

Imperialism in Southeast Asia

'A fleeting, passing phase'

Nicholas Tarling



London and New York

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Imperialism in Southeast Asia

Imperialism in Southeast Asia examines its subject in terms of several countries that could at a particular time be called imperialist: Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands and the US. Examining the imperialist phenomenon from this wide-ranging perspective reveals imperialism as driven by rivalry; it also facilitates comparison: imperialisms have elements in common, yet differ according to the state and territory concerned.

This is one of the few studies of imperialism to concentrate on Southeast Asia. Nicholas Tarling's definition of imperialism focuses on the establishment of political control from 1870 to 1914. Moving forward in time, the author analyses attempts to re-establish control after the overthrow of imperial regimes in the Second World War. Most recently, Southeast Asia has become a region of independent states, and Tarling discusses imperial ventures as forms of state-building. At the same time, his discussion reflects another contemporary concern – globalisation and the relationship of the state to that process.

Nicholas Tarling is an eminent writer in Asian History. His latest book will be of great interest to all those studying or involved in Asian Studies, History and Politics.

Nicholas Tarling was Professor of History at the University of Auckland, 1968–96, and is currently a fellow of its New Zealand Asia Institute, as well as Honorary Professor at Hull University. He has published widely and his most recent publications include *Nations and States in Southeast Asia and Britain*, and *Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Cold War*. He edited *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*.

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For Chris Tremewan

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Preface

This book is concerned not with any one country's 'imperialism' in Southeast Asia, but with that of all the countries that might be called 'imperialist': Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and the US. That makes it easier to explain the phenomenon, in so far as it was a question of rivalry. It also facilitates comparison. 'Imperialisms' had elements in common, but also differed, as did the territories in which they operated.

The book is novel in another sense. General studies of imperialism have rarely included Southeast Asia. The present survey may therefore add to the wider theoretical and historiographical debate.

The author chooses a definition of 'imperialism' that stresses the establishment of political control and a periodisation that concentrates on the years 1870–1914. Doing so does not exclude other possibilities, but suggests that they, too, need to be the subject of definition and analysis.

The book considers not only the establishment of control in the chosen period but also the attempts to re-establish control after the overthrow of the imperial regimes in the Second World War. The comparison helps in explaining the phenomenon, and in assessing the relative significance of economic and political factors, which has been the concern of so much of the debate.

Southeast Asia became a region of independent states. To some extent, the author argues, the imperial ventures were attempts at state-building, and he considers the legacy of 'imperialism' in that light.

His approach also reflects another contemporary concern, with 'globalisation' and with the relationship of the state to that process. The period on which he has focused may also be seen as a phase of 'globalisation'. The way states handled it – both promoting it and restraining it – offers comparisons, if not lessons. Hobson wrote of 'conspiracy'. We contemplate 'corruption'.

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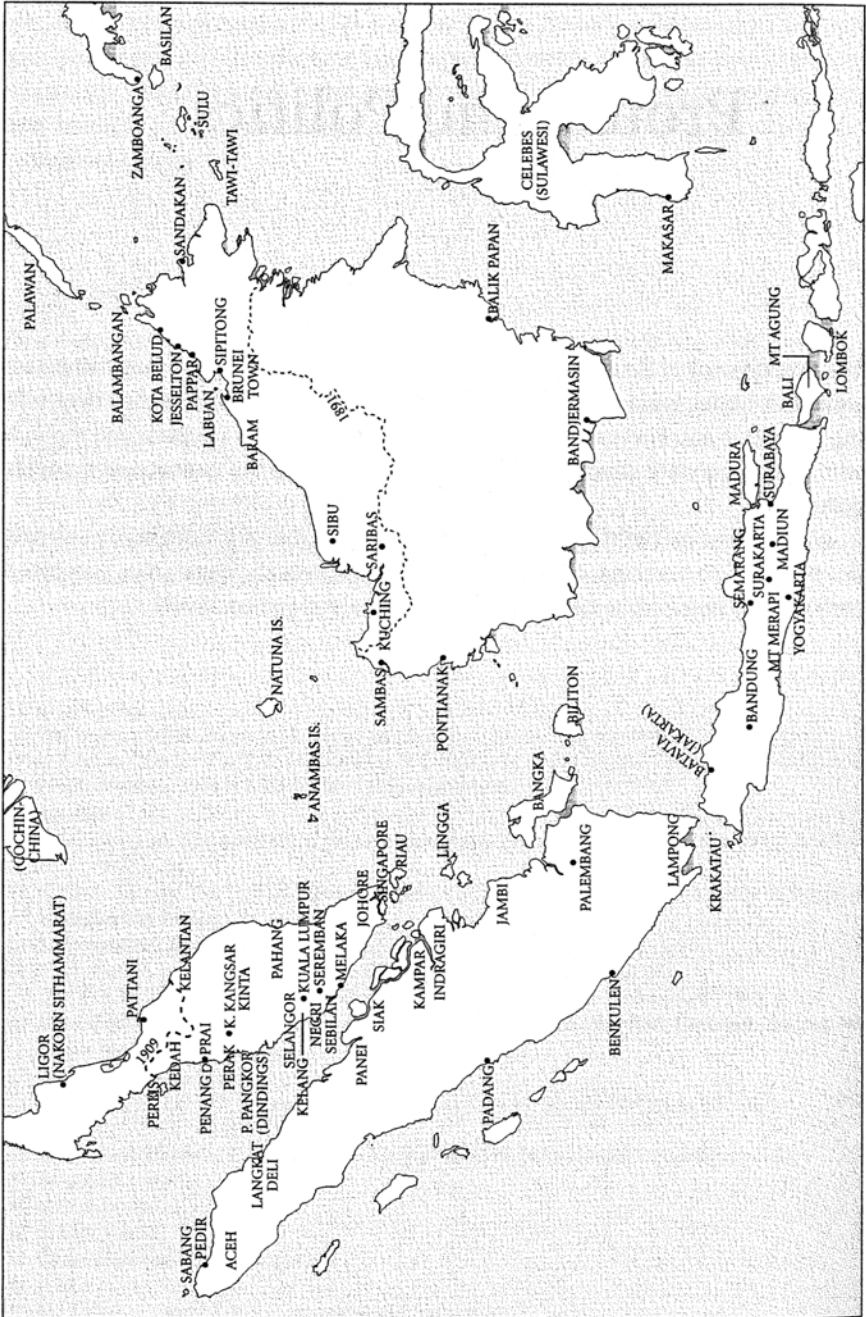
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Abbreviations

- ANU* Australian National University
CSSH *Comparative Studies in Society and History*
ISEAS Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
JAS *Journal of Asian Studies*
JMBRAS *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Malay(si)an Branch*
JSEAH *Journal of Southeast Asian History*
JSEAS *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*
MAS *Modern Asian Studies*
SEAP Southeast Asia Program
TLS *Times Literary Supplement*



Mainland Southeast Asia, nineteenth and twentieth centuries C.E.



Malaysia and Indonesia, nineteenth and twentieth centuries C.E.

Part I

Definitions and chronologies

[O]ne gains the impression that there are more people who have written on imperialism than people who have acted on it or fought for it.

W. Baumgart, p. 8

1 Definitions

To start with definitions may seem trite, but it is necessary. The necessity may be less pressing with one term in the title of this book than with the other. ‘Southeast Asia’ has come to be accepted at least as a satisfactory geographical term for a region that encompasses the territory of the contemporary mainland states, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and the archipelago states of Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia and East Timor. Few would agree, however, that it covered the Andaman and Nicobar islands, though geography would suggest it, while most would accept that it covered the Indonesian territory of West Irian, though geography would be more equivocal.

In other discourses, too, Southeast Asia has been, and remains, a contested term. Well before ‘deconstruction’ became fashionable, philosophers warned about ‘reification’. ‘Words like “Southeast Asia” and “unicorn” enable us to discuss topics about which we would not otherwise be able to hold a conversation’, J. R. E. Waddell wrote in 1972, ‘but we should be wary of attributing any more solidity to these concepts than the facts will allow.’¹ In an article published in 1984, Donald K. Emmerson quoted this alongside Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*: ‘What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.’ ‘Some names’, wrote Emmerson, ‘like “rose”, acknowledge what exists. Others, like “unicorn”, create what otherwise would not exist. In between lie names that simultaneously describe and invent reality. “Southeast Asia” is one of these.’²

Seeing the region as a region has always been more the habit among outsiders than among those who dwell there. For the Chinese it was *nanyang*, for the Japanese *nanyo*, the southern seas. If they saw it as a region, the Europeans struggled to find a word for it. ‘Further India’ was one attempt, but they were conscious of its diversity. Establishing territorial control in parts of it made them still less disposed to see the region as a whole, and naming it not even desirable. The sense of Southeast Asia as a region – whatever name might be given to it – was more frequent among Germans and Austrians, who did not possess colonies in the region, than among other Europeans who did.

In the 1930s the usage became somewhat more common, but it was the Second World War that gave it currency, and literally put it on the map.

Conflicting among themselves, the outside powers named the region where they conflicted. “Southeast Asia” turned out to be an aggregate of nations – individually distinct and collectively a battleground in, first, the Pacific War, then the Cold War, including two Indochina wars, and finally, in Cambodia, a Sino-Soviet “proxy war”.² Creating ‘a need to talk about the region’, Emmerson suggests, international conflicts ironically ‘underwrote the popularity of the name in the very act of undermining its empirical prospects’.³ It may also, however, be argued that the outsiders exaggerated the sense of region, and, in so doing, even led themselves and their policies astray. The countries had not been made less diverse by their colonial experience.

Indeed Emmerson himself had a political objective. He pointed to the neutrality of the term. ‘Unlike the “Near” and “Far East”, the name does not betray the location of an outside namer. Because it is not a reminder of dependence, the term is easier for the region’s inhabitants to use’: it did not have the imperialist overtones of ‘Orientalism’.⁴ He wanted them to use it, and so make it more of a reality. In general, however, scholars from Southeast Asia have not taken up the challenge. Their focus has been ‘national’ rather than regional.

Scholars outside the region, however, have begun to give its history as a region more meaning. At first it was a matter, it seemed, of making virtue out of necessity. The present author’s *Southeast Asia Past and Present*, published in 1966, suggested that the region had ‘a unity in its very diversity’.⁵ Later scholarship has made the regional approach more positive. In his masterly *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* Anthony Reid suggested ‘that treating Southeast Asia as a whole makes it possible to describe a number of areas of life which would otherwise remain in the shadows’. For each cultural area sources for his period, the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are fragmentary; but studying them together offers ‘a coherent picture . . . of the life-styles of the region as a whole’.⁶ The process put ‘Southeast Asians’ on the stage, though none of the actors would have recognised themselves as such.

Other historians outside Southeast Asia have, however, begun to wonder whether they are not over-emphasising the commonalities in the experience of its peoples, and at the same time cutting that experience off from the experience of peoples in other regions of the world. Vic Lieberman had been particularly concerned that the history of mainland Southeast Asia has been skewed as a result, and deprived of the benefits of a comparative approach. There were advantages, he argued, in putting the history of mainland Southeast Asian states in the context of other states in the ‘early modern’ period. Nor should those states be confined to Asia: the comparisons and contrasts should be on a ‘Eurasian’ basis.⁷

Lieberman did not seek to dislodge the regional thrust in the historiography of Southeast Asia. Indeed he argued that it could go further. He suggested, for example, ‘that the closest archipelagic analogies to Burmese, Thai and Vietnamese integration can be found in the early history of the Spanish and Dutch colonial systems’. Comparing them, he added, might oblige us ‘to

lay aside our recent distaste for colonial, as opposed to indigenous, history'.⁸ At the same time, he wished to bring Southeast Asia into the mainstream of historiography. Regionalism must not ghettoise its history, nor obscure the variety of experiences it contained.

It is this concept of Southeast Asia that the present book adopts. Its regional distinctiveness should not obscure its diversity. Nor should it prevent a comparative approach: the region may be compared with other regions, and any part of it with any other part of the globe. Indeed it would be difficult to adopt a different approach in a study of imperialism in Southeast Asia. In itself it offered commonalities and diversities of experience to a region already marked by both. What it offered other regions, or other parts of the world, is also relevant, for imperialism was both differentiated and global in its compass.

If, however, it is necessary to consider one term in the title of this book, it is even more necessary to consider the other. 'Southeast Asia' is a contested term, but retains a meaningful utility. Some may doubt that in respect of 'imperialism', for the definitions of it that have or may be offered are so various. When considering its role in Southeast Asia, it may be necessary to give preference to one definition, while holding alternatives in mind. The study of a particular region may help to bring about a consensus on the most useful general definition, even if it is unlikely to displace others.

One difficulty is that 'imperialism', though used by historians, is not used by them alone. 'Imperialism is no word for scholars', Sir Keith Hancock wrote. 'The emotional echoes which it arouses are too violent and too contradictory.' The Marxist view he thought useful, in that it focused on governments and on forces which move governments. It offered 'a useful sign-post for the working historian', but it was not 'precise' as to time-phase. 'Let others labour to split the *ism*. It is no task for the historian.'⁹ Hancock's criticism is of 'imperialism' both as an instrument or framework of historical study and as a subject of study. Clearly, however, it can be the latter. It may also, it seems, have uses in respect of the former meaning. The present author's aim is to pin it down as a subject and draw out its uses as a means of study. If that is useful to the historian, it may also be useful to others who use the term or, indeed, reject it.

Essentially the terms 'Southeast Asia' and 'imperialism' both emerged from public affairs rather than scholarly investigation. They did not, of course, emerge simultaneously. 'Southeast Asia' came into common use only when the European 'empires' there were being broken up. 'Imperialism' was a much older coinage. It had indeed passed through several phases in which its meaning had shifted, and it continued to do so.

Initially, it seems, the word did not apply to the non-European world in the way it characteristically came to apply. Instead it was used to describe the ambitions of the Emperor Napoleon III, which, though they came to involve Indo-China and Mexico, focused more on Europe, where Napoleon I had built his empire. That empire was designed to recall the greatest empire

Europe had known, the one that gave it its name, the empire of the Romans, and it dislodged the long-standing claimant, the Holy Roman Empire. Though both Rome and its medieval successors had built an empire on the far shores of the Mediterranean, they did not range beyond the Mediterranean and 'Asia Minor'. Only after Napoleon III's realm had been destroyed by what became the German empire was the term 'imperialism' invoked to describe the extension of territorial control in Asia and Africa in which the European states engaged themselves. 'It is only in quite late times within my own memory', Edward Freeman wrote in 1885, 'that the word "empire" has come into common use as a set term for something beyond the kingdom.'¹⁰ Proudly endorsed by some, 'imperialism' was increasingly defined by its critics.

'The notion of a number of competing empires is essentially modern', wrote J. A. Hobson in his famous *Imperialism: A Study*.¹¹ The work first appeared at the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer war, and it had a political purpose, 'to alert the British public to the new plutocratic phenomenon that was hijacking British foreign policy'.¹² Indeed Hobson tended to adopt a conspiratorial view. 'Aggressive Imperialism, which costs the taxpayer so dear, which is of so little value to the manufacturer and trader, which is fraught with such grave incalculable peril to the citizen, is a source of great gain to the investor who cannot find at home the profitable use he seeks for his capital, and insists that his Government should help him to profitable and secure investments abroad.' Big moneylenders and speculators were 'the prime determinants of imperial policy. They have the largest definite stake in the business of Imperialism, and the amplest means of forcing their will upon the policy of nations.' Finance was not the 'motor-power' of imperialism, but it was 'the governor of the imperial engine. . . Finance manipulates the patriotic forces which politicians, soldiers, philanthropists, and traders generate.'¹³

In some sense, however, Hobson belonged to the Radical tradition associated with Richard Cobden earlier in the century. Cobden's was a benign capitalism, and his conspirators were conquerors and military men who dazzled a mistaken public. 'No conqueror ever returned to our shores after enlarging our territorial sovereignty without a triumph.'¹⁴ Hobson's were financiers and speculators, but he was not attacking capitalism as such. It should be reformed, not overthrown. What was wrong was 'under-consumption'. 'If the consuming public in this country raised its standard of consumption to keep pace with every rise of productive powers, there could be no excess of goods or capital clamorous to use Imperialism in order to find markets.' 'The economic root of Imperialism is the desire of strong organized industrial and financial interests to secure and develop at the public expense and by the public purse private markets for their surplus goods and their surplus capital.'¹⁵ A better distribution of income at home would cut imperialism off at the roots.

'Hobson's conclusions have provided the basis for three-quarters of a century of neo-Marxist rhetoric.'¹⁶ Marx himself did not use the word 'imperi-

alism', 'nor is there anything in his work that corresponds at all exactly to the concepts of imperialism advanced by later Marxist writers'.¹⁷ Aware that a world market was being created, he did, however, 'discuss the need of capitalism for expansion'.¹⁸ Capital was sent abroad when it could not find employment at home. A high rate of earning was not necessarily the result of exploitation: it might, he suggested, be the result of transitory monopoly profits.¹⁹

Lenin acknowledged Hobson. Indeed he adopted his approach. 'Of course, finance capital finds most "convenient", and derives the greatest profit from, a *form* of subjection which involves the loss of the political independence of the subjected countries.' 'The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies.'²⁰ But Lenin rejected Hobson's under-consumptionist argument, which implied that imperialism could be abolished by reforming capitalism. His pamphlet, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), also initiated the process, as Bill Warren puts it, 'through which the view that capitalism could be an instrument of social advance in pre-capitalist societies was erased from Marxism'.²¹ Imperialism was capitalism in the monopoly stage. Neither the backward countries nor the workers at home would benefit, though the latter might be bribed. The capitalists would appropriate the benefits. The only solution to the end of imperialism was the end of capitalism. 'The capitalist delays the day of doom by reallocating his resources on a world scale.'²²

It was a view that resembled Karl Kautsky's: colonialism was a 'necessity' for the capitalist class, a 'powerful tool' for postponing the collapse of its rule.²³ The two had, however, come to differ. Before the war Kautsky came up with the concept of 'ultra-imperialism': major powers would agree to exploit the world jointly, rather than fight over it. When war among 'the imperialist powers' broke out in 1914, he thought that its result might be 'a federation of the strongest, who renounce their arms race... it is not impossible that capitalism may still live through another phase...: a phase of ultra-imperialism.'²⁴ For Lenin, too, the 1914 war was 'imperialist (that is, an annexationist, predatory, war of plunder) on both sides'.²⁵ Kautsky's theory, however, was a 'most reactionary method of consoling the masses with hopes of permanent peace being possible under capitalism... and directing it towards illusory prospects of an imaginary "ultra-imperialism" of the future'.²⁶

In Lenin's view the war offered an opportunity to bring to an end not only imperialism but capitalism itself. His April 1916 theses, 'The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination', envisaged an alliance between workers in the metropolitan countries and bourgeois-democratic nationalists in colonial and semi-colonial countries, such as China, Persia and Turkey. Socialists must demand the immediate liberation of colonies; 'they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary

elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising – or revolutionary war, in the event of one – *against* the imperialist powers that oppress them'.²⁷ His logic was political rather than theoretical. The Bolshevik seizure of power was followed by an attempt to carry it out that showed its weakness in both respects. The ensuing struggles gave 'imperialism' ever greater currency. Its meaning, however, became less clear, though it was certainly a pejorative word.

Sukarno, the Indonesian nationalist, described 'imperialism' in 1930 as 'a concept, an idea, a lust, a programme, a system, a policy of subjugating or controlling the country of another people or the economy of another nation'.²⁸ The success of the nationalists after the Second World War again helped to shift the way the word 'imperialism' was used. Their 'peoples' and 'nations' became 'independent'. Yet it seemed that direct political control was succeeded by indirect control, with an emphasis on the economic. The word was also taken up in the discourse of the super-powers, trading accusations of 'neo-imperialism' or 'neo-colonialism' and 'Soviet imperialism'.

The political and ideological dimensions the word 'imperialism' acquired strengthened the kind of doubts Hancock expressed. Could historians use it? could they even study it? The formulation offered by the British historian A. P. Thornton in 1978 was even looser than Sukarno's.

An imperial policy is one that enables a metropolis to create and maintain an external system of effective control. The control may be exerted by political, economic, strategic, cultural, religious, or ideological means, or by a combination of some or all of these.

In our time the attitude towards this control is hostile.

Imperialism is a critical term for activity let loose. It deals in dominance. In every age on record the dominant have been at work... At the turn of the twentieth century they were willing to accept the name of imperialist, as fairly describing those who actively promoted the national interest beyond home bounds.²⁹

Yet something useful to the historian may be drawn even from the rhetoric surrounding the term. A word frequently used is the word 'control'. That may be the most significant to bear in mind in a search for a useful definition. 'Dealing in dominance' and 'activity let loose' are phrases that convey both too much and also too little. But it is certainly necessary to consider the kinds of 'control' that may be exercised.

'Much of the debate over imperialism rests on a confusion of nomenclature', Eric Stokes argued in 1975. 'Most scholars interpret the term to mean the formal political acts of metropolitan governments leading to the appropriation of colonies or spheres of influence. Consequently they narrow the debate to an inquiry into the motivation of statesmen and officials. The existence or non-existence of economic imperialism is to be demonstrated

accordingly.' Yet, he went on, 'as a sociological phenomenon imperialism has to be read much more widely to embrace not merely political action but the whole range of activities by which an intrusive advanced society impinges upon another less advanced.' Stokes is, however, making choices, creating a category of 'economic imperialism', widening his 'sociological' reading. It is surely possible to adopt a narrower definition, and yet see statesmen and officials operating, as he indeed puts it, 'in situations prepared by the economic agencies of expansion', and by others, too.³⁰

Baumgart prefers 'a definition restricted to political and territorial domination'.³¹ The present author suggests that the emphasis should be placed, at least initially, on 'political' control, and tentatively favours a definition along the lines D. K. Fieldhouse offered: 'the deliberate act or advocacy of extending or maintaining a state's direct or indirect political control over any other inhabited territory'.³² At least two risks remain. The first is that, whatever conclusions the attempt to use it in respect of Southeast Asia may suggest, they may not apply to other regions. The second is that, while the author seeks to offer sufficient data and discussion to test the validity of the definition so far as Southeast Asia is concerned, and not simply to dismiss or ignore other definitions, '[t]he imperial historian . . . is very much at the mercy of his own particular concept of empire', as Robinson and Gallagher put it.³³ The choice of definition is also a choice of explanation.

The same problem applies to periodisation. '[P]eriods are modes of dealing with specific questions and must change with the questions', Tony Reid has commented.³⁴ To attempt to apply the term over too long a period may diminish any value it has to the historian, and indeed any value the historian's critique has in respect of the use of the term by others. To apply it to a particular phase may, by contrast, allow the detailed narration and analysis which form the historian's characteristic approach to the testing of theories or assumptions about the past. Neo-Marxists stretched the word so far that it covered several centuries of North–South relations. That, Maarten Kuitenbrouwer complained, contributed few new facts or useful interpretations, 'thus lending support to the argument that, in historical research, one should avoid definitions that are too wide'.³⁵ It explains too much and too little. Ask rather: why was imperial control imposed when it was and abandoned when it was?

Defining imperialism as 'the effort to establish formal or informal political control over another society', Kuitenbrouwer thinks that 'modern imperialism as a historical category should be reserved above all for the period between 1870 and 1914'.³⁶ The view is echoed by other modern Dutch scholars, freshly entering the debate on a subject which the Dutch had avoided, and contributing fresh insights. '[M]odern imperialism serves as a label for the historical process of the apportioning of the non-western world by the western powers between 1870 and 1914, and the motives and preconditions associated with that process', Elsbeth Locher-Scholten suggests. It was not a completely new process, she notes, and refers to a definition and periodisation

offered by J. Th. Lindblad, ‘the process of acceleration of colonial expansion between 1870 and 1914, in which the division of nearly the whole non-western world resulted in the political dominion of western states over these non-western regions’.³⁷ It is this periodisation that the present work adopts.

Those historians and others who ascribe imperialism to capitalism have been countered by others who see its origins in political struggles, in particular in the struggle among the states in which the western world was divided. ‘[O]ne of the peculiarities, almost *the* leading peculiarity of the Western world down to the present has been its subdivision into a series of competing states’, McNeill has suggested. ‘The way in which in modern times, that is down to the twentieth century, Europeans had a superiority to other civilizations in military matters is, I think[,] a direct function of intense competition and struggle within the larger community.’³⁸

Benjamin Cohen found the ‘real taproot’ of imperialism (it is Hobson’s phrase) in ‘the anarchic organization of the international system of states’. Nations, he argues, yield to ‘the temptations of domination because they are driven to maximize their individual power position’, and they are driven to that ‘because they are overwhelmingly preoccupied with the problem of national security. *The logic of dominion derives directly from the existence of competing national sovereignties.* Imperialism derives directly from this crucial defect in the external organization of states.’³⁹

Cohen adopts a broad and chronologically extended definition of imperialism, and, though his notion is a potent one, it is, like the neo-Marxist one, almost too encompassing to be used. Certainly it does not of its own explain, and perhaps was not meant to explain, what happened in particular countries or at particular times. Part of the explanation needed may, however, be found in the measure of insecurity to which states find themselves subject. The application of new ideas for organising states, or the acquisition of new wealth, or the development of new technologies, may change the distribution of power, and promote a new degree of insecurity, in which some states become more ambitious and others feel more threatened. Their endemic insecurity is intensified. Instead of uneasily co-existing, they become rivals, if not enemies.

The explanation may be supported by another modification. To describe inter-state relations as ‘anarchy’ is to exaggerate and to over-simplify. States have sought to regulate their relationship, even without accepting one-power dominance or ‘world government’. They have developed an international diplomacy that involves accepted practices and understandings, made treaties and settlements, and built up a corpus of international law. They have indeed sought to regulate their rivalry. Within states there have been those who called for a pacific approach as well as those who have called for an aggressive one.

This, the author conceives, is a useful context in which to incorporate in the discussion the contemporary concepts of state-building. The insecurity of

states encouraged them to strengthen themselves, though their success might only add to the insecurity of others. A means of so doing was to acquire the resources of other parts of the world, mobilising them for the contest in Europe. Again that may be seen as part of a long-continued process, in which, however, there are phases of more intense activity. One, it will be suggested, is the phase on which this book focuses, the period 1870–1914, a phase in which the relative primacy of the British was under challenge from other states, anxious to emulate it, to industrialise and to modernise. In this context, imperialism was a function of state-building.

Incorporating this concept has another advantage, since it invites us also to incorporate the concept of state-formation. State-building, as Jim Schiller has suggested, is a directed activity, designed to increase the power of the state by securing for it more resources, material or spiritual, or reducing the power of its opponents. State-formation he sees as the consequence of such activities, but also of the activities and responses of others, ‘capricious outcomes’, rather than intended results, some welcomed by the state, some not.⁴⁰ State-building conduced to economic and social change, to a redistribution of wealth and power within a society, to the fostering and frustration of personal ambitions, to the growth of public opinion, of a desire for participation, of non- or semi-governmental organisations, of the press and the media, though it was not the only source of such change. In turn, foreign policy was, in Cohen’s words, ‘a consensus of purposes and actions that are essentially the end products of a system of domestic power relationships’.⁴¹ D. Bruce Marshall’s remark on the colonial myth in France may apply more widely: it was ‘not the product of any party or group. It was part of a whole political system that was undergoing changes in its domestic organization and foreign policy in response to pressures both from within and without.’⁴²

The state indeed was, as classical Marxists like Bukharin emphasised, never ‘autonomous’.⁴³ Moreover, foreign policy is surely not only a domestic consensus but also a response to the actions of foreign powers. Something similar might be said of ‘imperialism’, though the nature of the ‘consensus’ would require even closer examination.

This book indeed seeks to consider the origins of or the reasons for wishing to exert political control as well as the nature of that control and its operation once established. Fieldhouse helpfully distinguishes ‘advocacy’ and ‘act’, and Sukarno threw it all in. When it was most frequently used, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rhetoric of ‘imperialism’ seemed to have a domestic as much as an external focus, if not more. Those who were positive about imperialism were concerned to reform their own societies in face of the impact of industrialisation, to make their own states more ‘efficient’ in the face of the emergence of industrialising rivals, their own peoples physically and morally stronger. In a measure the dispute about ‘imperialism’ was a domestic brawl. How far did such rhetoric affect what the state actually did in the outer world? how far was it even intended to do so?

In this connexion, too, it is apparent that 'imperialism' was seldom, if ever, a truly popular cause. The 'acts' were often those of adventurous individuals or ill-controlled officers, often winning the support of their governments only by presenting *faits accomplis*. Parliamentary or popular support might be secured only in time of crisis, when a hero had met an untimely end or 'national honour' could be invoked. 'Popular imperialism, or jingoism, was one thing; popular support for the whole panoply of "new imperialist" policies was quite another.' Joseph Chamberlain could secure backing for the South African policies that were to disturb Hobson, but it was 'little more than skin-deep'.⁴⁴ 'Parliaments have to be presented with *faits accomplis*, their character being alien to the conduct of foreign intrigue', Jules Ferry had declared in 1891. 'Unless parliamentary Chambers are led with determination, they are incapable of anything but rashness or irresolution.'⁴⁵

State-building and formation are helpful concepts in yet another way. Both economic and political factors are involved in an explanation of imperialism, act and advocacy. What is their relationship? '[T]he relations between politicians and businessmen do present a genuine and complicated problem', as H. L. Wesseling wrote in an article on French imperialism. He found an explanation 'not so much in terms of irresistible pressure from the latter, or of a confusion of private and political interests, but rather of the common social identity evident among the leading figures'.⁴⁶ That offers some explanation, but only a partial one. The same is true of Peter Cain's somewhat related comment on the concept of the 'official mind': 'the decision-makers were largely recruited from the public school-educated sons of the professional classes of southern England, and shared a number of economic assumptions which could influence policy'.⁴⁷ Another Dutch historian is helpful.

Lindblad has suggested that the economic and the political are connected both at the macro- and at the micro-levels, and again a suggestion about the Dutch in the Indies seems relevant about others elsewhere. The outer provinces were drawn into the mainstream of world trade and into the colonial framework. He draws the two trends together at the micro-level. The expansion in tobacco, oil, copra and rubber presupposed the extension of Dutch rule. 'This is not to say that Dutch rule was extended or consolidated with the overall expansion in mind. That materialized in the context of individual pioneers and their interaction with local administrators.'

There was an incessant interplay between the interests of private capital and political or administrative measures at the local level. At times the attention of prospective pioneers stimulated the colonial authorities to take action and increase actual Dutch control over the territory in question. At other times the administrators operated as an agent of private capital with the ulterior objective of strengthening the fiscal component of colonial public finance.⁴⁸

This concept makes it possible to distinguish not only act from advocacy, but act from act. Acquiring control could be a response to the growing rivalry among the powers, acted on and itself promoting state-building, and supported, at least to some extent, by its 'capricious' outcomes. Capitalists might be involved, but need not be principal, or even necessary, protagonists. Once a territory had been brought under control, however, their involvement, if not automatic, had to be encouraged. The colonial governments needed revenue. 'Statesmen can be interpreted as taking a broader view of economic interests that may not correspond with the immediate short-term interests of capitalist profit-making. Equally, economic interests can limit what imperialist politicians may attempt, in that annexations could not be maintained without their support.'⁴⁹

The measures colonial administrators adopted tend to fall into a pattern. It was, no doubt, a further product of the 'common social identity' to which Wesseling refers. The perceived needs of capitalists were widely understood. They were now extended to the colonies. 'Why these growing demands of the Indies government for exploitation rights, tariffs and security?' Locher-Scholten asks.

These demands should be seen as an extension of nineteenth-century state formation in the west, which involved the extension of state authority over the lives of the population and the growing claims of the society upon the state. State formation did not stop at the borders of western countries but was exported to their colonies and adjacent territories as well. Colonial state formation was an extension of western state formation.⁵⁰

There were, of course, other factors at work besides the political and the economic, other people involved besides the administrator and the capitalist. The earliest phase of European expansion encompassed a search for souls as well as gold. The motives of state and church did not, however, coincide, either at home or abroad: they, like those of state and merchant, intersected. Missionaries might be helped by state or merchant, but also hindered. State and merchant might find them useful, but also critical. 'On what authority have you waged a detestable war against these people who dwelt so quietly and peacefully in their own land?' the Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos had, according to Las Casas, preached on Hispaniola in 1511. '... And what care do you take that they should be instructed in religion? ... Are these not men? ... Are you not bound to love them as you love yourselves?'⁵¹ In the imperial phase, the interrelationships were more complex. A time of great social change in Europe, the nineteenth century was also a time of religious fermentation. That affected the rest of the world, and the missionary impulse was no longer so dependent on a few European powers. Imperial rulers might find missionaries an embarrassment. But their converts could be useful.

Economic, social and political change in Europe, coupled with the development of communications, contributed to one of the most extraordinary developments of the nineteenth century, the massive movement of peoples, within Asia, but above all between Europe and other parts of the world. That proceeded independent of the creation of colonies or states, coinciding sometimes, not others: indeed state-builders in the old world might see it as testimony of failure, just as it seemed testimony of triumph in the new. Between 1871 and 1901 the grand total of German emigration, for example, was 2.75 m. Only 21,000 Germans lived in the German colonies in 1911.⁵² Two-thirds of British emigrants 1843–1910 went to destinations outside the British empire, most to the US.⁵³ Some colonies, like Australia and New Zealand, were indeed colonies of settlement. In others colonists were few. They might, however, be more influential than their numbers suggested, and their interests might be distinct, not only from those of the indigenous inhabitants but from those of the metropolis.

These remarks have risked generalising from one colony to another, suggesting at least that conclusions drawn from one may be relevant to another. The imperialisms of the western countries indeed had a great deal in common. The differences among them may often be described in terms of a relative weighting of the factors and features involved. A small power will not behave like a great power. An industrial power will differ from a non- or would-be industrial power. The power that had enjoyed primacy may compromise. With some the missionary factor may be more significant than with others. In some territories settlers may be more influential than others, whatever their numbers.

The differences are also explained by the local and regional circumstances. Indeed neither definition nor explanation can be merely one-sided. After the Second World War R. E. Robinson and John Gallagher offered a reinterpretation that seemed almost a paradox in their famous article on the ‘imperialism of free trade’. That interpretation came to them not so much as a result of the contemporary process of decolonisation as of their perception of the position of Britain vis-à-vis the US at the time at which they were writing: they were apprehensive of ‘the colonial possibilities of the Marshall plan’.⁵⁴ ‘Imperialism’ was thus associated with the idea of ‘indirect’ control, and the two historians went on to develop a useful theory on the role of ‘collaboration’ in the making and sustaining of empire.

Yet, if their work offered new insights into imperialism, it also incurred new problems. It was, perhaps, ultimately misleading, if initially stimulating, to connect ‘imperialism’ and ‘free trade’. It seemed to overemphasise the continuities in the story. Nor was the concept of collaboration without its difficulty. Again the meaning of the term was loosened. It might be argued that all regimes, home or colonial, need collaborators, and that none can or do rely simply on force. The difficulty encourages the historian, however, to consider what is or was peculiar to the imperial or colonial relationship.

The risk to avoid is the one that Thornton faced, of dealing in dominion, activity let loose. Should the concept apply to regimes that found it possible to collaborate with the imperial power and survive? Or is it more useful to apply the concept to those conjunctures at which a regime has been displaced? It need not imply that the replacement of a regime, or its loss of independence, is the end of the matter. Rather the reverse. Resistance may still continue and 'pacification' may still be needed. In the imperial case, it is there, it seems, that the issue of 'collaboration' is most frequently lodged.

It is evident, too, that 'imperialism' was shaped not only by the peculiar features it assumed in the case of each European state, but by the responses it met in each territory or region. Those were affected by the legacy of the past and the impact of the present. Could a regime cope with the changes it faced among 'the whole range of activities'? If it were displaced, could the colonial regime secure useful collaborators at a lower level? This book argues that imperialists secured a measure of collaboration sufficient to establish a state, but only a state that had limited potential for modernisation. Attempts to go beyond that, if made, could dislodge its relatively insecure foundations.

At the same time, of course, state-building in the imperial territories had 'capricious' outcomes. The imperial endeavour, even as it extended to the colonies the process of state formation, produced a demand for participation, a wish to shape the destiny of the state. In their differing ways the imperial powers tried to repress or shape it, but they could not altogether avoid it. In Southeast Asia the outcome was deflected by a new incursion from the outside, that of the Japanese. The imperial powers returned, but could not resume control. Indeed they came, in some cases belatedly, to see that there was little reason to do so.

It might thus be possible to define imperialism by outcome as well as by act or advocacy. It was a stage in the emergence of a world of states, and a means by which non-western states were restructured so that they took part in it. Its relationship with the emergence of a world market is less direct. State and capital remain both at odds and in agreement.

If employing too wide a definition of modern imperialism risks misunderstanding its nature, it may also be too easy to apply it more widely. Doing so may, indeed, throw up a challenge that historians find stimulating. Some Indian historians under British rule, such as Raadhakumud Mookerji, were disposed to ascribe the 'Indianisation' of Southeast Asia to Indian colonisation, showing that the Indians, too, had been proud imperialists. '[S]warms of daring adventurers from Gujarat ports, anticipating the enterprise of the Drakes and Frobishers, or more properly of the Pilgrim Fathers, sailed in search of plenty till the shores of Java arrested their progress and gave scope to their colonizing ambition.'⁵⁵ The great Dutch sociologist and historian, J. C. van Leur, was prompted by such assertions to review the historical relationship between India and the Indies and to revise its interpretation.

Extending the application of the term 'imperialism' back into the past is risky, if also stimulating. The risk lies in using it to describe 'activity let loose' or 'dealing in dominion' without recognising that such generality may deprive it of any useful meaning. The advantage is that it should again compel us to define the concept more effectively. Our concern is with what is usually called 'Western' imperialism and with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To use the term of non-'Western' 'dealing in dominion' or 'activity let loose' may now be as politically unacceptable as it was politically acceptable to Mookerji's readers. It certainly carries the risk of misinterpretation. Historians may at best see it as a means of making comparisons and drawing distinctions. What made Western imperialism different from earlier and not necessarily Western 'imperialisms'?

The extension of political control over other peoples was not, of course, peculiar to the West nor confined to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nor was Southeast Asia exempt. There Hermann Kulke has suggested there were three phases in state formation: the local, the regional and what he characterises as the 'imperial'. 'Very generally speaking, the first step always had to be the successful establishment and consolidation of a solid local power within a limited territory.'⁵⁶ Next might come the conquest of one or more neighbouring nuclear areas, incorporated not by administrative unification but by the establishment of more or less regular tributary patterns. These were the somewhat precarious 'early kingdoms' of Southeast Asia. From the early ninth century a small number of what Kulke calls 'imperial' kingdoms emerged, which unified two or even several core areas of former early kingdoms.⁵⁷ They, too, were fragile, challenged by their attempts to secure sufficient resources, material, but above all in manpower, then in short supply in the region, and so ensure the continued retention of their acquisitions. The characteristic form is often described, as by Kulke, in terms borrowed from Europe, tributary and vassal. Oliver Wolters uses the image of the 'mandala'. 'Mandalas would expand and contract in concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals.'⁵⁸

Kulke is prepared to characterise as an 'imperial kingdom' a state such as Vietnam that extended beyond a core area. He does not apply it to the early Sumatran state of Sri Vijaya, since it had a limited core area throughout its history. Yet it created a loose commercially-oriented hegemony that extended well beyond that core area, and it is tempting to apply the word 'empire' to it. The same word may also be employed in respect of the archipelagic hegemony that future Javanese rulers sought to establish, most famously with what became Majapahit, celebrated in Prapanca's great poem, *Nagarakrtagama*.

Nationalist attempts to invoke Majapahit as a predecessor of the modern Indonesian nation-state were to provoke from the outer islands of Indonesia accusations of 'Javanese imperialism'. That described it retrospectively in the

pejorative phrase of the twentieth century. It was something different at the time, though certainly it was ‘activity let loose’ and ‘dealt in dominion’. The political usage does not invite imitation, but it does invite us to define our terms.

Clearly the peoples of Southeast Asia had long experienced the application of outside control. It differed, however, in origin, in style and in method from the ‘Western imperialism’ of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet, while that distinction is fundamental, it must not prevent our reckoning with the extent that Western imperialism might to some extent have been seen in traditional ways, and even found advantage in so being seen and seeing itself.

The peoples of Southeast Asia also had experience of powers outside the region. Yet they can hardly be called ‘imperialist’, or even perhaps ‘imperial’. Economic contacts with India had been substantial, but political interventions from India few. Its impact was felt, *pace* Mookerji, rather through the domestication of India’s religions and cultures, largely on the initiative of Southeast Asian rulers, who over time became, as Wolters puts it, ‘capable of forming independent judgments on the practical advantages of strengthening their institutions of government by means of certain kingship doctrines, a process of borrowing which in time meant that courtly society in Indonesia felt that it was part of, and on equal terms with, the Indian, or “civilized” world’.⁵⁹

Economic links with China were also substantial. Its culture was less susceptible of domestication, and its political example less relevant. Vietnam was an exception that proved the rule. Once incorporated in China, the core of the kingdom secured its independence in part as a result of that experience, and at times even claimed equality with China in a Confucian world. Yet it could also be characterised as a Southeast Asian kingdom, its Confucian borrowings fitful and inappropriate.

Sporadically China made its power felt in the region, sometimes with catastrophic effect, but its control, even in Vietnam after the tenth century, never lasted long. One period of vigorous activity was connected with the creation of the Mongol empire, and under the Yuan dynasty there were attacks on Pagan and Dai Viet, and also expeditions against Singosari and Champa. In the early fifteenth century, a time when southward trade was expanding, the new Ming dynasty not only tried to re-establish control over the Vietnamese kingdom, it was also responsible for a remarkable series of voyages, mostly led by the eunuch admiral Zheng-he. Between 1405 and 1433, in some seven voyages, he visited Champa, Java, Sumatra, India and Sri Lanka, and even Arabia and East Africa, and called at Melaka, then the leading entrepot in the archipelago, several times. The object was to re-establish a tributary pattern of trade.

A tribute mission was, for a Southeast Asian state, a means of avoiding something worse – pre-empting a more forceful deployment of China’s power – but it also had a more positive aspect. ‘The emperors thought that they

were manipulating their vassals by techniques of indirect control; the vassals were manipulating the China trade . . . to amass wealth as a means of asserting their authority.⁶⁰ Tribute might also help one kingdom to maintain itself over against another. Promising to accept Kublai Khan's overlordship secured the founder of Majapahit the help of Mongol troops. The Thais had the support of China as a splinter movement in the Khmer empire. The Chinese sought not 'empire', but fragmentation and submissiveness.

Such relationships were not 'imperialist', even if in some sense they were imperial. Studying them, however, can educe useful comparisons with the Western imperialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular perhaps in terms of the relationship between government and trade. It also introduces a topic of enduring interest in the history of Southeast Asia, including that of the 'imperialist' phase, the role of the Indian merchant, the role of the Chinese merchant, miner and migrant. While this imperial venture on the whole, however, seems to us so different from that of the Europeans, it may nevertheless have influenced the way the Southeast Asian rulers responded to a new set of 'outsiders', and it certainly affected the measures the Vietnamese took in an endeavour to fend them off.

In the meantime, they had learned from the activities of the Portuguese and the Spaniards and of the Dutch and English East India Companies that the Europeans were after all different. They differed also, however, from the 'imperialist' Europeans that were to follow them and make use of the bases they had established and the treaties they had concluded. In turn the peoples of Southeast Asia and their leaders were to have to face another kind of imperialism again, that of the Japanese, before regaining their political autonomy.

Notes

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- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 5 Melbourne, Cheshire, p. xii.
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- 22 Hodgart's phrase, p. 42.
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20 *Definitions and chronologies*

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2 Chronologies

In the first chapter the author sought to approach his subject by a process of definition and periodisation. In the course of that, he began to explore an explanation by origins and motivation. He also suggested that outcomes, not merely act and advocacy, may be part of a more compendious definition. The present chapter has two objectives. One is to place the definition and the period in a longer and broader context. In doing so, the author believes it may be possible to discern continuities and discontinuities that give them additional meaning. The second is to place Southeast Asia in that context.

Limited though the author's definition might be, and focused the period in respect of which it is employed, it seems clear, in terms of both origins and outcomes, that imperialism is involved with the emergence of worldwide economic relationships and of a worldwide system of states, and its study must focus on the relationship of those changes. The book seeks to explicate this through a study of Southeast Asia, in so far as one region can be exemplary, at the same time adding to the understanding of that region itself.

'Presentism' may help as well as hinder an historian. The present 'globalisation' – defined by Prasert Chittiwatanapong as 'the freer flows of information, goods, services, capital, technology, values and cultures, including social problems like pollution and AIDS'¹ – invites us both to consider its origins and to measure its distinctiveness. It appears to be a phase in history in which the achievements of science and technology offer human society a new potential, if also new problems. Some argue that the best way to realise it is to 'open up' the possibilities of world trade to the maximum. Not all the nation-states – into which the whole world is now divided – agree. A crucial issue for them, and for their peoples, is the role of the state over against the role of 'market forces'. Are they allies, subordinates, regulators or a mixture? The 'values and cultures' are also contested. Are they to become more uniform or more diverse? Affected by economic change, they may be shaped by the state, but also by globalisation.

Considering such a present offers the historian two opportunities, each with its own risks. One is to shape our narrative of the past, at the risk of offering a Whig interpretation: how and when – for what reasons and in what phases – did this kind of world emerge? The other is to suggest a mode of analysis: in

what ways were the development of world trade and of the state related in the past? how did 'values and cultures' then clash or combine? Bringing narrative and analysis together is the characteristic, though intractable, task of the historian. It may permit the singling-out of a period of imperialism. It may also permit both the distinguishing and the combining of the activities and processes that were taking place in that period. What was the relationship between the state and commerce, between the political and economic? In what ways did they relate to the contesting of 'values and cultures'? Our 'presentism' should warn us against simplistic answers. In turn we may be warned against simplistic answers.

Marx thought of the nineteenth century as another sixteenth century. When Britain signed the Elgin treaty with Japan in 1858, he took it as a sign that 'world trade was taking a new direction'. Bourgeois society, he wrote to Engels,

has experienced its sixteenth century a second time – a sixteenth century which will, I hope, sound the death knell of bourgeois society, just as the first one thrust it into existence. The particular task of bourgeois society is the establishment of the world market, at least in outline, and of production based upon the world market. As the world is round, this seems to have been completed by the colonization of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan.²

His hopes have been disappointed. Bourgeois society indeed invites the historian to consider yet another 'age of commerce'.

Though their views are not Marx's, his analysis yet retains its stimulus, both for the *dependencia* theorists, such as Andre Gunder Frank, and for Immanuel Wallerstein, who, in *The Modern World System*, sought in history for an understanding of the problems of development. Frank suggests that a 'chain-like' relationship between metropolis and satellites has existed since the sixteenth century. Wallerstein has argued that the beginnings of the world economy of today are found in the late fifteenth century, and that the basic mechanisms of the capitalist world system were in place well before the industrial revolution. It consists of a core, a semi-periphery and a periphery, the centre receiving the profits by exploiting the periphery. In modern history more and more parts of the world have been integrated into the system, and the profits enabled Europe to carry through an industrial revolution that further enhanced the underdevelopment of the rest of the world.

Was this a Whig interpretation? Some historians thought that Wallerstein had exaggerated the role of international trade in the early phase of European activities in the world. Even in trading nations, exports formed only a small proportion of gross national product, and the trading companies in Asia were after all largely engaged in trade within that continent. The capital accumulated in Britain as a result of overseas trade, as Wesseling points out, could not have represented more than 15 per cent of the gross

expenditure during the industrial revolution.³ *Dependencia* theorists ran the risk of attributing too much to outside forces. Wallerstein predated the dominance of the 'West'.

There may, therefore, be room for dispute about the consequences of the first sixteenth century. How far did it transform the economies of the Western countries or their relations with those of the rest of the world? Certainly what was done was, as Marx's phrase implied, in some sense a base for what came after: a step had been taken, even if its extent may be disputed, and the next step uncertain. What is also implied is the novelty of the initial step. It 'thrust' bourgeois society 'into existence'.

Our concern is with causes as well as consequences. Marx's phrase evades the issue: a century cannot thrust anything into existence. How must we explain act and advocacy? Wallerstein's suggestion, though sounding too modern, may be helpful. 'State power', he suggests, was used by 'actors in the market' to alter the terms of trade to their advantage.⁴ He certainly directs attention back to the relationship that is important for the understanding of 'imperialism'. Distinguishing the role of the state and the role of the 'market' and re-combining them are both essential.

Through the voyages of 'discovery' Portugal and Spain, as C. R. Boxer put it, 'first made humanity conscious, however dimly, of its essential unity'.⁵ Contemporaries were aware that those were epoch-making events. Dedicating his work on the history of the Indies to Charles V, Gomara described the voyage of Columbus in 1492 as 'the greatest event since the creation of the world, apart from the incarnation and death of him who created it'.⁶ Ever since, indeed, historians and others have puzzled over the origins of the voyages. Why did Europe take the initiative? and why were Portugal and Spain the first to do so?

Whatever the role of expanding capitalism or industrialisation in the later decades of European expansion, the voyages of the sixteenth century do not find their origin there. Portugal and Spain were not even the most commercially advanced of the European states: the former in particular was a small country with a population of only one million in 1500 and it had been importing slaves. Nor, therefore, was it a matter of surplus population. The Portuguese overseas had a manpower problem. Probably there were never as many as ten thousand able-bodied European and Eurasian men in their overseas dominions in Asia and Africa. In England and the Netherlands there was a flourishing textile industry. But these countries did not at first play a major role in the overseas voyages, and, when they did, their cloth exports were largely unsuccessful. The laments of the English East India Company of the seventeenth century, seeking in vain to get rid of the stuff, are testimony to that.

Nor can it be said that the voyages were the necessary result of advances in technology or geographical knowledge. Boxer points out that the Portuguese had the compass (probably derived from the Chinese and Arab and

Mediterranean sailors), the astrolabe and quadrant in simple forms; and he thinks that West African experience, together with these borrowings, enabled late fifteenth-century navigators to calculate fairly accurately their position at sea.⁷ But navigation was still rather haphazard. The great voyages of Vasco da Gama and his successors into the Indian Ocean or Columbus across the Atlantic did not result from sudden advance in technology. Nor was there a preliminary development of geographical knowledge: that was result rather than cause.

The voyages were marked and explained by two other features: the courage and determination of the individuals involved, and the backing of the state. Clearly, all the more for the lack of technical background or expertise, the voyages were acts of courage, determination and endurance. The accounts of the voyages not surprisingly tell a tale of tension, quarrels, disputes, mutinies, harsh discipline. There was an appalling loss of life. On da Gama's first voyage to India, 170 men left Portugal; 55 returned.

Men needed powerful motives for undertaking such ventures. Among them were the acquisitive urge and the ambition to rise in society. Those, no doubt, were not new, but they may have received a new impulse from the changes that were taking place within Europe. The Renaissance added little to the information or technology available to the voyagers or their sponsors, but it offered inspiration. The later Middle Ages saw a period of great prosperity among Italian cities, especially Venice, as Europe recovered from the Black Death, and trade across the Mediterranean and with Asia through Egypt and Arabia expanded. On this prosperity the Renaissance was built: it financed the attempts to recapture the glories of antiquity. 'The Venetians saw themselves by the fifteenth century as the new Romans.'⁸ There was a whole range of new possibilities for using wealth. The potential spurred men on to acquire it. And the calculations they made were full of fables, of Prester John, of the China of Marco Polo. The means might be trade, robbery, piracy, freebooting, privateering or war, or a mixture of them all.

Something of this spirit persisted into subsequent phases of the European ventures in the non-European world. The role of the state, however, changed. Generally it strongly backed the voyages of discovery. For the state, as well as for the individual, the Renaissance offered exciting potential: indeed it suggested new ways of building the state, utilising Roman law, acquiring Roman precedent, building in Roman style, demonstrating and consolidating power. What was needed was wealth. The Venetians and their rivals, the Genoese, had shown what could be done with it. Other states in Europe might borrow from the Italian city-states. They had also shown that wealth and the East were connected. They offered expertise; they offered plans and dreams as well.

The success was striking, even if the means were often unexpected. 'We see what floods of treasure have flowed into Europe by that action', wrote Bacon of the conquest of the Indies. 'Besides, infinite is the access of territory and empire by the same enterprise.'⁹ 'Le roi épicier' Francis I sneeringly called

the Portuguese monarch;¹⁰ but with overseas wealth Portugal built Renaissance Lisbon, lost in the earthquake of 1755, and created the culture that produced Camoens' *Lusiads*, picturing da Gama as a new Aeneas watched over by Venus. Spain's windfall profits were enormous. The wealth acquired by the conquest of Mexico and Peru – 300 tons of gold and 20,000 tons of silver were taken to Spain between 1500 and 1660¹¹ – made it the greatest state of Renaissance Europe, and the first world power, established in Asia and America, spreading its diplomatic game across Europe to Sweden, Poland and Muscovy, possessing an empire on which its king might truly say, as in Schiller's play, that the sun never set.

The securing of wealth outside Europe indeed transformed the situation in Europe, politically as well as economically. The earlier attempts to bring political unity to Europe, presented characteristically in Roman guise, had failed, though leaving behind the legend of Charlemagne that was itself not without power, and a Holy Roman Empire that was still worth contesting. A Europe of states had emerged, in which political disunity was itself part of a cultural unity. The failure of empire in Europe was indeed a prime source of state ventures outside Europe. Rivalry among the city states had urged on Italian ventures in Asia: Genoese were in Asia in the fourteenth century, seeking a route alternative to the one dominated by Venice – and Islam – overland. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the sovereign states were urged on by their ambition, acted upon by their insecurity. The potential the Renaissance offered, and the prospects of acquiring wealth, a new dimension to the cultural unity of Europe, were combined with its political division. The combination was the most powerful influence behind its expansion.

Whether or not it set capitalism in motion, or even industrialisation, it certainly had a dynamic of its own. Once one state had advanced itself, others became more insecure. 'With this great treasure did not the Emperor Charles get from the French king the kingdom of Naples, the dukedom of Milan and all his other dominions in Italy, Lombardy, Piedmont and Savoy? With this treasure did he not take the Pope prisoner? and sacked the see of Rome?' a contemporary perhaps exaggeratedly asked.¹² The sense of insecurity added to the determination of other rulers to acquire wealth and to 'modernise', and one way was overseas venture. Royal sneer notwithstanding, there were attempts at French rivalry: in 1527 Dieppe ships were sailing the Indian Ocean, financed in Lyon, also in Florence, another Italian town, and en route for China the Parmentier brothers died in west Sumatra.¹³ There were English ventures also, directed at finding routes to Asia not dominated by the Iberian powers. In the latter half of the century a semi-revolutionary state, the Netherlands, sought to sustain itself not only by the carrying trade of Europe but by venturing into Asia, Africa and the Americas, using state-backed companies. Nor were these ventures solely oceanic. The Cossack enterprise in Siberia was backed by the Muscovite state. Like other states of the sixteenth century, it recalled the Caesars and borrowed from the

Italians. Like other states it sought extra-European wealth to enhance its security and expand its role in Europe.

The rivalries of the European states spurred on their enterprise outside Europe. Their rivalries took hold there as well, though they had a lot in common – including the disposition to rivalry – and that common element often struck the Asians – all were *feringhi* or Franks. Intra-European conflicts were fought overseas, drawing in non-Europeans, more or less willingly. At the same time there were attempts to limit conflict by ‘dividing the world’, as well as to discuss and protect the ‘rights’ of native people.

The initial venture of the Europeans combined economic and political objectives by its emphasis not only on personal ambition but also on state-building, stimulated by the potential of the Renaissance, and on the acquisition of wealth, both stirred by and stirring their insecurity and their mutual rivalry. In the next phase, these factors reappear, though in altered forms and in different combinations. The initial venture is not fully described, however, nor the comparison with later ventures made feasible, without taking account of another factor, which also contributes to the development of European attitudes to other peoples and other states. That is the determination to extend Christianity. Like the economic and political factors, it operated both with individuals and with states. At times, it reinforced one or both of those factors; at others it was at odds with them. Again, the relative weight of this factor, like the others, varied from state to state, as well as from place to place and time to time.

For some powers, more particularly Spain and Portugal, which had been contesting the hold of Islam on the Iberian peninsula, the crusading element was an additional motivation for the ventures of the sixteenth century. If the commercial and political objectives included outflanking the Muslims – who dominated the overland route to Asia – the missionary element looked the same way. Missionary and acquisitive urges were mixed, as in the crusades themselves. But if, as Sir John Elliott has argued, empires must have an ideology, it could at times conflict with the acquisitive urge, though at others it might reinforce it. The Venetians had helped the crusaders, but avoided zealotry; the Genoese had been prepared to co-operate with the Ottoman Turks against the Venetians. For Portugal and Spain, the zeal to spread Christianity combined with the zeal to reap profit. But it introduced another element into their overseas ventures. The controls that the monarchy endeavoured to exert over its colonial bureaucracy owed something to church practice. The debate as to the use of power and the duties of those who possessed it – argued most famously by Las Casas and Sepulveda – was a prolongation of an earlier Spanish debate about the conversion of non-Christians, as well as an illustration of the influence of the Renaissance revival of Roman law. The acquisitiveness of individuals and the concern for power were to some degree tempered by ethical and moral considerations.

In Asia the success of Christian missionary endeavours was limited. Indeed they were largely counterproductive, so far as any of the objectives – eco-

conomic, political or indeed religious – were concerned. The incursions of the Portuguese, and their increasing emphasis on conversion, prompted Islam to strengthen its grasp on island Southeast Asia. The exceptional success of the missionaries in the Philippines alarmed the Japanese and contributed to the ‘closed country’ policy adopted in the 1630s. In Macao and Formosa Spaniards and Portuguese recognised the need for caution, lest they provoked the Chinese.

The church for its part saw the disadvantage of being too closely tied to the activities of the Iberian powers. Their methods might damage the cause and the converts be subject to their political fortunes. And there were areas – above all China – where, despite the original optimism, the Iberian states had made little impression, but where the prospects for Christianity, if not commerce, seemed limitless. Though Spaniards predominated in the missionary orders in the Spanish empire, the missionary enterprise, like the initial commercial enterprise, was in part an Italian affair, particularly in the Portuguese sphere. It was, too, the Italians who in the later sixteenth century tried to secure the cause of Christendom in the great polities of Asia which the secular enterprises failed to penetrate. Indeed the Jesuits hoped to recapture in Asia the ground lost in Europe to the Reformation.¹⁴ One strategy was the policy of ‘accommodation’, advocated, for instance, by the Italian Valignano, visitor of the Jesuits in Asia in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The orders should not rely on the economic and political ventures of the Europeans, but work through the existing political systems. The policy was unsuccessful in securing converts. At the same time it risked compromising the church’s teachings. Indeed Pope Clement XI was to condemn accommodation in bulls of 1715 and 1742.

Learning from the Iberians, against whom they were struggling, the Dutch made little attempt to complicate their commercial and political task with the promotion of the Christian cause. There were not more than twenty-eight *predikants* in the whole of their Asian sphere in the 1640s.¹⁵ ‘Jesus Christ was good, but trade was better.’¹⁶ A dissociation from the contest with Islam that the Portuguese had engaged in could, the Dutch thought, only assist in the task of displacing and replacing them, while their dissociation from attempts to convert made it possible for them to trade at Nagasaki and indeed to monopolise the only contacts with the Europeans that the Tokugawa allowed.

The Dutch came to dominate Europe’s trade with the world in the seventeenth century. Their state was not a monarchy, but the urban oligarchs who dominated the Republic, and in particular Holland, its most important province, ensured as much state backing for overseas ventures as any monarch had contrived: it was a new and larger Genoa. Overseas it characteristically worked through the Dutch West India Company, founded ‘to take away from the Spaniard the American treasures . . . with which he has so long battered the whole of Christianity’, and the East India Company (VOC), the com-

mander of whose 1602 fleet was told 'to attack the Spaniards and Portuguese wherever they are found'.¹⁷ If there were no religious objective, the prime task remained: to compete with other Europeans, to sustain the state, and to increase its prosperity. The VOC was 'a quasi-state organisation, ... authorised by the States-General of the Netherlands to wage war, make treaties, engineer conquests'.¹⁸ Its success against the Portuguese cannot be seen 'in terms of the triumph of a capitalistic enterprise over a seigniorial one'; it was 'not one that depended crucially on a more rational organisation, or a better harnessing of market forces'. 'Force and diplomacy ... play a crucial role in Dutch success'.¹⁹ The striking feature of the VOC is its combination of political and economic purpose and political and economic action.

Even apart from the Italian expertise of the Cabots, the English had many of the requisites for a successful venture overseas in the sixteenth century, more, perhaps, than the Portuguese; and they realised its importance both for the sake of the wealth it brought and in relation to the struggle within Europe prompted by the emergence of distinct sovereignties and changing disparities of power. Maybe, though less distracted by internal political and religious struggle than contemporary France, they lacked the centralised direction of the house of Aviz; and they had no Oldenbarnevelt. More important, perhaps, was their insecurity in Europe. First, they were threatened by France, and then, as Philip II sought to assert his power in the Netherlands and even intervened in northern France, they were apprehensive of Spain. Under Elizabeth I they intervened in the Netherlands, perforce supporting a people that was an effective commercial rival: 'the case will be hard with the Queen and with England if ever the French possess or the Spaniards tyrannize the Low Countries', as Sussex put it.²⁰ Successful overseas ventures could add to security, but not create it. A great deal of energy went into privateering, the Queen being unable or unwilling to risk open war, doing all by halves, Raleigh complained.²¹ At least it 'endamaged' Spain, as Humphrey Gilbert put it, to the extent that the object of the Armada of 1588 was, in the words of Philip II's secretary, 'no less the security of the Indies than the recovery of the Netherlands'.²²

The English East India Company was also 'severely undercapitalised'. That was not merely a trading constraint: 'weakness in terms of military power was also what accounted for the marginal position the English Company came to hold by 1625 in Southeast Asia and the Far East'.²³ It decided to concentrate on India, where it was later to benefit from the textile trade, and from which locally based 'country' traders were to make inroads into Southeast Asia.

The English were not lacking in the enterprise that carried other Europeans overseas, and Sir Francis Drake was the first commander to circumnavigate the globe. That enterprise, though not organised by the state, was to lead other Englishmen to settle on the American continent, in part to embarrass Spain, in part to escape the religious conformity of the early seventeenth century, to establish the 'Commonwealth' of Massachusetts, for

example. The colonies were, however, to be drawn into new struggles among the European powers, and the Cromwell republic and the restored Stuarts were to assert their power over them in a new Oceanic strategy. Out of the civil war in England – also a war of the three kingdoms of the British isles – emerged a military government determined to challenge the monopoly of the European carrying trade that the Dutch had consolidated and to assert Britain's power in the Caribbean, and able, with Parliament's support, to build a navy far surpassing that of the Tudors and early Stuarts. It was succeeded by a monarchy soon in actual conflict with the Dutch, but concerned also to limit the sway of the France of Louis XIV. The struggle among the European powers involved struggle outside Europe, and the American colonies were given a role: in 1684 the Massachusetts charter was annulled, and a Dominion of New England was established two years later.

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, new and more effective ways were found of uniting the three kingdoms and of mobilising their resources, through the Bank of England and the National Debt, and a new compromise was reached with the American colonies, designed to preserve the rights and properties of the people, but also their dependence on the crown. This restructuring was undertaken in the context of extensive intervention on the continent of Europe, where the decline of Spain opened the way to the dominance of France. The conflict deeply affected the fate of the empire. 'In the middle of the eighteenth century, the British . . . debated whether fighting in the colonies or on the continent was the better way to preserve their security', Ingram writes. 'The alternatives were more apparent than real: as long as three other European states were naval and colonial powers, naval wars fought in the colonies helped to preserve the balance of power on the continent.'²⁴ Their success in the Seven Years War enabled the British to acquire Florida and Canada and French claims in the interior.

The struggle was not, however, over, and the last additions to the empire challenged the policies traditionally accepted within the American empire. 'France had been defeated in the war, but no one believed that the French had really accepted the reduction of their power. There was a natural concern . . . to hold on to the colonies, to make them more secure, and to make them even more useful to the home country.'²⁵ The concern to create a stronger state in rivalry with other states in fact prompted the crown to adopt policies that led to its breakup.

An army had to be kept up. How was it to be paid for? If Parliament levied taxes, it would be a parliament without colonial representatives. If they were there, they would be a minority. 'What then?' asked George Grenville. 'Shall no steps be taken and must we and America be two distinct kingdoms and that now immediately, or must America be defended entirely by us, and be themselves quite excused or be left to do just what they please to do?'²⁶ Two distinct kingdoms emerged, though not immediately, nor peacefully, nor indeed without the intervention of other European powers. That established powerful precedents. One was general in nature: it provided a new means by

which the European state-system might extend to other parts of the world. It also provided the British and other powers with a warning. Too strong an assertion of imperial bonds might be counterproductive. Such ideas were the more easily adopted when settler colonies were in question. They were greatly enforced by the realisation that the loss of empire in America did not bring disaster. Britain's trade with the US prospered. A different kind of relationship became possible, indeed desirable.

Quite a different kind of empire was, however, being established in India at the very same time. That had been made possible by the divisions on the sub-continent, above all by the disintegration of the Moghul empire. It was precipitated by the Anglo-French rivalry of the eighteenth century and its projection overseas. To contest the rise of the English company, which enjoyed increasing commercial success from the late seventeenth century, the French intervened in politics. Dupleix's adventure, however, precipitated a similar redistribution on the part of the British, and began the transformation of their East India Company into a territorial power. That gave the British new territories and new resources. It also gave them new problems, in domestic as in foreign policy. They had to regulate the impact of the new empire on Britain's own politics: it was not, as with the American colonies, a question of representation, but of the deployment of the 'nabobs' wealth in an already corrupt political system. They also had to fit the security needs of the new empire into the international politics, both of Asia and of Europe, and they did not necessarily coincide with the needs of Britain itself.

The climax of Anglo-French rivalry came only after the French had lost the struggle in India. The two powers had differing strengths. France was far more populous, and its strength had been found in its ability to mobilise military strength and to demonstrate power. Its most glorious moment, the reign of the Sun King, Louis XIV, occurred when Spain's power had fallen away, with the drying-up of the supplies of Spanish American silver, and when indeed that had contributed to a recession that also affected the trading powers. The British had responded to those changes by restructuring their economy, by developing the trade of their American colonies and by opening up the trade in Indian textiles and China tea.

The rivalry at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth might be seen as an extension of earlier rivalry, but it had new dimensions, significant for others as well as the rivals, significant indeed for the world as a whole. The French revolution offered a new way of mobilising France's greatest comparative advantage, its people: it nationalised that resource. The British deployed their special resource, their wealth, derived from their commercial success, and increasingly drawn from the industrial revolution which their economy had begun to undergo. An epic struggle ensued, involving Napoleon's creation of a new empire in Europe, and then its overthrow by a coalition of powers led by the British. Other states, would-be states and revolutionaries in Europe witnessed the potential of both

revolutions, particularly in combination. They were to be followed by state-builders and would-be state-builders outside Europe.

The potential of these ideas for the acquisition of wealth and power, for individuals and the state, offered also the prospect of new rivalries, inasmuch as they changed the relative position of states, even their shape and nature. In the sixteenth century the potential of the Renaissance and of the voyages overseas, and the commencement of its realisation, had enhanced the rivalry of states, and at the same time made them act in similar ways, increasing the impact on the rest of the world. The nineteenth century offered, on a different basis, a similar prospect.

The initial effect was contained by the primacy of one of the powers. 'European rivalries were damped down for half a century [after 1815]... Most important was British predominance.'²⁷ For a while Britain faced no real rivals. Its island position offered it a measure of security, provided its navy could deal with the naval power that any other power or combination of powers could bring against it, and provided that the point on the continent from which it was most vulnerable, the Low Countries, was not in the hands of a major power. The defeat of Napoleonic France at sea at Trafalgar in 1805 and on land at Waterloo in 1815 ensured a level of security that had earlier evaded the British, and they sought to sustain a balance of power on the continent so that no one power should endeavour to predominate. The absence of effective opponents was combined with the unique advantage that Britain secured as the first industrial power. Others would catch up, but in the meantime it was ahead. 'The imperial metropolis of a far-flung polity' became, as Sir Keith Hancock put it, 'the commercial metropolis of a further-flung economy'.²⁸

In this position, indeed, Britain tended to reshape its traditional attitudes to the non-European world. The dominion in India was, of course, retained, even expanded. But Britain's economic success and political security added strength to the views that Adam Smith had expressed at the time of the American declaration of independence. 'No nation ever voluntarily gave up the dominion of any province, how troublesome soever it might be to govern it', he had declared in 1776. Such sacrifices were 'mortifying to the pride of every nation', and 'contrary to the private interest of the governing part of it'. If they were made, however,

Great Britain would not only be immediately freed from the whole annual expense of the peace establishment of the colonies, but might settle with them such a treaty of commerce as would effectually secure to her a free trade, more advantageous to the great body of the people, though less so to the merchants, than the monopoly which she at present enjoys. By thus parting good friends the natural affection of the colonies to the mother country... would quickly revive.

Instead of 'turbulent and factious subjects', they might become 'our most faithful, affectionate, and generous allies'.²⁹

With the advance of industrialisation, the relation of the economic and the political changed. The cause of free trade became wider, and the avoidance of empire more general. ‘Commerce is the grand panacea’, Cobden declared, ‘which, like a beneficent medical discovery will serve to inoculate with the healthy and saving taste for civilization all the nations of the world.’

Not a bale of merchandise leaves our shores, but it bears the seeds of intelligence and fruitful thought to the members of some less enlightened community, not a merchant visits our seats of manufacturing industry, but he returns to his own country the missionary of freedom, peace, and good government – while our steam boats, that now visit every port of Europe, and our miraculous railroads, that are the talk of all nations, are the advertisements and vouchers for the value of our enlightened institutions.³⁰

‘[T]he world has never witnessed a supremacy to be compared with that existing in our time’, wrote Friedrich List in 1841:

How miserable appears the ambition of those who attempted to establish universal dominion upon the power of arms, in comparison with the great attempt of England to transform her whole territory into an immense manufacturing and commercial city, into an immense port, and to become to other nations what a vast city is to the country, the center of arts and knowledge... the arsenal of extensive capital, the universal banker.³¹

The views of those whom Cobden criticised were not far from his own. ‘Parliament has for many years steadily persevered in a course of policy’, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Grey, wrote in December 1849, ‘which had had for its object gradually to relieve the Commerce of Empire from restrictions – to abandon all attempts to direct Capital and industry by artificial means into channels which they would not naturally seek’, and the government hoped that other nations would follow suit.²⁸ Men such as Palmerston wanted not to transform the world but to prompt it to transform itself. The blows the British dealt at China were designed not to add it to the empire but to precipitate its self-transformation. In the meantime it joined the ‘family of nations’ through the ‘unequal treaties’. One day, Macaulay suggested, India itself might demand English institutions. ‘Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history.’³³

The image was of a world of theoretically equal states, trading with each other unimpeded by political relationships. The optimism of this period proved unfounded, but hopes were deferred rather than abandoned. A world of independent states that traded with each other was finally to come about, but not as soon as the Radicals thought, though sooner, perhaps, than some of those they criticised thought. Only a limited number of non-European states transformed themselves. Others failed to meet the challenge

presented both by economic change and by political change. That challenge was intensified by the re-emergence of rivalry among the European powers, to be joined indeed by extra-European powers, the US above all. That was the result of the more or less successful application of the concepts of the French and industrial revolutions in the state-building enterprise in which their elites engaged. They were emulating the British and competing with each other. The result of the attempts to realise this potential was a new redistribution of power, in turn, of course, the source of insecurity. It was in these circumstances that 'imperialism' emerged.

In the 'first' sixteenth century, the application of new ideas, and accretions of wealth that surpassed expectations and came from unexpected quarters, created imbalance, insecurity and rivalry among the European states, driving them to exploit their resources and those of other parts of the world more determinedly. In the 'second' sixteenth century, the application of new ideas and the exploitation of new sources of wealth again redistributed power among the states, at first, after an initial struggle with the French, very much to the advantage of the British, and then in an intensified and more generalised competition. The rest of the world was again involved, affected by the application and potential of new ideas, affected, too, by the impact of the industrial revolution.

Imperialism in the author's sense was a product of those changes, but also, more specifically, of the shifts in the distribution of power that challenged the primacy of the British. Those included the unification of the German state and its rapid industrialisation and the transformation of the US after the civil war. They changed the position of other states as well, including France, and their relations with Britain. The relationships established with overseas states and territories in the period of Britain's primacy also came under pressure. It was at this juncture, and as part of this process, that 'imperialism' took hold. It was a component of the interstate 'anarchy' that had resumed. Insecurity gave state-building a new urgency, indeed some kind of timetable, since it seemed, in those Darwinian days, that some must die and only the fitter survive. That required the more efficient mobilisation of existing resources, the acquisition of new resources and the establishment of claims on future resources. 'Imperialism' was part of the answer. 'The great states of Europe are dividing up the other continents of Africa and Asia, in the same manner they would divide such countries as Italy or Poland', says a character in de Vogue's novel *Le Maire de la Mer*. 'What used to be a European balance of power is now a world balance of power, but it is subject to the same laws, and any country which does not wish to become less important must obtain as much new territory relatively as our rivals are doing.'³⁴

The connexion between the economic and the political strands in the relationship between the European states and the non-European world was less direct than in the first sixteenth century. Then the nascent states took a prominent role in backing the exploratory voyages, contracted later adventurers, chartered monopolistic companies. Now the commercial and financial

connexions between Europe and the world had become more diverse and more sophisticated. In some cases state and capital combined, and theorists of imperialism have conceived of conspiracy. More often, however, the connexion was an indirect one. The ventures were initiated by adventurers, visionaries and politicians, rather than by capitalists. The trajectory of state-building coincided with the deployment of capital but only on occasion. Imperialism was rather part of the first agenda than the second. Imperialists were creating a framework within which capital might act, or, they thought, ought to act. 'The truth is that we [at the British Foreign Office] not only do not neglect Manchester interests', Percy Anderson observed in 1885, 'but have to stir Manchester up to look after its interests.'³⁵

As a result of the 'imperialism' of this phase, Africa was 'partitioned', though not China, as widely expected, and Southeast Asia was divided anew. The British had never been convinced that they could or should build a worldwide empire to parallel their worldwide commerce. China, *The Times* had opined, must not become 'another India'.³⁶ 'Can it be doubted', Lord Wodehouse asked in 1860, 'that it is impolitic to add to our already enormous Asiatic territories?'³⁷ In the 'imperialist' phase, the British tended to compromise, rather than attempt to monopolise. That tended, despite alarms and excursions, moments of 'Mervousness', to make partition a peaceful affair, so far as other Europeans were concerned. There was plenty to compromise about, and the European powers in general conducted the process so that they avoided war.

Within the period 1870–1905 itself there were changes, the result of changes within and among the great powers, in the colonial areas, in industrialisation. In the course of the African partition, the powers at the Berlin conference of 1884–5 affirmed criteria for recognising each other's possessions. The conference, as Fieldhouse puts it, was 'an immense stimulus to colonial expansion. By drawing up rules it declared the game in progress.'³⁸ A wave of 'concession'-hunting marked the 1880s and 1890s as the demand for commodities and minerals increased, though, as Chandran Jeshurun has put it, 'the British government was not entirely without its own devices to check and scrutinise the various proposals from petty interests that it received almost endlessly during this period'.³⁹ Most industrial or industrialising countries adopted protectionist measures – Germany in 1879, Russia in 1891, France in 1892 – though Britain did not: '[t]he British government mainly concentrated on the task they had pursued during the free-trade period before 1880, that is, of providing British trade with security, protection, and information'.⁴⁰ The growth of participatory politics tended to shift the nature of colonial policy, and certainly to alter its rhetorics and rationales. At the end of the century, the imperialists were joined by the United States, though itself equivocal about empire.

The states that were created overseas were ambiguous in character and, in the event, transitory. Needing revenue, their administrators sought to attract

capital, but the interests of capital and the territories did not entirely coincide. They sought to modernise parts of their economic, social and political life, but not all. What they did, however, produced, like state-building elsewhere, 'capricious outcomes', especially when coupled with the widening of communications and the activities of Christian missions. New elites made the kind of demands that Macaulay had foreseen, welcome or not, and came to see the territories as potential members of the world of states. Created in the course of state-building ventures, the territories had developed differing relations with the metropolitan states concerned. Some of the connexions were to be easier to modify or abandon than others. None effectively took the place of 'independence'.

In interwar Southeast Asia the development of imperial relationships was affected by the depression and by the cautious stance that Britain and the other powers adopted in face of the deteriorating international position. Their rule was then interrupted by the Japanese occupation. That led the imperial powers not to abandon their territories, but to attempt to return and put their relationship with them on a new basis. In some ways their endeavours recalled the imperialist phase. The paradox that the state-building of an imperial power had come to represent could, however, no longer be sustained. The imperial powers departed, making what attempts they could to leave behind conditions in which their capital and enterprise could still be employed. Their success was diminished to the extent that their departure was violent. In any case, capital was finding new opportunities in the industrial countries themselves.

In the world of nation-states that the Southeast Asian countries now joined, disparities of power remained, and countries responded differentially to the new opportunities for mobilising their people and utilising their resources or those of others. Those disparities were no longer expressed in the 'imperialist' form. States sought security by arming themselves, by seeking powerful or regional allies, by diplomacy, by looking to international law and organisations. Their interests remained at a tangent to the economic interests that, in yet a 'third' sixteenth century, promoted and were promoted by the further 'globalisation' of world trade. That was a resource for state-builders, now with no imperial interlocutor. In a world of nation-states, such a role was impossible. But a new level of resources meant a new level of corruption, and, without even the measure of responsibility that imperial structures had provided, the only effective monitor of the relationship of the economic and the political was the development of participation and opinion that had elsewhere been part of state formation, encouraged, so far as feasible, by international organisations, official and non-governmental.

In the first sixteenth century Southeast Asia had been caught up in the ventures of the Portuguese and Spaniards, and later the English and the Dutch, for two reasons. Placed between India and China, it shared in the network of intra-Asian trade, in which the Europeans, with few goods of their

own to market, realised that they had to secure a share. It was also the sole source of fine spices, clove and nutmeg, then of great importance in a meat-eating Europe that could neither provide winter cattle-fodder nor preservatives. For the Portuguese and the Spaniards, though not for their successors, there was the additional urge to contend with the Muslims, opponents on the Iberian peninsula and in the Mediterranean. The Europeans were not for the most part much concerned with the control of territory before the eighteenth century. That was not their objective. Nor was the destruction or displacement of Asian realms generally within their capacity. It is only in retrospect that the forts and ‘factories’ they set up became in some cases the bridgeheads for expansion or conquest. In other cases they were indeed themselves turned out.

The Portuguese commander Affonso de Albuquerque gave his soldiers two reasons for the attack on Melaka in 1511:

the first is the great service which we shall perform to Our Lord in casting the Moors out of this country . . . And the other reason is the service we shall render to the King D. Manuel in taking this city, because it is the source of all the spiceries and drugs which the Moors carry every year hence to the Straits [of Bab-el-Mandeb] . . . Cairo and Mekka will be entirely ruined, and Venice will receive no spiceries unless her merchants go and buy them in Portugal.⁴¹

The Portuguese sought to insert themselves into the trade within Asia and divert its trade to Europe into channels they, not the Muslims and the Venetians, controlled.

The Portuguese never achieved the commercial dominance of which Albuquerque spoke. The capture of Melaka, which followed their establishment on the west coast of India, struck down the major Muslim entrepot in Southeast Asia, and they then moved on Maluku, the source of the spices then in demand. They sought to build a ‘trading empire’ in the archipelago, differing from the earlier empires there, those of Sri Vijaya or Majapahit, in its more formal connexion with other parts of Asia, let alone Europe, but using methods that probably differed rather less. ‘The years were filled with piracy and naval warfare by the Portuguese, defense against assaults, and attacks on trading ships, war fleets, and fortresses, guerilla warfare with a strong element of vendetta to it.’⁴² One novelty, it seems, was the fortification of their ‘factories’, otherwise similar to the *fondachi*, the residential quarters of Italian merchants in Muslim ports in the Mediterranean. Their violence was also accompanied by a superiority in the use of weapons and gunpowder. Even so the Portuguese did not destroy the opposition they evoked. Instead they both diffused it and inflamed it. The destruction of Melaka prompted a dispersion of Malay power and the creation of a number of new Malayo-Muslim states. None of them, however, had the ability to create an ‘imperial’ kingdom like Sri Vijaya or Melaka. That was confirmed by the venture of the

Dutch, who largely displaced the Portuguese, while imitating their methods and acquiring their information.

