Conclusion

Piracy in Asian and European Perspective

Studies of the European expansion in Asia, particularly during the nineteenth century, have generally treated the concept of piracy as part of a colonial discourse aimed at justifying European imperialism and domination. The thrust of the argument is that European colonisers inappropriately applied an essentially alien, European concept to the Asian context and that indigenous perceptions of maritime raiding and violence were fundamentally different from the European ones. This book, however, has shown that whereas the concept of piracy undeniably was part of the colonial discourse and frequently was used as a pretext for colonisation, these circumstances do not preclude there being indigenous terms in Asian languages that in some respects corresponded to the European understanding of piracy. Many contemporary nineteenth-century actors and observers of both Asian and European origin were also aware of the conceptual differences and understood that what was considered legitimate maritime violence varied between different social, political and cultural contexts.

The idea that pirates, by definition, were the enemies of mankind was indeed a distinctly European idea that originated in Roman Republican times. The understanding of piracy in this sense developed over a long period in European law, politics and culture, particularly during the early modern era, when European overseas expansion stimulated different forms of illicit or unregulated maritime violence around the world. The exploits of the pirates of the early modern age and the efforts to suppress them led to the emergence of the so-called piratical paradigm, which was established in Western Europe in the eighteenth century. This paradigm involved a complex set of ideas and implicit connotations related to piracy as a subversive and particularly serious form of maritime violence, which was associated both with debauchery, greed and extreme cruelty, and with liberty, romance and adventure.

From around 1730 European nation states were mostly, for the first time in history, able to control maritime violence emanating from their territories or perpetrated by their subjects against the vessels and coasts of other countries.

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In contrast to the notorious pirates and privateers of the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, most of whom were of European nationality, piracy from the second half of the eighteenth century became increasingly associated with non-European peoples and allegedly lawless or uncivilised nations beyond European control.

In confronting a surge in maritime raiding and violence in Southeast Asia in the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the piratical paradigm proved useful for the European colonisers in the region because it projected an image of the raiders as barbarians and a threat to progress and prosperity. Thus applied to the Southeast Asian context, the piratical paradigm justified the use of extraordinary measures, including the deployment of extremely brutal and indiscriminate forms of maritime violence against allegedly piratical communities.

Although accusations of piracy were frequently used by European colonisers to obscure less noble motives for sending naval expeditions to foreign countries, it was not necessarily inappropriate to describe the ravages of Iranun, Sama, Malay, Chinese and other raiders in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia as piracy, at least not in the vernacular European sense of the word. Just as the concept of slavery could be (and was) applied in Southeast Asia, what European and American colonisers in the nineteenth century labelled piracy often involved abhorrent violence and abuses to human life and dignity that from an ethical perspective were repulsive to Asians and Europeans alike.

The concept of piracy, in the sense of the illegitimate use of maritime violence for the sake of plunder and material gain, was also well known throughout Asia's modern history, not least against the background of the maritime depredations by European navigators. The frequent violent displays by European navies, trading companies and freebooters in Asian waters from the turn of the sixteenth century onward gave Europeans a solid reputation as pirates throughout the ports and coasts of the Indian Ocean and East and Southeast Asia. Many Asian languages, including Malay, Chinese and Japanese, had specific terms that signified illegitimate and violent maritime activities, such as armed robbery against ships or raids on coastal regions by descent from the sea. Such activities were well known throughout Asia long before the arrival of Europeans, and the use by the latter of maritime violence to further their commercial and political interests were readily described in those terms, which then in turn were translated into European languages as *piracy*. When early modern Europeans worried that they were seen as pirates in Asian eyes, they were thus often correct, even if the connotations of the various terms that were translated into European languages as *piracy* differed in some respects from those embedded in the European piratical paradigm.

Asians were also capable of understanding the European concept of piracy and were at times able to appropriate it and use it to their advantage in their contacts with the colonial powers, for example, by committing themselves – whether earnestly or only ostensibly − to cooperate with the colonial powers in the suppression of piracy or by using the accusation against their enemies. Some Asian sovereigns, such as Emperor Tu Duc of Vietnam, even accused Europeans of piracy, an accusation that seemed to carry some weight in view of their long-standing reputation as pirates in Asian seas.

By comparison, the French casting as pirates all who resisted colonial domination in Vietnam after the invasion of Tonkin at the beginning of the 1880s seems more far-fetched. The French extended the *pirate* label to include marauders on land as well as at sea, the former comprising the vast majority of so-called pirates. Moreover, the Black Flags, which initially was the main group of pirates in terrestrial Tonkin according to official French rhetoric, was not just a band of land-based river pirates or outlaws, but part of the irregular forces of the Nguyen Dynasty, which sanctioned them in order to maintain nominal control over the Red River region and other parts of northern Vietnam. The French also subsequently extended the accusations of piracy to Nguyen Dynasty loyalists among the *literati* and supporters of the Can Vuong nationalist resistance movement, most of whom probably never set foot on a ship and whose main motivation was political rather than economic.

Designating the Black Flags and other opponents of French colonialism as pirates and thus as enemies of mankind may not have been appropriate from a factual point of view, but it served the purpose of drumming up support in France for colonial expansion in Vietnam. The discourse also gave rise to a literary genre of both fiction and nonfiction about the pirates of Tonkin, which resonated with a popular cultural demand in France for tales of the savage and exotic. With regard to piracy, the discrepancy between the colony's function as an *ailleurs rêvé* in French national culture and the reality in Indochina could hardly have been greater. The colonial imagination nonetheless served French colonial interests well by diverting attention from the security problems and lack of legitimacy that characterised French colonial rule in Vietnam, particularly before 1895. In that context it did not matter that the *pirate* label was stretched beyond recognition and applied not only to land-based bandits such as the Black Flags, but also to the Vietnamese anticolonial resistance movement.

Colonial officials in the Malay world were well aware that piracy was seen by some of the perpetrators in the region, particularly traditional Malay chiefs and noblemen, as a legitimate and even honourable way of securing wealth, social status and political influence. Those colonialists who took more than a passing interest in Malay history and society, such as Van Angelbeek, Raffles and Crawfurd, however, also realised that such notions were not shared by the

majority of the indigenous population of Southeast Asia, who were the main victims of the piratical depredations. In other words, although the perpetrators and sponsors of maritime raiding in the Malay Archipelago may have argued, and possibly sincerely believed, that their activities were just and morally defensible, most Southeast Asians probably did not think the robbing and killing of peaceful traders, fishermen and other seafarers, or the wanton abduction of coastal populations, were legitimate or honourable.

