



## China's response to the Pirates Under the Ming-Qing Dynasties

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### ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the research period of the Ming-Qing dynasties, which marked the final era of monarchy in Chinese history. During this time, China faced unique historical circumstances with unprecedented challenges to its strength, national security, and maritime security, particularly with the emergence of Western colonialism. The article not only examines China's policies in addressing piracy from a national perspective but also considers the regional dimension by exploring the initial coordination between China and neighboring countries such as Japan and Vietnam in the collective effort to eradicate piracy and ensure security in the East Sea. By analyzing the advantages and achievements gained from the Ming and Qing dynasties' policies in combating pirates, the article also highlights notable limitations in China's response to this issue during that period. The article emphasizes that a lack of introspection, insufficient emphasis on coastal defense, and the failure to prioritize the maritime domain within the national defense strategy were the primary factors contributing to the limitations of China's policies in addressing piracy under the Ming and Qing dynasties. These limitations also played a crucial role in the country's defense strategy failure in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

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### 1. Introduction.

Although China has a fairly long coastline in the East and Southeast, since ancient times, Chinese civilization has been famous as a continental, inward-looking, not a marine civilization. Even under the monarchy, China's two popular ruling theories, Confucianism and Legalism, attached great importance to agriculture, taking farming as the root. However, with the change of historical context, when national security was not only affected by the land side but also contains many potential dangers from the sea side, the maritime issue gradually became a concern of Chinese dynasties, especially the Ming and Qing dynasties. In addition to the risk of border encroachment from the sea by foreign countries, the risk of piracy threatening national security was increasingly evident, requiring the Ming and Qing dynasties to adjust their national strategies to suit the new

situation. Many researchers around the world (including Chinese researchers) have discussed a number of aspects related to maritime security, including the problem of piracy in the centuries under the rule of Ming – Qing dynasties, such as: Yuen Yung Lun (1831), Woo Kit-yu (1963), Na Yancheng (1968), Ma Dazheng (2000), Zhang Wei & Phuong Khon (2003), etc. Some famous Western authors discussing Chinese piracy in this period can be mentioned, such as: Dian H Murray (1996), Angus Konstam (1999), Robert Antony... However, the most of the above works are focused on reflecting the reality of piracy in the East Sea in general or the eradication of a specific group of famous Chinese pirates. Currently, there is still no work that places the issue of piracy in the overall defense strategy of China under the two Ming and Qing dynasties. Faced with the threat of piracy directly threatening the security of China and neighboring countries, what policies did the Ming - Qing dynasties implement to respond? To what extent did these policy adjustments meet practical needs? Was there coordination between China and surrounding countries in dealing with the common danger that threatened regional security? Was that coordination governed by current political relations when China was the "center" of the "tributary order" in East Asia? Those

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are the issues posed and also the focus that this article is about.

## 2. Sea perception of the Ming - Qing dynasties.

China's three directions west, north and south are high mountains, grasslands and deserts; The east side overlooks the vast Pacific Ocean. Although the coast is long, in the North, the coast is low and muddy, and there is a lack of islands near the shore, so the Chinese people from ancient times did not want to venture out to sea. In the South, the coast is not flat, the climate is bad, there are many storms. They are the geographical position and natural conditions that have contributed to the creation of a typical continental Chinese civilization, with the center being the Zhongyuan area, which is characterized by a dry nomadic agricultural civilization, combined with the wet rice agricultural civilization in the south of Yangtze. It is that geographical position that in the ancient and medieval times, the sea was considered by China as a natural fortress, a "solidest line of defense" (Chinese Historical Association 2000a, 429-430), because to them, "The danger of the ocean is the boundary between China and the outside determined by heaven" (Chinese Historical Association 2000a, 429-430). Not only saw the sea as a natural fortress, the Chinese dynasties also considered the sea a taboo area, partly because they could not control it, partly because piracy had been a constant threat for centuries, forming a constant concern for the imperial court. The Chinese dynasties almost exclusively focused on those countries that could reach them on land, could communicate by land, "emphasis on defense on land, disregard defense at sea". This immutable defense strategy has been assumed by Chinese feudal dynasties to be "truth" for more than 2000 years, since Qin Shi Huang destroyed and annexed 6 countries, unified the whole country, built a multi-ethnic country with the first centralized feudal system in China, until the mid-nineteenth century (221 BC-1860 AD).

To the Han Dynasty (206 BC), China made a move to the East Sea through the fact that Hainan Island was owned by the Le (or Ly) people, a Vietnamese ethnic group in Baiyue, but was conquered by the Chinese in Guangdong. This can be considered as the first step into the East Sea of Chinese dynasties. Over the next 19 centuries, the Chinese feudal dynasties continued to send immigrants in and adopted a policy of assimilation to make Hainan their territory. However, the separation from the mainland culture, especially coastal piracy, ... has prevented the Chinese governments from sending people here to settle on a large scale, hindering the policy of entering the East Sea of the Chinese dynasties.

