



*Waves of Change*  
*CalsMUN 2024*

**Research Report**

**Forum:** Historical Security Council

**Issue:** Assessing the VOC's  
contribution to the development of maritime  
law and diplomacy

**Chairs:** Elliot Slembrouck and Rohan  
Ramnathsing



## Introduction

The VOC had a rich history concerning trade and welfare, especially surrounding the stock market. It was the first company ever to have its shares actively traded upon on the stock market<sup>1</sup>. To this day, the VOC is the company which had the greatest stock value, having reached a staggering \$8.28 trillion in 1637, with them having a monopoly over the spice trade. At the same time, the Dutch East India Company had a lot of power as a private company. With them having waged wars, signed treaties with Asian rulers and being one of the biggest companies within the slave trading market<sup>2</sup>. With them having a total rule over the spice trade, a lot of new legislation had to take place. What did they contribute to maritime law and diplomacy back in the eighteenth century?

## Definitions of Key Terms

### VOC:

The Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), was a chartered company founded on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1602 by Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and the States General of the Netherlands. They had a 21 year monopoly to carry out trading activities in Asia.

### Monopoly:

The exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service. In other words, one has control over the entire trading market concerning a product of other type of service.

### Shareholder:

An owner of shares in a company.  
In other words, the owner of a small proportion of a company.

### KNIL:

The Royal Dutch Indonesian Army (Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger) was the military force maintained by the Dutch government in the East Indies (former Indonesia).

### Governor-General:

The VOC representative of the Dutch rule in the East Indies (former Indonesia).

## General Overview

Since the issue is assessing the influence of a party, the most important details of the VOC are explained in this part.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The world's first stock exchange*. (n.d.). The World's First Stock Exchange.  
<https://www.worldsfirststockexchange.com/>

<sup>2</sup> *Treaties between the VOC and the Spice Islands* | *World History Commons*. (n.d.).  
<https://worldhistorycommons.org/treaties-between-voc-and-spice-islands>

The founding of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie was inspired by the English East India Company (EIC), because they had their own monopoly. With them profiting and becoming stronger and stronger, the Dutch soon realized they had to take matters in their own hands and establish their own monopoly to keep up with their competitors<sup>3</sup>. The VOC was able to monopolize the trades in nutmeg, mace and cloves, which they sold across European Kingdoms and emperor Akbar of the Great Mughal Empire. The Dutch also still had to gain independence from the Spaniards, which was made easier due to the support of the VOC. From all of these efforts, the Dutch were able to gain hegemony over the area between Cape the Good hope, the southern tip of Africa, and the Straits of Magellan between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans<sup>4</sup>. The Dutch government gave the company the right to declare wars, which they did with several parties, including the British Empire<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, due to the English having taken multiple merchanting posts because of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, the VOC got into a lot of debt. In March 1798, the VOC was dissolved by the Dutch government.

## Timeline of Key Events

**1566-1648** - Eighty Year War (Dutch independence war)

**~1595** - Rise of trading compangieën in the East Indies

**20th of March 1602** - Founding of the VOC

**1613-1665** - Province quarrels surrounding trustees

**1749** - Prince William IV becomes commanding general

**1780-1784** - Fourth Anglo-Dutch War

**March 1798** - Formal dissolution of the VOC

---

<sup>3</sup> Roos, D. (2023, June 29). *How the East India Company Became the World's Most Powerful Monopoly*. HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/news/east-india-company-england-trade>

<sup>4</sup> Coolhaas, W. (1999, May 27). *Jan Pieterszoon Coen | Dutch merchant, statesman & colonial ruler*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jan-Pieterszoon-Coen>

<sup>5</sup> VOC – *United Dutch East India Company* | Western Australian Museum. (n.d.). Western Australian Museum. <https://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/dirk-hartog/voc-united-dutch-east-india-company>

## Major Parties Involved

### Republic of the Seven United Netherlands

The company was founded in Amsterdam, along with the stock market. Thanks to the foundation of the company, the Dutch became very powerful and wealthy. Even to this day the “VOC mentality” is strong within the minds of Dutch nationalists, despite the various controversies surrounding it. One thing was for sure, the Dutch hated it when their trade was interrupted by local regents or other great powers. That’s why the government gave the VOC the power to wage war with Indonesian regents, if they were interrupting the trade, at that time. The Dutch will do anything and everything to keep their trade intact. Their biggest enemies were the English, because of their various colonial bases close to the East Indies (Malaysia etc.), as well as them fighting the Dutch for more control in East Asia. The French were also a handful.

**Netherlands delegate info:** Assume that the Dutch were at their full power during this time period. The delegate also has Indonesia on their side when they say so.

### Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia)

The Dutch East Indies were a colony founded by the United Republic of the Netherlands. The indigenous people there were mistreated by the Dutch colonists in Indonesia, but some of the Indonesians were loyal to the Dutch, with a goal to be more respected by the Dutch in order to live better lives (KNIL soldiers). The government of Indonesia during this time period is still subjugated to the Dutch and will support them in their entirety, while trying to find ways to seek for more freedom through other member states, such as The British Empire and France.

**Indonesian delegate info:** Since Indonesia was a Dutch colony during this time period, the delegate is required to listen to the Dutch and support them with their actions, not their words. However, try to look for ways to gain more freedom, negotiate with the Dutch or try to side with others.

### The British Empire

During this time period, the British Empire was starting to rise, with them being one of the most powerful countries along with France, Spain, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. They started to colonize Asia, especially the area of modern day Malaysia, with the British being major rivals of the Dutch in terms of trade and warfare. Since there was no Anglo-Dutch treaty yet, the Brits and the Dutch were still not bound to create borders in between colonies. That’s why the Brits continued to try and spread influence by means such as war and other conquest methods. The British were also the ones which indirectly caused the collapse of the VOC.

**UK delegate info:** The delegate is not at its full power, since the Spanish, French and Chinese empires are still more powerful. The delegate has Sri Lanka (Ceylon) on their side, since they were a crown colony during this period.

## Possible Debate and Further details

Since there isn't any issue to solve, some details concerning the issue will be posted here. As well as a few points of view of several member states. This is to clarify what the debate will be about.

There are several sides to this topic. First of all, the Dutch will try as hard as they can to spread VOC influence over the Indonesian peninsula and possibly over the entire Southeast Asian region. They will try to find allies and make compromises so that both parties can profit from it. The VOC has done a lot of good things according to the Dutch, so they will try to ignore all of the atrocities it committed to the Indonesian population.

Secondly, you have the British who are still in conflict with the Dutch. They will try to gain more power within the region and spread their influence. Following history, they will eventually cause the collapse of the VOC, but that can change.

Third of all, other member states will try and find ways to spread influence in the region. The Chinese, French, Mughals (Indians) and Spanish are interested, so they will try and find ways to spread more influence, by supporting the things the VOC does or opposing it. The Spanish are still angry about the independence war, so they won't be happy to side with the Dutch, unless they have a good offer.

The Chinese and Dutch had good relations, since the Dutch had trading posts in Canton (Guangzhou) and Formosa (Taiwan).

The French were pretty neutral, but they did hate the English.

The Mughals had pretty good relations with the Dutch, since they were actively trading with the VOC.

Overall this topic is about gaining influence and addressing if the VOC

## Bibliography

*The world's first stock exchange.* (n.d.). The World's First Stock Exchange.  
<https://www.worldsfirststockexchange.com/>

*Treaties between the VOC and the Spice Islands | World History Commons.* (n.d.).  
<https://worldhistorycommons.org/treaties-between-voc-and-spice-islands>

Roos, D. (2023, June 29). *How the East India Company Became the World's Most Powerful Monopoly.* HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/news/east-india-company-england-trade>

Coolhaas, W. (1999, May 27). *Jan Pieterszoon Coen | Dutch merchant, statesman & colonial ruler.* Encyclopedia Britannica.  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jan-Pieterszoon-Coen>

VOC – *United Dutch East India Company* | *Western Australian Museum*. (n.d.). Western Australian Museum.

<https://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/dirk-hartog/voc-united-dutch-east-india-company>