The VOC created no general commercial monopoly even in the archipelagic part of Southeast Asia, and established no overall political supremacy, but it curbed not only its European but also its local rivals. It did not eliminate them, but it prevented their empire-building, and it tried to channel the international trade of that part of the region. The VOC, it might be said, built a new kind of Sri Vijaya, backed by a contractual approach to Southeast Asian states and rulers. It met a great deal of resistance.

The central rendezvous, for which the Directors called in 1610, was established at Jakarta in western Java, and called Batavia. It was soon threatened by the principal Javanese ruler, Sultan Agung of Mataram, and in 1629 he besieged it with a vast force, defeated because it could not be supplied overland, and the Dutch had command of the sea. The initial focus of the Dutch venture, like that of the Portuguese, was the fine spices of Maluku. There the VOC acted with violence, both against its English rivals and against the local inhabitants. Governor-General J. P. Coen, the founder of Batavia, conquered Banda, wiping out the population, and parcelling out the land for cultivation by slave labour. 'Things are carried on in such a criminal and murderous way', wrote an ex-officer of the VOC, 'that the blood of the poor people cries to heaven for vengeance.'⁴³

Melaka itself remained in Portuguese hands until 1641. Then the Dutch took it, assisted by the rulers of Johore, successors of those who had ruled Melaka before 1511. With that the VOC was able to pursue a monopoly of pepper, a spice more widely grown than the clove and nutmeg of Maluku, and increase its share in the trade in tin, then exported to China. It fended off Sultan Agung's attempt to intervene at Palembang – once the centre of Sri Vijaya – and extorted from the Queen of Aceh, which then dominated the state of Perak on the peninsula, a treaty whereby it was to share the tin trade equally with her to 'the exclusion of all other nations, Europeans as well as Indians'.⁴⁴ On the west coast of Sumatra, the Dutch displaced Acehnese supremacy, and under the Painan contract of 1663 a number of rulers in the Padang region granted the VOC a monopoly over the pepper trade. In pursuit of a pepper monopoly, the Dutch intervened in a succession dispute in the sultanate of Bantam in western Java. The victor made a treaty with them, granting an exclusive right of trade, and they constructed a fortress nearby.

The advance of Dutch power in the western parts of the archipelago affected Mataram. Sultan Agung had sought to prolong the resistance of Melaka, and his successor, Amangkurat I, vainly sought to maintain an influence in southeast Sumatra. The quarrel shifted back to Java itself. There Amangkurat's violent rule provoked a rebellion, in which the VOC intervened. In the treaty of 1677 he had to meet the VOC's costs, to grant it the right to trade throughout his dominions, to deliver rice, and to limit trade with Makasar. A further treaty was made with Amangkurat II in 1678: the northern seaports were ceded to the VOC until his debts were repaid; it was

given a monopoly over the import of textiles and opium; the boundaries of Batavia were extended; and Semarang was made over to the Company. '[T]he Dutch have gradually extended their hegemony over various places to the point where many of the coastal areas are now in their possession', the representative of a Chinese junk reported at Nagasaki.⁴⁵

Makasar had become a centre of what the Dutch regarded as the 'smuggling' of fine spices. God, said Sultan Hasanuddin, 'has created the world so that all men can enjoy the use thereof. Or do you believe that God has reserved for your trade alone those islands which lie so far distant from your own country?'⁴⁶ In 1660 he was forced to agree to prohibit all sailings to Maluku. When he failed to carry out his undertaking, the Dutch, with Buginese allies, attacked and defeated him in 1667.

The long-sought monopoly of fine spices became less important in the eighteenth century. Increasingly the Dutch focused on Java, where they had commenced coffee-growing. The wars there – wars of succession to the throne of Mataram, in which the VOC intervened – became more costly and also more destructive, yet still did not provide stability. The relationship between the Sultan and the Company broke down again in the 1740s. The outcome was the cession of a number of towns to the Dutch, and in 1746 Governor-General van Imhoff secured the cession of all the coastal regencies for a yearly sum. Yet further military action followed in 1749–57. The outcome was the partition of Mataram. The Company was now master of Java.

It was, however, weaker overall. It failed to adapt to the new opportunities of the eighteenth century, the trade in Indian textiles and opium and in China tea. It also faced rivals: within the archipelago Bugis adventurers dispersed by their intervention in Sulawesi; and within the archipelago and beyond, the British, whose Company expanded territorially in India and commercially at Canton, and whose Country Traders penetrated the Archipelago and challenged the Dutch contracts and claims to monopoly. One focus of the struggle was Riau, part of the empire of Johore, its trade 'an object of anxious uneasiness to the Dutch and of great mercantile convenience to the English'.⁴⁷ In 1784 the Dutch attacked Riau. Their action disrupted Johore and its trade, and impelled the British to occupy Penang in 1786. That settlement was, however, beyond the limits of the empire the Dutch now had, one increasingly focused on Java, with Melaka as the outwork.

That empire was limited and indeed fragile. It could not, however, be dislodged by the Malayo-Muslim states of the region. The broken-down empire of Mataram could not mobilise Java, the main centre of population. Johore-Riau, the inheritor of Melaka, had also been broken down as a result of internecine struggle and Dutch intervention, as well as the intervention of the Bugis and the English. Only another European power could dislodge the Dutch, as they had dislodged the Portuguese from all but a remnant of their trading empire in the Lesser Sunda islands. Britain did indeed dislodge them during the wars of the French revolution and Napoleon. It restored them, however, when the French were defeated.

Merchants, missionaries and merchants, the Europeans did not establish empires on the mainland in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nor even lay foundations for them. The initiatives lay with the mainland states, and their political struggles followed patterns that predated the advent of the Europeans. One was the struggle of the Burmans to integrate the Mon and Shan peoples into their kingdom and the bitter contest with the Thai kingdoms of Chiangmai and Ayudhya that were in part a result. The Portuguese played a minor role, as mercenaries, for example, when Tabinshwei-hti attacked Martaban in 1541. Contending with a successor, Nan-dabayin, the Arakanese installed a Portuguese mercenary, Philip de Brito, at Syriam: his power was destroyed by the Restored Taung-ngu dynasty, and he was impaled. The King of Arakan had himself begun to distrust the ambitious *feringhi*, and had welcomed the Dutch as a balance. Subsequently the VOC was able to establish a factory at Syriam, and when order was restored in the north it sought to establish one at Bhamo. The government at Ava forbade the project, however, and the VOC closed all its factories in Burma in 1679.

That led the English Company to display an interest in Burma. Its other motive derived from its growing contest with the French in India, and, more immediately, from their involvement in Ayudhya in the late seventeenth century. Both powers saw the significance of southern Burma, not only in respect of the supply of teak and thus of naval construction and repair but also, and increasingly, in respect of its strategic position in regard to the Bay of Bengal. They were thus tempted to take advantage of the Mon revolt of the 1740s. Rumours of Dupleix's plans to aid the Mons prompted the English Company to seize Negrais in 1753. That, however, led to conflict with the new Burman unifier, Alaung-hpaya, and the withdrawal upon which the Company had decided was not completed without a massacre in 1759. For the next thirty years or more there was little European contact with Burma.

The Thai kingdom of Ayudhya had also maintained its independence from the Europeans: it was to succumb to Alaung-hpaya's successor, Hsin-hypushin, in 1767. The kingdom had, like other coastal kingdoms, generally been strengthened by the commercial expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as, more specifically, by the use of European weapons and the employment of European mercenaries. Foreign traders were welcome, European, Chinese, Japanese, and they were used by the monarchs to conduct their trade. The VOC was especially important, first as a counter to the Portuguese, and later, under Prasat Tong, for its political support, for example in dealing with the recalcitrant Malay 'vassal' state of Pattani.

His successor, Narai, opened relations with the French, with whom he had made contact through missionaries of the Société des Missions Étrangères, and the connexion was encouraged by a Greek adventurer, Phaulkon, who hoped that king and people might be converted to Christianity. The arrival of an imposing French mission in 1687 was, however, followed by his overthrow. The Portuguese feared that the example would spread to other mainland

kingdoms: ‘they will drive out all the missionaries and Europeans, and close all the ports to them, as was done [by the Tokugawa] in Japan, fearing that we will do as the French did in Siam.’⁴⁸ Narai’s successor in fact made a new treaty with the VOC, but Chinese and Malays had a larger role than before.

The Laos kingdom, with which the Dutch vainly sought to open up trade in the 1640s, fell apart at the end of the century. A succession dispute opened the way, not to the intervention of Europeans but to intervention on the part of the neighbouring Vietnamese. The subsequent breakup of the kingdom into three states, Luang Prabang, Vientiane and Champassak, indeed led to the intervention of the Thais as well, and later to that of the Burmans under Alaung-hpaya.

Cambodia, too, was a prey both to its own weakness and to its neighbours. Its kingdom had sought to take advantage of Ayudhya’s struggle with the Burmans in the 1580s, and then sought help against the avenging Thais, even appealing to the Spanish governor in Manila, and securing some help from Spanish adventurers. The first half of the new century was, however, a period of prosperity for Cambodia. Rivals overthrew the king in the 1650s, however, and they were assisted by the Vietnamese, who subsequently choked off the international trade of Cambodia. Increasingly, too, the Vietnamese took over the Khmer territory in the Mekong delta.

Vietnam itself had been unable to maintain its unity, but that encouraged its expansion, rather than preventing it. The civil wars of the sixteenth century had ended in a stalemate, with the Trinh family dominating the old core of the kingdom, Tonkin, and the Nguyen family building their power on the more recently acquired lands to the south. The struggle was renewed in the 1620s and went on for fifty years more. Both parties welcomed European merchants and, in a much more tempered way, European missionaries: the Europeans, especially the Portuguese, were a valuable source of arms and ammunition. Another stalemate followed. The Trinh were restrained by the fear of Chinese intervention. The Nguyen tapped the resources of the south by trading with foreigners and by colonisation at the expense, in particular, of the Khmers. Yet the Vietnamese state remained, at least in theory, one. The Nguyen did not create a separate Cochin China.

The eighth Nguyen lord welcomed a French East India Company mission in 1748–50. The French were looking to ‘Cochin China’ as well as to Pegu in their attempts to counter the British company. But its leader, Pierre Poivre, failed to secure permission for a factory at Tourane. The regime, and that of the Trinh, was to be overthrown by the Tay-son rebellion that began in the 1770s. That gave the French a new opportunity to intervene. Though their government made a treaty with the Nguyen pretender in 1787, they were cautious about doing so, and the help they afforded him was limited. His unification of all Vietnam, achieved by 1802, owed little to them, and his empire was able to limit its contacts with the Europeans.

The Spaniards built a state in the Philippines, but it was an exception that proves the rule. The objective of the voyage begun in 1519 by Magellan – a Portuguese who had fought with Albuquerque against Melaka, and subsequently joined the Portuguese expedition to Maluku – was the spice islands. He reached Samar and Cebu, then an entrepot for trade with China. Though he met his death there, the remaining ships went on to Palawan, Brunei and Tidore, and the *Victoria* completed the first circumnavigation of the globe. The Spaniards retained their interest in Maluku till the 1660s, despite the opposition first of the Portuguese, then of the Dutch. At the same time, they built up a new commercial interest, centred on Manila, which they acquired in 1571. That became an entrepot for trade between China and their empire in New Spain.

Manila was, of course, also the capital of the realm they built up in the islands they had named after the then Infante. That realm, however, depended largely on the activity of the missionaries and their successful evangelisation of the peoples of Luzon and the Visayas, who had not yet been converted to any of the world's major religions. It also depended on the lack of effective political opposition: the islands were divided among *barangays*, village settlements, rather than states. Where states existed – the Muslim sultanates in the south, Brunei, Sulu, and Mindanao – the Spaniards enjoyed only a very limited success. Indeed the 'Moros' reacted to the Spanish incursion by extensive raids on the Spanish coastal settlements in the islands to the north. The Spaniards counter-attacked in the 1630s, but withdrew in the 1640s, making treaties with the sultans, and in 1663 left their advance base at Zamboanga.

In 1718–19 that base was rebuilt, and several sharp encounters with the Sulus followed. In 1737 both Spain and the Sultan of Sulu adopted new strategies: the two parties made a treaty promising mutual aid in the event of an attack other than one by a European power. If the Sultan hoped to gain support against unruly vassals, he failed. The Spaniards wanted to preach Christianity, at the same time offering an alliance against European powers as well as Asian. When he agreed, the Sulus displaced Sultan A'zim-ud-din by his younger brother.

The war was renewed and raiding increased. In 1754, for example, the Moros attacked all the coastal towns of Mindoro, a particular target because of its strategic location, and by 1755 they were entrenched in Marinduque. Their presence hindered resistance to the English when they attacked Manila during the Seven Years War. After the British left Manila in 1764, the Moros were stronger than ever. In 1788, after repeated attacks, only three towns in Mindoro were left standing. This was again a realm that could be dislodged only by Europeans, but its ability to protect its subjects was often tenuous.

The Europeans in Southeast Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in most at least of the eighteenth had neither the power nor the wish to create territorial empires in the region. Only over several decades had the VOC established control in much of Java, in part because the initial weakness

of Mataram grew with successive interventions. The Spaniards had established territorial control in Luzon and the Visayas, largely through missionary endeavour and 'urban' concentration. Their settlements remained exposed to devastating attacks from the Muslim sultanates to the south, which, though seeing them as part of the Philippines, they had completely failed to subdue.

From the late eighteenth century, Southeast Asia felt the impact of the growth of the power of the British, economic and political. They did not use it to build an empire. Their general preference was trade, not dominion, and India was an exception to the rule, even a warning. Their particular interests in Southeast Asia were limited, even extraneous, largely determined by its interests elsewhere, in Europe, in India, in China. Britain wanted to ensure the security of its growing dominion in India by keeping other European powers at distance and ensuring that neighbouring powers offered no challenge, policies that mainly affected Burma and the west side of the Bay of Bengal. It wanted to guarantee the security of the route to China, the focus of the East India Company's trade in tea, in particular through the Straits of Malacca. And it wanted to preserve a balance in Europe over against the main challenger, France.

These policies limited the territorial changes brought to Southeast Asia before the 1870s. Britain established itself in the Straits Settlements, adding Singapore in 1819 and Melaka in 1825, and later acquired Labuan from the sultanate of Brunei. It did not dislodge the Dutch or the Spaniards. Instead it came to terms with them, accepting their dominion, while securing commercial opportunity, the policy explicit in the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824, implicit in the Spanish case. That policy affected the position of non-European states in archipelagic Southeast Asia. In so far as they recognised the nature of the changes that were taking place or were in a position to do so, they sought to adjust their policies accordingly. In the archipelago few Malayo-Muslim states were in a position to pursue an autonomous course, and attempting to do so could be dangerous, given the special relationship with the British that the Dutch and Spanish realms preserved and developed. The states on the mainland had preserved their autonomy in the previous phase. Their success in handling the problems of the new phase varied from state to state, and was deeply affected by their traditions and their structures, and by the difficulty in perceiving and assessing the objectives of the Europeans or distinguishing among them.

In the post-1870 phase, they all succumbed to the Europeans, save Siam. After strengthening their control, the Spaniards were displaced from the Philippines, but the Dutch boosted their position in the archipelago. These were the results of 'imperialism'. The renewed rivalry of the Europeans, and their determined state-building, dislodged the compromises Britain had made when it was virtually unchallenged, but saw no need for territorial dominion. For Britain it was in some sense a retreat rather than an advance. Above all, it

was another accommodation, but with the European more than the Asian states.

With and within the new territorial entities, new relationships were developed, and new interests established. The outcomes of state-building were themselves ‘capricious’, while the entities were subject also to a range of other changes as well. The extent to which the imperial regimes could accommodate these changes was limited. They survived, however, until they were overthrown by the Japanese.

The Japanese had determined to sustain their independence in a world of states by modernisation and industrialisation. For that they had come to believe that the resources of East and Southeast Asia were essential. Even before the depression they resorted to military force on the East Asian mainland. It was only as a result of the interposition of the US – concerned about the war in Europe – that they resorted to military force in Southeast Asia. For a brief period the whole region was part of one empire, termed the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. On its overthrow, the Europeans sought to return, but largely in vain, and a Southeast Asia of independent states emerged or re-emerged.

Notes

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Part II

Interventions and acquisitions

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Robert Meade, 1883

3 The British

In Chapter 1 the author advanced a definition of imperialism, focusing on control, and on the period 1870–1910. The second chapter sought to place that definition in the longer-term context of the emergence of a world economy and a world of states, and in the history of the Southeast Asian region. This chapter and the next tackle the question of imperialism in Southeast Asia from another vantage point, by investigating in some detail the ‘imperialist’ interventions in Southeast Asia in the 1870–1910 period. Such interventions did not necessarily result in ‘control’, but rulers were displaced or lost their autonomy under regimes of ‘protection’.

Intervention resulted from a variety of circumstances and a variety of motives, and a detailed approach may help both to sort them out and to indicate their interrelationships. The focus of these chapters is on the decision to ‘intervene’, to displace or protect. Who took that decision? under what circumstances? with what purposes? Such case studies may sustain or amplify generalisations, modify or undermine them. It is the author’s conclusion that they tend to support an interpretation that puts an emphasis on the recrudescence of rivalry among the major powers, while also taking account of the failure of existing states to cope with the pressures of the world economy alongside those exerted by that rivalry, and recognising the personal ambition and zest for adventure that marked the Europeans of the second sixteenth century as they had those of the first.

The rivalry, the earlier chapters suggest, is driven both by the prospects held out to states by ‘nationalisation’ and ‘industrialisation’, and by the fears of insecurity that their differential application was bound to enhance. It is seen not only among the various states but also between them and the state that had secured a primacy among them in the period up to 1870. Though not the most ‘nationalised’ of the states, it was the most industrialised. It had ordered the world, not to secure territorial dominion, but to give scope to its advantaged trade. The spread of industrialisation to other powers, and the further globalising of commerce and communications, outdated the arrangements it had made and brought them into question. The system of the 1860s as a result gave way to the ‘imperialism’ of the subsequent decades.

The interaction among the Europeans is hard to capture, let alone that between them and the Asians, though it is at the core of an explanation. The author has chosen, without being entirely persuaded, to deal with the British first, and then with the other powers, in so far as that is possible. The inference is not that they were the leading imperialists. Rather it is that it was the arrangements that they had made in the previous period that were in question. Their stance, indeed, was often reactive, rather than assertive. If they could not retain all that they enjoyed in their primacy, they needed to prioritise. Even then, they hoped to moderate antagonism and to avoid conflict.

Anglo-Dutch rivalry dated back to the sixteenth century. Then the English were the lesser of the two powers. By the early nineteenth century the position had been transformed, but the British did not wish to eliminate the Dutch from the archipelago. The treaty of 1824 did, however, exclude them from the peninsula, where Britain established the Straits Settlements, initially administered by the East India Company, and from 1867 by the Colonial Office. At least in theory the treaty left the peninsula open to intervention by other powers, once the Dutch had left. The treaty of 1824 did not provide for British control. In that, indeed, the superior authorities in India and in Britain had no interest: it might prove counterproductive, given Siam's claims over the northern states, and Siam's vassal relationship with China. Britain's main concern was with the Straits of Melaka, a thoroughfare for British shipping. With one side guarded by the Straits Settlements, and the other side by the Dutch, it was not at risk from major powers, so long as they respected the 'exclusive lords of the East'.¹ Treaties made with Malay states in the 1820s were not followed up.

The best-argued analysis of the British intervention in Malaya in the 1870s was offered by C. D. Cowan in 1961, and it remains the most persuasive. Taking over the Straits Settlements, the Colonial Office adhered to the 'non-intervention' policy followed by the Company and, its successor after the Mutiny, the India Office. To the first Colonial Office Governor, Sir Harry Ord, that seemed inadequate, especially in respect of the states not regarded as under the Thais, nor as readily open to British influence as Singapore's neighbour, Johore. 'Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the condition of the Native States which are not dependent on any superior power', he declared. In all the states but Johore, the insecurity of life and property checked the spirit of enterprise 'even of the Chinese' and deterred investment. Ord felt 'that it would be greatly to the advantage of the Settlements if our influence could be thus extended over the Peninsula', and reported that he would use 'any opening that may present itself for doing so'.² The Colonial Office was wholly opposed. 'Her Majesty's Government are not disposed to adopt the duty, directly or indirectly, of taking steps for the security of life and property in countries where that security cannot be given by the lawful Rulers', Sir Harry was told, 'and cannot give countenance to the trend of

policy which you appear . . . to contemplate. It is clearly of opinion that the true policy of the British Government of the Straits Settlements is not to attempt to control but to keep clear of native disorder.³

‘[N]ative disorder’ increased after 1868. The Perak succession was disputed, Chinese miners clashed in Larut, civil war raged in Selangor. While Ord was on leave, the Acting Governor, A. E. Anson, set up a Committee on Native States, using a number of cases of ‘piracy’ as a reason for action. The Colonial Office warned him against undertaking increased responsibilities, but he had already acted in Selangor. Chinese had pirated a junk, but the Malay faction in charge at Kuala Selangor failed to co-operate against the culprits. Anson sent down the sloop HMS *Rinaldo*. A display of force was insufficient, and a skirmish was followed by bombardment. Anson followed this up by demanding that the Sultan appoint a chief at Selangor upon whom the British could rely, and backing the delivery of this letter at Langat with the presence of HMS *Teazer* and a force of marines. An ultimatum from the head of the mission, J. W. W. Birch, the Colonial Secretary, secured from Sultan ‘Abdu’l-Samad the grant of full powers to the ‘viceroy’, Tengku Zia’u’d-din of Kedah, and he was promised British assistance against anyone who disputed his authority.

The Colonial Office at first treated this episode rather in the terms that Anson presented it, as a blow against piracy. The pledge of support hardly fitted in, but Kimberley, the Secretary of State, suggested that it did not necessarily mean material support.⁴ A letter in *The Times*, however, put a different construction on the affair. The feisty former Chief Justice of the Settlements, Sir Peter Maxwell, pointed out that the *Rinaldo* had been sent to Selangor without its ruler being called upon to punish his officers; that it had destroyed his towns and forts and killed some of his subjects; and that subsequently he had been ‘compelled by threats of further hostilities’ to install ‘an officer nominated by the English Governor’. Undue force had been used, and international law violated.⁵ The Colonial Office, in a despatch seen by Gladstone, the Prime Minister, finally offered approval, but observed ‘that in dealing with native states care should always be taken that all means of obtaining redress by peaceful means are exhausted before measures of coercion are employed’.⁶ The *Times* letters also acted as a restraint on further action. The promise of support was not implemented, though it was not withdrawn. The Viceroy’s position was in the event secured not by the British nor by the mercenaries he employed, but by his allies from the state of Pahang.

In 1873 the focus was on the disorder in Perak. In the Settlements the press, petitions and public meetings called for intervention. Cowan attempted to ‘discover the economic basis of the agitation’, and assess the motives of the interests concerned, but was hampered by lack of information. A Chinese petition of March 1873 argued that ‘internal dissensions’ had brought legitimate trade with Larut, Perak and Selangor to an end, while the activities of the Dutch and Spaniards were impeding trade elsewhere. Though some Chinese merchants were distressed, Cowan could find no evidence of com-

mercial crisis. He estimated the capital involved in the Selangor tin mines as 'probably of the order of \$500,000–\$1,000,000'. There was also 'political' investment. The Viceroy was indebted to the Singapore lawyer, J. G. Davidson, who secured a substantial concession, to exploit which he was to try to float a company.⁷

In the course of 1873 officials at the Colonial Office and the Secretary of State, Lord Kimberley, 'swung round to the view that some sort of action was in fact necessary in Malaya'.⁸ Crucial in this, Cowan argued, was an approach by Seymour Clarke, representative of Davidson's syndicate. In a letter of 18 July he relayed the view of W. H. Read, his brother-in-law, that the smaller states of the peninsula would seek European protection, German if not English. A letter from the Viceroy asked if 'the English, or any other Government' would interfere in Selangor, 'so that merchants desirous of opening up the country may have security for their property and capital invested'. In Cowan's view it was this communication that led to the change of policy. The junior officials saw it only as another tiresome complaint. Sir Robert Herbert, the Permanent Under-Secretary, agreed that the reply must be that Britain could not interfere. But he suggested that it might be well for Britain to consolidate its position on the peninsula without incurring major risks or responsibilities. Kimberley agreed. 'It would be impossible for us to consent to any European Power assuming the Protectorate of any State in the Malayan Peninsula.' The Foreign Office should be asked if it saw any objection to instructing the new Governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, to extend the treaties with Selangor and the other Malay states by a stipulation against ceding territory or exclusive rights to a foreign power.⁹

By the time he received the Chinese petition late in August, Kimberley had decided that 'the interests of the British Settlements require that we shall exert our influence to put an end to the state of anarchy and disorder which prevails in several of the States'.¹⁰ He drafted what was to become Clarke's directive. He was to report in respect of each state 'what mode of proceeding should in his opinion be adopted with a view to restore peace and order, to secure protection to British subjects who may trade with the States, or embark in commercial undertaking in the native territories, and generally to promote the improvement and good Govt. of the native States with which we are connected.' He should consider 'whether these ends would be promoted by the appointment of a British agent . . . to reside at the seat of Govt. of any of the States not under Siam'. A crucial passage in Kimberley's minute did not appear in the final instructions to Clarke. '[W]e could not see with indifference interference of foreign Powers in the affairs of the Peninsula, on the other hand it is difficult to see how we should be justified in objecting to the native States seeking aid elsewhere if we refuse to take any steps to remedy the evils complained of.'¹¹

Ten days later Kimberley justified his instructions to Clarke in a letter to the Prime Minister, Gladstone.

It is the old story of misgovernment of Asiatic States. This might go on without any very serious consequences except the stoppage of trade, were it not that European and Chinese capitalists, stimulated by the great riches in tin mines which exist in some of the Malay States are suggesting to the native Princes that they should seek the aid of Europeans to enable them to put down the disorders which prevail. We are the paramount power on the Peninsula up to the limit of the States, tributary to Siam, and looking to the vicinity of India and our whole position in the East I apprehend that it would be a serious matter if any other European Power were to obtain a footing in the Peninsula.¹²

Cowan's conclusion is 'that the decision to intervene . . . was provoked not by conditions in the Peninsula, nor by any consideration of British economic interests there, but by fear of foreign intervention'.¹³ In an indirect sense the 'conditions' did provoke the intervention, it might be said: but the decisive 'consideration' was fear of foreign intervention. The threat that might present to Britain's economic interests in Malaya was not in question. The priority issues were, as they long had been, the protection of the Indian dominion and of the route to China. Why the 'blackmail' worked is less clear. No other power was in fact demonstrating an interest in the peninsula. The new German empire had, however, just been created, and there was no certainty that it would not embark on colonial ventures.

The Germans had, moreover, been showing an interest in Sulu, where Spain was attempting anew to assert its claims, bombarding the capital in 1871 and 1872 and imposing some kind of 'blockade'. The acting British Consul in Manila reported that the Sultan had offered to place his dominions under the German flag, and appointed an ambassador. The Germans admitted that an offer had been made, but no ambassador had been sent. That information was conveyed to the Colonial Office four days before Kimberley wrote his minute on Malaya. It sent the Foreign Office a copy of the Chinese merchants' petition, which alluded to Sulu.¹⁴

To provide against foreign intervention did not seem to require Britain to go very far. No doubt that was another reason why it went as far as it did. In July Kimberley had contemplated merely extending to the Malay states the kind of provision already in the Brunei treaty of 1847, and in fact already in the Malayan treaties. At the end of August he suggested the appointment of a Resident. That was far from annexation. Such a step would have been hard to propose, let alone adopt, but it did not in any case seem necessary.

The assumption was that the formal giving of advice would be sufficient, and it was sufficiency that was Britain's concern. That assumption grew out of Britain's earlier experience with the peninsular rulers. Formal intervention had never been approved, but the governors had been able to influence them in a number of ways. The ruler of Johore was the most obvious example: abandoning his connexion with 'pirates', Tunku Ibrahim had developed a close association with the government in Singapore – where he lived – and

with some of its lawyers and merchants, and he and his son Abu-bakar were amenable to advice. It was perhaps rather too easy to conclude that all that was needed was a means of influencing the rulers. The information the Colonial Office received tended to support the notion. After the visit to Langkat in 1871, C. J. Irving declared that the Viceroy, a brother of the Sultan of Kedah, had 'European ideas about his government', was ready to establish regular systems of justice and revenue, and to employ for this purpose European officers selected by the Straits government. 'Johore, with not a tithe of the resources of Selangor, has become a thriving and opulent state, – and why? Simply because the East Indian Government selected the most intelligent of the Native Chiefs, the present Maharajah, and supported him by their advice and influence.'¹⁵ George Campbell, Lieutenant-Governor at Penang, whom Kimberley saw in July 1873, 'found all the Malay potentates most amenable to reason, most courteous and most anxious to please'.¹⁶

Straits editors and petitioners, too, had shifted from advocating annexation to urging increased influence, perhaps, as Cowan suggests, because the political speculators wanted their clients to succeed, not to be displaced.¹⁷ In 1871 the *Pinang Gazette* argued that Britain's relations with the Malay states required 'revision'. 'The progress of commerce in this part of the world has been so rapid', it continued, 'that treaties entered into 30 or 40 years ago . . . are now useless.' The states must be 'brought under European control', British, or if not Dutch, or that of 'any other nation that wishes for the extension of colonial territory'. The 1873 petition, by contrast, asked that Britain should restore order, 'not by expeditions and aggressions, but by a moral intervention, and a determined attitude in respect of the affairs of the Territories'.¹⁸

Khoo Kay Kim did not accept Cowan's argument. He was inclined to accept the alternative suggestion that Cowan canvassed, but for lack of evidence could not adopt, that Kimberley used the 'German' argument because he knew that no other argument would secure Gladstone's agreement. It is, however, 'stretching the point', as John Bastin argues, 'to suggest that Kimberley's justification of a forward policy had to be expressed in broad imperial terms in order to secure the Prime Minister's support as well as to provide a device for defending the policy in the event of future criticism'.¹⁹ Nor is the omission of the point from Clarke's instructions so 'strange' as Allen implies:²⁰ such instructions were likely to be laid before Parliament, and giving offence to a foreign power would be avoided.

Khoo sought the evidence. One of his points is, of course, the lack of evidence for Cowan's line in the sense that no explicit threat was present, from Germany or any other power. His attempt to extend the doubt that raises by referring to reports on the defences of the Settlements is not, however, convincing.²¹ The establishment of another power on the peninsula was quite another matter. Nor is his argument about imperial expenditure persuasive. Kimberley insisted that the cost of the Perak war that followed the

assassination of the first Resident, J. W. W. Birch, should be borne by the Colonial Treasury, arguing that '[t]he policy which led to the War was in no sense specially an imperial policy'.²² Aside from a wish to shift the burden, the Colonial Secretary could easily persuade himself of a distinction between what he authorised and what Birch and others did.

Khoo's main arguments are more straightforward: that Kimberley wanted to protect and advance the trade of the Straits, and, but for his lack of confidence in Ord, would have acted sooner. There is certainly evidence of the lack of confidence, shared by Herbert and others. The former point is more doubtful. Indeed his material tends to show that the Colonial Office was anxious to avoid the impression that it was backing the Selangor association.²³ His material on Carnavon's support for a second telegraph line belongs to the period after Clarke's intervention.²⁴ What it was desirable or necessary to do once the intervention had taken place does not, however, necessarily reflect on the reasons for the intervention. Once a regular government was established – be it by appointing residents or by annexation – it needed revenue. It was in order to create that revenue, and to develop the state, that the Colonial Office offered a measure of support to concessionaires and investors, and it was particularly in that phase and at the local level that the link between capitalism and 'imperialism' is to be found. A different nexus of interests now emerged, displacing the nexus between 'native' chiefs and political speculators.

About a German establishment at Sandakan in North Borneo – a possibility raised during the Sulu discussion – Herbert had displayed no concern. Indeed he adopted the traditional view, offered by his junior G. W. de Robeck, that '[t]his may be bad for Labuan, but is a first rate thing as a whole'. 'A good deal of any trade they create will one way and another benefit British merchants', Herbert said.²⁵ Kimberley agreed: only monopoly was objectionable. In the Colonial Office's view merchants ventured in native states at their own risk. That did not mean that an ordered government was not preferable. But, so long as that government was not 'monopolistic', it did not have to be British. What was at issue over Sandakan was, in any case, a German mercantile enterprise, not an intervention on the part of the German government. If government intervention was at issue, the British government would be more concerned. In this case, indeed, the German government denied a wish to acquire territory.

The distinction had already been shown in the treatment of the US cessions of 1865.²⁶ '[A] large concession in North Borneo granted to the American consul in Brunei, C. L. Moses, in 1865 passed almost unnoticed in the Foreign Office and Colonial Office records', Cowan wrote.²⁷ That was not, however, the case. The grant had been reported both by the British Consul in Sarawak, G. F. Ricketts, and by the Governor of Labuan, F. J. Callaghan. Callaghan also reported in 1866 that Moses had transferred his rights to J. W. Torrey, whom the Sultan had appointed Raja of Ambong, and who was setting up a

colony at Kimanis. The Foreign Office made enquiries in Washington. The British ambassador there was told 'that Mr Moses is their Consul, but that any attempts which he may be making to obtain grants of land from the Sultan of Brunei are made on his own immediate responsibility, and for his own purposes'.²⁸ A further despatch from Washington indicated that the government there had 'declined to accept a cession of territory in Borneo as proposed to them by Mr Moses, whose proceedings appear to have been disapproved'.²⁹ The Foreign Office declared that, since Washington had disavowed any connexion with Moses' proceedings, it was 'not thought necessary to raise the question whether Her Majesty's Government had not a right to object to this grant as being contrary to the provisions of our Treaty with the Sultan of Brunei'.³⁰ The US government was not involved, or claimed not to be. Only if that had seemed likely would the Foreign Office have adduced the treaty, made in 1847.

A somewhat similar approach greeted the news received in July 1870 that newly unified Italy was seeking the grant of Banggi for a penal colony and of Gaya for a naval station. 'It appears to me', wrote Charles Cox at the Colonial Office, 'that if we are not prepared to extend Trade in these rich districts we ought to be glad to see such a Country as that of Italy willing to do it.' Herbert and Sir Frederic Rogers agreed. The treaty of 1847 was brought into the discussion, as well as an old treaty with Sulu made on behalf of the East India Company by Alexander Dalrymple in 1763. Kimberley decided to tell the Foreign Office 'that if the proposed Italian colony were to be simply a trading settlement', he would agree with the governor of Labuan, John Pope-Hennessy, 'that we should have no just grounds for objecting to the settlement'; but that he doubted if the British government should approve the introduction into Borneo of 'an European convict population'. The Foreign Office told Pope-Hennessy not to countenance the scheme.³¹

The Italian government had not, however, given up. Early in 1872 its minister in London, Cadorna, sought the British government's assent to a penal settlement between 6 degrees and the northern extremity of Borneo.³² The Colonial Office referred to its earlier opinion, and Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, told Cadorna he could not expect a favourable answer. The Italian government continued to press. The Foreign Office referred again to the Colonial Office, mentioning the 1847 treaty, and it repeated its earlier views, also referring to the old Sulu cessions. Their relevance was a matter for Granville to decide. The question of a naval station at Gaya, 'close to the main lines of communication in the Eastern Seas', was a matter for the Foreign Office and the Admiralty.³³ The Colonial Office did, however, refer to Pope-Hennessy's successor, Henry Bulwer. He was apprehensive about the effect on Brunei and on Labuan's trade. The Colonial Office recurred to its convict argument. There was 'strong ground for resistance on account of the disorders which would follow the introduction of a desperate class of European convicts in Borneo'. The Italians should be told that

the idea 'cannot meet with our approval'.³⁴ Their project was reduced to one of exploration, and Carlo Racchia, the Italian emissary, left it to his colleague Felice Giordano.

The British had taken their stand on the 'moral' issue, apparently preferring that to directly adducing the treaty of 1847. At Brunei, however, the treaty was in use. Giordano discussed with the Temenggong 'the territories that', as Bulwer put it, 'some years ago were so improperly leased to American adventurers'. The consular writer seemed mistaken, he added, in thinking that the Italians wanted the territories: no doubt they only wanted information. Enche Muhammad reported that he constantly reminded the Sultan of the treaty of 1847, and the Sultan allegedly replied: 'The English nation is our principal friends – and Labuan is like the fortification of Brunei. If other nations wish to establish their colonies on the N.E. coast the trade of Labuan will be injured and not many people will go there.'³⁵

When negotiating the treaty of 1824 the British had probably expected all of Borneo to come under Dutch control, but that had not happened. The British had reversed their policy, producing by 1870 a far more complex position. The change arose partly from their dissatisfaction with the Dutch treatment of their commerce elsewhere in the archipelago in the 1830s. The opening-up of China following the end of the Company's monopoly in 1833 increased interest in the southern shores of the South China Sea, and the growing use of steamers added an interest in Borneo coal. The decisive factor was, however, the initiative of James Brooke, who intervened in the still independent state of Brunei. Without him, it seems clear, there would have been no 'British Borneo'. It is equally clear that the British government did not wish to overturn their basic policy, that politically the Dutch should prevail in the archipelago.

Yet it was just that which Brooke hoped to bring about. The British should intervene where Dutch authority was weak or non-existent and reform and revive the indigenous Malay monarchies. His initial intervention in Sarawak, then part of Brunei, was designed at once to assist the Raja Muda, Hassim, to restore order, and also to start a process of reform, which he hoped would, with the backing of the British government, transform Brunei, and set an example for other states in the archipelago. Invoking the local help of the British against opponents he deemed piratical, and carrying out a public campaign for support in Britain, he became Britain's Agent with the Sultan of Brunei. His intervention provoked a coup in Brunei against Hassim's faction and a naval attack on Brunei followed. It was not, however, taken over. Instead in 1847 Britain made a treaty with the Sultan, providing for extraterritorial jurisdiction, and binding him, under article 10, not to make cessions to other powers without the approval of the British government. Offshore Labuan, already offered to the British, became a colony.

With these steps Britain went back on the treaty of 1824 but only in a limited way. Its emphasis was on bringing the Dutch to terms, not on estab-

lishing a rival empire. At home, too, a public campaign now developed against Brooke, provoked in part by the bloody conflict with the Iban 'pirates' at Beting Marau in 1849, but also concerned with the apparent incompatibility of the roles he had assumed, Raja of Sarawak, Governor of Labuan, and Commissioner and Consul-General to the Sultan and Independent Chiefs of Borneo. When a new British government appointed a commission of enquiry in 1853, the expansive policy of the 1840s, such as it was, was dropped.

The Labuan colony was not, however, abandoned, though it did not thrive. Nor was the treaty of 1847 undone. The raj of Sarawak was not withdrawn: public opinion would not have permitted the government to attempt it. Increasingly, on the other hand, Raja James argued that Sarawak was an independent state. That, however, would set an undesirable precedent. The transformation of British subjects into sovereigns would be an unwelcome anomaly in a world of states. The government already found difficulty in defining and fulfilling its obligation to protect British subjects in pursuit of their commercial interests, and it did not want to find itself committed to protecting their political interests. If it were, it would mean that the regular operation of British power had been restrained, only for it to be operated irregularly, and that commitments would be imposed on the government rather than assumed by it through due process. Instead of the clear obligations of a colony, there would be the unclear responsibility of a pseudo-colony. The position of Sarawak under the treaty of 1847 would also be unclear.

Reporting in 1855, the commissioners differed. H. T. Prinsep compared Brooke's position as a British subject with 'the ordinary and frequent case of British subjects engaging in the service of a foreign Power from which they may legally be recalled by their native Sovereign, on pain of outlawry'. At Sarawak he was a vassal of the Sultan, and that the British government could not overlook in the light of the treaty of 1847, so long as Britain and Brunei remained on terms of amity.³⁶ The other commissioner, H. B. Devereux, could arrive at no clear conclusion. If the treaty applied, Brooke could not alienate Sarawak without British approval, and British subjects would come under consular jurisdiction, not Sarawak's. If it did not apply, a British subject would be in the position of passing sentence on other British subjects, or of assuming inconsistent obligations to foreign powers. In the meantime foreign states acknowledging the independence of Sarawak might be guilty of aggression against Brunei.³⁷

The government dropped the commissionership but, as a gesture to Sir James, appointed his associate Spenser St John Consul-General. That was not enough. The Raja insisted that he could not operate in Sarawak without an *exequatur* from Sarawak. The government compromised on a basis suggested by Lord Wodehouse, the later Lord Kimberley: it would not recognise Brooke's sovereignty, but it would be ready to leave British subjects to be

dealt with by his courts.³⁸ That new anomaly was accepted by the Raja. He rejoiced in 'Our split with England'.³⁹

The Chinese 'rebellion' of 1857, however, prompted him to seek formal support. He wanted the British government to offer a protectorate. That it was unwilling to offer. He began to look to other powers, major and minor, France, the Netherlands itself, even Léopold, the future king of the Belgians. For such a policy to succeed, however, he had even more to stress that Sarawak was independent. Informal help should not be sought, he told his nephew Brooke. 'No nation... will deal with you, as an English agent in disguise. You must avow the independence of Sarawak, and thus disavow any connexion with England.'⁴⁰ The Raja told the British government that their relations were terminated, a 'manifesto (qy. and declaration of war)' Wodehouse described as 'simply ridiculous'. At Lord Russell's instance, the Raja was told 'that the people of Sarawak are welcome to any independence they can achieve and maintain, but that a British subject cannot throw off his allegiance at pleasure. Practically things will remain as before and a ship of war will go from time to time to Sarawak.'⁴¹ The Raja, however, chose to see this 'a great Victory... the treaty of Brunei does not now impede our negotiations'.⁴² It did, however. What would Britain say? Bentinck, the Dutch ambassador, asked.⁴³ Napoleon III gave no answer. Walewski had declared that the British would oppose the scheme by referring to the treaty of 1847.⁴⁴ Belgium the Raja himself ruled out after meeting the future ruler of the Congo: 'he has no idea of native rights'.⁴⁵ In general, however, it was clear that, no matter how strongly he asserted its independence, other powers saw Sarawak as within the sphere of the British, and their interests were sufficiently protected by or despite anomaly. It is the more surprising that they took a further step. It may have been affected by the French move on Saigon.

Brooke's friends had been largely against his foreign proposals, as had, for somewhat different reasons, his elder nephew and heir. One, Baroness Burdett Coutts, offered financial support. Others worked on the Foreign Office. The outcome was that Governor Cavenagh of the Straits Settlements was sent to Kuching to report. He suggested that Sarawak stood in the way of the Dutch, 'always inimical to British commerce in the Archipelago, and thus retains to us the whole of the trade of the north of Borneo'. He also made a strategic case. If the French retained their new settlement in Cochin China, and there were a war, British vessels would have to go China by the Palawan passage, and Sarawak could be a harbour of refuge and a position where men-of-war could refit. If it were in foreign hands, however, 'Labuan could only be maintained by the presence of a large Force, and the safety of our trade with China might be seriously endangered.'⁴⁶ Governor-General Elgin suggested some recognition and protection. Making Sarawak a colony might 'give umbrage in certain quarters, and furnish a precedent which may be abused if not a ground for protest'. Extending 'such recognition and protection' as would enable Sarawak 'to maintain in tolerable safety its present status of independence' would be 'the safer and wiser arrangement, if care

be taken to define properly before hand the extent which is to be given to this protection. It wd. never do to offer to the Govt. of Sarawak an absolute pledge of support.⁴⁷ The government had already more or less decided to appoint a consul at Sarawak and the report clinched it. Doing that implied Sarawak's independence, though the terms in which it was done sought still to avoid recognising a subject's sovereignty. '[A]bstaining from all unnecessary interference . . .', the consul was told to 'afford that moral support to the Ruling authorities which it is the desire of Her Majesty's Government to give to them.'⁴⁸

The negotiations with the Dutch that were finally to produce the Sumatra treaty of 1871 touched upon Borneo. Indeed the Dutch, fearing that Britain would take over Sarawak, at first hoped to secure an agreement about Borneo as well as about Sumatra. At the Foreign Office A. H. Layard believed that

it is for our interest and advantage that the ill-defined authority of the barbarous native chiefs in Sumatra and in parts of Borneo, should be replaced by the rule of a civilised Power – and the Power which we have the least cause to fear in the East is Holland. All we require is that Holland should renounce the exclusive narrow commercial policy that she has hitherto so obstinately adhered to in her colonies.

There was, however, the question of Sarawak. Did the Dutch intend 'that we should renounce any claim upon, or any future intention to enter into closer relations with that settlement?' Sarawak and its rulers were in 'a very anomalous position'. The British government had declined to accept a colony and rightly refused a protectorate, but had 'so far recognised Raja Brooke, as an independent ruler, as to name a Consul to Sarawak'. No doubt the Dutch 'anticipate the time when disputed successions after the death of Raja Brooke and other events [he and his elder nephew were now at odds], will afford them an opportunity of obtaining Sarawak for themselves, and of finally excluding the English from Borneo'. It was for the British government to decide whether Britain's commercial and political interests – free trade and naval superiority – required that Sarawak should remain 'an independent settlement under rulers connected with England or should be united more closely with this country'.⁴⁹

The Admiralty thought it would be 'prejudicial to the interests of this Country if we were to enter into any arrangement with the Netherlands Government by which Great Britain would be precluded from acquiring Possessions in those Seas, while it would be left open to other great maritime Powers to occupy whatever Stations they might find it advantageous to possess'.⁵⁰ The Colonial Secretary saw no reason for Britain to be jealous of Dutch settlements or anxious to extend its own, but also presumed it 'undesirable to fetter the future policy of the Government by promises to the Dutch as to what cause it may be desirable to pursue in yet unknown circum-

stances'.⁵¹ The negotiations were thus confined to Sumatra. Options should not be abandoned, but it was sufficient to keep them open.

In 1866 Coutts declared that she was disappointed that the transfer of the Straits Settlements to the Colonial Office was taking place without a consideration of Sarawak, and that she was making her 'last effort'.⁵² Brooke offered cession. At the Colonial Office Frederick Elliot was opposed. 'It is not territory which gives commercial influence, but ships, capital and credit.' Some day Britain might require it, as the Land Board suggested, but he 'would not take it now or until the necessity or expediency is much more proved than at present'.⁵³ The Admiralty was more positive. 'It commands one of the great routes to China, whilst the French establishment at Saigon commands the other.' Britain's influence would no doubt continue to predominate until Sir James died, 'but afterward Sarawak will be a great temptation to France, America, or the Netherlands'.⁵⁴ Back at the Colonial Office Rogers rejected the argument. 'It seems to me that this is just the old story. – We are called upon to an inconvenient and probably expensive thing because if we do not the French will.' The final reply, however, reflected Elliot's view. A Sarawak colony would be a burden in peace and war, but the question might be entertained in altered circumstances.⁵⁵

There was another anomaly in Sarawak's position. Sir James sought to extend his rule. In 1853 he had assumed the administration of the Rajang region, undertaking to pay the Sultan a fixed amount per year, and half the share of any surplus revenue, a compromise suggested by St John that avoided actual acquisition, though no doubt implying the assimilation of the region.⁵⁶ The Raja later argued that the 1847 treaty did not apply because Sarawak had been 'ceded', but the question of the Rajang was not raised. Subsequently the raj, guided mainly by the nephews, intervened in Muka, where it had developed a significant trade in sago. They believed, post-1857, that Brunei *pengirans*, nobles, were stirring up opposition, and Brooke Brooke talked of intervening 'with all the force I can muster' and making it independent of Brunei. The Raja cautioned him: 'remember your acts will probably be judged by the English or the Netherland government as arbitrators or in a worse character – for they might for their convenience disallow our character of nationality and the right of waging war'.⁵⁷

In the event the nephews did intervene in force in 1860, but the action of Governor Edwardes of Labuan – acting as Consul-General while St John was on leave – inadvertently averted the risk that the Raja had foreseen. It was 'most essential', he told his Colonial Office masters, 'that the Sultan's rights and territories shall not be trespassed upon by British subjects. His Highness should not vainly appeal to his treaty of friendship with England'.⁵⁸ In July Edwardes went to Muka on the steamer *Victoria* and told Brooke Brooke that he and others, British subjects, were committing aggression on the Sultan's territory, and requested him to withdraw. Brooke Brooke agreed to withdraw the British subjects, and Edwardes then insisted that he withdraw all the Sarawak force.⁵⁹

Wodehouse's reaction to the early stages of the episode was that it afforded 'a striking illustration of the inconveniences which arise from the anomalous position of Sarawak'. The authorities there feared the treachery of the Brunei chiefs, while the Sultan's relations with Labuan could not be friendly while he was apprehensive of 'the British subjects who rule in his neighbourhood... whom we protect and countenance'. The Sultan should be told that Britain could not interfere in his relations with Sarawak, 'a matter relating entirely to the internal administration of his dominions'. Brooke Brooke should be asked to show 'moderation' and to maintain good relations with the Sultan, and told that Britain had a right to an explanation, since he and his friends were British subjects, Britain was asked to protect Sarawak with ships of war, and it had a treaty with Brunei.⁶⁰

Edwardes's later proceedings were disapproved. He should not have interfered in the dispute unless he had been asked by both parties to mediate, he was told. That was not the case, 'and the course you took was therefore without excuse'.⁶¹ St John was sent back, told to interfere as little as possible in local disputes, but to endeavour to bring about 'a friendly arrangement of the affair'.⁶² That arrangement was in the event to involve the transfer of the government of the rivers in return for an annual payment along the lines of the 1853 agreement. Attempting to reassert a non-intervention policy, the British government had found itself intervening. Aware of one anomaly, it extended another.

The explanations Edwardes offered for his proceedings, too late, were dismissed, but there was some sympathy for them. An official at the Foreign Office suggested that he and the Sultan were 'misled by the anomalous position of sovereignty at Sarawak'. Edwardes's interference should have ceased when Brooke Brooke agreed to withdraw the British subjects involved.⁶³ 'He evidently thought it his duty to exercise a control over Sarawak on the ground that Sir James Brooke and his coadjutors are British subjects', Wodehouse commented; 'but this is precisely the Policy which it has been determined here not to pursue'.⁶⁴ Had Edwardes been told? He regretted that when he agreed to take charge of the consulate, he was 'ignorant of the duties it imposed on me, which I should have considered incompatible with my position as Governor of Labuan and the interests of the colony'.⁶⁵

A later Governor/Consul-General, Pope-Hennessy, dealt with the raj in a different way. At first it was, it seems, a matter of dealing with the anomalies, but in the 1870s the growing interest of other powers gave that a new context. The Raja died in 1868, to be succeeded, without any of the disruption some had feared, by his younger nephew Charles. Like his displaced brother, he had a more ruthless view of Brunei than the old Raja, who yet retained some feeling for the sultanate. Shortly before he took over, indeed, he was at odds with the Bruneis over the Baram, and Pope-Hennessy reported 'the general opinion that the Tuan Muda is resolved to pick a quarrel with the Sultan and thus get Baram and perhaps Brunei itself'.⁶⁶ He alluded to the treaty of 1847

and to the 1860 despatch to Edwardes. He was told not to interfere, 'either as mediator or otherwise', without special instructions. He was also told to

remind the Raja . . . of the provisions in our Treaty with Brunei against the cession of territory without the consent of the British Government, and, in so doing, you will state that Her Majesty's Government have no desire to see any change in the present state of territorial possession in the Island of Borneo, nor are they disposed to countenance any attempt to induce the Sultan to act in contravention to that Treaty.⁶⁷

Pope-Hennessy's attempt to uphold the interests of Labuan and of Brunei was more subtle than Edwardes's – he had no armed expedition to deal with – and it was also more successful: the Foreign Office took a firm stance against the further extension of the raj, quite explicitly using article 10 against it, and thus treating Sarawak as a foreign power though without explicitly saying so. The reasons for this shift are not entirely clear. It is likely, however, that the instructions of 1868 were an attempt to reassert a policy of non-intervention. The British government had, despite Elgin's suggestion, not defined its responsibility for Sarawak – definition would have meant obligation – and it had a treaty with Brunei – also falling short of a defined protectorate. Disputes were embarrassing, as the Edwardes episode had shown. Stopping the young Raja – easier, it may have been thought, than stopping the old – would avoid them. Opposing his expansion was an intervention designed to avoid more intervention, not on the part of other powers but on the part of Britain itself.

Raja Charles approached the British government directly in 1874 by alluding to the Sulu question and the advance of foreign interests in the region. He suggested that Britain should, by subsidising the Sultan of Brunei and his chiefs, become suzerain over the territory between Baram and the northern limit of Brunei, and that, if it did not wish to do so, Sarawak would undertake the plan.⁶⁸ Either way, of course, the Baram prohibition would be dislodged. That the officials did not at first perceive.

At the Colonial Office R. S. Macdonald thought that the first proposal 'would possibly involve Great Britain in great difficulties, and only grant a very complicated tenure of a limited part of Borneo. A resident at Brunei would probably be able to effect all that British interests at present demand, even if it be assumed that our consul (Mr Bulwer) has not sufficient influence.' Experience in Labuan, Herbert thought, was a conclusive argument against 'any extension of our interests or obligations in Borneo. We should acquire difficulties . . . with native states and foreign powers, & the country would be next to worthless for colonisation.' Brooke should be told, he added, of the 'strong objection' to his second proposal, the extension of his 'anomalous jurisdiction . . . His operations, which, while limited, have caused no inconvenience, could hardly fail to draw this county into complications if enlarged as proposed.' 'We have quite enough already on our hands', Lord

Carnavon, Disraeli's Colonial Secretary, wrote.⁶⁹ The Colonial Office told the Foreign Office that it was 'averse to the extension of British dominion and obligations in Borneo', and suggested that Brooke should be told that Britain 'would not view with favour any very considerable extension of his anomalous jurisdiction in Borneo'.⁷⁰

The growing interest of foreign powers in the area, to which Brooke had alluded, did not produce the drastic change of policy he sought. It did, however, affirm the current policy: it was an argument in fact against his extension, hitherto, it seems, based on the desire to avoid intervention. The Colonial Office comments have a wider significance, given that they belong to the year 1874 and to the Conservative government. The idea of a resident, such as had recently been appointed in Malaya, was not taken up: such an increment was not necessary to sustain British influence. Still less was Britain disposed to become suzerain: it could mean only difficulties without rewards. There is some implication, at least in Macdonald's case, that the policy might change in the future, and also some assumption that Britain would be able to change it when it chose.

Bulwer brought the Baram back into consideration. He pointed out that the 1853 acquisitions were 'a virtual infringement of the terms of the Treaty [of 1847]', and that in 1860 the British government appeared to have been under the impression that Sarawak's measures were 'self-defensive'. Any further extension would damage the interests 'invited into existence' when Britain made a treaty with Brunei and established a colony at Labuan. Sarawak's extension to the Baram would 'constitute a standing menace to the safety and independence' of the Sultan's government, injure British trade and prospects in Brunei and Labuan, and probably lead to 'questions and complications' necessitating the 'interference' of the British government 'at no distant period'.⁷¹ Following a reference to the Cabinet, the Foreign Office declined the protectorate and reaffirmed the 1868 decision.⁷² The commercial interests of Labuan were not its main concern. The interest of foreign powers had, however, increased its fear of 'complications'. If it needed to do so, it could still rely on the treaty of 1847.

The growth of foreign interest and the decline of Brunei were, however, factors in a change of policy in the later 1870s. The concessions of 1865 were renewed and expanded. Though it had not ignored them earlier, the Foreign Office now handled them in quite a different way. Options were being fore-closed.

Baron Overbeck, an Austrian who had worked for the leading British firm Dent and Company in Hong Kong, where he was appointed Austrian consul in 1869, became interested in Torrey's concessions, and in July 1874 made an agreement with two friends, A. B. Mitford, later Lord Redesdale, and Count Montgelas of the Austrian embassy in London, to acquire them and share the profits of their resale. The trio's attempt to interest some Viennese businessmen led to the visit to Borneo in May 1875 of an Austrian corvette, *Friedrich*.

Its captain, said Hugh Low, acting Governor/Consul-General, had instructions to investigate the position of the American Trading Company, 'as some capitalists in Vienna, who had been applied to on behalf of the Company', had asked the Imperial government for information.⁷³

Meanwhile early in 1875 Torrey agreed to sell Overbeck all his rights, subject to the renewal of the leases within nine months.⁷⁴ In June Overbeck and Torrey arrived at Labuan on a Swedish barque. Low thought that the object was to obtain a renewal of the 1865 grants, on which nothing had been paid and which were about to expire. The Temenggong made a new agreement, conferring on Torrey for ten years with right of renewal 'the entire control' of Paitan, Labuk, Bongaya, Sandakan, Kinabatangan, and Memiang, and the islands of Balabac, Palawan and Cagayan. Torrey proposed that the Sultan should cede the island of Gaya, and, it seemed, confirm the Temenggong's grant. Low had told the consular writer to remind the Sultan and chiefs of their treaty engagements. Enche Muhammad asked if a farm (*pajak*) were prohibited by the treaty of 1847. Low replied that 'to farm away the right of ruling the districts proposed . . . ought not to be consented to by the Rajas till after communication with Her Majesty's Government'. He suggested that there would be problems with Sulu, which claimed northern Borneo, and with Spain, which claimed Sulu, and that the Bruneis would 'run the risk of bringing hostilities upon themselves at a time when perhaps they would have weakened the friendly relations with England by neglecting to observe the 10th article of the Treaty'. The Sultan repudiated any share in the Temenggong's act.⁷⁵

Overbeck meanwhile went to London and obtained financial support from his former employer, Alfred Dent. In December 1877 he returned to Borneo. He told W. H. Treacher, now acting Governor/Consul-General, that the object was 'to form a British Company somewhat, tho on a smaller scale, after the manner of the late East India Company, the main desire being to develop the agricultural resources of the northern portion of Borneo'. Treacher said that he would welcome it, and did not think the interests of Labuan should stand in its way. Overbeck said he planned to buy Torrey out. Treacher said it would be better to get a fresh grant from the Sultan, 'a fairer and less onesided concession', and the Baron said that was his desire. Recalling Overbeck's earlier attempt to interest foreign capitalists, Treacher followed him over to Brunei in HMS *Hart*. Both Baron and Sultan promised that any concession should contain a clause 'subjecting it to the approval of the British Government'. In the event, however, none of the agreements the Sultan and Temenggong signed contained the clause. Treacher thought that Labuan could be sacrificed to an English company, though 'a similar proposal by the successful ruler of Sarawak' had been vetoed. As it was, the concessions could be transferred 'to one or other of the Governments' that had interested themselves in Borneo. But at least the American leases had been cancelled, and the grant contained the name of 'an English merchant of position'.⁷⁶

Much of the territory covered was in Sulu hands, Treacher pointed out, and the Baron would have to negotiate with the Sultan of Sulu as well. Overbeck agreed to insert in that agreement 'a clause to the effect that the concession shall not be sold or transferred to any other nation or foreign company except with the consent of Her Majesty's Government'. He told Treacher that 'there should be the strongest possible inducement for you to carry through such a measure for it would be a great diplomatic victory, insofar as it would virtually place the whole of the east coast under the direct control of the Government, at any moment they liked, without pledging them in any way to the expenditure of a single Dollar unless they chose to do so'.⁷⁷ It seems that the Sulu claims were a surprise to Overbeck, and that he recognised that he needed Treacher's help.

Britain's policy towards the Spaniards in the Philippines may be compared with its policy towards the Dutch in the archipelago. It had no major interest in the Philippines to set against its interest in the balance of power in Europe, where Spain had to be kept apart from France. Indeed it preferred to see the Philippines in the hands of a minor power, such as Spain had now become, rather than to have a major power alongside the route to China. It should, however, be persuaded to offer adequate opportunities to British trade. For their part the Spaniards recognised that the best means of retaining their colony was to appease the British and open it up. The loss of almost all their American empire, and the failure of their own attempts to develop the Philippines, led them to take a relatively positive view of British trade and investment, though they remained fearful that they might again have to face, as they had in the Seven Years War, a combination of internal unrest and foreign invasion. The 1869 and 1871 tariffs abolished export duties and reduced the tariff differential enjoyed by national vessels.⁷⁸ Trivial questions gave the impression, however, that the Spanish attitude to foreign commerce was 'arbitrary, grasping, and even dishonest'.⁷⁹ Kimberley regarded their government as 'effete and anti-commercial'.⁸⁰

Both the resources they secured and the apprehension they felt prompted the Spaniards to strengthen their hold on the islands, and to renew their attempts to establish their position in the Muslim south. With Sulu indeed Sir James Brooke had in 1849 made a treaty along the lines of the 1847 treaty with Brunei. Following a Spanish protest the British government had abstained from ratifying it. The Spaniards were also prompted to make a new treaty of their own in 1851, though they did not establish themselves on the island.

The wish to eliminate slave-raiding, the fear of Islamic revivalism and the threat of foreign intervention led to more violent action against Sulu in the 1870s, cutting off its trade and sinking its ships. There were protests from the German government, to which the Sultan had appealed, as well as from the British. The two powers joined in securing the protocol of 1877, by which Spain agreed to refrain from any interference with British or German vessels,

and to levy no duties on trade except where its authority was definitely established. Theoretically the deal kept open Sulu's traffic with the outside world, including the arms trade Spain so much resented. It was also, however, another inducement for Spain to extend its authority. In 1878 the Sultan was compelled to sign a new treaty.

Early in the year Treacher visited the Sultan, to tell him, under Foreign Office instruction, that his request for mediation was under consideration. Overbeck went there at the same time, though not in the same boat. The acting Consul-General apparently saw the Sultan before the Baron. They discussed mediation. The Sultan said he expected 'great pressure... to come to terms before the two Governments applied to can interfere', and Treacher said that the Spaniards knew of his approach. Perhaps, if averse to making a new treaty with Spain at once, he might seek to gain time, or offer a compromise.⁸¹ It is not clear whether Treacher helped Overbeck. No doubt, a British commentator wrote some years later, his presence would heighten the Sultan's impression that he would have a better chance of British help if he made the concession.⁸² Treacher said he responded unofficially to the Sultan's request for advice. Overbeck, he thought, represented a bona fide British company. If the Sultan wished to make the concession, it might be well to insert a clause rendering it not transferable to other than British subjects without the consent of the British government, 'to obviate the risk of its ever passing into the hands of his enemies the Spaniards', and to insist that any subsequent difficulties between himself and the company should be referred to the Consul-General. He also advised the Sultan, at his request, on the amount he should ask.⁸³

After the grant had been made, Treacher visited Banua, the Spanish settlement. Martinez at once claimed the Sulu possessions in north Borneo. The acting Consul-General then returned to Meimbang. Overbeck mooted the cession of the archipelago to the company. The Sultan told Treacher that he would agree to that only if it were 'approved and supported by the British Government'. If it were disallowed, he would find it even harder to get fair terms from the Spaniards. Treacher agreed to telegraph from Singapore. The telegram announced the offer, asked if it was sanctioned, added that the Spaniards were preparing an expedition, and concluded: 'Pauncefote knows the Company'.⁸⁴

Julian Pauncefote was the Legal Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. Formerly in Hong Kong, he knew something of the China hands involved, including Torrey. He was, it seems, in contact with Dent before Overbeck left, and, before he left himself, Dent wrote to his brother Edward that he had made a mistake in not calling on Pauncefote, 'as he might have given me useful letters to Consuls and others in the event of my going to Borneo and requiring introductions to Singapore and Borneo officials so that they recognised me as real chief of this Borneo scheme'.⁸⁵ Overbeck, as Treacher reported, had introductions, though 'of a private nature certainly, from gentlemen holding high official appointments at home, and to whom the

previous correspondence on the subject from the very first was in all probability known'.⁸⁶

The Colonial Office had not been brought into the affair. G. W. de Robeck and Robert Meade noted that the treaty of 1847 had been enforced against Brooke, and Robert Meade suggested referring the reports to Governor/Consul-General Ussher, who was on leave, saying that the Colonial Secretary would have to be satisfied that the Brunei concession was 'innocuous' and 'that there are good grounds for departing from the policy laid down and hitherto consistently followed'. Pauncefote was 'no doubt personally well acquainted with Messrs Dent and Overbeck', Herbert commented, 'but this may lead him to be more favourable to their scheme than if they were strangers'. 'A great and successful trading Company would almost extinguish our languishing Colony at Labuan', he suggested, but British influence and interests might be advanced. 'While therefore I would proceed very cautiously in connection with this undertaking I would not refuse it consideration'.⁸⁷

Ussher opposed the scheme. A company like the old East India Company would need a charter and should be a bona fide British undertaking. But British policy had 'of late years been averse to such enterprises; and the probable result will be that within a limited period Her Majesty's Government would have to assume the sovereign power and make these lands a British Colony, which could be done as easily now'. If the Company were successful, it would annihilate Labuan, 'most undesirable', as it was of strategic importance. Ussher counselled against a waiver of the treaty of 1847. It would, he added, be 'impolitic and perhaps not equitable' to concede permission to acquire a cession to 'a doubtful undertaking' after it had been refused to 'a British subject and a constitutional and enlightened ruler like the Rajah of Sarawak'.

Most of the Colonial Office officials shared these sentiments. Treacher, Cox thought, had encouraged Overbeck to think that the Colonial Office would not object to the Brunei concessions, as he had indicated that he would have waived his objection if the Baron had inserted a clause forbidding a transfer to a foreign power. If Britain called on the Sultan to cancel them, it might be a breach of faith by the Sultan. Yet in its present form the cession was 'very undesirable', and it would be still more undesirable if the Baron set up a 'Maharajadom'. He seemed to be 'a mere speculative Adventurer', and to have 'the whip hand of us'. But he might be told that the British government would not recognise the cession 'unless he was prepared to establish an English Company or agreed not to transfer the ceded Territories to anyone without the consent of the English Govt'.

Meade thought that, if it were a foreign undertaking, article 10 should not be waived. If it were British, it would be 'most objectionable'. 'They are to exercise Sovereign rights.... They cannot do this without involving the British Govt. in their proceedings, and in undefined responsibilities consequent thereon.' If they were successful, there would probably be complaints

against them, and the government would be called upon to control them. If they were massacred, the government would be called upon to avenge them. If they dealt harshly with the natives, Exeter Hall would call for government intervention. 'In international law I believe the cession to a British Company is virtually a cession to the British Crown... We should be saddled with a responsibility but without any control. It would, in my opn., be better to establish a Colonial Govt. at once over the territories in question.'

More moderate, Herbert was 'reluctant to check legitimate enterprise', and certainly Labuan could not stand in its way. He doubted 'whether we have the right to tell the Sultan of Brunei that we forbid him to cede privileges and lands to a Foreign Power or association; and, this being so, if we refuse to allow an English association to be formed where it is proposed, we drive the promoters to make it a foreign undertaking, and British interests, including those of Labuan, will be beyond our protection altogether'. It was, he argued, 'always a serious question whether if trade and settlement are contemplated or commenced, and it is not convenient to establish a British Government on the spot we should not endeavour to keep control over the proceedings of the traders by causing a Company to be formed under such requirements as may serve British interests'. On the whole, however, Herbert favoured taking Meade's line with the Foreign Office, 'principally, because we have already on our hands two or three young, costly, and troublesome colonies or settlements; and have good reason to fear that Baron de Overbeck's scheme could at an early stage lead us into difficulty'.

Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the Colonial Secretary, agreed. A foreign company or a transfer to a foreign power was objectionable. The Foreign Office could decide if the treaty of 1847 allowed Britain to object. A British company needed the means 'to deal both firmly and justly with the natives', and it was not certain that this one had. It might also involve complications with the Spaniards. These views were conveyed to the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office declaring that it was a Foreign Office matter.⁸⁸

Pauncefote disagreed with the Colonial Office view of the Dent-Overbeck concessions. Ussher, on whom the Colonial Office relied, knew little of 'China people and China affairs', he wrote, but he was, from his residence in Hong Kong, himself 'personally acquainted with the Promoters of this scheme and its real features'. Dent was 'a gentleman of the highest respectability'. Pauncefote was 'assured that the Association is purely British - that they have ample capital - and that they have no idea whatever of parting with the concession to any foreigners or foreign state'. Indeed the Sulu concession precluded it, and no doubt they would extend the undertaking to the Brunei concession. That partly disposed of the objection that they could not deal with the natives under their jurisdiction. In addition, the Sultan of Brunei remained their suzerain, so that if need be Britain could exercise extraterritorial jurisdiction under the treaty of 1847. As to the infraction of article 10, it was 'practically obsolete': its spirit had been disregarded on the occasion of cessions to Sarawak, and no objection had been made against the original

north Borneo cessions. The claim that the scheme would saddle the British government with responsibilities and involve it with the Sultans and with other powers was 'vague', and 'should have no weight against the advantage which must accrue to British interests from the transfer of this territory to a British Company'. The Sultans could not complain and it was important to save something from Spain. The strategic value of the territory, opposite Saigon, was enormous, its mineral resources vast. 'New outlets for Trade are wanted', and while the Government was not called upon to give 'active support to the Scheme', he could not see why 'they should go out of their way to obstruct it'.⁸⁹

Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary, thought that the company could be recognised, and British rights under the 1847 treaty waived, provided that no more foreigners were admitted to the partnership without Britain's consent.⁹⁰ No action was, however, to be taken till Dent returned from the East. These views were conveyed to Edward Dent, and on 22 May Salisbury told the House of Commons that a decision would be delayed.⁹¹

The Colonial Office had meanwhile supported the idea of mediation at Sulu. A telegram from Madrid of 10 March announced that the Sultan of Sulu had accepted Spanish sovereignty.⁹² The Colonial Office still recommended mediation. Should it prove that the Sultan had submitted, it would seem desirable 'to prevent this Act extending to Sulu possessions on the mainland'.⁹³ Under a new treaty, the Spanish governor at Banua indicated, all the Sulu dominions became Spanish, including those in Borneo, save only part of the island of Sulu itself, reserved to the Sultan.⁹⁴ At the Colonial Office, Cox thought that Britain was 'powerless to interpose' against the Sulu treaty, but that 'no time should be lost to prevent . . . the Spaniards from acquiring the Sulu possessions on the mainland of Borneo'.⁹⁵

The Foreign Office had come to the conclusion that the idea of mediation was now hopeless: trade would be protected by the 1877 protocol. At Pauncefote's instance, however, the Spanish treaty was referred to the government's Law Officers, who were asked if Britain and Germany were entitled to protest against it, and whether any action was 'necessary or expedient to protect their interests under the Protocol'.⁹⁶ They thought that Britain could not protest against the treaty. When the ratified treaty was communicated, Pauncefote suggested, the government could, with Germany, make a joint communication to Spain.⁹⁷

The 'new treaty' would require 'great attention', Pauncefote declared, as the Spaniards would try to claim north Borneo, 'the very contingency which the C.O. urge us so strongly to resist while opposing at the same time the British Company. The concession to the latter which is prior in point of date to this new treaty may prove useful in resisting the encroachments of Spain in Borneo'.⁹⁸ De Robeck thought the Foreign Office might thwart Spain by using Overbeck and Dent. Meade did not know which was the more objectionable. 'If it were not for the governing Power which they claim and with-

out which they can probably do nothing I should of course prefer Overbeck and Dent.⁹⁹

The visit of a Spanish gunboat to Sandakan led Treacher to telegraph the Foreign Office: it was 'a feeler', and, unless Britain acted, would be followed by annexation.¹⁰⁰ The proceedings caused the British government 'very serious uneasiness', the ambassador in Madrid was told.¹⁰¹ Silvela, the Spanish Foreign Minister, said that Spain had no intention of 'occupying the island of Borneo'. It was following up a treaty that had been forced upon it. 'They had enough to do to keep what they had got.'¹⁰² Soon after, the treaty, duly ratified, was officially communicated. The Foreign Office prepared a draft for the Law Officers: could Britain resuscitate its earlier treaties? The draft was not sent, but held for Pauncefote.¹⁰³ By this time Alfred Dent had returned to England.

In the meantime he had been developing the concept of the company, influenced by his brother's discussions with Pauncefote, and his own with Treacher. At the outset the aim, perhaps already influenced by the contacts with Pauncefote, had been, as Overbeck had told Treacher, a company somewhat along the lines of the old East India Company. Of this the Colonial Office officials were critical. Edward Dent saw Pauncefote in April 1878, learning that the Foreign Office was favourable, and concluding that Pauncefote, with whom 'the matter seems chiefly to rest', might bring them round.¹⁰⁴ 'Everything will be arranged on honest and broad principles', Alfred told his brother on hearing of the conversation, 'the rights of natives carefully guarded and provided for and free trade as far as possible. My idea is that every dollar raised by way of revenue or sales of land should be spent in the country or in expenses connected therewith, our profit is to be made hereafter in mining, cultivation, trading and so on. Overbeck has however not quite fallen in with this.'¹⁰⁵

He told Treacher that 'the field for the profitable employment of capital is at the present time greatly restricted – e.g. trade in China, where the Merchant princes of former times are represented now, to a great extent, by either commission agents or mere speculators'. The company's major object was to plant coffee. But trade *per se* would 'never pay' and it was 'absolutely necessary to obtain sovereign rights to a certain extent'. Treacher hinted that, if the scheme collapsed, they might go to 'the highest bidder', possibly a foreign government. 'Mr Dent replied that his Company would be only too glad to give the British Government, in return for moral support, a lien on the title deeds and to deposit them at the Foreign Office.' It was possible, Treacher thought, 'that in consideration of permission to levy reasonable export and import duties on the native trade, to go towards paying the expense of Government', Dent and his friends would agree not to engage in trade themselves, 'in which case Labuan and Straits traders would be benefited by the establishment of a Government of some kind in the place of the non-Government now the rule, whereas they will certainly be injured if

they have to contend against a Company, weighted with the duties from which their rivals in trade are exempt'.¹⁰⁶

A company of the East India type implied a charter. That Ussher saw as undesirable, but Pauncefote apparently thought the concept could be reutilised so as to limit the government's responsibility, and yet impose some control, while also avoiding annexation, likely to alienate other powers and to be opposed by the British themselves. In early May Edward was writing to Alfred of a possible approach to Austria-Hungary if Britain did not 'recognise a Consul', and he told Overbeck that 'it might . . . strengthen our hand considerably if the Government here thought the Austrian government was willing to treat for the possession of our territory'.¹⁰⁷ A few days later he had a further conversation with Pauncefote. The Foreign Office, he told his brother, was disposed to grant a charter if no more foreigners were admitted, but would not come to a decision till he returned.¹⁰⁸ Edward saw Pauncefote again in August. 'Pauncefote says Ld. Salisbury is still favourably inclined and the former's idea seems to be that a Royal Charter should be granted under certain restrictions; one of the chief being that the country should not be transferred to a foreign power'.¹⁰⁹

Early in December Dent and Overbeck sent Salisbury their long-awaited communication. It asked for a charter. The provisional association was 'British in domicile and character' and could raise capital. It sought no monopoly. It wanted the exercise of extraterritorial jurisdiction through the appointment of its administrators as officers under the consular article of the treaty of 1847; 'countenance and protection' from consular, naval and colonial officials; support 'with respect to controul of foreigners', resident or visiting, 'so that the Company may be relieved of any difficulties arising with foreign Governments'. It also wanted 'a Charter of incorporation and regulation'. That would give the company the benefits of incorporation, 'without being fettered by the provisions of the legislation relating to Companies constituted merely for purposes of gain', and the government could 'impose terms and conditions'. Dent and Overbeck would agree that the company should be British, that it should not transfer its territories and powers without British consent, that any difference between it and the Sultans should be referred to the British government, that the appointment of its governor should be subject to British approval, and that the company should afford facilities for Her Majesty's ships.¹¹⁰

The draft to the Law Officers was now revised to take account of the grant to Dent and Overbeck. Their response was again disappointing. There was no basis for a protest against the Spain-Sulu treaty. Indeed, if northern Borneo was a dependency of Sulu, it, too, came under Spanish sovereignty. 'Mr Dent and Baron Overbeck may therefore take their own course, as they may be advised, in their interest in a private undertaking out of Her Majesty's Dominions.'¹¹¹ Pauncefote suggested to Lord Tenterden a conference with F. S. Reilly, the Dent lawyer. He suggested that the proper answer was a compromise. 'Might not Her Majesty's Government set off Sulu against

Borneo, that is to say, recognise the sovereignty of Spain over Sulu and the adjacent islands, in consideration of the abandonment of the Spanish claim of sovereignty over the north-east Coast of Borneo?’¹¹² Pauncefote adhered to his opinion that the Spanish treaty and the 1877 protocol were incompatible; ‘and if we wish a compromise, the best way to get it is to take up the position asserted in my proposed Draft to the C.O., whether it be legally sustainable or not.’

In that the Foreign Office pointed out that the British government had, out of policy, continued to resist Spain’s claims over Sulu, despite the Law Officers’ opinion. The rights claimed under the treaty of 1878 were in excess of those conceded in the protocol. ‘[S]till graver’ was their attempt to extend their claim to Borneo, which was not covered by the protocol. Salisbury, the letter concluded, thought that the government could support the Dent–Overbeck undertaking ‘if the claims of Spain to the territory ceded to them can be disposed of’.¹¹³ At the Colonial Office De Robeck thought that the Dent–Overbeck scheme could not be ‘touched until the Spaniards are disposed of’. Meade thought it might be possible to recognise Spain in Sulu, if it receded from any claims to the mainland; but it could not be ‘expedient to take up, as a protection agst. the Spaniards, a scheme such as that of Overbeck and Dent, which would land us in worse difficulties’. Herbert agreed ‘in disliking and distrusting this scheme’: if it were sanctioned, ‘the Foreign Office should have the entire responsibility of it’. But again he qualified his view. ‘It is of course possible that a British Company strongly controlled from home, and unable to take any step without the concurrence of official Directors on the spot, might promote British Trade and beneficially counteract Spanish influence in Borneo, without making it probable that this country would be involved in war or other difficulties.’ The reply Hicks Beach prescribed indicated that the Colonial Office thought the Spanish claim should be disposed of first, that he retained but, in view of Salisbury’s ‘decided opinion’, would not press his earlier views on the question, but that he thought he should secure Cabinet’s opinion.¹¹⁴

Pauncefote prepared a protest against the Spanish treaty – it was not ‘consistent with the spirit of the Protocol’ – and against the Spanish claim ‘over any part of Borneo’. Salisbury approved.¹¹⁵ In September Dent urged a decision, and Pauncefote suggested pressing Spain for an answer. ‘Mr Dent is incurring great expense.’¹¹⁶ The Duke of Tetuan told the chargé that replies were ready, adding that his government had no intention of occupying north-east Borneo, but could not abandon its suzerainty over the Sultan, whose possessions extended to north-east Borneo.¹¹⁷ Talking to the ambassador in October, Silvela denied that treaty and protocol were inconsistent. As for Borneo, Spain never intended to occupy it, he repeated. It would, however, maintain its rights to sovereignty in parts tributary to the Sultan.¹¹⁸

Dent and Overbeck wanted ‘a certain amount of countenance’, Salisbury told his Cabinet colleagues, and sought various concessions, including a charter of incorporation. Their undertakings, he thought, did not ‘affect closely

the point at issue. For if it is right to make these concessions at all, the opportunity of opening trade through an English company with the interior of Borneo would be a sufficient motive for making them.' Three inconveniences were apprehended. First, the claims of Raja Brooke: no doubt a compromise could be reached over any disputed territory. Second, the destruction of the trade of Labuan: but '[i]t would not be fair to discourage enterprise, to restrict trade, to postpone the development of a fertile country, merely to spare the Colony of Labuan from a dangerous competitor'. Third, the 'most important' objection, it was 'essential to consider how far, by making these concessions to the Company, we shall be pledging the military and naval force of this country, and risking collision with other powers or peoples'. Would there be any obligation to assist the 'colonists' if attacked by the native chiefs or the Sultans? Spain might challenge Britain's right to recognise the government of a company 'professing to hold under a grant from Sulu whom she claims as her feudatory'. But 'there must be no doubt of the importance of the coast in question'. The issue was whether the benefits were

worth a possible disagreement with Spain, and a possible claim for defence against the natives of the Island. The attention of all other countries is at the present time so much turned to the occupation of important strategic positions in the Pacific, that if this opportunity is allowed to pass by it seems very probable that some other nation would interpose claims which would prevent it from being renewed.¹¹⁹

The Admiralty was doubtful. The Hydrographer admitted the strategic value of Labuan, and thus of keeping Gaya and the north-west coast free of another power, but he doubted the value of Sandakan.¹²⁰ The First Lord, W. H. Smith, thought Dent and Overbeck should supply more information on their resources, on the potential revenue, and on the powers they proposed to exercise. 'It might be inconvenient if the North West Coast of Borneo fell into hostile or unfriendly hands, but as much could be said of a great many other parts of the world which we do not dream now of occupying.' On the whole he felt 'that no additional responsibility should be accepted by England in respect of this Cession and if a Charter means a Gun boat for protection against any Enemy I should not be willing to give the "countenance and support" which is implied by a Charter'.¹²¹ No decision was reached before the collapse of the Conservative government. 'Shortly before Lord Salisbury left office Dent and Company pressed him for a letter to the effect that in the opinion of H.M.G. the Sultan was justified in making the concession or that the concession was valid. Lord Salisbury had no doubt upon the point but left the matter for his successor.'¹²² Pauncefote had advocated meeting Dent's request, but Salisbury declined: 'I think this should not be decided by an outgoing Government.'¹²³

Dent called on Pauncefote and, saying he had spent £40,000, declared that he would have to dispose of his concession if the government would not

support him. There were rumours of a German company, and Spain and Holland, even Russia, might be interested. In what Dent called 'a *powerful memo*',¹²⁴ Pauncefote argued that there would be no difficulty with other powers, even the US, which had a treaty with Brunei dating from 1850, provided no annexation took place.