But along with China's progress into the South China Sea was the confrontation with the Pirates. Although pirates appeared early, it was until the Ming Dynasty that piracy really raged. However, piracy was still not enough to pose a serious threat to China. Even the countries in the sea far away from China, before having the steamship, could not organize armies to attack the Zhongyuan. This fact made the Ming - Qing dynasties still maintain the concept of considering the sea as a "natural fortress", "a taboo area" before the British colonialists

caused the First Opium War (1840). It is this that greatly affected the radical or half-hearted level of the anti-piracy policy of the two Ming and Qing dynasties.

## 3. Piracy in China.

Pirates became a profession, called "Wako" in Japanese, the Chinese called them "Aikou" or "Wokou" (So 1975, 1). In Veritable Records of Hongwu Emperor, the word "Wokou" was first mentioned to refer to Japanese armed pirates cum traders, operating in North Korea peninsula and coastal area of China and that was the first time the name "wako" appeared in the records (Hach 2008, 231). "The term 'wako' is made up of two letters: 'wa' means Japanese and the letter 'k'ou' means bandits. From here, the word 'wako' is translated as names of Japanese bandits" (So 1975, 1). "Wako" is a word used to describe border bandits who were Japanese, but then there was confusion among the residents of the area being attacked by the bandits, they call all bandits operating in the waters of Japan, South China and Southeast Asia "Wako"

Since regional trade takes place according to the "trade season" (Hall 1997, 345) (The trading season begins when the trade wind appears over this sea "the northeast monsoon blows from the eighth lunar month, while the south-east winter blows from March to July of the lunar calendar. Therefore, the sailing season is from August to November and returns to March and April next year") (Nguyen 2003, 73), so the band of bandits also raged according to trade cycle. In particular, piracy along the coast of Nanhai increased sharply during the third and fourth lunar months of each year (Wang 1827, 85). It is also worth mentioning that Wako operated not only in coastal areas but also penetrates the inland of China, Japan, Korea and many surrounding countries (Ly 1990, 91).

Among them, China is the country that suffered the most devastating damage from Wako. Pirates raged mainly in the south, from Hubei, Hunan to Fujian, Guangdong. They landed on Hangzhou Bay to plunder, and took away a lot of wealth that scared the people in the area. Wako also organized raids into the waters of Nanjing, although the area was fairly well defended. A letter dated October 26, 1534 from the central government of China to the local government wrote: "People are very upset about the local government's control of smuggling and piracy. Pirates started raging in the Chili, Nanjing, Fujian, and Zhejiang regions. They blatantly go out to sea to trade and plunder" (So 1975, 46). The history of the Ming dynasty also marked their destruction. "During the time of The Jiajing Emperor, the Japanese sea invaders often harassed the Southeast coastal region. They associate with the moat and trader to kill people and loot, making the security of the coastal area always unstable. Chinese history called them the "Wako" (Japanese bandits). In 1553, they colluded with the Han crooks Uong Truc and Tu Hai to gather several hundred ships, landed in the waters of Zhejiang and Jiangsu, divided into dozens of groups, to plunder dozens of cities and towns. The mandarins and coastal soldiers did not dare to resist. When they saw them, they ran away" (Lam and Tao 2000, 348).

Notably, pirates were not only Japanese but also Chinese, Korean and many other countries, with the ratio of 10 Chinese - 1 Japanese, or 10 Chinese - 3 Japanese” (Sansom 1994, 437). All of them, regardless of their background, are collectively known by the name “wako” which means “Japanese bandit”. When “wako” flourished in Fujian, in a letter from Tsung-Ch’en - an assistant of the manager in Fujian sent to Hsu Chieh - secretary of the master of Zhejiang - it was written as follows: In Fujian, the Japanese border bandits account for 20-30% and the majority are Fujian people. They are people who are against the public authority and it is not easy to control them. If we try to suppress them to reduce the border robbers and bring them into framework, they will be like swarms of mosquitoes after the rains, ready to fight back” (So 1975, 30). In another letter from Tsung-Ch’en written in 1563, there were two groups of border robbers in Fujian: one group was about 30-40% Japanese pirates, the other group 60-70% are regional people” (So 1975, 30). The complex pirate composition was also one of causes making many obstacles for the prevention of pirates, contributing to the anxiety and view of the sea as a “taboo area” of the Chinese dynasties.

