

Cleo's 'unfinished business': coming to terms with Dutch war crimes in Indonesia's war of independence

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Bio details

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Abstract

This article discusses how Dutch society has come to terms with war crimes committed by its armed forces during the Indonesian/Dutch decolonisation war (1945-1949). In general, these 'excesses' have been legitimated by the community of veterans as the inevitable answer to provocative guerrilla tactics of the Indonesian adversary, who 'forced' Dutch troops to respond with

harsh counter-insurgency measures. Although considerable evidence exists indicating that these measures led to violations of the laws of war, only a small percentage of these crimes were prosecuted at the time. Public references to them were rare until 1969, when the first disclosure on Dutch war crimes was broadcasted on television. From the late 1960s onwards, such charges would occasionally resurface in the media, causing brief upheaval in the veterans' community and the press. However, this did not bring about any major historical inquiry or legal repercussion on the Indonesian side. Only in 2011 did a group of Indonesian widows of executed resistance fighters file a law-suit against the Dutch state. The present contribution describes and analyses how Dutch war veterans, media, historians and politicians have shaped the slow process of coming to terms with controversial aspects of the 1945-1949 war. It offers a number explanations that are related both to Dutch political culture and to the nature of the struggle.

Introduction

A remarkable event took place in the Netherlands in November 2011. After sixty-five years, nine widows of Indonesian villagers who were summarily executed by a Dutch military unit in the West Javanese village of Rawagedeh during the Dutch-Indonesian decolonisation war, received compensation and apologies from the Dutch state.¹

The question that arises is how this obvious case of a war crime—which even led to the involvement of the UN at the time²—never had any major legal repercussions. Even though it is by now common knowledge that Dutch military committed war crimes on a considerable scale, only a small percentage of them were prosecuted during the conflict, and those that were resulted in very light sentences. A government report about this issue compiled in 1969 contained mainly information obtained from official archives.³ But the knowledge about where, when and by whom these war crimes were committed remains largely confined to private or otherwise restricted realms of Indies-veterans, such as personal memoires, disclosures vis-à-vis therapists or deathbed confessions.

This contribution explores how this sensitive topic has been ‘framed’ within the Dutch socio-political context and what factors have impeded a thorough investigation and subsequent public acknowledgement of Dutch responsibility. Although there is nothing exclusively Dutch about repressing inconvenient historical truths—it is the rule rather than the exception—this article suggests that the process was partly affected by some distinct features of Dutch political and intellectual culture. Other relevant aspects commonly believed to have played a role were the problematic remembrance of a lost guerrilla-war and the priorities of post-war Dutch-Indonesian relationships.⁴ These elements are shortly sketched in this introduction so that they can be discerned in the description of the conflict and the subsequent handling of this issue.

The first explanatory variable is the Dutch dominant political culture of consensus-seeking which offered favourable conditions for the Dutch government to neutralize the impact of disclosures on Dutch war crimes in Indonesia. In particular, the moderate position of the social democratic party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA), which held government responsibility during the last phase of the conflict, contributed to the ease with which the issue could be downplayed. This approach was condoned by an intellectual elite that lacked a radical tradition of challenging the establishment.⁵ The sociologist Jaap Goudsbloem has characterized this conformist position with regard to political controversies as ‘the discretion of the leading class’.⁶ This is particularly true for Dutch historians, who are often involved as experts in political controversies about historical memory, and as such are attributed the role of consensus builders rather than of critics of the state. This has enhanced a professional code of ‘neutrality’ with regard to the subject of excessive violence during the decolonisation war, leaving the field of agenda-setting open to journalism and activism.⁷

The second distinct Dutch feature that plays a role on a more abstract level is the lack of familiarity with a culture of violence in the motherland (as opposed to the colony). Contrary to many neighbouring countries, such as France, England and Germany, the Netherlands had witnessed no violent revolutions, regional uprisings, secessionist movements or civil wars in the

recent past, at least not in the metropole. Consequently collective experiences in which violence is perceived as normal, necessary and effective, were largely absent.⁸ Although this was merely a question of good luck and of the country's limited potential to inflict large-scale violence, it laid the ground in the nineteenth century for a self-image of the Netherlands as a moral beacon. Dutch neutrality during the First World War, the Nazi occupation during World War II and the post-war identification with the bravery of a relatively small group of resistance fighters perpetuated this self-image of an innocent country with high moral standards.⁹

This image was challenged when after the defeat in 1949 a cross-section of the Dutch male population—over 120.000 men—returned home from a 'dirty war' that seemed to have served no purpose.¹⁰ A sense of betrayal shared by many of these veterans contributed to the suppression of memories of witnessing and committing war crimes. This process was facilitated by the interest of both the Dutch and Indonesian state to prioritize economic cooperation instead of dealing with victims of war.

To understand how these various elements have determined the dominant discourses about the war and how this has changed over time, it is essential to investigate the chronological evolution of the struggle, and of the character of the violence that was inflicted. Therefore, the first part of this article offers a concise outline of these elements. In the second part, the public debate on Dutch 'excesses' or 'war crimes' is discussed, covering the period from 1969 to 2011. This period is divided into two; the first focuses on the role of investigative journalism on television and its impact on politics and the second on the 'emancipation' of the veterans' community in the 1990s. The last section of this article analyses the apotheosis that took place in 2011 when, for the first time, Indonesian victims of Dutch war crimes entered the debate.

Historical outline of the conflict

The Indonesian declaration of independence on 17 August 1945, two days after the Japanese capitulation, came as a total surprise to the Dutch authorities, who were unprepared to grant

Indonesia full independence. The British, as the only force capable of taking limited control of the archipelago directly after the war, pressed the Dutch to open negotiations with the Indonesian nationalists in November 1945. But as distrust and power politics prevailed, the ‘hawks’ on both sides gained the upper hand.¹¹

The first major deployment of Dutch military forces came in the first months of 1946 when key strategic areas, mainly cities in Java and Sumatra, were taken over from the British military command. After months of political stalemate, the successful first ‘Police Action’ (a euphemism for a campaign of military re-occupation) was launched in July 1947, resulting in the occupation of West and East Java as well as parts of Sumatra. Especially in rural areas where villagers were less politically conscious and wanted to resume their normal lives, Dutch authorities succeeded in regaining some trust by establishing civil-military projects and by socializing with the local population.

As might be expected, the Indonesian adversary considered such fraternization a threat. The choice for guerrilla warfare included a regime of terror against countrymen suspected of consorting with the Dutch. The nationalist armed forces also entered into alliances with local militias, some of which had a predominantly criminal background.¹² The Indonesian military were completely dependent on local support, and did not hesitate to confiscate resources. In addition to the Republican Indonesian army, which was strongly linked to a Western-oriented urban elite, other armed formations included communist and Islamic movements.

After the second Police Action in December 1948, central Java and other parts of the island, and larger parts of Sumatra were conquered by Dutch troops whereby the occupied area became too large to control. As infiltrations and ambushes intensified, the Dutch could no longer offer ‘protection’ to the native population. Instead, they further developed and employed a strategy of counter-insurgency consisting of surges, reprisals, summary executions and harsh interrogation methods. As a consequence, the Dutch authorities gradually lost the sympathy of the indigenous urban and rural population.¹³ The difference among military between experiences with regular

occupation, offensive action or aggressive counter-insurgency would, many years later, form an obstacle for many veterans to come to an agreed story about the meaning of their war-effort.¹⁴

The Indonesian Republic's guerrilla-campaign gradually wore down the Dutch troops. Combined with the lack of international support for the Dutch cause, eventually the authorities in the Netherlands had no choice but to give in and grant Indonesia full independence in 1949. The Dutch-Indonesian peace treaty contained a provision for reciprocal amnesty. Military offences related 'to what had been necessary for the political struggle' were exempted from prosecution, although no criteria were laid down to define which crimes this encompassed. Neither party to the treaty intended to address this issue, instead prioritizing post-war reconstruction. .

Scale, character and cover-up mechanism of the violence

It is important to stress that the context of the counter-insurgency deployed in 1945-1949, although rooted in an older colonial practice of large-scale violence, differed from the earlier expeditions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As many of the photographs of mass killings taken during the Atjeh-campaigns show, the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians by colonial troops was then virtually standard operational procedure.¹⁵ Indeed, the Hague Regulations, formulated in 1907 to set limits to excessive violence within an armed conflict, explicitly exempted colonial warfare.¹⁶ By 1945, however, while the advancement of military technology had increased the potential to inflict casualties,¹⁷ the rules on what was permissible had changed, leading to the integration of parts of the Hague Regulations into Dutch Indies military law,¹⁸

Taking into account these legal constraints and the fact if excesses occurred they now had to be concealed from public opinion, it is plausible to suppose that violence against civilians was no longer standard procedure on the scale it had been in the past. Moreover, the circulation of news on indiscriminate violence against the Indonesian population would have meant losing the international support on which the Dutch were now highly dependent. The United Nations was monitoring one of its first conflicts after its founding in 1945 and the Indonesian Republican

government repeatedly turned to the UN to discredit its adversary. In short, while formally there were strict rules to protect civilians and prisoners of war, informally, the conditions that made it possible to abide by these rules varied strongly. A problem for coming to an agreement on the scale of Dutch excessive violence during the counter-guerrilla campaign between 1945 and 1949 is the lack of written records. Together with the absence of claims by Indonesian victims, this lack of sound records has left the subject open to both exaggeration and downplaying.

The nature of the violence deployed mirrored the asymmetric relationship between Indonesian and Dutch troops. Indonesian troops, who were completely dependent on the resources of local villagers and wanted to deter support for the Dutch, committed acts of theft, destruction and arson against the civilian population, or sometimes even more extreme forms of terror, such as abduction, murder and mutilation. The Dutch troops were confronted with ambushes, booby traps, sabotage and scorched earth practices meant to frighten, exhaust and disorient them. The violent methods deployed on the Dutch side were a mixture of conventional warfare, like artillery bombardments, mortar fire and machine guns, and traditional forms of colonial warfare, such as summary executions, reprisals and incidentally also torture.¹⁹ The perception on the Dutch side of being constantly under threat fostered an attitude that disavowed the role of perpetrator and positioned the military as ‘victims of the foul methods’ of the adversary and of the ‘wrong policy’ of the Dutch government. This interpretation meant turning a blind eye to the many Indonesian victims of mechanical violence from a distance. Later, once in retirement, the veterans would succeed in gaining recognition in the Netherlands on the basis of this alleged ‘victimhood’.

Notwithstanding the censorship exercised by the Netherlands’ Army Public Information Services, some stories about Dutch excesses did reach the homeland. Even so, questions raised in Parliament were answered extremely slowly. The Minister of War could only ask the Netherland Indies government, which had a fairly autonomous position, to open an inquiry. Army General Spoor’s argument for desisting from investigations was the apparent lack of details regarding the

identity of the perpetrators and the time and place of the alleged atrocities. Whistle-blowers seldom identified themselves, fearing reprisals.²⁰

Covering up matters was referred to as *toetoeep*, derived from the Malaysian word for ‘closed down’; meaning that the information would not travel beyond one’s own unit.²¹ This mechanism is typical for a hierarchical organisation that derives its legitimacy from successfully maintaining an outward appearance of order and respectability. Disclosures about ‘failures’ in the system originated from individuals with a troubled conscience who refused to comply with the code of silence.²² Consequently, only a small minority of cases reached the public, and those that did only caused commotion in extreme leftist circles.. For the majority of the Dutch population the belief in and compliance with authorities was greater than the sense of outrage.

1969: Testimonies on war crimes on television

The first time state authorities were seriously challenged came only twenty years later, in 1969, with disclosures on television of war crimes committed in Indonesia by veteran Joop Hueting. The authorities were suddenly confronted with ‘dangerous’ information, the classic element of a taboo, that had been shared with a wide audience through a relatively new medium with a large public impact. The older generations in particular feared that this disclosure could undermine the trust in the government and in the armed forces. As might be expected, the authorities tried to ‘control’ and ‘neutralize’ the form and the character of this information.

In an interview broadcasted by the left-leaning current affairs program ‘Behind the news’ (*Achter Het Nieuws*) on 17 January 1969 Hueting stated openly:

I was deployed in Indonesia for two and a half years as a soldier in the infantry, with roles in the intelligence service among others, and I took part in war crimes. I saw men commit them and want to give you a few examples: villages would be riddled while no one at the time saw the military exigency. During interrogations suspects would be tortured in the most hideous

ways even though there was no evidence this was necessary. Retaliations were organized, again with no clear military urgency.²³

According to Hueting, such atrocities occurred on a considerable scale and it was now time for everyone involved to speak out. In contrast to the reception given to earlier stories in printed media, the revelations made by Joop Hueting on television had the effect of a bombshell. The issue dominated the headlines for days, and the producers of 'Behind the news' received more than 800 letters from the public. Among the positive reactions, many letters contained testimonies of war crimes, thanking Hueting for giving them the opportunity to express feelings that had burdened them for years. However, critical reactions predominated. The majority of letter writers claimed that they had never heard about, let alone witnessed war crimes.²⁴ A recurrent feature in a number of letters was the concern that only 'responsible' people should deal with such a sensitive topic, referring to television as an inappropriate medium.²⁵ This can be interpreted as a sign that, notwithstanding the new spirit of questioning then gaining momentum, the wartime generation still placed great trust in the administrative and political elite.

It was the social democrats and their leader, Joop den Uyl, who placed the matter on the political agenda. As a young journalist, Den Uyl had already been involved in this issue when criticizing the Dutch government's conduct in the 1945-1949 war. Now the parliamentary leader of the opposition against a coalition government of liberals and christian-democratic parties, he urged the government to investigate the accusations made on television by collecting all available information.²⁶ The government under Prime Minister Piet de Jong quickly decided to establish a commission to scrutinize the archives. A report was compiled within three months, purportedly containing all available documents regarding 'excesses' perpetrated by the Netherlands' armed forces in Indonesia between 1945 and 1950.

The choice for the term 'excesses' was deliberate and decisive for neutralizing the impact of the issue. According to the prime minister, it had been necessary to make an efficient selection of

relevant documents, as the term 'war crime' as a criterion would have meant the exclusion of many documents containing references to acts of violence that the commission had regarded relevant for inclusion in the report but that were not defined as 'war crimes'.²⁷ A consequence of this seemingly convincing archival logic was the popularization of the generic term 'excesses' for all cases, including those that *did* fall under the definition of 'war crime'. This choice of terminology suited Prime Minister De Jong's attempt to 'neutralize' the issue well. The eventual report, presented to Parliament in June 1969, covered 110 registered cases of questionable use of force and killings. It found that 'excesses' had been perpetrated especially by Special Forces in South Sulawesi and splash during interrogations by members of the intelligence services.²⁸ Notwithstanding the small empirical basis (not a single officer was questioned) and the short duration of the investigation (a mere three months) the government confidently concluded that there was no question of systematic 'excesses'. A crucial decision was not to prosecute crimes that had not yet come under the statute of limitations, based on the argument that the arbitrary availability of historical files and not the severity of the war crimes would have determined who would be charged and who would not.²⁹

This settled the legal aspects of the issue, Prime Minister De Jong's main concern. Now that a risk of prosecution was laid to rest, he proved to be a strong proponent of further historical inquiry. This posture indicates that he was not necessarily against addressing the topic, but regarded the issue as a responsibility of individual historians and not of the Dutch government or judiciary. He was willing to gradually open up the archives containing documents on the negotiation process between Indonesia and the Netherlands, and to provide the necessary financial means to prioritize the publication of a volume of sources. However, his request to the distinguished historian and former colonial administrator Sander van der Wal to take up this study was rejected on the grounds that speeding up the process would yield bad history. Van der Wal refused to be swayed by the issues of the day and wished to start his work of publishing sources at his own pace and in a responsible way. It would take him twenty-five years to complete his Sisyphus labour.³⁰

The *Excessennota*, the report of the government investigation, was discussed in Parliament on 1 and 2 July 1969. The parliamentary debate centred on the question whether these 110 cases were the proverbial top of the iceberg. As expected, the opposition parties left of centre pushed for further research by an independent commission of specialists. Even so, no politician demanded a public inquiry, which could have included oral testimony by veterans and the responsible civilian and military authorities. The majority of parliament followed the liberal-Christian government coalition and decided not to initiate any additional research. It was the government's position that the most extreme cases had already been prosecuted. Most of them were closely related to the equally harsh terror tactics of the Indonesian enemy. Priority was given to sparing the vulnerable group of veterans of any blame because most of them had merely executed orders of military authorities that, in turn, were backed by a democratic government.³¹ As a consequence, Parliament merely 'took notice' of the report on 3 July 1969. In any event, interest for the issue had waned since the beginning of 1969, as at this time a more urgent case of 'unfinished colonial business' attracted the public's attention: riots had broken out in Curaçao in the West Indies because of the social economic crises, meaning that the Dutch government had to consider the deployment of Dutch marines to check the violence.³²

The approach taken by the De Jong government and the relatively mild stance of the left-wing opposition would be decisive for the course of the debate and the policy line on this subject in the coming decades. The government's handling of the issue had managed to neutralize its potentially dangerous political implications. Societal forces favouring full disclosure proved to be too weak, while even on the left side of the political spectrum the issue was not perceived as a fundamental problem. The victims of Dutch colonial violence were not Dutch voters, and so had no voice or presence in the political process. The subtle tactics of the liberal-Christian government of De Jong and the position of the positivist historian Van der Wal with his firm belief in the primacy of written sources created a situation in which the chance was lost to hear the key-figures in this debate who were still alive in 1969: the senior commanders.

1970-1988: The historians' verdict on Dutch war crimes

Not unlike the politicians, most academic scholars would display a 'neutral' attitude towards the subject, primarily relying on government records as the key to knowledge on the subject of 'excesses'. That there were alternative sources was illustrated by the social scientists Jacques Van Doorn and Wim Hendrix. Already in 1970, they published their volume *Derailment of violence, about the Netherlands Indies/Indonesian Conflict*.³³ In their time as drafted conscripts in Central Java, both of them had collected data on war crimes with the intention of writing an academic study at some future date. After their return to the Netherlands, this plan was postponed because of the strong anti-Indonesian sentiments in the 1950s and the priority they gave to starting their career.³⁴ The television interview with Hueting in 1969 was the incentive they needed to resume their work. Within a year, they completed a sociological study arriving at conclusions that contradicted those contained in the *Excessennota* the year before.

In their view, the war crimes were not the consequence of individual derailment, but of a deliberate policy of counter-terror, sanctioned by higher authorities to counter the tactics of the Indonesian guerrilla. By not addressing this issue in the *Excessennota*, the government had displayed its unwillingness to deal with the question of political responsibility:

The government report in question should unfortunately be considered as a shameful piece of work, for two reasons. Firstly, the material in the report wrongly suggests that excesses were exceptional; secondly it defines, following the line of the court martial, excesses as purely personal and incidental accidents, while from the list of complaints in the same report one can deduct that much more and systematic violence occurred.³⁵

Despite the critical tone of the authors, no public controversy erupted after their book was published. Colleagues in history and sociology received it quietly; none of them felt the need to take

up the politically sensitive aspects of the main conclusion, partly due to some important choices Van Doorn and Hendrix had made. Firstly, they adhered to the professional ethics of sociology by omitting all references to real names, dates and places to minimize the chance that military personnel featuring in the eye-witness accounts collected by Hendrix could be identified. Another crucial choice was to follow Prime Minister De Jong's line and use the term 'excesses' instead of the controversial term 'war crimes', a remarkable choice, as twenty years earlier, when they had secretly gathered their data in Indonesia, the reports they had compiled were given the name 'investigation on war crimes'. By approaching their material as social scientists, and not as historians, they could refrain from using real names and places and by doing so run the risk of revealing the identity of the perpetrators of war crimes. This choice gave them the opportunity to display their analytical skills on a controversial topic to their peers, while at the same time sparing their former commanders and mates. Van Doorn, who at the time of the publication taught at the Dutch Royal Military academy, later acknowledged that this choice had been deliberate in order to avoid misleading comparisons with the Nazi-crimes. Such an analogy would lead to emotional debates instead of an understanding of the complex context of guerrilla-warfare, he said.³⁶

Only in the 1980s would interest in the subject of excesses/war crimes resume and result in major publications. The most spectacular case, the counter-insurgency campaign conducted by captain Raymond Westerling in South Sulawesi in 1946 and 1947, was reconstructed by historian Willem IJzereef. Westerling's Special Forces had been sent to South Sulawesi to counter the terror campaign of local militias targeting Dutch authorities and local people cooperating with them. Westerling's approach was brutal and rigorous. He would herd the people of an area in a central square and then choose someone (based on intelligence gained in advance) who had to point out who the terrorists in their midst were. Those identified would be summarily executed.³⁷ Three years later, IJzereef's study was followed by an article from military historian Jaap de Moor about the Special Forces, and in 1999, this research would lead to his dissertation on the same subject.³⁸

Both authors dealt thoroughly with the issue of violence on the basis of new government sources that had become available after 1969. As before, terminology was crucial for mobilizing public attention. IJzereef had opted deliberately for the term ‘excesses’ instead of calling the execution of thousands of prisoners a ‘war crime’. Like Van Doorn and Hendrix, he wanted to avoid a discussion that would focus on terminology at the expense of the valuable new empirical insights that he had to offer.³⁹ An analysis of press coverage and of professional journals shows that these well-researched and nuanced key publications did not lead to any major public or intra-professional controversy.⁴⁰ This lack of reaction indicates that adhering to the dominant code of ‘neutrality’ perpetuated a situation in which the Dutch public and media could continue to believe that its armed forces had ‘only’ committed some excesses in extraordinary circumstances. The authors had added important knowledge to the subject but, partly deliberately, did not phrase it in terms that might provoke a re-evaluation of such ‘comfortable’ thoughts.⁴¹

The almost silent reception of IJzereef’s and De Moor’s publications stands in stark contrast to what happened in 1987, when Lou de Jong, the ‘historical conscience’ of the nation and author of the authoritative study of the history of the Netherlands during the Second World War, offered his reading on the war in Indonesia. Unlike other scholars, De Jong was the public figure *par excellence*. He had presented a popular television series in the 1960s based on the first volumes of his magnum opus, *The Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War*.⁴² As an expert on this war, the government routinely turned to him every time a controversy arose about someone’s alleged collaboration during the Second World War. His views fitted perfectly into the commonly agreed story that appealed to the general public about Dutch victimhood and Nazi-occupation. Now that he was about to present an alternative assignment of responsibilities, with Dutch military as occupiers and perpetrators and Indonesians as victims, a fierce controversy arose.

A former colonel of the colonial army and member of De Jong’s advisory group had leaked a draft paragraph of the forthcoming publication to *De Telegraaf*, a right-wing daily newspaper, anticipating a situation in which De Jong would dismiss the critical comments of his advisory

group. Within days, the whole veteran community, which had grown more powerful through the establishment of veteran's organisations by the late 1980s, was mobilized against De Jong. As a young journalist with left-wing sympathies De Jong had already favoured granting Indonesia full independence after 1945. His hope then had been that through negotiations Indonesia and the Netherlands could come to a peaceful transfer of power. When this failed and the Dutch government took the decision to attack the Indonesian Republic by launching the first 'Police Action' in July 1947, De Jong had quit his membership of the PvdA, the social democratic party, who were in power at the time, as a sign of protest (together with 7000 other members).⁴³

This original position was clearly reflected in his later interpretation of the Dutch role as perpetrator of war crimes. Now, in 1987, he was being threatened with legal action by a lobby of veterans who perceived his draft text on Dutch war crimes to be inaccurate and derogatory. Like the editors of *Achter het Nieuws*, De Jong received many letters of protest and only some of support.⁴⁴

An analysis of the draft text shows that not only had De Jong used the legal (but critical) term 'war crimes', but even had dared to compare the Dutch military deployment in Indonesia to that of the German occupier of the Netherlands during the Second World War. Needless to say, this comparison touched a raw nerve in parts of the public. Being associated with crimes that represented the ultimate evil in Dutch historical memory was unacceptable for generations that had experienced World War II. Pressured by various parties, among them resistance fighters from the Second World War with an unassailable reputation, and by Prof. Bastiaanse, a leading psychiatrist in the field of PTSS treatment of concentration camp survivors, De Jong succumbed and eventually acknowledged that there were many 'imbalances' in his original draft chapter. A few months later, he presented a thoroughly revised text: what in the draft text had been 'war crimes' became 'excesses'. In an interview he clarified his change of mind:

A historian is also a human being. I had written this paragraph driven by emotions. The feelings of a young man who had been shocked by the news coverage about what happened in the

Netherlands Indies at the time. After the fierce criticism I have again worked very hard. Have taken more distance from the material. Eventually I rewrote the paragraph. I consider the result of this as being more nuanced and responsible in terms of scientific truth.⁴⁵

It is understandable that De Jong had wanted to present a counter-position to the more ‘neutral’ publications of some of his colleagues. Yet a comparison between De Jong’s draft and final text shows that his critics did have a point. He had indeed presented a long list of war crimes without providing any context on the interactive dynamics of guerrilla-warfare. The tenor of his text was one of moral indignation. Another shortcoming was that he had made no references to the responsibility of the military and civilian authorities for placing the Dutch troops on the ground in circumstances that enabled committing war crimes. Moreover, De Jong had not considered important new secondary literature that had been written on the subject.

In a new version of the chapter, De Jong corrected all these flaws and changed the tone markedly. The Dutch ‘excesses’ were now carefully phrased with much emphasis being placed on the harsh circumstances that gave rise to them. Most importantly, all comparisons with Japanese and German perpetrators in the Second World War were removed, as well as criticism of the outcome of the *Excessennota* in 1969. De Jong’s chapter ended with the comforting observation of the absence of anti-Dutch feelings among Indonesian victims of Dutch violence, indicating that the Dutch occupation was judged far more positively than the previous Japanese one.⁴⁶ The tone in his new version unintentionally supported the positive belief that the Dutch generally upheld high moral standards that had been lowered only due to circumstances beyond their control.

A comparison between the analytical and detached approach of Van Doorn and Hendrix and the passionate and polemical stance of Lou de Jong’s suggests that only provocative positions succeed in bringing about a public debate on a historical sensitive topic. Originally, at the time of the events, Van Doorn and Hendrix had interpreted at least some of the violence as ‘war crimes’. Had they maintained this terminology combined with a rigorous analysis of their first hand accounts

in terms of where, when and by whom such ‘war crimes’ had been committed, their work would most likely have had sufficient scientific credibility to challenge the professional code of ‘neutrality’. But as it is likely that this would have affected their careers and reputations, one can easily understand Van Doorn and Hendrix’s choice to adhere to accepted professional discourse. However, this ‘understanding’ is relative. It would probably lose its rationale, if Indonesian relatives of victims of atrocities committed by members of Hendrix and Van Doorn’s unit would demand clarification and recognition.

The emancipation of the veterans’ movement

In the wake of the controversy around Lou de Jong’s draft, the social agency of the Indies-veterans evolved in the late 1980s when the first generation from the lower ranks of the conscripts retired and gradually found the time and means to mobilize public and political support. It is distinctive for the weak Dutch military culture that these new veterans organisations did not seek credit for their military achievements, but rather stressed the need for psychological support and services for veterans. The very few older existing veterans organisations, dominated by former resistance fighters, officers and professional military from the higher ranks with close ties to the establishment, had never considered casting themselves as ‘victims in need of support’. They were now being challenged by a critical mass of ex-conscripts who formed their own organisations at the regional and local level. Following a societal trend in which various categories of war victims from the Second World War in Europe and Asia had gained recognition through a range of state-sponsored financial compensations, the veterans of the decolonisation war were last in line to claim their share of public attention and respect.⁴⁷

A series of controversies in the 1990s illustrate how, besides developing a policy of veteran care, government attention also meant silencing controversial figures who challenged the image of veterans as ‘law-abiding citizens who merely executed orders’. In 1993, a group of veterans lobbied

Parliament and the press to prevent that an entry visa to the Netherlands being issued to Poncke Princen, a former Dutch military man who had deserted to the Indonesian side in the late 1940s. Like so many others, Princen had been sent as a conscript to Indonesia in 1946 against his will. As he gradually came to appreciate the Indonesian struggle for independence, he decided to change sides and offer his services to the Indonesian armed forces. He accepted Indonesian citizenship after the war. The rumours that Princen, dressed in a Dutch uniform, had lured his former colleagues into an ambush with fatal consequences (which has never been proven),⁴⁸ had such a powerful effect on the veterans' community that Princen was threatened with murder if he set foot on Dutch soil. He functioned as a scapegoat for all the frustrations and traumatic memories of the veterans' community. It was this consideration that in the 1990s led the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kooijmans to decide not to grant him an entry visa. He claimed that there was a moral obligation towards the veterans not to provoke and upset them.

This decision led to sharp criticism by the essayist and Netherlands Indies specialist Rudy Kousbroek, who condemned the manner in which the government had caved in to the veterans' lobby. According to Kousbroek, the veterans displayed a sense of indulgence with regard to charges of war crimes with only eyes for their own bad experiences:

What is recurrent is a claim on suffering, mental suffering and war traumas, but clearly only one's own suffering, not that of the adversary. The same approach can be seen with regard to Indonesia in general, most of what really went on there is still covered up.⁴⁹

Eventually, in December 1994, the old and sick Princen did obtain a visa to visit his family in the Netherlands on 'humanitarian grounds'. This decision was linked to a 'gentleman's agreement' with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van Mierlo, and involved a promise to abstain from making public statements while in the Netherlands. Princen abided by this condition until the moment of his departure, when he publicly expressed his wish to enter into a dialogue with Dutch veterans about

what really happened in the period 1945-1949.⁵⁰ It is salient that this compromise was the outcome of negotiations within a remarkable coalition of liberals and social democrats—excluding the Christian parties from government—led by Prime Minister Wim Kok of the PvdA, a former union leader. This coalition chose to back the veterans and censure Poncke Princen, and in this way prevented him from gaining public attention for his view on ‘what really happened’ in the 1945-1949 period.

Following the historian Lou de Jong and the deserter Poncke Princen, a third public figure, a novelist, challenged the veterans’ community. In 1994, after having published a novel based on the traumatic experiences of his father in Indonesia, writer Graa Boomsma remarked in an interview that the Dutch counterinsurgency campaign was in some ways comparable to the methods used by the German SS in World War II. This remark, selected by an editor as headline for the entire interview, enraged one of the veterans so much that he decided to sue Boomsma for libel. In no way, this veteran said, did he wish to be compared with the murderous Nazi regime. While he admitted that terrible things had happened in the period 1945-1949, these had to be considered as ‘unavoidable’. He also stated that ‘disproportionate attention’ was paid to ‘excesses’ in the media, with negative consequences for the veterans’ community.⁵¹ Boomsma was eventually acquitted by a court, based on the argument that there had been no insult directed towards a specific person.⁵²

Counter-voices within the military/veterans community also pleaded for more openness, though they were a minority. One of them was the psychologist and retired colonel Jan Van Neden, an advisor of the Veterans Platform, a federation of veterans’ associations set up in 1989. Van Neden, being of Indo-European descent and coming from a family with a long history of service in the colonial army, knew the subject well and dealt with traumatized veterans as a therapist. When in 1995 the intended state visit of Queen Beatrix to Indonesia once again revived the debate on the Dutch war crimes, Van Neden was asked for his opinion in a current affairs program on television. He stated that many veterans came to him with traumatic memories of burning kampongs and the torture and execution of Indonesian prisoners of war. Although he acknowledged that many of these

‘excesses’ had occurred in circumstances beyond one’s control, he still expressed the need for further academic research as a means to check the myths and rumours that circulated about this issue. Although he had emphasized that this was his personal opinion as a psychologist, the program makers presented him as ‘advisor of the Veterans Platform’. The consequence was that he lost their trust and was asked to step down the next day. He had clearly placed himself outside the group by jeopardizing the social capital, support and recognition that the veterans had gained by then as a result of successful lobbying. Paradoxically, Van Neden had done nothing more than articulate in public the mental anguish experienced by many of the veterans who sought his psychological counselling.⁵³

A more dramatic attempt to make public a major episode of a war crime occurred in the summer of 1994 by a tormented veteran who had belonged to the unit that had attacked Rawagedeh in 1947. His disclosure was the very first post-war public reference to the mass-execution. Afraid of repercussions from his fellow veterans, he had spread an anonymous pamphlet in the village of Wamel, in which he described the attack and pleaded that someone else should take the lead in disclosing what had happened:

I can’t give my name as this information will not be appreciated in certain circles. Yet maybe someone from Wamel, especially Wamel, could take the initiative, I don’t know how ...⁵⁴

The reason for choosing the village of Wamel to distribute his pamphlet was that a similar event had taken place there during the Second World War, though on a smaller scale: twenty Dutch civilians had been arrested and executed by German troops in retaliation for an attack by Dutch resistance fighters on German troops as they were trying to cross the river Waal on a ferry.⁵⁵

At first the anonymous pamphlet hardly received any attention. Only in August 1995 was the desperate wish of this veteran fulfilled when a crew of the commercial broadcasting company RTL4, who were in Indonesia to report on the coming state visit of the queen, decided to pay a visit

to Rawagedeh, where they filmed testimonies by various villagers on the Dutch mass-execution. Back in the Netherlands these were edited and subtitled just in time to be able to air the documentary on the symbolic date of 17 August, the Indonesian day of independence. As controversy had been already provoked about whether the Queen should accept the invitation of President Suharto to commence her visit to Indonesia on this day, the accounts on television attracted much attention in both countries.⁵⁶

Former Indonesian commander Lukas Kustario claimed in front of the press that 430 rather than 150 people had been massacred back in 1947. Pressed by Parliament, the Dutch Prime Minister asked the public prosecutor of the military court in Arnhem to investigate the case. In a report to the Minister of Justice, it was recognized that Dutch armed forces had committed offenses punishable under article 148 of the Military Penal Code.⁵⁷ However, there was uncertainty as to whether this particular war crime had fallen under the statute of limitations. The report also suggested that a possible prosecution would probably be dismissed on the grounds that various authorities in the past had already decided not to prosecute (in 1969 the Dutch government had taken this decision, and already in 1948 the case had been dismissed). The Minister of Justice therefore concluded that since no new factual evidence or testimony had been presented—implying thereby that the testimonies on RTL4 television and the anonymous pamphlet distributed in Wamel were not considered valid evidence—there was no reason to further investigate the case.⁵⁸ In other words, the fact that previous efforts to prevent prosecution of war crimes had been successful was now used again to legitimate a decision not to prosecute. However, the assumption that this case could be closed for good turned out to be wrong.

Giving voice to the victims

The debate was revived by a new voice, that of the ‘victims’ of Rawagedeh. Their case was taken up by a small number of ‘agents’ who possessed the social skills, resources and strong motivation to challenge and defy the dismissive attitude of the Dutch government.

In Indonesia, it was the fall of the authoritarian regime of Suharto in 1998 that gradually opened up the social space for various categories of victims to articulate their concerns and come forward with their demands for justice. What could and what could not be addressed in public was no longer dictated and controlled by the central authorities. In 1999, the village-head of Rawagedeh, himself the son of one of the widows of the executed men, H. Sukarman, set up an association in support of the widows.⁵⁹ At the same time in the Netherlands, activists tried to pressure the Dutch government to accept responsibility for the mass-execution in Rawagedeh.⁶⁰ Initially, all attempts to establish any form of dialogue between the widows of Rawagedeh and a representative of the Dutch government came to nothing. It was only when two activists established the association 'Foundation Committee of Dutch Honorary Debts' in 2007, that the affair really caught public attention.

In the Netherlands, the moving spirit was Jeffrey Pondaag, an Indonesian who had migrated to the Netherlands at a young age, but continued to hold a strong grudge against the former colonial power.⁶¹ His Indonesia counterpart was Batara Hutagalung, an opponent of Suharto who had left Indonesia at a young age to study in Germany. Inspired by the German efforts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) in the context of the Nazi crimes of the Second World War, Hutagalung had returned to Indonesia after the fall of Suharto, determined to force the Dutch government to deal with its legacy of colonial violence.⁶²

In 2009, they succeeded in winning the support of a specialist in international humanitarian law, Liesbeth Zegveld, who managed to present the case of the widows of Rawagedeh against the Dutch state to a Dutch civil court. Legal action proved to be the only way to force the Dutch authorities to deal with the issue. Consequently, the issue of Dutch war crimes in Indonesia was again placed on the agenda of editors of various media, sparking interest among a new generation of journalists, students, academics and, last but not least, politicians. The ultimately successful outcome of the civil case on behalf of the widows of Rawagedeh and the fact that the social pressure of the Indies-veterans had decreased (many had passed away in the meantime) created a public space in which using the term 'war crime' was now permissible. As a further consequence of

this changed political climate, Liesbeth Zegveld also initiated an investigation regarding the summary executions perpetrated by the troops of captain Westerling in South Sulawesi in 1946/1947.⁶³ The most recent development is that, with the support of Indonesian historians, three leading Dutch historical institutions have asked the government to fund a large-scale research program on violence perpetrated by both sides during the 1945-1949 war.⁶⁴ The pressure now had not come from the Dutch press and parliament as in the past thirty years, but from Indonesian victims of Dutch violence, who had found an alternative path to enforce recognition from the former colonial power: the civil court. They could now speak out freely and accept the support of activists.

Conclusion

When assessing the evolution of the Dutch debate on war crimes in Indonesia in the past forty years, the elements presented in the introduction are clearly apparent. However, the role of cultural determinants—the political culture of seeking consensus instead of antagonism and the self-image of a country with high moral standards—remains speculative. The illustrations presented in this article can only offer an interpretation, not a clear-cut proof. The elements related to the war itself—the character of the struggle and the mutual interest of the Dutch and Indonesian state not to address the issue of war crimes—have a clearer explanatory power for the protracted suppression of the subject.

The fact that the struggle generated widely divergent individual experiences—friendly contacts with locals versus executions and torture—made it difficult to come to an agreed story about it in retrospect.⁶⁵ This is typical of wars that have been fought far away from home, and ended in defeat. What contributes to this difficulty in attributing meaning to the conflict is the lack of records on Dutch war crimes. Atrocities by the Dutch side were probably too scarcely documented and too dispersed to allow aggregation into a powerful narrative about Dutch violence inflicted on Indonesians. Besides the sheer size of the country and the nature of much of the terrain (mountains and jungles), what has to be taken into account is that guerrilla and counter-guerrilla

consist mainly of small-scale covert operations by autonomous units. As some of the veterans who did speak out indicated, if no one from the unit reported excesses after returning from a patrol and if Indonesian bystanders did not file complaints, many cases could remain unnoticed. This was particularly the case in isolated areas and among villagers with a high level of illiteracy who lacked the capacity to bring the injustice to the attention of authorities. On the Dutch side, suggestions have been made that many files regarding atrocities may have been burned in 1949.⁶⁶ What makes an adequate interpretation even more challenging is the violence among Indonesian troops and the terror they inflicted against the own population. The independence struggle was at the same time a social revolution, and the adage that ‘the revolution eats its own children’ certainly applied to the fraternal strife between nationalist, communist and Islamic factions. After independence, this internal rivalry was soon covered up by a patriotic narrative of national unity.⁶⁷

This is why the provision on reciprocal amnesty agreed on in 1949 can be seen as the first step in a protracted strategy of political neutralizing. It was in the interest of both the Indonesian and the Dutch state. Had the Indonesian government sought redress for Dutch atrocities in the form of compensation for its victims and prosecution of perpetrators, then the historical treatment of the issue of war crimes could have taken a completely different course. It is imaginable that if the subject would have featured more prominently on the agenda of Dutch-Indonesian relations and had been backed up by extensive documentation on Dutch war crimes, it could have been more difficult to control and steer the course of the debate in the Netherlands.

With regard to the distinct features of ‘consensus seeking’ and ‘belief in a high moral ground’ in Dutch public culture, it is plausible that they were ingrained in the ‘mindset’ of the main contributors to the debate. Following this line of thinking, Prime Minister De Jong’s policy in 1969 can be seen as a compromise. He did give the assignment for the government report, he supported historical research, but at the same time he prevented any steps that might lead to prosecutions. This decision was only based on an inventory of government sources, without initiating hearings of any of the responsible commanders. He clearly balanced between the role of the state in upholding

social values by addressing injustices, and maintaining social stability by covering up information that can threaten mutual trust. To quote the wife of a veteran who wrote to *Achter het Nieuws*: ‘You know what the effect of the broadcasts has been on me? That I can no longer trust my husband, I keep on thinking whether it is true that he has never been involved in this’.⁶⁸

Prime Minister De Jong wanted to counter these reactions and place the Dutch public at ease: Dutch military had not committed war crimes, merely ‘excesses’ due to circumstances beyond their control. The subtext of this message could be: Dutch military have not behaved like the German occupier in the Netherlands between 1940 and 1945. This was at best a half-truth that was hardly questioned in the parliamentary debate. The social democratic opposition was moderate, and that of the extreme left parties too weak. A public inquiry was not even considered.

This attitude stands in marked contrast with the way the political and military responsibilities of the government during the Second World War were scrutinized. In fact, a very exhaustive public enquiry was set up lasting nine years in which no fewer than 850 people were heard. The armed forces also screened all of its officers regarding their conduct in the world war.⁶⁹ Apparently cleaning the slate with regard to this war was considered more vital for trust in the conduct of the armed forces than it was with regard to the subsequent lost war..

The Second World War as reference frame for victimhood has a flipside: the potential identification with the role of perpetrator. References to this role were already made at the time of the conflict by individual military who would compare violent methods they witnessed in Indonesia with what they themselves had experienced as young boys under the German occupation. Such references are recurrent in letters written following the 1969 *Achter Het Nieuws* broadcastings. The veteran who distributed the anonymous pamphlet in Wamel in 1994 also made this comparison. Van Doorn and Hendrix initially used the term ‘war crimes’ in their reports. These were highly unpopular allegations. Both the historian Lou de Jong and the novelist Graa Boomsma had to learn how problematic it was for them to use the term ‘war crimes’ or to make comparisons with the German occupation in public.

There is no denying that the Nazi crimes were of a different scale and were motivated by a completely different ideology than the Dutch attempt to 'restore order' in their former colony. However, the problem here is that what seems incomparable at the macro-level is sometimes comparable at the micro-level. Specifically, the phenomenon of random summary executions, retaliations and torture to gain information about pending attacks resembles the terror that was inflicted on Dutch citizens during the German occupation. Of course, this is a difficult message to a society that perceives itself as having a tradition of 'good intentions'.

The first Indonesian victims who came forward in 1999 challenged this image of the Dutch military as victim of circumstances. The representatives of the widows of Rawagedeh tried to enter into dialogue with the Dutch government about its responsibility for the mass-executions, but after more than half a century the doors for a meeting remained closed out of fear for financial claims. Changes in this attitude only came about thanks to the tenacity of two activists in the Netherlands and Indonesia, and the sympathetic ear of the civil court.

The activists did finally manage to gain support from Dutch left of center parties, but what was really decisive for their success is another power: that of the law. Due to developments in international humanitarian law and the effects of globalization, transnational lobbying became easier, leading to a considerable increase of the social agency of victims of past historical injustices. After more than sixty years, in 2011, it was finally possible for victims of war crimes to have their case heard across national boundaries, also without the intervention on their behalf of the Indonesian state.⁷⁰ Although lawyer Liesbeth Zegveld brought the case of the widows of Rawagedeh to an ordinary civil court in the Netherlands, the fact that the Dutch government did not appeal against the verdict of the judge may be interpreted as a sign that it sensed that a rejection of the verdict would cause considerable political damage.

For all that, the influence of the 'democratization' of history and law should not be overestimated. Whether 'inconvenient truths' are addressed or not will always be dependent on a small minority of dissenters with a troubled conscience, an enormous willpower or a radical sense

of justice, who are willing to take the risk of being ostracized. Historians should be aware of the importance of these figures to check state-friendly interpretations of history, often based exclusively on official government sources. This can be interpreted as an invitation to Cleo, the muse of history, to occasionally leave the comfort zone of the National Archives and search for ‘hidden knowledge’ about Mars in the minds of ordinary people.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

¹ Verdict of the judge, 14-09-2011, LJN:BS8793, Rechtbank ‘s-Gravenhage, 354119 / HA ZA 09-417, [http://www.bohler.eu/user/file/110914_-_uitspraak_Rawagedeh_\(nl\).pdf](http://www.bohler.eu/user/file/110914_-_uitspraak_Rawagedeh_(nl).pdf), retrieved 18 July 2012. For a reconstruction of the events in Rawagedeh on the basis of written records available in the Netherlands, see Harm Scholtens ‘Rawagedehh, 9 december 1947, een nieuwe Nederlandse versie?’ (MA thesis, University of Groningen, 2007). For a contribution to the debate on Rawagedeh, see Stef Scagliola, ‘Wie luistert naar de slachtoffers van Indonesische terreur’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 18 October 2008.

² Security Council, Committee of Good Offices on the Indonesian Question, report of the Rawagedehh observation team, restricted, S/AC.10/85, 12 January 1948, United Nations-archive, New York.

³ *Excessennota, nota betreffende het archiefonderzoek naar de gegevens omtrent excessen in Indonesië begaan door Nederlandse militairen in de periode 1945-1950*, Tweede Kamer 1968–1969, 10008.

⁴ For a broad treatment of the latter points see my PhD thesis ