# Thalassocracy

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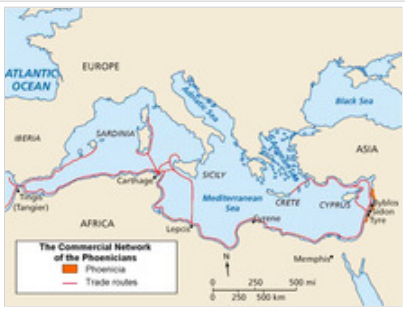
The term ***thalassocracy*** (from Greek language θάλασσα (*thalassa*), meaning sea, and κρατεῖν (*kratein*), meaning "to rule", giving θαλασσοκρατία (*thalassokratia*), "rule of the sea") refers to a state with primarily maritime realms—an empire at sea, such as Athens or the Phoenician network of merchant cities. Traditional thalassocracies seldom dominate interiors, even in their home territories (for example: Tyre, Sidon, or Carthage). It is necessary to distinguish this traditional sense of *thalassocracy* from an "empire", where the state's territories, though possibly linked principally or solely by the sea lanes, generally extend into mainland interiors.

The term can also simply refer to naval supremacy, in either military or commercial senses of the word "supremacy". Indeed, the word *thalassocracy* itself was first used by the Greeks to describe the government of the Minoan civilization, whose power depended on its navy. Herodotus also spoke of the need to counter the Phoenician thalassocracy by developing a Greek "empire of the sea".

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## Examples




The Phoenician trade routes in the Mediterranean.

There are many ancient examples besides those mentioned above, such as the Delian League. Aside from this, which was an empire based primarily on naval power and control of waterways and not on any land possessions, the Middle Ages saw its fair share of thalassocracies, often land-based empires which controlled the sea. Among the most famous is the Republic of Venice, conventionally divided in the fifteenth century into the *Dogado* of Venice and the Lagoon, the *Stato di Terraferma* of Venetian holdings in northern Italy, and the *Stato da Màr* of the Venetian outlands bound by the sea:

> "This was a scattered empire, reminiscent, though on a very different scale, of the Portuguese and later the Dutch empires in the Indian Ocean, a trading-post empire forming a long capitalist


Part of the Politics series

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- Aristocracy
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- Confederation
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- Stratocracy
- Supranational union
- Technocracy
- **Thalassocracy**
- Theocracy
- Timocracy
- Tribe

antenna; an empire 'on the Phoenician model', to use a more ancient parallel"[1]

In 7th to 15th century Maritime Southeast Asia, the Srivijaya and later Majapahit empire that controlled the sea lane in Southeast Asia, and exploited spice trade of spice islands as well as maritime trade route between India and China, can be considered as thalassocracy.

Nearly contemporaneous, the Republic of Ragusa can be seen as a "thalassocracy", a *protégé* of Venice.


- Tyranny
- Unitary state

List of forms of government

**Politics portal**


The Dark Ages (c.500–c.1000) saw many of the coastal cities of the Mezzogiorno develop into minor thalassocracies whose chief powers lay in their ports and their ability to sail navies to defend friendly coasts and ravage enemy ones. These include the variously Greek, Lombard, Angevin, and Saracen duchies of Gaeta, Sicily, Naples, Pisa, Salerno, Amalfi, Bari, and Sorrento. Later, northern Italy developed its own trade empires based on Pisa and especially the powerful Republic of Genoa, that rivaled with Venice (these three, along with Amalfi, were to be called the *Repubbliche marinare*, i.e. Sea Republics).

It was with the modern age, the Age of Exploration, that some of the most remarkable thalassocracies emerged. Anchored in their European territories, several nations establish colonial empires held together by naval supremacy. First among them was the Portuguese Empire, followed soon by the Spanish Empire, which was challenged by the Dutch Empire, itself replaced on the high seas by the British Empire, whose landed possessions were immense and held together by the greatest navy of its time. With naval arms races (especially between Germany and Britain) and the end of colonialism and the granting of independence to these colonies, European thalassocracies, which had controlled the world's oceans for centuries, ceased to be.

## List of other examples

- Ainu Confederation
- Aleut Confederation
- Aragonese Empire
- Balinese Kingdom
- British Empire
- Brunei Sultanate
- Bugis Confederation
- Butuan Rajahnate
- Carib Confederation
- Carthage
- Chola Empire
- Denmark-Norway (as separate Viking kingdoms and later as a unified empire)
- Dorian Confederation
- Kingdom of Dublin
- Frisia
- Tribes of Galway
- Haida Nation
- Hanseatic League
- Japanese Empire
- Kingdom of Luzon (Now part of the Philippines)
- Kalmar Union
- Kingdom of the Isles (Now part of Scotland)
- Latin Empire
- Lusignan Empire (West central France, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of Cyprus)
- Majapahit Empire
- Kingdom of Majorca
- Sultanate of Malacca and its successor, Sultanate of Johor
- Mataram Kingdom and its successor, Kediri

- Mataram Sultanate
- Micronesian Empire
- Minoan Civilization
- Kingdom of Navarre (controlled Normandy in the mid-14th century and Greek lands in the late 14th century and had outposts in Newfoundland in the late 15th and early 16th centuries)
- Norman Empire (although based in Western Europe, it spread during the Crusades to the central and eastern Mediterranean) and its successor, the Angevin Empire
- Oman-Zanzibar
- Pergamon
- Phocaea
- Ryūkyū Kingdom
- Sailendra
- Sea Peoples Confederation
- Srivijaya
- Sulu Sultanate
- Sultanate of Maguindanao
- Swedish Empire
- Taíno Confederation
- Tlingit Confederation
- Tu'i Tonga Empire

## See also

- Colonialism
- Imperialism
- List of countries spanning more than one continent
- List of historical countries and empires spanning more than one continent

## Notes

1. ^ Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, vol. III of *Civilization and Capitalism* (Harper & Row) 1984:119.

## External links

- The Fragility of Thalassocracy, Pericles to Heinlein (http://www.friesian.com/thalasso.htm) .

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