From their plundering activities along the coast of China, the Wako groups gradually moved down to Southeast Asian countries such as Dai Viet, the waters of Luzon - Philippines... (Ngo 1997; Taylor 2001). In general, Japan, Korea Tien, China and the countries of Southeast Asia suffered the ravages of bandits. They caused a lot of confusion for the coastal residents. “The pirates stole a large amount of rice and grain in Korea and many precious goods from China such as silk, copper coins... In many surprise attacks, the Wakos enslaved many people” (Sansom, 1994, p. 442), “We cannot enumerate all the factors that contribute to the Wako phenomenon, but the the above examples make this phenomenon more obvious. The number of pirates and their activities is expanding and more and more people become their victims. The poor people who joined the pirate caravans were also increasingly active. The activities of this group of pirates are extremely daring. “Wako” is mentioned in the Ming History: in 1555, a group of Japanese pirates numbering 60-70 people began to attack from Shao-hsing, stealing goods and wealth from Hangzhou, Yenzhou, Hoizhou, and others. Ningkou and Taiping, threaten and attack Nanjing” (So 1975, 138). “The Wako bandits organized large-scale ravages along the coasts of Korea and China, seizing much property and brutally slaughtering the local population” (Nguyen 2000, 125). The above excerpts have vividly described to us the terrible consequences that merchants, people and even the government had to suffer from piracy. They also exert a strong influence on foreign trade, not only China’s maritime trade but also the maritime trade of countries in the region. It was this common risk that was an important basis for the initial cooperation between China and other countries in solving the problem of piracy at that time.

#### 4. The policy of “Haijin” of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

To deal with the dangers from the sea, including the increasing pressure from piracy, the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

in the 4th Hongwu year (1371) implemented a “closed door” policy. In the book *5000-year history of China*, Lam Han Dat and Tao Du Chuong considered the problem of piracy as one of the main causes of this “defensive” policy of closing the sea of the Ming Dynasty: “Policy of the Ming Dynasty for the ocean in the early years took the principle of conservatism as the main principle, which was related to the problem of pirates ... For that, Hongwu Emperor on the one hand planned a defense plan, on the other hand withdrew all the people living in Penghu, and at the same time passed on his descendants not to conquer overseas countries, including Xiao Liuqiu (ie Taiwan)....(Lam and Tao 2000, 349-350). Facing the increasingly fierce problem of Wako raging, the government continued to implement the policy of “Haijin”, which stipulated that only the official fleets of the imperial court could go abroad to trade, and the people in the coastal regions of China are not allowed to be traded with foreign countries, and are not allowed to go to the sea to go to other countries. China’s boats were only allowed to bring enough drinking water for two days, so they had to stay anchored in rivers, wander around in shallow seas, and were not allowed to trade with foreign countries. The dwellers in the coastal areas were allowed to migrate inland to avoid looting by pirates. The Chinese boats themselves, designed to carry cargo, were very bulky, so they could not cross the ocean, could only follow the coast.

In the Qing dynasty, the Chinese court continued to deal with piracy with the policy of “Haijin”, not allowing people to go out to trade. Leaving the homeland was considered treason, so those who go out were often unable to return to the country. In 1661, in order to prevent the group of pirates from the Zhèng family, the Qing dynasty banned the sea and forced the people living in the coastal areas to migrate inland (Lam and Tao 2000, 357). From Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu up to Shandong, the people were not allowed to fish and the boats of the southern provinces were all burned, and an inch of wood was not allowed to be released into the water, whoever violates will be convicted of colluding with the enemy. The court did not recognize the island as part of its territory. Therefore, even the conquered islands near the coast such as Zhoushan, Penghu, Southern Austria, and Taiwan were only considered as the territories to which envoys were to be dispatched to Beijing to periodically tribute. In addition to the purpose of fighting piracy, this was also to cut ties between mainland China and the outside, to prevent the former mandarins of Ming dynasty from fleeing abroad to oppose the Qing dynasty. Especially, since the end of the seventeenth century, many Western countries, such as the Netherlands, Spain, France, England, etc., traveled by sea to China, requesting the authorities to open up trade, the Qing Dynasty was even more defend the sea side more closely, in order to prevent the penetration of Westerners.

However, China’s “Haijin” policy not only did not limit piracy, but also promoted illegal smuggling and trade (Lam and Tao 2000, 349-350). This policy deprived coastal residents of all means of earning a living, forcing them to join pirate groups. When promulgating the “Haijin” policy, the Ming court believed that restricting non-state commerce would gradually repel piracy. However, this policy turned out to force many Chi-

nese merchants to illegally trade with Japan to protect their own interests. With the coastal residents of China, Korea and South-east Asia, seafaring is the basic occupation of the residents here, so the extreme 'Haijin' policy has deprived them of their way to earn a living. Therefore, in addition to the "full-blown professional piracy" (Dian 1987, 32) such as Trinh Thanh Cong (a mixed-Chinese pirate leader still known as Quoc Tinh Gia, the scope of operations spread to the waters of the Philippines, under his authority sometimes up to thousands of ships, totaling more than 70,000 people (Antony 2003, 20), among the pirates operating in the East Sea at that time, there were also petty pirates who were economically disadvantaged fishermen, who viewed piracy as a lifeline in their desire to have a better life (Murray 1987, 6; Downing 1838a, 106 - 210; Downing 1838b, 222 - 223). This led to the formation of the second phase of Wako, when Japanese pirates were complicit with Chinese pirates to expand their forces. As a result, the power and leadership of Wako gradually changed markedly, with the number of Chinese people greatly increasing.