The F.O. and the C.O. concur in the opinion that although it is not desirable that a British Protectorate should be established over this territory, it is of great importance to British interests that no foreign Power should obtain possession of it, or indeed exercise any influence there. This applies notably to Spain... The only practical mode (short of British annexation or Protectorate) of excluding the influence of Foreign Govts. ... is to secure its *occupation* by British Subjects under such a concession as is held by Mr Dent.

A syndicate of wealthy friends would go ahead if granted a charter. A charter was also in the interests of Great Britain. Conditions could be inserted securing the government 'against any political difficulties. It is clear that so long as the territory is not annexed by Great Britain, ... no difficulty need be apprehended from any Foreign Power, except so far as any Treaty Rights which they may claim in the territory, should be infringed by the new Proprietors'. To obviate this a clause might be inserted binding the company to obey the Secretary of State's directions as regards relations with foreign states.¹²⁵

Kimberley was again Colonial Secretary. He modified the Office's earlier opposition. The question was whether the inconveniences it had pointed out were 'outweighed by the inconvenience which would be caused by this territory falling into the hands of another European power, and by the advantages of a fresh outlet for trade'. Normally, Kimberley wrote, 'I should look with comparative indifference on acquisitions of territory by foreign powers in the East, but I do not feel certain that this case is not an exception'. One possible occupant was the Netherlands; but under the treaty of 1871, 'we have lately given over to the Dutch all Sumatra, and I should be sorry to see a further extension of their power'. Nor was it at all for Britain's advantage 'that Germany should intrude herself into these regions. Her policy is Protectionist. She is not a weak state like the Netherlands whom we can easily influence, and her presence near the Malay Peninsula might seriously weaken and embarrass our position by unsettling the minds of the natives.' As for Spain, 'I think there is no power whose territorial extension in the East is less desirable. We have recently resisted in a peremptory manner her claims in the Sulu Archipelago and it would be very inconsistent to let her set foot in Borneo. She is intensely illiberal and Protectionist, and will shut out our trade wherever she can.' Last there was Italy: a non-penal colony might not 'do us any special harm'. The Colonial Office had earlier mentioned the 'difficulties of administration', but Kimberley thought that 'the success of Sarawak' showed that 'the natives of Borneo can be managed by a few

Englishmen'. The 'general objections to an English Company undertaking to govern this portion of the Sultan's territory' were not 'insuperable, if any extension of our responsibilities in the East is held to be admissible'.¹²⁶ Dent became confident; 'we are to have a "non-political" (!) charter'.¹²⁷

The Foreign Office now referred Dent's application to the Law Officers. Apart from its awareness of the advantages in opening new outlets to British trade, the government, they were told, did not wish the area to fall into the hands of foreign powers; nor did it wish to increase its 'responsibilities in the East by the annexation or protectorate of new territories, which, moreover, in the case of North Borneo, could hardly fail to excite political jealousies'. It thus favoured the application. Was there any valid objection in international law to an association 'as the governing power over these territories under the grants from the Sultans'? And was there any objection to a charter?¹²⁸ The Law Officers saw none. They did, however, think that the clause binding the company to obey the Secretary of State's instructions on relations with foreign powers might be modified: otherwise the British government could hardly 'avoid responsibility to foreign Powers for acts of the agents of the Association'. Instead there should be a clause providing that the British government might object to any of the company's dealings with foreign states, and binding the company to take notice of any suggestion founded on such objection.¹²⁹

The opinions of the members of Gladstone's Cabinet were obtained in October. The 'bigwigs' were in favour, some 'ultra Radicals' opposed:¹³⁰ Harcourt feared 'difficult complications', 'obvious embarrassments' and 'ultimate annexation'; Chamberlain agreed, and thought there would be opposition from 'Liberal members below the gangway'; and Childers thought a charter would risk 'complications with three Foreign Governments'. Gladstone and others, as Pauncefote put it, 'made no objection'. Kimberley repeated his views. The Dutch pursued 'a very monopolising exclusive commercial policy', and the Spaniards were 'thoroughly hostile to our trade'. 'The Germans would be a too powerful neighbour, and their presence in Borneo would exercise a disturbing influence in the Malay Peninsula, our position in which would be unfavourably affected by the establishment of any of the three States I have mentioned in N.W. Borneo.' He did not expect major objections. Britain had made 'extensive concessions' to the Dutch in Sumatra in 1871, and Spain had 'quite enough to do to justify her high-handed proceedings in the Sulu Archipelago without interfering with us'. 'Considering our position in the Malay Peninsula on the one side, and Australia on the other', a footing in north Borneo was important, and the opportunity of obtaining it should not be lost. Selborne agreed; Bright 'greatly doubted'.¹³¹

It is not clear that the matter was discussed in cabinet. Later Granville and Kimberley recollected that it was, but Gladstone could not call it to mind, and there was nothing in his report to the Queen, then the only record of Cabinet meetings.¹³² In any case Dent was told on 12 December that the

government was ready to grant his application. The Colonial Office, somewhat belatedly, raised the question of sovereignty: had British subjects, or the Queen, become sovereign? The answer, Herbert said, was that the Sultans remained suzerain. Pauncefote, of course, endorsed this view, and so did the Law Officers.¹³³ The War Office asked if the British government would be expected to undertake the defence of the territory: Pauncefote's comment was that the company was to receive 'such protection to life and property as is usually afforded to British Subjects in uncivilized places out of H.M. Dominions'.¹³⁴ After considering an objection from the Dutch, the Privy Council approved the charter on 26 August. The government and the charter survived the Commons debate, which took place in March.

The question of Cabinet approval had been raised by Sir Charles Dilke, hostile to the Company when in opposition.¹³⁵ Now in the ministry, he agreed to help meet criticism in Parliament. The best defence, as Granville said, would be 'not very civil to Foreign powers'.¹³⁶ A long expository despatch – Dilke's suggestion, designed to get over what he called the 'Parliamentary difficulty'¹³⁷ – recapitulated the circumstances under which the government agreed to the charter and explained its legal effect. 'North Borneo lies in the way of an immense British maritime trade between China, Australia, India, and the United Kingdom. Its occupation by a foreign Power would be a source of disquietude to this country.' By the charter the crown 'assumes no dominion or sovereignty over the territories occupied by the Company, nor does it purport to grant to the Company any powers of government whatever'.¹³⁸

It was in fact a singular debate, as A. J. Balfour observed, since the opposition had supported the charter when in power. Gladstone himself evoked the past, when, he said, government had mixed itself in James Brooke's 'very questionable – in my opinion, a very guilty undertaking'. 'We have thought it better to make an experiment of some wise and moderate method of preserving control.' Balfour referred to the Prime Minister's anti-imperialist Midlothian speeches. Now he argued that a charter limited responsibilities. 'If that were so, the Government ought to hurry after any body of British subjects who made a settlement anywhere, and should pray of them to accept a Charter in order that our responsibilities may be limited.'¹³⁹

The weakness of the two sultanates – whose control of the area for which they were at least in part rivals had always been variegated and often tenuous – had become more evident with the advance of Sarawak on the one hand and Spain on the other. At the same time Western powers showed an increased interest in Southeast Asia, the older-established ones in some measure being pushed into action by the interest of newer powers, and also by the revival of Islam. In these circumstances the British, though not methodically, redefined their priorities. The Borneo case study does not suggest that they changed their basic concept of Britain's interests. What concerned them was the scope for British enterprise in the world. That required orderly, but not necessarily British government, security for the main routes, and support of

free trade. The new circumstances of the 1870s – the decay of native states, the intervention of new powers and the activation of old, and from the late 1870s a growing protectionism in Germany – prompted more a reaffirmation of these objectives than their rejection.

What was done to pursue them in the new circumstances was, furthermore, modest and prudential. In part that was due to the long-standing domestic doubts over commitments and responsibilities. It was also a means of meeting the competition without clashing head-on. Britain perhaps still had the power to respond by wholesale acquisition of territory. It preferred to proceed much more cautiously so as not to provoke other powers into still larger changes or challenges. Its aim was not only to avoid changing its priorities but also to avoid so far as possible a wholesale change in the status quo. British influence was strengthened by innovative devices, or innovative use of old devices, like the resident system or the chartered company. It was also at times surrendered, as with the ‘partition’ of Sulu that was now to follow.

The case of the North Borneo charter – itself not quite precedential, since by early 1877 a Glasgow shipowner, William Mackinnon, was already discussing with his friends a company, modelled on the East India Company, that would rule and develop the mainland possessions of the Sultan of Zanzibar¹⁴⁰ – is suggestive so far as the relationship of ‘capital’ and government was concerned. No pressure groups were involved, other than Dent and his associates, whose fortunes were made in Hong Kong, and retired officials formed the majority of members of the Association. The government confined itself to rhetoric about British enterprise and Borneo resources without any kind of economic appraisal and was at pains to define the support it offered in traditional terms. The striking feature of the process is the role played by Pauncefote, the Legal Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. It was he who played a major role in showing, so far as relations with foreign powers were concerned, that the company would fend them off without provoking them. He was also able to bypass the opposition of the Colonial Office, hampered as it was by the conflict between its preference for a regular government, rather than a Foreign Office expedient, and its inability to advocate the creation of new colonies. Yet this personal advocacy rested, it seems clear, on no personal pecuniary interest,¹⁴¹ and even the friendship with the Dents appears somewhat impersonal. It seems indeed safest to conclude that Pauncefote began by an attempt to ensure that the concessions did not fall into foreign hands, which after all seemed not impossible, even perhaps those of Austria-Hungary, which we should not assume was not in the game. The move, along with the attempted mediation, stirred Spain to impose a treaty, and to claim north Borneo. That identified the Company’s cause yet more closely with Britain’s. In Salisbury’s case there is no evidence of any personal connexion: his reference is to ‘British enterprise’ and to ‘strategic positions’. The Company’s charter, furthermore, was restrictive as well as facilitatory.

The ‘partition’ was achieved in the Britain–Spain–Germany agreement of March 1885. Its basis was the recognition of Spanish sovereignty in the

islands, and the withdrawal of Spanish claims in respect of Sulu's claims in northern Borneo. The negotiations were protracted by the Spanish government's wish to modify the conditions imposed by the protocol of 1877, and by the attempt of the German government, otherwise gaining nothing from the partition, to secure some guarantees for free trade in the Company's territory. Possibly the Germans had a larger agenda. By this time Bismarck had indeed begun a colonial policy.

The partition process that the chartering of the company involved had another dimension. Raja Brooke had been held off the Baram by the decision of 1868. The Company's venture had two effects. The Brunei sultanate became more difficult to hold together and disintegration gained momentum, even a sense of inevitability. At the same time, Charles Brooke, furious at the Company's interposition, was able to argue that his cause was no less valid, and to obtain support from a Colonial Office that distrusted Foreign Office expedients, and shared Ussher's view that not to support the Raja now was 'impolitic' as well as 'perhaps not equitable'. The security of Brooke's raj itself might, moreover, be damaged, and his goodwill towards Britain reduced: indeed Britain could never entirely disentangle itself from the raj. Inasmuch, however, as the restriction on its expansion had been an intervention designed to limit responsibility, the removal of the restriction would imply an increase in responsibility. Had the mere expansion of the raj now become acceptable? or did it require some element of control, short of sovereignty, such as the charter offered in respect of North Borneo?

In a letter to the Foreign Office Brooke had described the Brunei grant as 'the ruthless and secretly devised selling of people's rights', an objection that Pauncefote thought came with 'bad grace', given that 'his uncle annexed large portions of territory in defiance of the Treaty'.¹⁴² The first draft of a response was modified by Salisbury: 'Too sharp. There is no use in offending the man who is well disposed.'¹⁴³ The Raja renewed his own proposals for extension. Treacher reminded the Sultan of the treaty of 1847. He also wrote to the Foreign Office. 'The Kingdom of Brunei I believe to be dead and past resuscitation, without the help of European rulers and advisers on the spot.' The influence that Labuan could exercise was insufficient.¹⁴⁴ But he questioned whether the extension of Sarawak was the answer. There was 'the grave question of how the Government of an enlarged Sarawak would be carried on in the event of the decease of the present Raja during the minority of his children – a question which would arise in the case of each successive Raja – and as to what the responsibility of England would be in the case of the failure of an heir to the throne'.¹⁴⁵

That doubt was not, however, repeated at the Colonial Office, and it suggested to the Foreign Office that, if it decided to set aside the treaty of 1847 in favour of Dent and Overbeck, there were apparently 'no grounds on which the peaceful extension of a settled and on the whole beneficent Government such as that of Sarawak' could 'reasonably be opposed'.¹⁴⁶

Pauncefote recalled that in 1877 the Raja had made deductions from his 'tribute' to the Sultan in respect of the debts of Brunei subjects, offering to restore them if he ceded Baram.¹⁴⁷ After a stormy interview with the Raja in London – he was 'very excited and abused the Baron but was unable to show how the matter concerned him in any way'¹⁴⁸ – Pauncefote suggested that conditions should be attached to the extension he sought:

if H.M.G. are to consent to this cession [to Baram], they should see in the first place that the Sultan is fairly treated – Secondly that our traders will not be placed thereby in a worse position and have no substantial objection to urge against it and thirdly that the relations between Raja Brooke and the Sultan are placed for the future on a clear and intelligible footing so that the rent or Tribute be punctually paid and not treated as charitable allowances.¹⁴⁹

If the treaty of 1847 was to be further displaced – by contrast to affirming it in 1868 – it would need to be done on a more regular basis than had been the case with the previous transfers. That would, of course, limit the *de facto* independence the Raja enjoyed and had been able to combine with *de facto* protection. It would also involve the British government more deeply.

At Meade's suggestion the Colonial Office reply began by restating the government's 'settled policy... not to sanction the creation or extension of states which cannot be regarded as either wholly independent or as under the immediate control of this country'. The Colonial Secretary was not prepared to recommend any departure from the policy. But if there were to be an exception, Brooke had 'strong claims for consideration, as his Government has now been firmly established for many years and has been conducted with success in the interests of the Inhabitants of the Districts ruled by him'. Any agreement between Brooke and the Sultan, the Colonial Office did however add, should be submitted to the British government before it was 'finally concluded, and it might be well to require the former to undertake that no export duty or restriction on trade should be placed on the various trading stations of the territory in question'.¹⁵⁰ Even the Colonial Office looked towards imposing some conditions on the extension of Sarawak.

There is some evidence, indeed, that, at least at lower levels in the Office, a more positive view of the raj was emerging. It was not merely a reaction to the Foreign Office's expedients, but also a reaction to the costly failure of Labuan. That could not be abandoned, but perhaps it could be part of a self-sufficient colony. '[I]f Labuan coal comes to naught, and the Colony is never to become worth having', de Robeck wrote in June 1879, 'the question will arise whether at no distant future it will not be wiser to try and do good in that part of Borneo by favouring the ambition of Sarawak, so that hereafter having absorbed Labuan and gained a predominant influence over the decaying Brunei Raja Brooke may found a sounder and more extended colony with better means of success than ever were within reach of the little

Island alone'.¹⁵¹ In the face of the Sultan's opposition, the Baram matter went no further at this point. 'The time may soon come', de Robeck remarked, 'when it will be as good an arrangement as any other to give [Brooke] Labuan as well as allow him to take Baram for Baram will bring Sarawak close up to our unfortunate island.'¹⁵² C. P. Lucas had the same idea. '[T]he true policy would, I think, . . . be to combine if possible Labuan and Sarawak under an English protectorate', he wrote early in 1880: 'but no such idea would presumably be entertained.' De Robeck looked towards 'the formation hereafter in face of a decaying Brunei of a sound self-supporting Colony'.¹⁵³

In 1881 the Raja sought to rent Miri and Bakam. A new Governor/Consul-General, C. C. Lees, suggested that a transfer was desirable 'with a view to the promotion of orderly Government and the development of Trade'. But it was possible that 'a future ruler of Sarawak' might wish 'to dispose of a part or the whole of his country to another nation' such as the USA, and the treaty of 1847 might not be sufficient to invalidate it. Brooke did not reocognise the Sultan's suzerainty, and the commercial articles of the treaty were, according to Treacher, not in force in his territory. Lees suggested that Britain might offer no objection to the extension on the understanding that certain conditions of the treaty, 'modified if thought necessary', should apply to Sarawak, or at least to the transferred districts.¹⁵⁴ The Colonial Office adopted the idea, and so did the Foreign Office. It stressed that it did not mean to urge cession on a reluctant Sultan,¹⁵⁵ but proposing conditions rather than putting up opposition made it more likely.

In 1882 the Raja secured the Baram, with some help from the acting Consul-General, Peter Leys, though that seems to have passed unnoticed in London. He also ensured that the agreement recognised the Queen's treaty rights in the transferred districts, applied the commercial clauses in them subject to any modifications approved by the British government, and stipulated that no ruler of Sarawak should cede 'these territories' without British consent.¹⁵⁶ Brooke at once asked if he might assimilate the duties in the ceded territories to those in the rest of Sarawak. The Colonial Office agreed that the commercial articles in the treaty of 1847 could be waived, though not abandoned.¹⁵⁷

The new cessions reduced the means by which the Bruneis might retain control over the remaining rivers, while at the same time helping, with the competition for the succession to the aged Sultan, to make them more exacting.¹⁵⁸ A report from Leys in 1883 strengthened the Colonial Office belief that Brunei's days were numbered. De Robeck hinted at annexation. Sultan Abdul Mumin was 'extremely old incompetent and mercenary, and his government inconceivably weak and corrupt. At his approaching end we must be prepared to annex Brunei, or to incorporate it with Sarawak and the territory of the British North Borneo Company, supposing the latter to go on well.' If Brunei were displaced, Herbert saw, the region could 'never be allowed to belong to any foreign power. We shall have to consider who should have it. It

might be divided between the Raja & the Company – Labuan passing to the latter.’ Meade thought they could wait. ‘When the time comes no doubt North Borneo or Sarawak will be glad to step in. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’¹⁵⁹ A further conclusion followed. In 1884 both Colonial Office and Foreign Office indicated that they would not oppose further leases of the Sultan’s territory, provided article 10 was preserved.¹⁶⁰

The Company was apprehensive of the rivalry. The prospect that Sarawak would dominate Brunei was alarming, in itself, but also because the Company had not secured a number of interdigital rivers within its cession. Its governor, Treacher, acting again as Consul-General when Leys became ill, intervened in disturbances on the Limbang in 1884, procuring a settlement between the Bruneis and the overtaxed and rebellious Bisayas and Kedayans. As Governor he secured the lease of the Padas in November. This prompted Sarawak to secure the lease of the Trusan which lies to the north of Brunei. Treacher reminded the rajas of the treaty of 1847 and presented the Foreign Office with various arguments against the transaction. He was also apprehensive about the Limbang, which it seemed that Temenggong Hashim, heir to the throne, was ready to cede to Sarawak.¹⁶¹

In London Sir R. Alcock, ex-ambassador to Japan and chairman of the board, sought the government’s approval of the Padas-Klias cession and its interposition against the advance of Sarawak. He stressed that ‘the personal tenure on which Sarawak is held from the Sultan of Brunei renders it very uncertain what may be its ultimate destiny’. It might be ceded to a foreign power, and Alcock alluded to the colonial fever stimulated by Bismarck’s action in southwest Africa. The British government should ‘extend a protectorate over the remaining territory of the Sultan, lying between the Baram and Padas rivers, as they have done in the native states of the Malay Peninsula’. Failing that, the Company could ‘step in and, with Lord Granville’s sanction and aid, enter into arrangements with the Sultan of Brunei to obtain a lease or concession of the Limbang and Trusan territory for which Sarawak was negotiating’.¹⁶²

At the Colonial Office de Robeck welcomed the Padas cession. Raja Brooke would ‘build upon it further annexations on his own side of the country’. Soon all Brunei would have passed into the hands of Raja or Company, ‘and both these Great Powers will then make a strong bid for the honour and advantage of possessing Labuan’.¹⁶³ Brooke declared his interest in Limbang, though adding that he would not touch the independence of the capital, unless the Brunei government offered it, and then the British government must make the decision. His request, de Robeck thought, ‘should be complied with, that is the Limbang River and eventually the Brunei River should be annexed to Sarawak, because the Government of Brunei Town and Labuan must eventually be one’.¹⁶⁴ Herbert believed that both the Company’s and the Raja’s ‘annexations’ were ‘desirable, and that it will be well that Brunei itself & any remaining territory not included in them should with as little delay as possible come under the control of either Sarawak or the

Company; as the insertion of any foreign power at Brunei would cause serious complications'. He also wished to ask the Foreign Office whether it would 'be possible to unite Sarawak & the Company's territory under the British Flag. There is much danger in the prospect of the Sarawak territory passing in[to] other hands'. Derby agreed.¹⁶⁵ What had been sufficient unto the day was so no longer. The main object now was to keep the area out of foreign hands, and that required a protectorate.

That view, it seems, also led Herbert to be more specific about the partition. De Robeck welcomed the idea that Brunei and Labuan should be transferred to the Raja. The proposal that the Company should have Limbang as well as Padas was 'the coolest thing that has come under my eye for some little time past'. Conversations with Alcock and Pauncefote led Herbert, however, to conclude that Brooke's proposed acquisitions 'would practically control Brunei and Labuan to an undesirable extent'.¹⁶⁶ Pauncefote suggested a stay on cessions meanwhile. Herbert and Lord Derby agreed, and a telegram was sent to Treacher.¹⁶⁷

In early March Alcock urged a decision. The Limbang truce could not last, and France or Germany might intervene, as in New Guinea, or a Lüderitz might secure a concession despite the treaty of 1847, and Bismarck take up his cause. The area was three days' voyage from Saigon and had coal. Recently returned from the Berlin conference, Meade argued that the partition should wait no longer. Padas should go to the Company, and Trusan and Limbang to Brooke. Certainly foreign jurisdiction must not be established on 'this portion of the Coast'. But the Colonial Office should state that it was, '[a]s at present advised', 'not disposed to undertake the onerous charge of governing the remnant of the state of Brunei left under the Sultan, in the same manner as the Malay states are administered by Residents'. If, however, the Foreign Office agreed that 'in some form a British Protectorate should be extended over the district in question', the Colonial Office would not object to the establishment of 'an ordinary Protectorate, which would suffice to preserve the little state from foreign aggression without entailing the responsibility involved in direct administration as part of Labuan'. Alternatively, 'we could later on arrange... for its partition'. His colleagues accepted Meade's approach. Brooke was, however, to accept the 1882 undertaking as covering all his territory, and it was suggested that the 'ordinary protectorate' should cover Sarawak and the Company territories, permitting their eventual absorption of the remnant of Brunei.¹⁶⁸

Alcock protested to the new ministry about its predecessor's decision, which, he said, virtually gave Sarawak control of Brunei, the suzerain of the Raja and the Company.¹⁶⁹ Treacher as Governor staked a claim to Muara, the mouth of the Brunei river, which the Directors approved 'in self defence'.¹⁷⁰ That, at Meade's instance, the Colonial Office opposed: 'any step tending to hasten the necessity of a decision on this point' – the 'ultimate ruler' of Brunei – was 'to be avoided'.¹⁷¹ Pauncefote visited Herbert and Colonel Stanley at the Colonial Office. The outcome was support for the

Company's having Muara. An arrangement that allowed the Raja 'to get Brunei into his grip' was 'not a good one', Herbert said. The Foreign Office thought it important that Muara 'should not be in foreign hands; and as this place is over against Saigon, and there is so much German movement in the East, I agree with them in thinking that the North Borneo Company should occupy Muara if they will do so'.¹⁷² Salisbury was not quite convinced that the rest of 'wrecked Brunei' could be preserved. 'Remember the new Principals [*sic*] Bismarck has introduced into Colonial Politics. He might as likely as not seize the Balance, while we are waiting to see it reach the proper stage of decay.' The Directors had rejected the idea of taking over Muara, 'in a fume', as Pauncefote put it,¹⁷³ but it was fair to let them have it, and in Britain's interests.

Herbert envisaged that a further step might be needed. The Foreign Office suggested that occupation of Muara by the Company would be a guarantee against cession to a foreign power, additional to the Sultan's 1847 treaty obligation. Herbert added to the Colonial Office reply a suggestion that the British government should reserve 'power to assume at any time the sovereignty or protection' of the Muara districts, if for the better protection of British interests that course should at any time hereafter be judged expedient'. If Labuan were to be maintained as a colony, 'some extension of it may become essential in order to preserve its prosperity and to increase its revenue'; and 'if it should be attempted to establish a stable and efficient Government in what remains of the sultanate of Brunei, events may prove that it will be necessary to strengthen the connection between the Consulate and Government of Labuan and the Native Government of Brunei'. Some hold should therefore be maintained over the mouth of the Brunei.¹⁷⁴ He thus revived the notion of a real protectorate and wanted to keep open the options.

The British decisions were to be implemented by Leys, back from sick leave. The Raja agreed 'that no Ruler of Sarawak shall cede or otherwise part with any territory that now is, or that may hereafter come, under the Government of Sarawak, without the consent of the British Government'.¹⁷⁵ The main obstacle was Hashim, now Sultan. In 1885 the old Sultan and the three wazirs had agreed, in a document known as the *amanat* or will of Sultan Abdul Mumin, not to cede or lease any more Brunei territory.¹⁷⁶ The disintegration of the state was to go no further, its rulers decided. Hashim stuck by this, though British, Company and raj officials tended to think it simply covered a desire for a higher price, and seemed unable to believe that a native ruler could halt 'decay'. Only 'dire necessity', Leys now reported, would induce him to yield more territory, or even the Limbang. He suggested he should be instructed to 'press the Sultan to cede to others the districts he is so obviously unable to govern'. All the rivers up to Trusan, save Brunei and Muara, should go to Sarawak, and the Lawas and the interdigital rivers should go to the Company. Brunei would remain a home for the pengirans, and Muara stand over for 'future consideration'.¹⁷⁷ The Colonial Office

officials agreed, though Herbert thought that a formal protectorate should be extended over Brunei and Muara.¹⁷⁸

Pauncefote saw Herbert and Meade, and the three endorsed the virtually complete partition Leys suggested. They also revived and endorsed the protectorate proposal for all three territories. '[B]y virtue of Treaties, Charters, Declarations', they were 'virtually under British control, but not sufficiently to exclude the pretensions of other Foreign Powers seeking some footing in these important regions'.¹⁷⁹ The Governor of the Straits Settlements, it was proposed, should be appointed High Commissioner, his 'high position' adding 'great weight to his authority in the settlement of any difficulties which might arise in the Protectorate'. 'The remarkable activity which has been displayed during the last few years by some Foreign States in the acquisition of colonies and new outlets for trade calls for the utmost vigilance on the part of H.M. Govt., in order to avoid rival claims and encroachments in territories where British interests preponderate so largely as they do in that part of Borneo.' It was

unnecessary to dwell on the important considerations which arise in the present case not only from the magnitude of the commercial interests involved, but also from the strategical position of the territories in question, and which render it a matter of great moment that every precaution should be taken to prevent any doubt arising as to the prior claims of Great Britain to exclusive influence over that Coast and to secure that no part of it shall fall under the Dominion of any foreign Power.¹⁸⁰

The proposal was put to the Salisbury Cabinet early in 1887. The conventions would give Britain control of the foreign relations of the territories and their relations with each other. 'Their geographical position and their exceptionally good harbours and coal supplies render them most important to this country commercially and strategically.' They would become independent protected states. 'The proposed British Protectorate being thus of a limited character would entail no responsibility beyond that of maintaining order and of defending the protected states against foreign aggression.' The British government had already acquired substantial control, and 'the object of the proposed limited Protectorate is only to strengthen and consolidate British rights over those states, and to secure the recognition of those rights internationally'.¹⁸¹ 'We have long thought it important in view of the colonizing propensities of Germany to safeguard our rights on the Borneo Coast, and prevent Sarawak getting into foreign hands', Pauncefote wrote to Salisbury.¹⁸²

Protectorate agreements were drafted at the Cabinet's request. The British government would decide succession disputes in Sarawak and Brunei, a new clause ran, but on the whole the drafting reduced its powers. The power to set up consulates was designed, as Pauncefote put it, 'to establish more clearly that the states remain independent of us as regards their internal

Government'. The Colonial Office cut out a phrase obliging the protector to assist in 'the suppression of internal disorders'. The Cabinet had indeed queried the earlier reference to 'maintaining order'. That was intended, Herbert explained, to cover disputes among the protectorates, not within them, but the reference disappeared. Hertslet, the Foreign Office Librarian, cut out a reference to defence against foreign aggression. 'The extension of European Protectorates over distant parts of the Globe renders it more than ever important that the obligation of a Protectorate should not be precisely defined.' By this time the memorandum that was to serve as an introduction to the agreements implied that the protectorate implied 'no responsibility'. That Pauncefote thought was going too far. 'There will be a certain amount but very slight compared to the advantages to be secured.' The answer was to omit the paragraph.¹⁸³

Governor Weld arrived to carry out the partition scheme in May 1887. In fact, however, he had probably decided, even before he arrived, to push for a Resident. Though he made it clear that he did not wish to cede more territory, Sultan Hashim did not want a Resident, and it seems that Weld had to send in a 'decided' message – 'a very stiff answer' – before he agreed to request one. Brunei, he reported, would not be difficult to govern if a good man were selected, and it would not be expensive, since the Resident could also supervise Labuan. Commerce would expand and the natives benefit. Its geographical position, its coal and its 'being the seat of an ancient Sultanate, whose rule or suzerainty more or less directly affects the greater part of Borneo, and whose prestige would be restored by a Protectorate' made Brunei, with Labuan, 'the proper place for the British flag to be placed from the Imperial point of view'. He would not impose a protectorate on Sarawak and North Borneo, unless they sought one.¹⁸⁴ Leys believed that Weld would seek financial assistance for the new scheme from the Straits Settlements or from Perak.¹⁸⁵

This, as Weld put it, was not a solution the 'Home Govt thought of'.¹⁸⁶ His proposal indeed received no support at the Colonial Office. He had, said de Robeck, 'made a hash of his visit to Borneo',¹⁸⁷ and Meade echoed him. Herbert, too, thought the mission had been 'altogether mismanaged'. An administrative protectorate would be 'very objectionable to Raja Brooke', and 'would involve expenditure in Brunei which the country cannot provide for & which Treasury would certainly, and rightly, refuse to meet from Imperial Funds. It is out of the question, I think, to sanction the expenditure of Straits or Perak money on this unpromising scheme of a Brunei Protectorate.'¹⁸⁸ He adhered to this view when Weld came to London and endeavoured to argue for his scheme. Reports that the Sultan was after all ready to cede Limbang made it easier to argue for the scheme of partition and the 'ordinary' protectorate agreements. Pauncefote agreed, though arguing that the Company might govern Labuan.¹⁸⁹

Salisbury concluded that the Company and Sarawak were 'crushing out the Sultan between them; and that the process is going on with some rapidity.

I think that we had better let them finish it and make no agreement with the Sultan of Borneo which would stand in the way of a consummation which is inevitable and on the whole desirable.¹⁹⁰ Hertslet suggested that the Sultan, despite the treaty of 1847, might conclude a treaty with 'some other power . . . so as to avoid absorption by his neighbours'. Herbert suggested that concluding a protectorate treaty with the Sultan would not prevent the final partition of Brunei.¹⁹¹

The agreements were signed, the Governor became High Commissioner, the administration of Labuan was made over to the Company, and Brooke secured rights at Muara. He did not secure Limbang, which Hashim would not cede. At first the Raja was prepared to wait. The advent of tobacco concessionaires in Brunei, however, suggested to him, as indeed to the Company, which was still seeking the interdigital rivers, that it would now become more difficult to acquire territory, since the pengirans would be in funds, and that, if it were acquired, it would be encumbered.¹⁹² The British administrator at Labuan suggested that the Government should urge the Sultan to cede Limbang, for 'there is nothing to prevent the Sultan from selling and leasing lots of land in the vicinity of the river to Land Speculators and others for mere nominal sums and this will greatly complicate matters in future'.¹⁹³ In March 1890 the Raja occupied the Limbang. 'The real reason why Raja Brooke had seized the Limbang river is because the Sultan has begun to let land to Europeans for tobacco cultivation', G. L. Davies wrote, 'and Raja Brooke knows that the influx of British capital into the state of Brunei would make it prosperous and lead to the appointment of a British Resident; his chances of getting the country would then be gone for ever.'¹⁹⁴

Neither the High Commissioner nor the British government thought that the Raja should be required to withdraw. There was some suggestion that the Limbang people, in revolt, it seemed, for several years, might be virtually independent, and generally it was believed that the Sultan's opposition was tactical rather than absolute. Both Offices concluded, as Edward Fairfield put it, 'that it is inevitable to recognise Sir C. Brooke's act, however high handed it may appear on the surface'.¹⁹⁵ He should, however, compensate the Sultan. Sanction was given in July 1891 and compensation fixed at \$6,000 a year. The Sultan refused to receive it. There was some sympathy for him. The new Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, thought it 'a very bad business, and I will have nothing to do with it'.¹⁹⁶ That Pilate-like view also meant that he did not reopen the question.

At the Colonial Office, however, Raja Brooke's action and Hashim's obstinacy contributed to the development of a different approach to Borneo. Weld's concept of a residency had been rejected in the 1880s. In the 1890s it came into favour. The emergence of a possible model, the Federated Malay States, was another factor. For that suggested a means of sustaining British interests, though not the means de Robeck and Lucas had earlier contemplated.

The detailed study of what became 'British Borneo' indicates that the major decisions in the 'imperial' phase were motivated by a broad conception of the interests of the British state. Those interests were defined, much as they had been in the previous phase, in terms of politico-strategic considerations and of a generalised concern for economic opportunity. Changing circumstances – the 'decay' of native states, actual and perceived, the globalising of communications and economic development, and, still more, the recrudescence and intensification of international rivalry, to which the other factors contributed – prompted new measures. About them was an element of improvisation. The British indeed had good reason to emphasise adjustment and compromise. The status quo was largely to their advantage, and they should not encourage others to overthrow it either by example or by provocation. Time, they had believed, was on their side. That was now less clear. Some at least of the options they had kept open had to be taken up, though still no more than would be sufficient unto the new day.

Once the British had gone back on the notion that Borneo should be left to the Dutch, it became their concern. The policy of the 1840s had left Britain with a complex of interests there from which it could not extricate itself. It sought to minimise its responsibility in respect of the Brookes, but it could not abandon them. It also upheld the Brunei treaty of 1847 and retained Labuan. The resultant policies were full of anomalies, but they were sufficient to sustain British interests in the 1850s and 1860s, and the possibility of changing them, should those interests require, was kept open.

The larger changes of the 1870s and 1880s – above all the emergence of rival state-builders and Bismarckian 'principles' – impinged on these adequate, if messy, arrangements, and suggested the need for adjustment. International rivalry was a factor in the support the Foreign Office gave to the Company and in the establishment of the 'ordinary' protectorates in 1888. Some Colonial Office officials had preferred an alternative track, supporting the raj, and making over the revenue-deficient Labuan, so as to form the basis of a 'self-sufficient' colony. Their superiors did not support the programme, and the annexation of Limbang made it impossible to advocate.

The main objective was to fend off other powers from an area from which the Dutch had been excluded and to do it as cheaply and as inoffensively as possible. Britain had been content to wait upon developments. Now that time was up, it was reactive, and it remained concerned, despite Pauncefote's occasional relegation of the Law Officers, to go by the book. 'Capital' has little role in the framing of this policy. The Foreign Office extends some favour to the Company, but it is not led by capitalists, and relations become strained when it refuses to occupy Muara. In counterbalance the Colonial Office favours the raj, but the raj is far from 'capitalist'. When concessionaires appear, they seem likely to disrupt the partition plans upon which the government has agreed, though it does not oppose them. The decisions are based on a perception of the interests of the British state in the face of other states, then engaging in a state-building venture that spurs on the acquisition of

overseas territory. Local and personal interests may influence the decisions, but do not determine them.

At the time of his visit to Brunei, Weld had been moving towards establishing a Resident in Pahang, which he alleged was not only larger but richer than Perak, 'possessing great mineral and agricultural wealth, and offering a great field for commercial enterprise'.¹⁹⁷ It was ruled by Wan Ahmad, the formidable victor in the Pahang civil war of 1857–63. When Clarke had offered him advice and assistance in governing the country, it was 'politely declined'.¹⁹⁸ Governor Jervois was equally unsuccessful, and the murder of Birch prompted a Colonial Office reaction against a forward policy. In any case, the state was orderly, undisturbed by the rivalries among chiefs and immigrants that disturbed the states with alluvial tin.

In the 1880s Weld revived the idea of extending the Resident system to other states. Meade was still opposed. Kimberley was more positive. The despatch in reply was cautiously worded: 'Her Majesty's Government would view with satisfaction that the intercourse between the Straits Government and the Malay States should assume a character of more intimate friendship, but no measures involving a change in the relations of those States to the British Government, beyond what is already sanctioned, should be taken without instructions from home', except in cases of 'urgent necessity'. The 'general policy' should be 'to avoid annexation, to encourage the Native Rulers to govern well and improve their territories, and only to interfere when mis-government reaches such a point as seriously to endanger the peace and prosperity of the Peninsula'. But the wording, especially of the opening statement, gave the Governor some room for manoeuvre.¹⁹⁹

The Bendahara did not seek the appointment of a Resident when he visited Singapore in 1880–1. His visits seem, however, to have aroused the interest of speculators, and he and his chiefs gave out a number of concessions. The Straits authorities apprehended trouble between the people of Pahang and the concessionaires, not always men 'of the best class'.²⁰⁰ They were also concerned that the irregular terms of the concessions would retard the development of the state. The attitude of the Colonial Office was affected by the activities of Germany in Africa and New Guinea in 1883–4. Sir John Bramston, the Legal Assistant Under-Secretary, had been opposed to extending Britain's responsibilities on the peninsula in 1879. Now he raised the question of extending Britain's protection to all the Malay states. 'In these days when our rights and quasi-rights are strictly questioned and boldly encroached upon', Herbert wrote, 'there must be danger in leaving this protectorate unconsolidated.' The Office swung round to Weld's view that Britain must gain an irrefutable right to 'protect' Pahang owing to the 'possible interference in its affairs of another European Power'.²⁰¹

The issue thus became not whether to intervene, nor even when, but how. Weld told Lucas that he would 'lead and not press' the Bendahara, getting him to accept a British Agent rather than a Resident, an adviser rather than

an administrator.²⁰² His mission to Pahang in 1886 was, however, vain. The Straits officials tended to attribute his failure to the influence of Johore, and no doubt the concessionaires were also opposed. They underestimated the man himself as they underestimated Sultan Hashim of Brunei. By December 1886 Weld had concluded that ‘harsh measures’ were necessary to bring the Bendahara to terms, and resuscitated a case involving the ill-treatment of the wife of a Chinese trader at Pekan. The Colonial Office officials were dubious. ‘Are there not many other equally cruel cases’, Meade asked, ‘and if we enter on a general crusade where will it end?’²⁰³

In any case Weld had second thoughts. In January 1887 he sent Hugh Clifford to Pekan to get a letter from the Bendahara asking for an ‘agreement or convention of amity’ on the lines of the treaty Johore had made in December 1885. That would secure Britain’s control over Pahang’s foreign relations and the appointment of a British Agent with consular powers. Clifford found discontent among Malay chiefs and Chinese miners and among the Europeans as well. At first the ruler rejected Clifford’s proposal, but on 10 April he handed him a letter asking for a treaty that would put Pahang ‘on the same footing’ as Johore. Possibly, Thio suggests, the concessionaires saw the advantage of having an Agent if not a Resident, while the Sultan of Johore, who appears to have been helpful, may have wished to win the Colonial Office’s favour.²⁰⁴

Abu-bakar had evaded Weld’s attempt to impose a Resident on Johore and gone to London. There he had negotiated a treaty with Meade, giving Britain control of foreign relations, preventing concessions to non-British Europeans without British consent, and providing for the appointment of an Agent with functions similar to those of a consular officer.²⁰⁵ ‘The . . . danger I see is that a Dutch – or worse still a German man of war (when Germany has absorbed Holland!) might attack Johore on the pretext of defending the rights of a Javanese leaseholder, or the French intervene on behalf of a Saigon Chinaman’, Meade told Weld. The Governor agreed that, ‘with Zanzibar and other lessons before us, so special a point of vantage as Johore must be carefully secured’.²⁰⁶ The treaty left Abu-bakar independent in internal affairs, and that no doubt encouraged Ahmad to follow his example and advice.

Weld did not go to Pekan at once, as his Borneo mission supervened. In the meantime Clifford sought to constrain concession-making, which aroused some opposition in Singapore. When Weld did reach Pekan in July 1887, the Sultan sought to modify the terms of the proposed treaty, for example by securing the right to appoint and dismiss the Agent, and to prevent his listening to non-European complaints. Weld for his part became concerned that an Agent with merely consular powers would not be able to protect the interests of the British government. No treaty was concluded. The Sultan of Johore broke the impasse. The Sultan of Pahang apologised for his breach of faith, and a treaty was signed on 8 October 1887.

Appointed Agent, Clifford found himself, however, with very little influence over the Sultan. The new Governor, Sir C. Smith, again took up the

idea of a Resident, particularly as the number of companies being floated suggested the need for a proper administrative framework. The stabbing of a Chinese shopkeeper provided an excuse to act. Governor Smith visited Pekan in June 1888, along with F. A. Swettenham, the Resident of Selangor, and W. A. Pickering, the Protector of Chinese, and demanded that the Sultan accept a Resident. The Sultan 'should . . . be *made* to introduce reforms into his country'. A show of force would bring him to terms and there would be no resistance from the people, whom Clifford had pictured as waiting for 'the English Government to assist them'. The Colonial Office accepted the idea with reluctance. 'I do not like this', Meade wrote, 'but our hands are forced and on the whole I think there is less danger in advancing than in disavowing the Governor's action.'²⁰⁷ Once more, however, the Sultan of Johore was called in, and violence was avoided. The Sultan asked for a Resident.

Sir John Dickson, the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements, was in London in 1888, and three years later commented at the Legislative Council in Singapore: 'The financial interest which influential men in England had in that State [Pahang] was much greater than had existed in the case of any other state, and those interests were able to bring to bear upon the Government at home, and through them on the Government of the Colony, an amount of pressure which it was impossible to resist.' The largest concessionaire was at the mercy of the Sultan's arbitrary conduct: 'it was at this juncture that the Government was able to make a Treaty with the Sultan and take the administration into its hands. That was not for the avenging of the life of a British subject, but really for the preservation of British capital.'²⁰⁸

The Pahang Corporation, 'the largest British company interested in Pahang', had bought a large mining and planting concession acquired in November 1883 by Lim Ah Sam, a resident of Biliton with connexions in Singapore.²⁰⁹ The Straits government had doubted the validity of part of it, and in February 1885 had reserved the right not to recognise concessions obtained by British subjects from independent Malay rulers. The Secretary of State maintained that the Straits government had no right to interfere, declined to publish its notification in London, and told Smith not to republish it in Singapore. The metropolitan authorities adhered to long-standing policy in the changing circumstances: British enterprise should be fairly treated in native states, and British authority used to secure that. A different line appealed to the local authorities. Intervention to establish a more regular administration was inevitable. Backing concessionaires would first delay the inevitable by putting money temporarily in the ruler's hands and then make the task more difficult. In April 1888, following a representation from the Corporation, the Colonial Office telegraphed the Governor to ascertain the truth in a rumour that the concession had been cancelled at the instigation of the Sultan of Johore. It was left to Smith to decide whether any friendly representation 'could not properly be made' to the Sultan of Pahang.²¹⁰ This, Thio suggests, Smith saw as approving a check on the Sultan's powers through the appointment of a Resident, and he took up the cause of the

stabbed shopkeeper. The two sets of authorities were in fact pursuing different policies. The determination of Smith to reorder Pahang was more significant than the influence of the capitalists on the Colonial Office, which had prompted it to support a far more modest policy.

Dickson, Thio argues,²¹¹ exaggerated the Colonial Office's pressure on the local authorities to intervene on the Corporation's behalf. He was speaking in a debate on a loan for Pahang, and the unofficials had argued that Smith's moves to take over the administration had been premature. It seems clear, indeed, that he used the Colonial Office's instructions as a licence for a wider policy than it intended. The Governor's objective – in what Edward Fairfield later called a *coup d'état*²¹² – was to install the Resident system. The Secretary of State told Salisbury that the step should be 'productive of good result both in developing the resources of the State and in preserving peace and good order, especially having regard to the mining concessions recently granted by the Sultan to European Companies'.²¹³ But that has the flavour of ex-post-facto justification.

The intervention in Pahang led to the creation of the Federated Malay States (FMS). The reason was not its success but its relative failure. Though the old Sultan more or less retired, he sympathised with chiefs who had lost power and perquisites and resisted the new system. Disturbances began with the revolt of the Orang Kaya of Semantan in December 1891, and in 1892 the British obtained military assistance from Perak and Selangor. At the same time, Pahang, relatively inaccessible, without alluvial tin, and burdened with concessions, did not prosper: by 1891 it had a substantial debt to the Straits and dealing with the disturbances increased it.²¹⁴ At the Colonial Office Fairfield argued that the British should withdraw from Pahang, initially returning to the treaty of 1887. Lucas endorsed the Straits view that Pahang would ultimately pay its way. No Imperial contribution was, however, available.²¹⁵

Lucas corresponded with Swettenham, who later claimed that he put forward a scheme for 'some kind of combination . . . of the four states . . . a form of federation'.²¹⁶ The idea was not entirely new. The potential advantages of administration and financial co-ordination were already recognised, and there had been talk of a Resident-General as early as 1880. In his last memorandum before retirement, written in 1889, Low had urged that the states should be confederated so that 'the policy in all should be uniform', and the surplus of one lent to assist the others.²¹⁷ He repeated the notion when Lucas consulted him in 1892.

Meade, Herbert's successor as permanent head, thought it premature to consider 'union or federation' while the Pahang question was unresolved. He admitted a mistake. 'We thought that as the Residential system was a success in Perak it would prove the same in Pahang.' A 'less ambitious policy' might have brought 'more real progress'. He leaned towards withdrawal, but Sydney Buxton, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, thought otherwise. Even a critic on the Legislative Council, Thomas Shelford, thought with-

drawal would be disastrous in terms of prestige, he pointed out. If the Resident were withdrawn, it was probable that 'before long' it would be necessary to interfere again, and all the initial expense would be incurred again.²¹⁸ Lord Ripon agreed. The decision brought back the question of union or federation.

At Buxton's instigation Lucas prepared a scheme for Smith's comments. There were, he said, two governing principles. The Governor's authority must be unimpaired: 'the prospect of an uniform British policy in the Malay Indies, including Borneo as well as the Malay Peninsula, will most be furthered in future years, as communication by land and sea become quicker and more constant, by entrusting the Governor at the central point with powers of general supervision and control.' A Resident-General, subordinate to him, would be the chief British officer of a united or federated protectorate. The second condition was that the scheme must not be uncongenial to the Malay communities and their rulers. Annexation was out of the question, 'at all events at the present time', but a confederation might be acceptable. 'One strong reason for raising the general question of the status of these States at the present moment is that possibly, in their confederation, might be found the best solution of the Pahang difficulty.'²¹⁹ Neither Meade nor Fairfield supported the proposal, but it was sent to Governor Smith on 19 May 1893. He supported it.

Given the doubts of Meade and Fairfield, and the views of Swettenham's rival, W. E. Maxwell, the new Governor, Sir Charles Mitchell, was, however, asked to report. He rejected annexation and amalgamation with the Colony, which Maxwell had come to support. Instead he supported the scheme for 'Federal Union of the Protected States', and proposed that Swettenham should be sent round to secure the agreement of the Sultans.²²⁰ He appears to have drafted the document they were to sign. It extended the powers of advice, now stopping short only at Islam, and so removing the exception in respect of Malay custom in the treaties Clarke had made; yet at the same time it declared that nothing was intended to curtail the powers of the rulers nor alter their relations with the empire. Nor was the agreement federal in nature. Union, federation and confederation had all been terms officials had bandied about. The outcome mixed them, but least of all was the federal component. Certainly the result had no sovereignty. Nor did the British. It remained with the individual rulers. The aim of this state-building was greater 'uniformity, efficiency and economy',²²¹ and the route was the one likely to cause the least difficulty. Chamberlain, now at the Colonial Office, approved what had been done in December 1895, and Swettenham became the first Resident-General. In the 1890s the British thus consolidated their position on the peninsula. The aim was no longer to provide against foreign intervention, though regional 'consolidation' was part of a wider imperial policy. It was rather to provide for greater efficiency and regularity. Again 'capital' was not directly involved. What was involved was 'capacity'. If a colonial government could not provide for itself, it might be helped by another. Perak had been subsidised by

the Straits, and now Pahang was supported by the FMS. Neither the Straits nor Perak had been allowed to help Brunei. The FMS was.

The setting-up of the FMS suggested a model for Borneo. There the Colonial Office had looked to Sarawak as the possible basis of a future colony, while critical of the Foreign Office's expedient, the Chartered Company. The annexation of the Limbang and the Sultan's determination not to assent to the final breakup of Brunei were factors in a change of view. Inspired by the Malayan model, Lucas believed that a Resident should be installed in Brunei, which, with Labuan, would become the nucleus of a kind of Borneo FMS. Such a scheme faced many obstacles. It frustrated Raja Charles, who hoped finally to absorb the Sultanate. The Company resented the resumption of Labuan. The Foreign Office preferred a more indirect approach and came round to supporting the Raja. Funding was a problem. All these obstacles were overcome, partly because Lucas and Swettenham again worked together, and Hashim was persuaded to accept a Resident. The scheme went no further, however.

'I think it would be well', Lucas had written in May 1896 on seeing a complaint about the Company's administration of Labuan, 'if Sir Charles Mitchell, when he has started federation, were to pay a visit to Borneo . . . I look in future to an administration of North Borneo & Sarawak on much the same principles as the native states of the Malay peninsula, with a resident General at Labuan and residents on the mainland, the whole under the High Commissioner at Singapore: but this is some way on.'²²² Mitchell found the Sultan beset by 'concessionaires of a doubtful type', and feared lest 'a large extent of his country' might be practically alienated to 'other than British subjects'.²²³ At Lucas' instance, Mitchell was instructed to suggest to the Sultan that, although the protectorate agreement left him with the granting of concessions, he should consult the High Commissioner before granting any.²²⁴

Lucas also proposed that Mitchell should be asked 'whether there is any prospect of a modified treaty tending to such administration as is given in the Protected States of the Malay peninsula finding acceptance upon the present Sultan's death'. He preferred making a new treaty to 'straining . . . the old; and I think it would have a good effect on North Borneo on the one side and Sarawak on the other if the remains of Brunei were administered by a capable resident instead of falling further to pieces or being absorbed by one or the other'.²²⁵ Brooke, he thought, was 'a good ruler of natives. But Sarawak is disappointing and unprogressive, & I think the Imperial Government had better take Brunei itself & not strengthen either of the two rival claimants'.²²⁶ For some years his objective evaded him, but he did not drop it.

The decisive move was to send Stewart McArthur to spend three months in Brunei and to prepare a report.²²⁷ It favoured the establishment of a Residency. Not all at the Colonial Office were in favour. G. V. Fiddes preferred to do nothing. The British taxpayer should not have to find the money to set it up. 'Imperial interests seem perfectly safe in any event.' And the FMS

should not have to make a loan: 'they have no possible concern in the matter'.²²⁸ His colleague, Reginald Stubbs, was agreed on that point, but, in favour of the plan, thought '[w]e had to find the money somehow and if we had tried to get it from the Treasury we should have met with a refusal in emphatic – and probably offensive terms'.²²⁹

The aged Sultan signed the necessary treaty late in 1905. It expressed his desire for full protection and assistance in improving the administration, and his hope that the British government would also ensure 'the due succession to the Sultanate of Brunei'. He undertook to receive a British Resident, whose 'advice must be taken and acted upon on all the questions relating to Brunei, other than those affecting the Mohammedan religion in order that a similar system may be established to that existing in other Malay States now under British protection'.²³⁰

Though Brooke had secured the Lawas, he had failed in his hope of securing Brunei itself. Lucas explained the change in British policy. Sarawak rule, better than that of a Malay Sultan, was not 'preferable to British rule': it was 'one man rule', the ruler was 'an old man', his sons 'more or less unknown quantities'. Britain was 'adopting the form of administration which has met with such wonderful success in the Malay Peninsula, that of ruling by British officers through the native Sultans'. A third reason was that 'sooner or later' all 'British Borneo' would come 'directly under the British Crown. I do not want to hurry the process but I believe it must come: again I believe that the change will be for the benefit of the human beings concerned.' Taking back Labuan and combining it with the Resident system was 'likely, if & when the change comes, to make it easier'.²³¹ In the event the change came only in 1946.

The actions the British government had taken to deal with the changes of the 1870s and 1880s – the increased interest of foreign powers and the increased activity of concessionaires – had been contingent and pragmatic. The same kind of approach continued to influence the steps taken in the 1890s and after the turn of the century when the further growth of international economic and political competition – coupled with and reinforcing a wider sense of responsibility – prompted a demand for a more efficient and active kind of government. The government made changes gradually, even opportunistically. In some sense it seemed to indicate a great confidence in the future: it would be able to act when the time came. In another sense, perhaps, it represented a much more cautious view: trying to pre-empt the future might provoke opposition. None of this suggests a bold 'imperialism'.

The British interventions of this period also seem to fall short of an 'imperialism' that is the creature of capitalist enterprise. The connexions seem indirect, even obtuse. The metropolitan authorities rarely, if ever, act in direct support of a particular economic enterprise. If they do, they tend to confine themselves to an endeavour to ensure that there are conditions under which an enterprise might flourish. Local authorities might take a different line. Yet even they rarely seem openly to back particular enterprises. In Pahang,

indeed, they seemed to run ahead of the private interests. Both sets of authorities tended to be critical of concessionaires, disrupting the older concept of state–business relations espoused by the metropolitan authorities, and getting in the way of the aspirations of local authorities. In some ways both sets of officials took what might be seen as an ‘aristocratic’ view: the government was there to provide conditions under which merchants might prosper.

The case studies suggest a third feature that qualifies a simple ‘imperialist’ explanation or typology. There were restraints in Britain itself: the differences among the Offices, the Treasury’s tight-fistedness, apprehension about Parliament. Local authorities had a little more leeway, though still in a measure accountable and controllable. The relationship between the metropolitan and the local, always one of by-play, if not tension, gained a new dimension in the latter part of this period. In face of change the British made attempts to draw their empire together. They were, however, largely vain. Instead the British put their emphasis on strengthening the individual parts of the empire. In Southeast Asia, the success of the FMS came to seem the basis on which the ‘British’ territories in Malaya and Borneo might be drawn together and prove more effective in a changing world. Local initiative gained a new sanction, but it was within a prescribed framework, and the improved communications of the period in fact enhanced metropolitan control. This kind of ‘sub-imperialism’, if such it was, may still be distinguished from that of India.

In the year in which Weld planned to ‘lead and not press’ the Bendahara, the Brunei chiefs agreed on the *amanat* and the Colonial Office proposed ‘ordinary’ protectorates in Borneo, the British went to war with Burma. Their victory was followed by the destruction of the monarchy and the annexation of the remnant of the kingdom. In what sense, if any, were all these moves part of an ‘imperialist’ movement? It seems likely that simple imperialist explanations must again be modified. Some common factors were present, including the rivalry of foreign powers and the incursion of concessionaires, but the outcome is quite different. The policy towards Burma is better explained in the context of an Indian policy than a British one.

That policy had already been exemplified in practice. It went back – well beyond even the period of so-called free trade imperialism – to the early years of the nineteenth century. Burma and British India had then attained contiguous borders but held differing views of their appropriate relationship. The British in India took a ‘continental’ view of their foreign policy: their vast new dominion must be surrounded by states that were in themselves no threat, nor were the means of threat by others. Acceptance of a kind of subordination was the condition for sustaining a degree of independence. Challenging such a position was the more unacceptable in that it would set a bad example for the states on the subcontinent itself, whose existence, where it continued, was based on a system of ‘subsidiary alliances’. ‘External foes were always suspected of being on the point of linking up with internal dissidents.’²³² The

British objective was not to conquer or acquire Burma, but to ensure that in neither of these ways would it present a threat to the Indian dominion. Nor was the object designed to develop the commerce of Burma. If the complaints of merchants were taken up, it was not because of their intrinsic significance, let alone their individual merit.

Restorers and conquerors, the Konbaung monarchs were far from accepting the modified independence implicit in British India's view of interstate relations, and the first two wars were designed to enforce their acceptance. The aim, said Lord Amherst in 1824, was not to acquire territory but 'to produce such an impression of the power and resources of the British empire in India as will deter the Court of Ava from any attempt again to disturb the friendly relations which may be established by the result of the present contest'.²³³ The acquisition of Arakan and Tenasserim was a substitute for the confession of subordination that Amherst had hoped to secure.²³⁴ The British-Indian victory in the second war was demonstrated by the retention of Pegu. Even though it was more successfully conducted than the first, there seemed no other clear way to demonstrate Burma's humbled status. Governor-General Dalhousie himself argued against taking a further step, trying to secure the formal acknowledgement of the conquest by treaty. Annexing Pegu would give the British security in any case.²³⁵ In the new conditions that prevailed in the last decades of the century, that seemed less certain.

In the meantime, the new king, Mindon Min, had been ready to accept, at least de facto, a relationship which his great neighbour could also accept. There were indeed some compromises on the British side as well as the Burman. British envoys, for example, continued to remove their shoes before a royal reception. The King hankered after a direct relationship with the Queen's government in London, such as the King of Siam secured in the Bowring treaty of 1855, but did not initially press the point. Visiting his capital in 1859 Sir Arthur Phayre, the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, concluded that there was 'a settled conviction among the majority of all classes of Burmese that they are completely in our power'. He was convinced that Mindon saw 'that the only safe policy for the kingdom, is to preserve the peace with the British government'.²³⁶ In 1862 a Resident was installed, and Mindon accepted a commercial treaty, which responded to the British interest in opening up a 'back door' to China through the navigation of the upper Irrawaddy. Articles 4 and 7 allowed British merchants to proceed along the whole length of the river and to purchase Chinese goods at Bhamo.

Largely compliant so far as the British were concerned, Mindon was cautious in his dealings with foreign powers in the 1850s, and they were cautious in their dealings with him. Relations with them were a demonstration of continued independence, but they must not be pursued to the extent that they alarmed the British. The King of Sardinia's consul in Calcutta sought a commercial treaty in 1854. Mindon balked at the article that provided for a Sardinian consul at Amerapura, 'as it might provide the thin edge of the

wedge the British were looking for'. The French adventurer 'Count' D'Orgoni carried letters and a verbal message to Napoleon III in 1856. His replies were lost. Sent with duplicates, Henry de Sercy told Walewski that a treaty could be made, 'but the French government was cautious, pointing out the susceptibilities of the English and the expense experienced establishing consular missions in Siam and Cambodia'.²³⁷

In the early 1860s the French established themselves in Cochin China and Cambodia. Phayre told the Governor-General, Sir John Lawrence, that their subsequent expedition to the Mekong would tantalise the Burmese government. In the light of that, and the anti-Mindon revolt of 1866, he hoped to make a new treaty, like the one the French had made with Cambodia: in return for restrictions on his foreign policy, the king would be guaranteed against his enemies. Not concerned about the French, the Governor-General opposed this strategy. Phayre failed to negotiate a new treaty, through which he had also hoped to provide improved commercial access.²³⁸ His successor, Albert Fytche, tried again.

In the meantime, however, a Burmese mission to France was reported, probably designed to secure arms following the rebellion and disturbances in Karenni and the Shan states, and also carrying proposals for a treaty. The Resident, E. B. Sladen, thought it 'imbecile'. The Viceroy, however, thought it might stimulate French interference on the Cambodian side. Sir Henry Maine, the Law Member of his Council, referred to French newspapers, indicating 'a design on the part of certain French adventurers in the East to take advantage of the terror of annexation in which the King of Burma lived to bring him into closer contact with the French government'. Obtaining a hold on Burma might 'take possession of Napoleon III's imagination'. Another member suggested telling the king that no diplomatic intercourse was permitted except through the British government, but the Viceroy pointed out that the treaty of 1862 did not contain such a clause.²³⁹ In the event he decided not to impede the mission, but the king called it off.

In the draft of the new British treaty such an article was included. Lawrence also modified the draft Mindon had put forward so that the Chief Commissioner's permission would be required for the import of arms. Fytche saw that this would create difficulties, and told Sladen to assure the king that he was unlikely to put obstacles in the way while the relations between the two countries were friendly. In the negotiations, he dropped the article on foreign relations, which he had been told not to press, and contented himself with a vague assurance. He put his own assurance on arms in an appendix to the treaty. Pollak suggests that the appendix was deleted in Calcutta.²⁴⁰ It was, however, published in the parliamentary papers in London.²⁴¹

Salisbury, then at the India Office, had told Fytche that Britain's influence in Burma should be paramount: 'an easy communication with the multitudes who inhabit Western China is an object of great national importance. No influence superior to ours must be allowed to gain ground in Burma.'²⁴² His

successor disapproved of pressure on Mindon, and preferred 'forbearance' as a means of promoting reforms.²⁴³ Even in the late 1860s, that instruction seems to have been followed, while the king in the event refrained from sending a mission to France.

Pollak, however, associates Mindon's adoption of a bolder policy with the accession to power of the Kinwunmyingi and the Pangyet Wun after the revolt of 1866. 'Burma started to take the diplomatic offensive in seeking avenues and powers to circumvent Britain's stranglehold and act as a counterpoise.'²⁴⁴ It may rather be that they were tempted to adopt this risky course by the evidence of the growing interest in Southeast Asia of powers other than the British in the period after 1870. In Burma, as elsewhere, the British in turn were to find it necessary to review the political arrangements that, though not always comfortable or without tension, had so far sufficed.

In March 1871 the Italian envoy, Carlo Racchia, signed a commercial and consular treaty with Mindon. Article 11 allowed Italian subjects to sell every kind of goods to the Burma government, including arms, and article 14 bound the Italian government to supply arms if the Burma government applied, 'observing with respect to them international laws'. Britain approached the government in Florence, where its ambassador was told that Racchia had added these words to make the clause 'innocuous'. The Indian government wanted the clauses removed, and the British ambassador made a fresh representation. In December 1871 the Italian ambassador in London explicitly declared that his government would not supply arms and ammunition. King Mindon was not, however, told.²⁴⁵

There were a number of indirect and vain approaches to Russia in the 1870s.²⁴⁶ In 1872–3 the Kinwun led a mission to Europe. It was well received in Italy, and a commercial treaty was made with France early in 1873. The British ambassador asked for a copy. Aware, of course, of his country's weakness after its defeat in the war of 1870–1, the French Foreign Minister agreed to communicate it, and said that its principal clause related to religious toleration.²⁴⁷ An embassy of ratification reached Mandalay in December. Its head, Rochechouart, agreed to changes at the King's request. The French Foreign Minister assured the British that they would not be accepted. One required the French government to offer good offices whenever Burma asked, and that, as the ambassador pointed out, could be 'very embarrassing and inconvenient'. The Foreign Minister accepted that Britain's relations with Burma were 'of a special character'. He 'admitted distinctly that the vast possessions and immense interests of England made it proper and necessary that she should be vigilant respecting all Asiatic questions, and should expect to exert a special interest over them'. It would be 'impolitic and improper' for France to intervene politically in questions between Burma and England. 'France had no trade and no interests in Burma, and could hardly communicate with it except through British territory.'²⁴⁸ The new treaty would not be ratified.

The British had also discussed their own approach to the mission. British administration of the border provinces would be 'paralysed', the government of India had argued, if the Burmese government could through an accredited ambassador put before the authorities in London 'their own views on the many diplomatic and administrative questions that must perpetually arise between two Governments whose common frontier extended over many hundreds of miles'. The right of intercourse with the British government would, moreover, be only 'the first step towards habitual diplomatic discourse with other Governments in Europe and America'. Other questions would then arise, perhaps even that of alliances. They would 'inevitably result in direct antagonism between the Government of India and the Court of Ava, and possibly in war'. The Indian government argued that the reception of the mission in London should be merely ceremonial. The mission was received by the Queen.²⁴⁹ It was introduced to her by the Secretary of State for India, not the Foreign Secretary. 'There seemed a significance in this act', the US Ambassador commented. 'It was as if the Government here was willing to consider question of relations with Burmah, as belonging to the policy which controls in regard to the eastern possessions of Great Britain, and not to the treatment which is to be given to an independent power.'²⁵⁰

The relations between Burma and the British in India deteriorated in the following years. The British ceased to compromise on the 'shoe question' in 1876. Sir Douglas Forsyth, heading a mission sent to Mandalay to settle the boundary of Western Karenni, removed his shoes according to precedent, and he found the steps he had to pass over unprecedentedly carpeted.²⁵¹ He formed the 'impression' that 'a little more discussion and tact' might secure for British officers the right to 'retain their shoes whilst His Majesty preserved his dignity'.²⁵² In January 1876 the government of India instructed the Resident not to take off his shoes while visiting the King. No 'tact' had been used, and Mindon refused to modify the ritual. 'As the old King was his own Minister of Foreign Affairs, and no negotiations were ever concluded except at personal interviews with him, this sudden change put an absolute stop to all important business', wrote Horace Browne, the Resident, in 1879. The result of Viceroy Northbrook's mistake, Lord Lytton was to write, was 'to deprive our Resident of the last vestige of personal influence, and to render his position as humiliating as it is powerless and exposed to danger'.²⁵³

The accession of Thibaw prompted Lytton to propose a new approach. Britain's interests, 'mainly commercial', were affected by the insecurity of life and property at Mandalay, and by the royal disregard of treaties.²⁵⁴ The home government argued, however, for 'the utmost consideration towards the new king'.²⁵⁵ In March the Indian government proposed 'a sort of "ultimatum"',²⁵⁶ and again got no support from home. Anything like an ultimatum based on former grievances would be 'highly impolite', and calculated to give the impression that the Viceroy's government was 'seeking hostilities rather than more friendly relations'.²⁵⁷ In September the British withdrew their *chargé d'affaires* from Mandalay. But that was decided as a result of the

murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari in Kabul – the Viceroy was ‘suffering from a severe attack [of] Kabulitis’²⁵⁸ – and no drastic action followed.

Appointed Viceroy by the Gladstone government, Ripon re-examined Britain’s policy towards the kingdom. He told the merchants in Rangoon that he ‘had no belief in a policy of going to war to extend trade’.²⁵⁹ He had authorised a ‘remonstrance’ over the granting of monopolies, but did not consider the terms of the 1862 and 1867 treaties clear enough to call for a complete ban. He also believed that Burma should be allowed to import such arms as it required for the maintenance of internal tranquillity. On shoes a compromise was desirable. In April 1882 a Burmese mission was received at Simla and the negotiation of a new treaty began.

The parties reached agreement over commercial issues and over shoes, but not over the Burmese request to send an envoy to London. ‘The question was treated by the Burmese as one affecting their national dignity’, the Indian government commented,

and there is some evidence to show that this feeling had long existed among them, though probably it would have never attained its present prominence but for the recent increase of communication between Upper Burma and European Powers, and more particularly for the admission of the Burmese Sovereign to commercial Treaties with Italy and France.²⁶⁰

Later the Burmese representatives offered to give up this demand if the treaty were drawn up in the name of the Queen. That the Indian government would not accept, but it did offer a friendship treaty in the Queen’s name, and a ‘business’ treaty with India, and to this the Secretary of State agreed. Before the treaties could be signed, however, the Burmese government withdrew its representatives. British difficulties in Egypt encouraged the Burmese to hold out for more.²⁶¹ In December they submitted substitute versions, which Ripon rejected. Kimberley, then at the India Office, approved. ‘I have certainly no wish that you should quarrel with those barbarians, but I would take a firm tone with them, and conclude no Treaty with them, which is not satisfactory. It is neither polite nor dignified to have any dealings with a comparatively petty state such as Burma, except on terms befitting our position.’²⁶² Inadequate information or appraisal had lost the Burmese a real chance of compromise.

Sending an embassy to France in May 1883 was, says Singhal, ‘unfortunate’.²⁶³ On hearing that it had been received by the French President, Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador, reminded the French government that ‘in consequence of its vicinity to British India, and of its political relations with that Empire, Burma occupied a peculiar position with regard to Her Majesty’s Government and one which gave them a special interest in all that concerned it’.²⁶⁴ Kimberley advised the Foreign Office that the ambassador should impress on the French government the objections the British government held against any agreement with the King of Burma ‘containing

stipulations beyond those of a merely commercial character'.²⁶⁵ When the negotiations began in April 1884, he was assured that any treaty would be purely commercial, and he was told it would not include a clause covering the free passage of arms through French territory.

As a prelude to the negotiations, the 1873 treaty had been ratified, and Kimberley pointed out that it involved the reciprocal appointment of diplomatic agents. The government of India, he said, objected to diplomatic intercourse between Burma and European powers. Lyons was instructed to secure a French promise that any agent appointed would have only commercial functions. Jules Ferry said that political and commercial functions could not be clearly separated, and remarked that France, advancing its control in Vietnam, was about to become Burma's neighbour.²⁶⁶ He asked 'if there were any special treaty engagements between Great Britain and Burma which precluded the Burmese from entering into independent political relations with other powers'.²⁶⁷ There was none: Lyons could only stress the 'very special political relations' that made it very objectionable that Upper Burma should enter into alliance with another power.²⁶⁸ A week later Ferry told Lyons that 'France did not contemplate making any special political alliance with Burma'.²⁶⁹ But he refused to draw an exact line between the political and commercial functions of the agent: there might be questions of 'neighbourhood'.²⁷⁰

The convention of 15 January 1885 was indeed merely a commercial convention.²⁷¹ In a secret letter of the same day, however, Ferry undertook that Burmese subjects who took shelter in French India should not use that territory for collecting arms or molesting Burma. 'With respect to the transport through the province of Tonkin to Burma of arms of various kinds, ammunition, and military stores generally, amicable arrangements will be come to with the Burmese Government for the passage of the same, when peace and order prevails in Tonkin and the officers stationed there are satisfied that it is proper and that there is no danger.'²⁷² For a time the letter remained secret, but its exposure was bound to be explosive.

In the meantime merchants at Rangoon – British, Chinese and Muslim – claimed that Thibaw's 'misrule' and anarchy in Upper Burma had depressed their trade, and a meeting of 11 October 1884 called for annexation or the installation of a protected prince. Bernard, the Chief Commissioner appointed by Ripon, gave their views no support. If the King had breached frontiers, broken treaties or refused redress, 'matters would be different'.²⁷³ Those who exported rice to Upper Burma were doing better than those who exported it to Europe. In Britain the Chambers of Commerce in cotton towns sought annexation because of their interest in opening trade to Yunnan. 'Silk-centric' towns wanted no more than the restoration of the status quo, with a British Resident back at Mandalay.²⁷⁴ Viceroy Dufferin accepted Bernard's views. His adviser, G. S. Forbes, argued that the most that could be considered was the restoration of the Residency. That idea was difficult for the British to broach, lest they

received a negative answer. Kimberley authorised the Indian government to re-establish it whenever they thought it best.²⁷⁵

Forbes's main concern had been the advance of French influence, and that helped to make restoring the residency more desirable, but also more difficult. In June 1885 China gave up its claims over Tonkin and Annam. A few weeks before, the French Consul, Haas, had arrived in Mandalay. Already concessionaires – French and Italians among them – were active, one of them proposing a Royal Bank, which could loan money to the King against 'royal incomes', and which would be sponsored by the French government, and also a Toungoo–Mandalay railway. Court factions encouraged the speculators, a welcome source of income in a diminished kingdom. The Taingda's faction talked of cancelling the timber leases of the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation (BBTC) – which had been accused of not paying foresters, nor duty, in the Ningyan Forest – and also of cancelling all the contracts of British subjects.²⁷⁶ This alarmed the BBTC's agent, Andreino, the Italian Consul.

The information he was able to obtain and pass on about the treaty, the secret letter and the contracts led Bernard to bring up the question of annexation. The French concessions would make France dominant, 'and would in the end extrude British trade from... the valley of the Upper Irrawaddy'. France would try to hide its domination by persuading other European nations to declare Burma a neutral zone between British India and French Indo-China. He proposed a warning. Durand, the Indian Foreign Secretary, did not know on what grounds India could object to a concession as 'contrary to treaty', though it had apparently had the right to object to the complete establishment of foreign influence at Mandalay.²⁷⁷

On 2 August Dufferin's Council at Simla concluded that dominant or extensive French political or commercial influence at Mandalay would be a threat to India's eastern frontier and to the interests of British subjects in Upper Burma. It would have to be stopped even at the risk of war with Mandalay. The Council recommended that Mandalay should be asked to place its foreign affairs under the direction of the Indian government. If the demands were refused, Upper Burma should be invaded and conquered. Before such a step were taken, correct information was required on the actual extent of French influence. The Council suggested that Britain should notify all European nations that it could not accept the dominant influence of any other power at Mandalay, that being done quickly before the French got further involved. The Council concluded by declaring that it would regret coercive measures, and was opposed to an 'annexationist policy'.²⁷⁸

The new Conservative government in London was planning an election in late November. Lord Randolph Churchill, now Secretary of State for India, wanted to push British markets overseas to counter the depression, and among them were Upper Burma and, at least potentially, Yunnan. He did not, however, initially plan to do this by annexation. He recalled Lytton's disastrous Afghan war and the loss of the 1880 election: he should have left the ruler alone and sought explanations in St Petersburg. Now, he said, it

would be more acceptable to the British public if London sought explanations in Paris and left Thibaw alone.²⁷⁹ 'The only way to avoid annexation of Thebaw's Kingdom is to compel the French, somehow or other, even at the risk of a rupture, to desist from their designs.'²⁸⁰ The French were, however, evasive, and the Burmese provocative.

On 7 August Waddington, the French Ambassador in London, promised Salisbury he would obtain information from Paris about the contracts and the secret letter. The latter Freycinet suggested was of little practical value, given the troubled situation in Annam and Cambodia. The British embassy in Paris took up the question of the contracts. Freycinet denied a newspaper report that the contracts were part of a secret treaty. That was hardly an answer, Churchill suggested. The arrival of the Tangyet Wundauk in Paris to formalise the treaty the Senate had ratified increased British suspicions. Freycinet told Lyons on 12 October that the French government had no knowledge of any banking or railroad concessions for French firms and had given no authority to anyone for obtaining such concessions. If Consul Haas had promoted them, he had acted without authority. In any case he had gone on sick leave.²⁸¹ Ten days later the British sent an ultimatum to Mandalay.

The 'convenient pretext' was Mandalay's refusal to accept arbitration of the BBTC teak case.²⁸² The Hlutdaw, the council, had passed a judgement against the Company on 12 August. There seems little doubt that the BBTC had taken more timber than its contracts permitted and bribed local officials. The Company was fined and its leases cancelled, Haas having offered on 3 August to find other lessees. The Kinwun proposed a large fine. That, he thought, would lead the BBTC to appeal to the Indian government, and its protest would lead the King to end the meddling of the rival Taingda faction. His risky course did not work out. The mixed court had died with the withdrawal of the Resident. Instead of reviving it, Bernard proposed that the Viceroy should appoint an arbitrator. This the Hlutdaw rejected on 21 September. The Kinwun drafted a negative response, sent on 3 October. In fact it was meant to be face-saving, and the Hlutdaw wanted a settlement.²⁸³

Dufferin had meanwhile reached the conclusion that Upper Burma was

rapidly becoming a source of danger to us instead of merely an annoyance. Owing to prolonged misgovernment, it has degenerated in power and resources, and is unable any longer to assert its undisputed rights . . . or to resist the pressure and temptation of French or other influences. The danger involved in this state of affairs is real and we clearly recognise the expediency of putting an end to it. If, therefore, King Thebaw should give us legitimate provocation, it would probably be for our interest to annex the country or take it under our protection.²⁸⁴

On 16 October Dufferin asked permission to send an ultimatum. It covered the settlement of the teak case by an Indian government envoy, who was to retain his shoes, and be stationed permanently at Mandalay. The Burma

government would be expected to conduct its relations with France and other countries in accordance with the wishes of the Indian government, and grant proper facilities for the establishment of the trade of British subjects through Bhamo with Yunnan.²⁸⁵

Churchill approved on 17 October, though hoping that massing troops on the frontier would bring submission. The Hlutdaw considered the ultimatum on 1 November. The Kinwun's group favoured a soft answer, averting war, and boosting the reformists. The Taingda's group knew it had a bad reputation with the *kalas*, the foreigners. He argued for rejection. His son-in-law Pangyet wept: 'this time you've really done it and the country is lost'. His cause was, however, supported by the Queen, who taunted the Kinwun: 'Bring him . . . a petticoat and a fan.' Away from the presence, the ministers voted for an evasive but friendly reply. Thibaw had, however, given the word for war.²⁸⁶ A reply was still sent. In it the King offered to entertain a petition for a review of the BBTC case. He would receive a Resident back, but declined to accept exclusive advice on foreign relations.²⁸⁷ This was considered a rejection, and on 13 November General Prendergast's forces were ordered to cross the frontier.

'It is French intrigue which has forced us to go to Burmah', Churchill wrote to Dufferin;

but for that element we might have treated Theebaw with severe neglect . . . If . . . you finally and fully add Burmah to our dominions before any European rights have had time even to be sown, much less grow up, you undoubtedly prevent forever the assertion of such rights, or attempts to prepare the way for such assertion . . . If, on the other hand, this opportunity of protecting India effectually on the East is allowed to pass, these events may follow a course analogous to what has taken place in the N.W. The aggressions against you need not necessarily be French; they might be German or Italian, or all three.²⁸⁸

Churchill was interested in providing for the trade to Yunnan. He recurred, however, to the security of India. And but for the evasion of the French, he might have adhered to his preference for leaving Burma alone.

On 28 November Mandalay was occupied, and the following day the King and Queen were taken to a steamer, to be transported to exile in India. That did not necessarily mean annexation. The future form of government had still to be determined. Churchill had sought Dufferin's views in October. He had then listed the arguments for it. One buffer-state, Afghanistan, was worry enough, he suggested. A buffer-state, he added, required some resilience: 'Burmah is so soft and pulpy a substance that she could never be put to such use.' If a protected prince were set up, the French would constantly try to influence him. A contiguous frontier with China would not, as Ripon had thought, cause tensions with China. It would boost trade with Yunnan, and the route would be secure against French 'intrigues'.²⁸⁹ In November

Dufferin offered arguments against annexation and in favour of the concept of a protected prince. One was financial: Upper Burma had rich potential, but it would be many years before revenues would meet the cost of administration. Indian troops would be required to maintain order, but, given the long-range threat in the north-west, India could not become involved in a military adventure in the east. A 'protected' state, too, would be better able to ignore the tribal depredations on Burma's ill-defined northern frontier. It would also be better able to ease any tension with China.²⁹⁰

Opinion in Britain, however, came to favour annexation. *The Times* published lurid reports about the 'massacre' of dacoits by Indian Army troops. It called for annexation. About to become Prime Minister again, Gladstone pronounced in favour of the despatch of Indian troops and of annexation. On 13 February Kimberley, back at the India Office, sought information about the executions before Parliament met on 18 February. The same day Dufferin, just arrived on an inspection tour, recommended annexation. Two other events helped to precipitate the decision: news of the escape of a pretender, the Myngun prince, from Pondicherry; and the failure of the Hlutdaw to offer the Viceroy a courteous welcome. Dacoity could not be resolved under a protected prince, he concluded. Nor could such a prince maintain his throne against rivals without Indian troops, involving the British in responsibilities almost as great as those of annexation. He also made an optimistic estimate of the costs of pacification and of future revenues.²⁹¹

Dufferin set out the options he had considered. Burma had 'neither the elasticity nor the ultimate power of resistance' a buffer state needed. A 'semi-protected' state would still have needed the Indian Army to deal with dacoits, but the ostensible control would have been with the King. He could prove 'unreasonable and obstructive', even 'disloyal', and could drag India into wars with neighbouring powers. A 'fully-protected' state – in which a British Resident had full control of foreign affairs and some control of internal affairs – Dufferin had ruled out only reluctantly. There were no trustworthy princes, and installing the six-year-old son of the Nyaungyan prince would have imposed the costs of administration without the advantages. A 'protected prince' might have restored order more quickly, giving the Burmese a symbol of unity. There were, however, at least three pretenders fighting the Indian Army at that very moment. Royalty was as divisive as it was unifying. Full annexation and direct administration, Dufferin concluded, seemed to offer 'the best prospect of securing the peace and prosperity of Upper Burma and our own Imperial and commercial interests'.²⁹²

'We had no doubt... that the only course open to us was to follow your advice and to give up the idea of erecting a... Protected State', Kimberley wrote.²⁹³ Approval of the despatch of Indian troops and annexation was rushed through Parliament on 22 February. Upper Burma was incorporated in the Indian Empire on 26 February.

