PART TWO

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GERMANY AND BRITAIN'S COLONIAL AUTHORITIES

In addition to illustrating the spectacular success of German commercial activity in some parts of the East, Part One discussed various aspects of German foreign policy towards the Malay Peninsula and Siam. It particularly highlighted the German government's great reluctance to become directly and actively involved in the politics of this part of the world. Part Two focuses mainly on the British colonial authorities' attitude towards Germany. Later on, in Part Three, our attention will turn to how the British Foreign Office viewed Germany and the question of extending British rule over the Siamese part of the Malay Peninsula.

In 1873 the British Colonial Secretary, Kimberley, instructed the new Straits Governor, A. Clarke, to intervene in the western states of the Malay Peninsula not tributary to Siam. Several historians explain that the German factor was a sufficient condition to provoke Britain's intervention there. And yet, there is strong indication that Kimberley used the rumour that Germany was about to take an active interest in the affairs of the Malay states to justify the extension of British control (Chapter 5).
Certain British groups deeply resented the remarkable growth of German shipping. Greatly irritated, they perceived it as a dangerous challenge to their commercial interests in the East. The authorities of the Straits Settlements made several attempts to curtail German influence in the carrying trade. But Singapore was a free port and almost all of these attempts were rejected by London. Only the recruitment of "coolies" for work in German colonies was successfully blocked (Chapter 6).

In contrast to Singapore's open-door status, the Straits governors insisted on obstructing German capital and enterprise from entering the Malay states not yet under British control. Their aim was the extension of British influence further northwards into the Malay Peninsula. The governors sought to achieve their goal by expounding the ceaseless rhetoric that if German concessions were allowed to enter freely into the Malay states, Germany would eventually gain a pretext for intervention. Their methods succeeded to a large extent in convincing the government in London of the need for a more active policy (Chapter 7).
CHAPTER 5

INTERVENTION IN THE MALAY PENINSULA

The presence of a Prussian warship on the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula in 1870 did not alarm the Colonial Office. And yet, unfounded rumours of German designs in the western side of the peninsula only three years later received more attention. Several historians accept the view that a letter written by Seymour Clarke depicting German intentions in Selangor influenced the Colonial Secretary's decision for intervention. But there are strong reservations to this "German Argument", the most important being the lack of evidence confirming Germany's intentions.

There is general agreement that S. Clarke's letter expounding the rumour that a foreign power was about to take active interest in the Malay Peninsula was an attempt to manipulate the fear of the Colonial Office. There is also indication that Kimberley used the argument of a foreign power intriguing in the Malay states, so close to the Straits Settlements, to justify his decision for intervention. For these reasons, and for the special attention accorded by historians to the process leading to change in Colonial Office policy, that it seems necessary to consign a whole chapter to this question.
I. A Prussian Warship on the East Coast

Britain was in the midst of negotiating a treaty with the Netherlands regarding the island of Sumatra when it was learnt that a Prussian warship was snooping around the eastern islands of the Malay Peninsula. According to a confidential Dutch ministry dispatch dated 7 July 1870 to the British Foreign Secretary, Granville,¹ the North German Confederation had been negotiating the lease of some islands from the "Maharajah of Djohor" with the intention of establishing a naval station there. Without revealing the source of this information,² the Netherlands government asked whether the British government had any information to the claim that the ruler of Johor had "ceded to the North German Confederation, as a Naval Station the Island of Tiomang [sic] or of Tinggi, near the East Coast of Malacca".³

The British Colonial Office seemed puzzled at first. They had never heard of these islands, but soon inferred that by "Djohor", the state of "Johore" must have been

¹After only a year as Colonial Secretary, Granville was transferred from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office in 1870.

²It seems likely that this information was forwarded by Holland's Consul in Singapore, W.H. Read.

³"Malacca" here should be understood as referring to the Malay Peninsula, like in the German "die Halbinsel Malakka", and not the port.
meant. Nor was the Colonial Office too alarmed by the Dutch enquiry. The Permanent Under-Secretary, Frederic Rogers, noted that he was not "inclined to object to European neighbours in [the] Indian Ocean ... if Prussia likes to have an island there ... let her by all means", but only if this did not "injure British interests".\

After further investigations at the India Office had revealed nothing, Kimberley finally instructed the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Harry Ord, "to ascertain distinctly where the Maharajah & his islands are" and to report on the truth of the rumour. While waiting for Ord's reply, the Colonial Office further surmised that "Tiomang" was actually the island of "Tioman", which lay off the east coast of Johor.\

Even with the mix-up in names, it is somewhat surprising that the Colonial Office had difficulty obtaining information about Pulau Tioman or Pulau Tinggi, especially when such information should have been readily available in their files. About a year and a half earlier,

*C.O.273/42, No.7727, Netherlands Minister to Foreign Office, 7 July 1870, confidential; F.O. to C.O., 14 July 1870; C.O. to F.O., 19 July 1870.\

*C.O.273/42, No. 7727, Minute by Rogers, 20 July 1870, on F.O. to C.O., 14 July 1870. The influential and non-interventionist Frederic Rogers resigned from the Colonial Office in 1871.\

*Harry Ord served as Straits Settlements Governor from March 1867 to November 1873.\

*C.O.273/42, No.7727, Minute by Kimberley, 21 July 1870, (emphasis in the original).\

Governor Ord had already explained to Granville, when he was Colonial Secretary, the decision taken on the boundary question between Johor and Pahang. According to the 1868 agreement between the two Malay states, a direct line from the mouth of the Endau river going east along the northern latitude of 2 degrees, 39 minutes, and 20 seconds, divided the islands. All islands which lay to the north of this line were assigned to the possession of Pahang, while all islands south of this line to Johor. Accordingly, Tioman fell to Pahang's share of islands, and Tinggi to Johor. Ord also supplied a detailed map showing the positions of all the islands, as well as the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula, as charted by the well-known government Surveyor, J.T. Thomson, in 1849. In this chart the dividing line was clearly drawn.\footnote{C.O.273/26, No.2728, Ord to Granville, 20 January 1869.}

In any case, Ord's reply of 3 November 1870 was to a large degree a repetition of what he had already explained in 1869. Moreover, the Governor expressed his doubts whether the government of the North German Confederation was seriously considering the establishment of a naval base on Tioman. The island lacked a suitable natural harbour and other requirements needed for a naval station.\footnote{C.O.273/42, No.12104, Granville to the Netherlands Minister, 3 November 1870.} This is quite true. Other than enjoying the advantage of continuous flowing fresh water all year round, none of Tioman's natural harbours provide
sufficient protection in the months of the monsoon season. Its rocky hills and steep slopes make both agricultural farming and overland transport exceedingly difficult. In addition to the logistical problems of transporting supplies and stocking fuel, Tioman possesses no minerals of economic value.\(^1\)

As for Johor’s Pulau Tinggi, Ord emphasized that it was not the Maharajah’s intention to cede this island or any other part of his territories to the North German Confederation or anyone else. Ord believed that this rumour was caused when the commander of the Prussian warship "Hertha" announced their intention of surveying a location called Blair Harbour on the east coast of the peninsula with the view of establishing a naval station there.\(^2\) These plans, however, were quickly dropped and the Straits Governor did not think that:

"there is any reason to suppose that the Prussian or any other Government will be able at the present time to effect a settlement on the Peninsula, at all events without the previous knowledge & concurrence of H.M. Government."\(^3\)

After the facts of the matter had been relayed to the Netherlands government, the case was closed and "put by".

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\(^2\) Blair Harbour is situated a few miles south-east of the Endau river mouth and west of Pulau Acheh. The entrances leading to Blair Harbour are extremely dangerous and may be entered only by small vessels with local knowledge.

\(^3\) C.O. 273/42, No.12104, Granville to the Netherlands Minister, 3 November 1870.
But the Tioman and Tinggi rumour was soon followed by other rumours of German schemes in the area. For example, it was widely rumoured that Prussia intended to incorporate the cession of French possessions in the East Indies and Indochina as part of any peace agreement with France.¹⁴

¹⁴The Overland Straits Observer, 22 November 1870, in C.O.273/41, No.230, Ord to Kimberley, 29 November 1870.
I. Precursors to Intervention in the West

On the other side of the peninsula, the anarchy prevailing in the tin producing states since the 1860s became a source of feverish complaints and petitions from certain interested parties. The Colonial Office, however, refused to interfere saying that Britain maintained a policy of strict neutrality towards these states. But the appeals for intervention to establish safer conditions for investment and trade did not stop. Continued menace to trade and repeated acts of piracy caused British merchants, shareholders, as well as Chinese secret societies, to perpetually urge the colonial authorities to place these states under British protection. Also the 'de facto' ruler of Selangor, Tungku Dia Oodin, told Ringling, the Auditor-General for the Straits Settlements, in 1872 that he would welcome British assistance in singing about security and order to his dominion.  

Campbell, the former Acting Lieutenant-Governor of Penang, outlined the problems caused by the disturbances in the western Malay states in his report for the year of 1872.  

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17Although some historians use "Kudin" instead of Oodin", I will continue with the latter spelling.

17C.O. Correspondence, No.1, Ord to Kimberley, 6 November 1872.

For Campbell's report see C.O.273/74, No.6733, port on the Blue Book of Penang and Province Wellesley for the Year 1872, 5 June 1873, in Campbell to Kimberley, June 1873.
The shareholders and promoters of the Selangor Tin Mining Co., S. Clarke in London, and J.G. Davidson with W.H. Read in Singapore, were the most vocal of those who urged for British government interference. These men held extensive tin mining concessions and other commercial interests in Selangor. Especially the Selangor Tin Mining Co. faced severe financial difficulties because of the turbulence in the western Malay states. One of their methods to influence the Colonial Office towards a more active policy in the peninsula was through expounding rumours of German intentions in Selangor.

J.G. Davidson's attorneys, Lambert, Burgin, and Petch, asked the Colonial Office on 25 June 1873 whether the British government would be willing to extend protection "to the territory ... from which we should derive benefit". If no such protection was forthcoming, they asked whether there were any objections if the Selangor Tin Mining Co. recruited armed troops to protect their interests in Selangor. The Colonial Office replied by restating Britain's policy of non-involvement in the internal affairs of the Malay states. Speculators entering these states did so on their own risk and could not count on support from the British government if things went foul. As to the proposal of stationing troops there, the Colonial Office made it plain that it "cannot in any

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1 S. Clarke represented Davidson's and Read's interests in England. He was also Read's brother-in-law.

way sanction the employment of an armed force by an English company within the Salangore territory", and that the company would have to face "very serious responsibility in case any collision should take place between such a force ... and the native inhabitants".  

Less than ten days after this reply, an article appeared in the "Times" on 12 July 1873 in which a certain Captain Sherrard Osborne cautioned that a stronger German naval presence in the Straits of Malacca was highly undesirable. Since the Anglo-Dutch Convention of 1871 had virtually ousted any British influence in Sumatra, Osborne warned that piracy in the straits, and disorders on the mainland, might be used as an excuse for intervention by a foreign power.  

Soon after this article was published, S. Clarke went to see the new Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Colonies, Herbert, probably to discuss matters relating to the Selangor Tin Mining Co. and the situation in the Malay Peninsula. There is no record as to what was actually said between these two men, but shortly after, S. Clarke addressed a letter to Herbert at the Colonial Office emphasizing the possibility of Germany extending her protection over some western Malay territory. This interesting letter has exercised great fascination among

\[\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\text{C.O. Correspondence, No.9, C.O. to Messrs. Lambert, Murgin, and Petch, 5 July 1873.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21}}\text{A.P. Rubin, Piracy, Paramountcy and Protectorates, Kuala Lumpur, Univ. of Malaya, 1974, pp.49-50; Cowan, Nineteenth-Century, p.168; MacIntyre, "Britain's Intervention", p.65; Chew, "British Intervention", p.86.}\]
researchers of Malaysian history who attempted to pin-
point the trigger for Kimberley's change of policy, from
non-involvement to direct intervention. As the timing and
contents of S. Clarke's letter weighed heavily in several
explanations, it seems appropriate to quote in full this
letter which was written in Northcotts, Walhamstow, on 18
July 1873:

"Sir,

When I recently had the honour of an
interview with you on the subject of working tin
mines in Salangore, I called your attention to a
despatch relative to that kingdom, in the year
1872, and especially to a letter from Mr. J.C.
Iring, the Auditor-General for the Straits
Settlements. I understood you to say that,
though Her Majesty's Government did not extend
their protection to the Kingdom of Salangore,
they took much interest in its welfare, and
would be glad to see its prosperity established.

In a letter I lately had from one of the
old residents in Singapore, and who is
intimately acquainted with the native Chieftains
(but before our tin mining project was at all
matured), he gave it as his opinion that the
independent sovereigns of the smaller States in
the Malayan Peninsula would put themselves under
the Protectorate of some European Power, and
Germany was mentioned as most likely to be
approached, falling England.

Within the last few days a letter has been
received by the promoters of the Tin Mining
Company from the Viceroy of Salangore, dated 3rd
June, 1873, from which I extract as follows:—

'I would ask you to ascertain if
the English, or any other Government,
would interfere in any disturbance
that might arise in the territory of

22MacIntyre and Chew believe that this "old resident"
was W.H. Read, the leader of the mercantile community in
the Straits Settlements and the most vocal supporter of
British intervention. Read, who as President of the
Singapore Chamber of Commerce and Senior Non-Official
Member of the Legislative Council, was closely associated
with several important Singapore companies. He was also
involved in business dealings with several Malay rulers.
Salangore from wicked persons, so that merchants, &c., desirous of opening up trade here, may have a security for their capital and property invested, and see that there was some safety for life and property.

(Signed) Tunku Dia Oodin, Viceroy of Salangore.'

I doubt not, Sir, that your attention has been called to a letter which has appeared in the "Times" this week from Captain Sherrard Osborne on the unprotected position in which British commerce would be placed in passing the Straits of Malacca, consequent on the ceding our position in Sumatra, &c.

It struck me that the remarks of the Viceroy of Salangore are so much 'a propos' to the subject that I have ventured to trouble you with this letter, and to ask you the course that the Viceroy should pursue to place his views before you; whether the Governor of the Straits Settlements, or direct to the Colonial Office; and with what probable result?

I have, &c.

(Signed) Seymour Clarke"23

The immediate reaction to this letter can be discerned directly from the minutes in Colonial Office records. It seems best to present these minutes, together with other important documents, without commenting on them for doing so would only represent a repetition of what other researchers have already said. While these are by no means all the records that deal with the topic of intervention, however, they are the most important in terms of the number of times cited by historians. A brief outline of the interpretations of several historians will be presented later on.

23 C.O. 273/74, No.7362, S. Clarke to Herbert, 18 July 1873. Letter also available in C.O. Correspondence, No.10.
MacDonald's minute, 19 July 1873:

"H.M.'s Govt. would hardly (I fancy) care to interfere further in the affairs of Selangore and the probability of a German protectorate seems small. Any proposal from Tunku Dia Oodin should be forwarded to the Sec. of State through the Governor of the Straits Settlements."  

Cox's minute, 20 July 1873:

"I suppose so. At the same time I can't help thinking that with a judicious Govr. we might almost imperceptibly have a considerable moral influence over the various Native Chiefs but I am aware how dangerous any interference may be."  

Herbert's minute, 21 July 1873:

"We can only reply that H.M.'s Govt. is not prepared to interfere within Selangore. ... But as Sir A. Clarke is believed to be able and cautious in administrative matters it might be well to desire him confidentially to consider after his arrival whether it would be safe and advantageous to extend our influence to some parts of the Malay territories beyond our own Settlements."  

Knatchbull-Hugessen's minute, 22 July 1873:

"It would probably be easy to extend both our 'influence' and our possessions in this part of the world, but I do not understand this to be the policy of Her M. Government, but rather to keep ourselves to ourselves as much as we can & to avoid these complications which may follow extensions of 'influence', which entails as a rule extension of responsibility."  

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C.O.273/74, No.7362, Minute by MacDonald, 19 July 1873.

C.O.273/74, No.7362, Minute by Cox, 20 July 1873.

C.O.273/74, No.7362, Minute by Herbert, 21 July 1873.

C.O.273/74, No.7362, Minute by Knatchbull-Hugessen, 22 July 1873.
Kimberley's minute, 22 July 1873:

"It would be impossible for us to consent to any European Power assuming the Protectorate of any state in the Peninsula. I think we might send this to F.g.o. and inquire whether they would see any objection to Sir A. Clarke being instructed to endeavour to extend the Treaties with Salangore & the other Malay States by a stipulation that they should not enter into any Treaty ceding territory to a foreign Power or giving such Power any rights or privileges not accorded to us: but first examine whether some stipulations of this kind are not to be found in our Treaties with these States. I will meantime speak to the Duke of Argyll [the Secretary of State for India] & Lord Granville [the Foreign Secretary] on the subject".\(^a\)

MacDonald's survey of existing treaties, 23 July 1873:

"As regards Quedah, by ... the treaty of 1802, His Highness agreed that he should not permit Europeans of any other nation' than the English 'to settle in any part of his dominions'.

"Perak. By ... the treaty of 1818, His Majesty the Rajah agreed that he would not renew any obsolete and interrupted treaties with other nations.

"Salangore. A similar article [1818].

"Johore. A similar article [1818]. And by the further treaty of 1819, Johore is not to enter into any treaty with any other nation, nor to admit or consent to the settlement in any part of the Dominion of any other power, European or American. This is confirmed by ... the treaty of 1824, but in other words.

