

TRADE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE BRITISH WEST INDIES (1823-1846)

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study investigated the history of trade relations between the United States and the British West Indies from 1823 to 1846.

Methodology: This article uses a combination of historical approach and interdisciplinary approach through statistics, analysis of statistical reports, and content of scientific publications on the topic.

Main Findings: The author of this article has analyzed the value of trade and the structure of exchanged products, compared the trade value between the US and the British West Indies with other regions as well as its effect on the US, British Indies in the context of the British-American relations in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Applications of this study: This study can be useful to understand the history of trade relations between the US and the British colonies in the West Indies during the first half of the nineteenth century. It can also be used for academic purposes for universities, researchers, lecturers of history and political sciences as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This paper is the first study on the history of trade relations between the US and the British West Indies between 1823 and 1846.

Keywords: *British West Indies, United States of America, Great Britain, North America, Export, Import.*

INTRODUCTION

The West Indies Islands include islands divided by country of ownership, such as British West Indies, Spanish West Indies, French West Indies, Dutch West Indies, Danish West Indies, and Swedish West Indies (Brereton, 1998); (Trollope, 1999). The British West Indies or the British Islands include the islands of Antigua, Dominica, Nevis, Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent, Bermuda, Bernice, Trinidad, Anguilla, Bahamas, Tortola and Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Tobago, St. Christopher's, Demerara, St. Lucia, and Jamaica (Murray, 1855); (Smith, 1965). These islands were regions with great potential for materials and markets in the British colonial system (Ward, 1978); (Higma, 2000); (Zahedieh, 1986).

The commercial interests in the British West Indies were seen to be vital to the US (Sang, 2019a); (Sang, 2019b). According to the convention of July 3rd, 1815, the US declared that the trade relations between the US and European countries were equally based on the basic principles: taxes and fees are equally applied to goods of both parties; taxes and fees for importing any items to two countries must not be higher than those for exporting similar items to any other foreign countries; allowing export and import of goods produced, manufactured and grown in different countries to the two countries; export or import duties on each party's port are the same for both British and American vessels; exchanges between the US and British West Indies and British North America were not subject to this clause. Based on the above clause, the West Indies and the British colonies in North America still maintained a trade control policy by Great Britain. After the convention of 1815, Great Britain implemented the old colonial policy to these lands, removing the US from participating in commercial activities and monopolizing commercial interests in the West Indies. However, since 1815, Great Britain has implemented a policy for maintaining a commercial monopoly in this colony (United States Department of State, 1877); (United States Department of Commerce, 1864); (Government Printing Office, 1859); (Sang, 2019a). Therefore, Americans were always trying to connect with the West Indies market, but Andrew Jackson's predecessors have not been able to do it yet (Pastusiak, 2005). The most difficult issue for opening the British West Indies to American merchant ships was that neither Great Britain nor the US agreed to make concessions to achieve a long-term trade agreement. Typical cases of uncompromising policy between the US and Great Britain may be the Act of 1818. The US announced the closure of US ports against British ships that came from the ports of the British territories and colonies. The US believed that the goal of this Act was to retaliate against British maritime and commercial laws against US ships. In fact, the trading of products from the West Indies to US ports was done indirectly through Nova Scotia or other British colonies in North America by British ships. To prevent this, in May 1820, the US Congress continued to enact an act prohibiting indirect exchanges between US ports with the West Indies. However, on May 6, 1822, the US opened the gate for British merchant ships to trade. In contrast, on June 22, 1822, Great Britain announced the opening of the West Indies and the North American colonies to allow US vessels to trade (Matera & Matera, 2007); (Pitkin, 1835). On December 2, 1823, President James Monroe presented the message to Congress to express on US foreign policy, which was later known as the Monroe Doctrine (Moore, 1896); (Ammon, 2007); (Mariano, 2011). Since the Monroe Doctrine was born, the era of war between the US and Great Britain has come to an

end. Political conflicts are replaced by the search for peaceful solutions and trade development. James Monroe's successors, from John Quincy Adams to James K. Polk, continued to build good relationships with Great Britain. The US government found diplomatic solutions to conflict issues, created a peaceful basis for the development of Anglo-American relations, as well as relations between the US and the British West Indies. Therefore, the study of the trade between the US and the British West Indies from the birth of Monroe Doctrine to before the Mexican-American war has a crucial significance in the study of historical relations between the US and the British colonies, relations of the two countries, and the history of the US in the first half of the nineteenth century ([Sang, 2019a](#));([Sang & Tien, 2018](#)).