The fear of foreign intervention was decisive in respect of annexation as it had been in respect of the war itself. But for that the British might have settled

for something short of it. That was made difficult by the weakness and division to which the Burman state had been reduced. In part that resulted from the failure to establish a satisfactory relationship between the kingdom and the Indian empire, the incremental losses that ensued, the tension among Burman factions that resulted. Only in the early years of Mindon's reign had the two parties reached some kind of mutually acceptable relationship. That, it seems, was dislodged by the risks and the temptations of the 1870s. In this phase, in Burma as elsewhere, Britain's arrangements for the protection of its interests came under new threat, the advance of other powers, the activity of concessionaires. Because of the nature of their realm in India, of their legacy of poor relations with Burma, and of the intrigues of the French, they remedied those arrangements by more drastic means than they employed elsewhere. The economic interests involved were secondary. Obtaining a safe route to China was an important but secondary aim, supporting the BBTC a 'pretext'. Concern about Parliament was generally a constraint on 'imperialism' rather than an encouragement. Somewhat perversely, it was the 'atrocities' of Indian troops that made Gladstone support annexation.

Over the third Burma war, as over intervention in Malaya, there has been a measure of historiographical controversy. D. P. Singhal stressed the 'economic' factors, Hugh Tinker called attention to the 'strategic',²⁹⁴ C. L. Keeton added in the ecological and political. More recently, Webster has sought to frame an explanation in terms of the concept of 'gentlemanly capitalism'. The data he adduces do not convincingly support his somewhat 'conspiratorial' view.²⁹⁵ Nor, perhaps, is it necessary to tear apart the 'economic' and 'strategic' as the earlier debate suggested. Those who made British policy combined a concern for 'strategic' interests with a generalised concern for economic interests. That was evident in Burma as elsewhere. Burma differed, however, inasmuch as it was the object not only of a British foreign policy but also of a British Indian one, concerned above all with the security of a continental dominion.

In this phase the British had established Residents in some of the Malay states, to be followed by a 'federation' in the 1890s; it had chartered the British North Borneo Company and brought northern Borneo under 'limited' protection, following that in the new century by installing a Resident in Brunei; and it had extinguished the Burman monarchy. The study of these events reveals the presence of adventurers and concessionaires and includes local coups and *faits accomplis*. The stories they tell are indeed complex interactions in shifting contexts. Overall, however, they suggest that British 'imperialism' was reactive. Britain's interests were not redefined: its priorities did not change. But the measures required to protect them were no longer sufficient. In some cases it strengthened them, in others it compromised, and it generally sought to avoid provocation. What motivated the other Western states?

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4 The other powers

Even as the external policies of other powers affected the British, so those policies were affected by them. In the phase before 1870, other powers, it might be said, worked very much in a British context, at once resentful of British predominance but allowed a considerable freedom of movement. In the new phase Britain's primacy was challenged and the arrangements it had made in the previous phase brought into question. Its adjustments interacted with the policies of other powers. Their 'imperialism' might well differ. Indeed the 'imperialism' of each power was distinctive in its origins and purposes, in its relationship to the advance of industrialisation, and indeed in its relations with Britain. The common object was 'state-building', but it took various forms.

In France the earlier defeat at the hands of its major rival, the British, had conduced to a politics of 'grandeur', but European security always had priority, and it was not consistently pursued. In the absence of an industrial revolution, moreover, French activity overseas lacked an economic context. The role of naval officers, adventurers and missionaries was all the greater. Moreover, metropolitan governments were less completely in control. After its defeat at the hands of the Germans in 1870–1 – or after the payment of the indemnity and the departure of the German troops – French colonial policy again became more active. It was still without an industrial backing. But the changed position of Britain enabled it – with the support of Germany under Bismarck and later with the alliance of Russia – to make advances in areas where it had earlier established footholds, in Africa and in Southeast Asia, and it became once more a major factor in British calculations, weak though it really was. At home the support for colonial policy remained limited. For some it was too transparent an attempt to divert attention from defeat in Europe. The nature of French politics under the Third Republic, however, allowed the '*parti colonial*' an undue influence at home, and limited attempts to contain adventurers and indeed officials abroad.

Other major European powers had established no footholds in the pre-1870 phase, and indeed acquired no territory in Southeast Asia in the imperialist phase. Neither Italy nor Germany was, however, inactive. Their very emergence as unified states was itself a change, and the apprehension that they

might intervene was kept alive by rumour but also by action, not merely in Southeast Asia itself. For Britain, Germany was the more significant of these powers. It was unified in 1871; it industrialised rapidly; it adopted a protectionist tariff in 1879; it adopted a colonial policy in 1883–5; it defined a challenge of principle at the Berlin conference. Italy, weaker and not industrialised, was easier to handle, even to deny.

The emergence of other powers helped to change British policy. It also influenced the minor colonial powers, the Netherlands and Spain, the continued existence of which had been part of Britain's own pre-1870 pattern. Resented though British dominance might be, it had been a guarantee against the intervention of others. In the new situation that guarantee might be less effective. Both powers sought to strengthen their territorial control. The fact that they acted within the more-or-less accepted frontiers of their realms does not mean they cannot be qualified as imperialist. Their activities can be compared with those of Asian states that sought to adapt to the changes after 1870, the most successful being Siam. They also resemble those of the British themselves. They were reacting to the post-1870 challenge by affirming their claims. In the course of their endeavours the shadowy international position Aceh and Sulu had enjoyed was finally destroyed.

The 1890s marked something of a second instalment in the 'imperialist' phase. Among its features was the emergence of non-European imperialist powers. One of the colonial empires was displaced. But the American acquisition of the Philippines interposed a barrier to the Japanese.

'Inconstancy and incoherence bedevilled official [French] approaches to imperial expansion throughout the nineteenth century.'¹ There were, perhaps, some constant factors behind the inconstancy. France was not industrialised, not even industrialising, and in any case its politics focused on the 'regime' question. France had lost an overseas empire and its Napoleonic empire in Europe had been overthrown. A sense of lost grandeur affected individuals and it affected the armed forces. At times it also influenced the government of the day. Success might win support. In Europe, however, France could expect few opportunities for success, and an adventurous regime risked failure. Easier to envisage, success overseas meant less to the French public, though it would resent defeat or withdrawal.

The Restoration had abandoned plans in West Africa and vainly attempted to renew the earlier connexion with Vietnam. The Algiers expedition of 1830 was designed, too late, to shore up Charles X's regime. Only in the 1840s did the Orleanist monarchy pick up this initiative. Its priorities, however, were to keep the peace in Europe and stay on good terms with other powers. Guizot believed France lacked the resources for empire-building on a grand scale. He wanted France to have *points d'appui* 'in those parts of the world which are destined to become major centres of trade and navigation'.² It was 'not convenient' for France to be absent from East Asia once Britain had opened China and established a base at Hong Kong.³ He abandoned the

search for a French base, however, dropping the claim to Basilan in the southern Philippines when Spain protested. The navy – with no trade to protect – was tempted to take up the missionary cause in Vietnam in the 1840s, but Guizot vetoed any occupation of the Vietnamese coast.

Initially the policies of the Second Empire were just as Eurocentric, and so really they remained. After the Crimean war, however, Napoleon III embarked on a series of adventures overseas. His aim was to sustain ‘national greatness’. There was, he admitted, no preconceived plan. Nor, indeed, was there sustained public support. French troops took part in the China war of 1858–60 and were sent to Lebanon in 1860. ‘The country is tired of war’, said the Procureur-Général for Paris in 1863. The most unrealistic of the Emperor’s projects nevertheless followed, the creation of an empire in Mexico, a disaster and a lasting source of public grievance.⁴

The expedition sent to Vietnam in 1858 had also been very much the Emperor’s initiative, with little backing from Cabinet. Admiral Hamelin, the naval minister, ‘told us that we would find an important outlet there – for our gold’.⁵ ‘Moved by the idea that if France had lost her great colonial possessions she should, in favourable circumstances, seek to restore the losses which her great political disasters had cost her, and associate herself with the great movement of progress, civilization and commercial expansion of which China would soon become the theatre’, the Brenier commission looked, however, towards acquiring a base in Cochin China. ‘France should not remain in a state of inferiority painful to her dignity and injurious to her commercial prosperity as much as to her right to the share of political influence which she should be enjoying in a region in which great events are in the making.’⁶ Though sent in response to missionary grievances, the expedition occupied Saigon and eastern Cochin China.

There was also a great deal of local initiative. ‘The creation of the second French colonial empire was less the work of central governments than of soldiers and sailors on the periphery who generated their own expansive drives and launched France on a series of conquests far more sweeping than their masters in Paris had ever contemplated.’ In Algeria it was the soldiers: ‘One should burn instructions so as to avoid the temptation of reading them’, said Bugeaud.⁷ In Indo-China it was the sailors: in June 1867 Admiral P. P. M. de la Grandière annexed the western provinces despite explicit orders ‘to avoid anything that would upset [the Vietnamese court at] Hue’.⁸ The empire was created not in a fit of absence of mind, but in a prolonged bout of absence of control. One reason was the weakness of many of the governments, particularly in the 1830s. Even after that, cabinets lacked solidarity. The Emperor himself approved the seizure of western Cochin China. Backing down was in any case incompatible with prestige, even if the adventure had itself not been authorised. The Emperor ‘expressed his regret that despite the current political difficulties in Europe, you weren’t afraid to start a war with Hue’, La Grandière was told. ‘His Majesty told me to tell you that he accepts the *fait accompli*.’⁹

In 1862 Admiral Bonard's adviser, Gabriel Aubaret, had warned him that Britain's recent treaty with Burma was 'the first step towards Yunnan. It should be France that maintains influence over the Indochinese Peninsula... washed by a river that originates in Tibet and whose mouth is in our possession.'¹⁰ The Doudart de Lagrée expedition of 1866–8, however, found the Mekong unsuitable for a commercial artery. The second-in-command, Francis Garnier, concluded even so that France's position in Cochin China could be the base for a commercial and political influence in Indo-China and southern China with the potential to become 'the exact counterweight to that of England in India'.¹¹ The approach should be by the Red River.

Though the British in Burma were aware of these moves, they had not opposed the French venture in Cochin China. There had been several British attempts to develop a commercial relationship with Vietnam, but the Nguyen dynasty had rebuffed them all. There was less reason for opposing the French. The old jealousies were dying out, the *Hong Kong Register* had declared: a commercial settlement at Danang might benefit 'the whole of commercial Europe', not France alone, if it helped to spread 'western civilisation and a more liberal policy in this quarter of the globe'.¹² Nor had the British government been greatly concerned. Its ambassador in Paris was told to ascertain the 'ulterior object', if any, of the French: to protect Christians or Catholics? to open commerce? to occupy territory? He was, however, 'not to convey the impression that the French operations are viewed with jealousy or suspicion'.¹³ A 'second Cherbourg in the East' was not 'cause for serious anxiety'. French expansion could be tolerated so long as Laos remained between France and Burma.¹⁴ When the French placed Cambodia under their protection in 1863, the India Office felt that 'so long as the proceedings of the French in or towards Cambodia do not in any way interfere with the independence of Siam, ... in the present state of affairs, they may be regarded by Her Majesty's Government without anxiety or concern'.¹⁵

The defeat of France in 1870–1, though partly blamed on the Emperor's reckless overseas ventures, hardly delayed the resumption of expansion. For some a colonial policy was no substitute for a war of revenge. 'I have lost two sisters [Alsace-Lorraine]', Déroulède declared, 'and you offer me twenty chambermaids.'¹⁶ Others saw overseas expansion as more necessary, if France were to sustain or regain its place in the world. 'Extension without acting, without becoming involved in the affairs of the world, by keeping apart from European combinations, by seeing every attempt at expansion into Africa or the Orient as a trap – living like that, for a great nation, is to abdicate', Jules Ferry declared in 1885, 'and in a shorter time than you would believe possible to descend from the first rank to third or fourth.'¹⁷ 'France would not easily be content to count for no more in the world than a big Belgium.'¹⁸ 'I have always thought that France would fall rather rapidly to the rank of secondary powers if she remained indifferent to the great struggle which is being pursued about her for the possession no longer of Europe but of

the world. Time is pressing because our competitors are numerous', Professor Gabriel Charmes declared.¹⁹

For this concept there was indeed limited public support. 'When one returns to France after long years in distant lands', Garnier lamented in 1869, '... one is singularly touched by the profound indifference of the public for all that is connected with national grandeur... It seems that there is no connexion between the interests one has just defended and this nation, formerly so adventurous, which is now so drawn in upon itself that it does not even look beyond its borders for an element of its national activity.'²⁰ Under the Third Republic many colonial societies were formed. The total membership was never more than five to ten thousand, however, and the *parti colonial* was nicknamed the dinner party.²¹ The colonial cause was most popular in the 1890s, when it could be identified with opposition to Britain, and in the early years of the new century, when it could be identified with opposition to Germany.²²

If governments had been less uninterested, and the public more involved, the colonialists would not in fact have got so far. 'Like its ignorance of Empire, the injured nationalism of French society made it vulnerable to a colonialism with which it was fundamentally out of sympathy.' 'The colonial party was the highest stage not of French capitalism but of French nationalism.' 'The *parti colonial* could not make public opinion colonialist. But at moments of crisis it could none the less enlist public support for overseas expansion by presenting colonial issues as questions of national prestige.'²³ It also depended on the weakness of French governments. Ministries, 'precarious, usually preoccupied by domestic affairs', rarely attempted to impose Cabinet control on foreign or colonial policy. Their instability sometimes left officials in control and opened the way to pressure groups.²⁴ Those at home or overseas who believed that the state must be built and sustained in this way came into their own.

The defeat of 1870–1 did not prevent Admiral Marie Jules Dupré from taking up Garnier's ideas. From December 1872 he 'bombarded' Paris with requests for permission to occupy Hanoi.²⁵ He wanted to conclude a treaty that would include not only the Emperor Tu-duc's recognition of French sovereignty in western Cochin China, but also an undertaking not to cede Tonkin to any other power. It was, he added,

indispensable for the future tranquillity of our colony that we have no immediate European neighbor. Siam, which separates us from the English of Burma, will develop and endure, in contrast to the Empire of Annam, which is in rapid decadence and will finish by falling either into our establishment or into that of a foreign power that will seize Tonkin. For the Germans have designs there.²⁶

A merchant and arms-supplier, Jean Dupuis, had shown the practicability of the Red River route in 1871. His plan to supply arms to the Governor of

Yunnan had semi-official support from the ministry of navy and colonies. ‘The arrangement fell into that shadowy world where officials give “semi official” support to risky projects. With success there can be a ringing affirmation of association, while failure brings a bland denial of knowledge.’²⁷ Dupuis found more support among the naval officers he met at Saigon in May 1872. In Tonkin his behaviour was provocative, but, though seeing his presence as outside the treaty of 1862 and his behaviour as illegal, Tu-duc tried to avoid a conflict, and appealed to the Admiral to withdraw him. He did not, however, offer to negotiate a treaty over the trade of the Red River.²⁸

Dupré admitted that Dupuis had no right to be in Tonkin. Pointing to the interest of the British in the commerce of Yunnan, and suggesting that German merchants were also interested, he proposed, however, to occupy Hanoi until he secured a protectorate treaty. He told Admiral Dompierre de Hornoy, the minister of marine in Paris, that he hoped for support, but was ready to take responsibility and be disavowed.²⁹ Dompierre’s reply of 12 September reminded him that France was isolated and in a dire financial position. ‘You will need troops and still more troops... We would have to double the administration..., and it all takes money, money and more money... More dangerous still is the jealousy of England and Germany at seeing our power expand in this way in the East.’³⁰ Dompierre agreed, however, that Dupré might negotiate on the basis he had suggested, gaining a protectorate and returning the western provinces, provided it was done peacefully, and he said he had Prime Minister Broglie’s backing.³¹

On 10 October Dupré despatched a small expedition under Francis Garnier, whom he had already summoned in late July. He was formally instructed to withdraw Dupuis, but to stay and try to negotiate the opening of the Red River. Dupré envisaged a protectorate, which he thought would be easier to fund and to sustain than the colony in Cochin China.

The occupation of a military position in the heart of Tonkin will very probably be a necessary step toward the conclusion of the treaty, which must be the equivalent to the protectorate of France over the entire kingdom. If the Hue court stubbornly maintains its stupid pride and rejects our protection, it will suffice to call upon all the malcontents of Tonkin in order to chase away all the mandarins. We would only have the problem of choosing among the more or less legitimate pretenders to the sovereignty of Tonkin.

Making the protectorate effective would require ‘a significant naval force to remain in the country until its complete pacification’. But it would not be necessary, as in Lower Cochin China, ‘to substitute our administration for the indigenous one. A resident and several inspectors would suffice to ensure that the population be honestly and benevolently administered.’³² ‘As for instructions’, Garnier wrote to his brother, ‘*carte blanche!* The admiral is relying on me! Forward then for our beloved France!’³³

In Hanoi Garnier displayed no intention of arbitrating the Dupuis dispute. He issued an ultimatum requiring that the citadel be disarmed, that the authorities in Hanoi order the provincial authorities to comply with his demands for the opening and regulation of commerce on the Red River, and that Dupuis be paid an indemnity for his losses so far and allowed to continue his transactions with Yunnan. The Vietnamese commander Nguyen Tri Phuong ordered the citadel to prepare its defences. Garnier's forces attacked it on 20 November and overpowered the defenders. He moved on to take several of the delta citadels, receiving support from the French missionaries, but not from the Spanish Dominicans, who maintained that, since the treaties had been signed, they had 'lived in perfect harmony with the Annamite mandarins'.³⁴

From the start of the onslaught in 1858–9 – in which the French had invited Spanish participation³⁵ – the Nguyen court had been split between advocates of war, *chu chien*, and advocates of peace, *chu hoa*. The former recognised the determination of the invaders, but had no answer but resistance, suicide rather than surrender. The advocates of peace recognised the superiority of European weapons and the sufferings continued resistance would bring and sought a negotiated settlement. They also drew on the Chinese example. The Middle Kingdom had been humbled by the West in the 1840s and 1850s, but the victors had been content with concessions rather than territorial acquisitions. The latter faction prevailed and Tu-duc followed this line. Though France refused a settlement in 1864, the court still hoped to regain the eastern provinces by strictly fulfilling the 1862 treaty.³⁶ That was also a reason why it refused to acknowledge the loss of the western provinces in 1867. In the Garnier affair Tu-duc retained the policy. His aim was to regain the citadels by concession and negotiation. 'If we now desire to put an end to Garnier's disruptive violence, to resolve rapidly the northern imbroglio', the Foreign Relations Bureau declared after the fall of Hanoi, 'there is no better means than to accede to Admiral Dupré's wishes'.³⁷

On 20 December 1873 a Sino-Vietnamese group, Quan co den or Black Flags, led by Luu Vinh Phuc – they had been pushed out of China after the Manchus had destroyed the Taiping kingdom, and used by Hue to extirpate rival bands in the highlands – attacked the French at the Hanoi citadel. Garnier chased the attackers and was attacked and killed, and his head carried off.³⁸ The attack was not ordered by the Emperor. Hoang Ta Viem and Ton That Thuyet, the imperial commanders who utilised the Black Flags, were connected with the *chu chien* faction, and probably acting without or in defiance of authority. The Emperor stopped their follow-up and pursued negotiations with Philastre, sent up by Dupré. He claimed to accept Dupré's assertions that Garnier had acted in violation of his instructions. His negotiators sought to explain the death of Garnier as a result of local circumstances. 'Just as your admiral has stated that he did not order the seizure of the four provinces, our country did not conflict with yours . . . Garnier's death was caused either by bands of robbers or by enraged scholars'.³⁹

The Emperor presented his policy as a success. Under the treaty of 15 March 1874, the French indeed left Tonkin. But it also recognised French authority in all Cochin China, enhanced the privileges of the Catholics and opened the whole Red River. No protectorate was established, and article 2 declared that Vietnam was not a dependency of any country. France did, however, promise assistance, should the Emperor seek it, in the maintenance of peace and order, the suppression of piracy and defence against any attack. In recognition of that, the King of Annam agreed to conform his foreign policy to that of France and not to change his diplomatic relations. The result was, as Brötel puts it, a disguised protectorate, realising the colonialists' minimum programme, without prompting a diplomatic confrontation with rival powers.⁴⁰

In face of a British protest, however, the Quai played down the quasi-protectorate nature of the agreement. The war scare of 1875 'also made local German interest in the Tonkin question a delicate issue'. At the instance of Decazes, naval ministers 'monitored closely all tendencies to political re-involvement', though disorder made the Red River privileges 'inoperative', and the British were reported to be opening up a route to Yunnan through Bhamo.⁴¹

France had even so made a substantial advance in Asia even at a time of weakness in Europe. By the late 1870s the uncertainties of a republic not ruled by republicans had come to an end, and a bolder policy became possible. It was, however, necessary to agree on its focus. Was France to seek revenge in Europe and the regaining of Alsace-Lorraine? or was it to seek greatness, and to assuage disappointed patriots, by a less dangerous route, an active colonial policy? In 1878 Britain and Germany agreed to give France a free hand in Tunisia. In 1880 Radowitz indicated that Germany had no territorial ambitions in Vietnam. In the interests of its commerce, it would applaud the affirmation and extension of French authority in Tonkin.⁴²

In 1879 Waddington's ministry had proposed to consolidate the French position in Vietnam by forcing Tu-duc to accept a real protectorate and by occupying strategic positions on the Red River. The idea was taken up by his successor Freycinet the following year, though he insisted that it must be based on an 'entente' with Hue. His Cabinet resigned on 19 September 1880.⁴³ The fragmented nature of the Republican centre, the frequent collapse of coalitions, and the uncertainty of parliamentary support, still made it difficult for Paris to adopt a forceful policy. The first Ferry Cabinet tried it in Tunisia. It ran into 'pacification difficulties'. That provoked the fall of Ferry's government, and also prevented large-scale operations in Tonkin.⁴⁴ The Gambetta ministry emphasised pacific and civilian expansion, transferring colonies to the ministry of commerce, but when he fell he was in fact planning an expedition, and his successor, Freycinet, returned the colonies to the marine ministry.

The minister, Admiral J. B. Jauréguiberry, a Cochin China veteran, approved Governor C. M. Le Myre de Vilers's proposal to send a small

force under Henri Rivière to deal with Black Flags in the delta and thus to ensure freedom of commerce.⁴⁵ Rivière seized the Hanoi citadel in April 1882.⁴⁶ Le Myre de Vilers told him his task was 'essentially political and pacific'. He was to consider not what was most advantageous, but what was possible, given the 'repulsion' of parliament and of France to any expedition, the ministry's embarrassment, the pretensions of China in respect of Vietnam, the susceptibility of foreign powers, the need to maintain order in the colony, and the impossibility of obtaining reinforcements and subsidies.⁴⁷ France's failure in Egypt prompted Gambetta to argue for intervention in Tonkin, but President Grévy ruled against an expedition, recalling the Mexican adventure.⁴⁸

The death of Gambetta in December 1882 led his followers to rally to Ferry's faction, and his new ministry was strong and long-lived. When Rivière received reinforcements in April 1883, he ignored warnings 'not to drag the government into complications', and attacked Nam Dinh. 'Since the government... was foolish enough to send me 500 men, I set out to accomplish on my own what it lacked the nerve to make me do', he told a friend in Paris. 'They will now be forced to carry on.' Despite new instructions, he led a sortie and was killed on 19 May.⁴⁹ That prompted a surge of patriotic feeling in both chambers and in the press.⁵⁰ Ferry obtained consent for a substantial naval and military expedition designed to eradicate Chinese and Vietnamese deployments on the upper Song koi and to impose a new protectorate treaty.⁵¹ The Thuan An forts were bombarded, and the court accepted the terms put forward by Jules Harmand, civil Commissioner-General. Vietnam formally accepted the French protectorate and wholly made over the conduct of its foreign policy.⁵² As Ferry wished, its treatment of Annam and Tonkin differed. But he thought that Harmand had reduced the viability of Annam by transferring provinces to Cochin China and Tonkin and increased the risk of opposition. The Patenôtre treaty restored the provinces and increased Annam's autonomy.⁵³

France had secured the surrender of the court, but its forces could not readily defeat the Vietnamese and Chinese troops in Tonkin. The Vietnamese commander-in-chief, Prince Hoang Ke Vien, held out at Son Tay with the assistance of Chinese troops and Luu Vinh Phuc's Black Flags for several months, abandoning his stronghold only in December 1883. The Chinese, reinforced across the border, held out longer. Only with troop reinforcements were the French able to take the major strongholds of Bac Ninh and Hung Hoa. That led to the negotiation of the treaty of May 1884, in which the Chinese government acknowledged the French protectorate. They renewed the war when they realised that they had lost their traditional suzerainty. Courbet bombarded Foochow. A new treaty followed in April 1885.⁵⁴

Encouraged by the naval minister, Bonard had led a gunboat-supported mission of exploration into Cambodia in September 1862. Aubaret concluded

that the 'whole commercial future of lower Cochinchina lies in this vast basin of Cambodia'. 'It is imperative that our influence... be predominant in Cambodia', Bonard wrote; 'for upon such influence the prosperity and security of lower Cochinchina depends'. Chasseloup-Laubat supported him. Siam's claims must be repelled, otherwise, 'under the direction of foreign agents, jealous of our progress', it 'could block all the trading activity of lower Cochinchina'.⁵⁵ Under the influence of a French missionary bishop at Udong, King Norodom sought a protectorate treaty that might offset Siamese pressure, and it was signed by Bonard's successor, La Grandière, in August 1863. The Siamese complained in Paris. Apprehensive of the British, Drouyn de Lhuys wanted to repudiate the treaty, but Napoleon III reluctantly sided with Chasseloup-Laubat. The latter conceded that, if Siam accepted the French protectorate over Cambodia, it should retain Battambang and Angkor. Advised by the British Consul-General, the Siamese accepted a draft treaty on this basis.⁵⁶

The pursuit of commercial expansion up the Mekong to China involved Laos as well. Chasseloup-Laubat wanted the treaty with Siam, which had referred to 'Siamese Laos', to cover a renunciation of its claims over Laos beyond the Mekong. The Siamese approached Paris direct, at a time, moreover, when Chasseloup had been replaced by the less enthusiastic Rigault de Genouilly, and the Doudart expedition had dampened the Mekong prospects. The Foreign Office was able to seize the initiative. The treaty finally concluded acknowledged Siam's sovereignty over Battambang and Siemreap, and, while it did not obtain a French acknowledgement of its suzerainty over Laos, it was given a verbal assurance that the French did not intend to extend their control over it. La Grandière described the treaty as 'an unnecessary act in its entirety, and dishonourable in some of its articles'.⁵⁷

His annexation of the three western provinces of Cochin China, however, gave France control of the delta. 'This bloodless conquest puts us in a strong position to control the Gulf of Siam', the *Courier de Saigon* commented. If the Mekong was impassable, other prospects opened up. '[O]ur relations with [Siam] will necessarily become more frequent', Aubaret declared, 'and I think it will be a matter of real significance to us to maintain our influence here in such a way as to ensure the strict neutrality of this neighbouring kingdom'.⁵⁸ In Paris La Grandière argued that relations with Siam should be handled from Saigon. The Foreign Minister, the Prince de La Tour d'Auvergne, argued in 1869 that British influence at Bangkok could best be countered by gaining Siamese friendship, not by issuing threats. 'In Saigon it does not seem to be recognized that, since we have no intention of conquering Siam, the wise policy would be to make a good neighbour of this kingdom situated between ourselves and the possessions of the British.' France might exercise 'a sort of moral protectorate'.⁵⁹

The adoption a decade later of a more vigorous policy in Vietnam was accompanied by a different approach to Siam. In September 1881 Le Myre de Vilers inventively told the minister of the navy and colonies that the

British were moving towards a protectorate of Siam. In control of Bangkok, they would place gunboats on Tonle Sap and demand free navigation of the lower Mekong. 'Cochinchina would become completely exposed, and we should have to assemble on the banks of the river the most powerful means of defence . . . a veritable army.' The Governor proposed a policy of informal penetration: an 'active' consul of his own nomination, expert on Indo-China, should be sent to Bangkok. The Quai accepted the nomination of Harmand, who had been on the Garnier expedition to Tonkin and later explored lower Laos. Its continued caution irritated him and he sought to use his Paris contacts to persuade it to take up his recommendations.⁶⁰

Believing like Le Myre that Siam might soon become British, he wanted to find a means to seize Luang Prabang, Battambang and Siemreap before that happened. He sought, without success, to uphold the 'Old Siam' party against King Chulalongkorn, believing that a divided Siam would offer less resistance than one strongly led by the King. He also sought, with little success, to develop infrastructural links between Saigon and Bangkok. He gave attention, too, to private schemes that might increase French influence, a French bank, a tramway between Bangkok and Paknam, and the Kra canal scheme advocated by François Deloncle, but rightly doubted that the Siamese would welcome them. These measures being unrewarding, Harmand sought to counter what he saw as a British threat through Chiangmai by a clandestine mission to Luang Prabang, which had Quai approval, but was so ineptly led that he dropped its political objectives.⁶¹

Harmand was reduced to proposing an agreement with the British. This idea he had described to Freycinet in April 1882:

an arrangement which, while allowing the Thai kingdom proper to stay in existence, that is to say the Menam valley, and also ensuring its neutrality, so that we never find ourselves in direct contact with the British, would allow Britain to go ahead and complete her domination of Burma and the Shan states. This would leave us, on our side, with all the scope we need to carry out the best, the easiest, the greatest piece of colonization that fate has offered us since Duplex and Bussy, that of eastern Indochina.⁶²

It was in July 1883 that the Burmese mission reached Paris. François Deloncle, then at the Quai, and allegedly given prime responsibility for the Burmese negotiations, later argued that Ferry's policy in Burma was part of his policy in Indo-China. 'Jules Ferry . . . did not lose sight of the fact that our situation in Cochinchina necessitated some action to prevent a threatening power establishing itself at our backs.' Just then the Burmese mission arrived. 'The Burmese wanted a new treaty; they had to be induced to accept the former treaty of 1873 with some secret stipulations.' The agreement was 'to be concluded in such a way that we would be able to use it to make headway in Siam in exchange'.

M. Jules Ferry asked me to negotiate it in such a way that the British might become aware of our desire to develop an interest in independent Upper Burma, where they were so jealous of their own influence, and that, thenceforth, they might be prepared to make exchanges which would allow us, if need be, against the withdrawal of our interest in Burma, to obtain concessions in Siam. This would at least enable us to keep the British on tenterhooks in the Malay Peninsula. What Jules Ferry wanted was to conclude an agreement with Burma which would give him the tiller in Siam.⁶³

Tuck believes that in this case the often mendacious Deloncle is difficult to dismiss. Though the official files do not contain memoranda on Ferry's overall policy, it seems likely that gaining an influence at Mandalay well beyond the modest bounds of the early 1870s was intended as a counterpoise to British influence at Bangkok. The British warnings, however, led him to proceed cautiously, lest he provoke the British to march on Mandalay. Haas indeed declared on arrival that 'the occupation of Mandalay will involve the loss of the Mekong valley'.⁶⁴ Ferry himself drafted the secret letter. It appears that he hoped to avoid using it in order to secure the convention, but that rumours about a British move on Chiangmai made it urgent. The published convention was, of course, innocuous. He still thought that it was premature to play his trump card and that it was necessary to build up French commercial interests on the Irrawaddy.⁶⁵ But that was not readily done, and Haas's attempts to do it, in rather the style Harmand attempted in Bangkok, were counterproductive. There were no French interests to protect. They had to be manufactured.

After the British occupation, Harmand met Dufferin, and told him that he had tried to persuade Ferry not to adopt an aggressive policy in Upper Burma.

He said that M. Ferry had, of course, no intention of annexing Upper Burma to the French dominions, but that his plan was to establish large French commercial interests in Mandalay and to secure the political ascendancy of France in the upper valley of the Irrawaddy, with a view to acquiring a situation which would enable [France] to put pressure upon England, and thus obtain whatever advantages such a condition of things might procure.⁶⁶

After Ferry's fall in March 1885, the French had changed their strategy, though not their objectives. Freycinet ordered Haas to withdraw and took up Harmand's suggestion of an Anglo-French treaty. On 28 October he agreed that France should aim, not at a protectorate of Siam, but an international guarantee of its neutrality. That was too late to stop the British invasion of Burma, and with the conquest 'the French lost their *quid pro quo* for British consent to the neutralization of Siam'.⁶⁷ It also became more difficult to

secure the role in Laos that the French had envisaged. Yet the country was of strategic importance to any ruler of Vietnam.

Siam might become a 'buffer'. For that, as Dufferin had said, Burma lacked the necessary 'resilience'. Siam was in a better position. Those who restored the kingdom after the Burmese destruction of Ayudhya in 1767 based it down river, first at Thonburi, and then at Bangkok. Such a capital was well placed to control the core of the state in the basin of the Menam Chao Praya, and it was also well placed to benefit from the trade of the region. The kingdom revived Thai claims in respect of Cambodia, Laos and the Malay states. It also developed a more positive relationship with the British than either Burma or Vietnam. In part that was due to the restraint of the British, in part to the sagacity of the Thais. The Burney treaty of 1826 provided for British trade at Bangkok, while offering a compromise over the Malay states. Following the break with China, the British government sought to secure a new commercial treaty, including provisions for extra-territorial jurisdiction, the kind of treaty made with 'other imperfectly civilized States', as the instructions put it.⁶⁸ Sir James Brooke failed to secure it and recommended a punitive expedition. Instead another envoy was sent. Sir John Bowring secured the treaty of 1855.

The Kralahom minister was glad that the British envoy was 'the pioneer of the new relations to be opened between them and the West, as they could then count upon such arrangements being concluded as would be both satisfactory to Siam, and sufficient to meet the demands that might hereafter be made by other of the Western powers'.⁶⁹ Siam had taken out a measure of insurance with the major power. But the changes of the closing decades of the century challenged these arrangements as they challenged others. The British accepted the establishment of the French in Cochin China and the subsequent Cambodia treaty. How would they now view French interest in Siam and Laos?

The Harmand concept was revived in 1889. It did, however, require a definition of Siam's borders. Attempting that now involved considering the position of the Shan states, which extended beyond the Salween, and supremacy over which the British inherited from the Burman kingdom they had displaced. It also involved considering the position of the Laos states. Over these Siam claimed supremacy, and it began to assert that in the 1880s. Over them, too, Vietnam had claims: their strategic significance for any ruler of Vietnam was underlined in this phase by the use of Laos sanctuaries by the Vietnamese resistance.⁷⁰ The Quai's concept was of a line drawn along the Mekong itself. Unrealistic as a frontier, that divided Laos. Local Frenchmen – such as Auguste Pavie, the Vice-Consul at Luang Prabang – opposed the idea: Laos should be French. But it was the British who defeated it, arguing that France must settle its differences with Siam first, instead of there being a Franco-British deal, jointly pressed on Siam.⁷¹

This, however, left the way open for French pressure on Siam. In 1888 Pavie, supported by a French column, had had some success in avoiding a confrontation with the Siamese forces on the Dien Bien Phu plateau and persuading them to retire. The tactic of local confrontation, it was decided, could be employed more extensively. The Quai saw that as a means of accelerating a settlement with the Siamese and the British. For the colonialists it was designed to make such a settlement unnecessary.⁷² Approving a second Pavie venture, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Spuller, insisted that Luang Prabang be left to the Siamese. 'We absolutely must limit our claims if we are to have any chance of making them acceptable without recourse to a military expedition, which French public opinion would find totally unacceptable.'⁷³

In April 1889 a businessmen's dining club had been addressed by Haas, who argued that the upper Mekong was the strategic and commercial axis on which Indo-China depended. A Syndicat de Haut Laos was formed, with the object of creating a French commercial and political presence there that would pre-empt the British advance into the trans-Salween Shan states. Deloncle, now Ferry's secretary, saw this as part of a larger strategy to secure the Mekong valley for France, and he was backed by Eugene Etienne, the under-secretary for the colonies, and doyen of the *parti colonial*. The idea was that Pavie would head a commercial and political mission that would confront the Siamese garrisons one by one and push them back, as he had confronted the one at Dien Bien Phu, and induce the King of Luang Prabang to seek French protection.⁷⁴ It was that priority Spuller had altered.

The mission, however, departed in a blaze of publicity, with the bulletin of the Société de Géographie Commerciale de Paris writing of the 'incomparable riches' of Laos, and with renewed hopes that a Mekong route to Yunnan would be found. The Siamese were alerted, and Chulalongkorn told Pavie that frontier negotiations could take place only in Bangkok. That prevented local deals. Nor did Pavie manage to collect evidence of Vietnamese claims that might be used in the negotiations. He recommended that France should not negotiate until it was ready to impose a frontier by force. He also advocated claiming Upper Laos as far as the Mekong. This view was adopted by Alexandre Ribot, a Prime Minister in charge of foreign policy late in 1891, and expounded in response to a parliamentary question tabled by Deloncle. So far the Siamese had enjoyed considerable success in resisting the French advance. 'But the danger of such successful resistance was that it tended to propel the Quai into the arms of the colonial interest, for whom the use of force was beginning to seem greatly preferable to negotiation as a means of dealing with Siamese problems.'⁷⁵

Early in 1893 – in a France strengthened by the Russian alliance, but governed by a succession of ministries weakened by the Panama Canal scandal – the colonialists were able to secure a parliamentary vote for an expedition to evict the Siamese garrisons on the east bank of the Mekong. Outside parliament Etienne backed a petition drafted by Deloncle demanding that French claims against Siam should be pressed, and Delcassé took up the cause

from his position as under-secretary for the colonies. The governor-general, Jean de Lanessan, sought to give the enterprise the character of a police action, so as to avoid the appearance of making war on Siam. He also had limited forces available.⁷⁶

The unexpected resistance of the Siamese the colonialists turned to account. Pavie argued for a naval demonstration, followed by a protectorate, and so did another petition drafted by Deloncle. The death of the *Inspecteur de la Garde Civile*, Grosgrurin, enabled Delcassé to argue for the 'lost provinces' of Battambang and Siemreap. Two gunboats were sent to Bangkok with the aim of presenting an ultimatum. The boats clashed with the Siamese in forcing a crossing of the bar on 13 July and guns were trained on the royal palace. The reply to the ultimatum was, however, qualified, and Pavie announced a blockade. Delcassé advocated a protectorate. But the protests of the British restrained the French, and the breakup of the French parliament before the elections in August deprived the colonialists of an audience.⁷⁷

Back in March, when, as Philip Currie observed at the Foreign Office in London, the French were 'working themselves up into a state of excitement against Siam with the view of plundering her', Lord Rosebery had indicated – somewhat to the surprise of the French Foreign Minister, Jules Develle – that Britain had no intention of getting mixed up in the dispute. He did not think the upper Mekong was in question, and he thought the Siamese should buy a settlement by ceding some of their claims, and 'agree with their enemy quickly'.⁷⁸ That had encouraged Develle to accept the police action. The advice tendered by the British minister in Bangkok, however, may have encouraged the Siamese in their determination to resist. The impression was confirmed when late in June Rosebery, increasingly worried by the turn of events, authorised the despatch of British gunboats, though they were intended to restrain the French. Develle then authorised the despatch of French gunboats and the ultimatum.⁷⁹ The fracas at Paknam alarmed Rosebery, who yet feared that any hint of British support would merely provoke the French jingoes.⁸⁰ Develle, however, gave assurances that the territorial integrity of Siam would be preserved. Of those he reminded the Cabinet when Delcassé urged a protectorate and when he urged the regaining of the 'lost provinces'.⁸¹

Rosebery was aware that 'neither the government nor the House of Commons would support him in an ultimatum at this moment over Siam'.⁸² He pressed Siam to accept the ultimatum – which would involve the loss of the east bank and most of Luang Prabang – so as to 'strike at the forward party' – while protesting in Paris against any extension of its terms. The British Ambassador, Dufferin, deplored any idea of adding the lost provinces to the ultimatum, and reported that Develle 'listened to me with . . . much equanimity, for my strong language placed weapons in his hands for his anticipated fight with his enemies'. New terms were added to the ultimatum, including a demilitarised zone and the occupation of Chantabun, but they did not involve the annexation of Battambang and Siemreap.⁸³

In the eyes of the Siamese the British had done too little to help them. Their losses were grievous, and, but for the onset of the French elections, could have been worse. However, the affair alerted the British to the influence of the colonialist party and prompted them to adopt a more active policy. It was the British who now became the advocates of a policy of neutralisation. Develle, on the other hand, found it difficult to contain the colonialists.

One reason was that he had nominated Le Myre de Vilers as plenipotentiary. He had hoped to make a treaty binding Siam not to alienate territory to any other power without French consent, as a step towards a protectorate. Develle managed to prevent that, describing the former governor as 'an idiot who almost jeopardized everything'. He did, however, manage to conclude a treaty that went beyond the ultimatum. 'European niceties are inappropriate in Siam. With Asiatics, you impose your will when you are stronger, or you stand aloof if you are the weaker. There is little point in negotiating: it is a waste of time.'⁸⁴ Influenced by Lanessan and 'public opinion' in Saigon, he secured the removal of Siamese customs posts from the demilitarised zone, pending the conclusion of a commercial treaty, while the occupation of Chantabun was to continue until the French were satisfied with the implementing of the treaty stipulations.⁸⁵

Britain's aims, Rosebery had told Gladstone on 26 August 1893, were two: France must not be allowed to absorb Siam as it 'would place another great military power on our Eastern frontier; and as we possess practically a monopoly of Siamese commerce we do not wish to see our trade destroyed by the tariff wall which the French erect around their possessions'. Back at the India Office, Kimberley was concerned over 'the coincident action of Russia on the Pamirs and France in Siam'.⁸⁶ Siam gave in to Le Myre's demands sooner than Rosebery wished. He concentrated on securing a buffer zone in the north, where he proposed to meet the views of the French in return for a mutual guarantee of Siam.⁸⁷ That, he hoped, would limit the colonialists.⁸⁸

The colonialists, however, opposed the buffer scheme. By December the French press were clear that it was a device to deny control of the upper Mekong to the French. A former foreign minister, Emile Flourens, argued in *La Presse* that it would 'open the southern gate to China' for British goods, destroying the French monopoly of access through Tonkin. He also argued that it would leave Indo-China and Saigon defenceless against a riverborne British attack. Prince Henri d'Orléans was concerned that the British would build a railway through it, though in fact they had no such plans. 'With this weak Government', Dufferin wrote, 'the real interests of the country are never present to the mind. Their sole attention is fixed upon what the papers will say, and on the best means of safeguarding their position in Parliament. In such circumstances argument is useless... the Paris press has taken the alarm about Siam... and it will be very difficult to hurry on a solution.'⁸⁹

Returned to power, Salisbury envisaged dropping the buffer state but securing a guarantee of Siam. The British would accept a Burma–Tonkin frontier along the Mekong, and expect France to leave Chantabun and

renounce any intention of annexing the 25-km zone. Ambassador Courcel argued that a joint guarantee would be inconvenient not only to France, given future British needs, an allusion to the northern Malay states. Salisbury put forward the idea of a limited guarantee of the Menam Chao Phraya valley alone, although he realised that the Siamese might view that with 'extreme dismay and discontent', and was himself concerned about third-power (German) interest in the unguaranteed peninsular part of Siam.⁹⁰ French doubts were met by 'a masterly piece of bluff':⁹¹ Salisbury threatened to offer a unilateral guarantee to Siam. The Salisbury suggestion became the basis for the declaration finally signed on 15 January 1896.⁹²

It was not so much a guarantee as a mutual promise of abnegation. The General Adviser, the Belgian Rolin-Jaequemyns, thought that it improved Siam's position, inasmuch as it took away from the French, at least while they were at peace with the British, 'the fearsome weapon of an attack on the Menam (be it understood that I leave aside the wicked hypothesis of an agreement between these two countries re this attack)'.⁹³ Of that, of course, there was some suspicion, for example on the part of the Japanese: the arrangement was 'of the same nature as the compact between two highwaymen not to molest a certain richly-laden coach'.⁹⁴ 'Treaties are only made to be broken', Prince Prisdang told King Chulalongkorn.⁹⁵

The two powers exchanged notes, however, in which they expressed their common solicitude for the security and stability of Siam. In addition Salisbury wrote a covering despatch to Dufferin, in which he emphasised that although 'it might be thought that... we are throwing doubt upon the complete title and rights of the Siamese to the remainder of their Kingdom... we fully recognise the rights of Siam to the full and undisturbed enjoyment, in accordance with long usage, or with existing Treaties, of the entire territory comprised within her dominions'.⁹⁶ Salisbury also initiated a secret negotiation with Bangkok, designed to cover the non-neutralised portion of peninsular Siam between Tenasserim and the Federated Malay States, and to avoid the intervention of third powers. Siam was to promise 'not to... alienate... the western portion of Siam to anybody'.⁹⁷

The dismemberment of the Siamese empire was indeed to go further. In 1907 the French were finally to secure Cambodia's 'lost provinces', Siemreap and Battambang. Two years later, Siamese claims over Kedah, Perlis, Trengganu and Kelantan were transferred to the British. But Siam retained its independence, and in that the 1896 declaration was crucial. Without the measures the Siamese monarchy undertook, of course, it would have been insufficient. It was more successful in modernising than Mindon. It could, unlike Brunei, behave like Prince Prisdang's Medea, throwing outlying territory to its pursuers.⁹⁸ It had a better understanding of the Europeans than the Nguyen. The two highwaymen were not equal in power, it recognised, nor did they have the same objectives.

Britain's priorities were, once more, both strategic and commercial. Neither required the takeover of Siam by protectorate or otherwise, despite

the French suspicions. The British had fitted Siam into their commercial diplomacy in the 1850s. When France established itself in Vietnam and Cambodia and became interested in Laos, the British saw Siam as a buffer, and did not want its independence compromised. Their commercial interest, as the Siamese had seen, was in the opening up of the country, and, after the treaty of 1855, they played a major role. The onset of French protectionism was only another argument for maintaining an independent, if compliant, kingdom. Attaining their essential goals, the British proceeded by diplomacy and compromise, backed by a limited display of force. They were constrained by domestic conditions.

Surrendering British commerce in Siam was impossible, but public and parliamentary opinion imposed limits on what Rosebery could do. The British were also constrained by external conditions. Oriented to the maintenance so far as possible of the status quo, they sought to reach understandings rather than see crises deepen. Other questions were at issue at the same time, such as the future of the upper Nile. Nor – as the Kruger telegram was to show – were other powers likely to be helpful.

In a sense the French enjoyed a striking victory. They owed it in part to Siam's comparative fragility and to Britain's complaisance. For, while they had a strategic interest in securing the frontier of Vietnam, they had no real economic interest in Siam, nor any means of establishing it. The success they enjoyed was insufficient in the eyes of officials in the East and in the eyes of the colonialists in France itself, but it was evidence of their effectiveness. The empire continued to be, as in Napoleon III's time, a testimony to the weakness of the French political system, not to its strength. The colonialist venture had no substantial economic interests behind it, and it was backed only inconstantly by public or parliamentary opinion, at times when prestige was in question or someone had died a heroic death. The Chamber voted the credits for the occupation of Tonkin on 23 December 1885 by 273 votes to 267.⁹⁹ The system, however, allowed a freedom to local authorities and adventurers that far exceeded the freedom allowed by the British system. Weak cabinets could not control aberrant ministers, nor weak ministers their departments. The 'colonial party' of the Third Republic made use of these weaknesses in a more methodical way than the whimsical Napoleon III. In addition, some of the leading 'Opportunists', above all Ferry, were able to adopt a colonial policy as a means of demonstrating the greatness of France, and deflecting the demand to regain Alsace-Lorraine. It was a line Bismarck encouraged. The Quai was generally more cautious than the colonial party. It recognised that it was essential to avoid outright conflict with Britain. Though policy-making was confused, that was avoided: French policy might go to the edge, but never over the brink.

The *parti colonial* hoped to use the Boer war to modify the 1896 agreement. 'Le Siam doit être à nous!' cried Chailley-Bert.¹⁰⁰ In vain; and the expected partition of China did not happen. That meant that Indo-China was the limit of the French empire in Asia, and colonialists looked more to Africa. 'Lâchons

l'Asie. Prenons l'Afrique' was the title of Onesime Reclus's book of 1904.¹⁰¹ Harmand had seen Indo-China as a source of French influence in the East Asia and in the world at large.¹⁰² In fact it was somewhat exposed.

In the case of France in Southeast Asia, study suggests the overwhelmingly political character of imperialism. The economic arguments employed were largely rhetorical and the economic activities often contrived. Imperialism varies from power to power. The French example may nevertheless encourage seeing it in general in a more political and diplomatic light than Hobson or Lenin suggest. If the imperialist phase is to be seen as a transition towards a world system of states, it began as a transition from a world in which Britain had primacy to a world where power was more diffused. That resulted from a redistribution of power, itself affected by movements of national unification and the spread of the industrial revolution. The process was a political one, and involved shifts among all the powers, whatever their involvement in the industrial revolution. Indeed a power that was not industrialising might be all the more anxious to ensure its future in a changing world by imperial enterprise. It was such a view that colonialists sought to articulate.

There was certainly plenty of rhetoric. Tonkin, Professor Paul Gaffarel of Dijon urged, was the way to the 'very heart' of China, nearly one-third of the inhabitants of the globe, and by utilising it 'we shall have produced in our favor an economic revolution'.

We have... but to utilize what nature and treaties have placed in our hands, to restore impetus and life to these intelligent Annamese and Chinese peoples, and, thanks to them, pacifically to invade interior China. These are our future Indias... A century ago, we compromised our Asiatic dominion by sacrificing Dupleix. Let us not today sacrifice the work sketched out by Garnier and Dupuis.¹⁰³

Indo-China, however, remained 'on the periphery of Etienne's colonial concern'. Even by 1890, Africa had become 'the great area of expansion for the French colonialists... Little real value, they believed, would come quickly from Indo-China.' 'Do not forget that Germany still holds Alsace-Lorraine as a colony', Clemenceau shouted. 'You will find on the west coast of Africa an expanse of land as large as Germany itself', Etienne replied.¹⁰⁴

At times, indeed, Germany supported the colonial endeavours of post-1871 France. Bismarck believed that they would help to reduce the emphasis on *revanche*, and encourage the French to pursue grandeur through other means, less likely to disturb the new Europe. Colonial expansion would also help to divide France from Britain and, though he realised that France would always stop short of war with Britain, it would also stop short of alliance. In an early book, *Germany's First Bid for Colonies*, A. J. P. Taylor argued that Bismarck turned to colonial ventures in 1884–5 as part of his European diplomacy: he wanted to convince France that it was not alone in

its disputes with the British and sought to develop some of his own. Perhaps that was an exaggeration. It seems more likely that he had determined to pursue a colonial policy and wanted French support. In any case he had no wish for too deep a conflict with Britain, any more than the French had: the British were too important in his diplomacy for handling the conflicting interests of Austria–Hungary and Russia. The British response was, however, relatively bland. Germany ended up with a colonial empire in Africa and in the Pacific. None of it was in Southeast Asia: the nearest possession was New Guinea. German policy affected Southeast Asia, however, in other ways. It also offers another chance for comparison.

In the days of the North German Confederation and the early years of the Second Reich Bismarck displayed no interest in colonies. In a letter to Roon of 1868 he argued that

the advantages claimed for colonies were illusionary, that the acquisition of an overseas empire would lead to conflicts with other powers, that Germany had no navy with which to protect colonies and that it would be wrong to expect the taxpayer to foot the bill for maintaining territories which would benefit only a handful of merchants and manufacturers.

‘I want no colonies’, he declared soon after. ‘They are good for nothing but supply stations. For us in Germany this colonial business would be just like the silken sables in the noble families of Poland who have no shirts on their backs.’¹⁰⁵ In 1871 he took Alsace-Lorraine, but not Cochin China, though the Empress offered it just before the fall of Metz. ‘We are not rich enough to be offered the luxury of colonies.’¹⁰⁶

Other powers, however, could not help expecting that newly unified Germany, like other major powers, would engage in colonial policy, and they took precautions. In the 1870s, however, Bismarck’s foreign policy priority was security in Europe, and his domestic policy was concerned to advance industrialisation. Overseas, he insisted, the Reich’s purpose was to protect German traders, not to create colonies. It displayed an interest in Sulu when the Spaniards sought to assert their control. But Bülow assured the British ambassador in Berlin that Germany had ‘no wish or intention . . . to acquire transatlantic possessions in the Sulu Archipelago, or indeed in any other portions of the globe’.¹⁰⁷ Refraining from a colonial policy, however, meant that it was ‘urgently . . . bound to secure German commerce from unjustifiable encroachments on the freedom of its movements’. Such included paper claims, already faced in the Caroline and Pellew islands.¹⁰⁸

Bismarck’s domestic politics shifted in 1879 when he offered the industrialists a protective tariff. That had its effect on the British, giving Kimberley, for example, an additional argument for the North Borneo charter. It was not, however, immediately followed by a colonial policy. ‘The industrial development of Germany . . . is driving her to colonial ventures and there

she will inevitably meet the ruthless rivalry of England', Courcel, the French Ambassador, was to write.¹⁰⁹ In fact Bismarck turned to colonial policy for political reasons that had no connexion with industrial interests, though the reasons were not, as Taylor argued, simply based on considerations of foreign policy. Some German nationalists saw the possession of colonies as part of a state-building programme. Bismarck did not, but he responded to the pressures exerted by state-formation. He saw colonial policy through the prism of domestic politics.

The limited power of the elected Reichstag and the low status of political parties – products of the Bismarckian system – led to the development of an alternative system of political representation and influence through extra-parliamentary pressure groups. Patriotic societies took up national issues. Within them there was usually a group that wanted to go beyond the government, and there was also a group prepared to work with the parties and the regime.¹¹⁰ In the early 1880s colonial policy was a promising prospect for bringing the right-wing protectionist National Liberals headed by Miquel back into the Bismarckian camp. The Chancellor said he could govern with them until they again became 'too strong and too demanding',¹¹¹ while they saw colonial policy as a chance to restore their fortunes. Both needed to build up the colonial movement, using economic arguments so that political opponents could not easily argue against them. The purpose in founding the Kolonialgesellschaft on a national basis in summer 1882 was 'political in the first instance'.¹¹² 'All this colonial business is a fraud', Bismarck remarked, 'but we need it for the elections.'¹¹³ '[F]or reasons of domestic policy alone, the colonial question is a matter of life and death for us', he was to tell Munster early in 1885.¹¹⁴

The founders of the Gesellschaft spoke of trading posts under the protection of the Reich, a formula designed to attract a hitherto reluctant Chancellor. He himself thought protectorates would sound less threatening to other powers and be cheaper than colonies.¹¹⁵ They would also involve the Reichstag less. 'Direct colonies we cannot administer, we can only support companies. Colonial administrations would be tantamount to enlarging the parliamentary parade ground.'¹¹⁶ In January 1883 Lüderitz was invited to Berlin, and he was offered protection for his trading post at Angra Pequena, north of the frontier of Britain's Cape Colony and south of the Portuguese frontier, where Britain, as Derby put it, 'claimed the right to exclude Foreign Powers on the general ground of its nearness to our Settlements, and the absence of any other claims'.¹¹⁷ Other Schutzverklärungen followed in election year 1884 and led to the taking-up of the idea of a conference advanced in respect of the Congo by a meeting of international lawyers. Held in Berlin in 1884–5, it was designed to prevent antagonism to Germany as a colonial power, but also to gain it recognition as a world power. 'Germany has become a leading power in organising a European link to a strange continent', the *Preussische Jahrbücher* declared.¹¹⁸ The Emperor took a similar view.¹¹⁹

The dispute over the Congo had been set in motion in 1876 when James Brooke's old interlocutor, now Léopold II of the Belgians, had set up the International African Association, out of which was to emerge the International Association of the Congo.¹²⁰ Acting for the French, de Brazza stole a march on Stanley, acting for the Association. His acquisitions led Portugal, which had long-standing claims in the area, to turn to the British. In February 1884 they agreed to recognise its claims, 'considering the Portuguese tariff a lesser evil than a possible French one, and Portuguese rule a less expensive proposition than consular supervision'. France intended the conference 'to put England in her place',¹²¹ but Bismarck found himself more in agreement with the British than the French.

There was, however, a wider issue, one of principle that affected what the Germans had earlier called 'paper claims'. A Portuguese journal suggested that, 'on pretence of settling a point of international jurisprudence which Prince Bismarck claims to establish on the west coast of Africa, and may extend to Asia and Oceania', Britain would have 'effectively to occupy by force of arms numerous territories of which she is the nominal possessor'. 'The struggle for the partition of the world is thus entering upon a threatening phase.'¹²² Germany 'was anxious to give as wide an application as possible to the principles of effective occupation in Africa, to see to it... that in future powers occupying territory there should have no legal claim to it unless they exercised strong and effective political control'. The greatest of imperial powers, but with varying degrees of administrative control, 'Great Britain clearly stood to lose most by any extensive or rigid definition of what such control should be'.¹²³

On this matter, however, France entertained views more like those of the English. Even before the conference began, Bismarck agreed that effective occupation should apply only to the coasts and to future occupations. At the conference itself, thanks to the determination of the British Lord Chancellor, Selborne, Bismarck also accepted a distinction between 'annexations' and 'protectorates', 'carrying with it the recognition of the latter as a perfectly legitimate, but much less complete form of government, exempt from any of the obligations imposed by the conference upon occupying powers'.¹²⁴ 'No attempt was made at the conference to interfere with existing maxims of international law', Malet reported. 'Dangerous definitions had been avoided, and international duties on the African coast remained such as they had hitherto been understood to be.'¹²⁵ Yet the very discussion of these issues drew attention to them. The German initiatives and the Berlin principles were much in the mind of those who framed British policy in northern Borneo in the 1880s.

The German venture in New Guinea was nearer at hand, but important to Southeast Asia rather in terms of principle than in terms of proximity. In August 1884 the British government decided to make New Guinea a British protectorate, as sought by the Australians. Granville insisted on consulting the Germans, despite Derby's doubts. He suggested conversations, and on 7

October proposed that the British protectorate should be confined to the south coast and a joint commission determine the fate of the rest. No comment was made.¹²⁶ Meanwhile the Germans went ahead. Von Hanseemann and von Bleichröder, two bankers who had set up a German firm to preserve the interests that the Hamburg firm of Godeffroy had built up in the south Pacific when that firm collapsed in 1879, had established a New Guinea consortium in May 1884. On their behalf the traveller F. H. O. Finsch made a number of treaties with chiefs on the north coast, and in August Bismarck ordered the annexation of territories not in Dutch or British hands where the German flag had been raised.¹²⁷ These activities became known in December, and Meade, in Berlin for the West Africa conference, expostulated.¹²⁸

‘[C]onsidering what we have got’, Gladstone was against a ‘scramble’. He was not disposed to share the ‘wild and irrational spirit abroad’, and told the Queen that in that he was ‘only a humble representative of convictions, which were not general only but universal among the Statesmen of the first thirty years of his political life’.¹²⁹ The Cabinet modified a sharply worded draft prepared by Pauncefoot.¹³⁰ ‘Wherever Germany has endeavoured to found a colony, England has closed in’, Bismarck exclaimed. A bland response declared that the British government ‘generally had no reason’ to oppose German colonisation, for which a field was open to Germany in the East and the West without entrenching on Britain’s ‘legitimate sphere of action’.¹³¹ In February a deal was reached, and in March Gladstone, in a speech to the Commons, gave German colonial enterprise a blessing.

With Germany, as with France, the main focus was on Africa. The same came to be true of Italy, too. It reluctantly acknowledged Britain’s opposition in northern Borneo. It was also unable to prevail even against a minor European power. *The Times* of London had suggested in August 1872 that there would not be ‘any very great opposition on the part of our Government’, though it questioned whether Italy needed

a pied à terre on some uninviting spot between the Tropics, when they have within reach, . . . in Sardinia, in Sicily, in Rome and in Naples, extensive tracts of waste ground which the slightest exertion on their part could turn to any of the purposes for the attainment of which in distant countries they have to solicit the good-will and to deprecate the jealousy and suspicion of other nations.¹³²

The article attracted the attention of the Dutch government. The Colonial Minister told the Italian Ambassador in The Hague that the Netherlands was opposed to a convict settlement, and the Dutch Ambassador called on Visconti Venosta in Rome. He denied any intention of pursuing a colonial policy.¹³³

Driven by international rivalry and then by their own 'ethical' policy, the Dutch were both to round out their empire in the archipelago and to consolidate their hold within it. In that process, indeed, the Berlin Africa conference played a part. The Dutch had sought to confine it strictly to Africa: they feared that 'the decisions – for example those about effective occupation – would be given a more general significance and be considered as applicable to the Netherlands Indies as well'.¹³⁴ The Dutch representative was frequently told that he must 'bear in mind the possible consequences for the Indies, "without mentioning them", of course'.¹³⁵ '[O]ne talked about Africa but one thought about Indonesia and was concerned about Europe.'¹³⁶ Though the conference decisions did in fact relate only to Africa, they were given a more general significance, not only by the new powers but also by the apprehensive old. The fact that they were not in themselves novel principles, but older ones restated, was not necessarily an advantage, and the Dutch took steps to strengthen their authority in the many parts of the archipelago where it rested only on contracts and the distribution of flags and symbols of authority.

Was this 'imperialism'? The question has been brilliantly discussed by Maarten Kuitenbrouwer. Gollwitzer, he points out, thought 'imperialist politics . . . only possible on the basis of a large state'. The Netherlands could not be counted among the imperialist powers. Dutch historians themselves avoided the word: H. T. Colenbrander referred to the 'rounding of the state' and F. W. Stapel to 'the establishment of Dutch authority in its Outer Regions'. Only Gerretson was ready to use the word 'empire', and Bartstra omitted the Dutch and the Indies from his history of modern imperialism.¹³⁷

In part it is a question of definition. Even the concept of 'rounding' or of 'the establishment of Dutch authority in its Outer Regions' indicate that the Dutch extended their political control in the last third of the century. One reason why it has been possible to avoid the application of the word 'imperialism' has been the fact that the Dutch already saw themselves as in some measure in possession of a realm of Netherlands India, thanks in part to their long connexion with that part of the world, and that other powers tended to accept it, thanks in part to its acceptance by the leading power of the day, Great Britain. The assumption that 'imperialism' was not involved was almost a political act in itself: it was an indication that the Indies were not available for contest.

Yet the perspective this book adopts suggests that the word may be used, while recognising that, even in a limited time phase, imperialism may take different forms and be backed by different motives from country to country. Schöffers suggests that Dutch expansion was reluctant and reactive, and the 'pacification' of the archipelago 'only superficially akin to the imperialism of other Western states'.¹³⁸ Wesseling sees it as a matter not of action but reaction: 'the only reason for Dutch imperialism was the imperialism of others'. In that it seemed 'unique'.¹³⁹ Its reluctant and reactive nature, however, sug-

gests its kinship with that of the British. The British were the patrons of the Dutch. Clearly what the Dutch undertook was designed to underpin their claims to the archipelago at a time when the arrangements the British had made in their primacy were under threat from the emergence of rivals, the spread of industrialisation, the penetration of concessionaires, and the weakness of native states. It was imperialism with a difference, but hardly unique.

Making the treaty of 1824 the British and the Dutch had seen themselves as 'exclusive Lords of the East'. In the French wars, Britain had acquired the Dutch territories in the Indies, but, though retaining the Cape and Ceylon, it returned those in the Indies in the peace settlement. Raffles acquired Singapore in 1819, but his empire-building was to go no further. Though provoked by the way the Dutch handled their commerce in the 1830s and 1840s, Britain did not go back on the understanding that they should prevail in the archipelago except in respect of northern Borneo. In 1860 it seemed to Wodehouse 'in many respects very advantageous that the Dutch should possess this Archipelago'. Otherwise it might 'fall under the sway of some other maritime power, presumably the French, unless we took it ourselves'. Unlike the Dutch, the French might be 'really dangerous to India and Australia'.¹⁴⁰ Would other powers continue to accept this arrangement in the new conditions of the 1870s and 1880s? Would the Dutch have to take steps to affirm the claims?

In making the Sumatra treaty of 1871, the Dutch had in mind strengthening their influence over Aceh, 'this state', as de Waal put it, '... which for political reasons will have to become Dutch'.¹⁴¹ Under it the British withdrew the reservation in favour of its independence contained in notes exchanged when the treaty of 1824 was signed. The possibility of foreign intervention was, at least in the interim, thereby increased. Van Bosse thought a liberalisation of the tariffs the best protection against foreign powers. 'Watch out for *coups de main*', he nevertheless wrote to Governor-General Loudon on 12 March 1872, 'but don't dream of a seven-year war with a European power.' He was concerned over Aceh's attempts to find support among foreign powers. Britain loyally rejected its approaches. Aceh was now, he thought, 'going to turn its eyes towards Berlin or Washington'.¹⁴²

His successor van de Putte wanted to avoid war. Perhaps Dutch sovereignty could be extended by blockades, or at the request of the small states over which Aceh claimed supremacy.¹⁴³ News of intrigues between Acehnese envoys and American and Italian consuls, was, however, conveyed by W. H. Read, the Dutch Consul-General in Singapore. Studer had been in contact with an Acehnese envoy, Panglima Tibang, through Tengku Muhammad Arifin, a Menangkabauer in Read's service, and Read made the most of his information. An Italian agent, he added, was seeking a penal colony.¹⁴⁴ Read's messages, as Reid puts it, were 'the very stuff of aggressive and irresponsible imperialism'. Force, he told the Governor-General, was the only answer to the Acehnese.¹⁴⁵

Loudon was agreed.

An end must come to the equivocal policy of Atjeh towards the Netherlands Government. That state remains our weak point as far as Sumatra is concerned. As long as it does not recognise our sovereignty foreign intervention will continue to threaten us like the sword of Damocles... Without this military exhibition it is almost certain that Atjeh will keep the matter hanging, in expectation of foreign intervention... Holland can no longer allow its existence in, and peaceful possession of, Sumatra to be dependent on the whim of a state hostile to us there.¹⁴⁶

The Dutch Cabinet instructed Loudon to send an armed expedition to Aceh to demand 'an explanation'. Hearing that the American squadron was on the point of leaving Hong Kong for Aceh, Loudon told his commissioner, J. F. N. Nieuwenhuyzen, to declare war unless the Sultan recognised Dutch 'supreme authority' within twenty-four hours. Italy, it turned out, wanted nothing to do with the conflict. The US government said its consul acted without authority.¹⁴⁷

The expedition was not, however, halted, nor the instructions greatly changed. Loudon himself was convinced of the 'necessity of a *fait accompli*, so that foreign claims would be excluded once and for all'.¹⁴⁸ Nieuwenhuyzen did not find the Sultan's responses satisfactory and began to bombard the shore on 26 March. A formal declaration of war was communicated to the European powers, 'to emphasise Holland's claim'.¹⁴⁹ A Dutch force of three thousand men landed on 8 April. It met a decisive response. Its commander was killed on 14 April, and it withdrew.

The defeat of the first expedition meant that a second expedition had to secure a decisive success, Loudon argued, 'with a view to maintaining law and order among the Muslim populations of Java and Sumatra'.¹⁵⁰ Van de Putte wanted Aceh to have the chance of a peaceful solution. Called out of retirement, General van Swieten was instructed to seek a treaty on the model of the treaty made with Siak in 1858. Arriving with his expedition on 9 December, van Swieten conveyed the message, but received no answer. Two of his envoys were killed and cholera spread among his forces. On 2 January 1874 he decided to attack. After fierce battles his forces reached the *kraton* (palace) on 24 January, but found it deserted. The Sultan died of cholera on 26 January, and van Swieten announced the annexation of the sultanate on the 31st.¹⁵¹ He declared that there should be no more aggression, and returned to Batavia with half his troops. Once they realised the occupation was permanent and acceptable, the Acehnese would, he believed, yield to persuasion and blockade and submit.¹⁵²

Even in 1874, however, it was clear to 'first-hand observers' that he was wrong. By abolishing the sultanate he had made negotiation impossible. The Acehnese did not regard themselves as defeated, and the Dutch had nothing to offer them.¹⁵³ The conflict continued – with varying degrees of intensity – for some thirty years. But, though the Dutch failed to establish their authority

over so long a period, they did enough to deter foreign intervention. Indeed the 'concentratie' policy – under which they shrank the occupied territory to about one-third of its size¹⁵⁴ – coincided with the German challenge in Africa and the decision to call the Berlin conference.

When in 1898 the Dutch decided to send an expedition to Pidie, accompanying their military activity with a compromise with the traditional chiefs, the British made no objection to the 'short declaration' that those chiefs were bound to sign. Yet, binding the chiefs to obey Dutch authority, that declaration displaced the contractual nature of the relationships between the Dutch and the native rulers, on which the British position had so largely depended. The long-standing relationship between the exclusive lords of the East remained. But the British accepted that Dutch authority had to be affirmed.

In the 1870s the war in Aceh weakened the Dutch position elsewhere in the archipelago. With 7,500 troops fighting in Aceh, only 450 were left for the extension of Dutch authority in the 'Outer Regions'.¹⁵⁵ That did not prevent raising the flag at Batu Tinagat in 1879, countering the claims of the Dent company, nor offering diplomatic opposition to the charter. The readiness to accept the British proposal of a frontier enquiry followed, however, not only the establishment of the British protectorate, but also the German moves in New Guinea and the Berlin conference. The Netherlands, van Bylandt wrote, should take care to maintain 'a good relationship with its most powerful neighbour, which is so much to be desired, even if it can only be obtained at the price of a small territorial concession'.¹⁵⁶ In the subsequent agreement Batu Tinagat was assigned to Britain. An Anglo-Dutch agreement on the New Guinea border was made in 1895.

Abstention, Kuitenbrouwer suggests, was the policy of the 1880s.¹⁵⁷ But in 1886 Controleur F. A. Lieftrinck was sent to Lombok, following a report that it was rich in minerals, especially tin. He argued that the Dutch should place an official on the island. A couple of minor incidents Governor-General van Rees used for a show of force.¹⁵⁸ In 1843 the Raja of Mataram had declared the island to be the property of the Netherlands Indies government, and agreed to make no alliance with any other white nation. The Dutch had promised that, so long the Raja abided by the treaty, it would not attempt to establish itself on the island, nor interfere with its internal administration. Now the ruler refused to accept a supplementary treaty and declined to accept the stationing of a European official. Lieftrinck sought the Governor-General's permission to send an ultimatum, and, if a supplementary treaty were still refused, to bombard Ampenam and Mataram. 'It is now necessary to act forcefully', the Council of the Indies declared, 'so that it will not appear as if the war in Aceh has broken our power elsewhere in the Netherlands Indies as this could be fatal to us'. It was just for that reason, however, that van Rees now drew back. 'It is not advisable to jump rashly at the possibility that Selaparang [Lombok] will burst asunder at the approach of our navy; an illusion which was held with regard to Aceh, and which there has been so sadly belied by reality.'¹⁵⁹

The revolt of East Lombok against Balinese rule in 1891 revived the notion of intervening. The Resident of Bali and Lombok, M. C. Dannenbargh, reported 'that there is a good deal of unrest among the Mohammedan population of Lombok, so that in the event of armed intervention by the Government, a very small force would be sufficient to put an end to Balinese domination'. Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk was cautious.

In view of the efforts still demanded of Army and Navy to curb resistance in Aceh, I wish to avoid armed intervention . . . Care should be taken that Hindu rule is not overthrown without the Government's permission. I have serious misgivings about the possibility that a Mohammedan state should independently come into being on Lombok, a state with which it might be difficult to settle our relations properly without resort to force of arms.¹⁶⁰

Early in 1895 the Resident tried again. He thought the ruler should make a supplementary treaty, guaranteeing that the Sasak population would be relieved of their grievances, and arranging for a Dutch official to reside at the Raja's place of domicile. If the Raja declined to make such a treaty, he should be brought to his senses by force of arms. 'In the interest of our prestige, I consider it urgently necessary that we act firmly, and if need be forcibly; particularly because a breach of the peace in the long run will be inevitable anyway and because the present situation is extraordinarily favourable to us.'¹⁶¹ The Council of the Indies supported the Resident, but the Governor-General remained opposed: Aceh was in his mind.

The Resident reported that a *haji* had left for Singapore with a large sum of money: 'I deem that Lombok ruler who of course does not have the slightest notion of the relations between European Colonial powers, to be quite capable of taking the foolish step of requesting the assistance of the Straits Settlements Government.'¹⁶² His spies could report only that the *haji* had purchased two steamers. The Council, however, proposed that the Resident should demand an explanation, and if it were unsatisfactory send in an ultimatum, demanding a new treaty and threatening an expedition. The Governor-General went so far as to authorise a naval bombardment, though expressing the hope that it could be avoided. Meanwhile, the Resident seized one of the steamers, which was carrying Balinese troops to Lombok, and provoked a minor incident with its British captain. When he reached Mataram, Raja Agung² Ngurah protested, and he also denied there had been political contact with the Straits government. The Resident demanded an apology for Captain Bruce's conduct and ordered the seizure of the other steamer. The Governor-General insisted, however, that he should not proceed to the bombardment.¹⁶³

Dannenbargh continued to urge a bombardment, and, if need be, more drastic steps. The government, he said, could not put up with the ruler's attitude. An expedition should not be delayed: if it were, the Sasaks might

give up their struggle. Should the Raja secure their submission 'without first having been brought to his senses by us, he will have scored a moral victory over the Government'. He would become 'more and more presumptuous' and, 'compelled by the force of circumstances, [we] shall have to begin battle with Lombok under much less favourable conditions than at present'. The Governor-General sought the Colonial Minister's view. He thought that Pijnacker should not be too concerned over the Dutch undertaking in the treaty of 1843. 'The question of whether we must interfere in the complications on Lombok is not a legal question, but one of power and of politics.'¹⁶⁴ He did not, however, disagree with the Governor-General's cautious policy. Pijnacker reiterated it in a reproof to the Dannenburgh. He could not understand how the ruler would enjoy the 'moral victory' of which he had written.¹⁶⁵ Bans on the transport of men from Bali and on the supply of war materials remained, however, in force. The Raja employed a Singapore solicitor, J. C. Mitchell, who vainly tried to persuade the Straits government 'to pressure the Netherlands Indies Government into lifting the coercive measures', and equally vainly sought an audience with Pijnacker. The Raja then employed a Russian adventurer, Malygin, in an attempt to circumvent the ban on arms supplies.¹⁶⁶

Pijnacker's successor, C. van der Wijck, adopted quite a different approach. 'What a scandal!' was his comment on the policy of abstention.¹⁶⁷ He ascertained that a military expedition was feasible, and secured a report that pointed to the sufferings of the Sasaks, partly the result of the prolongation of the war, to which the Dutch had in fact contributed. Dannenburgh proposed an ultimatum that would cover the making of a new treaty, the abdication of the ruler in favour of the crown prince, and the payment of the costs of the expedition.¹⁶⁸ '[A]n expedition to Lombok... has become inevitable', van der Wijck declared, 'unless we want to cross out Lombok as no longer part of the Dutch East Indies'.¹⁶⁹ On 9 June the Resident presented the ultimatum. It was not accepted, and the expedition left Batavia on 30 June 1894.¹⁷⁰

The Dutch occupied Mataram, and the ultimatum was accepted. The treaty that was drawn up rested, however, on the assumption that Balinese rule over the East Sasaks would be restored. They sought guarantees which the Dutch inserted in the treaty, covering the West Sasaks, who had not rebelled, as well. The additional articles the Balinese saw as, in General Vetter's phrase, 'thorns in their sides'.¹⁷¹ He did not, however, expect the Balinese attacks that took place on the night of 25–26 August. Most of the Dutch troops were driven back to the coast at Ampenan, but the Balinese failed to attack them there. The Batavian government sent reinforcements, and the East Sasaks joined in against the Balinese. They still put up a strong resistance. The Dutch razed Mataram and fired 8,525 shells into the town of Cakranegara.¹⁷² Still the resistance continued, and Vetter proposed that the war be ended by negotiation. The Council agreed, but the Governor-General wanted a victory. After desperate fighting on 18 November, Cakranegara was

taken. The Raja surrendered on 20 November. Others dressed themselves in white and staged a *puputan* (suicide attack) on 22 November. Now the dynasty had fallen and the mass of the Balinese could surrender. There was another *puputan* on 26 December. Meanwhile the Raja had been put on board the *Prins Hendrik* and sent into exile.¹⁷³

The introduction of ‘protection’ into Bali itself was spurred by the adoption of the ‘Ethical policy’, clearly set out in 1901, when Queen Wilhelmina spoke of the Netherlands’ ‘ethical obligation and moral responsibility’ to the Indies.¹⁷⁴ ‘We... shall, wherever there is injustice... not be able to remain inactive in the protection of the weak and oppressed’, wrote Governor-General Rooseboom. ‘To be sure’, the Colonial Minister commented, ‘but to take this ethical direction as a guiding principle is to come into conflict everywhere; hence self-restraint is needed.’¹⁷⁵ In 1905 the new Resident had asked Governor-General van Heutz for instructions: he ‘led me to a map of Bali and pushing his hand across the provinces of South Bali said no more than “this all has to be changed”’.¹⁷⁶ After the military expedition to South Sulawesi ended that year, it was Bali’s turn. Three dynasties compromised, three collapsed, one, Badung, with another *puputan*. ‘People who had initially fled before our fire, returned as it were ashamed of their vacillation and sought death.’¹⁷⁷

Violence is not a criterion of imperialism, but these cases make it hard to avoid characterising the Dutch as ‘imperialist’ simply because they were acting within a frontier they characterised as Netherlands India. The Ethical policy they put forward again resembles the imperial discourse of other powers at the turn of the century, though again, perhaps, with a difference. One reason for it, in the Netherlands as elsewhere, was the advance of democracy in the homeland. Whatever the motives for the acquisition or retention of territory, they had increasingly to be advanced in a different way, and the rhetoric took on a life of its own. ‘[F]or the general public in the Netherlands, Ethical perspectives were the easiest to understand’, Locher Scholten writes. ‘Gradually involved in the process through the extension of the vote between 1870 and 1918, the voting public was not acquainted with the intricacies of colonial policies and reacted emotionally on moral grounds.’¹⁷⁸ In some measure it marked a more sophisticated approach, compared with the outbursts of patriotism, followed by apathy, that had been features of the public reaction to imperialism. Crowds in Rotterdam had sung patriotic songs when the Aceh *kraton* was taken in 1874. But the victory over Lombok was also marked by spontaneous demonstrations.¹⁷⁹

The difference may lie in the caution of a small power. The Colonial Minister warned Rooseboom over Ethical policy, and indeed it was always contested. Would it produce opposition rather than win support? That, after all, was one of its main objectives, as Idenburg told the Queen in 1904: ‘the best way to assure a lasting and undisturbed possession of our colonies is the establishment of a peaceful, righteous and enlightened administration, which makes the blessings of our domination best known and valued to the millions

of subjects of Y.M. there'.¹⁸⁰ The remark suggests that peace and order, the objectives of Dutch policy in the previous century, could no longer be sufficient: its subjects must value the government for what it did. There is also some suggestion that it has to justify itself not only to opinion in the Netherlands but before international opinion. That was certainly beginning to emerge, in part as a function of rivalry, though also of the involvement of the US.

