The **Dutch East India Company (' or VOC** in Dutch, literally "United East Indian Company") was a chartered company established in 1602, when the States-General of the Netherlands granted it a 21-year monopoly to carry out colonial activities in Asia. It was the first multinational corporation in the world and the first company to issue stock. It was also arguably the world's first megacorporation, possessing quasi-governmental powers, including the ability to wage war, negotiate treaties, coin money, and establish colonies.

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Statistically, the VOC eclipsed all of its rivals in the Asia trade. Between 1602 and 1796 the VOC sent almost a million Europeans to work in the Asia trade on 4,785 ships, and netted for their efforts more than 2.5 million tons of Asian trade goods. By contrast, the rest of Europe combined sent only 882,412 people from 1500 to 1795, and the fleet of the English (later British) East India Company, the VOC's nearest competitor, was a distant second to its total traffic with 2,690 ships and a mere one-fifth the tonnage of goods carried by the VOC. The VOC enjoyed huge profits from its spice monopoly through most of the 1600s.

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The Dutch East India Company remained an important trading concern for almost two centuries, paying an 18% annual dividend for almost 200 years. In its declining years in the late 18th century it was referred to as *Vergaan Onder Corruptie* (referring to the acronym VOC) which translates as 'Perished By Corruption'. The VOC became bankrupt and was formally dissolved in 1800, its possessions and the debt being taken over by the government of the Dutch Batavian Republic. The VOC's territories became the Dutch East Indies and were expanded over the course of the 19th century to include the whole of the Indonesian archipelago, and in the 20th century would form Indonesia.

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[Dutch East India Company: History](http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/dutch-east-india-company/history.html) ►

[***Dutch***](http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/dutch/)*: Dutch usually refers to:...*

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[***States-General of the Netherlands***](http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/states-general-of-the-netherlands/)*: The States-General (Staten-Generaal) is the parliament of the Netherlands. It consists of two chambers, the more important of which is the directly elected House of Representatives (in Dutch, Tweede Kamer, Second Chamber, the lower house). The Senate (in Dutch, Eerste Kamer, First Chamber, or Senaat...*

[***Monopoly***](http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/monopoly/)*: In economics, a monopoly (from Greek monos / ????? (alone or single) + polein / ?????? (to sell)) exists when a specific individual or an enterprise has sufficient control over a particular product or service to determine significantly the terms on which other individuals shall have access to it. M...*