Trade exchange between the US and the British West Indies during the early period after the 1812 war primarily through indirect forms governed by the British statutes, council decrees, and statements by the US president ([Sang, 2019a](#)). The policies of the two countries were the underlying cause of commercial activities primarily taking place indirectly through the role of neutral ports of Spanish West Indies, French West Indies, Dutch West Indies, Danish West Indies, and Swedish West Indies. The main products exchanged between the US and the West Indies included rice, flour, wheat, beef, pork, tobacco, sugar, and coffee. Since 1822, Great Britain and the US began to make adjustments to each party's trade policy. Therefore, direct trade exchange was connected. However, laws subsequently enacted by Great Britain and the US caused this situation to continue to be disrupted ([Pitkin, 1817](#)); ([Pitkin, 1835](#)). After 1822, the US and West Indies began to have the first signs of trade exchange. These relations reflected and contributed as an important part of the development of the Anglo-American relations in the above period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The trade between the US and the British West Indies was an outstanding issue of the British-American relations in the first half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the first studies of the relations during this period were recorded in the original documents of the US and Great Britain which present on issues in bilateral relations ([Jackson, 1897](#)); ([Kłosowicz, 2005](#)); ([Manning, 1939](#)); ([Watts, 2000](#)); ([Great Britain Foreign Office, 1858a](#)); ([Great Britain Foreign Office, 1858b](#)); ([Government Printing Office, 1840](#)); ([Government Printing Office, 1859](#)). The first groups are statements by the politicians involved in the policies of the American government and the British government in the trade between the US and the British West Indies ([Jackson, 1897](#)); ([Kłosowicz, 2005](#)); ([Manning, 1939](#)); ([Watts, 2000](#)). Besides, the documents published by the British Foreign Office and the American Government Printing Office are not only the source for the analysis, events of the history of the trade relations within the scope of this study, but also provides the British and American views on matters and events in trade relations in both sides ([Great Britain Foreign Office, 1858a](#)); ([Great Britain Foreign Office, 1858b](#)); ([Government Printing Office, 1840](#)); ([Government Printing Office, 1859](#)). However, the aforementioned studies only present specific events and policies related to the trade between, while other important aspects of their trade relations have not yet been studied.

Besides, the reports and statistic documents at this period also mentioned the figures and the issues connected to the US-British West Indies trade relations ([Pitkin, 1817](#)); ([Pitkin, 1835](#)); ([Corwin, 1851](#)); ([United States Department of State, 1877](#)). It provides very important data to study trade exchanges between the US and the British West Indies. The data presented in the trade relations between the US and the British West Indies are processed from the raw data listed in this report and some other reports ([Macgregor, 1847](#)); ([Whiting, 1846](#)); ([Pitkin, 1817](#)); ([Pitkin, 1835](#)); ([Corwin, 1851](#)); ([Elder, 1864](#)). The data recorded in these reports and statistic documents have important implications in restoring the events and developmental progress of the trade history of the US-British West Indies. The characteristics of the mentioned documents presented above are legitimacy, high reliability of a specific issue, and figures of bilateral trade relations. In fact, the figures and issues presented in these documents are simple and non-systematic. Therefore, in order to recover a problem or the whole development of the US-British West Indies trade relations at the stage of the studies ([Pitkin, 1817](#)); ([Pitkin, 1835](#)); ([Corwin, 1851](#)); ([United States Department of State, 1877](#)); ([Macgregor, 1847](#)); ([Whiting, 1846](#)); ([Elder, 1864](#)).

The trade between the US and the British West Indies from 1823 to 1846 also studied in many research works as monographs ([Allen, 1955](#)); ([Green, 1919](#)); ([Mowat, 1925](#)); ([Kaufman, 2005](#)); ([Benns, 1923](#)); ([Matera & Matera, 2007](#)). The main topic of these works is not in the scope of the topic. The issues and events related to the trade relations of the US-British West Indies presented in the above works are only general as a part of the Anglo-American relations. As a result, trade between the US and the British West Indies has been recorded in several of their parts. The history of trade relations between the two sides in such aspects as the value of trade, the structure of products exchanged between the US and the British West Indies as well as the comparison trade between the US and the British West Indies with other British colonies has not been mentioned in above studies.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses a combination of historical approaches and interdisciplinary approaches. The following methods were used such as logical, comparative, statistical sampling, and territorial analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Scale and growth rate of the trade between the US and the British West Indies

Bearing the characteristic of trading with a British colony, the value of trade between the US and the West Indies for a long period varied according to the fluctuations of British and US trade policies and changes in bilateral relations. The shift in the scale of trade exchange between them is reflected in export and import values in Figure 1 below.