Acquisitions, too, were not always so violent. On the east coast of Borneo, for example, it was more peaceful. There the Dutch position had rested on 'paper claims', treaties made with indigenous rulers, and only after the British offered some official backing to James Brooke on the northwest coast was an assistant resident established at Kutai in 1846. New steps to exclude others were needed in the new phase. The interest in plantations and minerals provided a further reason for establishing control, but also the means to do so. In 1908 Kutai surrendered the ulu Mahakam to direct Dutch rule. The sultanate of Pasir was abolished that year, and Berau and Bulongan brought under the short declaration in 1909.¹⁸¹

The changes after 1870 led the Netherlands into its version of imperialism, so far as the Asian states were concerned. It also exerted pressure on the least of the colonial powers in Southeast Asia, Portugal. That had retained a foothold in Timor and the Lesser Sunda islands, despite the overall triumph of the VOC. In April 1859 the Netherlands and Portugal made a deal. The latter abandoned its claims to Solor and Larantuka, while the Dutch paid over £200,000 and made over the coffee region of Maubara east of Dili. In the 1890s, as bankruptcy threatened Portugal, it seemed that it might sell its colonies, including East Timor. Those in Africa were to become the basis of agreement and argument between Britain and Germany. The Dutch had already reached an agreement with Portugal, attempting to ensure preferential treatment if it disposed of East Timor, given that, as the Dutch ambassador in Lisbon put it, 'all the governments are like hungry ravens, with their eyes fixed on everything that Portugal will or might have to cede'.¹⁸² A boundary convention was concluded in June 1893, and a declaration, made mutual to please Portugal, was signed in July.¹⁸³ There were further boundary revisions in 1904 and 1914. The Portuguese preserved the enclave of Oecusse in West Timor. As in Africa, the sale never took place, and the Portuguese did not leave till 1974, nor abandon their claims till 1999.

The Spanish empire in Southeast Asia had disappeared a century earlier, as a result of revolution and war and also as a result of money changing hands. Its dissolution had, however, been preceded by attempts at consolidation which may be compared with those of the Dutch. Some at least of the activities of the Spaniards may fall within a definition of imperialism, though they also evidenced continuity with a pre-imperialist past. In the Moro lands they were conscious of an intensified threat from other powers, as well as concerned over

Islamic revival. They determined to assert their control over Sulu, whose case may be compared with that of Aceh.

The weakness of their state did not deter them, any more than defeat deterred the French. Put off Sarawak by Raja Brooke, but advocating an 'extension of the country, a luxury to match our wonderful independence',¹⁸⁴ Léopold of the Belgians later conceived the notion of buying the Philippines, before moving, like Germany and Italy, to 'secure for ourselves a part of that magnificent African cake'.¹⁸⁵ The Belgian government displayed no interest, and he thought in terms of an 'independent' state rather than a colony. The attitude of the government also made it difficult to raise a loan from Barings, however. But the real obstacle was the attitude of Spain. In 1873 his agent, Greindl, concluded that no Spanish ministry would ever agree.¹⁸⁶ No Spanish regime, even or especially in the chaotic period that followed the overthrow of Isabela II in 1868, could risk withdrawals in the colonies.

A new expedition to Sulu got under way late in 1871. A dispute – the Sultan refused to surrender a captive taken in the presence of Spanish naval vessels – was followed by bombardment. '[T]he real cause', Ricketts suggested, 'is... to be found in a desire on the part of Spain to extend her dominion in these seas.'¹⁸⁷ A blockade followed the bombardment. The Sultan appealed to Britain: Granville gave a negative response and recommended him to the protection of the Almighty. He also appealed to the Germans, and Bismarck sent the *Nymphe* to investigate.¹⁸⁸ The Spaniards extended their violence. But their actions also led the British and the Germans towards the 1877 protocol.

The protocol was in keeping with the aspiration to protect their trade that the Germans had expressed. 'But', as Austen Layard was to write, 'there was a suspicion, which was not only entertained at Madrid, that Prince Bismarck had ulterior designs with regard to the Sulu Islands, and that he was seeking to annex them to Germany.'¹⁸⁹ In fact Bismarck was seeking advantage in Europe, not in Asia. After the 'War in Sight' crisis of 1875 he had taken up the religious question, and saw relations with Spain in terms of the *Kulturkampf*.¹⁹⁰ It was in the 1880s that his policy changed. In August 1885 the German government announced its intention of extending 'imperial protection' to the German commercial stations on the Caroline islands. There was 'a storm of protest' in Spain, and 'patriotic Spaniards attacked the German embassy in Madrid'. Bismarck agreed to accept the arbitration of the Vatican, which awarded the Caroline and Pellew islands to Spain, allowing free trade to the Germans.¹⁹¹ In the 1890s Bismarck's imperial successor was to renew the search for colonies in the context of *Weltpolitik*. It was also in the context of the Philippines revolution and the Spanish–American war.

If Spanish authority was barely established in the Muslim south, it was under challenge in the Christian north. Economic and educational opportunity had bred an elite, but the Spaniards were not prepared to offer it political opportunity. Though unwilling to unleash social revolution, it was driven towards political revolution. In some ways the Philippine experience

paralleled that of Cuba. The latter had staged a revolt in 1868 that lasted ten years; the Cavite mutiny of 1872 had led to the garrotting of three secular priests who became nationalist heroes. A new revolt began in Cuba in 1895; in 1896 the revolution began in the Philippines. The two sides reached a deadlock and concluded the pact of Biaknabato. Foreign intervention was to be decisive, but not in the way either party hoped.

The Cuban struggle was prolonged and increasingly violent. The advance of democracy in Spain – universal male suffrage was introduced in 1890 – did not make it easier to accept defeat. Spanish forces could not, however, defeat the Cubans, despite the policy of ‘reconcentration’ Weyler adopted, and their machete-using guerrillas struck terror. Considerable support, too, came from sources in the US. It was only in 1898 that President McKinley’s administration decided to intervene, initially by exerting pressure at Madrid, and then, after the blowing-up of the battleship *Maine*, by going to war. If McKinley had prolonged negotiations, as a senator later put it, ‘the Republican party would have been divided, the Democrats would have been united, nothing would have been done, and our party would have been overturned in November’.¹⁹² The war was short. Cervera’s fleet was sunk in May and Santiago de Cuba capitulated on 16 July. The revolutionaries were disappointed that their junta was kept at arm’s length and their military co-operation not sought.

The war was shortened by extending it, not indeed to Spain itself but to the Philippines. It was indeed the scene of the first major battle in the war. On 25 February 1898 Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, had instructed Dewey to concentrate the Asiatic Squadron at Hong Kong and prepare for offensive measures against the Philippines. That was part of the war plan against Spain, rather than part of a conspiracy to establish an American empire.¹⁹³ Dewey destroyed the Spanish Pacific Squadron in Manila Bay on 1 May, though he did not take the city. The outcome was never in doubt, though the *New York Times* declared that the victory rivalled ‘the glories of Trafalgar’.¹⁹⁴ The insurgency had been resumed and Emilio Aguinaldo took over command in May. He received limited aid and possibly some assurances of support. Dewey had, however, been instructed ‘not to have political alliances with the insurgents or any faction in the islands that would incur liability to maintain their cause in the future’, and he insisted that he had avoided entangling alliances ‘from the beginning’.¹⁹⁵

The US had not yet dealt with the question of the political future of the Philippines. In the coming months it became ever more clear that, if it had begun as a piece of war strategy, the attack on the Spanish fleet was becoming part of an imperialist strategy. Late in July the Spaniards had initiated peace talks through the French. Working out its requirements for a cessation of hostilities, the US Cabinet agreed that it would seek to hold Manila, ‘pending the conclusion of a treaty of peace which [should] determine the control, possession, and government of the Philippines’. Subsequently the President

agreed to change the word 'possession' to 'disposition'.¹⁹⁶ It was on that basis that the protocol was signed on 12 August.

In the meantime an expeditionary force of regulars and volunteers had been built up under Wesley Merritt. It was to go to the Philippines with, according to McKinley's orders of 19 May, the 'two-fold purpose of completing the reduction of Spanish power in that quarter and giving order and security to the island while in the possession of the United States'. An American military government was to be established.¹⁹⁷ En route the first group took Guam on 21 May. By 7 August an army of ten thousand American soldiers had been assembled to attack Manila. The Captain General, Fermin Jaudenes y Alvarez, was anxious to preserve Spanish honour, but feared the retribution of the insurgents more than American victory. It was therefore agreed that, after token resistance, the Spanish forces would surrender. That occurred on 13 August, the day after the protocol had been signed.

At that point McKinley's Cabinet was divided about the future of the Philippines. Should the US retain the islands or part of them or merely seek a naval station? If it did not retain them, what could become of them? They could hardly be returned to Spain. Were they ready for self-government?¹⁹⁸ In the following weeks the President consulted businessmen, experts and diplomats, and also made a pre-election tour of the Midwest, by which time he was speaking in favour of expansion. Even in September, he was telling the peace commissioners that, 'without any desire or design on our part the war has brought us new duties and responsibilities'.¹⁹⁹ He believed the US should retain Manila and extend its jurisdiction over all Luzon.

At the Paris peace conference the Spanish commissioners argued that the capitulation of Manila occurred after the protocol had been signed. 'Since they have to consent to the dismemberment of their country, they wish... to show to their countrymen that they protested and struggled at every turn', as one of the American commissioners put it. They rejected the Spanish argument, but, differing among themselves over annexation, they referred to the question to the President. By this time he had completed his tour and convinced himself that the American people wanted an expansionist policy. 'The cession must be of the whole archipelago or none', Hay told the commissioners on 26 October.²⁰⁰ The Spaniards played for time, vainly hoping the Congressional elections would bring Democrat victories. An agreement was facilitated by a suggestion of Senator William P. Frye, an American commissioner, that the US should offer some financial compensation for the Philippines. The final offer of US \$20m – to cover the Ladrões and Carolines, too – was made on 21 November and accepted on the 28th.

Selling colonial territory was not a new concept. Indeed the US had itself purchased Louisiana from the French and Alaska from the Russians. The Portuguese empire seemed likely to be sold off. What was striking in the case of the Philippines was that the transaction between an old imperial power and what was making itself a new one took place in face of a nationalist

movement. In the Philippines, as in Cuba, the US forces avoided collaboration with the insurgents. Aguinaldo was disconcerted by the arrival of the troops, as he had hoped to take Manila himself. He was not invited to participate in the capitulation of the city.²⁰¹ A few days after it, the President directed 'that there must be no joint occupation with the insurgents . . . The insurgents and all others must recognize the military occupation and authority of the United States and the cessation of hostilities proclaimed by the president.'²⁰² Nor were the Filipinos represented at Paris. In January 1899, six weeks after the peace treaty had been signed, the Malolos convention defiantly proclaimed a constitution for the Philippines Republic. Soon after, what turned out to be a long conflict between the Filipinos and the Americans began when a Nebraska volunteer fired on an insurgent patrol in 'disputed territory' outside Manila. The news arrived just as the Senate prepared to vote on the treaty. 'This means the ratification . . . ; the people will insist on its ratification', McKinley declared.²⁰³

Early in April 1898 the European ambassadors – led by Pauncefote, by this time British Ambassador in Washington and dean of the diplomatic corps, but prompted by the Austrians – had made a vain appeal for further negotiations between the US and Spain.²⁰⁴ He failed to secure agreement on a second *démarche* by the Austrians.²⁰⁵ No power was willing to alienate the US. The extension to the Philippines of the war that followed aroused the interest of other powers. Warships from Britain, France, Germany and Japan entered Manila Bay. Such a step represented an accepted response to the emergence of trouble. What was unusual was the size of the German contingent. The friction between Dewey and Vice-Admiral Otto von Diederichs only added to the suspicion in Washington that Germany had territorial objectives.²⁰⁶

Prince Heinrich of Prussia, then in command of the Asiatic squadron, had cabled from Hong Kong on 11 May 1898 that, according to a German merchant in Manila, the Filipinos 'would gladly place themselves under the protection of a European power, especially Germany'.²⁰⁷ Secretary of State Bernhard von Bülow advised the Kaiser against a positive response. Other powers, stronger at sea, would oppose, and it would run counter to the policy of 'legitimacy' on which Germany's relations with Austria and Russia were founded. Instead, he concluded, Germany should put up the idea of neutralising the islands.²⁰⁸ In July the Kaiser decided that Germany should lose no opportunity of securing a naval station in East Asia.²⁰⁹ The question was raised with ambassador Andrew D. White. Instructed from Washington, he postponed the question till the war ended.²¹⁰ After the protocol was signed, Spain agreed in an arrangement of 10 September to sell Germany islands in the Caroline group, subject to the decisions in the final treaty over the Philippines.²¹¹ On the basis of an appeal the Sultan had made to Prussia in 1866, the Germans told the Americans that they had the next best claim to Sulu after Spain. If the US put no obstacle in its way over the Caroline and Pellew islands, and granted them a coaling station in the Sulu archipelago,

they would drop that claim.²¹² The US admitted no such claim, but accepted a German deal with Spain after the peace of Paris. Under it Germany agreed to pay Spain US \$4.2 m for the Caroline, Pellew and Mariana islands except Guam.²¹³ That, as Bülow incongruously put it, would stimulate the people and the navy to follow the Kaiser 'further along the path which leads to world power, greatness and eternal glory'.²¹⁴

The British would have accepted, even preferred, the status quo. They were not, however, unequivocally for Spain: Hong Kong was a source of arms for rebels and a venue for exiles, as New York was for the Cubans. In any case it became clear that continued Spanish rule was out of the question. The British did not consider that the revolutionaries could set up a viable regime, however, and they did not wish to intervene themselves. '[I]n line with its usual colonial policy, Her Majesty's Government preferred not to participate in the direct government of the islands unless such a measure were essential to defend her interests.'²¹⁵ US rule was preferable to German. The British attitude made the American task easier: 'other governments understood that it would be impossible to oppose the Anglo-Saxon bloc by force.'²¹⁶

The British had also been concerned lest the Germans intervened in Sulu, where Spain's authority was still not firmly established. When the US intervened in the war, the British North Borneo Company had wondered whether it would stay in the Philippines, and thought Britain had a claim: 'it is thought possible that the United States Government might at any rate so far as regards the Sulu Islands and Palawan, give the Sultan the choice of flag.'²¹⁷ 'We certainly cannot allow these Islands to get under German protection', wrote T. H. Macnaghten at the Colonial Office, 'since any trade they may have would then in all probability be restricted to German subjects.' Action, however, was premature 'until we know what action America proposes taking'.²¹⁸ In the event the Americans' acquisitions included Sulu, and the Sultan reluctantly made a treaty with John C. Bates in August 1899.

American interest in Southeast Asia had so far been restricted to the activities of traders – such as those on the pepper coast of Sumatra²¹⁹ or in hemp-producing Kabikolan²²⁰ – or consuls – such as Balestier in Singapore who made commercial treaties, with Brunei, for example, in 1850 – or adventurers without government backing – such as Moses and Torrey – who sought concessions. The acquisition of territory was a new departure. It was indeed challenged at home. The Anti-Imperialist League led a campaign against the ratification of the treaty. Ruling an overseas people without their consent was condemned as unconstitutional and undemocratic. An 'empire' would lead to foreign entanglements, economic ruin and the buildup of military forces. Yet the League failed to win mass support. Expansionists won the argument, talking of duty and of stepping-stones to the China market.²²¹

The venture can well be compared with those of the other powers. Popular enthusiasm was won for a course favoured by the leaders. They were not influenced by established economic interests, nor by clear economic prospects, so much as by a state-building project in a world of competing powers. Yet at

the same time it gave currency to other ideas about expansion. The US had difficulty rationalising its acquisition. Were you there to Christianise the natives, as McKinley suggested? They were Christian already. Were they 'Little Brown Brothers'? That certainly could not apply to the sophisticated elite. The export of US capital was to be limited and imperial preference contested. Built in face of a nationalist movement, the new empire held out from the start the prospect of self-government.

That would concern other powers. On the other hand it stood in the way of the Japanese, who had occupied Taiwan in 1895. When the revolution began, the Japanese government feared to provoke the intervention of others, and did not want the renegotiation of its own unequal treaties to be interrupted. The intervention of the US redoubled its caution, and the General Staff told the *shishi* (super-patriot) Sakamoto Shiro not to 'meddle'.²²² When it seemed uncertain that the US would retain the islands, however, Foreign Minister Okuma told his ambassador in Washington that both an extension of US sovereignty and a protectorate would be acceptable to Japan, but that, if the Americans did not wish to undertake either, Japan would be willing to join the US, singly or with another power, 'to form, subject to proper conditions, suitable government for the territory in question under the... protection of the guaranteeing powers'.²²³ But the US took over.

Negotiations over the Portuguese empire and destruction of the Spanish suggested that 'partition' was not a one-off process: there could be repartition. The involvement of the US both indicated that, and tended, at least in Southeast Asia, to halt it. Their involvement in the Philippines marked another shift. Imperialism extended, but so did nationalism. The Filipinos failed, for the time being, in their ambition to join the world of states, but they had asserted a claim, and, partly as a result, the US had recognised that its empire could not be like others'. Elsewhere, indeed, the success of state formation at home was producing new attitudes, opposing as well as endorsing imperialism, endowing it with new purposes. That could only increase the complexity of relationships with the colonial territories where, too, state-building had unanticipated outcomes.

By the end of the first decade of the new century, the partition/repartition was complete, and the new status quo was not dislodged until the Japanese turned to violence. Its creation was the result of challenges to the arrangements made in the days of British primacy and of the consequent compromises and adjustments. War among the outside powers was avoided, until the Spanish-American war was brought to Southeast Asia. The establishment of the new regimes, however, involved a great deal of violence, even in cases where at first it had seemed to be easily achieved. The strength of the imperial regimes, even when established, is easy to exaggerate.

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Part III

Pacification and development

Mais prendre n'est rien. Organiser, garder et défendre, voilà le difficile, voilà ce qui coûte.

Admiral Dompierre d'Hornoy, 1873

5 Establishing and maintaining

The establishment of European empires was not the sudden result of overwhelming strength, but the gap between the Western and the Southeast Asian states widened during the nineteenth century. On the one hand the Western states, partly as a result of technological and industrial advance, and partly as a result of their own interstate struggles, enhanced their capacity to mobilise power. On the other hand, the Southeast Asian states were weakened, partly by the earlier advance of the Europeans, who had secured command of the sea, and partly by their own internal divisions. Their strength was diminished, and their diplomacy damaged, by their lack of information. Nor were they able to ally with another, even as much as in the earlier phase of European intervention.

Yet it is possible to exaggerate the ease with which the Europeans gained 'control' and the extent of the control they gained. They themselves often thought that gaining control would be easier than it was, and that may have been a factor in their endeavour. A Resident would do all that was needed in Perak; the people of Burma and Vietnam would welcome the Europeans; capturing the Aceh *kraton* would suffice. Had they known the problems that would follow they might have been more cautious. To exaggerate the smoothness of the process is to misunderstand it. It is also to lose a clue to the nature of the regimes that were in the event established and provided the context of the economic changes that followed.

Colonial regimes were easier to start than to consolidate. Brief displays or deployments of force might suffice to win rulers over or, if need be, to displace them. That, however, was seldom the end of the matter. In almost every case the establishment of imperial power had to be followed by what was called 'pacification', the suppression of guerrilla and other struggles against the new regime. The imperial power might be able to dominate at the centre, even to 'decapitate' the existing state, only to find that it then began to meet real resistance. If there were a welcome to the 'imperialists', it generally came only from minority groups, Christians in Vietnam, Karens in Burma.

'Pacification' tended as a result to determine the future nature of the colonial regimes. All states rely on a measure of compliance, not on mere compulsion. The full repertoire of means to secure compliance was generally

not available to colonial regimes: they could seldom use tradition, *mana*, religious sanction. Mere force, however, could not be sufficient, even if it were readily available. They therefore sought collaborators, either among existing leaders if they were available or among *nouveaux venus* if they were not. Such measures, often taken under urgency, contributed to 'pacification'. They continued into the next phase. The regimes were to use force as rarely as possible. If it were used, it had to be decisive, an incontrovertible demonstration of the regime's power. For the most part, it was better to hold it in reserve, always ready to back up, rather than be a substitute for, a framework of collaboration.

The collaborators, of course, had to possess or acquire a firm popular base in order to counteract the endemic tendency to disrupt the state offered by gangsters, dacoits and ladrones, and to prevent the emergence of subversive or millennialist movements or even pro-monarchical ones. There were two drawbacks to the system so far as the imperialists were concerned. Identified with an alien regime, the collaborating elite might be unable to mobilise mass loyalty in its favour, or even prevent mass alienation. Even if they could, they might not be able to respond to the demands a modernising regime made upon them. Yet it would be difficult for the regime to discard them and take the risk of seeking the collaboration of a new elite. As a result colonial regimes sought to avoid interference at the village level, turning a blind eye, for example, on the use of bully boys. They also realised that there were limits to the modernisation that such regimes could bring about. Too active an administration, as the Ethici found, might alienate the people, rather than win them over. The regimes were not only difficult to establish. They remained weak, and in that sense were bound to be transitional. The undermining in the interwar period of the international system that supported them only redoubled their caution.

The policies the imperial powers adopted in order to establish and maintain their acquisitions left options open to those they aspired to rule. The options varied from power to power, place to place and time to time. But they also varied according to the perception and action of those who might or might not collaborate. Lack of power and lack of information restricted their choice, but did not necessarily eliminate it. Coming to terms with the imperial power quickly might mean those terms were better. The range of possibilities included: compromise, resistance, surrender and a deal after some resistance, surrender without any resistance and a better deal. The last was the choice of Johore in 1914, when its ruler finally accepted a British agent. 'It is best to surrender instantly to overwhelming odds', as Allen concludes, 'and hope stealthily to recuperate lost advantages during the ensuing euphoria.'¹ Nor was collaboration necessarily a short-term or self-interested option. You might, as some Vietnamese argued, acquire the knowledge needed to rebuild a state.

Whether the top elite were displaced or collaborated, the local elite was crucial to a colonial regime. Even the most bureaucratic needed the support

of the village headman, whose position was likely to become more uncomfortable, if at times also more profitable. 'The local elite... is a problematic element in any colonial system', as Jeremy Beckett puts it. 'To the extent that it controls the lower orders it may be either the ally of the regime or its enemy. And to the extent that it exploits them it may be either a partner or a competitor. Whichever course it follows there are dangers. If it is defiant it risks destruction, and at the very least jeopardizes the protection given by its masters. If it is compliant it may jeopardize its legitimacy among the common folk.'²

In Malaya collaboration with the Malay rulers was embedded in British policy in the period of 'non-intervention'. Intervention, easier to contemplate because of that, did not displace it, but was based on it. What was needed, it seemed, was not a take-over but better means of giving advice and carrying it out. The assassination of the first Resident of Perak, J. W. W. Birch, seemed to give the lie to that assumption, though arguably it resulted less from Birch's personality or even his policies than from the fact that Governor Jervois had, as Peter Burns puts it, 'left the Malays in no doubt that Britain intended to take direct control of the country'.³ A punitive expedition followed – more troops were sent than needed⁴ – but that display of the power of Britain and British India served not to displace the system but to back it up. Indeed it preserved the myth of government by advice, since advice was now sure to be taken. 'The Colonial Office still would not acknowledge facts, but at least it was ready to be party to a fiction.'⁵

The myth remained even after the creation of the FMS. Approving the draft treaty, Chamberlain had insisted that 'no pains should be spared to safeguard the position and dignity of the Native Rulers'.⁶ In fact it was hardly a federation at all, and the rulers felt they had lost power, as the Sultan of Perak protested at the 1903 durbar.⁷ Yet the myth was not quite a myth either. The very fact that the Sultan could complain was a restraint on the British, caught in a measure in their own web. The divorce between myth and reality in the federation also affected relations with the states transferred – without the agreement of their rulers – by the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1909. The British did not attempt to force the northern states into the FMS, let alone Johore.

The 'decentralisation' policies of the 1920s and early 1930s were partly designed to make an all-Malaya union attractive to the rulers inside and outside the FMS. Visiting in 1932, Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, was 'clear that the maintenance of the position, authority and prestige of the Malay Rulers must always be a cardinal point in British policy; and the encouragement of indirect rule will probably prove the greatest safeguard against the political submersion of the Malays which would result from the development of popular government on western lines'.⁸ The growth of the Chinese community, and its apparent orientation towards the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party, gave

the British a further reason for not abandoning the Malay elite, though they were unable to achieve either decentralisation or union in the interwar period.

An alternative Malay leadership was also emerging, but collaboration with that was also difficult for the British to envisage. In face of the expansion of the Chinese community, some educated middle-class Malays began to look towards Indonesian nationalism, since the alternative seemed to be the option chosen by the elite, continued reliance on the British. In 1938 they began *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*. The British, of course, could not accept their radical approach, but recognised that neither they nor indeed the Chinese radicals presented any serious threat to their regime.

'But for [the rulers] the Malays would become a mob', wrote the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore.⁹ The remark suggested a deeper uncertainty among the British about their hold on the Malays. 'English officials', Arthur Keyser, the District Officer in Jelebu, had written in 1897, '...are accustomed to pass their lives amongst the Malays, ...and the inmates and affairs of each household are known, much as those of the cottagers on his estate would be to a home-staying country squire in England.'¹⁰ Headmen or *penghulu* were also appointed, however, and indeed 'became the most overworked and underpaid of government officials'.¹¹ Cheah Boon Kheng has, moreover, pointed to the mutual relationship between the *ketua kampung* or *penghulu* in the Kedah villages and the local 'strong men'.¹² Colonial 'law and order' had not displaced long-standing patterns of clientism and dependency. Indeed it had a relationship with them.

In Brunei James Brooke had intended to start at the top, upholding and reforming the sultanate, not displacing it. The failure of his party among the elite was not redeemed by the deployment of British force. The British government indeed reduced its support, though without withdrawing altogether or giving the impression that the Brookes were entirely abandoned. Their focus was now on building the raj of Sarawak. Again its establishment and its maintenance were closely related. The layer of Brunei control was removed as the raj expanded. It made use of the local Malay elite, as it had in Kuching itself. It advanced by alliance with down-river tribes against up-river. 'Our population requires an experienced commander', Charles Brooke wrote in 1866, 'but when once the relations of one party with another are properly understood, it is a singularly easy government to carry on, – tribes, one with another, being so well balanced, that in the event of danger arising from any one party, the other may be trusted to counteract evil influences, and act as a balancing medium in the scale.'¹³

The Brooke administration, when established, continued to work through chiefs. Raja Charles borrowed from Malaya when he introduced *penghulu* as intermediaries between the *tuai rumah* (longhouse headman) on the one hand and the native officers and the European residents on the other. While the creation of this status 'validated their positions in the community, it also co-

opted them as supporters of government policy'.¹⁴ The Raja stressed that Residents and their assistants should gain the confidence of the chiefs: they were expected, as Tom Harrison put it, to behave like 'transplanted English Devonshire Squires'.¹⁵

Raja Charles was highly critical of imperialism at the turn of the century. 'If we look upon the sad side of the picture of the making of our immense Empire, we should pause for a moment and ask if there will not be a day of reckoning in the not far-off future. Do all the many demonstrations in the way of processions, to display the good faith and loyalty of the people, really mean anything or nothing?' In his pamphlet *Queries* (1907), he pointed to the conflict with the native races in a range of territories, including Burma and Malaya. In the former, 'the natives were put to the sword when the country was annexed'. In Perak, 'the Malays offered resistance to alleged unjust treatment by the Resident... Here, again, the natives had nothing to fall back upon but the sword, for they would not submit to misrule, with the result that their country was taken over.' Colonial rule, once established, was arrogant. Indeed it was getting more so. Britain's possessions were too much Anglicised. Good and friendly feeling had diminished. There had been a falling-off, a separation 'in consequence of the English developing into higher civilisation – as it is termed – among themselves with wives and families, and European luxuries, and so it has happened that though we govern, we only do so by power, and not by friendly intercourse or feeling'.¹⁶ The criticisms, if in some ways apt, were bitter. The pamphlet was written shortly after the establishment of the British Resident in Brunei, which frustrated his hopes of finally securing the old capital for Sarawak.

Yet, while his criticisms assimilated the Resident system in Malaya to a colonial system whose very arrogance must, he believed, in the end destroy it, the system Raja Charles had created in Sarawak was not entirely unlike it. It differed inasmuch as it was not associated with the rapid expansion of tin-mining and the substantial immigration of Chinese that marked the west-coast states of the Peninsula. He put his emphasis on the modification of native custom rather than its displacement, on slow progress rather than rapid development. 'I am strongly against large capitalists embarking in speculative concerns; they move things out of their natural groove and are more liable in most cases to do the country much more harm than real good – to move on slowly and surely is safest and best.'¹⁷ In a sense, again, his view may be compared to that of the Colonial Office. Speculators could inhibit the establishment of order and of a regular administration. But his view came to seem too backward-looking, too 'unprogressive', as Lucas, once an advocate of the extension of the raj, put it. The Raja, unlike the Residents, was not moving with the times.

The Raja, of course, differed from them in a still more fundamental way. In Malaya, Britain's position was based on the collaboration of the rulers, expressed in the treaties of 1874 and 1895. Its position in regard to Sarawak was quite different. Formally it was based on the protectorate treaty

of 1888, which confined its role mainly to the conduct of foreign relations. Informally, it was also based on the fact that, uniquely, Sarawak was ruled by a British family which could evoke some popular support at home, as well as some support from the British elite, should the government either unduly neglect it or unduly interfere with it. The Brookes might, like the Malay rulers, be described in terms of collaboration, but in a rather remote and special way. The distinction became apparent as time passed. So did the difficulty of dealing with it.

In conceiving of a Borneo version of the FMS Lucas appears to have thought that some kind of takeover of Sarawak as well as of North Borneo would follow the establishment of the Resident in Brunei. When and how it would happen was less clear. He did not think it could be done while Sir Charles was still alive: 'it is right & expedient to deal as gently as we can with this old ruler who is bitterly disappointed at not having been allowed to absorb the rest of Brunei, who has been given a recognised position by the King & the government, and who, dating back to more or less barbaric times, has, on the whole, done good work as a despot.'¹⁸ It seems to have been thought that, when he died, his successor, his nephew Vyner, would have little interest in the raj, and that the Colonial Office would be able to put the collaboration on a new basis, if not take over. Raja Charles did not, however, die till 1917. That was not a moment in which the British government wished to engage in experiments in Borneo. Nor did Vyner display any wish to give up.

Yet a number of cases in the 1920s seemed to emphasise that the personal rule of the raja could not be continued. They were of two kinds. In some cases British subjects, now coming to Sarawak in increased numbers, complained of the treatment they and their commercial ventures received at the hands of its somewhat informal, even amateur, administration. Vyner returned the soft answer to the British Agent's enquiries. In Sarawak, he said, lawyers did not exist, 'and the need for them has not been felt owing to the simplicity of the local laws'. He did, however, plan to appoint a judicial commissioner or legal adviser to draft new orders, revise procedure and supervise the working of the courts.¹⁹

The other change that challenged the existing system emerged from the creation of the League of Nations in 1919. Its agencies extended their purview into domestic matters – in the case, for example, of the traffic in opium, long a source of government revenue to the raj, as to other governments in Southeast Asia – and they tended to hold the protecting power responsible, however limited its position might be under protectorate treaties. '[H]igh policy', as the Raja's brother, the Tuan Muda Bertram, put it, might mean that Britain should conciliate the League, and it could not take a strong line merely for Sarawak's sake. But if 'high policy' at home forced the Raja to go back on his word, 'it would be the beginning of the end of the present regime because it would be realised that matters of internal administration are not in fact, as they are in theory, in his hands'. J. J. Paskin of the Colonial Office sought to

reassure him. But 'one has to face the fact that the coming of the League, in so far as it acts a focus for "world-opinion" on social and humanitarian questions . . . has introduced a new factor into international politics, and no state can hope completely to escape from the necessary consequences of its existence'.²⁰

The Colonial Office found that the argument Bertram presented was also an obstacle to the changes it sought. There was an increasing tendency to connect the autocracy of the raj with the self-interest of the Brooke family, and to see the current raja as more interested in the pecuniary aspects of that self-interest rather than in the pleasures of power that had had absorbed his predecessors. That could only increase the wish to modify the autocracy so that at least it might operate in a more regular and more modern way, and at the same time enable the Colonial Office to answer both to constituents at home and to the League for the actions of a protectorate government for which it was assumed to be responsible. Yet that very autocracy had another significance. In the Tuan Muda's view, it was an essential element in the stability of the raj itself, and if it were dislodged or disrupted, the allegiance of its peoples might be lost. By changing the position of a collaborating ruler, the British might undermine his rule. In the Malay states the problem was overcome by the appointment of the Residents. But, fiction as their advisory function was, in Sarawak even such a fiction would be damaging.

The Colonial Office discussed the matter with Sir Lawrence Guillemard when he retired as High Commissioner/Agent. He did not think the appointment of a consul or political agent in Sarawak would be 'of much service. The Raja would strongly resent any interference in that form, and would make the Consul's position unbearable.' Buying out the Raja and annexing the country seemed undesirable, even if the Raja could be brought to agree to it, 'because Sir Lawrence considered that the natives would obey a native Raja, though an Englishman, much more readily than they would an official sent from England. The Raja, he thought, must be present, at least as a figurehead.' Among Guillemard's suggestions was appointing an ex-government officer to the Sarawak advisory council Raja Charles had set up in London in 1912 and seconding a Malayan Civil Service man as governor or chief secretary under the Raja. Officials in London were cautious: it was a 'delicate' and not an 'urgent matter'.²¹

Guillemard agreed 'that the hereditary (*not* the personal) prestige of the Raja is a very important factor in native administration and that it would be extremely difficult to substitute another government for that of the Brooke family'. The first step was to get Vyner to accept a Resident and let him 'set up the usual unfederated administration & a trained judiciary'. He could govern in the absences of the Raja, which would presumably grow longer. 'I doubt whether it would be safe to go further for a generation but an arrangement on the above lines would secure all we really want – good government and a proper judiciary – without being in any way derogatory to the Brooke family.'²² 'It looks as if Sarawak ought to be gradually assimilated to the

other Malay States (the race of the ruler making no difference)', wrote the Secretary of State, Leo Amery. The first step was to put in a competent Chief Secretary. Visiting Malaya, Ormsby-Gore might discuss 'how this can best be initiated' with the new Governor, Hugh Clifford.²³

Clifford did not visit Borneo, as expected, but his successor, Sir Cecil Clementi, did. Advocate of decentralisation in Malaya, he also took up the idea of a Borneo Federated States. Advancing this part of the Lucas concept was, however, no easier than advancing the increase of British influence. Indeed, so far as Sarawak was concerned, it raised the same issue. It was governed by an autocrat, as A. F. Richards, the Governor of neighbouring North Borneo, put it, 'one of the few absolute monarchs left in the world who can truly say *l'état, c'est moi*'. If he wished to enter a federation, 'there is none to say him nay. But it is difficult to foresee smooth working of the Federation unless he simultaneously accepted a British Adviser and a more constitutional position than the present one in which his wish is literally law.'²⁴ But the Brookes were not Malay rulers: they were a different kind of collaborator.

Responding to Clementi's concept, the Tuan Muda admitted that a federation could bring Sarawak advantages: a greater sense of security, increased efficiency, expanded commerce. What would it lose? 'The salient feature and strength of the Government of Sarawak, *as at present constituted*, is the status of the Raja in the estimation of the country's inhabitants.' That would be affected. With 'a definite Governor at Labuan... a superior being so close at hand, – there must be loss of prestige', and the increase of work would make direct access to the Raja, seen as a right by his subjects, difficult to sustain. The Tuan Muda did not, however, agree with those who thought the welfare of Sarawak and its people was inseparably connected with the existence of the raj. Sir Frank Swettenham, he said, had some years earlier pointed out to him the risk in personal rule – rajas were human, could be mad, spendthrift, drunkards – and suggested that the Brookes could never reject 'any friendly overtures' from the British government. The Tuan Muda agreed that 'the forces which through the ages have been at work causing constitutional Government to supplant personal rule cannot be expected to leave Sarawak outside their scope of operation'. The Raja of Sarawak, however, must be an autocrat. 'No other status would make up for the feeling, in an Englishman, that he must continue as the responsible Head of an Eastern State till the day of his death.' The only safeguard against his incompetence was 'voluntarily putting himself in the position of the Sultan of Brunei. There would be little sense in this however, for we and [the Sarawak officers], might then just as well live at home as here.' Bertram took the further logical step. The Rajas might become not only unnecessary but 'a drag on the harmonious development which is the basis of the scheme'. He had hoped his son, Peter (Anthony), would succeed him and carry on the family tradition. But it was 'far more important from this aspect, that the paragraph in British history representing the Brooke association with Sarawak should be a clean-run one, rather than that it should depict a gradual decline in authority, or a sudden

cessation by reason of the causes I have indicated'.²⁵ The Tuan Muda's concept of the *raj* suggested that a gradual increase of British control was impractical.

Clementi argued that advice would not mean merely 'nominal independence'. He cited the example of Johore: 'the Sultan has a very real authority'. As a constitutional ruler, the Raja would 'retain his present position of dignity among his subjects'.²⁶ That hardly met Bertram's point. The Raja himself thought change was unnecessary. 'Generally speaking, his attitude is that our relations are so friendly that if and when opportunities arise for closer contact we shall both avail ourselves of them to our mutual benefit, and he does not see that an official Federation would be of much assistance.'²⁷ In a conference in March 1931 Clementi argued that a Borneo federation would best come gradually, an adviser being installed at Kuching meanwhile. 'The Tuan Muda expressed the opinion that in that event the position would be less constitutional than under the present regime, for the Raja's position would be an anomalous one with an Adviser at Kuching.'²⁸

The Colonial Office itself was doubtful about Clementi's initiative. 'It is a most inopportune time to be rushed into schemes of this kind', Sir Samuel Wilson exclaimed.²⁹ Britain was indeed plunged in the depths of the Great Depression. The opposition to Clementi's plans may have another context as well. Britain's position was deteriorating internationally as well as economically. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it had been possible to meet the challenges that such changes presented by a selective modification of the status quo, by adjustments that might yet preserve core interests. The further deterioration of Britain's position during and after the First World War reduced its confidence. Interwar it tended to hesitate over embarking on adjustments to the status quo lest they should precipitate its collapse. It was necessary to wait for better times. That surely contributed to its unwillingness to adopt innovative policies in Borneo, and indeed in Malaya itself.

No action was taken over the Chartered Company, though it, too, was brought into Clementi's discussion. It outlasted the other chartered companies that its example had helped to create in Africa, with a record neither of outstanding success nor of egregious failure. It managed to set up a basic administration but not to make great profits: the highest dividend, 5 per cent, was achieved only in 1909–13 and 1919; none was paid 1924–27, 1929.³⁰ There was no need for the British government to take it over, and also no financial basis for doing so.

Setting up an administration had been even more difficult than in Sarawak. It was not simply that the Company's capital was limited and that its charter imposed restraints. There was, of course, no ruler to utilise as in a Malay state. Politically the territory was indeed even more fragmented than Sarawak. It had not, like the *raj*, been acquired step by step over several decades, so that a pattern of collaboration could be developed, displacing the Brunei overlords by utilising the local chiefs, utilising tribe against tribe. In so

far as North Borneo was not one block of territory, its divisions presented an obstacle rather than an opportunity: the original grants did not include all the 'interdigital' rivers, and until they were acquired the extension of the Company's control was hampered. In conceiving that North Borneo could be ruled for £30,000 a year, the Directors had the example of Sarawak in mind.³¹ But it was different.

'I think it should be our policy to place the tribes within our boundaries under our control as much as possible', Alfred Dent had written in 1880, '... provided that such was done with the full consent, and at the special request of the Chiefs and people: as also that no objectionable conditions be suggested by them; and that we did not thereby incur any undesirable responsibilities.'³² The administration was, as this suggested, spread thin, and the few Europeans relied upon native chiefs. That, of course, was not peculiar to North Borneo. Nor were the tribes there unfamiliar with the concept of alien authority. What was striking about the Company's administration was its haphazard recruitment of the chiefs it used. 'We are trying to govern the native through his headman', W. H. Treacher, the first Governor, told Dent, 'but we find it very difficult to discover headmen of any influence.'³³ The second Governor, C. V. Creagh, was not impressed by the chiefs recruited. 'They seem to have very little in common with the people they are supposed to rule by whom they are only regarded as Foreign tax gatherers and traders', he wrote in 1888. '... I think the plan of sending men of this class backed with all the authority of the Government to work amongst the natives on the interior without any European control or supervision is a dangerous one.'³⁴

The attempt to establish law and order through a 'native' police force, Sikhs and Iban, made matters worse. 'The police gave new power to chiefs who would previously have been dependent on popular goodwill, and new security to traders to drive unfair deals.'³⁵ 'If this philanthropic company, the shares in which are held by rich Englishmen, cannot afford to place trustworthy European officers over these tribes', wrote the naturalist John Whitehead, who visited North Borneo between 1885 and 1888, 'for God's sake leave them alone and avoid the stirring up of strife by placing such unprincipled blackguards in authority.'³⁶ The Company was bringing change but not order, particularly in the interior. A phase of government by expedition followed, marked on one occasion at least by horrifying slaughter, the massacre on the Kalabakan in 1890.

Disorder on the Sugut – where an expedition had been sent in retaliation for an attack on the police station on the Kinarom, but the station had not been re-established – provided 'a fitting atmosphere for the emergence of Mat Salleh'.³⁷ This leader confronted the authorities at Sandakan, then sailed away. An expedition was sent after him and destroyed a stockade at Jambongan, where it found 'silk umbrellas and... other flags, insignia of royalty, many of them having inscriptions attributing inviolability to Mat Salleh and claiming to raise the standard for the Mahomedan religion'.³⁸ The conflict was renewed in 1896. An expedition was sent to the Labuk, but failed

to secure Mat Salleh. The Court of Directors – concerned under W.C. Cowie's leadership to spend on infrastructure not on administration – regretted that the tactics employed in dealing with him 'were not from the first of a more diplomatic nature'.³⁹

The early months of 1897 were quiet, as Mat Salleh, unknown to the Company, built a fort at Ranau. Then, on the day of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, he attacked Gaya from his home river, the Inanam, which was still nominally under the Sultan of Brunei. An attack on Ranau failed, and in November followers of Mat Salleh attacked the station at Ambong. In December the Company's forces again attacked the Ranau fort, the adjutant, Jones, being killed in a vain attempt to storm it. With a new gun the fort was bombarded on 8–9 January 1898, but it was found on the 10th that Mat Salleh and his followers had slipped away. The Company's Ibans 'burned and looted' the Dusun villages.⁴⁰

Cowie came out to try diplomacy. After the Gaya raid an old hand, W. B. Pryer, had offered his services 'to try and arrange matters with Mat Salleh'; otherwise he might gain international Islamic support. 'I should probably propose to utilize the man by putting him in charge of some district and making him responsible for it.'⁴¹ He repeated the suggestion at a Council meeting chaired by Cowie on 20 January. 'We can risk no more failures. I am of opinion that the mere offer of his life will lead to loss of time only and that some arrangement should ultimately be come to with him holding him responsible for those of the interior tribes more intimately connected with him which naturally he will not do without some countervailing advantage.' Most of the officials at Sandakan preferred an active pursuit and a more or less unconditional surrender. Cowie preferred the more diplomatic course.⁴² He met Mat Salleh at Menggatal in April and told him he could 'take charge of the Tambunans'.⁴³

Though the Company's was not an imperial government – and the imperial authorities had refused to do more in this crisis than send gunboats to patrol the coast – the arguments among its officials turned on the options that faced an imperial government. It could reduce opposition if it could win over chiefs and make them part of its system. That would also reduce the need for the active deployment of force. Once that was deployed, however, it had to be victorious and seen to be victorious. The Company had deployed force against Mat Salleh, but had not been victorious, and its officials believed that this was not the time for diplomacy. Cowie thought the attempt should even now be made. Whether it had any chance of success is difficult to determine. The terms of the agreement he made with Mat Salleh were unclear. But, as Ian Black suggests, it seems unlikely that Mat Salleh was prepared to accept 'the strictly limited role' that the Company was prepared to offer him.⁴⁴

'What steps did the Company take to establish Mat Salleh's authority peaceably and ensure its being respected by the Tambunan people thereafter?' Sir Alexander Swettenham, the acting High Commissioner/Agent,

was to ask Hugh Clifford when he took over the governorship of North Borneo.⁴⁵ The answer was none. Mat Salleh found the Tambunan Kadazans divided into two groups. When he secured the support of one, the other sought the support of the Company, and when it built a station within sight of Mat Salleh's fort, he was defiant. F. W. Fraser, the officer at Keningau, sought to negotiate. He demanded that the Europeans should leave the valley. 'You must finally suppress him', Cowie telegraphed.⁴⁶ There was fierce fighting with his Tambunan allies, the Tagaas. It was followed by four days' bombardment of his fort. Mat Salleh himself was shot in the head on 31 January.⁴⁷ An Iban was made government chief.

Though peace thus came to Tambunan, Mat Salleh's followers attacked the government station in the Tempasuk in February and the town of Kudat in April, and in the succeeding months there were numerous attacks on minor stations, on Chinese shops, on Kadazan *kampongs* (villages). One of the guerrilla leaders, Mat Satur, a relative of Mat Salleh, was killed at Kudat. Mat Daud, a subject of Sarawak, surrendered in September 1900. Another leader, Kamunta, an Ilanun, finally surrendered in May 1902, and was executed at Kota Belud. Langkap, a Tagaas, came in at the close of 1902. He appealed for his life in vain. Governor Birch told him 'that the blood of many innocent people who never did him harm calls to me... he must be killed to show that the Government is mighty and that those who break its laws must suffer.'⁴⁸

'It is... impossible to look for loyalty from a people who hardly ever see the men by whom they are nominally ruled', Clifford wrote. The rough tactics of the police who sought the rebels only increased the alienation of the peoples of the west coast. 'At present our interference with the natives is sufficient to cause irritation, and intense dislike of the Government, but our action is neither strong enough, nor sufficiently consistent to inspire either respect or gratitude.'⁴⁹ Neither Clifford nor his successor Birch – both eminent among the Malayan administrators – survived Cowie for long. Birch's major change was, however, to endure: that was 'to scatter European district officers across Sabah so that few areas were left without governmental oversight for long periods'.⁵⁰

The chiefs and headmen on which the administration also relied were now better supervised. Not many were thought entirely satisfactory, and most of those that were were 'of exotic origin'. Ian Black offers an explanation. 'For most Sabahans the past remained a vivid and bitter experience. It is more than probable that the "dilatatoriness" and "laziness" which the district officers remarked upon was a mask for continuing reluctance to collaborate with an unloved government.'⁵¹ Nor was it easy for them to see the advantages of the 'reforms' the Company introduced, such as Birch's attempt to replace the poll tax by the payment of a land rent and taxes.⁵² A new phase of reform after 1910, coupled with a demand for labour for bridle path construction, indeed provoked the last great revolt, the Rundum disturbances among the southern Murut peoples in 1915.⁵³

The account A. B. C. Francis gave of a District Officer's life in prewar North Borneo recalls the administration of the second Raja's Sarawak. 'The red-tape fetters of centralisation had not then begun to bind him . . . all that was definitely asked of one was to run the district decently, to get in touch with the inhabitants, and to administer justice.' I. H. N. Evans, who also served in the Tempasuk, 'claimed that it was difficult for the district officer ever to find out the truth, or the whole truth, about local affairs. The Kadazan headman was not one to meddle in another's dealings, nor had he any special motivation for telling on friends (unless he had a grudge), and he might well be involved in the activities himself.'⁵⁴ Sabah-oriented, the comment yet points to a common feature in colonial systems of administration. 'Beneath the imposed government', as Black puts it, 'customary social organization persisted, and what was considered to be ineffectiveness on the part of chiefs and headmen from the district officers' point of view was in fact the subtle reconciliation, conscious and unconscious, of traditional life with the new order.'⁵⁵

Shareholders reaped no great profits from North Borneo, but the Company's administration endured, and, like the raj, it was dislodged only by the Japanese, against whom its protector failed to protect it. More than once, however, the Directors had been tempted to give up. The collapse of the tobacco boom had led them in 1893 to consider Charles Brooke's offer to take over the administration – 'the country could be more economically administered by the proposed coalition'⁵⁶ – but the shareholders rejected the transfer. In 1918 a shareholder suggested that a majority would welcome transfer to the British government, but, foreseeing long negotiations over compensation, an increase of work in London, and problems in local 'overhauling and reorganisation', the Colonial Office considered the proposal was 'not opportune'.⁵⁷

The government's relationship with the Company, like that with the raj, came into question in the 1920s. The charter made it somewhat more formal, inasmuch as the British government had the right to approve the appointment of its governor, and it had normally appointed men from the Colonial Service. In 1925 the recently retired President, Sir West Ridgway, suggested the appointment of a government director. At the Colonial Office Sir George Grindle rejected the idea. 'He would be in a hopeless minority and a series of protests by him against majority decisions would soon bring a crisis.' It would be better to have a representative of the High Commissioner in North Borneo itself. 'His functions would be to act as a watch-dog on behalf of the natives, and to supervise the Company's activities so far as they affected our relations with foreign powers.' Sir West suggested that the British government should take over and that the territory would pay for itself. Grindle was less certain: 'a higher standard of administration would be required of a Malay State'. In any case, 'the moment is not propitious for asking H.M.G. or Malaya to assume new responsibility. I contented myself with saying that the offer to sell would have to come from the Company, and that they must not expect

the Government to take over after they have gutted the territory by retaining all its assets for a trading company.⁵⁸

Doubtful about the inclusion of the raj in Clementi's scheme for federation unless he was to accept British advice, Governor Richards was also doubtful about the position of the Company. If the raja was an autocrat, the Company's administration was responsible to its shareholders in London: 'the rights of shareholders must always haunt the Directors even in their most altruistic moments'. As part of a federation, it would have to accept 'authoritative advice'. The Company set 'the traditions of British rule before its immediate profit'. But no company could surrender so much control, particularly over finance. The system 'requires the existence on the spot of the sovereign power (or its Regent) through which the advice becomes operative'. Richards offered an alternative scheme. The government should take over the Company's territory, which for a period should be under the aegis of Singapore. Then the bond might be severed, and the Governor might become High Commissioner for Sarawak and Brunei.⁵⁹

The idea had some appeal for Clementi, just as Bertram had caused some doubts. The slump in rubber prices, 'very seriously affecting the finances of British North Borneo', could make it easier to negotiate the takeover.⁶⁰ Sir Samuel Wilson indicated that the Colonial Office would consider a proposal, but added that there was 'no chance whatever of financial assistance from the Imperial Government'. He did, however, suggest that, if Clementi were prepared to proceed with his schemes on the basis that North Borneo were to become 'a Malay State under the High Commissioner for the Malay States', there would be no objection in London 'to the grant of a moderate degree of assistance to the new State of North Borneo from the funds of the Colony [of the Straits Settlements] or the other States or both, provided they were willing and could afford it'.⁶¹

Planning to reconstruct Malaya, Clementi decided to secure the money from the Straits Settlements. 'I can't understand Sir C. Clementi's mentality!' the Under-Secretary of State expostulated. 'If there was ever a more inopportune time to make a suggestion of this kind I don't believe he could have found it.'⁶² The colony's Legislative Council agreed. The Company's asking price – £1 m for its fixed and governmental assets – was too high. But could the colony pay even £500,000? North Borneo, too, would need annual assistance of £100,000. To provide such sums, the colony would have to increase taxation or cut expenditure, and neither was acceptable.⁶³ Clementi made a plea for imperial assistance, and the matter was finally taken to the Cabinet in 1933. It decided not to open any negotiations with the company.⁶⁴ Even the Admiralty's concerns about the Japanese interest in North Borneo did not affect the decision. 'I am sorry', wrote Dougal Malcolm, 'for the failure of what at one time seemed as though it might be a good get out for the shareholders.'⁶⁵

If the Company was in low water, so were the Straits and the Treasury: the depression added to the caution that marked British policy in Borneo, as in

Malaya, in the interwar period. Two old-fashioned regimes survived. The imperial power did not really seek any change in the terms of their collaboration, though recognising that they were anomalous and outdated. Nor were the regimes themselves challenged from within. Both continued to rely for the maintenance of their authority on the systems of collaboration they had built up during the laborious phase of their establishment, enhanced by measures like Governor Jardine's establishing a Native Chiefs' Advisory Council in North Borneo in 1935. That was the more easily done because the two states did not undergo rapid development and their administrations were not interventionist. Yet, as Raja Vyner himself recognised, a 'ruling power' needed 'adaptability, because it must be remembered that the demands of successive Asiatic generations alter mainly on account of changes brought about by the increasing Europeanization of their environment'.⁶⁶

In Burma, by contrast, the British were prepared to risk dramatic change interwar, to set up a parliamentary system, and to create a semi-Dominion. Their handling of Burma had indeed contrasted with their handling of the Malay world in the nineteenth century. In both periods Burma was exceptional because of its relationship with its Indian neighbour. The British were committed to constitutional experiment in Burma in part because they had made it part of their Indian empire. The caution of the interwar period made it as impossible to abandon as in Malaya and Borneo it made it difficult to inaugurate.

Yet it has been persuasively argued that Burma was 'a disoriented society never truly pacified'. There was 'order' in the colonial period, Michael Aung-Thwin goes on to say, 'but only in terms of military control and administrative function; order in the full sense of the term – social, economic, psychological – was never realized, neither in the short period following annexation nor the longer period of colonial rule itself.' He draws a distinction between that and the limited 'pacification' of the years that immediately followed the taking of Mandalay and the destruction of the monarchy. That, he argues, had limited criteria: the absence of significant anti-British military resistance; and the existence of an administration capable at least of revenue collection.⁶⁷

Few societies, it might, however, be suggested, attain 'order in the full sense of the term', and if in their history the Burmans have sought it, it is not surprising that they have been disappointed. It is a question rather whether 'British Burma' ever met the limited criteria of 'pacification'. Colonial regimes are easier to start than to consolidate, and their consolidation may tie the colonial administration to forms of collaboration it is difficult to abandon. British Burma resembles other colonial regimes so far as such generalities are concerned. But it may have fallen short, not only of the Burman ideal but of the colonial, because of the particular way in which it approached the normal tasks.

‘No one seems to have anticipated the curious possibility of “a state of war” after Thibaw’s fall.’⁶⁸ Yet there had been resistance in Pegu after the second war, even though the Mons were far from identifying with Alaung-hpaya’s dynasty: ‘at the end of the first year of the occupation broad districts were still in the hands of the insurgents and robbers and rebels were still at large, and great tracts remained into which British influence had not extended’. Only in 1861 did the province become peaceful.⁶⁹ In February 1886 Dufferin argued that the country normally suffered from a high level of gang robbery and dacoity, and they had been stimulated by Thibaw’s misrule and then by his overthrow.⁷⁰ Yet it was soon apparent that the British were faced with something more than an increase in traditional lawlessness. ‘It had been supposed’, wrote Sir Charles Crosthwaite, the Chief Commissioner, ‘that our coming was welcome to the people and that “the prospects of the substitution of a strong and orderly government for the incompetent and cruel tyranny of their former ruler” was by the people generally regarded with pleasure. . . . But by July [1886], it had become evident that a considerable minority of the population, to say the least, did not want us.’⁷¹

‘At first, under various leaders, few of whom showed any military talent’, the defeated army ‘waged a guerilla warfare against the invaders; and afterwards when their larger divisions had been defeated and broken up, they succeeded in creating a state of anarchy and brigandage ruinous to the peasantry and infinitely harassing to the British.’⁷² The British tried what would later be called ‘search and destroy missions’. But as soon as a ‘flying column’ left an area, it would again fall under the resistance.

The villagers, having cause to recognize that we are too far off to protect them, lose confidence in our power and throw in their lot with the insurgents. They make terms with the leaders and baffle pursuit of those leaders by round-about guidance or systematic silence. In a country itself one vast military obstacle, the seizure of the leaders of the rebellion, though of paramount importance, thus becomes a source of greatest difficulty.⁷³

Official papers reported that collaborating *thugyis* (headmen) were carried off or crucified and their villages looted and burnt.⁷⁴ Only those near military posts were secure.⁷⁵ Army operations, such as burning villages, were counter-productive. Villagers could not prevent reoccupation by the rebels, Colonel Ommanney wrote in March 1886. The burnt-out villagers ‘turn dacoits in order to maintain themselves and families’.⁷⁶

Dufferin denied that the ‘dacoits’ were patriots. ‘Their object is for the most part plunder.’⁷⁷ Not surprisingly historians of post-colonial Burma have re-emphasised the political nature of much of the resistance. ‘Most of the resistance leaders had worked for the king in a high or official position. Some were princes, others members of the court, while yet others were hereditary *myothugyis* [circle headmen] . . . The resistance even had women agents working

among the British, one of whom was a maid-of-honour under King Thibaw.⁷⁸ 'A number of real or pretended scions of the House of Alaungpaya had escaped from Mandalay and set up their standard in the provinces.'⁷⁹ One of them was the Myinzaing prince, one of the five sons of Mindon who escaped the massacre of 1879. His forces harassed the British: 'until the Myinzaing Prince is crushed', wrote the *Times* correspondent, 'no progress will be made in the general pacification of Upper Burma'.⁸⁰ He planned an attack on Mandalay, and issued a royal order calling for an uprising in Lower Burma, where there was indeed some resistance, particularly in the Bassein, Henzada and Tharrawaddy districts.⁸¹ He was finally forced to take shelter in the Myelat state of Ywangan, where he died of fever in August 1886.⁸² Few high court officials played a role in the resistance: they were 'cut off from local bases of power'. Men with hereditary positions in 'the intermediate and lower rungs of the administration' were far more significant.⁸³ Buddhist monks played a vital role.

In Upper Burma, as elsewhere, the means by which the colonial state was established affected the kind of administration that was to maintain it: the structures that became permanent grew out of the immediate need to secure collaboration. The choice, however, may have been skewed by experience in India and in Lower Burma, and as a result perhaps fell short even of the level of effectiveness that such structures reached elsewhere. Facing continued opposition, Crosthwaite concluded that it was necessary to bring the country under a strong centralised administration, with 'the individual village as the basic social and political unit'. That, he thought, 'would enable the authorities to eliminate elements of disorder by holding the village community responsible for everything that happened within the village tract'.⁸⁴ The civilian solution thus grew out of military necessity. But it was a solution perhaps unduly influenced by Crosthwaite's earlier experience, some thirty years in India, a short period in Lower Burma.

In Tenasserim and later in Pegu the British had used appointed *taikthugyi* at the circle level, though finding it increasingly difficult 'to get men who have influence and are at the same time qualified'.⁸⁵ At the village level the *kyedangyi* or largest taxpayer fulfilled the thankless task of man of all work, degenerating, as Crosthwaite put it, 'into a kind of village watchman and drudge', since he was given no authority or status.⁸⁶ In Upper Burma – the core of the old state – the monarchy had been able to rely more on hereditary *myothugyi* than on *taikthugyi*. They were much more of a social force than the *taikthugyi* of the south, let alone the *kyedangyi*. The new administration, however, did not see them as the source of collaborators. Not only were many of them leaders of the resistance. The British had no experience of the *myothugyi* institution as such. Crosthwaite tended to see them as usurpers of village power. There was no hereditary aristocracy, he concluded, no tribal or caste system. The British must establish and use an effective village leadership. But that set out the scheme of collaboration on a basis that was bound to be

disappointing, and indeed to run the same risks as the system developed in the earlier acquisitions.

The Upper Burma Village Regulation of 1887 empowered the Deputy Commissioner to appoint a headman in every village or group of villages. He was to give the authorities information about stolen property, about the movement of suspicious characters, about dacoity, murder and robbery. He would co-operate in supplying on payment food or carriage to troops and police and in furnishing labour for public works. He was also given a number of police and magisterial powers. If he neglected his duties or abused his powers, he could be fined or suspended from office or dismissed. The Deputy Commissioner could fine any or all the residents of a village who aided a criminal or failed to restore stolen property tracked to the village.

‘[M]ost of the British officials with long experience of Burma opposed Crosthwaite’s reforms.’ The village unit, they argued, was too small, and local residents capable of performing the extensive duties required could often not be found. ‘They insisted also that the sweeping away of all the intermediate aspects of the traditional governmental structure, involving the substitution of impersonal law for the principle of personal jurisdiction, left a gap between government and people which no artificially improvised village-headman system could bridge.’ At the beck and call of officials and subject to fine and reprimand, the new headman could rarely ‘generate the needed face and authority to function acceptably and simultaneously as head of the local militia, police officer, magistrate, work requisitioner, and tax collector’. In 1897, 697 headmen were fined, 341 village tracts were examined for dereliction of duty and 171 collective fines imposed.⁸⁷

Students of British Burma – including men with direct experience of it, such as John F. Cady and J. S. Furnivall – have discussed the high levels of local violence and crime. ‘Murders, dacoities, robberies, violent assaults are far too numerous’, as Sir Herbert Thirkell White, Governor 1905–10, put it.⁸⁸ To some extent at least, Cady suggests, it was the product of frustration, of the lack of opportunity to exercise responsibility. Those were, however, features that Burmese shared with other peoples under colonial rule, and, of course, appear in some other systems of government. A level of disorder was also something those regimes shared. If Burma seems especially disorderly, however, it may be due to the abrupt way in which its institutions were changed, the overthrow of the monarchy being followed by the imposition of a novel system of local government.

It was within this scarcely ‘pacified’ country, subject also to substantial economic change, that in the 1920s the British began a new political experiment, dyarchy, one that would advance a measure of participatory government, local and central. Again the impulse came from India, of which Burma was a province, and, if British administrators doubted the relevance to Burma of changes designed for India, Burmans were prepared to argue that they should not be left behind. Popular local government, however, achieved ‘no very impressive record’. Burma ‘still felt the procrustean effect of political

development upon a British-Indian model'. The legislation was carelessly drafted, the boards were frustrated for want of money, the Burmans 'ill-prepared either for executive responsibility or for political leadership'. A system originating in England, 'passed on at second-hand through India', 'launched in difficult times, was almost foredoomed'.⁸⁹

'In India, the building of representative institutions was prefaced by at least some preparation... But Burma emerged from the complete isolation of a backward Indian frontier province into semi-independent status as a parliamentary democracy, in one enormous stride'.⁹⁰ Dyarchy was an attempt to stage the process, but a vain one. The progressive development of self-government, on which the British embarked, may be seen as an endeavour on the part of an imperial administration to put collaboration on a new basis. Again, however, it was necessary, if an elite was to be useful, for it to have the chance of winning support. But under dyarchy Burmans were responsible only for some government departments, and that made it difficult for political leaders to win over the electors on the basis of a programme that they might collectively carry out. The alternative was to rely on corruption, patronage and paramilitary violence. Those practices continued even after 1937, when the Burman ministry gained wider powers.

Though they were not to make the Shan states part of parliamentary Burma, the British extended their authority over them after taking Mandalay. That authority was exerted through their chiefs, the *sawbwas*. They had paid tribute to the Burman monarch, rendered annual homage, and made military contingents available in war. It was a similar kind of loose control that the British sought to establish, a mode of collaboration that differed from those pursued in the Burman lands, but also begun in the initial phase of pacification. 'If we secure the allegiance of these rulers, we obtain... most of what we require', Dufferin wrote in October 1886. He hoped they would recognise British supremacy 'like the Native Princes of India'.⁹¹ 'The geographical obstacles of the hill areas and the subjugation of the Burmans for the moment meant that formal recognition of British supremacy and tokens of that recognition would suffice.' To do more, far more troops would have been required, more forts. 'Involvement in idiosyncratic civil procedures far beyond their abilities, both financially and in terms of expertise in tribal customs, was inconsistent with the temporary goals of the British', as Aung-Thwin puts it. 'So they did what the Burmans had done for centuries, with a few critical differences.' They followed the indigenous tactic of 'visiting' the chiefs with a substantial force, defeating them if they resisted, securing loyalty from the defeated or from his replacement. '[T]he scene is the same', as a Chinese headman put it; 'the actors only are changed'.⁹² But the means adopted to establish the authority of the British set the pattern they employed to maintain it when their resources and their expertise had expanded.

Establishing authority was not quite as easy as Dufferin hoped. The divisions among the chiefs had, however, helped the monarchy to exert its control,

and they helped the British. In the closing years of Thibaw's reign the trans-Salween states Kengtung, Kengcheng and Kenghung had rebelled, and that had encouraged open revolt by the Sawbwa of Mongnai and his allies. Beaten back by the royal forces, they set up a confederacy to confront the King's government, headed by the Limbin prince. It was at that point that the British captured Mandalay. Some chiefs who felt threatened by the confederacy turned to them. One of them was the Sawbwa of Yawnghwe. 'Let the hereditary Shan chiefs be maintained', he wrote to the Deputy Commissioner at Kyaukse. 'Let us come under your protection. Attempts have been made and are being made by ambitious chiefs to set up Burmese Princes in their name to dominate the rest of the states.'⁹³ The Sawbwa of Hsipaw also looked to the British. They sent a military expedition. '[U]ntil we go', as Sir Charles Bernard put it,

the inter-state fightings and the inroads of the Limbin Prince will not abate; whereas when we go, we can confirm all *de facto* rulers and over-awe intending breakers of the peace, while we shall very soon cause the defeat and disposal of the gathering under the Limbin Prince... the longer we delay, the more chance there will be of the parties hostile to British influence getting the upper hand, and of the Shan powers being turned actively against us.⁹⁴

The main battle with the Limbin confederacy was at Kugyo in February 1887, when the British bombarded the stockade, and there was hand-to-hand fighting between the Shans and the soldiers of the Hampshire and Gurkha Regiments. 'The hard core... remained unpacified, and the British resorted to a clever mixture of guile and force to break it up.'⁹⁵

It was in the trans-Salween area that the British were to determine a border with Siam and with what in 1887 another imperial power had formally decided to call French Indo-China. The French took over Vietnam, as the British took over Burma, piecemeal. Though they administered the non-Burman lands separately, the British treated the Burman lands, once they had acquired them, as a whole. The French adopted a different course in respect of Vietnam. The protectorates they established in Tonkin and Annam, nominally under the Nguyen emperor, were not operated in the same way, and what they called Cochin China they made a colony. Yet, while the British and French approaches contrasted, there was an essential similarity inasmuch as they sought collaboration through systems they set up at the outset and subsequently maintained. The French were, however, to take no steps towards democracy in the interwar period.

The creation and indeed the expansion of the colony of Cochin China was closely bound up with the resistance the French met. After the fall of the citadel of Gia-dinh on 17 February 1859, the Hue court encouraged the people to form volunteer militia units, offered plaques to villages who con-

tributed to the struggle, gave titles and funding to individuals who recruited fighters. The Tu-duc emperor in fact wanted to stimulate guerrilla warfare against the French. He would have the militiamen ‘oppose the invaders with all their hearts, with risings in all regions. They should sometimes materialize to fight, sometimes conceal themselves, now striking by surprise, now engaging in set battles, not allowing the invaders a moment’s rest. Thus, the invaders will know no tranquility while they remain on our lands.’ One of the most effective leaders was Truong Dinh. ‘We thought that the Annamites were still submerged in fear’, a French officer wrote, ‘that the masses were enslaved, cowardly, the dregs of empire, . . . incapable of undertaking any act of resistance. But one must recognize the existence of a spirit of national independence among the Annamese, whom we have always thought ready to accept and indeed worship any master who would allow them to plant and harvest their rice.’⁹⁶

In Upper Burma, guerrillas were to fight on though – and because – the monarch was displaced. In the first stage of the French conquest guerrillas had royal encouragement. With the signing of the 1862 treaty, the French hoped that it would cease. It seems clear, indeed, that, hoping ultimately to induce the French to withdraw, Tu-duc sought to abide by the treaty and he withdrew the imperial troops. Though sympathetic to their cause, he also wanted to discourage the guerrillas, ordering his officials in the border regions to capture any who entered independent Vietnam. ‘There are several elements among the people who have not heeded our words and have been active. They cause the French to be suspecting, therefore bringing harm to the people. Thus, the French can use this as a pretext for conflict with us, and the prospects for the three western provinces would not be bright.’⁹⁷ The guerrillas nevertheless continued the struggle, invoking the emperor’s name, even issuing bogus edicts. ‘Five more years of sacrifice of men, horses, and ships are necessary to plant our domination’, Admiral Bonard wrote in May 1862.⁹⁸ ‘Rebellion’ began in December. ‘L’insurrection est partout.’⁹⁹ Their provision of sanctuary afforded Admiral La Grandière a pretext for taking over the western provinces in 1867. That was initially unopposed, but the French troops at Rach Gia were massacred in June 1868. ‘The whole pagan part of the population’, wrote the Commandant Supérieur of Vinh-long, ‘who would have voluntarily been indifferent to all change of authority became hostile under the influence of the Mandarins and the *lettrés*.’¹⁰⁰

Organising the administration of the colony grew out of this situation. ‘Once a French presence had been firmly implanted in Saigon and its environs, the immediate problem arose of finding a way to administer the territory under French control.’¹⁰¹ Bonard’s answer was to use Vietnamese officials wherever possible. But, whatever the advantages or disadvantages of using the mandarins, not many were available. The treaty of 1862 gave them a legal basis for collaboration. Many preferred the option of retreating into non-occupied Vietnam, however. The ‘almost inevitable consequence’ was ‘the introduction of direct administration’.¹⁰²

Even that, of course, required collaborators. French inspectors, representing the governor in the twenty-two arrondissements, relied on interpreters, often missionary-trained, men such as Paulus Huynh Tinh Cua and Petrus Truong Vinh Ky. Not many were of their quality. 'Our new officials, both through instruction and education, are, in general, infinitely inferior to the old [mandarins]', wrote J.-B. E. Luro in 1875. '... In the first years of conquest one takes men of goodwill that one finds in one's hands. Fidelity counts more than capacity... many would not have been given employment as simple clerks formerly.'¹⁰³ By the late 1870s France had established schools that produced trained Vietnamese, and from 1881 lower-echelon bureaucratic posts were available to them. It was a new elite, and increasingly its 'mandarins' came from the wealthy class that emerged from the economic development of the colony.

The regime required collaborators at the lower level, too. Under the Vietnamese rulers central government and the village were linked through the canton or *tong*, comprising two to five villages. Selected by district or prefectural mandarins from lists submitted by the relevant villages, the canton chiefs were thus the brokers and mediators between government and village. Crucial for the Vietnamese rulers, the role of mediators was perhaps even more crucial in the case of the colonial regime, staffed in part by men of alien culture, and seeking to undertake novel tasks. Yet the French, perhaps with the French *maire* in mind, tended to overload the cantonal chief, making him 'the unpaid agent of the administration'. He became more important, but was 'frequently caught in the middle in clashes between the interests of the administration and the commune'.¹⁰⁴

Like other colonial rulers, the French tended to burden their local collaborators. At the level of the commune itself, the French increased the responsibilities of the notables. That made them more unwilling to serve, and perhaps more corrupt if they did. In 1902 the lieutenant-governor reported that the recruitment of notables was in some provinces becoming more and more difficult: 'the prosperous and honorable families show a certain repugnance for these perilous functions, which thus too often fall into the hands of those who are unskilled, and even, sometimes, dishonest'.¹⁰⁵

'It has become fashionable to shout out, in all manner of ways, that the Annamite population happily saw us come to deliver it from the oppression which weighed upon it and which it detested', Luro's colleague P.-L.-F. Philastre had written back in 1873. But that was illusion, not reality. 'The extraordinary resistance, sometimes violent, sometimes passive, day by day more hateful, which is opposed to us by all classes of the people, is stronger today than at any time since the conquest.'¹⁰⁶ Like the North Borneo government, the admirals had to look for chiefs, and those they utilised – such influence as they had in society diminished by the additional revenue-raising and administrative burdens they were given – were unable to win the regime support, and it thus had a loose control on the countryside. Perhaps it never indeed gained control. For it helped to unleash economic change as well, and

that created a rural proletariat as well as a landlord class. The result was increased support for the secret societies, both illustrating and increasing the weakness of French control.

When the French conquest moved to the north, the options for the mandarins were reduced: those who opposed collaboration could not retreat. The French were able to find collaborators, but their position was weakened by the patriotism of those who resisted. When the young Ham-nghi emperor fled from Hue, the French were able to install a monarch under their protection, but his position was weakened by his predecessor's endorsement of the resistance. 'Perhaps with Heaven's assistance, we shall be able to turn chaos into order, danger into peace, and finally retrieve our entire territory', Ham-nghi declared. 'Under these circumstances, the fate of the nation must be the fate of the people. Together we shall work out our destiny and together we shall rest.'¹⁰⁷ The resistance had developed when the French returned to the delta in 1882 and yet it seemed that the dynasty still preferred to compromise. With royal endorsement, what became known as the Can Vuong or Royalist movement was able to oppose the 'pacification' of Tonkin for a decade and more, outliving Ham-nghi's own arrest in 1888.

After Ham-nghi's flight, the French quickly seized the forts at Dong-hoi and Vinh, and then moved into the hills of the Quang-binh-Ha-tinh area. They lacked the resources to stay, and they were attacked by partisans. The French succeeded in establishing their superiority only because the area contained substantial Vietnamese Catholic communities. Attacked by the royalists, those communities were ready to 'cluster at key local junctions, where small forts could be erected, colonial troop units could be trained, and terror or counterterror expeditions could be organized'.¹⁰⁸ In his mountain retreat Ham-nghi was dependent on villagers of the Muong minority, a people not treated well by the dynasty. This was another weakness the French could exploit. He was betrayed by a Muong tribesman.¹⁰⁹

The most important Can Vuong effort in these years centred on Ba-Dinh in Thanh-hoa. There the scholar-gentry constructed a fortress, drawing supplies and labour from surrounding villages. Their endeavour, as Marr says, was 'bound to fail, given complete French superiority in artillery and naval gunfire',¹¹⁰ but the French had to mount two assaults and then lay a siege, with Captain Joffre commanding the engineers. In 1889–90 there was a renewal of resistance in Thanh-hoa. The French were able to smash or disperse the main units during 1890, but Tong Duy Tan, the leader, was not captured till 1892, and his chief associate not till 1896.

Can Vuong resistance in Nghe-an was headed by a court official, Phan Dinh Phung, and Cao Thang, a bandit leader whom his brother had protected from royal troops ten years earlier. In 1887–8 they set up 'a solid network of base camps, food caches, intelligence agents, and peasant supply contacts',¹¹¹ with a command headquarters at Vu-quang and fifteen other bases strung along the mountains. The French sought to isolate the lowland villages from the mountain-based guerrillas, and a ring of forts tightened

round their camps. Cao Thang impatiently attempted a full-scale attack on the province capital in 1893 and was mortally wounded. Hong Cao Khai, a collaborating mandarin who came from the same village, and was now Viceroy of Tonkin, appealed to Phan: 'should you pursue your struggle, not only will the population of our village be destroyed but our entire country will be transformed into a sea of blood and a mountain of bones'. He replied by putting the responsibility on the French. The whole country had suffered, not just their region. And he rebuked the collaborators: 'wherever the French go, there flock around them groups of petty men who offer plans and tricks to gain the enemy's confidence'.¹¹² Hoang Cao Khai told Governor-General de Lanessan that it was time to wipe out the remnants of the rebellion. That the French, with the aid of collaborators, achieved in 1896.

Tonkin itself had been wracked by disorder before 1885. Ham-nghi's call began a new phase, with a focus on resistance to the French. Gentry leadership was more dependent than in north-central Vietnam on the popular and anti-dynastic forces that had already been at work, to be termed pirates and rebels by the French, patriots by the later nationalists, in fact both or somewhere in between. They, on the other hand, had acquired experience of the kind of fighting that was involved, and the resistance in the north also had the advantage of proximity to the Chinese frontier, across which arms and supplies flowed till the opening of the Sino-Japanese war in 1894. The most sustained effort was in Hung-yen, Hai-duong and Bac-ninh provinces. The French again realised that, to control the lowlands, they would have to control the neighbouring uplands. Until 1890 they did not have the means. Then they had to deal with men such as Hoang Hoa Tham (De Tham), entrenched in the mountainous Yen-the area. It was against him that Galliéni developed the 'oil-spot' approach, driving the 'rebels' out of a valley, constructing forts to 'protect' the inhabitants and induce them to break with the resistance. In the event the civilian administrators came to a kind of deal with De Tham.¹¹³ French officials also struck a deal with Luong Tan Ky, charismatic Sino-Vietnamese leader of the 'Yellow Flags'. Assisting the French against smaller bands, he got arms and ammunition and a monthly salary for the next thirty-five years.¹¹⁴

Between 1882 and 1896 the French deployed some thirty thousand troops in Tonkin, and lost ten to fifteen thousand. They spent 500 m gold francs. Their armed columns levied coolie labour. The coolies 'died in masses and lined the itineraries of the columns with their corpses'.¹¹⁵ 'We have conquered Indochina and we have pacified it, but we have not won their hearts and minds', General Pennequin declared in 1911. '... We are still camping in this country; there are still conquerors and conquered.'¹¹⁶

For the most part, however, the French were able in the north and the centre to find collaborators among the mandarins, without, indeed, having to accept 'pirate' chiefs. They were essential in the task of 'pacification' and played a role in the administration that the French set up in the 'protecto-rates' of 'Annam' and 'Tonkin'. Their motives were not necessarily so venial

or self-serving as the non-collaborating Can Vuong leaders proclaimed: indeed they could argue that collaboration would enable the Vietnamese to take part in the modernisation of Vietnam. Their position was, however, undermined by the example the Can Vuong movement had set, by its long resistance, and by its articulation of the patriotic cause. That added to the difficulty collaborators normally faced. Could they win the support of the people for an alien regime? The French themselves, moreover, showed little confidence in them.

Though they made Cochin China a colony, the French indeed retained the monarchy in the rest of Vietnam. The monarch, General Warnet argued in 1886, 'could offer a considerable help, by the prestige which the royal authority still preserves over the populations[,] in pacifying and reorganizing the country'.¹¹⁷ The French diminished its value by allowing it too little authority. Its task was was a limited one, 'that of confining the transformation of minds within the limits of prudence and of abating opposition through its words or its deeds, whenever the colonial power deemed it useful'.¹¹⁸ The French hoped that it would shore up their protectorate, but they left it so little power that its collaboration could not be useful. French emphasis on its 'Confucian' character only further weakened it. It ignored other traditions of the Vietnamese king: a protector figure, 'part rebel, part guardian of agricultural fertility, and part cultural innovator'.¹¹⁹

In Annam and Tonkin the administration was initially left more intact than in post-monarchy Burma, but it eroded over time. In Annam new agencies were grafted on to the imperial government and placed under the jurisdiction of the French Resident. In Tonkin French authority was even more open. In 1886 the Emperor delegated all authority to a viceroy, the *kinh luoc*, who was responsible to the Emperor and the *Résident Supérieur*. In 1897, two years after the creation of the FMS, Governor-General Doumer decided to institutionalise the Union of French Indo-China. Of it the three divisions of Vietnam became part as such. The new bureaucracy was recruited from the elite, but some mandarin families withheld their children from the French schools. At the lower levels, the system still sought to rely on the village notables. Yet it burdened them, and leadership tended to fall into the hands of those ready to make up for unpopularity by corruption. There were changes in 1941, but nothing could arrest 'the deterioration in the relationship between villagers and notables'.¹²⁰

In Cambodia, too, the monarchy had been retained. Le Myre de Vilers had been highly critical of King Norodom, but hesitated to strip him of power, lest he withdrew to the interior: 'the Cambodian is profoundly attached to the monarchic form'.¹²¹ Governor Thomson was less cautious, despite a warning from Paris.¹²² His demand that the Cochin China government should take over the customs service was the sticking point. 'The Cambodian government and the Cambodian people are not accustomed to giving up their ancient ways in order to adopt new ones', Norodom declared. 'It will be thought that

the king has lost all authority over his subjects.¹²³ His refusal to negotiate led Thomson, backed by troops and gunboats, to impose on him the new convention of 17 June 1884. Obliging the monarch to 'accept all the administrative, judicial, financial and commercial reforms which, in the future, the Government of the Republic will judge it useful to introduce in order to facilitate the accomplishment of its Protectorate', it would extend French administration into the provinces, transforming Cambodia 'into something very like a colony'. The Cambodian people, it was believed, would be 'sympathetic to the changes that the French wished to introduce'.¹²⁴

Accepted in 1863 as a guarantee of independence, the protectorate had not been active enough to provoke opposition. Now it did: Thomson was too optimistic. By mid-January 1885 he was reporting 'general disorder over most of the country, with banditry added to resistance to French authority'. Some rallied to Prince Si Votha, who had been a contestant for the throne, and forces loyal to him secured control of the region northeast of Phnom Penh, probably with aid from hill peoples. 'We cannot deceive ourselves', wrote the French Resident at Kompong Chom in January 1886;

with the exception of a few points on the river where our supporters still hold on, with difficulty, the insurrection is master of the region. Throughout, bands move about the country, taxing the population, recruiting men, burning the houses of our partisans, and attempting to take their women and children so that they can be removed to the interior as a way to force others to make their submission.¹²⁵

In eastern Cambodia and south of the capital, Thomson suggested, unrest was linked with resentment at Vietnamese settlement. In the south and south-west and in the northwest, the leaders were men of the traditional ruling class. But there were also leaders who claimed magical powers.

