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The Delegation of Defense and Security Responsibilities at Sea in Historical Perspective

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The maritime warfare and security environment of the 21st century is changing. The proliferation of non-traditional maritime security threats, such as piracy, maritime terrorism, and illegal fishing, combined with the emergence of gray-zone warfare at sea through irregular actors, attests to this change. As a result, the international norms surrounding the use of force at sea are evolving as well, as states are increasingly delegating defense and security capabilities, traditionally considered exclusively state or military terrain, to non-state, nonmilitary, and irregular actors. Current scholarship generally analyzes these examples in isolation and fails to consider the broader framework of the changing maritime warfare and security environment to identify the dynamics underpinning this development. Moreover, while current scholarship commonly assumes that these are novel phenomena, the historical record includes a long-standing tradition of non-state and irregular maritime warfare and security actors, including the privateers and mercantile companies of the early-modern period. As a result, these contemporary examples could be considered symptoms of a more significant 21st-century development, representing the historical dynamism surrounding the international norms of maritime warfare and security. My PhD research project aims to analyze this development by combining traditional historical methods based on written primary source material with international relations theory and expert interviews. As an example of applied history, the project aims to operationalize historical precedents to better inform current policymakers and military leadership about the maritime security challenges of the future.

What discipline or branch of humanities or social sciences do you identify yourself with?

History and International Relations

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No, I am submitting a Closed Panel abstract

Are you a PhD student or early-career researcher?

Yes

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