As the naval dominance of the colonial powers was gradually extended throughout maritime Southeast Asia, particularly from the 1840s, many Asian sovereigns who previously had sponsored piratical activities realised that the tide was turning against the pirates, and they tried to adapt their policies and economic activities accordingly. Although European colonists frequently doubted the sincerity of the efforts by Southeast Asian rulers, such as the Sultans of Sulu, Selangor and Aceh, to distance themselves from what the colonisers saw as their old piratical habits, there is little to indicate that any of the major Southeast Asian sovereigns actively sponsored or encouraged piratical activity after the mid nineteenth century. Their failure to suppress piracy emanating from their territory was unsatisfactory from the European or colonial point of view, however, and often served as a pretext for military intervention. The principal aim of such intervention was more often than not to further the commercial or political interests of the colonisers rather than the suppression of piracy in itself. Southeast Asian rulers in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century were for the most part shrewd enough to understand that the European colonisers used the concept of piracy for such purposes. Realising the threat that piracy, from that perspective, posed to their power and autonomy, many of them also tried, with varying success, to suppress piratical activities in or around their territories.

Race and Religion

The eighteenth century saw the end of the classical age of European piracy and a shift of most of the main theatres of piracy in the world from the West Indies and the Indian Ocean to East and Southeast Asia. In Southeast Asia, maritime raiding increased sharply from around 1770, and the Iranun, based in the southern Philippines, emerged as a distinct ethnic group with a formidable reputation for it. By the end of the century the word *lanun*, derived from Iranun, had entered the Malay language as a generic term for pirate, in addition to several other terms, including those derived from the names of other ethnic groups engaged in maritime raiding throughout the Malay Archipelago.

From the second half of the eighteenth century British, Dutch and Spanish colonisers began to use the concept of piracy more frequently to describe the

raids of various indigenous ethnic groups of maritime Southeast Asia, particularly the Iranun and Sama of the southern Philippines. Piracy came to be seen as intrinsic to the Malay Archipelago in general, where the natural geography, with its many small islands, sheltered coves and shallow rivers, seemed to have stimulated the development of piratical habits among the population since the dawn of history, if not before.

In that context, and under the influence of Enlightenment ideas about race, civilisation and stadial theory, the concept of piracy, from the European perspective, began to be increasingly associated with race. In contrast to the French buccaneers of the seventeenth century or the British and other European pirates of the so-called Golden Age of Atlantic piracy at the beginning of the eighteenth century, most pirates around the world after the mid eighteenth century seemed to be non-Europeans. Colonial officials and observers consequently began to associate the presumed piratical habits of various ethnic groups in Asia with their allegedly inherent racial traits or deficiencies. The association between piracy and race, however, was not only – and possibly not even primarily – based on empirical observation. It was also an essential part of the emerging colonial discourse on piracy and race, according to which whole villages and even nations were defined as piratical and thus became susceptible to extinction. The suppression of piracy was the principle concern of colonial navies in Southeast Asia after 1815, and it was seen as necessary to stamp out piracy everywhere, regardless of the cost in human lives among the alleged enemies of mankind. By labelling whole nations or 'races' piratical, the use of wholesale and arbitrary violence to combat them could be justified and even be regarded as necessary or inevitable. Large-scale massacres of alleged pirate communities, in which hundreds of people, frequently including not only fighting men but also women, children, elderly people and slaves, were killed, could from this perspective be understood as legitimate and even progressive, although such claims did not always pass unchallenged by European humanitarians and other critics of imperialism.

The racial discourse was strengthened over the course of the nineteenth century. Malays in particular came to be seen as prone to piracy, and according to John Crawfurd, who by the mid nineteenth century was the leading authority in Great Britain on Malay history and culture, virtually all peoples of the archipelago were more or less addicted to piracy, bar the major settled agricultural peoples, such as the Javanese, Balinese and Christian Filipinos. The racial discourse was most pronounced in the Spanish colonial context, however, where there was virtually no questioning of the designation of the Muslims of the southern Philippines as pirates by nature. The terms *Moro* and *pirate* became more or less synonymous in the course of the nineteenth century, and the standard histories of the protracted Moro Wars, written toward the end of Spanish rule over the Philippines, described the Moros in almost

exclusively negative terms, casting them as cruel, vengeful and deceitful by nature.

The racial lens of colonialism tended often to obscure the heterogeneity of the members of the ethnic groups that were labelled pirates. Even though it must have been obvious, for the most part, to colonial observers and officials that most members of any given nation in Southeast Asia did not engage in piracy, they were still collectively labelled as piratical, and all were seen either as pirates or potential pirates, or as accomplices in piratical activity. As a consequence, the rule of law was frequently subordinated to the racist paradigm, which made it possible for colonial officials to assume guilt and even pass death sentences on suspected pirates only by judging them on their looks and physique.

The great majority of the victims of piracy in Southeast Asia were Asians. This circumstance, however, did not stop European and American colonisers from expressing their concern for the suffering of the victims of piratical attacks and coastal raids, particularly not when doing so enabled them to argue for decisive measures to suppress piratical activity. Much was made, for example, of the reported murder of thirty-four Chinese passengers on the junk *Kim Seng Cheong* in 1871. It is doubtful, however, if the concern was based on any deeper felt sympathy or sincere care for the loss and suffering of the victims, all of whom remained unnamed, both in official correspondence and reports and in contemporary newspapers. Only rarely were Malay or Chinese victims of piracy named, and the media instead tended to focus on the gruesome details of the piratical deeds rather than the subsequent fate of the victims. That the ethnicity of the victims was consequential is also clear from the attempts by American officials in the early twentieth century to downplay the problem of piracy in Tawi-Tawi because it was supposedly only committed by the inhabitants of the islands upon each other.

All of this was in sharp contrast to when Europeans or Americans occasionally fell victim to attacks by pirates or alleged pirates, such as happened in Tonkin in 1883, when the French commander Henri Rivière was killed by the Black Flags, or in Basilan in 1907, when an American timber merchant and his Dutch business partner were hacked to death, together with their Chinese associate. Both incidents triggered loud calls for revenge among Europeans and Americans, and the Basilan murder caused manifest displays of solidarity and an outpouring of racist sentiments in the colonial press. Echoing earlier Spanish stereotypes about the Moros, they were described in sweeping racist terms as being by nature cruel and treacherous.

