

ABSTRACT

THESIS: England's Privateers and Pirates from Hawkins to Kidd: Between the Law and Illegality, 1500-1750

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This thesis argues that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Atlantic piracy became less tolerated as the British Empire replaced the Spanish as the world's dominant power. Previously, piracy and privateering had been an acceptable and useful venture employed by European powers that wished to challenge the Spanish monopoly of the New World. A variety of changes brought about by the shifting of imperial powers made piracy less acceptable in the early eighteenth century. Eventually categorized as *hostis humani generis* (the common enemy against all mankind) in international law, pirates were considered both economic criminals and moral ones in both law and in moralistic rhetoric. Additionally, Spain's ineffective policies against pirates contributed to the rise of an English empire in the Americas, which made piracy less and less useful. Finally, a case study of the execution of Captain William Kidd (1645-1701) encapsulates the transition between chaotic early modern period and the codified modern one. All together, this thesis will show that British prioritization of economic prosperity made the useful disorderliness of piracy obsolete in the New World, eventually leading to its eradication in the 1730s.