"The same stipulation does not appear in the engagements with Ramboe and Nanning."\(^a\)

Colonial Office's reply to S. Clarke, 5 August 1873:

"any communication which Tunku-dia-Oodin may desire to make to Her Majesty's Government must be addressed to, or through the Governor of the Straits Settlements; and that Lord Kimberley

\(^a\)C.O.273/74, No.7362, Minute by Kimberley, 22 July 1873.

\(^a\)C.O.273/74, No.7362, Memo by MacDonald, 23 July 1873.
cannot express an opinion as to the answer which would be returned to any particular communication, until it is actually received. 

"His Lordship can only say that, whilst Her Majesty's Government have always maintained intimate relations with the native States who are bound by Treaty obligations to this country, and are most anxious that peace be promoted, they have hitherto made it their practice to abstain, as far as possible, from interference in the internal affairs of those States."\(^{30}\)

Ord to Kimberley, 10 July 1873, (arrived 21 August 1873), enclosed was a petition calling for support signed by 248 Straits Chinese merchants dated 28 March 1873):

"I [Ord] can only add that I fully appreciate the force of much that they urge, and venture to express my earnest hope that this subject, so important not only to the interests and prosperity of the Colony, but to the well being, progress and even civilization of the native States that surround it, may receive the serious attention of Her Majesty's Government."\(^{31}\)

Kimberley to Gladstone, 10 September 1873:

"The condition of the Malay Peninsula is becoming very serious. It is the old story of misgovernment of Asiatic States. This might go on without any serious consequences except the stoppage of trade were it not that European and Chinese capitalists stimulated by the great riches in tin mines 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 & our whole position in the East I apprehend that it would be a serious matter if any other European Power..."

\(^{30}\)C.O. Correspondence, No.11, C.O. to S. Clarke, 5 August 1873.

\(^{31}\)C.O. Correspondence, No.12, Ord to Kimberley, 10 July 1873, received 21 August 1873. For the text of the Chinese petition of 28 March 1873, see Inclosure in No.12 or C.O.273/67, No.8641.
were to obtain a footing on the Peninsula.""32

Kimberley's instructions to A. Clarke, 20 September 1873:

"The anarchy which prevails and appears to be increasing in parts of the peninsula and the consequent injury to trade and British interests generally, render it necessary to consider seriously whether any step can be taken to improve this condition.

"You will perceive from the enclosed correspondence between this office and Mr. Seymour Clarke, that Tunku Dia Oodin, Viceroy of Selangor, is sensible of the evils which exist in that country, and desirous of obtaining assistance from Her Majesty's Government in order to remedy them, or, failing Her Majesty's Government, from some other European Power.

"Her Majesty's Government have, it need hardly be said, no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of the Malay States. But looking to the long and intimate connection between them and the British Government, as shown in the Treaties which have at various times been concluded with them, and to the well-being of the British settlements themselves, her Majesty's Government feel it incumbent upon them to employ such influence as they possess with the native Princes to rescue, if possible, these fertile and productive countries from the ruin which must befall them, if the present disorders continue unchecked.

"I have to request that you will carefully ascertain, as far as you are able, the actual condition of affairs in each State, and that you will report to me whether there are, in your opinion, any steps which can properly be taken by the Colonial Government to promote the restoration of peace and order, and to secure protection to trade and commerce with the native territories.

"I should wish you especially to consider whether it would be advisable to appoint a British officer to reside in any of the States. Such an appointment could, of course, only be made with the full consent of the native Government, and the expenses connected with it

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"32Quoted by Cowan, Nineteenth-Century, p.169, and MacIntyre, "Britain's Intervention", p.67. According to MacIntyre, Kimberley also explained to Gladstone that the instructions to A. Clarke "do not actually pledge us to anything but they imply that some attempt is to be made to produce a better state of things"."
would have to be defrayed by the Government of the Straits Settlements."

The political situation in the Malay Peninsula changed very fast after A. Clarke arrived in Singapore to take up the post as Governor of the Straits Settlements in November 1873. He first negotiated a truce between the Chinese warring parties in Larut. Then he went about obtaining from the various Malay chiefs separate agreements to station British residents or assistant residents in Perak, Selangor, Larut, Kuala Langat, and Negri Ujong, whose duties were to advise the rulers on matters of government and finance.

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*C.O. Correspondence*, No.14, Kimberley to A. Clarke, September 1873. Attached was S. Clarke’s letter of 18 July 1873. Also in *C.O. 273/67*, No.8641.
III. How Historians Interpret the German Factor

Several studies have been devoted to the question why Gladstone's Colonial Secretary, Kimberley, chose to adopt an interventionist policy in the western Malay states in 1873, when it was Britain's declared policy not to interfere in the internal affairs of these states. In addition to the texts presented above, other documents were carefully analyzed, but interpretations differ as to what triggered off Kimberley's change of policy. The causes most frequently highlighted could be summarised as follows: the political fragmentation and disorders in the west coast states which threatened to create problems of law and order in the Straits Settlements; the personalities of certain Straits officials who advocated extension of British control; the role played by British entrepreneurs with commercial interests in Selangor; the Chinese merchants' petition calling for government support; and the prospect of Germany obtaining a foothold on the peninsula.

Since a full consideration of the merits of each explanation would lead too far away from our main topic, I shall restrict myself in the following to presenting a brief survey of several interpretations offered by historians who have examined the German factor in detail. As the interpretations which take into account

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*For a more detailed review of the different explanations, see Chew, "The Reasons", pp.81-93.*
the German factor have in common a number of similarities, but they seem opposed to each other in other aspects. In an effort to arrive at a plausible conclusion, an attempt will be made in the next section at synthesizing these similarities and differences.