## 5. Maritime defense policy.

In order to deal with piracy, on the one hand, the Ming - Qing dynasties implemented the policy of "Haijin" mentioned above, and on the other hand, organized defenses along the coast. However, because of limited capabilities and technology, the naval defense policy of the court was not very effective and merchant ships often had to equip themselves with guns, sailors were also soldiers.

In order to defend the sea and deal with what they considered to be complex pirates, the Ming and Qing dynasties restricted outside merchants [mainly Dutch and Portuguese] to trade in certain regions in Macau [Ao Mon], and at the same time enacted strict laws prohibiting people from going to the sea on their own to go to other countries. The rules were very strict, for example: "whoever brings food and weapons out of the country is hanged, anyone who discloses military information is beheaded, building ships with two or more masts violates the ban on building large ships; Prohibition of bringing banned goods to other countries to trade; secretly communicating with pirates, conspiring with them, leading them to plunder people, committing crimes according to the execution law, exposing their heads to the public. The whole family of the offender will be exiled to the border" (Lam and Tao 2000, 350 - 351). In addition, the court had to "order the officials (mandarins in the border areas or the coast) to strictly enforce, the migrants in Austria should be even more vigilant. The safety of the locality is due to the purchase and sale, but no matter how beneficial the trade is, it is also due to the foreign merchants (Dutch, Portuguese merchants), the way to prevent petty matters, it is impossible not to understand and be careful" (Ma 2000). In the reign of Kangxi, the court ordered all people living along the coast to move inland at least 40 miles. People living along the coast, although isolated from the ocean, were still strictly controlled, food was distributed per capita, only enough to eat for a few days at a time; items must be declared, and when used, permission must be obtained of the military. The market was now

only allowed to open twice a month, people were absolutely not allowed to go to the sea to trade.

To defend the sea, the court also advocated taking the Han people to rule the Han people, recruiting pirates. Although the Manchu people are powerful, they are still a people from outside, compared to the Chinese people, they are only a minority, so if they cannot use the indigenous people to help them, they will not be able to have enough administrative political or military force to rule the central plains. Therefore, right from the moment they entered Beijing, they had policies to please the Han people to attract talents. The fact that the Qing Dynasty was able to attract the Jiangnan strategy official, Hong Chengchou, then also used the mandarins and benefits to recruit other generals Zhèng Zhīlóng, Huang Wu (general of Zheng Sheng-gong) caused hundreds of officials and tens of thousands of soldiers returned to the court after that were proofs of the success of the Qing Dynasty in attracting the Han people, using the Han to rule the Han people, and recruiting pirates.

In addition, the naval work of the Ming - Qing dynasties was also prominent with the policy of investing in fleet construction and naval experts. Both the Ming and Qing dynasties tried their best to arrange more and more border guards along the coast. Under the Ming Dynasty, each mountain camp stationed 500 troops, by the Qing dynasty this number increased to 1,000, divided into 2 camps. Even in the reign of Kangxi emperor, the defensive posts also increased to 2,000 troops each, arranging large Western-style guns to prevent sea invaders. However, it is worth mentioning that the quality of this army was not strong (Many authors 1995, 23). According to a British officer hired by the Qing Dynasty to train sailors and command a battleship (named Yang Yu) in 1870, he was very disappointed in the organization and life of the ship and the Chinese army: "simply a bunch of well-equipped but undisciplined people" (Tien 1992, 86-87).

It can be said that, until before the First Opium War (1840 - 1842), China still had almost no clear concept and action on maritime defense for national security literally, although before that from the Ming to the end of the Qing dynasty, these two dynasties - with the main purpose of fighting pirates and the invasion of Westerners, established artillery squadrons, located along the Southeast coast. Such was the purpose of China's maritime defense, so until 1832, after the British sent the battleship "William Pitt Amherst" to survey Chinese waters, they drew the conclusion that: "The Chinese entire fleet is made up of thousands of ships, large and small, so it cannot resist even a single battleship" (Quach 1961, 111). The above situation of the Chinese navy, after more than 20 years of the First Opium War, has not changed, just as the British officer Chester Holcombe wrote in the book *The Chinese Army and Navy*: "Before 1862, China did not have a navy, almost only small and slow riverboats, with the purpose of performing coastal duties, each boat was equipped with 1 small cast iron cannon. These cannons only pose a danger to the crew of the enemy boat. These boats cannot escape quickly. In addition, there is a fleet of rowing boats on the boat. This type of boat is also equipped with an iron cannon, used to suppress pirates and smugglers. It is the entire fleet of Chinese warships" (Chinese Historical Associa-

tion 2000d, 463)