Racism was part of the colonial discourse everywhere, and the characterisation of whole nations as piratical is found in the Spanish, Dutch, British, French and American colonial contexts. However, the racial explanations tended to be more generalised and conspicuous where relations between

colonisers and the allegedly piratical races were openly hostile, or when ignorance of the other group's culture and society was great. Such was the case, most obviously, with regard to Spanish relations with the Moros, but the tendency is also manifest in the Dutch scholar Snouck Hurgronje's view of the Acehnese as arch-pirates or in American perceptions of the Moros as pirates by nature. Among the British and Dutch, however, the racial discourse was to some extent mitigated by senior colonial officials, such as Johan Christiaan Van Angelbeek, Thomas Stamford Raffles, James Richardson Logan, Thomas Braddell, Peter Benson Maxwell, John McNair and Frank Swettenham, all of whom served long periods in Southeast Asia and developed an intimate knowledge of and sometimes even sympathy for the Malay language, culture and history. Some of them were able to some extent to go beyond the racial stereotypes and identify differences of opinion and character among the Malays with whom they dealt, although Braddell's claim – which was forcefully rejected by Maxwell – that the Selangor pirates were the most daring and bloodthirsty of all in the Malayan seas was patently false, a circumstance of which Braddell was probably well aware. The claim was obviously intended to resonate with the racial stereotypes of the Malays as inveterate pirates in order to legitimise a British intervention in Selangor.

Religious adherence to Islam intersected with race in colonial attempts to explain piracy in Southeast Asia. To many colonial observers, Islam also seemed to be relevant with regard to the other two regions of the world that in the first half of the nineteenth century were seen as the most pirate-infested, the Mediterranean (north Africa) and the Persian Gulf (the Oman coast). In all three regions the pirates were for the most part followers of Islam, and contemporary reports held that the fact that most Malays − like the Arabs who were implicated in piracy in the other two regions − were Muslims explained their piratical habits. Islam, it was claimed, sanctioned piracy, slavery and other forms of violence, robbery and deceitful behaviour by Muslims against non-Muslims.

The attempt to explain piracy with reference to Islam is found among the representatives of all the colonial powers in the Malay Archipelago, including among generally well-informed students of the region, such as Raffles, Ferd. Blumentritt, P. J. Veth and Snouck Hurgronje, all of whom pointed to the role of Islam in encouraging piratical activity among the Malays. The connection between piracy and Islam was also manifest among the Spanish. Piracy and maritime raiding emanating from the southern Philippines was interpreted against the background of the Moro Wars, which since the sixteenth century had been regarded by the Spanish − and, largely, by the Moros as well − as part of a global struggle between Christianity and Islam. Maritime raiding, in that context, was used by both parties to the conflict as a means of warfare. However, it was only from the second half of the eighteenth century and above

all during the nineteenth that the Spanish began to describe their Muslim enemies as generic pirates.

The typical image of the pirate in popular history and culture around the world today is still a white man, generally a European. The most famous historical pirates, such as Henry Morgan, François l'Olonnais, William Kidd, Edward Teach and Bartholomew Roberts, were also Europeans. Against this background, an auxiliary purpose of this book has been to highlight the names of some of the lesser-known pirates and pirate chiefs of non-European origin who have made a name for themselves in the history of Southeast Asia, at least locally and in their own time: Pak Ranti, Raja Yakob, Taupan, Selungun and Jikiri, to mention some of the more prominent maritime marauders who have appeared on the pages of this book. There is little reason to suppose that their exploits and characters were more noble or honourable than their European counterparts, but they may be just as worthy of attention as some of the Europeans who occupy the pirates' hall of fame today.

Explanations

By the middle of the nineteenth century the navies of Great Britain, the Netherlands and Spain had broken the back of the large raiding fleets that had ravaged the coasts and seas of Southeast Asia since the late eighteenth century. Piracy continued on a smaller scale, however, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and in some places well into the twentieth.

In the Straits Settlements occasional attacks by Malay pirates based in southern parts of the Strait of Malacca, including the Riau-Lingga Archipelago and the small islands near Singapore and on the coasts of some of the Malay Peninsula, constituted a minor problem for several decades after the mid nineteenth century. Although it was difficult to suppress completely, such piratical activity was for the most part relatively efficiently contained by British patrols, sometimes in collaboration with the Dutch colonial authorities or independent Malay states such as Johor and Terengganu. The most serious outbreak of piracy perpetrated by pirates who were indigenous to the region occurred in the 1880s and early 1890, when several brutal attacks on British ships took place in the context of the Aceh War, which was caused by the Dutch attempt to subjugate the Sultanate from 1873.

A problem of much greater importance to the commerce and security of the Straits Settlements was the depredations of heavily armed Chinese pirate junks. There were two major outbreaks of Chinese piracy affecting the Straits Settlements during the second half of the nineteenth century. The first, which mainly affected the trade between Singapore and Indochina, occurred in the 1850s, and the second occurred in 1872−74 and emanated from Perak, affecting the trade in and out of Penang and threatening public order in the

colonial port. The first of these two waves of piracy was the most serious and protracted. As in Indochina at around the same time, the so-called junk piracy was linked to the upheaval in China, mainly the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion. It flourished in the Strait of Malacca and along the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, largely because Singapore was an excellent land base for the pirates. The trade in arms was an important part of the port city's commerce, and pirates could easily obtain arms and munitions there, as well as general provisions, crew members and information for carrying out their depredations. Pirated goods could also be easily marketed and disposed of in Singapore. By providing these advantages to the pirates, the British inadvertently encouraged piratical activity emanating from the very centre of British power in maritime Southeast Asia, at the same time as Great Britain claimed to be the international leader in the struggle to suppress piracy there and in the rest of the world. The irony and hypocrisy did not go unnoticed by contemporary observers, but efforts to pass stricter laws and curb the arms trade in order to deal with the problem were slow to come about and largely insufficient.

Piracy in the rivers and on the coasts of Indochina in the 1860s and 1870s was essentially part of the same wave of Chinese piracy, the origins of which was the breakdown of law and order in southern China during the Taiping Rebellion. When piracy was suppressed with increasing vigour and efficiency, both on the south China coast and in the Strait of Malacca, many pirate junks seem to have taken refuge in the coast and islands of northern Vietnam, where the maritime geography, combined with the political and military weakness of the Nguyen Dynasty, created favourable conditions for piracy and maritime raiding. Robbery of trading junks and other local vessels seems at first to have been the main activity of the pirates, but from the 1860s they turned increasingly to the abduction and trafficking of Vietnamese women and children to China, where most of the victims were sold as domestic slaves, concubines or prostitutes. Vietnamese men were also abducted and trafficked as involuntary coolie labourers to colonial plantations, mines and other workplaces around the world.