The struggle took on the features of guerrilla war and 'pacification'. Thomson's *chef du cabinet*, Klobukowski, tried to explain the uprising by alleging that the King was involved. He denied it. In any case, challenged in Tonkin as well, the French turned, under a new governor, Filippini, to a policy of concession. After interviews with him in July 1886, the King then travelled through the country calling on the insurgents to lay down their arms.¹²⁶ The convention remained. But any thought of annexation was ruled out, and 'reforms' would be pursued more gradually, as the resident general put it, 'en ménageant autant que possible les susceptibilités nationales'.¹²⁷

That gradual growth was spurred on in the late 1890s with what Doumer rather exaggeratedly called a coup d'état. Apprehensive lest the ageing Norodom might abdicate in favour of a prince hostile to France, Verneville, the *Résident Supérieur*, persuaded the council of ministers to agree in January 1897 to carry out business without consulting the King. That was followed in July by a royal ordinance declaring that no royal decision had

legal standing unless it was countersigned by the *Résident Supérieur*.¹²⁸ Norodom died in 1904. His successor, Sisowath, was 'a pliant tool of the French authorities',¹²⁹ and the pace of 'reform' increased.

Until 1897 provincial officials had enjoyed considerable autonomy. After 1897 the power and the initiative more and more lay with the French protectors: 'comme les ministres, les autorités locales devenues instruments d'approbation servent à accrediter et à utiliser le pouvoir colonial auprès des masses'.¹³⁰ Cambodian officials had to act within the limits of the colonial will or anticipate colonial wishes: the administration was thus characterised, as Resident Outrey put it in 1913, 'by inexperience and by excessive zeal'.¹³¹ Relatively powerless, it was also relatively inaccessible: it became the preserve of the sons of officials or the sons of Sino-Khmer families who could afford to learn French or of Vietnamese.

At the level where government and people met, the Khmer tradition differed from the Vietnamese: the village was geographically more dispersed and there was no commune. The imposition of French reforms was, however, just as disruptive. The Cambodian village, *srok*, was headed by a chief, *mesrok*, assisted by notables, *chuntup*. The governor nominated the *mesrok*, but had to take account of the wishes of the people, and to some extent the *mesrok* had the role of patron.¹³² French reforms displaced that by election, but also identified the headman with the administration. A law of 5 June 1908 displaced the *srok* by the commune, *khum*, and gave the *mekhum* the task of keeping the list of inhabitants, and thus of those who owed the state tax and corvée. He was given many other tasks as well, and in fact was overwhelmed. 'Si les gouverneurs ont quelque difficulté avec les dossiers et les registres, on imagine assez bien ce qu'il en est pour les chefs de village.'¹³³ The fact that the French saw the main task as revenue collection did not help: it further emphasised the change in the headman's role. Some exploited the situation, and contributed to the rural disorder of 1916.¹³⁴

An older colonial realm shared some of the practices the imperialists adopted, and some of the disadvantages. Restored to the Indies after the French wars, the Dutch saw them as a source of funds to rebuild and modernise the Dutch state. At the same time, they wished, particularly after the alarming experience of the Java war of 1825–30, to avoid troublesome and costly opposition. They thus combined a policy of 'peace and order' with compulsory deliveries of agricultural products under the so-called 'cultivation system'. In Java they found their collaborators in the 'Regents', the leading members of the *priyayi* elite inherited from the ancient sultanate of Mataram. Their hereditary position was confirmed, and they were given a 'culture percentage'. But their association with the government tended to undermine their hold on the people, and their participation in its exploitation was a source of much of the criticism of the cultivation system after mid-century. The state began to curb its abuses, and thus effectively brought it to an end. The elite became 'a beautiful ornament'.¹³⁵ In the somewhat more modern state of the 'liberal'

period, indeed, the Regents lost part of their role. They were not, however, dislodged, and their political importance to the colonial regime was to increase in the twentieth century, when it reacted ambiguously to the responses to the changes it had helped to bring about. It distrusted the new elite that began to emerge, and though it established a Volksraad (People's Council) in 1916, the basis for 'collaboration' with it, or on its part, was limited.

The village headman, *lurah*, retained his significance throughout, tying together the peasant and the state. One link was through custom or *adat*, which king and official had to respect, though also demonstrate that they could break. Another link was through a network of patron–client relationships, which tied the village leaders to men of power. A third was through the ambiguous relationship with the *jago*, an ambivalent figure, bandit, enforcer, Robin Hood, also with its equivalent elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Under the cultivation system, the village headman was crucial, and he continued to be so under the 'liberal' system. The village was the source of labour for the 'private' system that followed the cultivation system, and the headman a useful means of securing it. His position, like that of village headmen in French Indo-China, became more burdensome, though possibly more profitable. If custom was endorsed in principle, it was undermined in practice. The well-meaning changes of the succeeding 'Ethical' period made the situation worse. The headmen were burdened with tasks for which they had little qualification, and in which the villagers saw little purpose.

The system the Dutch developed – particularly in the 'pacification' that followed the Java war – sought to take account of the role of Islam in Javanese society. They recognised that the resistance they had met had been strengthened by the identification of their leading opponent, Diponegoro, with the Muslim cause. Their alliance with the *priyayi* and the *adat*-based elite was in part predicated on a shared wish to limit the role of the Islamic teachers and scribes. The increasing alienation of the peasantry that nevertheless occurred in fact boosted that role. But it was this same perception that guided the Dutch in the Outer Islands as well, and it was employed to end the Aceh war.

In Aceh, the Dutch had never established the contractual relationship that elsewhere in the archipelago was to provide the context for their application of force, making it, they hoped, both sparing and effective. Nor did they try in 1873. The second expedition demonstrated their power: they took the *kraton*. Van Swieten's abolition of the sultanate, however, stood in the way of reconstituting a contractual policy. Affected by opinion at home, the Netherlands government, too, looked for the submission of the Acehnese: it ruled out negotiation, and it rejected any idea of British mediation, designed, as Sir Andrew Clarke put it, to end a war that might otherwise continue for years, 'keeping alive if it does not fan into a flame of which we may feel seriously the consequences, the spirit of Mahometan fanaticism'.¹³⁶

No submission took place, and late in 1875 the Dutch began an offensive aimed at securing the whole coast of Aceh Besar. The argument that this would isolate the war party in the interior was, however, mistaken, and the 1875 decision thus, as Reid puts it, 'began the ruinous oscillation in Dutch policy between the traditional foothold on the coast and offensives whose only logical end was a subjugation of the whole country'. The 1875 objective was achieved, it seemed, in 1877, and Governor-General van Lansberge turned to a policy of 'goodwill', symbolised by rebuilding the great mosque in Kuta Raja destroyed in the second expedition. That was brought to an end by an Acehnese offensive of June 1878. The Dutch responded under the formidable Karel van der Heijden. 'Everywhere villages were razed and the population fled either to the hills or to the North Coast.' When the offensive ended in September 1879, only fifty thousand remained of a prewar population of three hundred thousand. Twenty-three posts were set up, from which constant patrols were despatched to protect the remaining population.¹³⁷

In the coastal dependencies the blockade had secured token submission from most of the rajas. In 1876 – when the position in Aceh Besar seemed sufficiently established – van Lansberge decided to proceed against the remainder. A number of Dutch posts were established, but they were 'subjected to sporadic attacks'.¹³⁸ The dependencies also helped the 'war party' in Aceh Besar. Van der Heijden intensified the blockade, insisting that ships go to Uleelheue before they went to any other port, despite the Governor-General's well-founded fear that it would provoke the British in Penang. Britain appointed a consul in 1882. He found Uleelheue a town under siege, with only a strip of road 'as long as Sloane St.' safe to walk on.¹³⁹

In April 1881, however, the Dutch had declared that the war was over. That was not the result of reconciliation, still less of victory. The Dutch army had sustained heavy losses from disease, and the home government was unwilling to sanction special recruitment in Holland. Expenses were also heavy, making it difficult to avoid calling on the Dutch treasury even though the abolition of state coffee culture was deferred. Ready to vote credits in 1873, when the national honour was at stake, the States General had now become critical. In 1880 the Anti-Revolutionary leader L. W. C. Keuchenius condemned the war as 'one of the most horrible and unjustifiable ever undertaken in the Indies'. International publicity had also 'injured Holland's reputation as a colonial power'.¹⁴⁰ Such factors made it easier to believe that, given a period of peace and stability, the Acehnese would acquiesce in Dutch rule. A civilian governor was installed.

The war was not in fact over. 'Van der Heijden's offensives could only have been a permanent success had they been crowned by a durable understanding with traditional *uleebalang* leadership whose interest was in stability.' Such leaders had been driven out, replaced in many cases by 'more pliable rivals'. The villagers whose homes had been burned by the troops had no reason to return. 'Even Van der Heijden . . . failed to efface the reputation for arbitrary punishment which the Dutch had earned by claiming to rule where they

lacked real power.¹⁴¹ The Dutch could not offer them security: their collaborators were weak; their power inadequate and convulsive.

The war in fact changed its nature in two ways: it became a guerrilla warfare; and Islamic leaders assumed a leadership role. 'The *uleebalangs* who had conducted the defence of their own districts now withdrew to the background. The initiative was seized by adventurers, young hotheads, and religious teachers [*ulama*] who were prepared to undertake daring raids on the Dutch positions in the cause of patriotism, of religion, or of their own advancement.' Teungku di Tiro was 'more than any other responsible for portraying the resistance as a *perang sabil* (holy war) and uniting the *ulama* behind it after 1881'. In 1882 and 1883 'hardly a week passed without some fatal attack on a Dutch post or transport'.¹⁴²

Beset by financial as well as political pressures, the Dutch now sought a retreat, though it had to be covered by an advance: the plan was to impose a blockade, retrench, and then relax the blockade. 'Our strength will have been seen and felt', wrote the minister, Sprenger van Eyk, 'and the inevitable concentration will have taken place without allowing any weakness on our side to be suspected, and without disadvantage to our prestige.' It was a 'fanciful' policy. The blockade was ineffective, while, according to the British consul, the retreat 'inspired the hostile Atjehnese with great enthusiasm'. The position of the *ulama* was strengthened, and they made the guerrilla struggle a popular cause. The belated Dutch attempts to negotiate with Muhammad Daud, chosen by the Acehnese as Sultan and based at Keumala, were seen 'only as further evidence of the hopeless weakness of the Dutch'.¹⁴³

In 1891 Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, then adviser to the Indies government for Eastern languages and Muslim law, was commissioned to investigate 'how the disposition of the religious party in general was after the death of Teungku Tiro [in January 1891], and in what way the government should try to exercise influence on Keumala'. His conclusion was that the government must try to conciliate the majority by encouraging trade, but 'make the task of the *ulama* leadership impossible by ceaselessly attacking and harassing them wherever they were'.¹⁴⁴ Such a policy was adopted by Van der Wijck only in 1898. What made it effective was not only the military vigour of General J. B. van Heutsz, but its association with the political objectives that Snouck Hurgronje defined. The old tactics of burning and destroying were curbed. The dignity and influence of the *uleebalang* were restored, and they were held responsible for anti-Dutch activities in their districts. The policy 'gave the secular *elite* a vested interest in stability under Dutch authority, and so drove deeper the wedge between them and the *ulama*'.¹⁴⁵

In Aceh a structure of collaboration was at last built, under, as elsewhere, the urgent requirements of pacification. The sultanate was not restored, however, though Sultan Daud submitted in 1903, and the *uleebalang* signed a 'short declaration' that made Dutch rule more direct than contractual. The collaboration was supported by a common distaste for the Islamic elite. *Ulama*-led resistance continued. 'Only when the *marechaussee* pursued and

killed several of the leading descendants of Teungku Tiro near Tangse in 1910–12 did the *ulama* give up the guerrilla war.¹⁴⁶ About the same time, the Americans were, with great violence, suppressing the remnants of Muslim opposition in the southern Philippines.

In Luzon and the Visayas the Spanish regime had set up a system of collaboration in which religion, as in traditional Southeast Asia, seconded the state, though without being entirely subordinate to it. The regime indeed used a collaborating secular elite. The *datu* and *maharlika* of the pre-Spanish period became headmen or *cabezas de barangay*, and magistrates or *gobernadorcillos* in the *municipios*, and with other office-holders, constables, inspectors of palm-trees and rice-fields, notaries and church officials, fomed the *principalia*, a substantially hereditary local oligarchy which was yet renewed by intermarriage with Chinese immigrant families. The regime employed them to raise taxes and secure *corvée*, and they benefited from their share in the task.

The regime also relied on the religious orders involved in the original conversion to Christianity. Few *indios* were admitted into the orders, none at all into the Society of Jesus, nor any *mestizos*, only Europeans and *criollos* or local-born Spaniards. As a result, there was a European in each community, watching over and manipulating the activities of the *principalia*. With *cura* and *capitan*, as a British observer put it in 1887, ‘a Philippine hamlet feels and knows little of the vexations inseparable from direct foreign and official administration; and if under such a rule “progress”, as we love to term it, be rare, disaffection and want are rarer still’.¹⁴⁷

‘The experience of two centuries has shown’, Pedro Sarrío declared in 1787, ‘that in all the wars, rebellions and uprisings that have broken out, the religious parish priests were the ones who contributed most to the pacification of the malcontents.’¹⁴⁸ With no army and few Europeans, the regime found the ‘powerful influence of religion’ essential, as Tomas de Comyn put it in 1810.¹⁴⁹ It was reliant upon the orders, even though they were not subject to episcopal visitation. Nor was it easy to hand the parishes over to secular clergy, even though the missionary task of the orders was completed: the regime was not ready to trust the *indios* and *mestizos* who would fill the benefices. The unrest of the nineteenth century was indeed felt first among them.

A new secular elite was also emerging as a result of the opening of the Philippines to foreign trade and the educational opportunities it secured in the islands and overseas. Writing back in 1842, the Catalan littérateur and traveller Sinibaldo de Mas y Sanz had offered his government the choice: to preserve the colony or ‘to decide on its emancipation and prepare it for freedom’. He preferred the latter: ‘how can we combine the pretensions of liberty for ourselves and desire to impose our own law on distant people?’ If that course were chosen, he envisaged ‘a popular assembly of representatives in Manila’, and a Spanish withdrawal, leaving behind ‘a constitutional form

of government', perhaps headed by an Infante.¹⁵⁰ But the government made no real effort to work with the new elite. In 1893 there were but three Filipinos in the Governor-General's cabinet. Their colleagues were the archbishop, the naval commander, the vice-governor, the president of the *audiencia*, the intendant of the treasury, the director-general of civil administration, and the provincials of the six religious orders.

Yet, drawn for the most part from wealthy families, the new elite, the '*ilustrado*', was at first moderate and reformist in tone. The great polymath José Rizal feared the consequences of a more violent course. Even the Liga Filipina, which he founded in 1892, did not aim at separation: he hoped that, confronted by its strength, the regime would at last make the concessions its critics sought without the need for an open trial of strength. His arrest left the way open for a different kind of leadership, less patrician, though still not proletarian, that of Andres Bonifacio and his secret society, Katipunan. Its discovery in 1896 produced a crackdown – Rizal was executed – but that produced a revolution. Neither side could win. They made a truce at Biaknabato.

The opening of the Spanish–American war in 1898 raised the hopes of the revolutionaries, then dashed them. After Dewey's destruction of the Spanish fleet at Manila in May, they proclaimed an independent Republic in June. There was little co-operation between them and the Americans. Indeed, as the US moved towards annexation, the two parties were on a collision course. Instead of offering the new elite independence or a protectorate, the new imperialists intended to take over from the old: it was a question of repartition, not of liberation. The Americans paid US\$20 m for the assets, but the Philippines was largely in the hands of the revolutionaries. Republic was to fight Republic.

In the fighting that began in February 1899 the Filipinos had no chance of victory. Their best hope was that they could continue the struggle long enough for their opponent to give up and withdraw.¹⁵¹ The Americans were far from home and in a difficult terrain, and they had never before sought to subjugate a people that had claimed independence. If there were any hope that such a policy would succeed, the Filipinos damaged it by their initial attempts to fight set-piece battles, in which they were at an immediate disadvantage. 'One failing of the leaders of the Filipino Army was their persistent view of guerrilla warfare as merely the last resort of a beaten army rather than as a means by which an inferior army could cope with a superior one, and one consequence of such thinking was to undermine the potential effectiveness of the unconventional approach.'¹⁵² They were not unfamiliar with the guerrilla alternative: they had fought that way against the Spaniards. To start that way with the Americans would, however, involve surrendering the control they had already established. Perhaps, too, it was incompatible with the dignity of a Republic.¹⁵³

It was only in November 1899 that Aguinaldo ordered the 'insurgent' army to dissolve into guerrilla bands and to fight what the Filipinos called 'ambush

warfare'. The purpose, ran a broadside, 'will be to worry the Yankee in the Pueblos occupied by them, to cut off their convoys, to cause all possible harm to their patrols, their spies and their scouts, to surprise their detachments, to crush their columns if they should pass favorable places and to exterminate all traitors... The guerrillas shall make up for their small number by their ceaseless activity and their daring.'¹⁵⁴ For the better part of a year Aguinaldo's forces often held the initiative. The Americans had to bring in more troops, and to adopt more ruthless policies, including the 'water-torture', and 'reconcentration', designed to relocate civilians in towns and isolate them from the guerrillas. 'I want you to take the most aggressive measures against the natives', Colonel Robert L. Howze ordered his troops in Badoc, Ilocos, in August 1900; 'clear up that situation even if you have to kill off a large part of the malcontents; do some terrorizing yourself.' 'Shoot anyone you believe to be in any way connected with destruction of telegraph', General Samuel B. M. Young ordered in October 1900.¹⁵⁵

The war lasted till July 1902. 126,468 American troops were sent to the Philippines, of whom 4,234 were killed and 2,818 wounded, and the cost was US\$400 m, twenty times what had been paid to Spain. The 'insurgents' were said to have suffered some sixteen to twenty thousand fatalities. About two hundred thousand civilians died.¹⁵⁶ But the war was not ended merely by violence or 'concentration', nor even by the kind of stratagem that General Frederick Funston used to secure the capture of Aguinaldo in March 1901.¹⁵⁷ The US also won over elite leaders by offering stability and a measure of political participation. Indeed, while McKinley's re-election in 1900 clearly affirmed annexation, the Americans came to talk of self-government. In some sense the resistance helped to prompt political concessions.

Among the early allies of the Americans was a group of upper-class Filipinos, led by T. H. Pardo de Tavera, who in 1900 formed a Federal party aimed at making the Philippines a state of the union. It helped the Americans bring the resistance to an end: it mobilised 'a very large number of Filipinos who have been at heart friendly to the American cause', as Dean C. Worcester put it.¹⁵⁸ In turn it gave the *ilustrado* some leverage with the Americans. Though the US rejected statehood, the President, under the Organic Act of 1902, ordered the setting-up of a Philippines Assembly, with a national election to be held in 1907.

There was another reason for the success of the new collaboration. Rizal himself had been apprehensive about violence: 'wrongs are not righted by other wrongs', says the hero Ibarra in *Noli Me Tangere*.¹⁵⁹ Now the elite feared that a political revolution might become a social one. No doubt many *taos* went to war because their patron went to war and because they were conscripted.¹⁶⁰ They also had their own ideas about the war, seeing it as a way not towards political independence but to the realisation of the kingdom of God on earth. They fought all the more desperately. General Malvar sought to continue guerrilla resistance in Batangas by invoking that sentiment. In his proclamation of 12 April 1901 he likened himself to a humble

beggar, who, 'in spite of illness, continues walking to the end'. 'Let us do away with the untrue stories that the uneducated will be weeded out afterwards, because any brother in the field who has learned to ignore dangers to his life in defending the fatherland . . . is a well-spring of knowledge'.¹⁶¹ But for the elite such arguments, and his association with the peasant-based *colorum* sects, were an argument for terminating the war.

While they were dealing with the '*insurrectos*' in the Christian north, the Americans tended to temporise in the Muslim south. There Spanish authority had never been effectively established. In Mindanao they had made the Sultan of Cotabato a tributary in 1837, but that had not given them control of the whole Pulangi valley. In the 1860s, indeed, they met formidable up-river resistance led by Datu Uto, and in 1874 he established close relations with Sulu.¹⁶² In 1887 Governor-General Emilio Terrero led an assault on Buayen, and he capitulated. Yet, Iletto suggests, the Pulangi was never truly pacified. 'My labours', said Governor Salcedo in 1888, 'have been directed principally at destroying the Moro unity which has been lamentable to us, since the sharifs who come from Mecca and proceed from Singapore travel about these rancherias, preaching incessantly the Holy War and complete unity to struggle against us.'¹⁶³

A former associate of Datu Uto, Datu Piang, sought to become his successor, securing Spanish support, winning over some up-river *datus*, and also, unlike Uto, enjoying considerable influence in Cotabato itself. In the Tagalog uprising he declared himself a friend of Spain. But when the Spaniards had to evacuate the Pulangi valley in 1899, he sought to make himself Sultan of Mindanao, and he and his associates turned on the members of the provisional government the Spaniards left behind. Nor were those sympathetic to the revolutionary government spared their wrath. The memory of *indio* participation in wars against the Muslims was strong, and 'it was ridiculous from the Muslim point of view for the Sultanates and datuships, proud of their long history of resistance to Spanish imperialism (while their racial brethren in the north submitted), to acknowledge the authority of Malolos'.¹⁶⁴

In December 1899 the arrival of American forces put a stop to armed conflict in the lower Pulangi, and Datu Piang was 'co-opted into the American establishment'. Up river, however, resistance continued, led by Datu Ali, a descendant of the Buayen ruling family and ex-follower of Datu Uto. His fort – believed, Leonard Wood reported, to be 'the largest ever constructed by a Moro in these Islands' – was captured in March 1904. In September he was still at large with an armed following of fifty to sixty, 'and a miscellaneous following of a hundred or two people, who accompany him under compulsion from place to place, carrying food, etc . . . As the hereditary datto of the upper valley the people at heart sympathize with him, but not to the extent of openly taking up arms in large numbers'.¹⁶⁵

In restoring order, the American military governors of what became the Moro province 'generally ignored the traditional authority of the sultans and

datus', as David Barrows wrote in 1914.¹⁶⁶ 'For a long time to come', General Tasker Bliss said in 1908,

the proposition to confer on any one native element the power of government would, stripped of all misleading verbiage, amount to the naked fact that the United States would have to hold the larger part of the people by the throat while the smaller part govern it. It is true that we constitute a still smaller part and are forcibly holding the people while we govern them; but if we assume the responsibility of forcibly holding anyone we had better also assume the responsibility of governing him rather than attempt to pass the responsibility to one who can neither hold nor govern.

The Moro could not 'advance under datu rule', General Pershing declared, the foundation of which was 'laid in ignorance and strengthened by superstition... In the development of the individual, control by datus whose authority is founded on Mohammedanism must eventually be abolished.'¹⁶⁷

Writing in 1913, however, Najeeb Saleeby regretted what seemed to be the destruction of native authority.

The datu should... be respected and recognized as the chief of the datu-ship because he is our best agent for governing his people. The Moro masses are perfect strangers to us... We cannot manage them directly, and in person, nor do they lie within our immediate reach. We cannot rule them without an intermediary and we cannot force upon them measures which we cannot force upon the datus. Why should we not then accept the natural inter-agency of the datu and benefit by his position and influence. We cannot have another intermediary without rupture and we cannot accomplish much without peace.¹⁶⁸

Though Saleeby was sidelined, his views were followed. 'At the outset it looked as though the American establishment would break the power of the *datus*; instead it came to rely upon them.'¹⁶⁹ Piang was the most prominent of them, 'still easily first in the valley', wrote J. R. Hayden in 1926. '... His slaves still surround him, his word is law, and it is said, although probably not to be proved, that in accordance with the old Magindanao code he still has recalcitrants of certain sorts cast to the crocodiles.'¹⁷⁰

In Sulu itself the US initially asserted its claim by making a treaty with the Sultan, the Bates treaty of August 1899. It provided for the recognition of US sovereignty, for respecting the rights and dignities of the Sultan and *datus*, for non-interference with Islam, for free trade with the Philippines and for co-operation against piracy, for monthly salaries. Much like the Spanish treaty of 1878, it was, as one observer put it, 'as good and fair as was possible to get under the circumstances, the Americans at that time being anxious to avoid

fighting the Sulus and Magindanaos, and everything having to be done in order to conciliate those Mahommedan tribes temporarily and prevent them from arising'.¹⁷¹ Once the 'insurrection' in the north had been suppressed, the Americans were free to deal with Sulu. 'It was a critical time', as Bates was to say later, 'as all the troops were needed in Luzon. The treaty was made as a temporary expedient to avoid trouble.'¹⁷²

The Sultan, Foreman suggested, had signed the Bates treaty 'in the spirit of Micawber'. For the Americans, he added, it was a wise move, since his inability to enforce it enabled them to set it aside.¹⁷³ The Moro province was established in 1903, and the following year the US abrogated the treaty with a ruler Wood described as 'degenerate, dishonest, tricky, dissipated, and absolutely devoid of principle'.¹⁷⁴ Unrest increased. Inspired by Islam, and by the legacy of centuries of struggle, the Moros indeed put up a fanatical resistance to American 'pacification', resulting in the massacres at Bud Dajo in 1906 – six hundred Moros dead, twenty-one Americans – and at Bud Bagsak in 1913.

The Sultan, Governor Carpenter reported in 1916, 'at all times... refrained from armed conflict or even active opposition to the United States Government'. On various occasions, he offered 'to establish and maintain peace and public order in Sulu if permitted to reorganize and rehabilitate his army'. The offers were 'of course' declined, although sometimes his services were 'utilized in conference with recalcitrant datus and other leaders'. He insisted that he had not surrendered his sovereignty, nor lost it by conquest. If he hoped to secure a position like that of a Malay ruler, he was disappointed. In 1915 he had to accept the Carpenter agreement, confirming his recognition of US sovereignty and the exercise by the Governor-General of all the attributes of sovereign government.¹⁷⁵

In the Philippines the missionary presence had been seen as indispensable to the maintenance of Spanish control, even though it deprived the government of some of its authority. It also reduced its flexibility in responding to change, while itself being responsible for some of the changes that took place. The missions promoted education, though also linguistic division. The identification of church and state stressed another division. Even as the Spaniards claimed all 'Filipinas', they could not establish their authority in the Muslim lands. There they tended to see themselves and to be seen as conquistadors. It was almost as if their rule in the north depended on their not being able to rule the south.

For the American conquerors the position was different. They wanted, McKinley declared, to 'educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them'.¹⁷⁶ The declaration was no doubt more apt to the American audience than to the Filipino. It did, however, signal an opportunity for Protestant missionaries. American Catholics were suspicious that officials would be partial to them. 'I want to see American rule made possible in those islands', Archbishop Ireland told the Protestant readers of *The*

Outlook. 'Do your Protestant missionaries realize that they are doing the greatest harm to America by making her flag unpopular? ... Give the Catholic Filipinos at least a chance to know us as we really are; that we are not out there to stir up religious as well as political hate.'¹⁷⁷ In the event the US were able to emphasise the secular nature of their regime. But of that the Muslims were scarcely persuaded, and the military governors had no sympathy for Islam.

The Dutch Company had not undertaken the missionary activity of its Portuguese and Spanish antagonists: it wished to minimise Muslim antagonism. The establishment of Dutch authority made it no less necessary to minimise antagonism but more difficult. Increasingly it identified with leaders who found their influence mainly from outside Islam, while trying to avoid provoking those whose influence had a mainly Islamic basis. The policy was reaffirmed by Snouck Hurgronje and the conclusion of the long conflict in Aceh.

British authorities in the Malay world sought a kind of religious neutrality. In Sarawak the Brookes were ready to welcome missionary activity, but not if it alienated Muslims.¹⁷⁸ On the Peninsula, Islam was left to the Malay rulers, even under the FMS-style treaties. The British were, of course, mindful of the fact that, possessors of an empire in India, they had more Muslim subjects than any other power. That gave them an additional motive for avoiding provocation. In Burma, on the other hand, they were unable to take the place of the king as patron of Buddhism. Monks were among the disaffected. Concerned lest a well-disciplined *sangha* under a strong primate might challenge their rule, the British found themselves faced by political *pongvis* 'quite free from the discipline of the hierarchy'.¹⁷⁹

Napoleon III undertook his venture in Vietnam in part to ingratiate his regime with Catholics at home. Within the colony of Cochin China that was in the event created, the Admirals found it convenient to retain the missionary structure, rather than introduce the concordat. They thus avoided the cost of paying the secular clergy at the expense of a diminished control over them, and there was a certain amount of tension between the government and the missions: it was, for instance, concerned over the expansion of mission property. The post-admiral administration dropped the subsidies the mission had received, but did not adopt the concordat. Le Myre de Vilers allegedly declared 'that the missionaries have had the monopoly of spiritual care for two centuries and it would be rash to take it off them, especially if one wants to invade Ton-kin'.¹⁸⁰

In the conquest and pacification of Tonkin French forces were indeed able to rely on Christian communes for information about the Chinese and Vietnamese guerrilla bands, and the Can Vuong movement saw them as a major threat. The missionaries thought the French military tardy in defending the Christian villages, and suspicious of the collaborating mandarins. Some missionaries formed their own militias, and some Christian villages took vengeance into their own hands. French anticlericals were to use the

notoriety the missionaries gained to discredit the mission. Of more long-term significance were the legacy of division and the problems left for the secular administration.

The first civil Resident-General of Annam–Tonkin, Paul Bert, sought to secure the collaboration of the mandarin elite. Christians were, however, still useful to the administration. ‘Bert needed to retain Christian support by means which did not further alienate the wider non-Christian community.’¹⁸¹ As Republican orthodoxy required, he proclaimed neutrality in religious matters. Informally he offered the missions considerable moral support. In 1901 the Bloc des Gauches in France passed a law intended to lead to a ‘concordat for religious orders’, but in fact used for the general destruction of unauthorised religious congregations. Its application in French Indo-China was questioned. Governor-General Klobukowski, Bert’s son-in-law, finally came down on the missionary side. Tuck suggests that he reached this conclusion when he heard evidence that Vietnamese Christian priests were sympathetic to the nationalist movement. That ‘enhanced the value of missionary collaboration’.¹⁸²

The war buried the controversy. But Pope Benedict XV’s encyclical *Maximum illud* of 30 November 1919 favoured the transfer of canonical authority from missionary bishops to national clergy.

Suppose that the missionary lets himself be partly guided by human opinion and that instead of behaving always like a true apostle, he shows an equal concern to serve the interests of his country. All his actions would immediately be discredited in the eyes of the population, which will easily come to think that Christianity is only the religion of a particular foreign power and that to become Christian is apparently to accept the supervision and dominance of a foreign power and reject one’s own country.¹⁸³

The encyclical underlined the ambiguity in the relationship between imperial and missionary activity. That had long existed: the activities conflicted and co-operated. Nationalism gave the relationship an additional complexity.

Armies drawn from the metropolis played a role in establishing and maintaining the imperial domains, but they were never sufficient, even though, once established, the regimes sought to limit the role of force. The answer was to draw armies from the domains they ruled. The Indian Army was the most significant of these forces, and the British used it outside India as well. Generally the colonial powers in Southeast Asia sought to raise forces within the colonial territories themselves. Arming their subjects, they recognised, had its dangers. Often, therefore, they sought to recruit from groups that were by culture or religion distinct from the majority. In that they did not entirely differ from their pre-colonial predecessors. In a measure, however, their success in recruiting and in securing loyalty depended on the absence of

the nationalism that they themselves were experiencing and that was to spread to their dependencies. The forces were dedicated to maintaining 'order': they were, as they were sometimes called, constabularies. They were not defence forces. The imperial powers recognised that, if their control was challenged from the outside, it had largely to be met from the outside. They could not create 'national' armies.

The expedition sent to Perak after the assassination of Birch consisted of European and Indian soldiers. In 1876 the Secretary of State asked Governor Jervois to consider the provision of a force that would enable them to withdraw. 'On the one hand it may be desirable that it should not appear to the Malays to be that of a dominant power imposed on them from without; on the other a force drawn from beyond the Peninsula may be found most reliable.'¹⁸⁴ A paramilitary force, mostly Sikh, was set up. After the creation of the FMS, the Malay States Guides were formed, stationed at Taiping, one artillery company and seven companies of Jat Sikhs and Muslims, under British and Indian officers.

Before the First World War military authorities suggested creating a Malayan defence force, two battalions of Malay infantry to serve alongside one British. 'By taking thought in time', said the Inspector-General of Overseas Forces, Ian Hamilton, 'we may save the stitches nine. A loyal and patriotic Malay nation, trained to arms[,] might well prove in future a fitting guardian for the Western portal to the Pacific [and] a doughty defender of one of the richest and fairest portions of the British Empire.'¹⁸⁵ No such proposal was implemented, for it implied, as Hamilton's own phrases suggested, a different way of looking at the Malayan 'state'. Twenty-five recruits were taken into an 'experimental company', the Malay Regiment, in 1933.¹⁸⁶ Late in 1934 it was decided to expand it into a whole battalion, and in 1941 into two battalions. They fought with the British in defending Singapore against the Japanese.

Charles Brooke set up the Sarawak Rangers in 1862 as a paramilitary force for 'pacifying' *ulu* Dayaks. It was largely drawn from the Balau and Sebuyau tribes of the First Division, traditional source of the war parties or *bala* that the Brookes had sent out. 'For the Dayaks the Rangers constituted a military caste in which sons followed their fathers in the Rajah's service.'¹⁸⁷

In their wars in Burma the British mainly relied on British and Indian troops. In the Company phase they also raised local forces, such as the Arracan Light Infantry, which fought on the British side in the second war. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857, however, most local forces were disbanded, and the British recruited from the 'martial races' of India, organised into battalions by 'class companies' and with subordinate Indian officers. Even so Karen units were raised for active service in the third war. The only regular army unit to recruit Burmans, however, was the Sappers and Miners, formed in 1887.¹⁸⁸ In the First World War four battalions of Burma Rifles were formed – Karens the largest element, but also Burmans,

Arakanese, Kachins, Chins, Shans and Gurkhas – and they served in the Middle East. After the war the number of battalions was reduced, and between 1925 and 1935 Burmans were not recruited. In 1939 there were four Burman officers, seventy-five officers from the ‘minorities’.¹⁸⁹

In the Indies the VOC’s soldiery had, as Merle Ricklefs puts it, been ‘an ethnic patchwork’.¹⁹⁰ The same was true of the kingdom’s forces. In 1830, when the Java war was brought to an end, and the Royal Netherlands Indies Army (KNIL) was formally created, the Dutch forces in the Indies numbered 13,555, six thousand of them Europeans. In 1853 it comprised 1,218 officers and 26,678 men, of whom 10,343 were Europeans, 1,744 Ambonese, and 14,591 Javanese, Sundanese, Buginese and Madurese. In 1890 the Korps Marechaussee was established in Aceh Besar, an armed police force of Indonesians with European officers.¹⁹¹ ‘Indonesians’ could be used against ‘Indonesians’ since Indonesia did not exist. Indeed the Dutch used the ‘majority’ Javanese, though alongside others, and with European officers.

For the ‘pacification’ of Tonkin, the French took as few troops as possible from regiments in France: European defence was in mind; the public, too, should know as little as possible of the losses suffered. Troops from Algeria were used, also the Foreign Legion, and zephirs, ‘despicable soldiers... To give them a mission of pacification was to open the door to the worst excesses.’ Le Myre de Vilers recruited the first 1,700-strong Vietnamese regiment of *tirailleurs* in 1879. More ‘Vietnamisation’ followed, the recruiting drawing on ‘the disinherited members of Vietnamese society’,¹⁹² and a Garde Civile Indigène was formed in 1888, including partisans and Catholics. By 1930 it had some 15,220 men, with 388 French officers and NCOs. Out of the thirty-one battalions in the Indo-China army itself by that time, twenty were indigenous, some twenty thousand men. They had become the target of the nationalists in the late 1920s, and in January 1930 a mutiny broke out at Yen-bay.

A Garde Indigène was set up in Cambodia in 1904. Each village had to furnish recruits, those taken then being selected by volunteering or by lot. The size of the force varied between 1,500 (1912–15) and 2,200–2,400 (1916–20). The service was in general deeply unpopular, another *corvée*, but, as in Vietnam, the French sought ‘volunteers’ for the war in Europe. Even with the King’s support, however, only about a thousand were found, and 340 deserted.¹⁹³

Though Spain sent troops from the Philippines to join the French expedition to Vietnam in 1858, the colonial army was primarily a constabulary force, often needed to back up the police, though it was also sent against the Muslims. From the beginning of their regime, the Spaniards had drawn on the local population, and there was no European garrison 1570–1828. They found the Pampangans notably loyal.¹⁹⁴ ‘Common soldiers were recruited from the indigenous population by military conscription though unit commanders had to be of European or Mestizo origin’, Greg Bankoff

writes of the nineteenth-century Philippines.¹⁹⁵ Otherwise the European component included just 1,500 artillerymen.

Macabebe scouts from Pampanga helped in the capture of Aguinaldo. The 'Little Macs' were 'loyal to the American liberators. They wanted to enlist and to fight on the American side', the Americans at the 1904 World's Fair were told. The war ended 'in American supremacy and in peace. But a strong arm of authority must remain . . . As the white men laid down more and more of the burden and came home, [they] stepped into the place of upholders of the Government.'¹⁹⁶ The US administration relied heavily on the armed Constabulary. Its officers initially came from the US Army, but Filipinos soon joined the upper ranks. A Philippine National Guard, set up in the First World War, was abolished after it. Only with the inauguration of the semi-independent Commonwealth government in 1935 was any emphasis put on self-defence.

Armies or constabularies could be recruited in the Asian dependencies when imperial troops were cut back or withdrawn, and, backing the collaborating elite, they helped to sustain the imperial regimes. Their main concern was with law and order, not with defence. The defence of imperial Southeast Asia was the task of the imperial forces. Their failure in face of the Japanese invasion was to inaugurate a different Southeast Asia, though the post-colonial regimes still put their emphasis on the constabulary rather than the defence function. The army personnel of the preceding regimes, like the civilian elites, was a source of expertise, but also distrusted. In both cases there had to be a transition, and in neither was it smooth.

The overall impression of the imperial regimes must be one of fragility and lack of penetration. Indeed greater penetration was likely to increase fragility. Collaboration was all the more important. But the regimes were tied to the collaborators they had secured during the phase of pacification, and found it difficult to sever the links. In some ways collaborators improved their position. The King of Cambodia, for example, became 'a symbol of national unity, unchallenged, as he had so often been in the past, by other members of the royal family'.¹⁹⁷ Others were, or became, discredited by their association with imperial regimes. That imposed additional limits on the ability of those regimes to innovate. Yet they had themselves instituted change, and change was also brought to Southeast Asia by its involvement with the world market. Their prospects were limited. Western rule could only be, in Malcolm MacDonald's phrase, 'a fleeting, passing phase in Asian history'.¹⁹⁸

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6 Investing and exploiting

The imperial enterprise was part of a state-building enterprise. It was also building states overseas, restoring or replacing states that could not cope with economic or political change. The outcome of such a venture was bound to be ambiguous. Could those states be or become states like the metropolitan states, or must they remain the participants of 'unequal' treaties, protectorates or colonies? They had some of the attributes of states, but not all. Their emergence as states in a world of states, though in retrospect it seems inevitable, was fraught with political tension and conflict. It was also necessary for the metropolitan states to reconceive the nature of their economic interests.

The state-building enterprise of the later nineteenth century, though contemporaneous with the advance of industrial capitalism, was not identical with it. While the reordering of the world might serve the capitalist cause, capitalists of the day were seldom squarely behind the adventurers and empire-builders. Often the new semi-states had to go out of their way to attract investment, and so boost their fiscal resources. Protecting the goods of the mother country's industries, a subsequent task for some of the regimes, was not one they welcomed: it could limit investment, revenue and development. Metropolitan interests tended, however, to prevail, and certainly inhibited the development of industry in the dependencies. It was not perhaps clear till the postwar period that privileged markets in the colonies were at best of temporary advantage even to metropolitan interests. Better opportunities for European capital became available. The value of the colonial tie was lost: it could even be counterproductive. That facilitated political disengagement, though metropolitan politics, even public opinion, might stand in its way. Throughout the political and the economic traversed courses that overlapped rather than coincided.

Imperialist rhetoric had emphasised economic advantage as well as political duty or necessity. The modern reader is struck by its exaggeration, its vagueness, its lack of quantification. '[D]uring this whole period', as Fieldhouse puts it, 'remarkably few colonies were annexed as a result of a deliberate assessment of their economic potential by an imperial power.'¹ The rhetoric was designed to make a state-building enterprise acceptable and to win support for it. '[W]e may find that in the end, [British] policy [towards

Burma] was influenced not so much by economic realities as by mirages . . . , such as the legend of the vast mineral wealth of Upper Burma, and the prospect of new markets to be gained by means of the “backdoor to China”, as Tinker put it.² The *parti colonial*, Tuck tells us, ‘usually paid little attention to the intrinsic value of territories acquired. Its economic arguments were frequently perfunctory, over-sanguine and misinformed. Its essential aim was to pre-empt European rivals, especially Britain, in uncolonized regions.’³ ‘Colonies would mean the winning of new markets for German industries, the expansion of trade, and a new field for German activity, civilization and capital’, ran Bismarck’s rhetoric in the Reichstag when he adopted the colonial cause. ‘Consider what it would mean if part of the cotton and coffee which we must import could be grown on German territory overseas. Would that not bring an increase of national wealth?’⁴ The true answer was negative. But imperialism – including its alleged economic potential – was a political programme, driven by an agenda of competitive state-building. It was a matter, in Rosebery’s famous phrase of 1893, of ‘pegging out claims’.⁵

Once a territory had been made a dependency, a colony or protectorate, the administrators and advisers were faced with another task of state-building. The object was to create not a nation-state but a more ‘modern’ state. It would have some of the features of the nation-state as it was emerging in the West – a recognised geographical frontier, for example – though it could not call for allegiance on the basis of nationality or citizenship. It would also have many of the institutions of a modern state. For those it would need revenue, and it was above all to obtain that revenue that the administrators, facing reality, though repeating rhetoric, sought to promote ‘development’.

That in itself might require the extension of ‘modern’ concepts of property and contract. It often involved the creation of a market in land, ‘an important prerequisite for attracting external investment and redistributing land to European planters and Chinese colonists’.⁶ Development might also itself require subsidy, either direct or indirect, and it certainly required the creation of infrastructure. Those were generally a call on revenue. Indeed colonial regimes readily used old-fashioned means to secure the resources their new or part-new states needed. They employed *corvée* labour, and they established revenue farms. The latter were particularly effective in relation to the Chinese immigrant communities, the presence of which was again not new, but now expanded. The imperial enterprise was indeed partly an Asian enterprise. Like the old colonial and Company regimes, it needed intermediaries from other parts of Asia. The British regimes in particular provided unprecedented opportunities for migrants from India.

Yet perhaps the striking feature of the enterprise is its element of commonality. What the Western administrators did varied, of course, with the circumstances within their dependencies, their resources and their economic potential, as well as the nature and extent of the collaboration they were able to secure. It also varied according to the national traditions, practices

and preconceptions of the administrators. Yet the differences seem to be variants on a theme rather than outright contrasts. Amid all the rivalry of the imperialists, there were common purposes and presumptions. All were creating states that were to a greater or lesser degree fragments of empires, themselves loosely conceived as modernising tack-ons to modernising states. What emerged could not be nation-states, but nations were being formed.

Professor Khoo Kay Kim has argued that the attention the Colonial Office gave to a number of commercial ventures after September 1873, 'compared with the total absence of any mention of the fear of German intervention, lends further strength to the belief that Kimberley's policy of 1873 was influenced by economic motives'.⁷ It seems more likely that there was a shift once intervention had been decided upon. It was in 1874 that Herbert suggested a positive response to Clarke's request for a Straits subsidy for a telegraph line through the west-coast states: 'I am inclined to think that the Straits government may properly contribute to the Telegraph line. Our newly developed relations with the Malay States, as well as the general interests of the Colony, seem to make it desirable that there should be a land line between Singapore and India through the Malay Peninsula.'⁸

Treacher and others in the FMS 'explicitly regarded the presence of European investors as indispensable to progress', John Drabble has written. 'However, it does not follow that government was exclusively concerned with the creation of profit-making opportunities for businessmen.' The FMS administration had a dynamic of its own. 'Emphasis was placed on promoting stable and permanent forms of economic activity among all sections of the community, foreign and indigenous, rather than ephemeral ones such as pure concession hunting and land speculation.'⁹

Certainly the Residents on the spot were keen to attract investors. Their focus was on infrastructure, in particular on roads and railways. Frank Swettenham, a devotee of this policy, drew a lesson from it in his Perak report for 1894.

It is, that in the administration of a Malay State, revenue and prosperity follow the liberal but prudently-directed expenditure of public funds, especially when they are invested in high-class roads, in railways, telegraphs, waterworks, and everything likely to encourage trade and private enterprise... The Government cannot do the mining and the agriculture, but it can make it profitable for others to embark in such speculations by giving them every reasonable facility, and that we have tried to do.¹⁰

And not British capitalists alone. In 1888 J. E. de la Croix recalled 'the kindly welcome and the generous support, which the Straits Government has not ceased to give Frenchmen and French companies established in the Peninsula'.¹¹

For the most part Perak and Selangor met the costs of the programme out of revenue. Poorer states borrowed from them or from the Colony. The revenue came largely from the tin mines. 'Tin was heavily taxed... The tin duty represented the largest element in the combined revenues of the states.'¹² Next in importance were the revenue farms, chiefly affecting the Chinese. The most valuable of these included the right to manufacture and sell spirits, to keep gaming-houses and pawnshops, and to collect duty on or prepare and sell opium. The system, a testimony to the administrative weakness of the state, was also a boost to the Chinese capitalist. The profit from the farms facilitated the opening of the mines. Describing his negotiations with Penang capitalists over the Perak farms, Hugh Low wrote in 1879: 'They will afford this very well indeed, but of course it requires a large capital and bold speculation. Ah Kwee... wanted 5,000 more coolies put in at once, and this is the only way to make it successful, but Tean Tek talks of 2 or 3 hundred coolies at a time at which fiddling game of course they could not develop the tin industry sufficiently to make it worth my while to let it to them.' The farmers were, however, in a strong position. 'If the price of tin was high and immigration boomed, they made large profits; if trade was depressed and they were unable to meet their commitments, they were able to plead for relief, usually with some success, since the government could not afford to risk the financial collapse of large local interests.'¹³ The state was linked with capital, Chinese capital. 'What British officials were most committed to was the solvency of the colonial state.'¹⁴

The state government also made loans to miners and planters. As Resident of Selangor, Swettenham obtained authority to make loans to 'respectable persons', and he reported in September 1883: 'No less than \$52,000 has been advanced in this manner at different times during the current year and I consider that this assistance has contributed not a little to the large increase in the revenue.' W. E. Maxwell continued the practice: he lent money to Chinese miners and to the Capitan China. Both Perak and Selangor made loans on easy terms to European planters. 'Loans were also made to Malays to assist them in mining, trading and planting, and to cover the initial cost of settlement; with a few exceptions these loans were individually insignificant, but reached a substantial aggregate sum, at least in Selangor.'¹⁵

The Chinese were 'the bone and sinew of the Malay States', Swettenham said, 'the labourers, the miners, the principal shopkeepers, the capitalists, the holders of the revenue farms, the contributors of almost the whole of the revenue; we cannot do without them'.¹⁶ Chinese had come to the west-coast mining districts before intervention. Now they came in greater numbers, though the death rate, even in a population mainly of young adult males, was probably as high as 10 per cent a year. No other obstacle was put in the way, though no funding was offered. The recruitment of Indian labour, important for the works programmes and for the coffee estates, was also largely left to private enterprise, though there was more regulation, and for some years the state governments subsidised a line of steamers bringing

Indian migrants to Malaya. In a sparsely populated land, immigrants from other Malay states, from Java and Sumatra, were also welcome. Often their leaders had negotiated with district officers, securing land and an advance. The Residents were keen to have what Swettenham called 'a fixed agricultural population'.¹⁷

Kerah or *corvée* was continued for a time, but in a modified form, and it was abolished in Perak in 1891.¹⁸ Taxation did not indeed fall heavily on the Malays: the *ra'ayat* (commoners), were, as Nonini puts it, 'lightly exploited' in the period 1874–1905. The 'expanding colonial state' depended more 'on the exploitation of the Chinese mining and plantation proletariat'. Malays were few in number, and Chinese readily available.¹⁹ Nor were the British ready to risk their political alliance with the Malay elite, or damage its position, in order to exert greater pressure on the Malay population. They could evade a problem that faced other regimes – associating authority and exploitation – by relying on migrant labour. Yet it was more a deferment than an evasion. The role of the *penghulu* changed. So also did the position of the peasantry, and by the second decade of the new century the British administrators were concerned that the changes they had unleashed were undermining the stable agricultural community that they also wished to retain.

One reason was to be found in the Land Regulations Maxwell drew up for Perak in 1879, which the other states adopted, with minor modifications, in the 1880s. In a sense they superimposed Western concepts of property on a Malay system that had valued people rather than land. The Raja, Maxwell claimed, had 'absolute property in the soil'. 'Subsequent to this legal *coup-de-main*, the lands which Malays and others had, in fact, been occupying and cultivating up to that time were then leased back to them, in the form of "titles" provided them.' Land not actually occupied or cultivated at the time the treaties were made was declared state land. That gave British officials 'an unparalleled opportunity to make land available in the future, at the most nominal rents, to settlers and to British and Chinese capitalists for their use'.²⁰

The changes in respect of the land already occupied were also considerable. Initially the occupants were required to pay a quit rent, and that indeed provided additional revenue for the state in the 1880s. Maxwell argued for rent revision, to which Swettenham, anxious to attract population, was opposed. He also argued for a simpler way of recognising customary tenure and in effect giving title. Both these ideas were reflected in the consolidated FMS legislation of 1897, the latter much more strongly than the former. 'The effect... was to provide a simplified form of tenure free of the cost of premium, survey and preparation of title, but to make such land transmissible in the same way as land held by grant.' Though it had not been Maxwell's intention, customary tenure was opened to non-Malays, 'with the express purpose of making the land more marketable'.²¹

These changes tended to transform the Malay village communities. The land tax and registration of title promoted the notion of individual tenure in land as private property, undermining a more complex system of shared and

communal rights. The introduction of rubber cultivation intensified the effect. Rural Malays lost their land to planters, land agents and money-lenders. The FMS government passed the Malay Reservations Enactment in 1913. Though somewhat ineffectively, government also discouraged the *ra'ayat* from planting rubber. To that they had taken with enthusiasm, despite their alleged devotion to tradition.

Rubber changed the relation between government and capital, and so did the introduction of tin dredges. The state no longer relied so much on the Chinese: the hold of the secret societies was broken, the tax farms replaced by direct collection of revenues. British miners and planters, backed by capitalists in London, became more important, as the constitution of the Federal Council suggested.²² The economic tie with British capital became closer, and indeed Malaya came to have a far greater importance for the British economy as a whole. The demand for rubber vastly increased with the development of the automobile industry and its utilisation of the earlier innovations of Goodyear and Dunlop. The major market was the US, and the earning of dollars became important to the sterling area.

In a sense, the rubber enterprise began at the local level, though it became of metropolitan importance. Indeed it was not entirely fortuitous, but it owed more to the government and to the individual than to capital. Seedlings of *Hevea brasiliensis* were brought from Kew and transplanted in the Singapore Botanical Gardens, and its director from 1888, H. N. Ridley, begged planters, currently concentrating on coffee after disease had destroyed the industry in Ceylon, to make a trial. The persistence of 'Mad Ridley' paid off in the new century. The infrastructure built for the mining industry helped to locate rubber in the west coast states as well.

In the opening years of the new century the rubber boom boosted the concession-hunting that had marked the closing decades of the previous century. Officialdom still gave priority to state-building. Indeed it tended to see expanding economic prospects in terms of the potential for state-building: if it was now to be possible to do it, it should be done properly. Before the 1885 agreement with Johore, the Colonial Office had persuaded the ruler, Sultan Abu-bakar, to drop a scheme under which he chartered a corporation and gave it 'a virtual monopoly of the economic development of Johore for 99 years'.²³ It also opposed the granting of a major concession to a syndicate called the Malay Peninsular Agency Ltd in 1882. The agreement forbade him to grant concessions to non-British Europeans, but, with some not necessarily disinterested sympathy from the Singapore business community, he resisted the appointment of an agent.²⁴

Sultan Ibrahim anticipated Charles Brooke in setting up an Advisory Board in London, but the Colonial Office was scarcely more enthusiastic about that than it was about the Singapore lawyers, even though Herbert chaired it till 1905. That year the Board told the Office that it had, at the Sultan's request, raised funds to start the Johore State Corporation Limited, with a monopoly on concessions for twenty years. The concession, the

Colonial Office replied, was 'contrary to public policy' and could not be 'countenanced or recognized by the Secretary of State'. The Governor was told that the concession might create 'difficulties... in the event of its being found necessary to intervene more directly in the affairs of Johore'. '[I]t is certain that, in the near future, we shall have to take the Sultan and his state in hand', Sir M. Ommanney had written, and then it would be necessary to buy the company out. British officials 'wanted Straits Settlements regulation of development in Johore, not control by investors and concessionaires. The British Empire... had developed an impetus of its own in the peninsula so strong that investors could make no headway against it when they sought to intrude in Johore.'²⁵

'British officials were not tools of British capitalists and, indeed, were often hostile to them. They were not, however, hostile to capitalism.'²⁶ Corruption was rare, it seems, though Frank Swettenham came close to it. In 1901 he had to be ordered to give up shares in a Pahang gold mine, and he gained an 'objectionable' concession in Johore.²⁷ In retirement, certainly, former officials were prepared to invest, even to speculate, and Herbert was among the would-be concessionaires of 1905.²⁸ There was indeed a tradition in Britain in which former colonial officials and military men joined the boards of companies that dealt with lands they knew at first hand.²⁹ At this point again, capital and government came together.

In dealing with Sarawak in the interwar period officials were sometimes to call Johore to mind. The Brookes, however, would have little to do with large speculators, British or otherwise: their priority was on state-building. The priority was set by a mix of motives: a big company would rival the ruling family; but it would also lead to exploitation. The conclusion was not that Sarawak should not be 'modernised' but that it should be a slow process that diminished the political damage development could cause.

At the outset James Brooke had found it necessary to trade, and had encouraged his agent, Henry Wise, in the idea of forming a company with a capital of £300,000 to £500,000. Gaining some official support, he altered his view. 'A sketch is made out of a Borneo Company, who are to buy up my rights in Sarawak; develop the resources of the various rivers; and above all, work the coal mines of Brunei', he wrote in March 1846. 'All this I have positively declined, because part of the project is unjust, part visionary, and part premature; and in my opinion, if a measure of this sort be precipitately undertaken, it would end in failure and bloodshed, undoing all that has been done by time and patience.'³⁰

Wise became an enemy and the Raja turned to his friends, who set up the Borneo Company Limited in 1856, its main task in Sarawak to be working the mineral resources.³¹ Even so, Raj-Company relations were not without strain. On the one hand, there was some distrust of its political stance: it took a rather independent line during the Chinese rebellion the following year.³² On the other hand, it diversified its economic interests by product and

territory. That helped it to survive and prosper, but suggested that it was neglecting Sarawak. Yet it was the only European enterprise in the raj before 1909.³³

The second raja, who ruled till 1917, retained his uncle's prejudice. 'I am strongly against large capitalists embarking in speculative concerns; they move things out of their natural groove and are more liable in most cases to do the country much more harm than real good – to move on slowly and surely is safest and best.'³⁴ It was the Raja's 'dearest wish', the Ranee Margaret wrote, 'to keep Sarawak for the benefit of its own people, and, in so doing, from the devastating grasp of money-grabbing syndicates'.³⁵ His political will of 1913 'railed at' 'these times when eager speculators are always seeking for some new place to exploit in a money-making sense[,] when the white man comes to the fore and the dark coloured is thrust to the wall and when capital rules and justice ceases, whereas the main consideration should be an honest and upright protection afforded to all races alike and particularly to the weaker ones'.³⁶ The setting up of the Advisory Council in London in 1912 reflected the Raja's concern that his successor would not abide by this policy.

In the event Vyner made no attempt to change the policy of the raj. 'It is not my policy, and was never the policy of my predecessors, to increase the revenue of the State by inviting any influx of foreign capital.' It might increase the total wealth of the people, but, inequitably distributed, it would not increase their happiness. 'If their interests are to be safeguarded then development of the resources of the country must be gradual and so far as possible carried out by the people of Sarawak themselves.'³⁷ Indeed the Colonial Office was concerned not only over the application of League agreements to the protectorate but over its treatment of independent British traders. Vyner told Guillemard that the government's aim had always been to keep court procedure as simple as possible so as 'to suit the needs of the inhabitants' and to assure them of justice 'without undue expense or delay'.³⁸

Under the second raja, as Robert Pringle puts it,

system and legislation were . . . allowed to wait upon occasion, even when results sometimes amounted to near-chaos. Until his death in 1917, Sarawak functioned without a comprehensive land law, without a uniform system of taxation, and without any code of regulations for the important native civil service. The Rajah's Notices and Orders, the only written legislation in the country, were issued piecemeal, in response to local problems . . . There was no defined Secretariat in Kuching, and no specialized British staff of any kind in most of the outstations.³⁹

The system shared with that of the early Residents in Malaya something of the 'squirearchy' approach. The emphasis in respect of development was, however, quite different: a priority in Malaya, it was not in the raj. Even so, Raja Charles valued the Chinese. He insisted on good relations between

his government and their leaders in Kuching. 'They are the capitalists that we have most to depend on, and a certain amount of consideration and respect should always be paid to them.'⁴⁰ He also invited Foochow colonists to open up the Rajang. The initial object was to expand the production of rice, but the rubber boom overtook it. The Rajah foretold friction even in 1908: 'I think some are encroaching too much on Dayak farming land which may cause trouble if not checked in time.'⁴¹

Like the Residents, the Rajas had asserted the state's rights over land. In 1863 all 'waste' and 'unoccupied' land was classed as government property, and could be leased.⁴² A 1920 order classified land in order to facilitate grants, and that was followed in 1933 by Land Rules that classified land into Mixed Zones and Native Areas, and by a Land Settlement Order, designed to create a land register by cadastral survey.⁴³

The Chinese were the major source of revenue for Raja James and Raja Charles as for the early Residents. The revenue was derived from the letting of farms to leading Hokkien or Teochiu trading firms in Kuching, who in turn pioneered the cash-cropping of gambier and pepper in the First Division, and supplied credit to shops throughout the raj. In 1910 the government joined the Kuching merchants in forming the Sarawak Opium Farm Syndicate, and in 1924, ostensibly according to League policies, it assumed direct control of the monopolies. They became a less significant contributor to revenue in the 1930s. The income from customs duties rose, but outstation Chinese played a big role in the planting and trading that contributed to them.⁴⁴

'Brooke idealism', Pringle suggested, 'was primarily a rationalization of the special conditions which prevailed in Sarawak, and only secondarily a motivating force': unable to effect 'any dramatic change', they made a virtue of a necessity, though over time 'their rationale developed a momentum of its own'.⁴⁵ Perhaps such an emphasis is a little awry, and the rationalisation rather different. The resources were certainly constrained, but, though Sir James approached the pre-Congo Duc de Brabant, he and his successor rejected any approach of the type that resembled the approach Léopold was to pursue in the Congo: 'Congo rules cannot be supported in Sarawak to please anyone or company', Charles declared in 1911.⁴⁶ To argue that the Brookes would have gone for large-scale 'development' if they could has no evidence to support it. They liked to rule, and it was that which they rationalised by their insistence on slow modernisation and adaptation. Pringle is on sounder ground in suggesting that, given Sarawak's resources, a more elaborate government was not feasible.

The Chartered Company had been set up to rule North Borneo to fend off others without alienating them, but also to avoid calls on the imperial treasury on the part of a territory that could not afford colonial administration. The Company, unlike other chartered companies, survived, not oppressive enough to be dislodged, not quite unprofitable enough to collapse. But it was

crisis-ridden. It took a generation to establish an uncontested control, initially indeed adding to opposition by its attempts to secure revenue without providing an adequate administrative cadre, and its fortunes fluctuated with the booms in tobacco, rubber and timber.

In this case, unlike Sarawak's, takeover seemed possible on political grounds when Clementi suggested it. It was ruled out on economic grounds. 'He tells us what Sir Neill Malcolm hopes to get: but he does not refer to the additional expenditure which would be necessary if the Malayan Government were to take over the administration; when everyone would expect about twice as much (I mean in the way of roads, schools, hospitals etc.), if not more, than they get now from the Company!', an Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office observed.⁴⁷

The position of a governing company was indeed somewhat paradoxical. The charter did not prohibit its engaging in commerce, but in respect of development, the Company's administration was in practice in much the same position as the residential governments in the Malay states. The Company had, like them, to encourage entrepreneurs who might produce revenue. The difference was less that between a chartered company and a Resident than between the potential of the territories as it then stood. North Borneo had no minerals: 'land had to be almost given away'.⁴⁸

The Land Code of 1883 followed Malayan and Sarawak patterns by vesting all land in the Company. Legislation provided for a Land Register, based on the Torrens system, where registration was a guarantee of title. The indigenous population had to register their rights on an individual basis and pay quit rent; land left uncultivated for three years reverted to the state; no native individual or group could sell land without the Company's authorisation. In practice the legislation categorised land so that it could be alienated and sold.⁴⁹ The Land Regulation proclamation 1913 prohibited sale of indigenous holdings to non-indigenes, but permitted sub-leasing. In fact both went on.⁵⁰ The report of an independent commission in 1920 praised North Borneo's 'excellent' land code.⁵¹ But the chairman of the 1937 Native Chiefs Advisory Council complained that 'the Chinese had become natives and the natives foreigners'.⁵²

The Company established an experimental garden at Silam in 1881. '[A]lmost every other tropical crop except tobacco was grown and reported on', writes Tregonning.⁵³ When an estate was nevertheless started by a joint European-Chinese company, however, the Company propped it up, and a small crop was able to compete with Deli wrapper-leaf on the Amsterdam market.⁵⁴ By 1890 there were sixty-one estates, mostly on the east coast, encouraged by the Company's concessionary terms. The US tariff of 1891 struck an initial blow at the industry, but it collapsed only in the early years of the new century. In 1930 production ceased. 'There was then a flurry of subsidies, negotiations and assistance, and the government resuscitated an estate near Lahud Datu.' Imperial Tobacco, 'one of the few great British companies who have invested in Borneo, was induced to participate'.⁵⁵

North Borneo shared in the rubber boom. Its stronghold was the west coast. There the Company had constructed a railway between two new towns, Jesselton on Gaya Bay (now Kota Kinabalu), and Beaufort on the Padas, and that helped to locate the plantations. In 1905, furthermore, Cowie announced that the government would guarantee a 4 per cent dividend for six years on all companies formed to plant rubber in North Borneo, and that there would be no tax or levy on exported rubber for fifty years. By 1915, when that concession was ended, 34,828 acres were under rubber, in addition to Chinese and North Bornean smallholdings.⁵⁶

Timber, later a mainstay, was important even in the late nineteenth century, particularly when the hardwoods of the east coast regions were in demand for the building of the Chinese railways. 'It cannot be disputed', A. C. Pearson wrote in 1914, 'that the methods and machinery of our present companies are primitive in the extreme compared with the Philippines.'⁵⁷ The Court determined to take an active interest in exploiting its greatest asset and to work towards the creation of a large well-funded company. Indeed, despite the doubts of its local officials, the Court agreed to grant the British Borneo Timber Company exclusive timber rights over all unalienated state land. The Timber Company paid the North Borneo government a royalty. In addition the government was entitled to 10 per cent of net profit in any year in excess of the amount required to pay a dividend of 6 per cent. In the 1930s Japan became the leading market. The Japanese, concerned largely with local quality timbers, invested in plantations in the Tawao region.⁵⁸

North Borneo, Alfred Dent had quickly realised, was sparsely populated. '[T]he Chinese must be looked to as the chief helpers in opening up the country.' In 1882 the Court appointed Sir Walter Medhurst as Commissioner for Chinese Immigration, 'charged with the responsibility of initiating a system of Chinese migration of labourers and agriculturalists to North Borneo and of inducing business men to invest their money there'. His efforts were costly and vain, but the Hakkas, whom he had not encouraged, began to migrate to North Borneo, where they formed an agricultural community.⁵⁹ The government appointed a Chinese Immigration Commissioner in 1911, but the government again 'burnt its fingers badly'. In the interwar period the government boosted migration by offering Chinese settlers a pass, which entitled wife or relative to a free passage from China.⁶⁰

North Borneo, like Malaya and Sarawak, drew revenue from the Chinese by taxing their opium – though the Hakkas did not smoke – and their gambling. In 1914 the government took over the opium farms, and in 1927 smokers had to be registered. The Company also followed Malayan practice in moving towards the abolition of licensed gambling. 'There was to be total prohibition of public gambling by 1 January 1931.'⁶¹

Brunei was short of revenue in the early years of the Resident system. Oil had been found in 1903. 'If this oil proves a paying property, it would help to solve the problem of how to provide funds for a decent administration of what

is left of Brunei', wrote R. E. Stubbs of the Colonial Office.⁶² In fact oil was struck in quantity at Seria only in 1929, and none was exported till 1932, in the hope that the market would become more favourable than in the depression.⁶³ Before that the sources of revenue were few. The old sultanate had diminished in size, and what revenue sources there were had been mortgaged in its crisis years. Nor was it attractive to new investment, even though, as elsewhere, a 'modern' system of land administration was introduced, in face of some opposition from the Sultan Jemal-ul Alam, with the Codes of 1907 and 1909.⁶⁴ Sir Shenton Thomas was to remark in the 1930s: 'anything the State can produce (except oil) is already produced just as cheaply and in greater quantities in Malaya and other Far East countries'.⁶⁵

State-building initially depended on a loan from the FMS. 'Frequent complaints have been made of the shameful misgovernment of the country', McArthur had written in his 1904 report. 'It would, I think, be more accurate, in view of the conditions prevailing, to say there is no government in the usual acceptance of the term.'⁶⁶ He described the traditional system and its disintegration and demoralisation.

With no public expenditure and with a disreputable ruling class scrambling for cash advances from foreign Governments or private speculators, seizing all they dare from their luckless subjects, and valuing their position solely as a means of self-indulgence and extravagance, to talk of a Government seems ridiculous. There are no salaried officers . . . no forces, no police, no public institutions, no coinage, no roads, no public buildings – except a wooden mosque, and – most crying need of all – no gaol. There is the semblance of a Judicature, but little justice.⁶⁷

State-building had been pre-empted: Brunei was not a Johore; and there was yet no idea of an oil bonanza. '[T]he Residency was not established because it was thought there might be oil in Brunei.'⁶⁸ For political rather than economic reasons, the British had nevertheless determined to build a state on what was left of the sultanate. What they had in hand was the revenue of the FMS.

About half the loan money was used to redeem the cession moneys and monopolies which the needy Sultan and *pengirans* had mortgaged. About another \$200,000 was spent putting the new administration on its feet. Servicing the national debt of \$439,750 was 'a heavy burden'.⁶⁹ Oil revenues made it possible to pay off the debt by 1936. The government still, however, took a cautious view of expenditure, for it was not clear how quickly the field would be exhausted.⁷⁰ In 1941 there were still only seven British officials stationed in Brunei. Brunei had no armed forces. Its police numbered eighty-five in 1938, 'but policing included manning the fire brigade after 1927 and the telephone exchange (in the 1930s), as well as registering aliens, dogs, and motor vehicles'.⁷¹ And despite McArthur's puzzling observation, its two prisons in 1936 contained only five inmates.⁷²

State-building has been a central concern of the historiography of post-annexation Burma. It was a focus of the writings of J. S. Furnivall, starting with his somewhat arch account of the early years of British rule in Tenasserim, *The Fashioning of Leviathan*.⁷³ He went on to write his famous work *Colonial Policy and Practice*, which bears a different legacy from the 1930s, a concern for a more integrated society. In it he articulated his theory of a 'plural society', in which a 'medley' of peoples mix, 'but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market-place, in buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit.'⁷⁴ It was 'a society which had no political will to control the economic forces of capitalist production, as its individual members felt no motive of self-sacrifice for the good of the whole'.⁷⁵

Robert H. Taylor's *The State in Burma*, which endeavoured 'to explain the contemporary state in Burma by comparing it with previous ones',⁷⁶ picked up a line of enquiry he thought that scholars since Furnivall had neglected. The colonial state, he argued, was very different from the monarchy. It was a question not simply of foreign rule but of alien ideas about ruling.

The colonial state was an instrument intended to create and free wealth as efficiently as possible, in the context of a larger set of external imperial, economic, political and strategic interests. The domestic political and social consequences of such a purpose, which no indigenous government could have ignored, were little considered by the British state until this century. Thus, the colonial state had an artificial quality which a genuinely independent state would never have.⁷⁷

Though Taylor offers perhaps too purposive a view of the colonial rulers, he accepts that their 'crucial task was to develop as quickly as possible the means to pay for the more elaborate administrative institutions that were the prerequisites for the expansion of trade and production'.⁷⁸ The retention of Tenasserim had remained in question for some years after its acquisition in 1825, in part because its revenue did not provide for its administration. 'Tenasserim, in fact, cost more than it was worth', as Furnivall wrote.

The revenue was not sufficient to meet the cost of administration. But then, as Mr [A. D.] Maingy was never tired of pointing out, the uncertainty of the political future deterred capitalists and speculators from embarking on costly undertakings, discouraged the native land holders from extending their cultivation, and rendered futile any schemes for attracting immigrants. Mr Maingy saw himself in a vicious circle. The country could not pay unless it was developed, but it would not be developed unless Government would guarantee its permanent occupation,

and Government could not give any guarantee of this kind until the country paid its way.⁷⁹

In search of revenue, Maingy, who came from the Penang government, let gambling and opium farms. He did not care for gambling shops under the sanction of government; but 'in every examination of the subject the mind of the Public Officer is insensibly biased by the consideration of the large and easily collected revenue of which such farms are the source'. The Burmans, moreover, regarded gamblers as degraded, 'and the population did not consist so largely of unsettled vagrant and occasional visitors as in the Eastern Settlements'. When he left in 1833, he recommended the abolition of the gambling and opium farms. The vices were 'denounced in every Burmese Code of Law and morality'.⁸⁰ In fact the gambling farm seems to have been abandoned, and the opium farm continued.

Maingy had recourse to what he called 'compulsive labour', and often had to deviate, as he put it, 'from Political Maxim'.⁸¹ The forests behind Moulmein, ceded only after the treaty of Yandabo, proved, however, a valuable source of teak. The first licence was granted in 1828, and many followed, ineffectively regulated: 'the valuable timber was exploited wastefully; no new plantings were made, and an estimated three-fourth of the logs extracted escaped payment of assessed taxes'.⁸² It was a 'cut and run' strategy.⁸³ When Maingy's successor, E. A. Blundell, cancelled the leases of uncooperative merchants, they obtained his dismissal.⁸⁴

Timber was to become a major export from Britain's next acquisition, Pegu, but Dalhousie insisted on a conservation programme. 'I deem it the duty of the Government of India to safeguard the forest resource of Pegu and not to permit them [*sic*] to be devastated like the forests of other provinces', the Governor-General declared in 1855.⁸⁵ The major transformation was the growth of rice exports and the settlement of the delta. Concerned for stability, the monarchy, like other Southeast Asian monarchies, had prohibited the export of the staple commodity. Following the second war and the subsequent pacification, Lower Burma exported rice in increasing amounts, and the pace quickened after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

The incentive afforded to cultivators was not that land ownership could be acquired for those who cared to develop virgin areas (this had long been the practice in Burma) but rather that a receipt for a nominal tax assessment on newly developed land, after three to five years of occupancy, was accepted as evidence of the pioneer's claim and became immediately salable or acceptable as collateral for a loan.⁸⁶

The way was open for conspicuous consumption and also for moneylending, initially by rapacious Burmans, then from 1880 by Chettiars from India. The government became concerned that the land was falling, in Governor White's words,

into the hands of non-agriculturalists and natives of India. Free trade in land . . . from an economic point of view . . . is probably sound. More rice will be grown for export; more land revenue and customs duty will be garnered. But . . . the standard of living will be lowered. The deterioration of the Burmese race, which will inevitably accompany their divorce from the land, will be a subject for regret when it is irremediable.⁸⁷

Such an analysis, echoing views current in Malaya, also prefigured that of Furnivall. In the frontier conditions of the delta, the inadequacy of Leviathan seemed particularly obvious.

Though it endorsed 'Political Maxim', the government had characteristically helped to initiate this change. 'Governmental policy facilitated the agricultural development by constructing bunds to protect large areas from threat of river floods, by developing railway and water systems of transportation for Lower Burma, and, for a time, by subsidising the steamship companies which were transporting the [transient] Indian laborers . . . to Rangoon.' India, not China, was the prime source of coolies in Burma. The private coolie trade began in 1870, but in 1874 the government brought over seven thousand prospective cultivators at a cost of 100,000 rupees.⁸⁸

The government also funded infrastructure, though it 'eventually' turned river transport over to the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, 'a Scotch firm, which operated at handsome profits'.⁸⁹ The railways were built by government with funds borrowed from India, the debt not in fact repaid until a deal was struck between Burma and India in 1954.⁹⁰ They were justified on strategic and administrative grounds, but, as in India, had economic and social results. The first line, opened in 1877, ran from Rangoon to Prome. By 1889 it had reached Mandalay, and by 1899 an extension ran from Sagaing to Myitkyina. 'Even more spectacular' was the line from Mandalay to Lashio, completed in 1903.⁹¹ The Burmah Oil Company was started in 1886, and a pipeline to Syriam constructed in 1908. But major private British investment – in the Bawdwin and Mawchi mines and in rubber plantations – took place only after 1914.

In the case of the British, though their commerce and industry were vigorous, setting up new governments – often following interventions that took place as a result of other priorities – remained, as it were, a speculative venture. The metropolitan government wanted, if possible, to be sure that they would pay for themselves, and to that end its administrators, if and when they were installed, put a premium on the raising of revenue. In turn, though, they all adopted in principle a Smithian view of the market, the 'Political Maxim', that revenue might be utilised for what would now be called 'interventions'. Governments not only built infrastructure, sometimes employing *corvée* to do so. They also offered subsidies and established experimental farms. In fact, they behaved like modernising governments

in non-colonial countries, though, crucially, stopping short in terms of their economic objectives.

If this was the case with the British, it was even more evident with the French, whose industrial revolution was yet to come, and whose motives were clearly political. And it was even more evident in Indo-China than in Malaya or Burma. France had no economic interests in Cochin China when the Admirals began their colony. That, however, made it more necessary to undertake the 'mise en valeur' of their acquisitions. The Brenier committee had envisaged trade protection. That was ruled out by the extension to the colonies of the free-trade Cobden treaty of 1860. In any case, there was little to protect. Excluding the trade of others would – even apart from France's legal commitments – make the life of the new colony impossible to sustain. Free trade was a boon, even a necessity.

'We wish to draw commerce to Saigon', Chasseloup-Laubat wrote to Admiral Charner in 1861. 'What we want is a sort of suzerainty or sovereignty with free trade accessible to all.' The commercial well-being of the colony, Admiral Ohier said in 1869, depended on the Chinese: 'it is upon them that we must count to draw... commerce to Saigon.' Revenue also depended on them. In France, Chasseloup-Laubat had written to Bonard, 'people will believe in the value of our new establishment only when they see that it is able, in some manner, to be self-sufficient and that if we do have some military expenses, at least all the rest of the costs will be covered by local revenue.' Charner sent him 'a plan for leasing the tax farm on alcoholic beverages. I admit that this project conforms little to our administrative rules in France, but that is of little importance if the result... is good.' 'Our desideratum', the minister affirmed, 'is that we find in taxes and in customs duties the equivalent of our expenses.'⁹² The authorities had some success, perhaps fortunately for them, since the navy's own budget was cut back after the Franco-German war. Throughout the Admirals' phase, however, the French taxpayer continued to sustain the navy's budget, and indirectly therefore the navy's colony.

Disappointment with French enterprise in Cochin China motivated the Mekong expedition of 1866–8.⁹³ Saigon, La Grandière hoped, would become 'the entrepot of western China'.⁹⁴ Ohier refused to protect the small French trading community from competition. He declared that he had been 'as favorable as possible towards business, but... refused to grant it the least subsidy'.⁹⁵ The colonial government was, however, to play a leading role in the construction of canals, which made it possible to grow rice for export. It made large land grants to French nationals and to deserving Vietnamese, or auctioned off land to defray the expenses of canal-building. In 1881 4 m piculs of rice were exported and the area under rice cultivation was said to be about 600,000 hectares. By 1894, 9 m piculs were exported and more than a million hectares cultivated. In 1904 more than 100,000 hectares were alienated in free concessions.⁹⁶

For a decade after 1894, 'the immediate goal of French administrators was to make Laos pay for itself. 'The central idea of the organization', *Résident-Supérieur* Tournier wrote in 1901, 'has been as follows: to administer this country with the least possible expense [to France].'⁹⁷ Taxes were high and led to an uprising in 1901–7. The Laos budget still needed a subsidy from the Indo-China budget, though Cambodia was a net contributor.

The effective implementation of the Indo-China Union – a deunified Vietnam, unified with Laos and Cambodia – had been driven by a search for revenue and by a realisation that it could, by drastic means, be found. All three *pays* were in deficit in 1895. Doumer's financial reorganisation of 1898 allotted direct taxes to local public works, while indirect taxes went to the Union. In 1901 the High Council was able to declare that 'Indochina will incorporate in her budget the military expense hitherto given by the mother-country'. 'Indochina began to serve France in the Orient on that day she was no longer a poverty-stricken colony, reduced to the position of holding out her hands to the mother country for alms', Doumer wrote. 'Her strong organization, her financial and economic structures, and her great power are being used for the benefit of French prestige. In five years commerce was more than doubled. The public projects undertaken have no parallel in all Asia.'⁹⁸

Doumer sought to give the union real meaning, not only by political and administrative reforms but also by a programme of rail construction, financed partly by taxation, partly by loan. One great project was the Transindochinois. The difficulties of the coastal route meant, however, that Saigon and Hanoi were not linked till 1936, while Cambodia and Laos remained without rail connexions to the Vietnamese lands. Doumer's other great project had priority. That was the Yunnan railway, designed to 'open up' southwest China, and to stake a claim in case it broke up. The 290-mile line, with 172 tunnels and 107 bridges, was built at monumental expense of life and treasure: 30 per cent of the eighty thousand coolies involved died, and forty of the three hundred European personnel. In a sense, despite the state-building 'mise en valeur' of Indo-China, the focus was still on access to China, and the belief that it would somehow create a vast commerce. Reaching Kunming in 1910, the railway returned a better revenue than other railways in Indo-China, since it did not face competition from road transport. Roads were emphasised after 1913, 'la folie des routes', as it was put.⁹⁹

The government's attempts to create administrative superstructure and economic infrastructure depended on its ability to raise revenue. The modern state was in fact being built on old-fashioned foundations. Between 1902 and the end of colonial rule, the three main government monopolies (*régie*), in opium, alcohol and salt, never contributed less than half of the indirect taxation on which the union budget relied. There were others, in, for example, matches, tobacco, mineral oil and tobacco, making the North Borneo Company's government look quite unenterprising in comparison. In Laos in 1914 most of the income of the Douanes et Régies came from opium sales.