The first analysis that deserves consideration is Margaret Knowles' Ph.D. dissertation of 1936. In it she explains that Britain's shift to interventionist policy occurred when it became evident that non-interference was no longer possible. The inadequacy of the non-intervention policy was demonstrated by certain commercial speculators with interests in the Malay states, forcing Kimberley to make a decision in favour of intervention. A second "contributing factor" that influenced Kimberley's decision was the dreaded prospect that Germany might acquire a foothold in the Malay Peninsula. As to the rumour of 1870 that the North German Confederation was aspiring to establish a naval station on the east coast of the peninsula, Britain was not alarmed because the threat was "not considered grave".

C.N. Parkinson in his study of the reasons for intervention dismisses the fear of foreign intervention altogether saying that the Colonial Office "was not unduly impressed" by S. Clarke's letter. This is evident by the

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³³C.N. Parkinson, British Intervention, pp.107-11.
reply given to S. Clarke on 5 August 1873, which was a repetition of Britain's policy of non-interference. Rather, the turmoil in Perak and Selangor, and the clever pressure by certain British capitalists with interests there, convinced Kimberley that something had to be done. Kimberley made up his mind and "the trend of policy... was strikingly reversed" sometime during the four to six weeks before 20 September 1873. That is, the decision to depart "from the policy as previously laid down" took place between the arrival of the Chinese merchants' petition on 21 August and Kimberley's instructions to Governor A. Clarke on 20 September. Apart from the determining effect of the Chinese merchants' petition, Parkinson also ascribes the change in British policy to the approaching change of government from Liberal to Conservative which induced A. Clarke to act fast hoping that the new Tory party would not oppose his measures.

C.D. Cowan\(^{37}\) disagrees with Parkinson and takes a more firm view on the effect of possible foreign intervention. For him, "The chronological evidence, the dates of the despatches and minutes, and the order of events, make it certain that it was the letter from Seymour Clarke about the Selangor Tin Mining Company, not he despatches from Sir Harry Ord about conditions in alaya, which prompted Kimberley's change of front in 873". Cowan categorically declares that the threat of foreign intervention was the "unstated motive behind the

\(^{37}\)Cowan, Nineteenth-Century, pp. 166-72 and pp.264-5.
ecision to intervene", and insists that Kimberley's hange of policy "was provoked not by conditions in the eninsula, nor by any consideration of British economic interests there, but by fear of foreign intervention." imberley wanted to prevent the possibility of a foreign over positioning herself on the peninsula and thus hreaten India and the trade route to China. As to S. larke's letter, Cowan asserts that it was designed to blackmail or frighten the British Government into ction", and "things moved" only after the arrival of this etter at the Colonial Office.

Cowan's interpretation is weakened, however, when he utions that there "is no evidence at all" that the itish government knew of any German plans to move into e peninsula, nor was it likely that Germany would do so ither. Although several British politicians feared "the ffects of German unification on the balance of power inurope, but so early as 1873 and 1874 there was no active var in London of German colonial expansions." Cowan refully adds that: "The background to Kimberley's cision is by no means clear, ... It is just possible, in ew of events in Fiji and the Gold Coast at this time, at he justified intervention in Malaya in these terms cause he thought that no other argument would secure the quiescence of Gladstone."

D. MacIntyre, as like Cowan, rejects Parkinson's ew that S. Clarke's letter did not affect the Colonial

"MacIntyre, "Britain's Intervention", pp.47-69."
Office. It is "quite wrong", he says flatly, because "[t]he reply to Clarke on 5 August 1873, which Parkinson quotes ... was simply designed to gain time". MacIntyre also dismisses the effect of the Chinese petition on Kimberley and considers it in terms of having merely emphasized "a situation which Kimberley had already appreciated." On the other hand, MacIntyre believes that "the rumour of a possible German interest in Selangor in 1873 would find him [Kimberley] alive immediately to strategic implications." Germany was now a power not to be taken lightly, while France "could be discounted as a colonial power for a number of years" after her defeat by Germany. As to why Kimberley was not alarmed by the presumed German interest in Pulau Tioman in 1870, it was "probably because he had no idea where Tioman Island was", and also due to his "rather narrow interest and his somewhat cynical aloofness from Malay affairs".

According to MacIntyre, three consecutive factors influenced Kimberley's decision in favour of intervention. The first was the problems caused by the disturbances in the western Malay states and Campbell's report describing these problems. The second factor was the "skilful pressure" applied by certain British speculators who hoped to secure government support for their projects in Selangor. The "third factor came into play" with the arrival of S. Clarke's letter because "Kimberley was likely to be sensitive to the dangers Clarke revealed. He supported the Dutch war in Acheh because an unsettled
independent Acheh might provide an excuse for foreign intervention". In MacIntyre's view, Kimberley's decision was taken sometime "between early July, when Kimberley saw George Campbell and 22 July", the date Kimberley read S. Clarke's letter.

For MacIntyre, the probability of German intervention nurtured by S. Clarke "was a sort of political blackmail to a sensitive diplomatist like Kimberley, who immediately felt a challenge to Britain's position as the paramount power in Malaya. In later years he remembered the 'German scare' of 1873." MacIntyre is referring to two statements made by Kimberley in 1881 and 1885. The first was made to Frederick Weld on 22 September 1881: "Bismarck used to be the bugbear, and was believed to have an eye on Selangore". Kimberley made the second in April 1885 when he noted: "I mention Germany because some years ago the Germans were intriguing in Selangore, now under our protection".