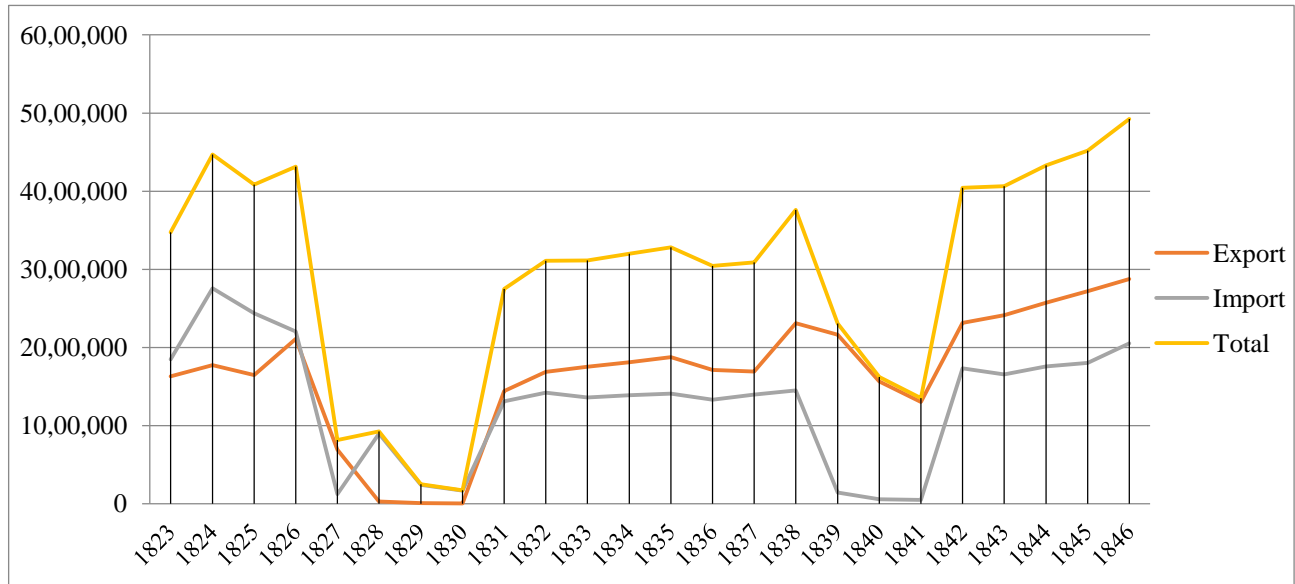


Figure 1: Export and import value between the US and the British West Indies, 1823-1846 in USD

Source: (Pitkin, 1835); (Macgregor, 1847)

The statistical data in figure 1 indicates during the first two years of 1823-1824, the uptrend is seen in the value of export and import and the total value of export-import between the US and the West Indies. The US export value to the West Indies market witnessed a sharp increase, respectively up to 1,627,967 USD and 1,771,008 USD in 1823 and 1824. The statistics also show that imports rocketed in the same period, reaching 1,844,931 USD and 2,758,067 USD in 1823 and 1824 respectively, increasing by 913,138 USD during the period mentioned above. The data of total export-import value also reflects an upward tendency, reaching 4,469,075 USD in 1824, increasing by 996,177 USD compared to 1823.

The change in the value of trade between the US and the British West Indies in 1823 and 1824 shown in the above statistical data originated from a change in trade exchange policy of the US and Britain. On April 1, 1822, the Board of Trade submitted two bills related to the trade exchange of the British West Indies. Until July 24, 1822, the US and West Indies Trade Bill was one of two bills that came into effect. It was considered to be the first act between Britain and the US regarding trade and shipping based on the principle of equality and reciprocity. It was also the first legal recognition of direct trade exchange between the US and the British West Indies. This event opened the doors of British ports for US ships to trade with the West Indies. As a result of Britain's action, in June 1822, the US president proclaimed the opening of US ports for Britain's ships to trade on a reciprocal basis. Subsequently, on January 23, 1823, the US informed Canning that all discrimination and differences in taxation for ships, especially British ships from the colonies, would be ended. British ships from the colonies would be fairly treated like other foreign ships (United States Congress, 1859). The US and Britain announced the opening of ports on British islands and colonies in the West Indies for US ships to trade in the West Indies since March 1, 1823. Vice versa, the US would open ports for British ships to conduct trade and exchange between the US and islands or colonies of the West Indies. Britain refused to participate in these terms and issued a council edict on July 21, 1823, to apply countervailing duty for ships entering colonial ports. Nevertheless, positive changes in 1822 and 1823 facilitated an enormous growth of trade exchange between the US and the British West Indies in subsequent periods. Afterward, President Monroe's declaration in December 1823 was the official event promoting the reciprocal free trade between the US and Britain or British colonies.