Increasingly the Régie looked to production in Laos itself, rather than purchase from India, and in the Second World War the Hmong growers were to play a major role in sustaining the French regime in Indo-China.¹⁰⁰

The state made use of *prestations* (labour dues), though from 1917 they could be commuted, to the advantage of the better-off peasants. By the 1930s *corvée* remained operative only in Cambodia and Laos, 'where an insufficiency of the communications and a feeble population density obliged its recovery, although more and more rarely to the degree that the penetration of the country was accentuated'.¹⁰¹ A convention with the king of Luang Prabang in 1895 obliged Lao males to serve twenty *corvée* days annually. The first road construction projects in Saravane and Xieng Khouang in the early twentieth century were built with *corvée* labour. 'Apart from the twenty days of obligatory *corvée*, the *inscrits* could still be liable for other duties such as repairing the telegraph line, courier duty, portage services, clearing rocks from the Mekong, etc.' The Service Géographique – whose surveys were useful for mineral prospectors – used 22,500 *corvée* days in Savannakhet in 1912 and 36,000 in 1913: 'one would not be astonished to see a discontented population nor to see almost entire villages passing on to the right bank'.¹⁰² In Cambodia good royal governors before the First World War were those who effectively levied and used *corvée*. It was the most unpopular of the *impôts*.¹⁰³

The commutation of *corvée*, the payment of personal taxes in cash and, where they existed, property taxes, indicated that the aim of the taxation system was not only to add to the revenue and thus help modernise the state. It was itself to contribute to the modernisation of the economy. The systems were designed to force the peasants to work the land harder or engage in paid labour. In that they succeeded and, with the development of infrastructure, they contributed to the creation of a capitalist system from which French investors and *colons*, and also a local middle class, could benefit. In some sense, however, they still relied on the village. That was a source of labour, all the cheaper because it was a 'temporary proletariat', whose welfare was covered not by the employer, nor by the state, but by the extended family and the village.¹⁰⁴

The creation of property in land was another part of the process. In Cambodia, for example, the French followed a practice not unlike the British. Private property was juridically constituted by asserting royal ownership, and by giving the Resident, on behalf of the King, the power to cede or alienate land.¹⁰⁵ A royal ordinance of 1902 accepted that land belonged to the cultivators or to those whose servants cultivated it. It then proposed, however, that each *mesrok* should register the villagers' holdings, and that had nothing familiar about it. Indeed the peasants saw it as only the prelude to another tax. Another attempt at a survey was made in 1912. The government proposed to fine those who did not apply. The result was 'une immense confusion'.¹⁰⁶

Few *colons* came to Cambodia. Even the rubber plantations of the 1910s were fragile enterprises.¹⁰⁷ Those in Cochin China were far more extensive, and expanded in the First World War. Colonial loans and subsidies were needed postwar, but the Stevenson plan, which restricted production in Malaya, led to a new expansion in Indo-China. In the depression the Indo-China government offered loans and premia, and the industry did well under the new quota arrangements after 1934, and again as war approached.¹⁰⁸ The mid-1920s saw a 'boom' in mineral investments, particularly in Laos, 'this veritable Far West, this *magasin de réserve* of French Indochina',¹⁰⁹ sometimes by fraudulent companies.

Enterprises of a more substantial nature had, however, been linking French investors and French Indo-China more closely. Another connexion – not quite consistent – had also developed. The initial colony had been built up in a free trade era, and its admiral governors relied on free trade. In the 1880s French industry – 'not very vital and . . . traditionally inclined to protectionism'¹¹⁰ – moved away from free trade. Méline, who had converted Ferry to protection, was able himself to introduce a heavy tariff in 1892. That was another cost imposed on Indo-China, but on all its economic activities, those of the French *colons* and companies included, and it was opposed by the *parti colonial*. The colonies, on the other hand, gained a privileged market in France, resented by French cereal producers.

Only 9 per cent of French investment before the First World War went to the colonies, including those in Africa. 'Our capitalists have always been very distrustful of colonial enterprises', du Vivier de Streel complained during the war. 'The explanation lies partly in their ignorance, partly in the discouraging advice given them by the financial institutions to whom they look for guidance and who prefer to direct them towards larger investments in foreign countries.'¹¹¹ In 1913 the colonies represented only 10 per cent of the external trade of France. An inspector general of public works in the colonies was nevertheless able to write that, as a whole, colonies were no longer a charge on the metropole, but every year an increasing source of profit. The general commerce of French possessions had grown constantly particularly since 1898. That commercial and industrial activity should, he said, be offered in justification *a posteriori* of the work already done.¹¹²

In the prewar period, Jacques Marseille has suggested, the colonial empire indeed played a fundamental role in the economic growth of France. Only recognisable some years after the end of the conquests, the trend became stronger in the interwar period. Then the empire became France's chief commercial partner, furnishing most of the agricultural produce it imported, absorbing cotton fabric, soap, sugar and cement, and enabling the motor and metallurgical industries to preserve their export capacity. Drawing attention to the importance of the empire even before the First World War for certain export industries and for investors in transport and mining companies, Marseille suggests 'that should dispel once and for all the idea – endlessly repeated, particularly by Anglo-Saxon writers – that the economic motiva-

tion behind the taking over of colonies only amounted to the speculations of a few profiteers'.¹¹³ His overall case is persuasive, but it does not prove that point. Indeed his own evidence suggests the extent to which trade and investment not only followed the flag but followed it only after an interval and a measure of support from those who had set the flag up and wanted it to stay up.

In the case of the older European empires in Southeast Asia, the issue arises in a different form. In the Indies, the VOC had brought political and economic action together in a direct way, employing its power, and its association with the elite, to extract goods with which it traded to other parts of Asia and to Europe. Coffee, introduced into Java in the early eighteenth century, was one example. It was made an article of monopoly in 1723. Around 1760 the planting of a given number of trees was made obligatory, the Regents organising production in conformity with the requests of the commissary for native affairs appointed by the Governor-General, and being aided by 'coffee sergeants'.

In the British interregnum after 1811 Stamford Raffles made some attempt to limit the role of the Regents. Government was to become more dependent on taxation than on production. Like his trusted Dutch adviser, H. W. Muntinghe, he believed that this would awaken the spirit of enterprise among the peasants.

Let the Javanese be deprived of every prerogative, of a right of property, and of every prospect of ameliorating his situation, and he naturally will be what he now is, an indolent, poor and wretched creature. But grant him a right of property, and open to him a view of mending his situation, and naturally he will display the principles and faculties innate to every human being.¹¹⁴

So great a change – in forms of administration and still more in attitudes and customs – could hardly be accomplished by an interim administration.

The restored Dutch found it impracticable even to try. They were building a new state at home – the Kingdom of the Netherlands – and, after 1830, trying vainly to hold it together following the Belgian revolution. They turned back to the old system in a new form, the 'culture' or 'cultivation system' advocated by Johannes van den Bosch. This was a new attempt to employ political power to ensure the availability of export surpluses at a profitable rate – to mobilise the unused labour power of the peasantry 'to cultivate products fit for the European market, at prices which can stand the competition from other countries', as he put it¹¹⁵ – not dislodging the Javanese elite from the process but involving them in it. The source of the system's success, that was also the source of its downfall. The colonial state was too weak to check the abuses to which the system was liable. An uneasy

coalition of interested parties flourished briefly, as Elson puts it, but led, as it was bound to lead, to corruption and maladministration.¹¹⁶

In the 1850s, the colonial state, stronger and aware of the abuses, began to curb them, and that, as Elson says, virtually ended the system, though it took time to die. Indeed the Dutch were divided. The system provided a substantial surplus which had boosted the Dutch state and helped to fund the Dutch railways: it was hard to give up. At the same time the very success of the state-building enterprise at home had created a middle class that wished to share more directly in the exploitation of the Indies. The changes that were made in the 1850s and 1860s stopped short, however, of implementing what was called a system of 'free labour', and even the legislation of the 1870s produced a kind of halfway house. It provided for the abandonment of the cultivation system in respect of sugar, and permitted private concerns to lease 'waste lands' on a regular long-term contractual basis, and to lease village lands on a short-term basis, while guaranteeing the non-alienation of land by the peasants. The state thus moved towards the commercialisation of land, but did not go so far as other colonial states.

The reason for this was its political caution, that of an established but weak imperial power: the village was a pillar of peace and order. But the policy also sustained the village as a source of cheap labour, and the sugar entrepreneurs negotiated with the village chiefs not only for the use of *sawah* land but also for labour, as they had under the previous system. 'The village, which aggregated and managed this cheap labour supply, had to retain its traditional ties and bonds in order to fulfil this function which was not eliminated by transforming forced labour into wage labour, for the low level of the wages depended on a continued symbiosis between private-export and village economy.'¹¹⁷ More formally than in French Indo-China the new capitalists depended on a labour supply that was cheap because the village provided welfare.

If the changes at the village level were constrained, the fiscal changes for 'Netherlands India' were substantial. In 1878 its budget ceased to provide a surplus. 'The deficit grew larger as the proceeds from the Government estates declined whereas the public expenditures in the colony increased.' At the same time as the government allowed private capital a greater role in Java, it was faced with a costly war in Aceh, and so it 'had to look for new sources of revenue, direct and indirect taxation in the colony itself'. One of the strategies the government adopted to strengthen its tax basis was, as Lindblad suggests, 'to stimulate private exploitation of the natural resources in the Outer Provinces'.¹¹⁸ 'A stronger colonial state... needed more robust resources.'¹¹⁹

In some cases it was necessary to intervene in order to keep others out, whether or not the cost of the intervention could be recouped by development, or would have to be met by drawing on the general budget or even on the Netherlands itself. In other cases it was possible to proceed more cautiously and pragmatically, assessing the capacity of a more advanced form of administration to pay for itself by helping, in alliance with private capital, to

develop the territory concerned. Within this framework, as Lindblad argues, there was 'an incessant interplay' between the agents of expansion in the Outer Islands, the private pioneers and the colonial civil servants, 'the one reacting to the action of the other thereby eliciting renewed action'.¹²⁰ He attempts to distinguish the occasions on which government and capital took the initiative. The endeavour is, not surprisingly, less than fully successful. What is striking is that the interests of the two are not identical but intersecting. There was common ground, but not all the ground was common.

Lindblad instances Siak. There the Dutch had made a treaty in 1858 to deter adventurers from the Straits. The success of the Deli tobacco venture to the north led to the establishment of a Residency in 1873 – perhaps, it may be added, also an assertion of political control following the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1871 – and the Resident sought to attract investment and stimulate trade. The Deli success – dependent on special conditions – was not replicated, however, and tin exploitation was unprofitable. In northeast Borneo the Dutch made formal agreements with the Sultans after the British North Borneo Company was set up. That attracted Dutch mining interests, though concessions were not granted 'as long as Government protection was deemed unsatisfactory'. In 1885 the firm Bauermann and Parmentier sought permission to look for gold in Gorontalo, and the Resident hastened to bring to an end the political chaos that had followed the death of the last raja, while the mining engineer surveyed the gold reserves. In 1889 Gorontalo was brought under direct rule. The interest of Royal Dutch in the oil wells of Tamiang and Perlak, Lindblad suggests, were an argument for the ruthless 'pacification' policy van Heutsz adopted in 1898.¹²¹

In all these cases, Lindblad suggests, 'the prime impetus to a more expansionary policy was the interest taken by private capital in the area'. In fact the position is less clear than such a statement suggests. 'Often this interest', he indeed goes on, 'was based on overly optimistic expectations but the political reaction materialized before the value of the promises could be fully assessed. At times, as in northeastern Kalimantan, the process was set in motion by an external pressure but again this does not detract from the force of economic ambition.' The government generally assumed

a rather ambiguous attitude towards prospective pioneers, notably when welcoming private interest in 'new' territories but refusing to authorize exploration because of the lack of public facilities there. Concessionaires were even granted on condition that the firm or individual applicant agreed to defray the additional outlays of the Government on colonial administration and protection of European subjects and property.¹²²

Lindblad goes on to discuss other cases in which, as he argues, the government took the initiative, its objectives, as he puts it, 'explicitly tied to the fiscal aspirations of the colonial Government'. In West Kalimantan the government had forcefully broken the power of the Chinese mining *kongsis* in the

1850s, 'but only at the cost of perpetual anarchy', which deterred investment. In 1887 'the regional authorities assisted the sultans of Pontianak and Sambas in setting up advertising campaigns in the Netherlands in order to lure Dutch capital to the region, both for estate agriculture and mining'. A large number of concessions were granted, 'and it appeared necessary to adapt also the local apparatus to the changing situation'. Much of the concession-hunting turned out to be speculative, however, and the region lagged behind 'both in terms of economic growth and tax revenue'. In Central Sulawesi an 'external initiative' – some Australian gold-diggers attempted in 1890 to secure exploration rights from local chiefs – prompted the Indies government to renegotiate the treaties with the rulers and appoint a new officer at Donggala. In Aceh the government sought to stimulate development 'once the war was over and security could be guaranteed'. In 1905, 'the year after the official end of the war', it proposed to set up a state rubber plantation at Langsar. This would produce profits and also 'set an example to benefit from the new international market for rubber'.¹²³

Government concerned itself with providing administrative services and occasionally with providing examples, in order to facilitate the development of Netherlands India in the new circumstances created by political rivalry and economic opportunity. It also provided infrastructure. Railways played a supplementary role in the economic life of a realm so highly accessible by sea and river. The first section was built in 1867 in Java, and Java remained the main focus of the network, designed to improve the links between the interior and the main ports, Batavia, Semarang, and Surabaya, but also linking the principal towns. In Sumatra the system was much more fragmentary, three separate 3ft 6in systems being unconnected, and that in Aceh using a different gauge. Forty-seven kilometres were built in South Sulawesi, but in the other islands there was no rail system, and in the 1930s the Dutch resolved to concentrate on roads. By 1940 a north–south road linked Aceh and Oosthaven (Palembang).

What neither road nor rail could do in Netherlands India was to draw the archipelago together into a political whole by enhancing its communications links. One means of effecting that was to modernise traditional links. For most of the nineteenth century the outer islands remained part of the older maritime system of island Southeast Asia, and were oriented towards its current entrepot, Singapore. The Dutch government supported the KPM (Royal Steamship Company) with a view to reorienting trade away from Singapore, and by 1915 it had eliminated all Singapore-based shipping east of Bandjermasin, though in the west shipping still had to use the British port.¹²⁴ The colonial government thus fought an economic battle by political means. But it was also engaged in a state-building project. Increasingly the Dutch were coming to see Netherlands India as the state in question, and their politico-economic policies were forming a basis for it and for its contested successor, Indonesia, a nation-state.

The position of the Spanish Philippines was strikingly different. There, too, an established but now minor colonial power sought to fend off other imperial powers, aided, on the whole, by a positive relationship with the British, and to affirm its authority over the territories it claimed, rounding out the state or proto-state of Filipinas. Its authorities, however, did not assume the role assumed by the VOC and the Dutch monarchy under the culture system. The tobacco monopoly begun in 1781 was not, as the German traveller Feodor Jagor thought, a precedent for the cultivation system but a means of taxation on the part of a government desperately insecure after the British conquest of 1762. 'The problem for the Spaniards was not how to mobilize native labor to grow tobacco, but how to limit the number of people engaged in this occupation.'¹²⁵ The monopoly made it possible to end Manila's dependence on a subsidy from Mexico. It was part, indeed, of an attempt to change its economic role, hitherto that of an entrepot for the trade between China and New Spain. Governor Basco published a development plan in 1779 and the Royal Philippine Company was set up in 1785.

The failure of these efforts, the loss of most of the Spanish American territories, and the recognition of Britain's dominance led to a further change. An otherwise conservative colonial power adopted a liberal approach to commerce. It formally opened Manila to foreign trade in 1834 and other provincial ports, Sual, Iloilo and Zamboanga, in 1855. The foreign firms, some American, mainly British, became a channel of investment in produce for export, and their enterprise and the capital they supplied helped to transform the economic and social life of Kabikolan and the Visayas. Supplying *abaca* (hemp) to the shipbuilders had once been part of the tribute the people of Sorsogon had owed the Spanish government. In the late eighteenth century it had toyed with a silkworm scheme for the area. With advances from American merchant houses in Manila, the growth of *abaca* rapidly expanded to supply not only the shipping industry, but also the binder twine used in the mechanical grain-binders developed in the late 1870s. It was, as Norman Owen puts it, 'a small facet of a global phenomenon – the expansion of a capitalist world-system'.¹²⁶ British merchant houses supplied much of the funding for the expansion of the sugar industry in the Visayas. 'The liberal distribution of funds to some extent in aid of both old and new plantations, and the opportune supply of iron mills and sugar-boiling Pans on credit, against the yield of the different estates, with the additional security of mortgages, has naturally had . . . a beneficial influence', as Nicholas Loney, who played a major role, put it.¹²⁷

The transformation was assisted, as these remarks suggest, not only by the supply of capital but by the use of instruments that extended its use. There were, of course, also implications for land tenure. The Laws of the Indies were full of ambiguities which those anxious to extend their holdings could exploit, alongside their readiness to deploy violence and corruption. Aguilar describes the means by which Teodoro Benedicto acquired vast tracts of land in the central interior of west Negros. He 'thrived on winnable court suits brought

about by the ambiguities of colonial land laws, the anarchic land market in which transactions could be consummated *sin formalidades* (without formal procedures), and the absence of an orderly system of property titling and registration'. The government allowed 'formal legalism to triumph over sound governance', and many *indios* were dispossessed. 'A land registration scheme introduced in 1889 provided yet another facile means to claim and control land legitimately.'¹²⁸

The striking feature of these processes was not that in themselves they had no analogues elsewhere in colonial Southeast Asia, but that they were operated by men such as Benedicto, Chinese *mestizos*, 'a remarkable commercial, industrial and speculative race', as Loney put it, 'increasing yearly in social and political importance'. Particular use was made of the *interdicto de despujo*, under which the Law of the Indies had recognised the right of usufruct. The *mestizos* deployed it, leaving the *peninsulares* to protest by taking up the cause of the *indios*.¹²⁹ Not inconsistently, they integrated their enterprise with the traditional practice of share-cropping, in some sense in parallel with the alliance between 'capitalism' and the village in Java and Vietnam.

The Americans displaced the Philippines Republic, as well as the Spanish regime. Like other colonial powers, the US collaborated with an elite. It was, however, an elite with a difference, attached to the 'global phenomenon' and the world-capitalist system, as well as to another concept of state-building. American policies not only gave it security: they gave it opportunity. The ambivalence of those policies only helped. Uncertain of its role as an imperial power, the US committed itself to granting independence. Somewhat inconsistently it offered privileged access to American markets. But it also placed limits on large landholdings that effectively limited the role of big US corporations.

Big business had indeed displayed little interest in the new venture. Some leaders, of whom Andrew Carnegie was only the most famous, thought colonialism and war harmful to the economy. '[A]s a mere cold-blooded business proposition we were engaged in a very bad speculation', the New York *Herald* believed.¹³⁰ Nor, once the Philippines was acquired, was there extensive investment. Domestic beef and sugar interests supported a law that limited the land leases and purchases that a corporation might secure. 'By preventing large-scale American investment in Philippine agriculture and extractive industries, [Congress] effectively frustrated American exploitation of the islands.'¹³¹ It did not deter the Filipino elite, which consolidated its wealth and power.

The elite benefited from new land legislation. Public Land Act 926 provided for acquisition by four methods: homestead, purchase, leasehold and patent. The last was intended to legalise individual claims to ancestral land, but the intricate procedure confined its use to the elite, also best able to purchase and lease. The way in which the Torrens system was used also benefited the elite. 'Cadastral surveys', Amzi B. Kelly wrote in 1929, were 'the rich men's dragnet'.¹³² 'By paving the way for the elite to expand their

properties, American imperialism envisioned that the elite and business corporations later on would mortgage their properties and/or Torrens titles to domestic banks and other money-lending agencies. This way, capital could be obtained by the landowners, thereby increasing agricultural production through mercantilist “development” of the agricultural sector.¹³³

In the Philippines US capitalism is not ahead of the US flag, nor does it enthusiastically follow. In that respect the Philippines story belongs with the story of imperialism in other parts of Southeast Asia. But the state-building initiative differs. Though beset by war and insurrection, the Philippines had already been modernising within the old colonial structure. The Americans indeed had difficulty in motivating or rationalising their venture. The striking feature of the story is continuity.

Siam modernised itself without undergoing colonial rule. Unlike China, it avoided a Palmerstonian blow, but it recognised the significance of the blows that others had received: it would have not merely to make concessions but to change if it was to survive. It thus became more like the colonial realms among which it was determined not to be numbered. The Bowring treaty of 1855 promoted a closer involvement with world market, and rice, hitherto prohibited, became the major export, not sugar, as Bowring had expected. In the 1860s and 1870s land became a commodity to be bought and sold, and wage labour increasingly replaced slave and service labour. Corvée was ended in 1899, and the delivery of taxes passed first to farmers, and then to a centralised bureaucracy. The monarchs were indeed engaged in building a modern state, which their acquisition of revenue made possible. Their neighbours started on the Transindochinois. They built railways that would strengthen their control over the peripheries of the kingdom. These changes made the monarchy more ‘absolute’. Like the colonial states, it was to be challenged to share power among its subjects. But theirs was not a ‘nationalist’ revolution.

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Part IV

Departure and inheritance

If we try to return, this could only be against the decree of destiny, without any chance of success and without power to bring us anything but disorder and harm.

Paul Mus, *Le Viet Nam chez lui*

7 Destruction and come-back

Imperial Southeast Asia was overturned by the Japanese in 1941–2. The future of the colonial states thus becomes ‘counter-factual’. No states endure for ever, and those, no longer traditional, but unable fully to become modern, could only be transitional. What would have happened, and when, is, however, impossible to determine. But all the colonial powers returned, or attempted to return, and the history of their ‘second coming’ may be compared, if not with a might-have-been, then with the interventions and acquisitions of the imperialist period. It may after all also be worth considering their ‘second going’ in the light of the counter-factual. How does it relate to the ‘transitional’ nature of the states they had been building?

Imperialism was in an alliance with capitalism, but an incomplete one. Capitalism sought to order the world so that its resources, human and physical, could be turned to account: associated with it were concepts of property, of public and private, of investment and return, bound to be in tension or even at odds with a sense of the communal as distinct from the individual, of custom rather than statute, of mutual obligation rather than contract. Such ideas did not enter imperial policy, however, because it was made by capitalists. Instead, they were shared by those who made policy, both at the metropolitan and at the local level. They appeared, in Maingy’s terms, as ‘Political Maxims’. Those who advocated or rejected an imperial policy tended to use them as assumptions, avoiding any detailed application of the concepts in terms of returns or cost-benefit analysis. Once administrations were set up others sought to put the principles into practice, often finding that it was necessary to ‘intervene’, to prime the pump, to use traditional methods in new ways, so that capitalism might be persuaded to get to work. Entirely characteristic was the tendency to develop single crops and single regions, and to focus on infrastructure. The regimes, too, had much in common, though they originated in rivalry.

A nascent capitalist world-order sought order among states, and law and order within them, though a particular kind of law. Its cause was not identified with a world of states, still less a world of nation-states. Such, however, was an acceptable framework provided there was ‘free trade’ among them and ‘free trade’ within them. Ideally it played down their interference with

the working of the market, though in practice it was ready to look to the state for lift-off or for protection in time of crisis. In the case of colonial possessions the tension was greater still. Governments often helped the capitalists they were anxious to encourage, though they also wanted to impose their state-building priorities over speculators. In the longer run, however, the colonial structure was bound to inhibit the efficiency of 'market forces', and to limit the contribution the resources and peoples of the territories could make to the world economy. If the nation-state could be an obstacle to the flow of capital and goods – though at times a useful prop – the same was even more true of that projection of the nation-state, the colonial states that advisers and administrators had set themselves to build.

Those were indeed in a sense 'transitional', the result of steps taken in part because independent states could not transform themselves, though some were not given much of a chance. But effecting the end of the 'transition' was no easier than starting it, and no less complicated. In independent states, social and political change is effected by reform and revolution, but, except in Siam, those options were not open in colonial Southeast Asia. Taking over and establishing their administrations, the colonial powers had found collaborators, often among the most conservative elements in society, sometimes among the less reputable. They were certainly apprehensive about changing their collaborators. Sometimes, indeed, they sought to limit the changes that their policies were bringing about or opening the way for.

At the same time, moreover, new ties had been established with the metropolises. That was partly done by the wooing of capital, followed, adventitiously, by the impact of the worldwide booms such as that for rubber. That created an interest in the fate of the colonies which could play upon those occasions when capital seemed to need government support, and which could argue that it needed protection or that it was a national asset. Something of the same is also true in respect of the colonies as markets, particularly once they became protected or privileged. In times of crisis or depression, industries could argue that the colonies were necessary for survival until the world market again functioned properly.

The question of 'transition' was complicated, too, by being involved in metropolitan politics in another way. State-building at home helped to produce wider participation in politics and, as a result, a need to redefine imperial purpose. Though it never became a truly popular cause, empire was popularised, and associated with the greatness, even the survival, of the nation. As with the original empire-building, there was little attempt at cost-benefit analysis. The arrival of the depression seemed to make the point self-evidently: it became part of the rhetoric of survival in a still more difficult world.

Popularising the empire did not merely associate it with prestige. It also brought out the 'ethical' aims that it had earlier included and gave them more emphasis. Those, of course, rationalised staying, though not for ever. The democratisation of the European states implied indeed that the depen-

dence of the colonies could not be permanent. But it could be a long time before their peoples were ready for self-rule. In the meantime there might be a greater measure of participation and association.

Ethical aims also rationalised greater investment and a more active kind of government. Both those were bound to add to the problems of change which the colonial systems already found it difficult to accommodate. Governments had not done very much. Doing more emphasised their alien nature, weakened their traditional supports, and required the raising of more revenue. 'In the Dutch time', a Selayer resident told Anton Lucas in 1986, 'everything was taxed... We used to say jokingly, "If you scratch your bottom, they'll make you pay an arse tax (*pajak pantat*).'¹ At the same time active government boosted the creation of educated elites who perceived the colonial territories in terms of new nation-states, who saw 'progressive self-government' as inadequate, and who could rally alienated popular feeling against their overlords in an attempt to speed up the timetable under which they would achieve that status.

New levels of investment and government activity stopped short, moreover, of effecting fundamental economic change. Some observers recognised that, if the territories were ready in the interwar period for a measure of political change, they were also ready for economic change. In general, however, the colonial connexion discouraged industrialisation. The interests of metropolitan manufacturers stood in the way, particularly in the depression, even in cases where it might have been viable. Attempts to limit the competition of cheap Japanese goods did, however, lead to some industrialisation in Java in the 1930s.

In their wartime planning the British declared that the future imperial task was nation-building. Yet, whatever the idealism that informed their purpose, they had neither the power nor the money to carry it out, and they faced elites that, though not prepared by the Japanese for self-rule, were clear that they were no longer ready to accept the rule of others. The British proved ready to adjust their programmes, even to abandon them. Capitalists had only a limited role in those decisions. Some of those who had operated in Burma had been doubtful about returning in any case. Even in Malaya the state acted autonomously.

For the French and the Dutch the task of adjustment proved more difficult, though, again, for political rather than economic reasons. Their attempts to re-establish themselves were not accompanied with a political programme even as attractive as that of the British. They fell into an armed struggle that in some ways recalled the struggles of 'pacification', except that, in the context of the nationalism promoted by the war, effective collaborators were no longer forthcoming. The inability to adopt different strategies is explained by political factors. They had never been so committed to the emergence of a post-colonial world of states as the British. Empire, moreover, had come to stand for survival or for 'greatness', and had in that sense come to play too large a role in metropolitan state-building. In the postwar period it was a

question of state-rebuilding. It thus became more difficult to present the case for colonial independence, particularly in the multi-party politics of France and the Netherlands where coalitions depended on formulae. In France it was recognised that – while the struggle was itself wasteful – the capital in the empire could in any case be better employed, but such a view was slow to prevail. The Dutch went on to lose what they had saved in the Indies for the sake of West New Guinea, but found that their old colony was not after all a sheet anchor.

In contrast to their approach in the 1870s and 1880s, the British adopted a planning approach in the 1940s, influenced, no doubt, by the experience of the depression and the war. They had exercised their power in Southeast Asia through more than one agency, and there were now several plans. But, though there was no overall plan for Southeast Asia, the several plans were informed by similar ideas. Once more, it might be said, there were Political Maxims. Lying behind them, indeed, was the long-standing view of the world as one of states open to each other's commerce. In the way of that, however, now stood the chaos and destruction brought by depression and war and a need for 'reconstruction' and 'welfare'. 'Today the State has become the prime agency in promoting social welfare and in safeguarding the standards of life', Lord Hailey declared. 'That idea has been projected from domestic into colonial policy.'² The world must also be one that was more politically secure, not the prey of dictators, nor of communism. The British put relatively little faith in international political action. They saw it as no more than a supplement to the interstate diplomacy on which a world of states must largely rely. What was important was that each of the states themselves should be viable and democratic.

The war had thus created a new clarity about the imperial task: it was to urge on the transition to a world of states. That fitted in with a trend in Britain's overseas history, its emphasis on devolution and self-government. But the war had also complicated the task by its demonstration of the insecurity of such a world, and of the threat of dictatorial governments. Britain must help in 'nation-building'. But the war had also undermined Britain's economic and political strength. The very reason for urging on the programme was also a reason why Britain could not achieve it. There were, of course, other reasons. Political life in the dependencies had not stopped for the duration of the war. Others, inside them and among Britain's allies, had different plans for the future nation-states.

'Self-government must be an orderly growth', the interdepartmental Far Eastern Official Committee wrote in 1946,

and be designed to meet local conditions (e.g. plural communities). We cannot, in the name of liberty, allow territories which we control to fall into chaos and general unrest, nor into such weakness and instability as to create political danger spots. This might mean, however, that we

should have the appearance of resisting legitimate claims. It is therefore important that action and publicity should go hand in hand. We have not only to decide the proper tempo for political advancement, but also to convince the peoples concerned and the world at large that we are not yielding step by step to pressure, but are sincerely following out an enlightened policy.³

In fact the British had to yield step by step. Yet, in moving from what had been an unrealistic policy, the overall aim was not entirely abandoned. The objective – put another way – was to find a new set of collaborators to whom ‘power’ could be transferred. They adopted different means.

The policy was unrealistic not only because it had been planned with insufficient recognition of the changes that had taken place in wartime Southeast Asia and of the blows the war had dealt to Britain’s economy. It was also unduly influenced by recollections of the 1930s and with attempts to put right what had then seemed wrong. Frustrated then, Britain’s colonial rulers believed that they now had an opportunity to do better. In that sense the wartime planners seem to be latter-day imperialists in a world of advancing nationalism. They presumed, moreover, that the plans they had themselves drawn up, without much if any consultation, would be bound to win support. Like some of the old imperialists, they expected a welcome.

The political framework to which, despite adjustments, the British adhered had, like the framework of the age of imperialism, a relationship with their economic objectives. The assumption was that Britain’s trade and industry must flourish in a world of states freely trading among themselves. If that were created, imperialism would in a sense have fulfilled its role, preparing for an orderly world and a world of orderly states in which capitalism and market forces, appropriately regulated, could flourish, and in which British merchants, manufacturers and investors should be able to compete without either favour or obstacle: almost, not surprisingly, in a way that recalled the Gladstonian view, or that of the Colonial Office of the 1860s. The questions that Correlli Barnett raises relate to this issue. He argues that Britain spent energy and money on restructuring the world, rather than British industry.⁴ It needed, however, to do both. It was a question of balance, which the Korean war made it difficult to achieve.

Arguably, too, the British were slow to recognise that the gains in international trade in the 1950s were occurring in exchanges within industrial blocs like the EEC, by-passing the primary-producing sector in which British interests and hopes were so deeply involved. That also led to a further revision of Britain’s colonial policy. In January 1957 the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, called for ‘something like a profit and loss account for each of our Colonial possessions’.⁵ That was not something imperialists had sought. But by that time Burma was independent, and Malaya itself about to become so.

The exiled Governor, Sir R. Dorman-Smith, began to discuss the future of Burma as early as summer 1942. What options would be open to the British on their presumed return? One was to 'grant immediate "freedom" . . . and let the Burmese reconstruct their country as best they can by their own unaided efforts'. That he ruled out: the British had a responsibility 'to rehabilitate the life' of Burma 'which had been destroyed owing to our inability to defend her', and the Burmese had 'neither the ability nor the financial resources to tackle this formidable task unaided'. A second option was to restore the 1935 constitution and 'carry on where we left off'. That would be a 'mistake'. The constitution had not broken down, but 'it creaked very badly. Either we had gone too far or we had not gone far enough along the road to "Dominion status"'. The ministers 'had neither the capacity nor the inclination to work a democratic Government in the way Parliament intended when it passed the Government of Burma Act'. Dorman-Smith advocated a third course, reverting for a period to 'direct rule', coupled with a programme of reconstruction. '*We shall have an unexampled opportunity to eradicate old defects*', such as the money-lending system, the system of land tenure, and the exploitation of 'cheap' Indian labour, and be able 'to rebuild Burma on sounder foundations' and 'carry world opinion with us'.⁶

The unrealistic nature of the favoured course did not pass uncriticised at the time. 'It would be a very serious mistake to ignore or underestimate the strength and importance of the "Freedom for Burma" movement', wrote R. G. B. Prescott, the Inspector-General of Police. The movement would be 'the main stumbling block to our return', but if it was with the British, at least their initial difficulties would be lessened. 'The great mass of the people, if not actually glad, will be quite content to see us back.'⁷ Extremists might cause disorder, wrote B. W. Swithinbank, an old hand. 'However large a military force may be employed in the country, such disorder will have to be suppressed mainly by the agency of Burmese civil and police officers. They will have no heart in the work of suppression unless it is incontestably and immediately leading to freedom for Burma. And, if they have no heart in their work, disorder may continue for years.'⁸

If direct rule would be difficult to implement, finance for the reconstruction that was to be its counterpart would be difficult to find. The appeal to spend '£x million' would be 'not very palatable', Sir David Monteat, the Under-Secretary of State, recognised.⁹ Indeed the Chancellor of the Exchequer indicated that reconstruction would be a world problem, and all that could be said at this stage was 'that we shall wish to do our best in the light of many other competing claims on our resources'. He also argued that 'it would be better to re-start the country with a not too ambitious scale of social services and expenditure so that Burma's revenue may cover expenditure when self-government is attained'.¹⁰

There was an opposition of a different kind from the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, son of Lord Randolph Churchill, under whom Burma had been acquired. 'So far from being pleased with the thought of continued

direct rule for a period of years', as L. S. Amery reported after a Cabinet meeting in March 1943, 'all he sees in it is that we are to spend money in order to be, as he puts it, kicked out by the Burmese afterwards.'¹¹ At a lunch on Guy Fawkes' day Churchill 'had on his intimidating expression. "You're the man, I hear", he rallied the Governor, "who wants to give away the Empire."' That Dorman-Smith, of course, denied: his aim was to secure the 'active cooperation' of the Burmese 'and bind them to us by such terms of affection that they would never want to leave the Empire'.¹² Churchill gave way only reluctantly late in 1944. His opposition did not dislodge the central concept of the planning. Indeed it may have prevented the development of an alternative scheme that might have been more realistic. While the scheme was modified, it remained unattractive, and the gap between what the White Paper of 17 May 1945 offered, and what the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League was looking for, was all the wider.

Dorman-Smith and the Burma Office in London believed that the British firms that had worked in Burma had a role to play in its 'reconstruction', but they were not prepared to offer them unconditional backing. Prewar the firms had been the butt of nationalist criticism, and, if they were to succeed post-war, and thus contribute to Burma's economy, they must take steps to meet it. 'Both Burma and the European firms doing business in that country have a common interest in the continued utilisation of British capital and enterprise in the development of her resources with a view to the well-being of her people', ran a question the Office put to the firms late in 1942.

As part of a long-term policy in regard to the relationship between the Government of Burma and the firms what would be the best means of demonstrating effectively and by introducing a practical element of cooperation into their mutual relations the reality of this community of interest and so of reducing the risks of the adoption of short-sighted measures which would be detrimental to the interests of both?¹³

The Burma Office contemplated some kind of partnership between government and firms: Amery suggested government shareholding, others the training of more Burmans and the appointment of representatives of the firms to advisory committees in the interim period. The firms, as Monteath put it, were 'a bit sticky'.¹⁴ How far would compensation for wartime destruction extend? would there be guarantees against future nationalisation? If serving on committees gave the firms influence, as J. K. Michie of Steel Brothers asked, 'would it in fact be an advantage to us or on the contrary cause even greater jealousy than before amongst politically minded Burmese?'¹⁵ The discussions led Michie to think that 'what we may be forced to say to you is roughly – "Compensate us – we will help to put Burma on its feet in the earlier stages but then let us take our own decision as to what our future policy is to be in the light of what meantime transpires in Burma and Whitehall"...'¹⁶ The Cabinet's failure to adopt the direct-rule plan did

not help in persuading the reluctant capitalists. Self-government was, however, still the overall policy, as Sir John Walton said, 'so that we can in some measure still put it to the firms that they should consider by some means or other taking into the coach those who might upset it.'¹⁷ 'I still think', Dorman-Smith wrote, 'that the importance of the firms' approach to reconstruction is only second to that of the soldiers' first approach to the Burmese. If necessary we must just be tough with the business boys, in spite of their blooming shareholders.'¹⁸

The soldiers' approach was in fact decisive. Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia, welcomed the collaboration of the Burmese army when it changed sides in March 1945, and that contributed to the dominance of the AFPFL. The Supreme Commander also believed that a conciliatory policy would be the best basis for the future of Britain's relationship with Burma. That was at odds with the thrust of the White Paper, and with Sir Stafford Cripps's insistence in the Commons debate of 1 June 1945 that Britain wanted 'proper democratic development' and was opposed, in Burma or 'any other country', to 'the rapid seizing of power by any particular group of people in order [to] improvise some form of Government'.¹⁹ Visiting Rangoon on 20 June, Dorman-Smith argued that the programmes of the British and the AFPFL were the same. 'Let's Get on with the Job!'²⁰ In fact he was unable to bring the AFPFL into his Executive Council. Instead of joining in the 'job' of reconstruction, the AFPFL challenged the Governor. In what Aung San, the AFPFL leader, was to call the 'fourth Anglo-Burmese war', he could not call on British or on Indian troops, nor even threaten to do so. It was a 'war' that the Burmese won.

The Governor was replaced by Sir Hubert Rance. Yielding to pressure from Aung San and the AFPFL, he accepted their dominance of the Executive Council, and the steps it took towards making it a national government. The government in London agreed to receive a mission, which early in 1947 negotiated an agreement that provided for a constituent assembly and an interim government. The British hoped that Burma would decide to remain in the Commonwealth. That at the time, however, involved accepting the British sovereign as head of state, and any chance that the difficulty that presented could have been overcome was destroyed by the assassination of Aung San in July 1947, and the suspicions about the British that it stimulated. Burma became independent on 4 January 1948, outside the Commonwealth.

The British had recognised that their postwar relationship with Burma, like their imperial relationship, depended on finding collaborators, 'the solid Burmans', as Monteath had called them,²¹ and the main object of their policy was to win them over. The differences between Mountbatten and Dorman-Smith were in part differences over the mode and focus of the search. For Dorman-Smith, and indeed the government, it had to be on a democratic and multi-party basis. Mountbatten, on the other hand, accepted the *de facto* dominance of the AFPFL, and thought Britain should found its future con-

nexion with Burma on it. It was that view which prevailed, though not before the alternative policy had been attempted and, as he believed, damaged the prospect that Burma would stay in the Commonwealth. One reason it prevailed was that the British came to recognise that Aung San was, as Sir G. Laithwaite put it, 'clearly a man with whom we could do business'.²² He broke with the Communists in the AFPFL, and he and his successor, Nu, now seemed a guarantee of moderation. Pressing Burma to remain in the Commonwealth might only open them to left-wing criticism and damage their position.

Reluctant to support colonial state-building in the late nineteenth century, Treasury was reluctant to support 'reconstruction' at the end of the war. 'What really troubled the Chancellor [over Burma] was the vast amount of overseas liabilities which might land us in very awkward problems before long.'²³ Britain agreed, however, to make a loan of up to £85.4 m available for reconstruction. That included funding for the projects, which would involve government and firms, for reconstruction, and for subsidising day-to-day government. It was, said Hugh Dalton in April 1946, 'a tremendous sacrifice'. 'Every pound which you spend in this way means a pound less spent on getting essential imports into this country, and, with all our other obligations, our help to Burma will have to be rationed.'²⁴

The British had also been anxious, in view of possible criticism in Parliament, to secure some protection for British nationals in independent Burma. The constitution confined the right to operate public utilities and exploit natural resources to companies with 60 per cent Burmese capital. Cripps thought that, if British companies began the process of Burmanisation, the government might give them time to complete it, and he helped to start discussion between firms and mission, 'educative and useful (to both parties)', as Laithwaite put it.²⁵ Pressed, however, by the need to outbid the communists, Nu's government proposed a fifteen-point programme in May 1948, and the following month it took over the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company and the timber concessions of the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation.

There was no simple relationship between government and capital in the return to Burma, any more – even less – than in the original acquisition. Overall the British were concerned to create a stable world of states among which trade could be carried on. Of this Burma was to be a member, non-communist, democratic, preferably but not necessarily a member of the Commonwealth. That objective was consistent with basing Britain's own future above all on its industry, its investments, its capacity to compete in world markets. Questions of priority were, however, involved, related to questions of expenditure. How much of Britain's resources should be devoted to the restoration of its industry? how much to creating a stable world, through defending it or through helping states to stabilise and defend themselves? There was a tradition of self-help, consistent with the overall belief in a world of states, fending for themselves, and in a decolonising world that

tradition could only be reinforced. In any case the depression and the war had depleted Britain's own resources and made the choice of priorities all the harder. Self-help might also involve attracting British capital and expertise, as setting up the colonies had. In Burma the British firms played hard to get, but it was not merely a matter of bargaining for better compensation from the British or better guarantees from the Burmese. They might want to use their capital elsewhere, in accordance, indeed, with the logic of a world of states open to capital and enterprise. That made it difficult for the Burma Office to argue for compensation on a nation-building basis, while the Treasury, in so far as it was concerned with the modernisation of British industry, did not attach a priority either to restoring the British firms to Burma or indeed to subsidising their taking risks elsewhere.

Did Britain's policies in respect of Malaya differ? There was one obvious contrast in the position of the two territories: the establishment of rubber in Malaya and the expansion of the automobile industry had made it a dollar-earner, which Burma had never been. 'This did not mean that Malayan decolonization became undesirable *per se*', R. F. Holland suggests; 'but it did mean that infinite care was now required as to whom the beneficiaries of such decolonization might be.'²⁶ Such 'infinite care' was not, however, peculiar to Malaya. The prime aim, there as elsewhere, was to create a viable and friendly state. The policies Britain adopted in Malaya and Burma were similar rather than dissimilar.

The initial state-building project in postwar Malaya was large and liberal if paternalist. It was quickly abandoned for a more conservative one. The object was not simply to save the rubber industry. It was to create a viable state when the initial scheme failed. But the inability to deploy dollar earnings added to the unrest that conduced to the 'Emergency', and the constitutional changes reduced any chance that it could find non-violent expression. The two policies coincided in their failure. The Emergency was not a right-wing coup, but the government believed that it could smash the opposition. It was a 'colonialist' misjudgement. Instead it had to engage in a long process of 'pacification'. That again was not designed to preserve the rubber industry. The rubber boom subsequently caused by the Korean war helped to meet the vast expense of the operation. Even the Treasury was moved to contribute, since the anti-communist campaign seemed to be part of a larger Cold War struggle. Involved, too, was a state-building endeavour much more comprehensive than that of 1945–6 and a commitment to independence in the short term. If one object had been to restore the economy, including rubber, the other object, to build a state, had assumed, if it had not always possessed, priority. Within that state rubber would have to do so as well as it could.

Shock over the military collapse of British Malaya had stimulated reconsideration of the future of the empire as a whole. 'The Malayan disaster has shocked us into sudden attention to the structure of our colonial empire', Margery Perham wrote one month after the fall of Singapore. 'Events such

as we have known in the last few weeks are rough teachers, but our survival as a great power may depend upon our being able to learn their lesson.' She likened the structure of colonial administration to a 'steel frame' which held together 'plural societies' in which separate groups pursued their material interests. 'It needs the brutal hammering of war to make us fully realize the weakness of such communities.' Imagine that Japanese transports and aircraft carriers appeared outside Mombasa. 'How would the "plural society" of Kenya respond?' The small settler community would know what it was fighting for, and the professional African troops would 'show the same remarkable bravery as they did in Ethiopia'. But would the Indian community 'find it possible to rally shoulder to shoulder with the Europeans'? Would the Kikuyu, 'still unsatisfied about their land and with some of the leaders of their political societies in prison', give their 'wholehearted co-operation'?²⁷ The 'coming age' demanded a 'working partnership'.

In the Malayan case, such issues were already familiar to policy-makers. The disaster only gave them a new urgency. The policy of the 1930s Edward Gent of the Colonial Office described as 'barren', 'a merely static policy of ignoring undoubted interests'.²⁸ The war indeed seemed to offer what Roland Braddell called 'a God-sent chance to clear up all the country's troubles'.²⁹ Such aspirations were illusory, as in the case of Burma, but Cabinet endorsement for the plans for Malaya was promptly secured. The plans accepted that Britain would return to Malaya to meet both its obligations and its needs, economic and strategic. They also assumed that there would be a campaign to regain it and a programme of rehabilitation after it had been regained. There were, therefore, short-term aims and a long-term one as well. That, as one official was later to tell A. J. Stockwell, 'was not regarded as a change in policy but as a change in the process by which it might be achieved': it was 'to bring about a state of affairs which would make it possible for Malaya to become a viable and independent political entity'. The change in process was indeed a radical one, designed to bring about the all-Malaya political entity that had been beyond Clementi's grasp, and to provide for 'a growing participation in the Government by the people of all the communities in Malaya'.³⁰

If the fall of Singapore had triggered this planning, the fall of Japan undermined it. Though in many ways unrealistic, it had assumed a reconquest, in which indeed the Chinese community – who provided the major component of the Anti-Japanese Army with which Force 136 was in contact – would play a positive role. The Japanese were, however, defeated before the reconquest took place. An attempt was made to implement the plans, but their chance of success was still further diminished. Planning his campaign, Mountbatten had been doubtful about negotiating the new treaties with the Malay rulers that were envisaged immediately after reoccupation, particularly as they would convey additional powers to the British government: 'the procedure proposed is psychologically questionable'.³¹ The lack of a campaign did not make it an easier task, particularly as there had been a number of racial

clashes during the interregnum between the surrender and the reoccupation, and they had indeed continued.

Sir Harold MacMichael succeeded in concluding the new treaties, which were designed to lay the basis for the Union by enhancing Britain's jurisdiction, rather as Jervois had planned in 1875. The British then moved rapidly towards replacing the British Military Administration by the new Union: it was impossible, said H. T. Bourdillon, who had accompanied MacMichael, 'to let the old system with its multiplicity of authority, its divided loyalties and its political stagnation, re-establish itself and then to set about changing it... HMG were bound, in the interests of Malaya and all its inhabitants, to waste no time in taking those first steps – the establishment of political union and common citizenship – without which the country cannot progress.'³² But, though the treaties did not explicitly deprive the rulers of sovereignty, the Japanese occupation and the events of the interregnum had made the Malays more politically conscious, and the United Malays National Organisation, formed in March 1946 and led by Dato Onn, son of the first *mentri besar* of Johore, protested against them. The rulers were persuaded to boycott the installation of the first Governor of the Malayan Union.

Sir Arthur Richards had been expected to get the job of Governor. It had gone to Sir Edward Gent, an architect of the Union policy. Even so he promptly advised changing it. The citizenship proposals should be narrowed, and the Union be replaced by federation, 'as good as union constitutionally'.³³ A positive response to the rulers would bring with Malay consent 'that unity which was the ultimate objective of democratic policy'. Malay opposition, extending to rural and urban districts, had to be placated: the alternative was 'very serious likelihood of organised and widespread non-cooperation and disorder on the part of the Malay people', which would help the Malayan Communist Party and Indonesian political organisations.³⁴ Britain, Gent insisted, must leave the 'Union road'. The MCP might take an opportunity to 'disturb the peace', while the attitude of Indonesian groups in Malaya would depend on British sympathy for Indonesian aims in the Netherlands Indies, and on the extent to which 'Malay opinion is sufficiently met in our own problem in Malaya'.³⁵ Underlying the concern to win over the Malay elite was a fear of popular alienation.

The Governor-General, Malcolm MacDonald, upheld Gent's appraisal. Failure to reach agreement would undermine the 'full trust in British leadership in this region which is the main base of the British position in the Far East'. Britain would always be, as in India, a bit behind local opinion. Any weakening of Britain's position would be exploited by Indian nationalism, Chinese imperialism, 'and especially Pan-Malayan Movement led by Indonesians'.³⁶ Like the Burma Office, the Colonial Office looked for a solution within the existing framework: it gave ground, but not enough. A positive reply, MacDonald urged, would strengthen 'the position of Dato Onn moderates against that of Indonesian inspired extremists'.³⁷ Negotiations began on the understanding that the treaties would be altered if a satisfactory

agreement were reached. An Anglo-Malay Working Committee was set up, with representatives from the government, UMNO and the rulers. A report was agreed upon on 20 November. Gent urged approval: 'a lot is at stake with China, India and Indonesia as very strong forces pulling us apart here'.³⁸

The British were anxious to build a modern Malayan state. Cabinet approved the proposals on 5 December, assured that though they displaced union by federation, they did not depart from the fundamental objectives of the British government, 'to set Malaya firmly on the road toward unity and constitutional progress'.³⁹ It was at the same Cabinet meeting that ministers decided to invite the mission from Burma.⁴⁰

While the British had adjusted their policy, it remained unrealistic. It retained a non-political image of the 'migrant' communities and did not expect them to react unfavourably to the new proposals. MacDonald had argued that the Chinese wanted a restoration of peaceful conditions so that they could carry on business.⁴¹ The non-Malay communities had indeed lent the Union proposals little support. They strongly objected, however, to the Federation scheme. The Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action (PMCJA), led by Tan Cheng Lock, had come together with the Malay nationalist Pusat Tenaga Ra'ayat (Putera), and the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce joined them in July. *Hartals*, stoppages of work, were launched in Melaka on 9 September and in Perak on 25 September; and on 20 October a countrywide *hartal* paralysed nearly all the main towns in Malaya. The PMCJA–Putera combination had difficulty, however, in preparing a joint programme, and only that month was a People's Constitution published. Neither Colonial Office nor Governor was disposed, however, to back down.

Above all that was because PMCJA–Putera was seen as a front organisation for the MCP. That precluded concessions: any delay in implementing the scheme would strengthen the MCP. The PMCJA–Putera campaign was 'a Left Wing campaign, with which is interwoven a Chinese racial campaign . . . it emphasises the importance of our dissipating at once any lingering doubt that the new constitution is to come into force'.⁴² On the other hand, any loss of confidence on the part of the Malays might turn them 'into channels of a "pan-Indonesian" (and anti-European) development', as Bourdillon put it.⁴³ The Federation displaced the Union on 1 February 1948, four weeks after Burma became independent.

The defect in the government's approach was that it neglected the moderate elements in the non-Malay community. Its policy gave the MCP an opportunity. So far the Party had avoided extremism, pursuing a policy of agitation, but not violence. The policy had not paid dividends, and news of the treachery of Lai Tek, as well as a change in Soviet policy, conduced to a shift to more militant policies. A meeting of the Central Executive Committee convened by Chin Peng on 17–21 March 1948 decided on a policy of armed struggle. Lower-level cadres took matters into their own hands, and three

British planters in Perak were killed on 16 June. The government declared a state of emergency in that state, and then in the whole federation. 'The MCP was taken by surprise.' But, as Stubbs says, the MCP enjoyed a 'general popularity among the Chinese community' which gave it 'a significant base from which to mount its guerrilla campaign'.⁴⁴

Political frustration was not, of course, its only source. The economic unrest which Lai Tek had sought to use in one way had not abated, and could be used in another. The most consistent criticism of the government was in relation to 'the shortage of rice and the consequent high prices'.⁴⁵ 'If only there was a sufficient supply of rice at a reasonable price, industrial troubles would be solvable', S. S. Awberry and F. W. Dalley, sent out to investigate trade unions, were told.⁴⁶ That rice would be in short supply the British had been aware, but their attempt to meet the problem by a compulsory delivery from Siam was, for practical and political reasons, a complete failure. It was affected by another problem that Malaya also faced. Britain was in no position to supply equipment or consumer goods.

Nor, of course, was there an inflow of capital.

Malaya emerged from World War II with her commercial complex shattered, her plantation economy ruined or obsolescent, food scarce and her labour force dislocated. In these circumstances of post-liberation prostration the restoration of the Imperial financial superstructure could only be an economic burden, with increasing political consequences. By way of contrast with some earlier stages of empire building, the post-war restoration of British rule did not entail a therapeutic inflow of sterling area capital for the economic development of Malaya.⁴⁷

Compensation did not come till 1950–5. Controls on Malaya's dollar earnings indeed intensified with the growing pressure on sterling.⁴⁸

The Malayan government offered rehabilitation loans to planters, but it was not a planters' government. It had its own agenda, as it had always had. Now, indeed, it included elements at least of the policies of the home government, in regard to trade unions for example. 'The new governors were men of liberal attitudes who were not notably sympathetic to commercial interests and who felt some obligation to forward the policies of the Labour Government which had appointed them.' In 1946, for the first time, 'the governments prepared labour policy without any direct influence from employers'.⁴⁹ That did not mean, however, that they were ready to accept the agitational use of the General Labour Unions formed in the immediate postwar years. The British 'sought to create free independent institutions unsullied by political concerns. Yet to the unions "politics and livelihood were indivisible."⁵⁰ The government was pleasing neither planters nor workers. Its aim was to construct a state, though it did not have the resources to do so.

‘[A]n essential element in British imperial strategy from 1942 was the upholding of British economic interests in a general sense’, Nicholas White suggests, but

the degree of collusion between British government and British business was limited. Government was often just too dispersed, representing too many varied viewpoints, to support British business in Malaya with definitive policies while, at other times, government was simply unprepared to adjust its agendas in Malaya to business demands. Frequently, therefore, commercial leaders were disconnected from government thinking and frustrated by official actions.

Nor were they socially cohesive in the metropolis or in Malaya.⁵¹

The ‘Emergency’ led to a far more comprehensive reconstruction of the Malayan state than the wartime planners had contemplated, though it was along quite different lines. The aim of that reconstruction was to defeat the guerrilla insurrection, but it was accompanied by a political programme that committed the government to advancing the date for independence. At the same time, economic interests shifted. The profits of the Korean boom provided an opportunity for Britons to withdraw investments and for Chinese to buy up shares, estates and mines.⁵² Multinational enterprises in Britain were interested in synthetic rubber, a wartime invention,⁵³ the success of which in the late 1950s was to mark ‘the downfall of Malayan rubber as a leading commodity in world trade’. The metropolitan government lost the interest it had displayed in imperial preference in the late 1940s. ‘Treasury and Bank of England officials began to view free capital flows to the rest of the sterling area as a burden which starved domestic export industries of funds.’⁵⁴

There were policy differences over the declaration of the Emergency as there were among the MCP leaders about the party’s task in 1948. What seems clearcut in retrospect was less so at the time. The role of the MCP in the growing violence and disorder was not plain. Gent was under pressure to act – ‘Govern or get out’, the *Straits Times* demanded – and in May 1948 there were apparently moves to have him recalled.⁵⁵ He was, as Stenson put it, ‘extremely reluctant to declare a state of emergency and to order troop reinforcements’.⁵⁶ He was recalled late in June, dying in an air crash on the way home. But the metropolitan government was ‘reluctant to completely abandon the vestiges of its post-war plans for multi-racial colonial partnership in Malaya and govern by authoritarian instruments’.⁵⁷ ‘Are we not gradually against our will being forced into the position of Europeans fighting the Chinese, or at least of Europeans and Malays fighting the Chinese?’ Sir Thomas Lloyd asked at the Colonial Office.⁵⁸

The ‘terrorists’ were unable quickly to set up ‘liberated areas’, but security chiefs admitted in September 1948 that there were some areas ‘where we have little idea of what is happening’.⁵⁹ The allegiance of the Chinese squatter populations, established in the war, was crucial. The strategy the British

evolved was to carry the name of the military commander, Lieutenant General Harold Briggs, though it recalls earlier 'pacifications'. It was

a massive scheme of resettlement, co-ordinated along military lines... While the deleterious consequences of the occupation to the economic and political position of the Chinese had driven them away from the main lines of communication, resettlement tied them back down to the roads and railways. They were transformed from dispersed pioneers into townsmen.

Creating communities out of the 'New Villages' was another matter. Welfare work was one answer, but an insufficient one. 'The main means by which the government sought to restore the initiative was by allowing the local roots of Malayan Chinese politics to grow in strength.' It turned to the Malayan Chinese Association that Tan Cheng Lock had formed, 'and incorporated it in New Village programmes'.⁶⁰ By October 1951, as MCP directives show, resettlement was already having its effect.⁶¹

The uprising received little sympathy or support outside Malaya. The British, unlike their European neighbours, were also careful to put their use of violence in a larger political context. Briggs never lost sight of the political objectives, as Frank Furedi puts it.⁶² With the Emergency the left-wing groups had vanished from politics. That left a vacuum, but it also led Tan Cheng Lock to revive a scheme for a Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). The British welcomed it, and encouraged Dato Onn to welcome it, too. MacDonald, now Commissioner-General, used the Communities Liaison Committee, begun informally in December 1948, to promote their collaboration. The MCA was intended to work with UMNO, as well as to seek organised support within the Chinese community. The programme drew out the implications of the Federation agreement, envisaging a Malaya based on inter-communal compromise, and on a reinterpretation of a traditional view that saw the Malays in a political role and the Chinese in an economic role. In another sense, however, it was forward-looking. Thanks partly to the Emergency, it was associated with a more rapid progress towards self-government.

As early as 1950, the Defence Secretary in London was clear that it might be necessary to concede independence to Malaya 'prematurely', in order to contain nationalism.⁶³ An attempt to regulate events in Malaya, and to gain time for orderly political advance, became a step in a race to independence. Twenty-five years were really needed, MacDonald said in June 1950, but '[w]e must be mentally prepared... to accept a quickening of the pace' because 'if we were to resist the pace of change we should lose the present support of Asian leaders'.⁶⁴ UMNO and MCA worked together in the Kuala Lumpur elections on 1952, and still more persuasively in the elections to the Legislative Council in 1955. Independence followed on 31 August 1957. With

independence 'the last support was knocked away from the MCP's pretensions to be a party of national liberation'.⁶⁵

'[O]ur object in using troops in Malaya was to protect life and property and to keep order', Emmanuel Shinwell, the Minister of Defence, stressed in May 1950. 'We were not fighting to defend the tin and rubber companies.' The relative success of the anti-guerrilla measures 'secured the tenure of British private enterprise in Malaya, but, at the same time, political change created additional anxieties for UK capital'. The 'key players' in decolonisation were 'political leaders and government officials . . . Business leaders were carried along by the tide of political events, at times in a state of near panic.'⁶⁶

Ceylon, not Burma, was to be the 'exemplar', the Eastern Department of the Colonial Office declared in July 1948. The end of British political control would not necessarily mean the 'end of British investment and enterprise there'.⁶⁷ The Colonial Office took steps to promote a 'community of interest' in Malaya – as the Burma Office had vainly attempted in Burma – so as to avoid the risks of nationalisation. It supported the Federation's determination to aid smallholders to replant, not merely plantations, so avoiding making the rubber industry a target for nationalisation. It conceded the need for a central bank, in the hope that private banks could co-exist.⁶⁸ In some sense the policy was almost too successful. British firms were ill prepared to face the more aggressive economic nationalism to which the government in Kuala Lumpur turned after the inter-community crisis of 1969.⁶⁹

Singapore had not been included in the Malayan Union, nor in the Federation. One reason was strategic. For the foreseeable future, Britain would have to retain forces in the area, though also encouraging its Commonwealth partners, Australia and New Zealand, to contribute to the defence of the 'Near North'. Another reason was political. The inclusion of Singapore in Malaya might make the control of the base problematic. Certainly it would put at risk Britain's attempts at social and political engineering on the peninsula, for Malays would be even more concerned for their future if the predominantly Chinese city were part of the new state: unification would be 'assisted by the non-inclusion of Singapore at any rate at the first stage', as Gent put it.⁷⁰ Yet in the postwar phase the British were convinced that small states could not survive, and that in the longer term Singapore's future had to lie with 'merger'.

Meanwhile, however, Singapore was treated as an entity, and so in fact became more distinct. The government took steps towards political participation. Governor Gimson supported an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council – the best means, he argued, for securing financial legislation, including income tax – including three elected by the Chambers of Commerce and six by popular ballot of registered voters who were British subjects. The result was 'sluggish': of a potential electorate of some two hundred thousand, only 22,395 registered. There was, the supervisor of elections, G. Hawkins, lamented, 'no campaign, no canvassing . . . no political meetings, no public speeches

by which emotions could be roused'.⁷¹ The only party to fight the election was the Progressive Party, 'essentially... moderate', 'willing to co-operate with the British to promote steady constitutional reform'. The colonial authorities for their part saw the Progressives 'as a reliable group, in whose hands the transition to stable self-government could be made in an orderly, peaceful fashion, without upsetting the economy'. The drawback was 'public apathy'. The present constitution, they believed, had 'fallen considerably short of Chinese aspirations'.⁷² A more radical approach was the answer.

A commission under Sir George Rendel set out in 1953 to devise a 'complete political and constitutional structure designed to enable Singapore to develop as a self-contained and autonomous unit in any larger organization with which it may ultimately become associated'. The object was 'to encourage political awareness and responsibility among the electorate by putting effective control over domestic policy into the hands of a predominantly elected government, a "genuinely responsible body with real power and authority"', which would provide a base for further constitutional development'.⁷³ There was to be a legislative assembly of thirty-two, twenty-five of them elected, and a council of nine ministers, six recommended by the leader of the strongest party, which would have authority over all matters except external affairs, internal security and defence. The British government accepted the proposals.

The British looked to a moderate and English-educated leadership, but that tended to exclude the mass of immigrant and vernacular-educated Singaporeans. They were open to the appeal of a nationalism renewed by the triumph of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 and to the penetration of the communists. 'The mass of Chinese blamed their troubles on the colonial regime and resented the privileged position of the English-educated.' A 'new generation of militant young student leaders set out to harness the labour movement to the anti-imperialist cause'.⁷⁴ It was in this context that Singapore prepared for the elections of 1955.

The newly formed Labour Front, led by David Marshall, a Jewish lawyer, and Lim Yew Hock, a third-generation Straits Chinese who had been a founder of the TUC, won the largest number of seats, working on a platform of independence and a welfare state. It did not win a majority, and that prompted Marshall to emphasise his anti-colonial credentials. 'One cannot defend democracy by refusing it to those who are anxious to support it. We have been taught to admire the British Constitution and British traditions of administration; Britain cannot now deny the implications of its own lessons.' He claimed that '*merdeka* will rally the majority of the people against Communism'.⁷⁵

In the subsequent talks in London Marshall sought independence, ceding back defence and external relations, and proposing a defence and security council for a transitional period of up to six years. Britain would be able to suspend the constitution if internal insecurity threatened the defence installations or the government of Singapore acted against the constitution, but

would not be able to do anything short of that. The British wanted powers that were less drastic and that could therefore be more readily used. Marshall's successor, Lim, accepted a compromise.

The People's Action Party (PAP) had taken a different course. Its leader, Lee Kuan Yew, an English-educated fourth-generation Straits Chinese, had realised that the future belonged to those who could secure wide support, and he was ready to work, at least temporarily, with the radicals who could mobilise it. At the same time he recognised that radicals and British would be at odds. That was the opportunity he saw for the moderates. 'We, the returned students', he had told the Malayan Forum in England in 1950,

would be the type of leaders that the British would find relatively the more acceptable. For if the choice lies, as in fact it does, between a communist republic of Malaya and a Malaya within the British Commonwealth led by people who, despite their opposition to imperialism, still share certain ideals in common with the Commonwealth, there is little doubt which alternative the British will find the lesser evil.⁷⁶

In power the Labour Front sought to break the Communist hold on the Chinese secondary schools and the trade unions. Lee took advantage of its difficulties. Yet at the same time he and the moderates benefited from the arrest of Lim Chin Siong, a left-wing colleague, and he kept open contacts with the British. The new constitution of 1959 provided for a fully-elected fifty-one-seat assembly and compulsory voting. That meant 'politics on a mass scale'.⁷⁷ It also meant a victory for the PAP, which secured forty-three seats.

It had advocated 'merger', sharing the British view that Singapore could not stand alone. 'Without this economic base [the Federation], Singapore would not survive', said Lee.⁷⁸ There were practical issues: would Singapore be just one state of the federation or something more? The main problems were political. How could the Malays be approached? Yet, if it were not done soon, it might become more difficult to do, not less. Initially, indeed, the first Malayan Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, was opposed. But he came to think that the PAP government was a guarantee against something worse that would come about when the constitution was further revised in 1963. That conclusion was reinforced when the PAP leadership broke with its left-wing allies, who formed the Barisan Sosialis. The concept of merger was made more acceptable by transcending it. In 1961 the Tunku spoke of Malaysia, associating Malaya, Singapore and the Borneo territories. That was an old notion, now thrown into a new context of state-building and decolonisation.

If Singapore could not stand alone, the British reached the same conclusion about the Borneo states. Their reconstruction and development were therefore seen, not simply in terms of individual units but in terms of a larger entity of which they might become part. The nature of that entity was uncertain. A

federation of the Borneo states was one prospect, a closer association with Malaya and Singapore another. Indeed the former might be a precursor of the latter. The options were indeed not finally determined before Malaysia was created. In the meantime the states had tended to become more distinct, rather than less. One was in the event to stand out of Malaysia, and the inclusion of the other two was in part sustained by political intervention on the part of the central government in Kuala Lumpur.

The states became more distinct from one another even though the British had extended a more formal control over them. That they had rather tentatively sought before the war, though backing down in face of political and economic difficulties. The destruction of British Borneo by the Japanese was rather paradoxically seen – like the destruction of British Malaya and British Burma – as a means of achieving objectives unattainable in the prewar period. The Cabinet proposed to acquire North Borneo from the Company, and to invite the Sultan of Brunei and the Raja of Sarawak to allow the application of the Foreign Jurisdiction Act (FJA), the formula also used to secure greater powers for the British government in the Malay states without directly raising the question of sovereignty. The treaty with the Raja was to install a British adviser, whose advice was to be sought and acted on in all substantial matters of policy and administration. In the event, however, both Sarawak and North Borneo became British colonies, perhaps the most striking example of the latter-day attempt to put the empire on a new footing as a preparation for its final disposal.

There had indeed been no difficulty with the Company, and no one conceived that the people of North Borneo should be consulted. The position of Sarawak was rather different. Raja Vyner at first suggested that he could hardly negotiate during a time of war. Pressed by the Colonial Office, he agreed to initial discussions, involving his nephew and heir, Bertram's son Anthony (Peter), whom he made head of a provisional government. Early in 1945 Anthony made a number of proposals for 'strengthening relations with His Majesty's Government'.⁷⁹ Those, declared the Secretary of State, Oliver Stanley, did not go far enough: the British government wished to be able to issue Orders-in-Council under the FJA. Anthony replied that he and his colleagues represented an independent sovereign state and could not accept dictation. At a subsequent meeting, Gent produced a legal opinion that declared that Sarawak had no international personality and that its independence was 'a purely domestic matter'.⁸⁰ In turn Anthony sought a legal opinion.

That took some time to prepare and the Colonial Office saw it as a delaying tactic. Stanley complained to the Raja that his representatives were 'unresponsive'.⁸¹ The Raja simply referred the letter to Anthony. The Sarawak strategy proved, however, somewhat counterproductive. The new Labour government had little sympathy for the Raja's regime, and the unexpectedly rapid end of the war made a decision necessary. Outright annexation it was desirable to avoid. The answer Gent and his colleagues adopted was to bring

pressure on the Raja to 'cede' Sarawak. The Raja then dissolved the provisional government and dismissed Anthony. His aide Gerard MacBryan was sent out to obtain the agreement of the Malay and Chinese leaders. The methods he adopted added to the criticism of the policy, and the Secretary of State agreed to a two-man parliamentary mission, designed to confirm by independent enquiry whether the cession proposal was 'broadly acceptable to the native communities of Sarawak'.⁸² Their recommendation favoured the Colonial Office solution, but cession went through the Council Negri in Kuching only on the vote of the European officials. A last-minute instruction from the Colonial Office not to conclude the cession came too late.⁸³

Backed by a legal opinion, Anthony Brooke had declared in October that extending the FJA would 'deprive a progressive people, politically free for a hundred years, of the full control of their internal affairs', 'a violation of the principles for which the war has been fought'.⁸⁴ But though criticism of the proceedings was quite widespread – Margery Perham suggested a commission of enquiry⁸⁵ – the anti-cessionists did not try to internationalise the issue. The dynastic arguments stirred the controversy, but obscured the case for Sarawak's independence. The opposition that the first Governor met suggested that there was some sense of nationalism, and what he did tended to provoke it. The second Governor was assassinated in December 1949. But that destroyed the movement, since the community was alienated by its violence and the government acted punitively. Any chance that Sarawak would emerge as a state in a world of states now vanished.

The British objective was not to lay hold of Sarawak's wealth. There was indeed a kind of nineteenth-century promotional exaggeration to Rees-Williams's statement in the House of Commons in July 1946 that 'we could make Sarawak one of the richest countries in the world literally in a year if we wanted to'.⁸⁶ Its resources were in fact limited. The British government endorsed the principles in the preamble of the Brooke constitution of 1941, one of which was to raise the standard of living of the people of Sarawak. To fund its development plans, 'the administration was under constant pressure to find new sources of revenue'. Helped by the Korean war boom, it also drew substantially on Colonial Development and Welfare funds.⁸⁷ The priority was state-building, though, like Singapore's, Sarawak's future was seen as that of a unit in a state, rather than a state itself.

The Brooke principles had also endorsed 'the goal of self-government'. Accepting them, the British government did not, however, accept the goal of an independent Sarawak. The Borneo territories were to emerge into the world of states, not, of course, as part of Indonesia, but as a part of a larger federation or federations. 'In 1946 it was the definite (though not overtly declared) hope that the two newly created Colonies of North Borneo and Sarawak and the State of Brunei would in due course be brought under some sort of unified administration', ran a Colonial Office memorandum of 1953. 'A public declaration to that effect at that time would have had a bad effect on public opinion in Sarawak, and would have played into the hands of the

“anti-cessionists”.’ There had not been ‘any authoritative statement’, but ‘it has not hitherto been contemplated that any one of these territories should obtain complete self-government by itself. The concept had been of two federations, one Malayan, one Bornean, and of ‘some form of constitutional relationship’ between them.⁸⁸

If creating that form would be difficult, establishing the initial federation in Borneo was no easier than instituting merger. The British decided not to raise the vexed question of jurisdiction in Brunei, as ‘we can achieve all we desire under the terms of the existing Treaty’. They did, however, make the Governor of Sarawak High Commissioner for Brunei in 1948, and that was ‘regarded with considerable suspicion’, though the only sign of opposition came from ‘isolated members of now dormant youth association, notably school teachers who have tried to suggest this announcement of *fait accompli* is undemocratic’.⁸⁹ There were ‘some fears’, Sir C. Arden-Clarke declared on taking over, that Brunei ‘would lose its independent position as a Protected State... Such fears are groundless. There is no question of Brunei coming under Sarawak or Sarawak coming under Brunei, or the interests of one being sacrificed to the interests of the other.’⁹⁰

The new Sultan, Omar Ali Saifuddin III, took more positive initiatives, designed to win support within Brunei, and at the same time to preserve the dynasty. Such steps underlined the distinctiveness of the territory and diminished the prospects of federation, but they were not steps to which the British could object. One was the First Five-Year Development Plan, which he conceived mid-1953, and which would cost \$100 m. The oil revenues could provide for that, although, as the Commissioner for Development told the Colonial Office, there was at the time only one known reservoir, at Seria, and it would be necessary ‘to save sufficient against the years to come when oil diminishes’. A Colonial Office official doubted that so much could be spent in five years. ‘The effect of the present approach seems only likely to be that a lot of money will be wasted by starting projects which can’t be finished. Since Brunei is rolling in money, they can probably afford this, but it does not seem to be a very practical way of going about the plan.’⁹¹

The other step was to associate the people of Brunei with decision-making and self-administration, ‘while retaining his supreme authority’.⁹² Again the British could hardly object. Gaining their agreement to a Succession and Regency Enactment, the Sultan announced on 12 May 1953 his intention to grant a written constitution. It was not introduced till 1959. One reason was the Sultan’s insistence on diminishing the powers of the Resident and the High Commissioner and securing the power to appoint a *mentri besar*. In the meantime he refused to sanction elections to the District Councils, already prepared by the Resident. Agreement on a new constitution was finally negotiated in London in 1959. The treaty of 1888 and the 1905–6 agreement were revoked and the post of Resident was abolished. A *mentri besar* was to assume his powers. A High Commissioner was to be appointed by the Queen in consultation with the Sultan and his advice was to be taken on all matters

save religion and custom. A Nationality Enactment would be introduced, and elections to the District Councils held, followed by the appointment of elected members to the Legislative Council .

The struggle between the Sultan and the British officials had taken place against a background of political activity, partly stimulated by the development projects. The constitutional discussions led to the creation of Brunei's first political party, the Partai Rakyat Brunei (PRB), in 1956. His share in the Indonesian struggle led its leader, Azahari, to look to the more radical Malay politicians of the peninsula.⁹³ Those affiliations did not, however, lead the British officials to seek his eclipse: 'I am afraid . . . there are even less reliable people waiting to step into his shoes', wrote the Governor/High Commissioner, Anthony Abell, in 1957.⁹⁴ His attempt to go on a *merdeka* mission was, however, a fiasco. The Colonial Office was dealing with the ruler, not, as in the case of Malaya, with an Alliance, backed by voters and rulers. It received Azahari's delegation, but urged him to work within the constitution that the Sultan was developing.⁹⁵ The Sultan, by contrast, was able to use the PRB to argue his case for his conservative but nationalist option.

Another context was indeed Malaya's unexpectedly rapid advance toward *merdeka*, which also revived the discussion on closer association among the Borneo territories. In a broadcast of 7 February 1958 Abell suggested a federation in which, as he put it, the central authority's control would be 'limited to those activities specifically allotted to it by the three Governments'.⁹⁶ The idea evoked little enthusiasm in the Council Negri, however, and in Brunei, he found, 'the quality are dead against it'.⁹⁷ The government, the *Sarawak Gazette* observed, 'adopted the sound motto *Festina Lente* in this matter'.⁹⁸

It became clear that a 'Malaysia' federation would not be preceded by a Borneo federation: instead it would be made up state by state. Some think, the Tunku declared in October 1961, 'that they should wait until the three territories have formed a federation of their own . . . But . . . how long will this take? Years, I am afraid. Knowing the British for what they are, the longer the better – what you can do tomorrow, why bother to do today?'.⁹⁹ His comment made some sense in terms of British imperial history. Yet it seems that the British now found themselves putting off till tomorrow what they could not do today. Arguably the tasks only became more difficult to achieve. 'Time is not on our side', Lord Selkirk said in June 1960.¹⁰⁰

Indeed it was clear that the local Borneo leaders would require some persuasion. On this task the British and Malayan governments embarked in 1961–2. Their success with the Sarawak and Sabah leaders was considerable: 'by the end of 1961 the zealotry of the Borneo leaders to preserve their emerging national identities had toned down to mere uncertainty about getting on the band-wagon'.¹⁰¹ A five-state consultative committee produced a memorandum supporting the concept, and a commission of enquiry headed by Lord Cobbold, set up by Britain in respect of the colonies of Sarawak and

North Borneo, found that a third of the people were strongly in favour, another third wanted safeguards, and the rest wanted independence first or wanted Britain to stay. In August 1962 Britain announced its agreement to form Malaysia and set the date at 31 August 1963. An intergovernmental committee, representing Britain, Malaya, North Borneo and Sarawak and chaired by Lord Lansdowne, worked out the conditions.

In early January 1962 the Sultan of Brunei appointed a Brunei–Malaya commission, a kind of equivalent of Cobbold, to report on the opinion of his people, and included Azahari. Its findings were not publicised, but were reported to be anti-Malaysia. In July the Sultan declared that the proposal could be accepted ‘in principle’, but that did not necessarily mean, he added, that it was ‘final’. In September there were further negotiations between Brunei and Federation officials in Kuala Lumpur. In those the Bruneis insisting on maintaining a degree of autonomy that was inconsistent with the concept of a federation and its chances of building up ‘a feeling of national loyalty and camaraderie throughout the territories’. The Sultan had also raised the question of regaining Limbang and in November wrote direct to the Secretary of State about it.¹⁰²

The Sultan, it seems clear, was opposed to joining Malaysia. He remained opposed after Azahari and his party, having won the District Council elections, lost patience and sought to seize power in December 1962. Putting down the revolt, the British now urged the Sultan to join Malaysia. His response was delphic. ‘I shall not hesitate to negotiate with the British Government in order to achieve independence outside Malaysia and with the British Government and the Government of the Federation of Malaya if it was thought favourable to achieve independence within Malaysia.’¹⁰³ More talks in Kuala Lumpur proved vain. Buoyed, perhaps, by new oil discoveries,¹⁰⁴ the Sultan stayed away when the agreement was signed on 9 July. Yet he retained Britain’s defence protection. Urging him to participate in the talks the British had assured him of their continued support for state and dynasty should he not secure the necessary safeguards. Brunei and Britain were, as Hussainmiya puts it, to be ‘locked in a “defence” embrace’ for another twenty years.¹⁰⁵ Indonesia’s ‘confrontation’ of Malaysia only consolidated it.

Ongkili argues that Britain could and should have compelled Brunei to join Malaysia.

Britain had her interests and petroleum securities to think of before she could gracefully hand over to Malaya as she was readily prepared to do in the case of Sarawak and Sabah. She decided to do nothing, happy to retain another Kuwait in South-east Asia, while Brunei remained assured of royalty dues and security under the protective umbrella of the British.¹⁰⁶

It seems more likely that such was a second-best option, so far as the makers of grand policy were concerned. Undoubtedly Brunei's oil was important to the British, and so, too, the sterling reserves it built up. Undoubtedly, too, the BMPC lobbied for its interests. It criticised the Resident and the High Commissioner for 'doing too little to contain the PRB' in 1957,¹⁰⁷ and it had 'unsurpassed' access to the Sultan.¹⁰⁸ But at the very least Ongkili's summation oversimplifies the multi-headed nature of British policy-making.

Quoting the comment T. H. Silcock had made in 1959 draws attention to the point. It was 'extraordinary', he wrote, that the co-ordination of the three Borneo territories was not 'pushed through'. Brunei's revenue was not used to develop its neighbours: 'another instance of an *ad hoc* political adjustment in which it was felt necessary to avoid conflicts with the sultan through whom control was exercised, even though this meant deferring the development of the whole area for a generation'. In the British Commonwealth, he reflected, 'it is not part of the pattern to try to incorporate the local population by cultural change into a large super-national empire but rather to introduce piecemeal a number of British institutions, modified to local circumstances as they seem necessary, with the ultimate object of building up a separate state which will have permanently absorbed along with its own local characteristics certain British institutions'. It was thus important to determine 'what is the unit through which rule will be exercised'. The British rarely decided that on the basis of any principle: it was 'a matter of political tact following the line of least resistance'.¹⁰⁹

If there were political factors as well as economic, however, it is not quite true that there were virtually no principles. In a sense, there were, in Borneo's case, too many. The British in general conceived of the future independent states as successor-states, inheriting the frontiers of the colonial phase. In the 1940s and 1950s, however, they also believed that small states could not survive. The two principles were rather at odds. The British were opposed to a Greater Indonesia, extending beyond the frontiers of Netherlands India. But the steps they supported for bringing together the fragments of their empire in the Malay world provoked opposition from an Indonesian Republic, the independence of which they had supported. It had, however, meanwhile been radicalised by its conflict with the Dutch.

The Dutch had been completely defeated by the Japanese in 1942, as had the British. They were determined to return to 'Netherlands India'. Returning to Burma and Malaya was for the British a matter of prestige, Malaya was a dollar-earner, and Singapore a strategic centre. Netherlands India occupied in Dutch minds more the position of India: holding it affected their position in the world. 'We know', as the clandestine Anti-Revolutionary Party publication *Trouw* put it in 1944, 'that our country, if deprived of the Indies, would be a small and insignificant state which would be pushed about within the great turmoil of international relations.'¹¹⁰ Netherlands India was, moreover, seen as an economic support – it added 8 per cent to Dutch domestic product

in the interwar period¹¹¹ – and of that the Netherlands, it was assumed, would be in even greater need in order to recover from the war. The position might be compared with that of 1814–15.

Indeed, as then, the Dutch recognised that their return depended on the attitude of other powers, this time the Americans as well as the British. It seems, however, that they failed to recognise the extent to which it also depended on the attitude of the Indonesians. They certainly realised that their position had long depended not only on the sanction of other powers but also on the collaboration of their subjects, backed by the use of force, and its minimum and effective display. They exaggerated the chances of merely replicating that approach in a nationalist context. The overthrow of the Dutch had stimulated the nationalists, and towards the end of their occupation the Japanese had encouraged the setting-up of a Republic. Sukarno and Hatta were able to announce independence only on 17 August 1945, two days after the surrender. But because the atomic bombs had brought the war to an unexpectedly early conclusion, and because neither the British nor, still less, the Dutch were prepared to occupy Java immediately, the Republic was able in some measure to consolidate its position, and to suggest that it could maintain law and order. Though anxious to see the Dutch restored, the British believed that it could and should only be done by collaborating with the nationalists. For the Dutch – with a different perception, moreover, of ‘collaborators’ – that was difficult to accept. And there were no pro-Dutch guerrillas.