As already mentioned in the introduction of this study, K.G. Tregonning in his article "How Germany Made Malaya British" fully agrees with Cowan and MacIntyre. He is even willing to go to the extent of saying that: "There you have the reason for intervention in a nutshell: Germany." And yet Tregonning cautiously adds: "No documentary evidence of any kind has ever come to light to indicate that Germany had any interests whatever in the

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**"Both citations from footnote in MacIntyre, Britain's Intervention", p.69.**
Malay Peninsula in 1873." He tries to solve this problem by explaining that "by 1873 he [Bismarck] was the man who mattered" in forming "British fear of what might happen, rather than any knowledge of what was planned to happen, that led to intervention on the west coast."^0

Tregonning reiterates his view elsewhere saying that "British fears for the safety of its trade route to China by 1873 were strong enough for Kimberley in London to consider acting in anticipation". He also adds that the Chinese petition probably also had an effect. Yet again, Tregonning admits that "no proof that Germany intended to utilize the disorders in the Malay States as a pretext for intervention has been discovered".^1

E. Chew^2 in his survey of the same topic agrees for the most part with Cowan's and MacIntyre's interpretation to the point of saying that it "seems to relegate previous interpretations to the limbo of historiographical curiosities". He concludes that the fear of foreign intervention was probably the main reason why Kimberley changed his mind about the question of intervention, and that S. Clarke's letter was "calculated (possibly) to startle and serve as a stimulus for action." Chew, however, differs with both Parkinson and MacIntyre in the question when Kimberley made up his mind in favour

^0Tregonning, "How Germany", pp.183-4.


of intervention. He in fact takes both their arguments into consideration and proposes that the decision was formed during the period between the arrival of Campbell's report and the arrival of the Chinese petition, e.g.: "between early July and the last week of August 1873".

Khoo Kay Kim\textsuperscript{a} takes an altogether different approach and his conclusion is also different. He dismisses the importance of attempting to pin-point when exactly Kimberley decided on intervention. It does not matter because "the issue in Kimberley's mind was not one of non-intervention or intervention". Kimberley had already decided on intervention to stop the disturbances in the Malay states because they were "injurious to the development of Straits commercial enterprise in the Peninsula", and therefore "[t]he question, now, was one of degree and method" and not a question of when he had changed his mind. Khoo suspects that S. Clarke's letter and Herbert's minute were directly related to what was said during their meeting earlier, and that their "personal relationship ... was an important factor in the making of Imperial policy." The following is a summary of Khoo's reasons for rejecting the validity of the "German Argument":

1) Kimberley expressed no astonishment for not receiving any communication from a Malay ruler "stating that Germany would be called in failing England." Neither did Kimberley think it necessary for the new Governor, A.

\textsuperscript{a}Khoo, "The Origin", pp.52-91.
Clarke, to inquire into and report on the reality of a potential German menace.

2) The threat of foreign intervention was mentioned only in the draft instructions to A. Clarke when submitted for Gladstone's approval. It was, however, omitted from the final instructions delivered to A. Clarke.

3) "Kimberley should have been assured" after learning about the existence of treaties between Britain and the states of Kedah, Perak, Selangor and Johor, which obliged the Malay rulers not to cede territory or special privileges to foreign powers without consulting Britain.

4) As to the strategic importance of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore's security depended on the presence of British forces in China and India and not the other way around. Moreover, Kimberley neglected to confer with the British Admiralty and War Office as to the strategic importance of the western Malay states and to the possibility of a foreign threat.

5) It is doubtful whether there was "so much tension between Britain and Germany in the 1870's". In fact, there is evidence of considerable cooperation. Bismarck had more than once appealed for British assistance to protect

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*It might be added that when A. Clarke met Tunku Dia Doin for the first time on board the "Pluto" on 9 February 1874, no reference was made to Germany during their long conversation. (See C.O. Correspondence, Inclosure 3 in No.53, Continuation of Report on the Proceedings of Government Relating to the Native States in the Malay Peninsula.)*

*For the changes made in the draft letter to A. Clarke see C.O. 273/67, No.8641. Very interesting document.*
German interests overseas.

6) Kimberley was primarily anxious to stop the disturbances in the western Malay states because they were a threat to British commercial enterprise in the peninsula.

Thus Khoo concludes: "While the genuineness of Kimberley's fear will probably never be definitely known, there are innumerable reasons to suspect that it was false and none to indicate that it was true." Nevertheless, Khoo offers a way of putting the German factor into perspective: "He [Kimberley] used the Imperial argument not only because it was an argument which could move Gladstone, the Prime Minister, but because it could be publicly defended in the event of a serious outcry from any quarter."

D.R. SarDesai also doubts whether Germany was the major factor in influencing intervention, agreeing with Khoo basically for the same reasons. He stresses the fact that British interests were in no way threatened by Germany. "The days of German ambitions in the imperial field were still a few years away. Bismarck had even turned down an opportunity to establish a protectorate over the Sulu Sultanate and also a French offer to trade Alsace-Lorraine for Cochinchina. In sum, there was no reason for Britain to entertain fear of a European power challenging her supremacy in the Malay archipelago."

SarDesai also believes that it "is very likely that

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*SarDesai, British Trade, pp.157-72."
Kimberley used the argument of foreign intervention to get the anti-expansionist Gladstone to agree to a reconsideration of policy towards Malaya." He further emphasizes "the man-on-the-spot as an important factor in the intervention". To back his point, SarDesai puts forward a new argument stating that A. Clarke intervened in Perak first instead of sorting out the problems in Selangor "where most of the trouble was".
IV. Germany: A Rationalizing Instrument

From the above outline of interpretations offered by historians who have carefully scrutinized Colonial Office documents, memos and minutes, a number of salient points regarding the German factor emerge:

1) The rumour of 1870 regarding the cession of an island on the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula to the North German Confederation did not alarm Kimberley. But three years later the issue that Germany might intervene on the western side gained more attention.

2) There is almost general consensus among historians that certain British speculators attempted to "force", "blackmail", "frighten", "threaten", or "startle" the Colonial Office into taking a more active role in the Malay states.

3) There is disagreement on how the rumour of a foreign power obtaining a footing in the peninsula influenced Kimberley's decision for intervention. Did the rumour cause intervention or, conversely, was it used to justify intervention?

4) There is nothing to show that the British government had concrete evidence about Germany wanting or trying to manipulate the disorders in the Malay states as an excuse to acquire territory or influence in the peninsula.