For the next two years from 1824 to 1826, import and total export-import value between the US and the British West Indies had a downward trend, in contrast to an upward trend in export value. In 1826, import and total export-import value respectively decreased by 535,655 USD and 153,861 USD, while export value slightly increased to 2,110,802 USD, going up by USD 339,794 compared to 1824 (figure 1). Since 1827, export, import, and total export-import value between the US and the British West Indies plummeted before reaching the lowest level in 1830. Specifically, export, import, and total export-import value in 1830 decreased by 1105 times, 13.1 times, and 25.3 times respectively compared to 1826 (figure 1).

The decline in exchange value between the US and the British West Indies in the period mentioned above was affected by the British plan and the US response policy. Britain was about to look for other supplies of goods so that the West Indies could be independent of the US. To serve this purpose, on July 5, 1825, Britain adjusted the colonial policy through some measures. Britain announced the opening of the West Indies and British North American colonies to trade with all foreign countries. However, this policy had a distinction between colonial rulers and countries that had no colony. The US had no colony, thereby not granting Britain the same privileges it had received from other countries. That was why the US could not directly trade with the West Indies. In the royal edict of July 27, 1826, Britain asserted that it closed colonial ports against American ships. After the edict was issued, the British cabinet refused to discuss further with the US about this matter. US President on March 17, 1827, responded to British policy and stated that trade between the US and British colonies were allowed by the banned Act of Congress of June 1822. US acts of 1818, 1820, and 1823 would be valid.

The non-trade closed-door policy implemented by both Britain and the US impacted the exchanged value of both sides as indicated above. This fact took its toll on the economy of Britain and the US, forcing two countries to give in and adjust their policies accordingly. In 1829, McLane, US Secretary of State in London opened negotiations concerning trading with British colonies as instructed. He proposed to the British cabinet to restore trade between the US and Britain on a reciprocal concession basis and stated that the US government was ready to participate in the provisions of the 1825 act. Diplomatic efforts of the US gained positive outcomes, making a change in the trade between the US and the West Indies.

The statistical data in figure 1 also show that, since 1830, three values of export, import, and total export-import in trade exchange between the US and the British West Indies witnessed growth again. This lasted from 1830 to 1838. Specifically, the value of export and import the total value of export-import in 1838 increased by 121.03 times, 85.90 times, and 220.40 times respectively. The positive changes in the trade values mentioned above were the effect of the establishment of trade policy on the opening of US ports for British ships from the West Indies and British North American colonies in the act passed by the US Congress on May 29, 1830. The Act stated that Britain would not determine the time and limit for the opening of British colonial ports in the West Indies in South America, the Bahamas Islands, Caicos, Bermuda or the Somer's Islands for US ships with same fair conditions on taxes, fees and imported goods like British ships (Jackson, 1830); (Jackson, A, 1830). Vice versa, British ships could come into the US and export from there any items that could be exported or imported by British ships. British ships with their cargo were allowed to enter US ports from British colonies in North America, the East, and West of the US without being subject to any terms or conditions. This act opened a new era in trade relations between the US and the West Indies or British colonies in North America and trade relations between Britain and the US with an increase in capital, tonnage, and trade value. Simultaneously, the trade relations between the two countries were strengthened ([the United States. Department of State, 1856](#)).

The openness in trade policy and equality in tariffs on US ships, British ships, and foreign ships continued to facilitate the exchange between the US and the West Indies. Although at some point, the impact of events, especially the ones related to maritime rights in the relationship between Britain and the US in the 40s of the 19th century, also significantly influenced the trade between the US and the West Indies region. Figure 1 shows that 1840 witnessed the lowest level of trade exchange between the two sides. The risk of the Aroostook war since late 1839 regarding the British-US border dispute and maritime tensions also delayed the exchange between the US and the West Indies (Sang, 2018a). The total value of import and export in 1840 was only 1,620,449 USD, decreasing by 1,852,449 USD compared to 1823. After successful negotiations with the signing of the Webster-Ashburton treaty in 1842, an era in the relationship between Britain and the US began. The peace enabled the US-West Indies trade to dramatically grow from 1842 to 1846. Specifically, export, import, and total export-import value in 1846 increased by 1,245,451 USD, 207,186 USD and 1,452,637 USD respectively compared to 1842.

Thus, the value and growth rate of trade between the US and West Indies changed over time, in which the scale and value reached their peak since the two countries signed the Webster-Ashburton Treaty in 1842.