After the Opium War, the Chinese court became aware of its military inferiority. However, because the renovation on the sea required time and money, the Qing Dynasty had to resort to the inherent strategy of increasing local forces and, if necessary, would lure the enemy inland to destroy according to the principle of withdrawal to retrograde defense.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Lǐ Hóngzhāng, general secretary of the Beiyang army, established more defensive brigades at strategic ports and along the coast. He also built military schools to train officers, but heavily on weapon innovation and lacked training in defensive strategies. Therefore, when the Chinese fleets encountered the Japanese navy (1894-1895) or powerful pirate forces, they were severely defeated and almost the entire force was annihilated. Therefore, more than ever, the issue of training naval experts was given special importance by the Qing court. According to Yizhen- who presided over the General Secretary of the Navy of the Qing court, the selection, training and promotion of talented generals in the army force is quite difficult, but "the training and promotion of talented naval generals is especially difficult" (Chinese Historical Association 2000b, 566). Right from the time of Dong Tri, when discussing the purchase of foreign warships, the ministers in charge of the navy actively prepared to send people abroad for naval training with the hope that in a few years, China will have a team of naval talents in the fields of commanding, building and controlling ships. In addition to the policy of sending people abroad to study, Li Hongzhang also tried to promote the establishment of naval schools in the country. In 1880, he imitated the "Western way" (Western Kingdom became a rule), founded the Tianjin Naval Academy, in order to train the fleet of ship commanders. In 1882, Li Hongzhang again established a branch of the Naval Academy, specializing in fostering and training ship repair personnel. In 1889, he again petitioned the court for permission to establish the Weihai Naval Academy. After 4 years, this Academy has trained 30 train drivers and repairmen (Lam and Tao 2020, 186). By the end of the nineteenth century, the Qing Dynasty had appeared a series of generals and captains who were loyal to the country, skilled in battle. . . After the Sino-Japanese War, although China was defeated by Japan, the Japanese themselves had to admit: "The Chinese navy's defeat was due to bad boats and artillery, not the fault of talent" (Ngo 1987, 19). Not long after the end of the Sino-French war (1885), China built the Beiyang fleet with an initial scale, becoming the second "Armed force at sea" in the Far East" (Ngo 1989, 30).

Not only that, the General Secretary of the Navy of the Qing court was well aware of the importance of building a naval base in the nation's maritime defense, so at the same time with the policy of purchasing ships, they chose places with the most prominent coastal locations to build moorings, repair and maintain, and provide supplies for the navy (Chinese Historical Association 2000b, 566)

Regarding the location of the naval bases, Li Hongzhang advocated that the Beiyang fleet should choose the Lüshunkou and Weihaiwei border gates as appropriate because these two places "are both very dangerous" (Chinese Historical Association

2000b, 567). In order to complete the construction of the naval base, Li Hongzhang, in addition to requesting the court to quickly make a decision and provide funding for construction, also personally sat on a warship to observe the coastal geography.

When establishing the naval base, Li Hongzhang attaches great importance to the construction of fortresses. He thinks that "Fortresses at the coastal border gates of China are largely unsuitable", so the policy of hiring foreign engineers to build design and build a new fortress (Chinese Historical Association 2000b, 568). Under the urging and direction of Li Hongzhang, the arrangement of the coastal defense line of the Beiyang navy was started; In places of strategic importance were all built and equipped with Western-style cannons, greatly enhancing their capacity of defense for the Beiyang fleet's navy.

On the other hand, Li Hongzhang repeatedly sent documents to the court, asking permission to develop the telegraph industry because the warring party had to "completely rely on the speed of telegraph news, so the telegraph is really something that is not indispensable for national defense" (Chinese Historical Association 2000c, 335). In July 1881, Li Hongzhang, on behalf of the General Secretary of the Navy, presented to the court for permission to install the Tianjin - Shanghai telegraph line. The piece was approved by King Guangxu, allowing the construction of this telegraph line to begin in April 1882. By the end of 1882, the Tianjin - Shanghai telegraph line was inaugurated. After that, the General Department of Telegraph was established in Tianjin along with 7 sub-divisions, making "The news passed between Nanyang and Beiyang smoothly in the blink of an eye" (Chinese Historical Association 2000c, 338).

In order to defend the sea against threats from the sea, including the problem of piracy, the Qing Dynasty adopted the Yang Wu movement to promote the construction of increasingly large-scale defense industrial plants. After many years of efforts of the core officials in the court, finally in 1885, China also purchased two large armored battleships from France. However, Li Hongzhang said that in order to develop the cause of marine defense, "it is necessary to have a long-term plan, from the beginning the construction scale must be large, and for the sea defense to be really effective, the ship must be built. Beiyang fleet needs to be equipped with 16 battleships, in addition to torpedo boats, gunboats to keep ports, training ships and transport ships, a total of 43 ships of all kinds. With equal equipment levels of the four fleets, the modern Chinese navy would become a formidable force at sea, made up of 172 warships of all kinds" (Chinese Historical Association 2000b). Armed forces at sea of such a scale, the active defensive thought "Determined to win at sea" of the radical mandarins in the imperial court - led by Li Hongzhang, would have a solid practical basis. However, due to the lack of consensus from the court and the lack of investment in the defense industry, those plans of the Li Hongzhang was unfinished.

Therefore, despite many progressive proposals of the radical faction, due to the lack of financial investment and the state's solidarity and determination, the naval defense activities of the Ming and Qing dynasties were limited to building boats used in marches, building fortresses against pirates and preventing peo-

ple from going out and trading in other countries of their own accord. The force directly implementing the maritime defense policy - the naval contingent - the force that plays a decisive role in the success or failure of this policy, although it has increased in quality in the second half of the nineteenth century, in general, its strength is still weak, unsynchronized, not equipped with modern ships and weapons to cope with dangers from the sea, including piracy.

## 6. In relations with other countries.

As the "center" of the medieval East Asian tribute system, China used its position in relations with surrounding countries in solving the problem of piracy. One of the methods of fighting against the sea rules of China at that time was to entrust the vassals to take charge of suppressing or restraining the pirates. Therefore, whenever the coast was in trouble, the first thing they did was to send a letter asking the surrounding small states to perform their duty, to undertake the fight against pirates (Oxnam 1975, 154-155). The surrounding countries themselves were also making great efforts in eliminating piracy - a danger that threatens the security of not only China but the whole region. Japan and Dai Viet are typical examples.

It can be said that having the same goal of destroying Wako pirates is one of the reasons that brought China and Japan closer together during this period. The victory of Japan's anti-piracy operation is also the victory of China. Typically, at the end of the fourteenth century, "Yoshimitsu ordered his army to attack the strongholds and outposts of bandits who disappeared on the islands of Iki and Tsushima. The discovered border bandits were punished. mercilessly treated" (Sansom 1994, 278). Accordingly, Wako's activities tend to decrease. The Emperor of the Ming Dynasty immediately sent a letter of thanks with many gifts of gold and silver to Yohimitsu<sup>(3)</sup>.

In addition, many times, before the blatant raging of pirate gangs, the Ming - Qing dynasties softened and humbly sent emissaries to Japan to maintain the relationship between the two countries (Kimiya 1980, 535). For example, in 1369, when Wokou sacked Shandong, Zhejiang and Guangdong, the Hongwu Emperor sent envoys led by Duong Tai to Japan, carrying a letter from Emperor Hongwu advising Japan to send emissaries to China tribute and take measures to prevent piracy in China (Tanaka 1987, 32). Or in 1370, although the trip of Duong Tai envoy delegation did not achieve the desired results, Hongwu Emperor continued to send Trieu Trat to Japan to ask Japan to establish Sino-Japanese tributary trade relations when the piracy was taking place along the coast from Shandong to Wenzhou, Dai Chau, Minh Chau and the coastal districts of Fujian, was increasingly serious... (Ton 2006, 300-301). As a result, the two sides had initial coordination and achieved certain achievements, such as in 1555, the Ming court of China coordinated with the Bakufu government to eliminate the band of strong pirates. Although China-Japan relations in the Ming -

Qing dynasties, especially in the Qing dynasties, had many periods of conflict and contradiction, it is undeniable that the coordination between the two sides has contributed significantly in the fight against piracy at that time. That same coordination has, in many cases, softened a relationship that contains many potential contradictions.

In addition to Japan, during this period, China also initially cooperated with "vassal" countries in reducing pirates. Vietnam was a typical example. When the Ming and Qing dynasties recognized the Dai Viet court, and appointed the heads of state of Vietnam as Annam's king also clarifies that Vietnam was responsible for maintaining the security of the sea to protect the Chinese court. Therefore, whenever there was any trouble in the ocean, the Qing Dynasty immediately sent a letter to the Dai Viet court to solve it.

First of all, many times, *China sent a decree to the Vietnamese court to agree on how to handle the sea invaders when the pirates of two sides ran into each other's waters.* On the 15th day of the 10th lunar month, 1790 (November 21, 1790), Emperor Qianlong (reigning time: 1736-1795) issued an edict to the King of Annam that: "An Nam<sup>(4)</sup> and Guangdong are on the sea consecutively, if there are pirate ships fleeing to the coastal area of the Annam King, please order soldiers to track them; If they resist, just kill them, not because they are Chinese and then wait, to slow down the peace of the sea." (Ho 2010b, 235-236)

*There were also many times, Chinese military officers coordinated with Vietnamese military officers to destroy sea invaders right in Vietnam's waters,* such as: On the 1st day of the 4th lunar month in 1566 (ie 20/4/1566 solar calendar), under the the reign of Emperor Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty (reigning time: 1521-1566), the military officers of the two provinces of Fujian and Guangdong pursued the sea invaders. After the Ngo Binh invaders were defeated in Duong Giang and O Tru Duong, they fled to Annam. Admiral Ngo Khue Phuong of the Ming Dynasty commanded the leader of Van Ninh commune in Annam to coordinate with the Chinese army to fight. As a result, Ngo Binh pirate's army lost a great deal, fell into the water and died unspeakably, the army of two sides captured and beheaded 398 pirates (Ho 2010a, 232). After that victory, the Minister of Infantry of the Ming Dynasty asked the Emperor Jiajing to define the merits of each individual to reward and punish, and especially to consider the merits of the cooperation in fighting the sea invaders of Annam government. Emperor Jiajing accepted this offer. (Ho 2010a, 233)