Let us now take this discussion a little further by first confirming that Germany in fact did not harbour any
intentions in the Malay Peninsula, and secondly, by demonstrating that the British government was most probably aware of that. If these two points are reasonably established and supported by enough evidence, then it can only follow that Germany was used as a "scapegoat" to rationalize British intervention.

The Dutch-Acheh conflict, which MacIntyre mentions that Kimberley so closely followed, provides us with some interesting insights as to the workings of German policy at the time. By signing the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1871, Holland gave up her possessions on the Gold Coast and promised not to obstruct British interests in the Malay Peninsula. In return, Holland gained a free hand in Sumatra. The Dutch tried hard to bring Acheh under their control. As a precaution against the prospect that disturbances in Acheh might invite foreign intervention, the Netherlands government in February 1873 sent a note through their Ambassador in Berlin advising Germany not to get politically involved in Sumatra. Rome, Washington, and St. Petersburg were given similar messages. Yet, the prospect that Germany might get involved in Sumatra was unrealistic. Germany at that time did not want colonies. It was also Bismarck's declared policy that Germany's desire for a naval station would not be allowed to complicate matters in Europe (see Chapter 1). In fact, the German government wanted to see Holland's control over Sumatra established as soon as possible. By the early 1870s, Germany's shipping and trade interests in the
Netherlands East Indies was relatively large and required protection for further development. \(^7\)

It was for these reasons that Bismarck instructed his Ambassador in the Hague, Graf Perponcher, to convey to the Dutch Foreign Minister, Gericke van Herwijnen, that Germany supported the extension of Dutch rule over Aceh. In June 1873, Bismarck personally extended to the Netherlands Ambassador in Berlin, van Rochussen, Germany's best wishes for Holland's colonial endeavours in Sumatra. During the Dutch-Aceh war, which began in March 1873 and continued for over 30 years, the Netherlands government was allowed to recruit German nationals who had already completed their military service as mercenaries to fight against the Acehnese. By 1877, every fourth mercenary in the Dutch army in Aceh was a German. These paid soldiers were highly esteemed and regarded by the Dutch officers as "the best element in the army." \(^8\)

The prospect that Germany might get involved in the Malay Peninsula was as unrealistic as the idea that Germany might get involved in Sumatra. Compared with the penetration of German enterprise into Sumatra, China, and the Pacific, and apart from Singapore, the Malay Peninsula was not important to German merchants. Nor were there any German plantations or trading settlements in the peninsula to induce the German government to attempt intervention. So why should Germany get involved in an area where there

\(^7\)Meyer, "Das Eindringen", pp.32-4.

\(^8\)Ibid.
were local disturbances and where German interests were almost non-existent?

Moreover, German commercial ability in Singapore in the 1860s and 1870s was not in a position to push for more influence in the Malay Peninsula without at once damaging their own interests in the Straits Settlements. The success of German enterprise depended much on British good-will. German merchants exhibited little ambition and less ability for the sensitive issue of undertaking political intervention on their own. Rather, it can be safely assumed, like in Sumatra, that the German trader welcomed Britain's move to put an end to the dangers caused by the disturbances in the western Malay states which not only affected trade but threatened the peace in the Straits Settlements. There is no evidence of German ill-feeling or protest against Britain's involvement in the Malay Peninsula.

As already stated in Chapter 1, Bismarck zealously opposed colonial adventures abroad and rejected several invitations to extend German protection over areas in Eastern Asia and the Pacific. Bismarck received petitions twice from the ruler of Sulu inviting German protection, once in 1866 transmitted by Captain Noelte, and the other in 1873 by way of a German firm trading with Singapore, Schonburgh & Co. In both instances Bismarck refused to sanction protection. Similarly, when the ruler of the Tjiji Islands appealed for German protection in 1872,

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*Hunter, "English, German", p.60.*
Bismarck refused without hesitation. Germany was later entangled with Britain in a controversy over the status of German settlers and their land rights in Fiji. Britain took possession of Fiji in 1874.\textsuperscript{50} Thus Dawson writes:

"[I]t cannot be questioned that he [Bismarck] showed a great lack of prevision, for vast territories were then still to be had for the claiming, and the opportunities which were allowed to slip by unimproved never returned".\textsuperscript{51}

Bismarck preferred Germany to remain a purely European power, and in 1873 Bismarck's view was unchanged. To one colonial enthusiast he once said: "but my map of Africa lies in Europe. Here is Russia, and here is France and we are in the middle; that is my map of Africa."\textsuperscript{52} The same obviously applied to the Malay Peninsula.

Moreover, there is no evidence that Bismarck received any request from the ruler of Selangor inviting German protection, nor from any other Malay chief for that matter. Even if such a petition was made, it is extremely unlikely that Bismarck would have sanctioned protection. An official German involvement in the Malay Peninsula so close to British interests in India and the Straits Settlements seems inconsistent with Bismarck's line of approach towards colonies in general and relations with

\textsuperscript{50}Dawson, The German, vol.2, p.170 and p.175.

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., p.175.

Britain in particular. Bismarck strived at the time of British intervention in the peninsula for amicable relations with London. He certainly would not have jeopardized this policy for something that would have gained Germany little, especially if it was a distant and turbulent Malay state.

It is also unreasonable to believe that Germany was in a position to embark on any colonial adventure. Germany had only two warships stationed in Eastern Asia in the early seventies. These could not have posed any serious threat to the numerically and technically superior British navy in the region. Germany maintained naval ships in Asian waters to aid her nationals trading there, like producing navigation charts and protecting them from pirates. There is no evidence that a German naval vessel actually surveyed the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. Not in 1873 nor before. Besides, the British would have detected such action. Just a few years earlier Lord had given this as his opinion to the Colonial Office.

In short, the reason I believe why no evidence has yet come to light demonstrating Germany's intentions to get actively involved in the Malay states is simply due to the fact that there was never such intent.

