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From Self-Defense to an Instrument of War: Dutch Privateering Around the Malay Peninsula in the Seventeenth Century



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Source: [Journal of Early Modern History](#), Volume 17, Issue 1, pages

35 – 52 **Publication Year :** 2013

DOI: [10.1163/15700658-12342356](#)

ISSN: 1385-3783 **E-ISSN:** 1570-0658

Document Type: Research Article

Subjects: [History](#)

Keywords: [warfare](#); [Malay Peninsula](#); [Piracy](#); [Dutch East India](#)

[Company \(VOC\)](#); [Dutch Republic](#); [privateering](#); [Hugo Grotius](#); [trade](#);

[colonialism](#)



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Abstract This article examines the transition of the Dutch East Indian Company (VOC) from a policy of self-defense to large-scale privateering and plundering. I argue that this shift was driven by both economic and political factors, and ca of the Company as a unified trading venture. The taking of prizes became a cornerstone not only of the economic

establishment of the Dutch colonial empire in Asia. Of particular interest is not only the instructions emanating from the Dutch government in the metropolis, but especially the implementation and adaptation of these directives on the ground that adds a crucial dimension to interpretations of the eager espousal of maritime violence by the VOC and its agents.

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