The Dutch had indeed begun to prepare the way for their return as early as 1942 by an attempt to ‘counter American attitudes toward colonialism’.¹¹² A broadcast by Queen Wilhelmina in December alluded to ‘a commonwealth in which the Netherlands, Indonesia, Surinam and Curaçao will participate’ in ‘a combination of independence and collaboration’.¹¹³ Talking to the British, H. J. van Mook, the wartime Colonial Minister, had envisaged a Netherlands government and a Netherlands Indies government, with equal status, and, above them, responsible for defence and foreign policy and matters of general interest, an Imperial government.¹¹⁴ The speech has been called ‘a poorly designed and unrealistic proposal... better characterized as an improvised concession to the language of the times rather than a map of the road to independence’.¹¹⁵ It echoed the proposals made by the moderate nationalists in the 1930s – in the Soetardjo petition of 1936, for example¹¹⁶ – and then rejected. It was, however, a belated attempt at a new form of post-imperial state-building that, unless it was developed in a liberal way, would have little appeal in 1945, and perhaps not sufficient even if it were.

The last Governor-General, van Starckenborgh Stachouwer, believed that the first step was to restore imperial rule. That policy, as J. H. Logemann, the Minister for Overseas Territories, put it on 9 October 1945, was ‘simple in principle, being based on the assumption of an unshakeable Dutch authority standing above all groups and opinions, striving to achieve an objective fairness and justice’. It failed, however, ‘to take account of the relative strengths

and interrelations of social forces at the present time'. Within the Indies, social forces had been stimulated that rendered untenable 'a gradualist policy of the kind whereby the tempo was set by Dutch administrators and whereby they ultimately decided what was and what was not good for the Indies'. Less than ever, moreover, were 'we alone with our subjects in the Indies, for the whole world is concerned about what is happening... Under these circumstances, we cannot create a stable government without the positive cooperation of a fundamentally important number of Indonesian nationalists.'¹¹⁷ Logemann's analysis was superb, but the Dutch were not able to find the collaborators on the basis they sought.

The British had, of course, reached a similar conclusion: it was only on the basis of collaboration that the Europeans could return to Southeast Asia. The question was the terms of the collaboration. Could it admit the prospect of early independence? Over that the 'imperialism' of the postwar phase might differ as earlier imperialisms had differed. The British, however, looked for an approach on the part of the Dutch and the French that resembled their own. A readiness to deal with the nationalists, and to boost the moderate elements by working with them, would be more effective if it were adopted in the region as a whole. A liberal policy would reduce international criticism and undercut the appeal of communism. A common policy in Southeast Asia would also help to sustain the strong relationships Britain developed with postwar France and the Netherlands. Dominant in the Allied South East Asia Command (SEAC), the British were able to bring some pressure to bear, particularly on the Dutch. They wanted the Dutch to return, but to offer a reasonable deal.

What, however, could that be? The British offered the example of India and Burma. Admiral Helfrich's view was that 'when dealing with native rabble, the most effective way is to hit immediately and hit hard'.¹¹⁸ At a SEAC meeting at the end of September, General Slim suggested that there were two courses: to negotiate; or to show strength and then relax. Captain J. P. H. Perks, the Dutch representative, said 'experience of 300 years' had shown the latter to be the 'most suitable' course in the Indies.¹¹⁹ Such a policy Mountbatten's command was unlikely to follow, and in 1945 the Dutch were in no position to attempt it, even if they had the inclination. But, shocked by the strength of the nationalist movement, they found it difficult to deal with its leaders, particularly men such as Sukarno who had 'collaborated' with the Japanese.

The only way for the Dutch to control the Indies, Mountbatten stressed, was to negotiate with the nationalist leaders, 'as the recent experience of British policy in Burma has shown'.¹²⁰ In October he looked for 'some form of agreement with the Indonesian Republic', but van Mook did not feel 'that he could run the risk of Dutch prestige... being further lowered by making public promises and starting arrangements for conferences before sufficient strength to back his promises had arrived and while he was unable to offer protection to any Republicans of moderate outlook who might be

willing to come and talk with him'.¹²¹ He was searching for a pattern of collaboration backed by strength, but at that point the Dutch had none of their own.

A major clash with the nationalists followed the introduction of SEAC forces into Surabaya. In some sense, however, that promoted the prospects of compromise. Additional SEAC forces were sent, but the Dutch realised that the nationalist movement had to be taken seriously, while moderates became concerned about the possibilities and implications of violence. 'Indonesia's fate ultimately depends on the fate of Anglo-Saxon capitalism and imperialism', Sjahrir argued in his pamphlet *Our Struggle* in early November. Its power must not be mobilised behind the Dutch, who had ruled the Indies since the early nineteenth century 'by favor of the English'. Indonesians should aim to increase world confidence 'that we are capable of disciplined ordering of our state and nation'.¹²² A Sjahrir cabinet was installed on 14 November. He impressed van Mook, and talks followed. Its installation was also an assertion that Indonesia was qualified to be a nation among nations, designed to impress the British, not merely the Dutch. Sjahrir's *diplomasi* was criticised in the Republic by those who believed in struggle, *perjuangan*. He had to contain them, but also to show that they were a threat of something worse, and that his level of collaboration was thus the best the Dutch, and their long-standing supporters, the British, could hope for.

After his talks with Sjahrir, van Mook left for the Netherlands without any concrete proposals. Back in the Netherlands he articulated a federal concept, designed to rationalise a scheme in which the Republic would be accepted in Java and Menangkabau, and the Dutch concentrated on Borneo and the Great East, where they would face far less opposition. Indonesia, he also argued, should have its own army and be represented in the UN: Indonesians believed that the Dutch had neglected their defence in 1941–2; and neighbouring countries had already won representation in the UN. Cabinet colleagues criticised proposals that seemed to threaten the unity of the empire. There was also a dispute over timing. Van Mook wanted to stipulate a time 'after which Indonesia could decide on its own destiny'. Logemann and van Royen, minister without portfolio, felt it was important to stipulate conditions that must first be fulfilled. A ministerial committee drafted a formula to present to the British. It was 'a great departure' from van Mook's proposals. Indonesia would be organised as a federal commonwealth under a Dutch Governor-General, who would appoint ministers bound to implement policies determined by the Volksraad. The Commonwealth would be a partner with the Netherlands in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. That would have a cabinet made up of eight Dutch and five Commonwealth ministers, and it would administer foreign affairs for the entire kingdom. The Kingdom would support Indonesia's admission to the UN. After twenty-five years, the structure of the kingdom would be reviewed on the basis of a voluntary partnership.¹²³

There were Cabinet-level discussions with the British at Chequers at Christmas 1945. They were anxious to withdraw their troops, particularly as the majority were Indians, the use of whom against nationalists might be embarrassing in India, but they felt some 'moral obligation' to the Dutch, which bound them to go beyond the 'military tasks', accepting the surrender of the Japanese and releasing the internees and prisoners-of-war. The objectives could be reconciled only if the Dutch made a political settlement with the Indonesians. At Chequers van Mook argued that conditions should be created under which Sjahrir would feel safe from extremist pressure. 'He could then be squarely faced with the choice of accepting or rejecting the proposals of the Netherlands Government as the basis of negotiation. If he rejected them, it would mean that the extremists had won the day.' That was a line that suggested a need to discuss those proposals, but, though they were tabled, that was not done. Schermerhorn, the Prime Minister, indicated that he could not go home empty-handed. A communiqué was issued, declaring that the British government was acquainted with the 'consistent and liberal policy' of the Dutch, and affirmed its obligation 'to establish without delay conditions of security' in which the Indies government could continue negotiations with 'representative Indonesians'. Renewed concern about the Indian troops led Foreign Secretary Bevin to send a British facilitator, Sir A. Clark Kerr.¹²⁴

Back in Batavia, van Mook sought to make the Dutch proposals more attractive, dropping the title of Governor-General and abandoning the twenty-five-year period. No mention, however, was made of the Republic, and the proposals had a lukewarm reponse when announced on 10 February. On 26 February van Mook tried to strengthen Sjahrir's hand by an elucidation that promised that the period of transition would end 'within the lifetime of the present generation', and presented the crown representative as responsible to a government of the Netherlands in which Indonesian Cabinet members would have seats.¹²⁵ Sjahrir, however, met strong Republican opposition to continued negotiations and resigned. Forming a second Cabinet, he returned to Batavia, insistent on a treaty that would recognise the Republic. An impasse ensued.

The compromise the French had made with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on 6 March offered van Mook 'some inspiration'.¹²⁶ Using it as a model, he submitted four articles for consideration. Under these the Netherlands government would recognise the Republic as exercising *de facto* authority in Java except in areas under Allied military administration. The Republic would agree to the landing of Dutch troops. It would collaborate with the Netherlands government in the creation of an Indonesian federative Free State of which the Republic would be a partner. The Netherlands government would consult with the Republic and representatives of the areas outside Republican control on the political structure of the future Indonesian state and its relations with the Netherlands Kingdom. Indonesian delegates sought recognition of the Republic's authority over

Sumatra and South Sulawesi as well as Java, but no longer of all Indonesia. In discussions the Dutch representatives accepted only Sumatra, but also agreed that the appointment of Indonesian representatives to the discussions about the future Indonesian state from non-Republican areas would be carried out in consultation with the Republic. Van Mook did not accept those points, but thought the positions of the two parties were sufficiently close to justify continuing the discussions in the Netherlands. To this Sjahrir agreed.¹²⁷

The Dutch Prime Minister was opposed to a treaty, which would imply recognition of the Republic, and thus breach the constitution. In the elections, due on 17 May, the opposition might accuse the government of dismantling the kingdom in an unconstitutional way. Drees, the Minister of Social Affairs, thought that even an exchange of notes would imply a degree of recognition: he preferred a declaration. Van Mook insisted that recognition of the Republic's *de facto* authority over non-occupied parts of Java was 'something other than the recognition of the Republic'. Even in a declaration, however, the Republic must be named. Schermerhorn concluded that there should be an oral agreement or protocol consisting of two declarations. The Dutch declaration would recognise the Republic as a 'provisional administration' on Java.¹²⁸

After a second meeting in London, the Dutch met the Republican delegation at St Hubertus Lodge, a country house in the Hoge Veluwe in Gelderland. The Dutch tried to explain why a treaty was inappropriate, and the Republicans rejected their view. The draft protocol the Dutch submitted furthermore limited the Republican claim to Java and denied the Republic a voice in the appointment of representatives from outside Java. It used the term 'Commonwealth', not 'Free State', which, Logemann claimed, implied that Indonesia would be freed of any links with the Kingdom. No mention was made of arbitration in the case of disagreement. Drees objected to the commission of arbitration the Republicans sought as it would mean international interference in Indonesian affairs.¹²⁹ Expecting negotiations, the Republicans were disappointed, and the talks got nowhere.

In the 'fluid political situation' in the Netherlands, the Schermerhorn-Drees Cabinet had 'ample reason to shun any conclusive arrangements with the Sjahrir Government'. The Minister of Home Affairs, L. J. M. Beel, one of the two Catholics in the Cabinet, observed that you could not talk of the failure of the talks: 'There was as yet no intention to achieve concrete results.'¹³⁰ Van Mook had thought that an agreement might be pushed through. The Cabinet could not risk it, lest it thrust the fence-sitting Catholics completely into opposition and left the Labour Party that dominated the Cabinet exposed in the elections. Nor did van Mook try very hard. He later told Schermerhorn that he had found Drees so irreconcilable that he had decided that the chances of agreement were 'extraordinarily minimal'.¹³¹ In his subsequent book he ascribed the lack of 'a large gesture' to 'our national character with its excess of caution and its deficiency of imagina-

tion'.¹³² In Kerr's view he was always rather changeable, and it may not be necessary to attribute either his actions, or those of the Dutch Cabinet, to a wish to deceive the British or the Indonesians, and so keep SEAC troops in Indonesia there till the Dutch could bring their own in.

Logemann later observed that the British had no written constitution and so had more manoeuvrability in settling the problems of independence, such as those of India and Burma.¹³³ Writing the Indies into the constitution indeed made for inflexibility. There were, however, political issues as well as constitutional ones. It may always be difficult to present the loss of an empire to an electorate, even if it was not much involved in its acquisition. Structures might help, like the British concept of Commonwealth. The fact that the British had a two-party political system, and that Labour had an unassailable majority in 1945–50, certainly helped. A multi-party system, such as that of the Netherlands, tended to reduce flexibility. In order to survive, governments had to accommodate a range of views and their policies tended to be formulaic and to avoid risk. Expecting an agreement just before the first postwar election was even more doubtful. No politician could appear to be throwing away the Indies when that sheet-anchor seemed essential to recovery.

After the Hoge Veluwe talks, the Dutch Cabinet considered a draft protocol. It spoke of a federal free state of Indonesia, to be part, with the Netherlands, Surinam and Curaçao, of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Under it the Dutch government would recognise the Republic *de facto* in most of Java and take note of its claim to Sumatra. Sumatra, like other parts of Indonesia, was to have an opportunity to indicate its wishes on its status in the free state. The Republic was to collaborate in building that state. It was to maintain order and to receive Allied and Dutch troops, with the task of relieving prisoners-of-war and internees and removing Japanese. There were also provisions for the appointment of delegates to an imperial conference. Those from Sumatra would be appointed by the Dutch after discussions with the Republic. The Republic would be informed about those from other territories. The protocol was presented to Sjahrir on 19 May, two days after the elections, with the Schermerhorn–Drees Cabinet now a caretaker government. Sjahrir's proposal, put forward in June, envisaged a treaty between the Dutch and the Republic, recognised *de facto* in Java and Sumatra. The Free State was to be in alliance with the Netherlands, not part of it, and the word 'federal' was not included.¹³⁴ The two parties were moving further apart, not coming together.

Van Mook convened a conference at Malino, near Makasar, where delegates from Borneo and the Great East generally supported a federal approach, though nationalist sentiment had not been lacking.¹³⁵ The British Consul-General, Gilbert MacKereth, asked van Mook if it would open the door to renewed talks with the republicans. Not yet, he replied: he expected them to break up into antagonistic elements, one by one entering the Dutch fold.¹³⁶ In Singapore the Dutch Consul-General, M. F. Vigeveno,

spoke to Lord Killearn, the Special Commissioner, of ‘police actions’ against extremists.¹³⁷ The Dutch – even the ‘reactionary’ ones – were not, of course, seeking to rely merely on force. They were, however, trying to return to an ‘imperialist’ position, in which force would be available within the context of political collaboration, and they were seeking patterns of collaboration and types of collaborator that were acceptable to them. The approach was not entirely unlike that of the British. Theirs, however, was a post-imperial one in which the collaboration was based on the acceptance of nationalism and the early emergence of independent states.

More time passed while the new Dutch Cabinet set up a commission-general to send to the Indies. That had a precedent in 1815, when the Dutch had resumed control over Java after the British conquest. It also made it possible to represent more than one party. Though the Catholics had done well in the elections, and Beel was Prime Minister, the commission-general was to be headed by Schermerhorn. Its guidelines, set out for the British on 6 August, were not very new. The Netherlands government would be prepared to recognise the Republic as the *de facto* administration of Java, provided it would participate in a political structure to be established in Indonesia, in turn to be a full partner in a reconstructed Kingdom of the Netherlands. A preliminary survey would determine whether the population of Sumatra wished to join the Republic or preferred its own autonomous membership.¹³⁸ The members arrived in Batavia on 18 September, and the third Sjahrir Cabinet was formed on 2 October. Killearn was present as a third party and declared the first tripartite meeting open on 7 October. The British troops were due to leave the following month.

Sjahrir signed a truce agreement on 14 October, and political discussions began on 22 October. At van Mook’s suggestion the commission set out goals for the negotiation. The ultimate goal was to be a Union. Schermerhorn believed the Dutch crown must head it. Sjahrir objected to its heading a voluntary and equal partnership, but Schermerhorn assured him that it would not be a superstate: the Netherlands itself would be opposed to that. In return for accepting the Union, Sjahrir was offered *de facto* recognition of the Republic in Java, and in subsequent discussion Sumatra was added. The Republic agreed in return to a proviso that any territory would have the right to opt for a separate status in the proposed United States of Indonesia (USI), the federal state, which the two parties were to cooperate in forming by 1 January 1949. In Linggadjati the Dutch met Sukarno and Hatta. Sukarno accepted the draft when van Mook agreed to use the word ‘sovereign’ to describe USI, instead of ‘free’. Back in Batavia the Republic secured the addition of an arbitration clause.¹³⁹

‘Although there is some similarity with the Viet Nam Agreement (inasmuch as there is to be an autonomous Republic within a federation which is part of a union with the metropolitan country and the other overseas territories)’, R. Allen wrote at the British Foreign Office, ‘the proposed new State is virtually without precedent and it would be rash to say whether it will work

or not.' Indonesia would not have dominion status: 'in our system there are no common organs of administration for dealing with Commonwealth interests as a whole. On the other hand she will be effectively mistress of her destiny and in that sense a genuinely sovereign state.' The chances that it could be made to work were reduced by the strong criticism in the Netherlands, leading the government to make a unilateral, though largely accurate, elucidation of the agreement. In the Republic a critic of Sjahrir, Tan Malaka, denounced the agreement as a 'swindle'.¹⁴⁰

On their way back from a visit to Indonesia in May 1947, Beel and his colleague Jonkman told Governor-General Malcolm MacDonald that Sjahrir was failing to carry his people with him in 'loyal implementation of Linggadjati'. They denied any intention of launching a campaign to seize the whole of Sumatra and Java, but indicated 'they might find it necessary to use local force on a limited scale in particular areas where the situation might get out of hand'. At one moment they spoke, Michael Wright noted, 'of operations which could be successfully concluded in two weeks, which sounded like more than some kind of local and limited action. It was difficult to escape the impression that they had some plan for military action up their sleeve', to operate if the Indonesians did not accept a new offer.¹⁴¹ On 30 May van Mook wrote to Logemann: 'It is not wishful thinking that with military action, I hope to create the conditions for a sound implementation of Linggadjati on the basis of cooperation from inside out.'¹⁴²

An ultimatum had been issued on 27 May, requiring a response by 10 June. Its basis was the collaboration of the Republic in setting up the new structure, its acceptance of an interim federal government alone able to conduct foreign relations, a joint gendarmerie and a joint organisation to control imports and exports. The demands were, as Sjahrir put it, a 'step back' for the Republic, putting it in the same position as East Indonesia (NIT), 'with the Dutch in control'.¹⁴³ A conciliatory response was met by a new ultimatum. He was forced to resign, but Sukarno sent a conciliatory response. Van Mook now put written questions, seeking 100 per cent compliance: did the Republic accept the crown's authority in the interim government? did it agree USI was sovereign, not the republic? did it accept joint responsibility for law and order? did it agree to the return of estates? The Republic's response was positive, except over the gendarmerie. 'In the old days', Berkeley Gage told Vredenburg in The Hague, 'a unilateral request to be fulfilled 100 per cent backed by threat of force and an ultimatum might have had some effect but not so in the new era of relationship with Eastern peoples'.¹⁴⁴ Sjarifuddin's government offered some concessions, but not enough. The 'police action' began on 20 July. It secured the estate products, but it was politically counterproductive. 'Surely the Dutch... have finally ruined their chances of a peaceful settlement and are now reduced to imposing one by force?' John Street of the British Foreign Office suggested.¹⁴⁵

More immediately, the police action had brought about the intervention of the UN, though in the moderate form proposed by the US of tendering good

offices, through a committee of three, to help the parties reach a settlement. Good offices did not, in fact, suffice, and the committee put proposals to the parties at Christmas. Those included provision for free elections and a constitutional convention. A further agreement was finally signed on board the USS *Renville* on 17 January 1948. It provided that sovereignty should remain with the Netherlands until, 'after a stated interval', it handed over to the USI, but that the Netherlands might confer rights and responsibilities on a provisional federal government. USI was to be a sovereign and independent state in equal partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands in a Netherlands–Indonesian Union, headed by the King. The Republic would be a state within USI. Within six to twelve months of signature, a plebiscite would be held to determine whether the populations of Java, Madura and Sumatra wished to form part of the Republic or of another state in USI, though the two parties might agree on an alternative method for ascertaining their will. A constitutional convention would follow, but any state that decided not to ratify it could negotiate a special relationship with USI and the Kingdom.¹⁴⁶

The agreement was not implemented. The Dutch pressed ahead with creating provisional federal institutions and with new states such as Madura and Pasundan, while the Republic wanted a complete understanding on the form of USI before a discussion of transitional measures. Van Mook felt that his hand was strengthened by the threat of communism in Indonesia.¹⁴⁷ The reverse was the case. The Americans – like the British – recognised 'that a political settlement in which both the Dutch and the Indonesians with nationalist aspirations participated would deprive the Communists of their most useful weapon'.¹⁴⁸ In the outbreak at Madiun, van Mook offered Hatta aid, and he declined it. His government proved able itself to deal with the communists. That encouraged the Americans to adopt a more favourable view of its cause, a trend already under way.

Dutch–Indonesian negotiations foundered over the question of commanding the armed forces during the transitional government. '[State] Department officers recalled deep-seated Repub fear Neth would use supreme military power to eliminate all non-subservient nationalist elements.'¹⁴⁹ The Dutch government announced that agreement was impossible, and proceeded to set up an interim federal government. The Republic was given an ultimatum on joining it. The twenty-four-hour deadline passed, and the second 'police action' began. Dirk Stikker, who conducted the negotiations, shared the approach of the displaced van Mook. He told Baruch, the US Ambassador, that he had confidence in Hatta, 'and feels that eventually and ere long a new government will emerge... headed by Hatta and other conservative elements'. The present action would result in the 'elimination of hot-heads and obstructionists', the emergence of 'genuinely democratic government' in the Republic, co-operation with the federalists and the formation of an interim government.¹⁵⁰ The result was, however, quite different.

The 'police action' enjoyed a measure of military success, but it was a political fiasco. The Republican leaders were taken prisoner, and strategic sites were occupied, but guerrilla warfare continued, throwing power to the military leaders, and still more to local units. It also affected the loyalty of the federalists, and so did the international reaction. That was far more intense than on the occasion of the first 'police action', partly because in the meantime the worldwide communist threat had grown, while the Republic was, as the American Acting Secretary of State put it, 'the only Government in the Far East to have crushed an all-out communist offensive'.¹⁵¹ Despite its European priorities, the US threatened the Netherlands with a reduction in Marshall aid and a deferral of military equipment assistance. The Dutch had no alternative but to return to negotiations, now on a more unfavourable basis than ever. At The Hague Round Table conference of 1949, they conceded the independence of the federal Republic of the Union States of Indonesia without either firmly establishing the Netherlands–Indonesia Union or securing useful guarantees of their interests. Indeed, they could secure the necessary two-thirds majority in the States-General only by not transferring West New Guinea.

Britain's postwar policies – like those of the imperialist period itself – were concerned with setting up a framework within which merchants and investors could pursue their economic objectives, though now the framework had to take account of nationalism. The priority of the Dutch governments was similar, though their policies took less account of the emergence of nationalism. Neither in the Netherlands nor in the Indies were those policies simply designed to serve merchants and investors. Van Mook was no friend of big business. A return to their prewar role, he recognised, was an illusion. But enterprise and government moved in opposite directions. Those in Indonesia began to realise that they had to come to terms with the Republic after the first 'police action', when unrest and sabotage continued.¹⁵² The period from 1947, as Baudet puts it, 'showed a less flexible Dutch official policy towards the republic, whilst from the side of the entrepreneurs came a growing tendency to accept new facts and conceive a new business interest, which was opposed to the second Dutch military action'.¹⁵³

The majority of private concerns stayed on under the Round Table agreements. But after Luns replaced Stikker in 1952, Baudet argues, 'all Dutch business interests in Indonesia were sacrificed to the prevailing policy conceptions. Even a child could have foreseen the serious risks involved'.¹⁵⁴ In the 1950s West New Guinea became the focus of a major dispute between the old metropolitan power and the successor-state. The radicalisation of Indonesian politics to which it contributed led in 1957 to the expropriation of Dutch interests. Some entrepreneurs tried to bring the parties together. 'In the Netherlands these efforts only attracted general public disapproval. Condemnation of such moves came even from political groups which normally opposed the inflexible policy of the Dutch Cabinet. Their standpoint

was based on the principle that private enterprise had to refrain from interfering with national foreign policy.¹⁵⁵

In the event Dutch national income and prosperity continued to advance. 'The transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia has opened the way for the Netherlands to resume the traditional position in the International economy', Stikker had written in 1950. His colleague, the Minister for Economic Affairs, van den Brink, had, on the very eve of the signing of the Round Table agreements, offered the States-General an industrialisation plan for the Netherlands that did not mention Indonesia.¹⁵⁶ That, new markets, the growth of services, the EEC, offered the Dutch and their state new sources of wealth. Indeed growth was 'spectacular': 3.5 per cent a year 1950–70.¹⁵⁷

In a somewhat similar way, the 'loss' of Indo-China was rather advantageous than disadvantageous to the French economy. Politically, however, it had proved harder to disengage. Indeed the struggle with the Viet Minh was so prolonged that it extended into the new phase of the Cold War that was inaugurated by the triumph of the Chinese communists and the outbreak of the Korean war, and the US committed itself first to aiding the French, and then to preventing a Viet Minh victory. The reason the French held on could not be found in any belief that Indo-China was vital to postwar France in any sense such as that in which the Dutch conceived the Indies were vital to the Netherlands.

It was true that the colonies, African and Asian, had proved valuable to France in the depression: in 1927 France imported 11.4 per cent of its goods and raw materials from the empire and exported 14.7 per cent; by 1936 the figures were 33.6 per cent and 33.1 per cent.¹⁵⁸ Colonial soldiers and factory workers had been important in the First World War, even if their importance had apparently been forgotten by the late 1930s.¹⁵⁹ Despite the National Colonial Exposition of 1922 and the vast International Colonial Exposition at Marseille in 1931, the *idée colonial* had not, however, become a popular one: the colonies remained a minority interest. For the general public they were 'exotic', and colonialist propaganda, evoking that feeling, could not make them less so.¹⁶⁰ The French proletariat, as Ho Chi Minh put it, thought of a colony as 'nothing but a country full of sand below and sun above, with a few green palms and a few brown natives'.¹⁶¹

What made the retention of the empire important was, above all, the sense of French greatness: losing it would be unpopular, even if it was not a popular endeavour. There was another similarity with the Netherlands: the political and constitutional systems made for rigidity rather than compromise. There was also a contrast: the rigidity was enhanced by instability. So great indeed was the instability of postwar French governments that they were, moreover, unable to exert the control over the man-on-the-spot that communications now made possible and that the British and the Dutch governments exerted over men like Dorman-Smith and van Mook. *Colons*, too, were influential, in Indo-China as well as in Algeria.

‘For us’, the Free French leader Charles de Gaulle wrote in May 1942, ‘the outcome of the war must be the restoration at one and the same time of the complete territorial integrity of the French Empire, of the heritage of France, and of the total sovereignty of the French nation.’¹⁶² The measures that the French had taken to hold on to Indo-China had not helped their cause. They had not been able to come to terms with Vietnamese nationalism. Fear, Milton Osborne suggests, ‘drove the French to reject any significant liberalization of their rule... the middle ground of genuine constitutional opposition of the sort which emerged in India was not available.’¹⁶³ Had Gandhi tried civil disobedience in Indo-China, Ho Chi Minh observed, he ‘would long since have ascended into heaven’.¹⁶⁴

Aware of their tenuous support within Vietnam, the French were ready to meet Japanese demands: if their rule were overthrown, it might never be restored. ‘The position is unhappily very simple’, the Vichy Foreign Minister, Baudouin, declared in August 1940; ‘if we refuse Japan, she will attack Indo-China which is incapable of being defended. Indo-China will be a hundred per cent lost. If we negotiate with Japan; if we avoid the worst, that is to say the total loss of the colony; we preserve the chances that the future may perhaps bring us.’¹⁶⁵ The same view applied when Japanese forces were admitted to southern Indo-China in 1941: any authority was better than none. ‘[T]he most important question for France is to remain with some authority on the spot regardless of how restricted such authority may be or how humiliating its curtailment.’¹⁶⁶ Were French authority broken off, it might never be possible to mobilise sufficient force and secure sufficient collaboration to re-establish it. But the policy – which helped the Japanese to attack the European colonies to the south – did not prevent the Japanese from overthrowing French authority in the coup of 9 January 1945 (*mei-go*), nor did it make it easier to win the support of the US for its re-establishment. Yet that seemed important.

If the combination of defeat and humiliation with aspirations to grandeur made for a rigidity of approach, it was reinforced by the traditional French approach to empire. Unlike the British, the French could not readily envisage an association of autonomous peoples or dominions. ‘Lacking any sort of powerful dynastic bond such as England and the dominions possess in the king, France and her possessions, in order that their association or their union be durable, needed to develop between them a bond as strong if not stronger, but a republican bond.’¹⁶⁷ French citizenship was awarded to non-Europeans in a limited way, and the citizens represented in the French Assembly: in 1936 it included nineteen deputies from colonial areas.¹⁶⁸ There was no written constitution that covered the colonial possessions. The postwar attempt to draw one up was, however, to emphasise the problems.

De Gaulle’s provisional government had held a conference with the governors of French Africa at Brazzaville early in 1944. The Free French movement assumed that constitutional reforms would be needed to undo Vichy’s repressive legislation and ‘to strengthen the feeble institutions of the Third

Republic'. They would be determined by a constitutional assembly at the end of the war. In the meantime the conference was clear that merely ameliorating the present system – giving colonial deputies and senators seats in the metropolitan parliament – would not be enough. It looked for a new representative body which would 'affirm and guarantee the infrangible unity of the French world' and 'respect the life and the local freedom of each of the territories that constitute the bloc France-Colonies' or French federation. It was also clear, however, that, 'where metropolitan interests and colonial interests might conflict, the interests of the metropole took precedence'.¹⁶⁹

The Brazzaville conference had dealt with Africa, but de Gaulle was determined to prove that 'whether it be at Brazzaville, Algiers, Hanoi, or even at Nantes, Lyons, or Paris, nothing has been able to make French unity cease to be indivisible'. His determination to play a role in the Far Eastern war was a factor in *mei-go*. 'In the suffering of all and in the blood of the soldiers a solemn pact is at this moment being sealed between France and the peoples of the Indochinese Union', he told the people of France on 14 March. '... In truth, never has the Indochinese Union been more committed to finding within herself, with the help of France, the conditions for her own development in every area.'¹⁷⁰ 'The Indochinese Federation shall form with France and the other parts of the [French] community a "French Union", the interests of which abroad shall be represented by France', the provisional government declared ten days later. 'Indochina shall enjoy within that union, liberty of its own.' It would have its own federal government, with responsible Indo-Chinese and French ministers, a council of state, and an elected assembly. It would be comprised of 'five countries', each to keep its own character.¹⁷¹

This approach, never very realistic, became still less realistic in the following months, both because the war continued and because it suddenly stopped. Before the Japanese surrender, 'independent' governments were set up in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and the last was even allowed, at the last minute, to take over the colony of Cochin China. Then, when the Japanese capitulated in August, France was in no position to send in troops and begin a reoccupation. At the same time, the communist-led Viet Minh believed that its moment had come – *thoi co*, the opportune moment that comes once in a thousand years – and, on the very day that MacArthur accepted the Japanese surrender, it proclaimed a Republic in Hanoi.

'Four years ago your country was invaded by foreigners', Emperor Bao Dai had written to de Gaulle. 'Therefore, you should understand that in this period of time a people who have more than 2,000 years of glorious history as ours, will surely never accept any oppression or domination... Even if you should reconquer the rule of this country, no one would obey you, every village will be a resisting force, you will have to withdraw.'¹⁷² 'Far too many Frenchmen imagined that the Indochinese were awaiting our return with impatience and were preparing to welcome us with open arms', Jean Sainteny had tried to explain.¹⁷³ The French ministry of colonies was indeed

anxious to modify the stance of 24 March. It might even be necessary, Henri Laurentie argued, to declare the independence of Annam and accept its unity. 'In such a delicate enterprise, what counts is to avoid letting the right moment pass. It is better to pronounce the word Independence at the opportune moment than to be thrown out. After all, the status of a present and favoured friend remains an acceptable condition.'¹⁷⁴

That line was not followed. De Gaulle believed that the restoration of French authority came first. Any chance of mingling force and conciliation was further reduced because after all force seemed to be at hand. Mountbatten's adviser, Esler Dening, was concerned 'that the French are likely to take the attitude that all subversive movements in French Indo-China are Japanese-stimulated'. He thought that 'we should avoid at all costs laying ourselves open to the accusation that we are assisting the West to suppress the East'.¹⁷⁵ On behalf of the SEAC forces, however, General D. Gracey sanctioned a French coup against the Viet Minh's provisional government in Saigon – though he had not anticipated the excesses of the French troops and *colons* – and when that provoked an uprising on 25 September his troops were committed to restoring 'law and order' in southern Indo-China. Indeed the French in Cochin China were offered far more support than the Dutch were to secure in Indonesia. That encouraged them to reoccupy rather than compromise, though the British made an attempt to promote talks. 'Your General Gracey has saved French Indo China', General Leclerc was to tell Mountbatten.¹⁷⁶ Perhaps the reverse was true. In an echo of the 1880s, the French insisted that the Viet Minh were 'pirates and bandits', H. N. Brain wrote. They were 'shutting their eyes to the fact that Annamite independence movements have existed for some 80 years and have broken out in violent forms more than once, only to be driven underground by the use of the harshest measures of suppression'. *Deux coups de fusil* would not do.¹⁷⁷

In the north, indeed, a different approach was followed. There the Viet Minh were far stronger, and the occupying forces were Nationalist Chinese. Their departure, secured by abandoning French extraterritoriality in China, was associated with the conclusion on 6 March of the Ho Chi Minh–Sainteny accord that was to 'inspire' van Mook: France agreed to recognise Vietnam as a free state, having its own government, parliament, army and finances, belonging to the Indo-Chinese federation and the French Union, while Vietnam declared itself ready to receive French troops. 'I am not happy about it', Ho told Sainteny. '...But I understand that you cannot have everything in a day.'¹⁷⁸

The post-accord negotiations took place, however, against a background of increasing tension. The Gaullist High Commissioner in Saigon, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, saw the accord as one of five accords to be made with the states of the federation. After a conference with the Viet Minh at Dalat, he determined to concentrate for the time being on Cochin China. There a Provisional Government for the Republic of Cochin China was inaugurated, and its representatives were included in a second Dalat conference, including

also those from Laos and Cambodia, but not Vietnam. These steps did not help the negotiations between France and the Republic at Fontainebleau, where the two sides could reach no agreement on two fundamental questions: the extent to which Vietnam might be a 'free' or an 'independent' state, and the unity of the three *ky*, Tonkin, Annam and Cochin China.

At the same time, moreover, the second constituent assembly was debating the constitution for the proposed French Union. By undermining the confidence of moderates in the assembly that a union could be based on free consent, the arguments at Fontainebleau contributed, as Marshall suggests, to the adoption of a more rigid structure. A loose union might be but an *ante-chambre de sortie*. In turn the constitutional discussions made for rigidity at Fontainebleau. The assembly debates also enhanced the public's concern and deepened its emotional commitment. 'National feelings, whipped up by the war, were becoming extremely irritable as soon as it appeared that France's future as a great power was at stake', Philippe Devillers commented. 'Public opinion, while ready to accept any transformation – even a radical one – in the colonial system, was, on the other hand, absolutely unwilling to permit the slightest attempt at secession... But to the public, the word "independence" inevitably evoked the idea of secession.'¹⁷⁹ No longer in power, de Gaulle kept up the pressure outside: 'United to the overseas territories that she opened up to civilization, France is a great power', he declared on 27 August. 'Without these territories, she risks being one no longer.' The constitution should 'affirm and impose the solidarity of all the overseas territories with France'.¹⁸⁰

The constitution for the Union that emerged – driven home by the Bidault government – was, despite the name, in some sense a confederation rather than a federation. France was linked to the associated states by an international agreement that preserved their international status. The members, however, were to combine their resources for the defence of the union, and the government of the republic was to co-ordinate and direct the appropriate policies. 'All French nationals and subjects of the French Union shall have the status of citizen of the French Union', Article 81 declared. Article 66 provided that the Assembly of the French Union should consist half of members representing metropolitan France and half of members representing overseas departments and territories and associated states. Executive powers were to lie with a committee, the High Council of the French Union, presided over by the president of the union, the president of France. Including representatives of the associated states, it was to assist the French government 'in the general direction of the union'.¹⁸¹ 'If you read the articles concerning the French Union in the constitution of 28 September 1946, ... you can see how falsely we were accused of trying to decolonize', Bidault later wrote.¹⁸²

No agreement had been reached at Fontainebleau, but Moutet, the Overseas Minister, had signed a *modus vivendi* with Ho on 14 September. Article 9, which dealt with a cease-fire, was, however, loosely worded. As he told d'Argenlieu on his return, Ho could not accept that it meant disarm-

ment in or withdrawal from Cochin China; but the old colony was the centre-piece of the High Commissioner's policy. The British Foreign Office feared 'serious disturbances' in Cochin China.¹⁸³ Given the content of domestic politics and the approach of new elections, no new instructions were likely to be sent. The initiative lay with the men on the spot. Conversations stalled.¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile the French had reintroduced the federal customs regulations. A clash over their application at Haiphong on 20 November prompted Jean Valluy, acting for d'Argenlieu, but perhaps recalling Garnier, to order the seizure of that city. Major clashes followed in Haiphong and in Langson.

Saigon wrote off Ho Chi Minh – d'Argenlieu began to emphasise that he was a communist – but Paris still hoped for a compromise, and Sainteny was sent back to see the man with whom he had negotiated in March.¹⁸⁵ Philippe Baudet, chief of the Pacific division at the Quai, told Ashley Clarke at the British embassy that

the French Government had decided to push on with the negotiations begun in Paris even if this course entailed the use of forcible measures to maintain the situation in the meanwhile. They believed that Ho Chi Minh genuinely desired to reach an understanding with France although he had been somewhat overwhelmed by the elements of the extreme left.¹⁸⁶

Separating Ho from his organisation was, however, an unrealistic notion, not unlike the notion of supporting Sjahrir or Hatta by suppressing extremists. In any case Sainteny was given nothing to offer. Indeed there was no government to offer it: Bidault had resigned on 28 November and Blum formed his cabinet on 17 December. In Burma the British government had replaced Dorman-Smith by Rance, but accepted that a mere change of personality was not enough. Blum decided to send Moutet out on a peace mission.

Meeting in Haiphong on 16–17 December, however, French military leaders had decided, as Léon Pignon told Paris, that the Viet Minh government must be destroyed or weakened.¹⁸⁷ That government had, after the Haiphong incident, adopted a plan for a rising in Hanoi, followed by a withdrawal. It was not, however, anxious to carry it out and it certainly sought to avoid incidents. Incidents increased, however, and war began on 19 December. Was Vo Nguyen Giap pre-empting a French attack? or were nationalist elements seizing the initiative over Ho's communist leadership? Such elements were strong in the Tu Ve militia, and the hostilities began in an aleatory manner.¹⁸⁸ The Tonkinese Vespers were blamed on the Viet Minh: another Pearl Harbor, said Moutet.¹⁸⁹ The French must share responsibility. They were tempted to use force. Misjudging the political context within which they now had to work, they alienated those that might have collaborated with them and destroyed the ground on which they might have

stood. Yet the Vespers began a war that they could not bring to a successful conclusion.

Like the Dutch ministers, Moutet changed his views once he got to Southeast Asia. There must be, he said, a 'military decision'. He added, however, that it was not necessarily reconquest: he hoped for 'political results', for a 'reversal of climate', thrusting the native masses back towards the French authorities, causing 'personalities to come forth with whom the authorities will be able to speak'.¹⁹⁰ In March 1947 d'Argenlieu was replaced by Emile Bollaert, who sent Paul Mus to Hanoi. The French, Baudet said, hoped to group 'some more acceptable elements' round Ho Chi Minh, but the terms they offered were unacceptable.¹⁹¹ Bollaert turned to Bao Dai. But, though able to indicate that the union of the three *ky* was for the people to decide, he was unable to speak of independence. The French, as Street put it, would not grant Bao Dai the concessions he needed to secure the status with the Vietnamese they wanted him to have.¹⁹²

The French government was nevertheless anxious to show that the policy would work before it risked a discussion in the Assembly. The concept of the Union, however, gave 'much trouble'.¹⁹³ In the Baie d'Along accords of June 1948 France recognised the independence of Vietnam, 'whose right it is to bring about freely its unity'. Vietnam adhered to the French Union and agreed to respect French rights and interests. Once a provisional government had been established, representatives of France and Vietnam would agree on arrangements in the cultural, diplomatic, military, economic, financial and technical areas.¹⁹⁴ Bao Dai was present, but did not sign. He wanted real independence.¹⁹⁵ The Marie government avoided a full discussion in the Assembly, obtaining only a 'somewhat ambiguous vote' of approval.¹⁹⁶ In March 1949 an agreement was annexed to an exchange of letters between Bao Dai and President Auriol. It offered, as the British Foreign Office saw it, 'token rather than real independence', unlikely 'to entice away from Ho Chi Minh those nationalist elements . . . who are opposed to a Marxist programme for Viet Nam and yet who wished to see a genuinely independent state'.¹⁹⁷ It was this government, however, that the UK and the US recognised early in 1950, even anticipating the completion of the slow process under which the French ratified their agreement with Vietnam.

The struggle in Indo-China became linked to the Cold War in a way that differed from the struggle in Indonesia. There the US was able to back a nationalist and anti-communist regime against the colonial power. In Vietnam the nationalist movement was under communist leadership, only consolidated by a French policy that had failed to combine its deployment of force with a realistic political approach. The growing alarm about communism – on the borders, moreover, in the Indo-China case – induced the US to support the French, while at the same time urging them to offer real concessions to the Bao Dai regime. 'We are the last French colonialists in Indochina', an American diplomat declared late in 1953.¹⁹⁸ The French

found a way out through the Korean armistice and the subsequent talks. The US, however, were unable to accept that Ho should triumph.

If that decision was taken on the broadest political and strategic grounds, it was also true that the French had not hung on for economic advantage. The war had been a drain on their resources. It had also seen substantial losses, some 92,000 men, mostly Africans, Indo-Chinese and Legionnaires, but also over 20,000 Frenchmen, 40 per cent of them officers and NCOs. In the early 1950s the struggle was continued with US help. It had begun, however, with a political objective, the greatness of France, and been sustained partly because the political system produced what Clarke called a 'combination of *laissez-faire* and spasmodic passion'.¹⁹⁹

In the early twentieth century and in the depression Indo-China had served French economic interests. By the 1950s there was no interest in making the Union an economic bloc.²⁰⁰ It came to be seen as an economic burden.²⁰¹ 'One may wonder if, by stemming the decline of one branch of industry already losing ground, the empire did not hinder the redeployment of the structure of French exports in relation to that of European countries, and help to maintain the status quo of a non-competitive industrial structure.' Private investors were indeed pulling out of the colonies in the early 1950s, and capital being redeployed in more profitable ways. 'In the decade which followed independence, the growth of French capitalism was particularly vigorous, and its structural changes rapid. Deprived of its colonies, France progressively made up some of the backwardness which marked it off from the industrialized powers.' Marseille suggests 'that it is unlikely that business interests could have been the pressure group behind those politicians hostile to every form of independence'.²⁰² The political issues predominated. The politicians could not find the way out.

From their own territory in Southeast Asia the Americans had withdrawn in 1946. Writing to the American ambassador in London in November 1942, Secretary of State Cordell Hull said that the President and the whole government

earnestly favor freedom for all dependent peoples at the earliest date practicable. Our course in dealing with the Philippines situation in this respect, as in all other important respects, offers, I think, a perfect example of how a nation should treat a colony or a dependency in cooperating with it in all essential respects calculated to assist in making all necessary preparation for freedom.

It was offered 'as a strong example to all other countries and their dependencies'.²⁰³ The war, despite the destruction it caused, only made the US more determined to carry out the promise of independence in 1946. In a special sense, therefore, the priority in American policy, as in the policy of the other powers, was political, though somewhat paradoxically the US

insisted on a privileged economic position in the new Republic, Congress making that the price of rehabilitation.

Siam had reacted to the first departure of the imperial powers and their second coming. It had gone to war with French Indo-China in 1940–1, had with some reluctance come to terms with the Japanese, and had joylessly accepted the transfer of some Shan and Malay states. It was able, however, to retain the goodwill of the US and to escape the postwar punishment the other powers were disposed to administer. Pridi made some attempt to support nationalists in neighbouring Indo-China. Pibun turned to the US.

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8 Legacies

The states of the imperial period became the independent nation-states of the post-imperial period. The states had often been initially seen as projections of the imperial states, if not, in some sense, part of them. The British, perhaps more clearly than other Europeans, saw them as a step towards being states in a world of states, though their time-frame was generally vague and sometimes very long. In retrospect, indeed, the states must appear transitional. They possessed some, but not all, the attributes of a modern state, but under colonial rule could not acquire the remainder. It would be 'counterfactual' to consider how the relationship might have evolved but for the Japanese invasion. Even before it occurred, the depression and the deterioration in the international situation tended, at least in some of the territories, to encourage status-quo policies. The invasion overthrew the colonial powers. The Europeans sought to return, but in general failed to regain even the measure of control they had acquired in the imperial period. Only the US was ready immediately to relinquish an overt political role.

Within the states that the colonial powers had taken over or brought under their protection, they had indeed come to face a nationalist challenge. As in the metropolises themselves, so in the empires, state-building had capricious outcomes, 'state formation' in Jim Schiller's analysis. The territories had been taken over as part of a generalised attempt to secure guarantees for the future in a phase in which the relative position of the European powers was being changed. The immediate gains were rarely obvious and never quantified. Adam Smithians or not, colonial administrators needed revenue, and they often adopted an interventionist stance in order to attract capital and labour, or to avert the interest of the merely speculative. Their state-building was bound, however, to have capricious outcomes, coupled, as it was, with the impact of economic and social changes brought about by what would now be called globalisation. Among those outcomes was the emergence of new elites that sought to displace the collaborators on whom the colonial regimes had relied from their inception and either put the collaboration on a new basis or bring it to an end. They were strongly influenced by the nationalism that was part of both state-building and state-formation in the West.

Growing up within the respective colonial frontiers, it was for the most part, however, a nationalism that sought to inherit a successor-state rather than start anew. The 'stretch' of Indonesia, with 'its hybrid pseudo-Hellenic name', does not 'remotely correspond to any pre-colonial domain', as Ben Anderson puts it: 'at least until General Suharto's brutal invasion of ex-Portuguese East Timor in 1975, its boundaries have been those left behind by the last Dutch conquests (c. 1910)'.¹ The frontiers of imperial Southeast Asia – drawn up to avoid open conflict among the European powers – indeed became a legacy to post-imperial Southeast Asia.

The process of decolonisation also helped to produce this result. Like the process of imperial partition, it took place over a relatively short period, but in a piecemeal way. For a brief 'interregnum', the Japanese were in control of all Southeast Asia, and they were disposed to tamper with the boundaries set up by those they had displaced. They made over parts of the Shan states and northern Malaya to Thailand, for example, as well as parts of Cambodia and Laos, and in Malaya and Indonesia they allowed nationalists to talk of Indonesia Raya, though not to realise it. The return of the colonial powers put an end to such changes, which seemed all the more unacceptable for the Japanese precedent. The US took the lead in granting independence to the Philippines as defined in the constitution of 1935, and, unwilling to alienate the British, the Filipinos decided against raising the claim to North Borneo of which prewar nationalists had talked.

The British, the leading power in SEAC, indeed aimed at putting the relationships of the Europeans and the peoples of Southeast Asia on a new footing. That was to be based on the recognition of the strength of the nationalism that had grown up within the colonial frontiers. It ruled out a reconsideration of the frontiers. The British decided against making any claim to the Kra isthmus, seen as critical for the defence of Malaya, though the Americans and the Thais were suspicious and the Pattani Malays hopeful. They were above all opposed to Greater Indonesia and its threat to Malaya and Borneo. The claims of Indonesian nationalists should, however, be recognised in 'Indonesia', even, perhaps, in West New Guinea, and the French, they thought, would have been wise to deal with Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist as the British had with Aung San.

That approach was in keeping with the long-standing view of the British, lying beneath their imperialist activity. The future of the world had been seen as one of states, inevitably now as one of nation-states, which traded with each other, and whose interests were reconciled by a diplomacy that took account both of a theoretical equality of sovereignty and of an actual disparity of power. Such a view was even stronger in the postwar world. It afforded the best opportunities for a power that had lost its pre-eminence and was, like the rest of the world, faced by two superpowers, whose rivalry tended to be expressed in ideological terms.

In the event the nature of the struggles in the Cold War, like those of the postwar phase, helped to sustain this approach to the frontiers inherited from

the imperial phase. The two superpowers, despite their rivalry and ideological differences, sought to avoid the risks of a third world war. There were wars, but small wars, and the fighting was generally regulated to avoid provocation. It therefore avoided openly crossing frontiers. In general the world dominated by two superpowers was also an emerging world of states in which the frontiers of the past were consolidated rather than eroded. The biggest interstate conflict in which Britain was involved in Southeast Asia was one in which in some measure it breached its own policy by supporting the creation of Malaysia. Its belief that small states were not viable was indeed at odds with its belief that new states must be successor-states. Nor was it easy to resolve the difference in association with neighbouring states, even though they should be treated like other sovereign states. The British sought to leave the Malaysia initiative to the Tunku.

The relative security the international situation conferred on the frontiers of the Southeast Asian states enabled them to focus on the task of state-building. That was an advantage. There were also disadvantages. While colonial states had Western-style frontiers, they were not Western-style states. The frontiers were the legacy of a state-building venture only partly – if at all – concerned with the creation and management of independent states. Yet that was the task ahead.

‘[T]he building of states in Western Europe cost tremendously in death, suffering, loss of rights and unwilling surrender of land, goods, or labor . . . Building differentiated, autonomous, centralized organizations with effective control of territories entailed eliminating or subordinating thousands of semi-autonomous authorities . . . Building states also entailed extracting the resources for their operation from several million rural communities.’² That is another context in which to consider the tasks of the leaders of post-colonial Southeast Asia. It had been a slow, if agonising, process. Yet the leaders could hardly delay. That would be to adopt the rationale of the colonialists. They were, moreover, working in a world where such states already existed and had indeed become the rule.

They were, too, nation-states, or saw themselves and were seen as such. The nation-state, it seemed, was the way to modernisation. Like the Fabian Governor of Uganda, Sir Andrew Cohen, they ‘[t]hought you had to have a national will for national economic and social development and that a colony never could have one’.³ The frontiers they inherited encompassed what was now seen as ethnic diversity, and there was an implicit contradiction in the principles of self-determination and nationality. Colonial states had been able to view that diversity with indifference. Indeed it could justify a kind of arbitral role. Back in 1764, Alexander Dalrymple had argued that the ‘Chief of a colonial settlement must have wide powers, to be avoided in a free state, but not abroad, ‘where there so many opposite Interests and jarring Dispositions’.⁴ The post-colonial ruler had to adopt a larger role. He rarely

felt strong enough to benefit from ethnic diversity. Often his actions might challenge and provoke what he wanted to suppress or play down.

Tied to the nationalist cause, and indeed to 'development', was a sense of popular participation. That, too, the leaders accepted, and the endeavour to throw off the imperial powers, whether by struggle or diplomacy or both, had endorsed it in theory and in practice. Upon what basis should it be secured? On that they differed. In Europe itself, it had been used to sustain both authoritarian and democratic regimes. There, too, it had been used to target minorities, even to destroy them, or to promote xenophobia. Whatever the examples the Europeans set, the legacy of their colonial regimes, even at their most liberal, could not support democratic practice by offering experience of it. '[S]overeignty is external to the colonized territory and in such a circumstance, there can be no democracy. Any attempt at the development of democratic institutions in circumstances so constitutionally antithetical to their prosperity can only produce a distorted experience for the colonized.'⁵

In the Philippines Commonwealth, President Quezon was unable to conduct foreign policy, while at home, as an admirer put it, he had 'more power than Mussolini'.⁶ In interwar Burma, as Robert Taylor puts it, 'British policy-makers failed to note that in order to allow an indigenous political elite to govern the country, that elite would have to be able to respond to the problems of the electorate'.⁷ The Volksraad, Colijn had said, would not enable the educated native 'to take his place in the administration in such a way as to be able to cooperate on the basic principle of responsibility'.⁸

Nor did the Japanese interregnum provide the experience the colonial powers had failed to offer. The Japanese were concerned more with mobilisation and control than with state-building. 'The farce of Japanese independence did not teach responsible handling of problems', writes Dorothy Guyot of Burma.⁹ A democracy required conscious effort, as Rizal had seen many years before: it required 'economía', the husbanding of resources, and 'transigencia', give and take.¹⁰ Nowhere was 'transigencia' more required than in post-colonial states, or, perhaps, more difficult to supply.

Attempting to develop a participatory system in interwar Burma, the British set the Scheduled Areas aside from parliamentary Burma, and provided 'communal' constituencies within parliamentary Burma. That was not a satisfactory solution. Burman nationalists became more determined to insist on a Union, and the 'minorities', especially the Karens, were among the first to take up arms after independence was secured in 1948. In postwar Malaya the British tried at first to introduce a Union that would more or less displace the Malay states and to create a common citizenship that would attract the 'immigrant' communities, but soon accepted a Federation and, a few years later, a political system that relied on co-operation at the elite level and mobilisation of supporters on a communal basis. Its association with the Dutch undermined a federal answer to Indonesia's diversity, though the independence struggle also promoted the introduction of a parliamentary

system, massively supported in elections based on universal suffrage in 1955, but soon, however, abandoned by the elite. The American attempts to integrate the Moro lands into the Philippines had been crude and counter-productive. Both the Commonwealth and the Republic governments aggravated the Moro 'problem', made more sensitive in any case by growing interest on the part of overseas Islam. Though the international system provided a guarantee of the frontiers which the new leaders had inherited, it did not, of course, prevent the provision of support from outside.

Imperialism left another equivocal legacy. In Europe the French concept of the nation and the British example of industrialisation had been brought together, and the one powered the other. The modern state was an industrial state. Colonial regimes, however, had stood in the way of industrialisation, doing nothing to promote it, if not actually opposing it. They had not been the only obstacle: 'perhaps the relative lack of industry in Malaya', John Drabble has suggested, 'was due more to problems such as the limited size of the local market, the supply of raw materials and the availability of cheaper competitive products'.¹¹ The gaining of independence was, however, associated with a determination to industrialise that shaped the development plans of the new states perhaps unduly and heightened expectations still further.

The classic story of Asian industrialisation was that of Japan. Certainly colonial governments had not had the macro-economic policy weapons that the Meiji oligarchs were able to deploy. In Java, for example, a number of the conditions were right: a substantial population, offering a domestic market and a labour force; a village system that avoided the need to cast in a safety net. Van Deventer's cures for 'diminishing welfare' at the turn of the century were irrigation, education, transmigration, better rural credit. Abraham Kuyper, Dutch Prime Minister in 1901, argued by contrast that the proper policy was 'to advance the people of the Indies from the agricultural to the industrial state'.¹² Plantation interests were opposed: it would raise the cost of labour. Industrialists and workers in the Netherlands were also opposed: they wanted to retain the market. It was only behind the quota-based Crisis Import Ordinance that the Dutch directed against Japanese competition in the 1930s that Javanese textile manufacturing boomed. Government spent only 1.6 per cent of its income on promoting industry in 1940.¹³

The position in Vietnam was somewhat similar. A textile mill had been established in Hanoi back in 1894, developing into the Société Cotonnière de l'Indochine in 1913. It was designed to stop the import of cheap British Indian yarns, without competing with high-quality French goods.¹⁴ Import substitution industries would have been possible by the end of the First World War, but, while there was no prohibition against them, there was no assistance for them. There were no subsidies, and small-scale entrepreneurs were excluded from metropolitan trade associations. The protectionist approach, adopted in 1892, was only altered in 1928, not abandoned. *A priori*, the

banker Paul Bernard argued in November 1937, one could not see why Indochina could not 'prétendre au même développement que le Japon'.¹⁵ He argued that France could create an internal market for goods, currently limited by the poverty of the population. Even the Popular Front government did not favour that: Moutet preferred peasants and artisans to unruly workers.¹⁶ Some ancillary activities nevertheless emerged, processing to reduce the cost of bulk materials, small-scale production for the local market.

The Philippines had more leeway. The prospect of independence and the reduction of US markets promoted a measure of industrialisation in the 1930s, though it faced competition from Japanese as well as American goods. The National Development Company, founded in 1919, was the chosen instrument, and it was given greater powers and more resources. A tin-can factory was set up, a canning plant, a cotton textile mill, but only a modest level of import substitute industrialisation (ISI) had been achieved by 1940.¹⁷

Colonial governments had promoted development as a source of revenue. The interests they thus helped to establish at the micro-level inhibited further development. Nor was the metropolis in favour. In the French case it had become protectionist even in the late nineteenth century. The depression extended the concern for markets for industrial goods, even though a policy of dear imports was at odds with the interests of locally established plantation interests. Behind barriers set up to limit the competition of the Japanese, however, some ISI took place. The Japanese occupation itself disrupted the economic as well as the political pattern. The return of the colonial powers was seen as an attempt to restore both. When political independence was finally secured, the leaders of the new states were all the more determined to industrialise. It was an assertion of independence and modernity. Achieving it, however, required more than the removal of the colonial bonds. It required a level of expertise and education which the colonial period had not provided. It also required favourable economic conditions in the world at large. They were not present either.

'Owing largely to its former character as a peripheral region of the Indian Empire', Burma was one of the least industrialised countries in Southeast Asia, and 'the desire for rapid industrialization . . . was particularly intense'.¹⁸ 'The government attributed . . . great importance to manufacturing, which symbolized to the leaders the new Burma they desired to build, and which, they thought, held out the greatest hope for higher levels of living and welfare.'¹⁹ It called in a firm of American consultants and embarked on a two-year plan focusing on ISI. It fell behind. Burma's leaders, Charles Fisher concluded, should 'resist the temptation to industrialize for industrialization's sake, and continue to concentrate the greater part of the nation's economic activity on primary production and related processing'.²⁰ In Indonesia 'development' was caught up in the argument between technocrats of a neo-classical bent and those concerned to promote 'national' economic leadership, turning also on the perception that their expertise, their networks and

their entrepreneurship might enhance the role of the Chinese minority. In the Philippines ISI was promoted, somewhat adventitiously, by the imposition of import and export controls, in the context of the pegging of the peso to the dollar on which the US had insisted. 'The immediate aim of the controls was to halt the sharp decline of the exchange reserves, but they were gradually intensified in the 1950s and increasingly developed as an instrument for industrialization via import substitution.'²¹

From the late 1960s international conditions became rather more favourable. A new form of the international division of labour brought opportunities for export-oriented industrialisation (EOI). Developing countries, the World Bank and the IMF argued, should concentrate on the manufactures they could produce efficiently, thanks, for example, to lower labour costs and informal welfare nets, fewer regulations against pollution, and lower tariff barriers in purchasing countries. They should take full advantage of relations with multinational corporations and other sources of investment, and the experience and the knowhow they gained would enable them to extend into other fields. Under this pattern of relationships the US and Japan, and also Korea and Taiwan, began to transfer manufacturing activities to Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian countries could take advantage of the 'product cycles of these investments to establish themselves in new and increasingly higher value manufactures'.²²

Yet there were limits on EOI as there had been on ISI. Some, perhaps the most important, came from outside. The realisation of Southeast Asia's industrial potential depended on the continued prosperity of the major industrial powers and their continued interest in the region. Southeast Asian countries were, as McVey puts it,²³ dependent in a new way on specialised and labile international markets, and they could be overtaken by countries offering still lower labour costs. Multinational corporations, moreover, might limit industrialisation not, as colonial powers once had, by employing or failing to employ political power, but by employing economic power: setting the terms of investment or the measure of technology transfer. Singapore's attempt at a 'second industrial revolution' after 1979 was much less successful than the first. The withholding of the latest technology, protectionism, and the consignment of cheap labour sites to a marginal role in world production, 'ensured that the period of NICs expanding their share of world industrial output was shortlived and confined to an intermediate technological level', Chris Tremewan concluded.²⁴

If there were limits outside, there were limits inside as well. The legacy of the imperial period was cheap labour, but not qualified labour. The extent and nature of education in the imperial period was shaped by both economic and political factors. The nature of the region's economic development did not require more than a limited level of technical or technological education. 'The aim of the Government', a report of the FMS Chief Secretary declared in 1920, 'is not to turn out a few well-educated youths, nor yet numbers of less well-educated boys; rather it is to improve the bulk of the people and to make

the son of the fisherman or peasant a more intelligent fisherman or peasant than his father had been, and a man whose education will enable him to understand how his own lot in life fits in with the scheme of life around him'.²⁵ Much of the task, perhaps not entirely unfortunately, was left to other bodies, foreign missions, Chinese community organisations: it was less part of state-building than of state-formation.

The political concerns of governments indeed made them apprehensive about the extension of education in law and the liberal arts. Almost everywhere colonial regimes educated small numbers. The same had been true, of course, in the metropolitan states themselves. In 1903 the Philippines claimed 44.2 per cent literacy; 40.7 per cent was the average for Spain in 1910. The gap opened up in the late colonial period, however, when colonial governments were cautious over political advance, and indeed over economic change. In 1930–1 only 8 per cent of the relevant age-group were in the vernacular primary schools designed for them in Netherlands India. By 1941 just 230 had graduated from the engineering, law and medical schools.

Education became, partly as a result of its limitation, an arena of nationalist struggle, most obviously in the case of Burma. Though the British established a university in Burma in 1920, partly as a result of its connexion with India, they seemed to envisage so restricted a number of graduates that Burma would never be able to govern itself. The university legislation became a focus for nationalist agitation, which also stimulated a call for 'national' schools. The university was itself to nurture the future 'Thakin' nationalist leaders, including Nu, president of the student union. As premier in the 1950s, and also chancellor, Nu was, somewhat ironically, to be concerned over political activities on the campus and over the low level of learning. The caretaker Ne Win government of 1958–60 'effectively restored discipline... at the expense, however, of free discussion, even in the classroom'.²⁶

By then, of course, education was politicised in an independent state. That experience in a measure replicated the experience of Western states, as well as that of independent Siam/Thailand, and it was not simply an imperial legacy. In that respect it may, perhaps, rather be seen as an aspect of the struggle to build states on the inadequate but essential foundations created in the imperial phase. Imperial state-builders had put the political task ahead of the economic. So did their successors. That was apparent in Malaya as in Burma, though in quite a different way: national language policy was in tension with the need for English, and quotas drove many overseas. Such priorities were not necessarily those that would enable the states to maximise the opportunities for continued industrialisation that the 1970s and 1980s were to offer.

Then state and capital collaborated once more without their interests entirely coinciding. Very often, it was on the basis of 'crony' or 'ersatz' capitalism. It released some of the potential available, but left the future uncertain. Politically the period was associated with an authoritarian trend. External resources indeed gave the regimes vast new resources for

state-building. They were widely used to win political support, but much more rarely to create the institutions of a civil society. In that sphere again the colonial legacy was limited. The new authoritarianism often sought to displace or take over what there was, or what had since developed. Useful trappings of the colonial states were retained, including their security provisions. 'Along with authorized figures – the ruler, the national heroes and martyrs, the established religious authorities – the newly triumphant politicians seem to require borders and passports first of all', Said has bitterly observed of post-colonial states. 'What had once been the imaginative liberation of a people . . . and the audacious metaphoric charting of spiritual territory usurped by colonial masters were quickly translated into and accommodated by a world system of barriers, maps, frontiers, police forces, customs and exchange controls.'²⁷ If his comment related to the immediate post-colonial period, it applied no less in the latter decades of the century.

The phase seems in retrospect to be one, not only of prosperity and rising living standards, as well as environmental degradation, but also one of missed economic and political opportunities. If there were to be any chance of continued industrial development, it would have required more attention to infrastructure and education. If there were to be political stability, there should have been more institutional development, not less. The imperialists had set up a political framework, within which they had encouraged economic development. Their views, limited in both spheres, were now entirely irrelevant. But one part of their legacy that was neglected – the one to which this book has drawn attention – was the connexion between the two spheres of activity. They overlapped, but were never identical. In the nation-states of modern Southeast Asia, the connexion must differ. What it should be requires a consideration larger than the short-term and the political.

Imperialism left a legacy to the imperial powers, too. They shed their economic connexions with little difficulty, their political connexions with rather more. In some cases they retained a nostalgia for the past, though it seems somewhat akin to the incurious exoticism of previous generations. Their 'racism' is less affiliated to the imperial experience than to the movement of peoples prompted by the post-imperial economic transformation of the world. Their attitudes allow room for greed and impatience, but also for idealism, all of them qualities associated in different ways with the imperial adventure.

Globalisation, Bernard Porter observes, the Victorians called 'free trade'. 'That was not the same as British imperialism, any more than it is identical with "American imperialism" today.' The British empire's relationship to globalisation was 'ambivalent. Usually it rode it', but its paternalism might also hold it in check. In the British case at least, formal imperialism modified globalisation 'by attaching to it a sense of moral duty, which imperialism does not naturally carry on its own. If you are merely trading with a people, you don't need to be concerned with their welfare . . . If you are ruling them, you must be, at least if you are doing it from the position of weakness that Britain's

colonial rulers were constantly in.²⁸ The imperial system provided for a measure of accountability, the substitute for which in a world of states can be found only in the development of civil societies within those states and the activities of international and non-governmental organisations outside them.

Imperialism has been given many meanings. The explanation for it will vary with the meaning. Some of the confusion surrounding the concept arises from the failure to make that point, or the wish to avoid making it. The focus of this book has been on what is most commonly called imperialism, the movement that saw most of Southeast Asia and Africa become the domain of colonial powers in the period in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. That focus may help in explaining the relative significance of the factors involved, economic and political, country by country, territory by territory. It may even so suggest strategies for considering other kinds of imperialism and explaining them.

The focus is also on Southeast Asia. Again, perhaps with greater ease, it may be possible to compare what happened there with what happened in other regions, even though its social and political structures, part of the explanation of the phenomenon, were themselves so varied and so distinctive. Certainly what happened in one part of the world affected what happened in other parts. The Europeans differed in many ways and were often at odds, but they shared many views of the world beyond Europe. Their relations with one another also covered more than one part of the non-European world. The practices they adopted became precedents.

The book finds that the rivalry of the European states is at the core of the explanation. Benjamin Cohen presents a similar argument in terms of a search for security in an anarchic system. On that two comments are offered. First, it was not entirely anarchic: even in the search for security, the states developed rules and sought agreements. The second comment is a related question: why were there phases in the story of endemic insecurity or rivalry, phases in which the agreements, and even the rules themselves, proved inadequate?

Obviously that related to the shifting distribution of power among the states, and, less obviously, to the potential for its redistribution. In the nineteenth century, two major sources of change operated within and among states: the national revolution and the industrial revolution. Not necessarily combined, but additionally powerful in combination, they were both sure to affect the relations of states one with another, and produce the apprehension and ambition that fed insecurity.

The 1870s marked a new phase in the story because the two sources of change had begun to have major effects on the distribution of power in Europe. Successful in its long rivalry with France, and first with the industrial revolution, Britain had attained an unusual degree of primacy at the mid-century. That was now challenged by the spread of the industrial revolution and by national unification.

It was in this context that 'imperialism' got under way. The arguments for empire, and the actions taken in pursuit of it, were often presented in terms of state necessity, the economic rationales skimpy indeed. They can usefully be seen – as Dutch scholars have suggested in the case of Indonesia – as part of state-building projects urged on at a time when the distribution of power was changing in Europe, and, the potential for further change being evident, they aimed to provide some certainty about the future.

The practice had some precedent in what Marx called the first sixteenth century. Then, though adventurers were essential, the state was predominant. The 'second' sixteenth century witnessed a more complex relationship between state and capital. But it is impossible to accept the cruder versions of the relationship offered by Hobson and Lenin, though they succeeded in their popularisation, and their popularity remains.

Though the states differed, the striking feature in all cases is the limited and reluctant role that capitalists played in the venture. There was talk of profit and riches, but it was rarely the talk of those who would invest. Characteristically those who came to rule colonial territories, or advise protected rulers, had to make their domains attractive to investors, to offer subsidies, to create infrastructure, often increasing local taxes to do so and calling on *corvée* labour. There were common 'ideas', the 'Political Maxims' of the day, but it was not the case that capital controlled the state apparatus. When capitalists did become interested, it was also clear that administrators did not welcome mere speculators. Their concern was with revenue and regularity.

Nor were the state-builders successful in involving the mass of their metropolitan fellow-citizens or subjects in the colonial aspect of their endeavour. 'Imperialism' and 'colonialism' had a role in domestic politics, but seldom a decisive one. Generally the mass of the people were concerned only in cases of personal disaster or national humiliation. When they were, of course, their involvement tended to add to the inflexibility both of interstate relations and colonial policies.

The relationships, moreover, were never merely those between state and capital. There were other ways, more or less autonomous, in which Europe projected itself into the non-European world. One, in the second sixteenth century as in the first, was in the religious field. The Christian missionaries both validated and questioned the imperial endeavour. Their activities both supplemented those of the colonial state and challenged them.

The colonial territories increasingly themselves took on the character of states. They could, however, never have all the attributes of an independent state, nor all its capacities. Within their frontiers, however, state-formation was producing elites that wanted to complete the task. The Japanese invasion opened the way for them. The European states reacted in different ways to the nationalist movements they now faced.

Though they had much in common, their imperialisms had differed from the start, affected as they were by their relative position, their wealth, their

traditions, their politics. Dealing with the period after 1870, this book first covered the British. The arrangements they had made or accepted in the 1850s and 1860s were challenged. Their response was to adjust, in some areas establishing their control, in others avoiding it, in yet others again coming down somewhere in between. Other powers the book covered in a separate sequence, though they interacted with the British, as well as (with an eye on the British) with each other. They included the 'expanding' and the 'established', the great and the small.

In 'leaving' the empire, there were again similarities and differences. The British found it relatively easy to accommodate the idea that colonies should become independent states in a world of states. France and the Netherlands found it more difficult. That was largely for political reasons. In every case capital was again finding more profitable opportunities elsewhere.

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Bibliographical essay

This book has sought to juxtapose the definitions of imperialism in general and the history of Southeast Asia. One of its objects has been to test out those definitions by considering them in a Southeast Asian context. The other has been to enhance the understanding of imperialism in Southeast Asia.

The author, like other historians, has been influenced not only by the literature he has perused but by the concerns of his contemporaries, themselves in many cases, of course, adding to that literature. So far as imperialism is concerned, the literature reflects the shifts in the political usage of the term. Contemporary interpretation of it is, no doubt, influenced by the challenge presented to 'Marxism' by the events of the closing years of the twentieth century. Our current focus on the relations between the state and the market in an age of 'globalisation' in fact, however, gives a new relevance to much of the old debate and offers another way of looking at it. Further focusing on Southeast Asia – where economic crisis has sharpened the questions about the role of the state – may add to the debate, particularly inasmuch as those who earlier wrote about imperialism tended to give it little attention.

Historians of Southeast Asia have indeed sought to avoid the ghettoisation that Vic Lieberman has seen as one of the risks in a regional approach. This book, like my *Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (OUP, 2001), has a similar object in view. Like those of other contemporary historians of Southeast Asia, it also reflects another shift in historiographical perspective. The struggle for independence is no longer the obvious framework for an historical interpretation. Developments since independence certainly put the struggle into a different context, metropolitan as well as regional or national. Indeed the whole 'fleeting, passing' imperial phase may be reviewed.

As in the past, additions to the literature have been influenced by new research and new perspectives. There are, it might be suggested, several layers in the historiography of the topic. On both aspects of it – imperial and Southeast Asian – the student will be well served by a reading of original texts. It is stimulating to read Hobson's *Imperialism, A Study* (1938 ed., intro. J. Townshend, London, Unwin, 1988) as well as the commentaries on it. The same, perhaps, is even more true in the case of Lenin's pamphlets (in *Collected*

Works, Moscow, Progress, 1964, vol. 22). Their short-term political purposes are more evident than their non-political logic.

It is stimulating, too, to read what the imperialists of the day themselves said of their task, in order to persuade others, or give themselves confidence. The arguments they used or the rhetoric they employed may seem alien to some early twenty-first-century sensibilities. They may, for example, make us wonder at a France that could produce Garnier and Harmand alongside Renoir and Massenet, though our own societies contain similar paradoxes. Some of this material is quite readily available – in, for example, collections such as G. Taboulet's *La Geste Française en Indochine* – and the author has sought to capture the flavour of it in his quotations from original sources.

He has also quoted extensively from the material left behind in the archives by those who decided, or sought to decide, the extent to which imperial adventures should be supported and empires acquired in a world that was being changed both by the development of the world market and the recrudescence of interstate rivalries. The language they used, as well as the steps they took, forms a clue to their priorities. It is essential at least to place them alongside both generalisations about imperialism and accusations of conspiracy. What the decision-makers said and did is not the whole story, but it is an essential part.

A second layer in this historiography is constituted by those who wrote about the empires during their existence. Often, indeed, they, too, were, or had been, involved in enterprise or administration, and the concerns of the civil servants among them reflected not merely their personal experience, but also the special interest of their employers. In Malaya Sir Richard Winstedt and his colleagues produced a number of state histories, published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Malayan Branch*, while Victor Purcell, in the Chinese Protectorate, collected the material that enabled him after retirement from the colonial service to publish *The Chinese in South-East Asia*. Dutch administrators took a special interest in *adat*, and men such as B. Schrieke and J. van Leur were encouraged to apply the insights of Max Weber in order better to understand past and present. Writing on the history of Burma was dominated by officials and ex-officials from Arthur Phayre onwards, G.E. Hervey, Gordon Luce, B. R. Pearn and J. S. Furnivall among them, and then, at the University of Rangoon, by D. G. E. Hall, later the first professor of Southeast Asian history in the UK. Furnivall, originator of the concept of the 'plural society', was a critic. The American Rupert Emerson's *Malaysia* was also critical.

A third layer in this historiography is often critical. It belongs to the post-war period in which independent states were replacing the empires, and in which it was easy to assume that such a process should shape the writing of their history. In reference to this period, as in reference to the period in which the empires were founded, it is possible to read the memoirs and reports of first-hand observers, supporters of the independence movements and, rather fewer, opponents. But, though often more academic in tone than the works of

the prewar periods, history-writing also reflected contemporary concerns. Indeed it was the source of one of the major controversies in Southeast Asian historiography, in some sense prefiguring the debate on 'orientalism' that Edward Said provoked.

'Asia, and not the European in Asia, must be our theme', declared K. G. Tregonning, Raffles Professor of History at Singapore, in 1958, 'and suddenly, if you think of that, it makes the Portuguese and the Dutch most insignificant and almost extraneous.'¹ A fellow Australian in the chair at Kuala Lumpur attacked that view. 'It would be extremely dangerous if, in an anxiety to meet the political demands of a resurgent Asian consciousness, historians of Southeast Asia began to minimize too much the part played by Westerners in the region', John Bastin argued. '... Surely the plea for reinterpreting Southeast Asian history from an Asian point of view means something more than the convenient removal of Westerners from the historical narrative?'²

What did it involve? The most distinguished contribution to the debate was made by John W. Smail in 1961. He took up van Leur's reference to the 'autonomy' of Indonesian history, and suggested that it opened up the possibility of 'establishing the basis for a continuous Indo-centric history of Indonesia'. 'Asia-centric' history had to mean not simply a revised history of Asian-European relations but the 'domestic history' of Asia.³

The controversy has never died away. Nor, indeed, should it, since it is at least a perpetual warning against subjectivity, not only in the historian but in the sources the historian uses. More than that, it offers, as Smail argued, guidance on focus. With a topic like the current one, the present author finds the reminder more pertinent, rather than less.

The more tempered approach that has nevertheless in general become more evident in the past two or three decades seems to be offering major additions to the historiography of Southeast Asia in the imperial and post-imperial phases. Particularly welcome is the new work from Malaysian historians, on the one hand, and from Dutch historians, such as J. Th. Lindblad and Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, on the other.

General surveys of imperialism are numerous. Among them are W. J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism*, New York, Random House, 1980, and W. Baumgart, *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1914*, New York, OUP, 1982. Readers can follow the trajectory of the most important postwar British historians of the subject in the works of R. Robinson and J. Gallagher – including the famous joint article, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 6 (1953), pp. 1-15, Robinson's 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe, eds, *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, London, Longman, 1972, and Gallagher's *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire*, CUP, 1983 – and in the works of D.K. Fieldhouse. Among the latter are *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism*,

London, Longman, 1967, and *The Colonial Empires, A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*, second edition, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1982. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* honoured Fieldhouse with a Festschrift in May 1998 (26, 2) and articles by Peter Burroughs and Stephen Howe comment on his work. Also John Legge, an authority on Malaya and Indonesia, and author of the historiography chapter in the *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, discusses it in 'A New Imperialism in the Late 19th Century? Revisiting an Old Debate', in B. Barrington, ed., *Empires, Imperialism and Southeast Asia*, Clayton, Monash Asia Institute, 1997, pp. 101–12.

The publication in the mid-1980s of Lance E. Davis and Robert A. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism*, CUP, 1986, was followed in the early 1990s by another vast work, in which the theme of 'gentlemanly capitalism' was developed by P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688–1914*, London and New York, Longman, 1993. Neither book dealt with Southeast Asia. Anthony Webster sought to fill a gap with *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia 1770–1890*, London and New York, Tauris, 1998. Cain and Hopkins proceed, as they put it, 'by organising the evidence to identify the processes of which individuals were a part', and tend to accept 'that we are seeking to explain trends and events in terms of causes rather than trying to understand individual actions in terms of motives'. They assert, however, that 'our account of historical context is based on the interplay between process and agency; and if we focus on the former rather than the latter it is because it is more appropriate to the purpose and scale of our particular inquiry, and not because of a belief in its inherent superiority' (p. 49). The present author has the space to cover rather more of what he considers essential to an historical explanation. Doing so, however, seems to throw some doubt on the overall thesis.

Other works the author found stimulating are Benjamin Cohen, *The Question of Imperialism*, London, Macmillan, 1974; Alan Hodgart, *The Economics of European Imperialism*, London, Arnold, 1977; and Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, London and New York, Routledge, 1980.

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Singapore, University of Malaya Press, 1969, carry the story forward. More recent studies of individual Malay states include Christopher S. Gray, 'Johore, 1910–1941, Studies in the Colonial Process', PhD thesis, Yale University, 1978; Shaharil Talib, *After its Own Image: The Trengganu Experience 1881–1941*, Singapore, OUP, 1984; and Aruna Gopinath, *Pahang 1880–1933: A Political History*, KL, MBRAS, 1991.

Works on nineteenth-century Brunei and Sarawak include D. E. Brown, *Brunei: The Structure and History of a Bornean Malay Sultanate*, Brunei, Muzium Brunei, 1970; R. M. Pringle, *Rajahs and Rebels*, London, Macmillan, 1970; D.S. Ranjit Singh, *Brunei 1839–1983: The Problems of Political Survival*, Singapore, OUP, 1984; Ulla Wagner, *Colonialism and Iban Warfare*, Stockholm, University of Stockholm, 1972; and the present author's *Britain, the Brookes and Brunei*, KL, OUP, 1971. A. V. M. Horton's many thorough contributions to the subject include his edition of the decisive report, *Report on Brunei in 1904*, Athens, Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1987.

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Jeshurun's *The Contest for Siam 1889–1902*, KL, Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1977, two works by Patrick Tuck make essential reading: *French Catholic Missionaries and the Politics of Imperialism in Vietnam, 1857–1914: A Documentary Survey*, Liverpool UP, 1987; and *The French Wolf and the Siamese Lamb*, Bangkok and Cheney, White Lotus, 1995. 'Pacification' is covered by David Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885–1925*, University of California Press, 1971. The valuable articles jointly written by C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner include 'Centre and Periphery in the Making of the Second French Colonial Empire, 1815–1920', in A. Porter and R. Holland, eds, *Theory and Practice in the History of European Expansion Overseas*, London, Cass, 1988, pp. 9–34.

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Documents on the End of Empire. Series B, vol. 3, London, HMSO/ICS, 1995, which deals with Malaya. A two-volume collection, *Burma: The Struggle for Independence, 1944–1948*, London, HMSO, 1983, was edited by Hugh Tinker. The present author's *The Fourth Anglo-Burmese War*, Gaya, Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1987, offers an account of the 1940s.

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Notes

- 1 *Straits Times*, 21, 24 November 1958.
- 2 *The Study of Modern Southeast Asian History*, The University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, 1959, pp. 8–9.
- 3 'On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia', *JSEAH*, 2, 2 (July 1961), pp. 88, 100.

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