As to Tregonning's assertion that Bismarck "was the man who mattered" in forming Britain's decision to

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"Foerster, Politische Geschichte, p.30.
"Ganz, "The German Navy", p.130."
intervene directly in the peninsula, it is true that Bismarck's character was not held in high regard in British ruling circles. In 1870, Queen Victoria was supposed to have had "a most horrid idea of his character". Gladstone likened Bismarck's integrity to that of Napoleon III, saying of the German chancellor: "A big man, not a great man". It is not really surprising that Bismarck was judged this way. Bismarck displayed cunning political and military abilities when he subdued the Danes with Austrian help in 1864. Turning then against Austria, he crushed her forces in 1866. France's turn to taste a humiliating defeat followed soon after in the war of 1870-1.

Nevertheless, a crucial point is overlooked by identifying Bismarck with possessing some sort of imperial shrewdness which the British might have perceived as a compelling threat. Bismarck may have been a master tactician in the European arena, but, unlike British and French politicians, he lacked experience in colonial affairs. At the same time, it is pertinent to emphasize that German authorities at home had a very deficient information base to rely upon as to the events in the Malay Peninsula.

We still have to consider the question whether the British government knew that a German move on the

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peninsula was highly unlikely? The answer to this question seems to lie in the affirmative for the following reasons. The very first documented reaction to S. Clarke's letter by a Colonial Office official was MacDonell's minute of 19 July 1873. In it MacDolande correctly expressed his belief that "the probability of a German protectorate seems small". But how could he have known? The answer may lie in the fact that the British Foreign Office was well informed and was kept up to date with details of Bismarck's intentions by their able Ambassador in Berlin, Odo Russel, also known as Lord Ampthill. From the beginning of his appointment as ambassador in 1871, Russel managed to develop a close rapport with Bismarck. This relationship gave Russel particular insight into Bismarck's character and techniques and made him especially qualified to provide the Foreign Office with accurate information relating to the Chancellor's foreign policy.

In 1873, the year Kimberley decided to interfere in the Malay Peninsula, Russel notified Granville of

C.O.273/74, No.7362, Minute by Macdonald, 19 July 873.

**Odo William Leopold Russel (1829-84) held diplomatic posts in Vienna, Paris, the Crimea, the U.S.A., Florence, Rome and Naples before serving briefly at the foreign Office as Assistant Under-Secretary, 1870-1. Russel was British Ambassador to the German Reich from 871 until his death on 25 August 1884. In 1878 he acted as British plenipotentiary at the Congress of Berlin. He became Lord Ampthill in 1881.**

**Dawson, The German Empire, vol.2 p.194 and p.204; unter, "English, German", pp.67-8.**
Bismarck's insistence on staying clear of any colonial endeavours, and that Bismarck had no desire for Germany to become a formidable maritime power. When Granville asked Russel about Germany's plans for the Sulu Islands, the British ambassador replied on 21 November 1873 that although Germany wanted to protect her trade interests, she had no intention whatsoever of acquiring territory there or anywhere else.\(^2\)

In fact, there was considerable cooperation between Germany and Britain during the Sulu crisis of 1873. When Spanish authorities in the Philippines attempted a blockade to force the Sulu sultanate into submission, both Britain and Germany cooperated in pressuring Spain into lifting the blockade. This cooperation lasted until 1877 when Madrid finally gave way and consented to allow free and direct trade in the Sulu Archipelago (see Chapter 1).\(^3\)

As to German intentions in the Malay Peninsula, Granville had never heard of such a scheme. On 7 February 1885, Granville wrote to Odo Russel's successor in Berlin, Edward Malet, saying that:

"Until the receipt of a report from Lord Ampthill [Lord Odo Russel] of the 14th June last [1884], of conversations he had with Prince Bismarck, and up to the interviews which I had about the same time with Count Herbert Bismarck, I was under the belief that the Chancellor was personally opposed to German colonization. The


reports of Lord Ampthill were continuously and strongly to that effect, and on the 15th March, 1884, his Excellency, referring to the agitation [in the colonial controversies of 1884 and 1885] on the subject, and among the shipping and commercial classes in Germany, stated that it was well known that the Prince was absolutely opposed to their ardent desire for the acquisition of colonies by Germany, and was determined to combat and oppose their growing influence.\footnote{2}

It seems safe to conclude that the prospect of Germany interfering in the Malay Peninsula in the 1870s was just not there, and that British government officials understood that fact. This leads us to dismiss the view that Germany was directly responsible for Kimberley's conversion to intervention in the affairs of the Malay states. It simply does not accord with the facts and logic of the question concerned.

Yet, it is not possible to disregard the German element completely. What was asked for in 1873 was government protection for British interests in the western Malay state. To achieve this, the rumour of possible German designs in Selangor was "trotted out" on behalf of certain speculators in the hope of inducing the British government to afford them protection.

Since it has been demonstrated that Germany did not have the intention or the means to interfere in the peninsula, and since Kimberley most probably understood the fact that German intervention was hardly possible, his leaves us with only one possible explanation. Kimberley used Germany as a rationalizing instrument to

\footnote{2}Quoted in Dawson, The German, vol.2, p.204.
influence Gladstone towards intervention in the Malay Peninsula. Kimberley used Germany as a rationalizing tool again when the question of granting the Charter for the British North Borneo Co. was discussed in parliament in October 1880. Kimberley argued that if Britain failed to extend her control over North Borneo, Germany might establish herself there and threaten British interests in the Malay Peninsula and Australia. Kimberley also used Germany to defend his decisions in case of future problems. It is in this sense that Kimberley's statements of 1881 and 1885 with reference to the German threat should be understood. This conclusion corresponds with Khoo's interpretation.

To sum up, the "German Argument" falls apart if it is used to explain that the fear of Germany dictated Kimberley's change of policy. And yet, Germany played a role in the sense that alleged German schemes were fabricated and subsequently used to rationalize intervention. Only in this sense is it possible to say that Germany had an influence on British policy in the Malay Peninsula in the 1870s.

*Thio, British Policy, p.17.*