2. Structure of exchanged goods in the trade between the US and the British West Indies

In terms of trade structure, in the first 10 years from 1823 to 1833, the US and British West Indies, with their advantages, continued to maintain the structure of exchanged products of the previous phase. This stemmed from the British government's regulation that only allowed certain products to be exported to the West Indies market. The US exported to the British West Indies primarily agricultural and fishery products such as rice, wheat flour, dried or smoked fish, whale oil, beef, and pork. Gold ingots and silver coins were the only non-agricultural products. Major US products exported to the West Indies market are listed in the table below.

According to the statistics in table 1, from 1823 to 1826, despite the volatility, all US products exported to the West Indies market increased, except for a downward trend in the export data of gold ingots and silver coins. Specifically, in 1826, figures of spermaceti oil, whale oil, fish, rice, wheat flour, beef, pork respectively went up by 318 (gallon), 11,303 (gallon), 26 (quintal), 3,002 (barrel), 22,844 (barrel), 184 (barrel) compared to 1823, while the export of gold and silver decreased by 3,589 ingots and coins during the same period. This change reflected the general trend of fluctuations in

trade exchange between the US and the British West Indies shown in table 1 and table 1 under the impact of trade policies between Britain and the US in this period.

Table 1: Some major US products exported to the British West Indies, 1823-1833

Year	Rice	Spermaceti oil	Whale oil	Fish	Beef	Pork	Gold and silver
	Barrel	Gallon	Gallon	Quintal	Barrel	Barrel	Ingots and coin
1823	4,169	292	1,200	286	378	170	7,319
1824	5,526	36	566	600	658	232	12,150
1825	4,399	180	368	292	380	412	480
1826	7,171	600	12,503	312	562	301	3,730
1827	1,065	83	33	---	161	113	---
1828	11	---	---	---	13	---	1,880
1829	---	---	---	---	---	---	4,878
1830	---	---	---	---	---	---	1,761
1831	4,389	1,421	---	218	1,292	683	1,660
1832	5,994	60	208	708	2,815	3,002	10,879
1833	4,830	84	49,510	655	2,420	3,407	---

Source: (Pitkin, 1835); (Macgregor, 1847)

From 1828 to 1830, the return of restriction policy on trade between the US and the British West Indies, imposed by Britain, almost stopped all trade, except gold and silver but the value reduced compared to previous periods. In 1828 and 1829, there was no data on the products the US usually exported to the West Indies market such as wheat flour, rice, fish, pork, and beef found in trade exchange. The resurgence of trade exchange between the two sides began in 1830 when the aforementioned policy of trade expansion was implemented by both Britain and the US for trade between Britain, the US, and the West Indies. Until 1833, nearly all products recovered from the previous period, even increasing sharply, except for a decrease in the export value of wheat flour, fish oil, and data for gold and silver which was not recorded (table 1).

Among the US commodity groups exported to the British West Indies listed in table 1, food groups such as rice, wheat flour, beef, and pork remained stable throughout the period. This was due to the huge demand for food in the West Indies and the US, which was a huge supply for the West Indies, although Britain implemented a policy to find alternative supplies for the US in 1827.

From 1833 onwards, the exchanged products between the US and the West Indies at this phase were not so different from before. Besides food for the West Indies, US handicraft products appeared for the very first time in the West Indies market.

Table 2: Some major US products exported to the British West Indies, 1834-1843

Year	Wax candle	White fabric	Colored fabric	Fish	Wheat	Wheat flour
	Pounds	USD	USD	Quintal	Barrel	Barrel
1834	29,658	10,248	469	321	-----	95,816
1835	26,839	12,341	1,252	436	-----	118,307
1836	50,080	9,689	2,237	819	2,062	70,307
1837	32,376	13,144	731	550	-----	68,328
1838	80,681	1,664	132	506	137	75,524
1839	16,645	6,083	581	240	14,129	130,340
1840	26,730	3,338	1,375	980	33,743	232,239
1841	---	4,374	1,530	2,679	41,116	246,465
1842	51,394	---	---	3,197	14,920	237,473
1843	64,220	---	---	4,793	17,399	170,577
1834	Wax candle	White fabric	Colored fabric	Fish	Wheat	Wheat flour

Source: (De Bow, 1854)

According to statistics in table 2, figures about some agricultural products such as rice, beef, pork exported by the US to the West Indies were not found in this period, wheat became a new exported commodity. In addition to traditional products, the white and colored fabric of the US industry was exported for the first time to the West Indies since 1834. However, gold ingots and silver coins were almost not exported to the West Indies by the US in this phase, the only value was recorded in 1839 but not significant (Table 2). It is worth noting that the scale of US products exported to the West Indies during this period was always volatile and did not follow any certain rules. This was a result of diplomatic

tensions between Britain and the US during this period, especially incidents such as Comet, Encomium, Enterprise, Hermosa, Caroline (Sang, 2018b); (Rupprecht, 2013); (Jennings, 1938); (Rakestraw & Jones, 1997); (Sang, 2020), Creole which took place at sea and border disputes between Britain and the US concerning Oregon, Maine, New Brunswick and Texas (Sang, 2017); (Sang, 2018a); (Sang et al., 2019); (Kerr-Ritchie, 2019). This factor limited the trade exchange with the West Indies region. Since 1842, political issues between the two countries were solved which set a precedent for the growth of the US products exported to the West Indies (Gordon, 1908); (Jones, 1977).