In the Sulu Archipelago piratical activity continued for about a decade after the Spanish destruction of the Sama raiding base on Balangingi in 1848, albeit on a smaller scale than before. Many survivors of the attack moved to the periphery of the Sulu Archipelago, particularly the Tawi-Tawi group of islands, from where they continued to conduct raids, occasionally on a relatively large scale, to neighbouring islands in the Philippines, as well as to north Borneo and the eastern parts of the Dutch East Indies. From the end of the 1850s, and especially during the following decade, Spanish efforts to suppress piracy in the Sulu Archipelago became increasingly efficient. Occasional piratical activity continued to occur throughout the Spanish colonial era, but were on the whole relatively efficiently contained by Spanish naval patrols.

It was only in the early twentieth century, when the American colonial authorities began to implement a program of economic development, which led to increased maritime commerce and traffic and to a decline among the indigenous pearl fishers of Sulu, that piracy again resurfaced on a large scale in the southern Philippines. For eighteen months, from the end of 1907 until the middle of 1909, a band of outlaws led by Jikiri, a former member of the entourage of Sultan Jamalul Kiram II, brought terror to the Sulu Archipelago and Basilan, and almost brought maritime trade and pearl-fishing in the region to a standstill.

In all of these outbreaks of piracy were traces of the impact of colonialism and the changes brought about by the economic and political transformations due to the intensified imperial expansion in Asia in the nineteenth century. British free trade policies in maritime Southeast Asia and the South China Sea facilitated piratical activities to the extent that even the centre of British power in the region, Singapore, became a well-known pirate haunt. In the context of the unrest in Perak in the first half of the 1870s, Penang similarly functioned as a catalyst for piratical activities, although on a smaller scale and during a more limited period of time.

Raffles and other European observers of Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century frequently explained piracy in the region in terms of the decline of the indigenous economy caused by the European expansion of the early modern period, particularly the monopolistic practices of the Dutch East India Company. Although this so-called decay theory has in part been superseded by more sophisticated explanations as to the large-scale maritime raiding emanating from the southern Philippines in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it still carries some explanatory value with regard to the outbreaks of piracy in Southeast Asia after the mid nineteenth century. The ravages of Chinese pirates off the coast of northern Vietnam, for example, were only possible because of the weakness of the Nguyen Dynasty, which to a significant extent was due to French advances and aggression from the 1840s. More broadly, the surge in Chinese piracy affecting the South China Sea, Vietnam and the Strait of Malacca was linked to the instability and civil war in southern China, particularly the Taiping Rebellion, which also to a large extent was triggered indirectly by European incursions into China during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Opium War played an important part in triggering junk piracy, as numerous privateers who had fought on the side of the Qing Dynasty took to piracy after the end of the war.

Perhaps the most clear-cut example of piracy caused by the decline of indigenous power and prosperity due to Western imperialism was the ravages of Jikiri and his followers in Sulu between 1907 and 1909. In a desperate attempt to counter the injustice and flawed implementation of a colonial law aimed at facilitating the exploitation of the pearl beds of the Sulu Archipelago

by foreigners, Jikiri attacked the interests of those who, in contrast to himself and many indigenous Sulu Moros, seemed to gain from colonial efforts to transform the region's economy. The latter groups included European and American colonisers, overseas-owned pearl luggers, Japanese pearl fishers and Chinese merchants, all of whom fell victim to Jikiri's attacks. Against this background it has been suggested that Jikiri's motives were political rather than economic, but it is difficult to interpret his actions as anything but those of a disaffected desperado, whose main interest lay in plunder and violence and in gathering a large following in order to conduct ever more daring and spectacular raids. Nevertheless, behind the outbreak lay widespread discontent among the Joloanos with the American policy, which in part explains why the Americans had such difficulties defeating Jikiri and his band.

Plunder was the main motive for most of the outbreaks of piracy that occurred in Southeast Asia after the middle of the nineteenth century, even when piratical activity was directly linked to war and other politically motivated hostilities, such as in China and the Malay Sultanates in the Strait of Malacca. The suggestion that the concept of piracy would be inappropriate in Southeast Asia on the grounds that the cultural and political context was different from that of Europe cannot, therefore, on the whole, be sustained, at least not after the middle of the nineteenth century. Whether triggered by misery or opportunity – push or pull, in other words – the main goal of the pirates during Southeast Asia's age of empire was in virtually all instances material gain, possibly combined with the prospect of increased social status.

The main exception to this conclusion is Vietnam, where the acts of violence, robbery and extortion perpetrated by the Black Flags were political in the sense that they were sponsored by the Vietnamese government and used, among other things, as a bulwark against the French incursions in Tonkin in the 1870s and early 1880s. The Black Flags and the other predominantly Chinese bands that controlled most of northern Vietnam were nonetheless bandits or brigands more than anything else, and their main interest lay in activities such as plunder, extortion and trafficking. By contrast, the Can Vuong was an anticolonial resistance movement whose main aim was political, that is, to expel the French colonisers and restore the sovereignty of Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty. The supporters of the Can Vuong were thus not so much pirates or bandits as nationalist resistance fighters, despite the fact that they were described as pirates in the French colonial discourse and in the French cultural imagination.

Sovereignty, Security and the Suppression of Piracy

By the 1850s piracy had in principle ceased to be a major security threat for the colonial powers in Southeast Asia. Even though petty piracy continued to

occur in many parts of Southeast Asia it was no longer a threat to European maritime commerce or the security and prosperity of the colonial centres in the archipelago. On several occasions between the middle of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the threat of piracy was nonetheless brought to the fore and securitised by various actors, including senior colonial officials, military officers, local merchants and the victims of various acts of maritime violence. The securitising moves involved concerted attempts to draw attention to the problem of piracy by describing such activity in strong words as a serious and even existential threat to, for example, maritime commerce, the colonial community, law and order, or civilisation. The thrust of the argument was that piracy was not just an ordinary crime, but a threat so grave as to require the urgent use of extraordinary measures, such as punitive naval expeditions, and wars of conquest and colonisation. The antipiracy operations of James Brooke to north Borneo in the 1840s were examples of such extraordinary and often brutal measures, as was the destruction of Balangingi by the Spanish in 1848.

The fact that piracy was no longer a security threat in most parts of Southeast Asia after the middle of the nineteenth century did not put an end to the efforts of various actors to securitise it. By looking beyond the securitising rhetoric and analysing the motives of those involved, however, a deeper understanding of the reasons for the invocation of piracy as a security threat emerges. Most conspicuously, the securitisation of piracy was linked to the assertion of sovereignty over territories suspected or accused of harbouring pirates. In all three geographic regions under study here, the suppression of piracy was thus accompanied by colonial expansion and the loss of sovereignty for indigenous Southeast Asian states.