In April 1690, under the reign of Emperor Kangxi, the sea invaders of Yen Quang (ie Yen Bang) Phuong Van Long and Tan An Sung occupied Van Ninh waters, gathering many people to plunder. The General of the Qing Dynasty sent a letter to Vietnam to make an appointment with the army to eliminate these people. Dai Viet court sent Le Huyen to bring troops to coordinate with the Qing army, captured An Sung and more than

<sup>3</sup>Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (Japanese: 足利 義満) was the third shogun of the Ashikaga shogunate in Japan, ruling from 1368 to 1394

<sup>4</sup>After gaining independence, Vietnamese kings often had to receive Chinese ordination, the title of King of Annam (since 1164). Since then, the Chinese have often referred to Vietnam as Annam, regardless of the country's name.

200 people to deliver them to Diep Thang at Longmen County (Longmen County is 60 miles south of Qinzhou, important location by sea) (International Affairs of Nguyen Dynasty 2002, 752). Thus, the coordination of the two countries' military officers brought about an important victory against the sea invaders led by Phuong Van Long and Tan An Sung.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, in August 1853, the ships of the Hai Ninh government (in present-day Quang Ninh province) together with the coast guards of Qinzhou (China) joined forces to fight the sea invaders in Vinh Thuc commune's sea area, killed the enemies. (International Affairs of Nguyen Dynasty 2007, 283).

*Besides the times when the two sides cooperated to fight sea invaders in the East Sea, many times the Qing side sent letters asking the Nguyen court to arrest the Chinese sea invaders to flee.* For example: On the 4th day of the 6th lunar month in 1791 (ie, the 4th of July, 1791 in the solar calendar), according to the words of the Fuk?anggan group to the Qianlong king, we know: When the king of Annam received it Notice of the Qing Dynasty about the search and capture of the bandits, he immediately gave emergency patrol to coastal posts, and appointed Ngo Van So as Admiral of the Navy, dispersing troops to patrol and hunt for sea invaders of China fled to Vietnam. Because up to now (1791), the leader of the bandits named Ha Van Khoi (<sup>5</sup>) has not been caught, in addition, 16 accomplices (including Vuong Tai Cao, Khong A Tich, Truong A Tu, Bo A Vang, A Tan, A Muoi, A Cuu, Ngo Thiem, Dai Dau Bong, Phuc Dai Phao, Luu A Nhi, Tran A Nhi, Tran A Luc, Truong Lao Nhi, A That, A Thang) have not been caught. Another case led by the oligarch Ton Duy Bin has not been caught, so King Qian Long continued to notify the King of Annam to pay attention to arrest the sea invaders if they ran into the waters of Annam (Ho 2010b, 241-243).

Then, in March 1807, the pirates of Min province (now China's Fujian province) were Thai Khien and Chu Fen, who were chased by the Qing army and fled to the sea. Governor General Liangguang sent a letter to Bac Thanh (Vietnam) saying that the enemy ships had blue noses with red masts, and if they ran to Vietnam's waters, China would ask to catch them for China. Upon hearing the news, King Gia Long (Nguyen dynasty - Vietnam) immediately ordered the coastal local officials from Quang Duc to return to the North to send troops to patrol to help the Qing Dynasty capture the sea invaders (International Affairs of Nguyen Dynasty 2002, 696).

Or a similar case also took place in May 1848. At that time, enemy ships in the Chinese sea harassed Qinzhou, the leader of Qinzhou sent a message to the leader of Van Ninh (Mong Cai - Quang Ninh today) hired many boats and soldiers to block dangerous places in border areas to prevent sea invaders. The officers of Quang Yen province reported the matter to the Nguyen

court, the Nguyen dynasty approved the waterway and road to be carefully patrolled, to help Qinzhou quell the sea invaders. (International Affairs of Nguyen Dynasty 2007, 74)

Obviously, in many cases, the Chinese court entrusted the vassals like Vietnam to take on the task of suppressing or controlling pirates whenever the coast was unsafe. Although in the history of the Qing Dynasty, the Qing Dynasty The court sought to erase the role of the Vietnamese navy, especially the Tay Son navy [as well as trying to conceal the achievements of Nguyen Hue], but in in some Western narratives, we also see part of the contribution of the Tay Son's multi-species army at this time in the fight against pirates in the East Sea at that time. (Neumann 1831, 14-15)