3. Trade relations between the US and the British Indies in comparison with other British colonies

Throughout the period, trade between the US and the West Indies played an important role for each of them. The scale of US trade with the West Indies market and vice versa was reflected through a comparison of the increase in US vessel tonnage to the West Indies compared to other foreign countries as well as the value of export-import from the US to the West Indies compared to other regions of the world that exported to the West Indies at the same time.

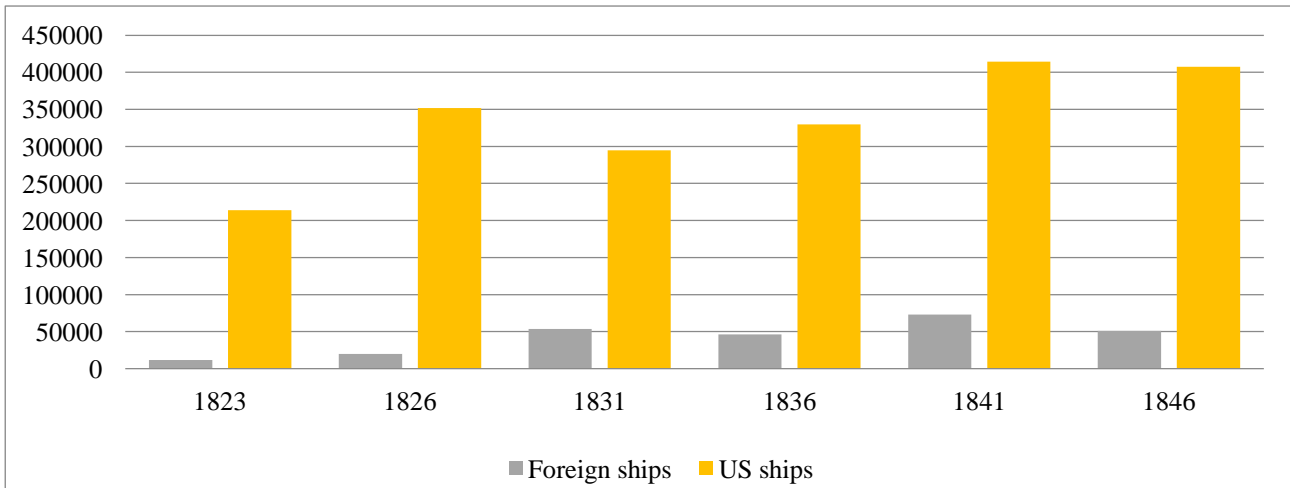


Figure 2: Tonnage of US ships in comparison with foreign ships to the West Indies, 1823-1846 in a ton

Source: (Macgregor, 1847)

Figure 2 demonstrates that the tonnage of US vessels arriving at West Indies ports always prevailed and was many times more than foreign ships arriving in the West Indies during the surveyed period, specifically 17.6 times more than 1826 and 8 times more than 1846. This is one of the bases to confirm the position of the West Indies market to US trade as well as the role of the US in the supply of goods to the West Indies market.

Besides, the proportion of each region and country in the structure of export-import to the West Indies is also a factor to compare their contribution to the West Indian trade as well as determine the position of the US and the West Indies in their trade exchange. Table 3 compares the export-import value of the US with the West Indies with the value of other regions in the 5-year cycle from 1826 to 1846.