Despite these general similarities there was considerable variation with regard to the actors, motives and measures implemented to deal with piratical activity, both between the three areas under study and within each of them. These differences had an impact on the timing and character of the adopted antipiracy measures, which were often accompanied by colonial territorial expansion, as well as on the colonial imagination and the long-term relations between colonisers and colonised.

In the Strait of Malacca, piracy was not securitised to any significant degree in the 1850s and 1860s, despite the relatively serious problems that junk piracy caused for maritime commerce in the Straits Settlements. Local merchants demanded naval protection and improved legislation to deal with the problem, but such measures were only adopted slowly and partially. Furthermore, because Singapore, for good reasons, was suspected of being the main land base of the pirates in the area, securitising the issue risked drawing negative attention to the British colonial authorities and exposing their failure to uphold law and order in their own backyard. Suggestions to curb the arms

trade in order to stop the pirates from getting access to arms and munitions, meanwhile, were rejected because of the negative consequences that such measures might have for Singapore's commerce.

In 1871, by contrast, the reported attack on the *Kim Seng Cheong*, in which thirty-four people were said to have been brutally murdered at sea by a gang of Chinese pirates after leaving Penang, led to a securitising move by the acting governor of the Straits Settlements, Edward Anson. Upon receiving news of the attack Anson dispatched a naval expedition to Selangor, which led to skirmishes between the British and local Malay bands, and eventually to the destruction by the British of the fort at Selangor, which they, on dubious grounds, claimed to be a major nest of pirates. The main objective of the intervention, however, was not the suppression of piracy but to put an end to the ongoing civil war in Selangor and bring about a transfer of power from the apparently inept Sultan Abdul Samad to his son-in-law, the British-friendly Tunku Kudin. The involvement of fifty of Kudin's followers in a recent case of piracy on the Selangor coast notwithstanding, senior government officials and influential merchants in the Straits Settlements both believed that he, with British support, would be able to bring political stability and favourable conditions for trade and investment to Selangor. Piracy was used as a motive for the military intervention in the Sultanate, despite the fact that the attack on the *Kim Seng Cheong* – if indeed it happened as reported – had been launched from the British port of Penang and not from Selangor.

The scheme ultimately failed because of a countermove by the recently retired Chief Justice of the Straits Settlements, Peter Benson Maxwell, to de-securitise the threat of piracy in the Strait of Malacca. In doing so he challenged both the legality and morality of the British intervention. In an article in *The Times*, Maxwell sharply criticised Anson's handling of the affair, and his criticism contributed to a more cautious, noninterventionist policy on the part of the colonial government and the Royal Navy in relation to the Malay states in subsequent years. In contrast to Anson, Governor Harry Ord, who returned to the Straits Settlements in March 1872, sought to downplay the threat of piracy emanating from the coasts of the Malay Peninsula, despite a surge in piratical activity in Perak, which to some extent affected British interests in Penang. This policy, among other things, contributed to widespread discontent with his administration, both in the colony and in London.

At the end of 1873 Ord was replaced by Andrew Clarke as governor of the Straits Settlements. Under the new governor, and in concert with several of the old hands in the colonial administration, many of whom took a great personal interest in the problem of piracy, the threat was again securitised and used to motivate British military and political interventions, first in Perak and then in Selangor. The condition for the success of the securitising moves, in contrast to 1871, was the policy change in London, where the government – still under the

generally nonexpansionist Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone – now had come to support a more interventionist British policy in the Malay Peninsula. Consequently, Clarke carried with him instructions by the Colonial Secretary to take measures for the protection of British commerce with the Malay states, much in contrast to the noninterventionist policy under Clarke's predecessor. Although piracy was not explicitly mentioned in the new governor's instructions, the threat was once again mobilised in order to justify intervention in both Perak and Selangor. The theme of piracy was highlighted both in the colonial press and in official reports about the current situation in the Malay states, particularly in Perak, where raiding by Chinese bands involved in the conflict in Larut did cause a deterioration in maritime security and affected local traders and fishermen. The reports used a highly securitising rhetoric in order to justify not only increased antipiracy patrols and other policing measures, but also increased British political control over the Malay states through the appointment of a permanent British resident, first to Perak and then to the other sultanates on the Malay peninsula.

In contrast to Perak there had been very few reported pirate attacks emanating from Selangor in the preceding years, but this circumstance did not prevent senior government officials and the colonial press from describing Selangor as a hotbed of piracy. In that context, an attack on a small trading boat off the Selangor coast in November 1873, in which five Malays and three Chinese were killed, apparently on the orders of a son of the sultan of Selangor, was quickly seized upon by the colonial government as a reason for intervening in Selangor.

Although the measures taken by the British to deal with the problem of piracy in Perak and Selangor in the first half of the 1870s were extraordinary compared with the previous policy of nonintervention, they were far less violent than earlier British antipiracy campaigns, particularly those of the late 1830s and 1840s, in which thousands of real and imagined pirates were killed. The Straits Government now instead used gunboat diplomacy, combining more or less overt threats of violence with negotiations and offers of rewards for complying with British demands. The negotiations were largely conducted by colonial officials who were familiar with the language and culture of their negotiation partners and commanded their respect and possibly even a measure of trust. The threat of violence was often direct and clear, but the British also offered clear benefits to their counterparts, such as immediate food relief for the Sin Heng in Perak or the prospect of increased British trade and investment in Selangor.

The first half of the 1870s was unique in the Straits Settlements in that it was the only time after the mid nineteenth century that piracy was successfully securitised. By contrast, when several British ships were attacked by Acehnese pirates in the 1880s and 1890s in the context of the Dutch war of conquest in

Aceh, the issue was not securitised, despite the fact that several British officers and other Europeans – in addition to an even larger number of Asian crew members and passengers – were killed. The attacks on the *Hok Canton*, *Rajah Kongsee Atjeh* and *Pegu* were among the most brutal to befall British ships in the Strait of Malacca in the second half of the nineteenth century, but neither the colonial government, the government in London nor the general public in the Straits Settlements were interested in securitising the issue. There were no plans for a British intervention in the bitter and protracted Aceh War, nor was there any interest in a fallout with the Dutch over their failure to curb piracy emanating from their territory. The piratical attacks were thus treated by the British as tragic events and criminal acts, but not as a threat to the security of the Straits Settlements or its commerce.