However, many times, the Qing Dynasty also showed its displeasure by reprimanding and reminding when the Vietnamese court was negligent or tolerant of sea fees. Also many times, the Qing dynasty had the reward for Vietnamese officials when helped the Chinese dynasty to destroy pirates. For example: In 1666, Oboi [Ao Bai], the vice-president of the Kangxi dynasty (Qing Dynasty) a letter accusing Dai Viet of tolerating pirates and even threatening to wage war without arresting pirates and handing them over to Qing dynasty. Pirate party leaders surrounded South China. (Oxnam 1975, 154-155). Or, in 1790, King Qian Long (Qing Dynasty) issued an edict commending the cruiser General Pham Quanh Chuong (in Vietnam) for being able to track down and kill the pirates of Guangdong province who were attacking the merchants outside of the sea: "Pham Quang Chuong patrolled the sea, saw that domestic merchant ships were robbed, bravely pursued and killed the bandits, it is commendable!", At the same time, Kangxi emperor decided to reward two brocades, requesting the Guangdong Provincial Government to hand it to the King of Annam Nguyen Quang Binh so that when he returned home, he would hand it over to Fort General Pham Quang Chuong to reward and encourage (Ho 2010b, 235 -236). Are the above actions the reward - punishment of the "upper country" for "vassals" in the process of "vassals" performing their duties and responsibilities?

Obviously, the issue of piracy threatening the common security in the East Sea has brought the two governments closer together and cooperated to protect the security of the region and also the security of their own countries (Nguyen 2019). The cooperation from both sides of the Nguyen – Qing dynasties at that time was still limited and sometimes there were doubts and disagreements; However, it has greatly limited the threat of aggressive pirates, contributing to ensuring the maritime security of both countries.

## Conclusions.

Facing the raging piracy, threatening security and economic interests at sea, for more than five hundred years of existence, the Ming and Qing dynasties had many policies that showed efforts in limiting, eradicated the pirates and achieved certain results. In which, it is noteworthy that China's initial successful coordination with some neighboring countries such as Japan and Vietnam in fighting sea invaders; policy of recruiting pirates, training naval experts and developing equipment such as

<sup>5</sup>Ha Van Khoi is probably the character that True records of Dai Nam copied with the name Ha Hy Van. (International Affairs of Nguyen Dynasty 2002, 228). Regarding his background, Ha Hy Van belonged to the Bach Lien religious party, opposed the Qing Dynasty, so Qian Long called it a bandit. According to True records of Dai Nam, Ha Hy Van died in 1801, the 6th Gia Long year (1807) (International Affairs of Nguyen Dynasty 2002)



weapons and ships for the force to perform tasks at sea. . . Those policies have restrained many teams of dangerous robbers raged continuously in the vast East Sea. However, as analyzed above, at that time, the Chinese did not consider the sea at all as an area to be conquered and exploited. Moreover, many sea defense policies of the Ming and Qing dynasties clearly showed confusion and weakness. Reality has proved to us: the more the policy of "Haijin" was implemented, the more numerous and dangerous the sea invaders (especially the Chinese sea invaders); The more attention was paid to building forces to perform the task of protecting the sea, the more backward it was in terms of both qualifications and equipment for warships and weapons, especially clearly showed the disunity of the dynasty itself in realizing the defense strategy at sea.

The disunity, lack of consensus within that dynasty was the biggest cause leading to the limitations and confusion in the prevention of piracy in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. For the most part, the Qing dynasty's ruling class focused only on the defense of the northwest "considering the maritime defense is not important" (Chinese Historical Association 2020b, 444). Once the issue of maritime defense is not taken seriously (Ngo 1989, 95), they did not invest much in this defense, including equipping warships and weapons for the task force. This is also understandable. Therefore, although Li Hongzhang tried all kinds of ways to convince the court to buy 8 armored battleships to equip the Chinese navy (Chinese Historical Association 2020a, 217), most of the officials in the dominant group still remained indifferent. Even Tso Tsung-t'ang (1812 - 1885), Governor of Ryanggang, who wholeheartedly supported Li Hongzhang in the Yangwu movement, also opposed Li Hongzhang's policy of purchasing warships to "win against the enemy on vast expanses of the sea", and argued that China's maritime defense required only small homemade boats, "specialized in the defense of the rivers that flow into the mouth of the sea" (Chinese Historical Association 2020b, 524). Even the meager funding for marine defense was cut down to spend on Tso Tsung-t'ang's army to retake the southern region of Xinjiang occupied by the A Co Ba forces, to save the famine affected area caused by natural disasters (Ngo 1989, 215), even spent on repairing and expanding the Yihé Yuán in the Empress Dowager Cixi period (Tran and Phuong and Nguy, 1982, 131). As a result, China's annual naval spending was "just over 30,000 taels compared with the original 200,000 taels approved" (Chinese Historical Association 2020b, 444).

It can be said that China's policies to deal with piracy are basically fragmentary, just a temporary response, lacking a systematic and long-term view. In other words, in terms of combating pirates in particular and ensuring maritime security in general, China during the Ming and Qing dynasties did not have a strategic vision, nor did they put the sea at the heart of the national defense strategy, although it was very necessary in the context that maritime power had become a measure of power potential among countries in the region and in the world. It was this limitation that caused the failure of China's defense strategy in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The limitations of China's anti-piracy policy at this stage are clearly still valid for countries in the world today when piracy

is still threatening the security and survival of many countries.

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