Maritime piracy, past and present: politics, trade, popular culture and a face-to-face encounter
Kleinen, J.G.G.M.; Osseweier, M.

Published in:
IIAS Newsletter

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Theme introduction

Piracy and robbery in the Asian seas

M aritime piracy has become a focal point of media attention. Together with governments and military experts, the media tends to link maritime piracy with international terrorism as an ongoing threat in the post-Gold War era. In particular the Strait of Malacca, the strategic sea-lane linking the oil fields of the Middle East and the production economies of East Asia and beyond, is portrayed as a future battlefield. The media, however, has a tendency to overstate the issue on the basis of insufficient evidence - data supplied by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) and its UN counterpart, the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The absence of thorough research has led to the romanticization and misunderstanding of piracy to such an extent that, in many cases, fiction has overtaken reality. This is not to underestimate the difficulty of researching pirates. As Dian H. Murray observed: 'like other grey-area phenomena, detailed information on pirates and their lives is difficult to come by'. For 'what pirate would want to keep written accounts of activities which, if the records should fall into government hands, would automatically convict them?' (2002: 257)

This does not imply that social science research on robbers and pirates is impossible; maritime piracy, unlike terrorism, can be regarded as one of many grey-area phenomena. Like smuggling, gambling, prostitution, the trafficking of goods and people and petty crime on land, piracy exists in more or less organized forms in contexts of diminishing human security (Chalk 1997). Maritime Southeast Asia's coastal zones are increasingly characterized by environmental degradation, illegal fishing, high unemployment, and foreign and local raiding groups. In her article Esther Velthoen addresses the political implications of raiding for booty and slaves in Eastern Indonesia, and Dutch colonial attempts to suppress it. Ota Atoushi focuses on the role of piracy in transforming inter-regional trade patterns in the late eighteenth century, where local raiding groups competed and cooperated with the Dutch East India Company, British country traders, and Chinese merchants. Three articles address contemporary maritime piracy. Eric Frécon defends the necessity of studying everyday piracy out of the limelight of sensation and romanticism, and takes us on a journey to Indonesia and Singapore in 2004. Papers from these workshops will be published in edited volumes with the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) at the University of Amsterdam, and affiliated to the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE). His current research focuses on maritime and political terrorism in Southeast Asia. Two workshops have been held to date: 'Inter- national Piracy and Robbery at Sea', and 'Maritime Security, Maritime Terrorism and Piracy in Asia', co-organized by IIAS and the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) at the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE). The Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) at the University of Amsterdam and affiliated to the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) are hosts of the programme 'Piracy and Robbery in the Asian Seas', an initiative to facilitate research, workshops and publications on piracy in Asia. Two workshops have been held so far: 'International Piracy and Robbery at Sea' at the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) conference in Amsterdam in 2005, and 'Maritime Security, Maritime Terrorism and Piracy in Asia', co-organized by IIAS and the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) in Singapore in 2006. Papers from these workshops will be published in edited volumes with the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) and the IIAS-SEAS conference on 'Maritime Issues and Piracy in Asia'. The 9th Imares conference in Amsterdam, 7-9 July 2005, will feature a panel on maritime risks including piracy, and a call for a broader research agenda on human insecurity in coastal areas.

The guest editors hope the issue of maritime piracy will remain on the international research agenda after the imminent link with terrorism and cataclysm has faded away.

References