Whereas the perceived seriousness of the threat of piracy thus subsided among the British in the Strait of Malacca after the mid 1870s, piracy started to become increasingly seen as a security threat by the French in Indochina from around the same time. French missionaries in the region had drawn attention to the problem since the middle of the century, but the suppression of piracy in Indochina was not a major concern for the French Navy before the 1870s. Moreover, although river piracy was rife in French Cochinchina from the establishment of the colony in 1858 until the end of the 1860s, the naval officers who administered the colony tended to downplay the problem rather than to securitise it. Doing so would obviously have reflected poorly on the Navy and its ability to maintain law and order in the colony, for which it was responsible. Just like the British did not want to draw attention to the Chinese pirates operating out of Singapore in the 1850s, the French authorities in Cochinchina had no wish to call attention to the prevalence of river piracy or other forms of disorder in the colony.

Whereas the problem of piracy was thus toned down in official correspondence and reports from Cochinchina, it was dealt with internally by a combination of regular patrols taken over from the Vietnamese and an extremely harsh and arbitrary system of justice in which death sentences were frequently passed on suspected pirates and other criminals, often on very loose grounds and by junior naval officers who lacked both training in judicial matters and understanding of the cultural and linguistic context of Cochinchina. The harsh measures were motivated by the extraordinary security situation in the colony and were terminated only with the transition to civilian rule in 1879.

Sea piracy increased on the coast and around the islands of northern Vietnam in the 1860s and early 1870s as numerous Chinese pirates were drawn to the area after being pushed out of the Strait of Malacca and much of the South China Sea. A French businessman and adventurer, Jean Dupuis, who had commercial interests in northern Vietnam and sought to expand his operations to the Yunnan province of southwest China, urged the French Navy

in Cochinchina to take on a greater responsibility for suppressing piracy on the coast of northern Vietnam while simultaneously exploring the possibilities for further French colonial expansion. In 1872 the dispatch boat *Bourayne* was sent to Tonkin for the dual purpose of exploring the region and suppressing piracy. Even though piracy in northern Vietnam was not seen by the French as a security issue at the time, the second expedition of the *Bourayne* in October turned out to be one of the most brutal antipiracy campaigns in Southeast Asia after the middle of the nineteenth century, leaving more than 500 alleged pirates dead.

Rather than trying to securitise the problem of piracy and banditry in Tonkin, however, Dupuis downplayed the threat, particularly with regard to the Black Flags, who controlled the Red River and obstructed the passage of commercial traffic with Yunnan. Consequently, a small and ill-prepared French expedition was dispatched to Tonkin in 1873, officially for the purpose of expelling the troublesome Dupuis, but actually for the purpose of putting pressure on the Vietnamese government to settle a territorial dispute with France in the south. The intervention ended in disaster for the French, however, after the commander of the expedition, Lieutenant Francis Garnier, was killed by the Black Flags. The failure of Dupuis and the colonial authorities to securitise the depredations of the Black Flags, combined with the European orientation of French foreign policy at the time, contributed to the decision to withdraw French troops from Tonkin and to a more noninterventionist French policy in Indochina over the following years.

To anti-imperialists in France, Garnier's death seemed to demonstrate the perils of further colonial adventures. The government had to use a highly securitising rhetoric to get Parliament to ratify the treaty of peace and friendship, which was negotiated with Vietnam in 1874. According to the treaty, France promised to assist the Vietnamese emperor in suppressing piracy, an obligation that was represented by the government as part of France's civilising mission in Asia. In the end the treaty was ratified, despite the attempts by anti-imperialists to desecuritise the threat of piracy in Indochina with regard to French interests.

In the following years, missionary and official reports contributed to securitising piracy and trafficking in Vietnam, particularly with regard to the trafficking of women and girls to prostitution in China, which by the 1870s had developed to become the main source of income for the pirates. The reports contributed to strengthening procolonial sentiments in France, and by the early 1880s there was a strong opinion in favour of annexing the rest of Vietnam. Against that background − and in sharp contrast to the French withdrawal from Tonkin after the killing of Garnier in 1873 − the killing of the commander of another French expedition to Tonkin in 1883, Henri Rivière, by the Black Flags triggered loud and virtually unanimous calls in France for

intervention. Vietnam was described as infested by pirates, of whom the Black Flags were the most barbarous and dangerous.

The rhetoric of piracy became firmly entrenched in French colonial discourse in the aftermath of the events of 1883 and continued to be used throughout the French colonial era in Vietnam. In the second half of the 1880s and first half of the 1890s the allegations of piracy were extended to include virtually anybody who resisted French domination in Indochina with little regard for the diversity of the groups that were labelled piratical. The rhetoric contributed to a sense of emergency that justified the use of repressive military action against so-called pirates in various locations, including, and even, from around 1890s, predominantly, on land. The extraordinary measures taken by the French authorities included the dispatch of tens of thousands of troops to Indochina, as well as arbitrary killings, the destruction of property and the forced recruitment of labour to support the colonial war effort. The securitisation of piracy in French Indochina lasted well into the twentieth century, but it was most pronounced until the middle of the 1890s, when the back of anticolonial resistance and the power of the Black Flags and other bandit gangs was broken.

Piracy was also securitised by the Vietnamese authorities to draw attention to the existential threat that the French incursions constituted to the country from the middle of the nineteenth century. Emperor Tu Duc accused the French of being cowardly pirates who sought to foment disorder in his realm, and by the beginning of the 1870s, Dupuis was regarded by Vietnamese officials as a pirate after he tried to force the Red River open for commerce without official authorisation. The appeals to resistance after the French invasion of Tonkin in 1883 also called for the Vietnamese to rise up and expel the French pirates. Even though the connotations of the Chinese or Vietnamese terms may have differed from the European ones, there were similarities in that pirates in both contexts were seen as subversive and treacherous. Describing the French in such terms served not only to defame them but also to cast them as an existential threat to the Vietnamese nation. In that sense, the Nguyen Dynasty's use of the *pirate* label to refer to the French was arguably more appropriate than the corresponding French discourse, according to which all who resisted French advances in Indochina were cast as pirates.

Of the major colonial powers in Southeast Asia, Spain was probably the most consistent when it came to the securitisation of piracy. In contrast to the Straits Settlements, where piracy after the mid nineteenth century only briefly emerged as a security threat at the beginning of the 1870s, and in comparison with Indochina, where the securitisation of piracy by the French emerged only gradually before coming into full swing after 1883, the Spanish perception of the Moros of the southern Philippines as a security threat was more pronounced throughout most of the nineteenth century. The Spanish understood

Moro culture and society against the background of the global historical struggle between Islam and Christianity, and the Moros were thus seen as the arch-enemies of the Spanish. The frequent slave raids that seafaring Moros undertook to the islands of the Spanish colony also constituted a significant and persistent security threat for the Spanish authorities and the coastal populations for much of the Spanish colonial period. From that point of view, Spanish descriptions of the Moros as inveterate pirates were more empirically based than, for example, the exaggerated British accounts of the allegedly dangerous and bloodthirsty Selangor pirates or the sweeping use of the label *piracy* by the French in Indochina.

As the slave raids emanating from the southern Philippines intensified toward the end of the eighteenth century and during the first decades of the nineteenth, piracy emerged as a major theme in Spanish rhetoric about the Moros. The large-scale raiding expeditions of the Iranun and Sama affected not only the Philippines but large parts of the rest of maritime Southeast Asia as well. The raids led British and Dutch (and later American) colonisers in Southeast Asia to concur with the Spanish impression of the Moros as pirates, and such perceptions were reinforced by the racial and stadial theories that emerged around the same time in Europe. The Iranun and Sama in particular gained a reputation for being the most dangerous pirates in Southeast Asia, and by the early nineteenth century they were widely seen as a threat to the security of human life and maritime commerce throughout the Malay Archipelago.

With Moro piracy thus being seen as a persistent security threat by the Spanish, extraordinary measures, such as the dispatch of major naval expeditions, invasion attempts and the destruction of alleged pirate fleets and land bases, were implemented with relative frequency during the protracted struggle of the Moro Wars. The arrival of steam navigation from the 1840s gave the Spanish Navy a decisive advantage over the Moros, as demonstrated by the destruction of the Sama raiders' base at Balangingi in 1848. The attack was followed by the despatch of another major naval expedition to Jolo in 1851. The assault was to some extent motivated by the need to suppress piracy, but its purpose was above all to preclude further British attempts to compromise the Spanish claim to sovereignty over the Sulu Sultanate after the conclusion of the Brooke Treaty between Britain and Sulu in 1849. Jolo was thus attacked after raiding had declined substantially in the wake of the destruction of Balangingi in 1848 and after Sultan Muhammad Fadl Pulalun had begun to distance himself from the Iranun and Sama raiders.

Further Spanish naval expeditions were dispatched to the Sulu Archipelago in the 1850s in order to suppress piracy emanating from Tawi-Tawi islands, which were close to the Dutch and British possessions in Borneo. The Spanish, however, rejected suggestions to cooperate with the naval forces of their

colonial neighbours, demonstrating again that for the Spanish the main security threat in the Sulu Archipelago after the middle of the nineteenth century was no longer Moro piracy or raiding in itself but the prospect of other colonial powers gaining a foothold in the region. The securitisation of piracy thus served to justify further naval patrols in and expeditions to the southern Philippines. The main purpose was to assert Spanish sovereignty over the Sulu Archipelago, both in relation to other colonial powers and to the apparently insubordinate Sulu Sultanate.

Securitisation of piracy in the Sulu Archipelago intensified in the 1870s, when the Spanish began to implement a fully fledged policy of maritime warfare directed at Moro shipping not only for the purpose of suppressing piracy but also in order to destroy the commerce of the Sultanate. In 1876 a large military expedition was dispatched to Jolo to occupy the capital of the Sultanate and suppress, once and for all, piracy emanating from the archipelago. The Spanish conquered the capital at Jolo and established a Spanish garrison there, and naval expeditions were sent out throughout the Sulu Archipelago to chase down alleged pirates. The conquest of Jolo was hailed as a great victory in Spain, and the histories of the Moro Wars published in subsequent years described the Moros as a race of inveterate pirates, thereby reproducing and disseminating the securitising colonial discourse about Moro piracy and justifying Spanish colonial expansion in the southern Philippines.

When the United States took over the Philippines from Spain in 1899, piracy was initially not seen as a major security problem, despite occasional attacks against local traders and fishermen. As long as the number of attacks was limited and the victims were Asian, piracy was seen as one among many forms of violent crime that were prevalent among the Moros. However, when two white settlers were murdered on Basilan at the end of 1907, the problem was immediately securitised. The colonial press called for extraordinary measures and even suggested that a massacre, such as the one on Bud Dajo on Jolo in 1906, in which close to 1,000 Moros had been killed by the US military, should be staged in order to teach the Moros a lesson.

The raid on Basilan triggered a massive effort on the part of the US Army and the Philippine Constabulary to exterminate the pirates. The governor of Moro Province, Tasker Howard Bliss, was blamed by his superiors for the deteriorating security situation, but his efforts to maintain law and order were hampered by the lack of naval support. When such support eventually, in February 1909, came forth, the authorities were at last able to put an end to the raids and restore maritime security in the Sulu Archipelago. Despite the plea for a wholesale massacre of Moros in the colonial press, and in contrast to the brutality of the military expeditions under Bliss's predecessor as governor of Moro Province, Leonard Wood, the operations of 1908−09 were relatively

restrained, and few innocent Moros or other people seem to have been killed or injured by the colonial troops.

To sum up, piracy was securitised in all three regions under study after the mid nineteenth century, but for different reasons, most of which did not have to do with the problem of piracy or other forms of maritime violence, at least not on its own. The threat of piracy tended to be invoked when there was a desire on the part of the agents of colonialism, such as colonial officials, naval officers, journalists and merchants, to extend colonial sovereignty or influence to nearby autonomous states and territories, such as Selangor, Perak, Aceh, Sulu and Vietnam. Piracy was rarely securitised, however, when it occurred in or emanated from an area over which the colonial powers exercised sovereignty (real or nominal) already, such as Singapore or French Cochinchina. The securitisation of piracy in the southern Philippines under American colonial rule in 1907−09 stands out as an exception in this context because of the strong emotions that the killing of white men triggered in the local colonial community.

The timing of most of the successful cases of securitisation of piracy after the mid nineteenth century is also significant. The first half of the 1870s saw the rise of the last major wave of antipiracy operations in Southeast Asia, with major interventions, ostensibly for the suppression of piracy, in all three regions under study: the British attack on Selangor following the reported attack on the *Kim Seng Cheong* (1871), the antipiracy cruises of the *Bourayne* in Vietnam (1872), the Dutch invasion of Aceh (1873), the onset of the Spanish attacks on Moro shipping (1873), and the British interventions in Perak (1874) and Selangor (1874). All of these events occurred more or less concurrently within a period of just three years, which coincided with the intensified scramble for colonies among the established and emerging imperial powers, including the rising Germany. In that context, allegations of piracy were useful in order to obscure self-interested motives for imperial expansion on the part of the colonial powers in Southeast Asia.