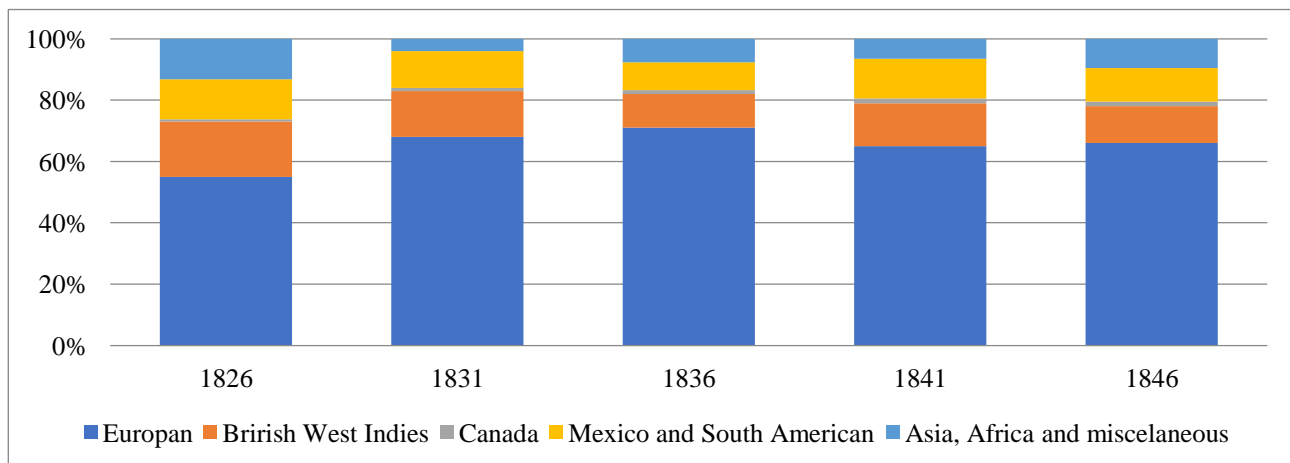


Figure 3: US export-import value with the West Indies compared to other regions in the world in a 5-year cycle, 1826-1846 in percent

Source: (United States Department of Commerce, 1864)

The value of US's export to and import from the West Indies and other regions for 20 years from 1826 to 1846 indicates that the West Indies was an important export and import market of the US after European countries. Notwithstanding certain fluctuations, the importance of the West Indies to US trade remained stable over time. Specifically, in 1846, the percentage of the trade value of Europe, the West Indies, Canada, Mexico, and South America, Asia, and Africa were respectively 66%, 12%, 1.5%, 11%, and 9.5%.

Thus, the important position of the British West Indies in the US trade exchange and the support of demand between the US and the West Indies region were the factors that ensured the connection between the two sides in the trade exchange. The development of the plantation economy in the South and US fishery industry needed a market to sell their products. The proximity of the US to the British West Indies was a favorable condition for US businessmen to come and exchange, although the British policy towards the West Indies region was to avoid relying on supplies from the US. However, due to the high demand for agricultural products, especially in the years of harvest failure, the self-sufficiency policy of the West Indies was ineffective. As a result, Britain was forced to import these products from the US to fill the shortage. All of these factors created a close-knit relationship, impacting the change in the trade value between the US and the British West Indies in terms of value, scale, growth, structure, and role in the political context between the US and Britain for over 20 years from 1823 to 1846.

4. Impacts of trade between the US and the British West Indies

The US-West Indies trade exchange was a part of and influenced by the relationship between Britain and the US. On the other way around, the US-West Indies trade exchange also affected Britain and the US to some extent in the first half of the 19th century.

Economically, political and territorial conflicts lead to losses for both Britain and the US. Compared to Britain, the US suffered greater damage. During the development of the plantation economy in the South, apart from providing materials for the industrializing industry in the North of the US, a large number of products also needed a market. Meanwhile, the US did not have a colony to export these products to, so it would be hard to find a replacement if it lost the West Indies and other British colonies. To Britain, despite its vast colonial system, it was also greatly influenced by conflicts in relations with the US, which had previously been an important market for its industry. Normally, the US exported to the British colonial ports the goods needed for the British industry, especially raw materials for the textile industry ([Sang, 2019a](#)). Processed agricultural and fishery products, which were exported from the US to Britain during the colonial period, were indirectly brought to Britain through trade with the West Indies in this period. From the West Indies, these products were transported by British ships to the country. The export of the aforementioned products to the West Indies affected the foundation of the plantation economy's development in the Southern US ([Daszyńska, 2018b](#)). Moreover, the analysis and explanation above indicate that, during the intense in Britain-US relations, Britain also repeatedly sought alternative supplies for food provided by the US to the West Indies. The failure to look for stable supply sources of food from other regions to replace the US for some reason, notably price and crop failure in the West Indies for years, affected Britain. Despite conflicts, Britain had to continue the trade relations with the US, especially the trade relations between the US and the West Indies ([Pastusiak, 2005](#)). Maintaining food export from the US to the West Indies guaranteed the stability of colonial society in the face of frequent crop failures and reduced the cost of British budget because it was cheaper to buy from the US than buying from other colonies with no cost for transportation from Britain or other colonies to the West Indies ([Green, 1919](#)), because, in terms of distance, the West Indies lay right on the domestic trade route between the ports of the Southern US, which was closer than the transportation of food from any region to the West Indies.

With its favorable natural advantages, the US provided the West Indies with cheap raw materials compared to other markets. That gave US goods the advantage of easily penetrating the West Indies market, while the West Indies bought them at cheap prices. However, the US's cheap materials sold in the West Indies adversely affected British colonies in North America. North America could not export its agricultural and forest products to the West Indies market because it was unable to compete on price with the US. The North American colonial government repeatedly asked the British government to impose additional taxes on commodities such as wheat flour, wood, sugar, and fiber from the US to the West Indies so that the North American colonies had a chance to export their products to the West Indies. The alarming fact was that products from the US market exported to the West Indies and then North America completely dominated this market, namely 2/3 of wheat flour and 7/8 of timber for shipbuilding in North American colony brought in from the West Indies was produced in the US ([United States Congress, 1859](#)). This situation also weakened the relationship between the US and British North America. It was detrimental to the US using North America as a bridge to exchange with the West Indies when Britain implemented the West Indies closed-door policy towards US merchant ships ([Daszyńska, 2018a](#)).

In the development of maritime trade between the US and the West Indies, ports of New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston played a major role in connecting. US-West Indies trade route connected to a large trading area on two sides of the Atlantic. Accordingly, when the US and the West Indies were free to trade directly, a system of trade routes was established, including US port system to the West Indies and from the West Indies to other British colonies as East Indies, North America, or from the West Indies to other West Indies colonies of the Netherlands, Denmark,

Sweden, France, or from the West Indies to Britain and vice versa. When the relationship between the two countries was tense and interrupted, trade between the US and the West Indies created a new bridge for trade activity, products from the US were brought to the British colonies in North America like Nova Scotia and then to the West Indies. From the West Indies, these goods were spread to the colonies, Britain, and other regions. The flexible transition which adapted to trade relations between the US and the West Indies created a trade connection in the Atlantic region, ensuring smooth cargo connectivity in the Atlantic (Daszyńska, 2018a).

On the other hand, trade relations between the US and the West Indies provided an opportunity to promote the liberation of slaves. The British Empire and its colonies did not accept the existence of the slave trade since 1834. In incidents at sea involving slave ships between the US and Britain in the West Indies, most ship-owners and the US government opposed the release of slaves by Britain (Rodriguez, 2007). Nevertheless, to slaves in the South of the US, the colonial government's arrest of merchant ships opened up an opportunity for them to be freed from slavery, protected and guaranteed by the West Indies government. Despite enormous damage from losing slaves on ships, the US only demanded compensation for economic loss through diplomatic measures. The deepest reason why the US did not push these matters further, namely a war, was because it wanted to maintain peace with Britain and trade with the West Indies. If these matters had become tenser and interrupted, or even the trade relations with the West Indies had been terminated, the US's southern economy would have been more vulnerable than it would have been due to the loss of slaves (Sang, 2019a). Moreover, the slaves were all freed by the colonial government of the West Indies, so the US government also avoided political conflicts and regarded diplomacy as a tool to fight. Rebel slaves or slaves on merchant ships were aware of this, so they all chose the West Indies as a place to flee or stay when freed. During the 40s and 50s of the 19th century, hundreds of slaves in the US were freed under such circumstances.

Therefore, despite being a relationship between a country and a colony, the US and West Indies relations also contributed to strengthening the Southern economy through the export of products to the West Indies, reducing the cost and maintaining the stability of British colonial government, and was an opportunity to promote the liberation of slaves. Besides these positive aspects, this relationship affected the development of trade in North America and the relationship between the US and British colonies in North America.

CONCLUSION

- The British West Indies took up a crucial position in the US trade and vice versa compared to other regions.
- The trade relations between them were influenced by the history of the British-American relations and built up by the needs and advantages of each party.
- The US mainly exported agricultural, fishery, and non-agricultural products. However, the US-West Indies trade relations were often volatile and not stable over time.
- The trade between the US and the West Indies had a positive, limited impact on the US, the West Indies, Britain, and the British colonies during the first half of the 19th century.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This research is primarily focused on the trade relations between the US and the British West Indies in the first half of the nineteenth century. This research can be expended to study trade relations between the US with the West Indies thought the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Beside another limitation of this paper is that it is only analysis the trade relations of the US and the British West Indies, but also next studies could be able to study the form of this research in the trade relations of the US with other countries and colonies during that time.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

N.V. Sang wrote the main conceptual ideas of the manuscript and plays a role as the corresponding author. Both N.V. Sang and L. Trang contributed to revising the final version of the article.

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