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Pirates, Ports, and Coasts in Asia: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

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and stability of the international order as a whole. In other words, Britain's defensive "status quo" policy was implemented by operationally offensive threats or means. Furthermore, Matzke clearly shows that the British politicians well understood that if they failed to respond to some of these lesser challenges (the Chinese opium war being a prime example), over time they risked weakening their ability to influence their major adversaries in the future, in situations where the stakes might be higher.

During the course of her analysis, Matzke takes issue with established scholarship holding that the relative inactivity of the Royal Navy during this period was indicative of its comparative weakness within Europe as a whole. On the contrary, she depicts an early Victorian navy that was well up to the task, possessing shipbuilding, logistics, and manpower support superior to that of any competitor. It was this depth of capability that represented its major coercive value, particularly to the European rivals, often allowing what she terms demonstrations of Thomas Schelling's "skillful nonuse of military force." Moreover, the British instinctively knew all this, giving them great confidence in their brinkmanship with rivals. The case of the successful coercion of France in the Egyptian/Syrian crisis is a notable example.

Matzke's work is meticulously researched, using a wide array of contemporary archival material that focuses on the collected thoughts and writings of the main players involved, material taken from their personal papers, letters, and diaries. The weakness in her work lies in the admittedly implicit assumption that this short period can

be taken as truly illustrative of the situation throughout the whole of the *Pax Britannica*. Arguably, Matzke has found a narrow historical period where thesis and facts align, but she is less convincing over the broader time frame, and more work would likely be necessary to settle this point decisively. Less important, but nonetheless still of concern, is her rather rosy picture of the reliability of the steamships of the day. As John Beeler has forcefully demonstrated, truly globally deployable, oceangoing steamers would have to wait until the late 1880s to be realized; their limitations until then, in terms of maintenance requirements and support while deployed, facts of which navies were only too well aware, do not come across well. That said, this is an important work that successfully advances the study of British naval policy into an earlier period. When taken together with the more established scholarship of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, it moves us closer to a more complete understanding of British efforts to wield naval power in support of a global free-trading system. As such, it has timeless relevance.

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Kleinen, John, and Manon Osseweijer, eds. *Pirates, Ports, and Coasts in Asia: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Singapore and Leiden: ISEAS Press and International Institute for Asian Studies, 2010. 312pp. \$74

Liss, Carolin. *Oceans of Crime: Maritime Piracy and Transnational Security in Southeast Asia and Bangladesh*. Singapore and Leiden: ISEAS Press and International Institute for Asian Studies, 2011. 446pp. \$82.35

These two books from the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Press share one single characteristic—a long delay between authorship and publication. This has no appreciable effect on Kleinen and Osseweijer's edited collection, based on a 2005 conference, but it ill serves Carolin Liss.

She evidently completed her book in 2006. Since then, however, various maritime-security initiatives in the region whose births she observed, including the various Malacca Strait patrols and the ReCAAP information exchange, have matured. It would have been interesting to have her views on the decline in major incidents that gathered pace starting in 2005—as to the degree to which they contributed to this decline, and what caused the recent modest uptick in numbers.

This is a disappointing shortcoming, because her survey up to 2006 adds much useful detail to what are now a number of well-established themes. Her contributions are particularly welcome in two areas, first on small-scale piracy. There she advances a persuasive argument that the general and substantial increase in fishing-boat numbers and the use of more sophisticated search equipment beginning in the 1950s (which resulted in widespread overfishing) and, within that overall picture, the malign effects of large and sophisticated foreign ships operating illegally contributed, possibly significantly, to the rise of piracy everywhere from the Philippines to Bangladesh. Also welcome is her critical examination of the political, practical, and moral effects of substituting private security companies for government-provided security. Among several observations none is more germane than that private security would be unnecessary

if governments had more interest in protecting maritime trade and made a better job of it when they try. This point has relevance to the waters off Somalia as well. If Liss misses anything, it is that governments prior to the modern naval era expected individual ships to look after themselves and that the return of piracy at the end of the twentieth century is producing an edging back toward a similar expectation.

Kleinen and Osseweijer's book is the fourth in a series from ISEAS that has focused primarily on modern piracy in Southeast Asia. In contrast to its predecessors, half the book is devoted to historical cases. It contains a number of noteworthy contributions to the literature on piracy studies, ranging from an excellent chapter by one of the editors, John Kleinen (on the inapplicability of Eric Hobsbawm's radical and romantic thesis that bandits could be Robin Hoods), to the historical experience of piracy in Asia. Robert Antony's detailed study of the frontier town of Giang Binh adds to our knowledge of the late-eighteenth-century southern Chinese "water world," which was first explored by Dian Murray.

The majority of the essays, however, concentrate on waters between the southern Philippines and Borneo, centered on the Sulu Archipelago. James Warren adds to his indispensable work on the Sulu Zone with a chapter on the workings of the Sulu slave market between 1800 and 1850. Esther Velthoen examines Dutch attempts to tame coastal raiding up until 1905, efforts that have some remarkable similarities to Roman attempts to curb Cilician piracy. Stefan Amirell describes the region between 1959 and 1963, when Britain was left as the sole colonial

power, struggling to contain an upsurge of piracy following the withdrawal of the Americans from the Philippines and the Dutch from Indonesia. Two complementary studies of the contemporary situation, one by Carolin Liss, from the perspective of Sabah,

and the second by Ikuya Tokoro, from the perspective of Sulu, complete this examination of a region where piracy was, and to an extent remains, a way of life for marginalized communities.

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