If the motives for securitising piracy thus for the most part depended on factors other than the threat of piracy in itself, it was still essential, in order for the securitising moves to succeed, that there was some empirical ground for the allegations of piracy. In other words, piracy was a *sine qua non* for the securitisation of piracy. Even in Indochina, where the label was stretched beyond recognition, the securitisation of piracy after 1883 could probably only have taken place against the background of earlier reports about piracy and trafficking in the region and the well-published antipiracy operations in Vietnam in the 1870s.

Last, there were substantial differences between the colonial powers under study with regard to which types of extraordinary measures they implemented to suppress piracy and to extend or assert their sovereignty. After the middle of

the nineteenth century the gunboat diplomacy employed by the British involved limited military expeditions that resulted in relatively few casualties on both sides. The French and Spanish antipiracy measures, by contrast, often involved much larger contingents and expeditions, and were considerably more costly in human lives, particularly on the side of the alleged pirates but sometimes also among the colonial troops. The American efforts to chase down Jikiri and his band involved relatively large numbers of military and constabulary personnel over a long period of time (eighteen months) but nevertheless – in contrast to many other American military operations in the region around the same time − avoided extensive destruction of human lives.

Maritime Violence and the Civilising Mission

Time and again during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the suppression of piracy was framed as part of the obligation of the European and American colonisers to bring civilisation and progress to the rest of the world. Regardless of whether piracy was understood as part of the nature of certain piratical 'races', a cultural habit, a religiously sanctioned practice or the result of economic and political decay, those who engaged in piracy were, by definition, regarded as uncivilised.

For colonial observers and agents the inclination to piracy was not linked to the individual perpetrator's degree of civilisation but to the stage of civilisation achieved by the race or nation to which he (or, very rarely, she) belonged. Colonial rule, it was assumed, would eventually lift up even the most barbarous tribes and nations to a reasonably civilised level, although it might be necessary to kill off a substantial number of the most depraved pirates first in order to teach the community as a whole a lesson. The survivors would then hopefully come to their senses and abandon their piratical habits and adopt more civilised and sedentary ways of life.

Against this background, the application of the European concept of piracy to the Southeast Asian context was not, from the perspective of the colonisers, misguided or inappropriate but part of Europe's and the United States' civilising mission. By suppressing indigenous forms of maritime violence in Southeast Asia, European and American colonisers believed that they were bringing improvement and progression to the region, particularly with regard to the free flow of maritime commerce and the human security of the Asian seafarers and coastal populations who were the main victims of the piratical attacks. Awareness of the fact that there were differences between European and Asian understandings of piracy, and that some of the perpetrators may have regarded piracy and maritime raiding as legitimate and even honourable pursuits, did not alter the conviction of the colonisers that piracy was an immoral and uncivilised practice. By siding with the victims, moreover, the

colonial agents could project themselves as altruistic saviours of the majority of the population, who bore the brunt of the depredations. Smug as this attitude may have been, human security did improve significantly in the course of the nineteenth century due to the antipiracy campaigns of the colonial powers – even if colonialism obviously gave rise to other forms of oppression, exploitation and insecurity.

The civilising discourse is found among all the colonial powers under study here but with some variations. For the Spanish, the piratical Moros were to be civilised through conversion to Catholicism, combined with the adoption of agriculture. The British, by contrast, did not seek to convert the Malays to Christianity, and they believed the best road to civilisation was a combination of economic and commercial development, the rule of law and the demise of the traditional Malay nobility, which was understood for the most part to be made up of oppressive pirates, brigands, parasites or tyrants. The Americans, upon taking over the Philippine colony from Spain, largely shared the British view and did not actively seek to convert the Moros to Christianity. In Indochina, meanwhile, the focus for the French was on bringing law and order to the colony by exterminating or driving out the pirates, in order for the majority of the population to return to their peaceful, mainly agricultural, pursuits. In contrast to the Spanish, however, and despite the long-standing strong presence of Catholic missionaries in Indochina, the French did not seem to harbour any great hopes of making the Chinese and Vietnamese pirates and other outlaws in the region abandon their ways by converting them to Christianity.

Piracy was often a prominent subject in treaties and negotiations between Asian sovereigns and European colonisers, and the latter frequently called attention to the necessity of meeting the international standard of civilisation when it came to the suppression of piracy. The Malay states were largely seen by paternalistic European and American colonisers as rude or barbarian, and even if they were sincere in their commitment to combat piracy, they were generally deemed to be lacking both the legal institutions and the necessary repressive capacity for dealing effectively with the problem. In European eyes, a state's ability to suppress piracy and other forms of illicit violence emanating from its territory was essential in order to be respected and seen as civilised by other nations of the world. This reasoning seems to have convinced at least some Southeast Asian sovereigns, such as the Sultans of Johor, Terengganu and Sulu, and King Norodom of Cambodia, of the need to cooperate with the colonial powers in order to suppress piracy. The Vietnamese Emperor Tu Duc and other members of the Nguyen Dynasty, meanwhile, seem in principle to have shared the European understanding of pirates as being uncivilised – although, of course, Emperor Tu Duc held that it was the French who were pirates, along with the Chinese and other bandits who ravaged his country.

Finally, the suppression of piracy frequently involved the use of indiscrim-
inate and arbitrary violence, particularly during the 1830s and 1840s, when the
British, Dutch and Spanish antipiracy campaigns sank the fleets and destroyed
the land bases of the alleged pirates, often killing several hundreds of people in
a single encounter. In Britain, but less so in the other colonial metropoles, the
massacres gave rise to sharp criticism from anti-imperialist groups. From
around the middle of the nineteenth century, such criticism brought about
more restricted policies and practices with regard to British antipiracy oper-
ations in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

The public displays of concern for the lives and rights of alleged pirates
were less prominent in the Netherlands and seem to have been altogether
absent in France and Spain, as indicated by the praise that Senez and
Malcampo received in the wake of their successful campaigns against the
alleged pirate bases in Cat Ba (1872) and Jolo (1876), respectively. Both
campaigns involved significant destruction of human lives and property, none
of which reflected negatively on the expeditions or their commanders in the
eyes of the domestic public or policymakers in the metropoles. If anything,
they were commended for exterminating the enemies of mankind in such great
numbers, with few casualties among the French and Spanish troops.

By contrast, the relatively limited use of violence by the British in Selangor
and Perak in 1871–74 gave rise to criticism and controversy in Britain.
Maxwell's warning that the unjust and wanton intervention in Selangor in
1871 would cause England's name to stink in Asian idiom may not have been
shared by most members of the general public in Britain and certainly did not
meet with much sympathy in the Straits Settlements. But it demonstrated that
there were differences of opinion with regard to the standard of civilisation
among the colonial powers, whose self-imposed task it was to bring civilisa-
tion to the rest of the world by exterminating piracy.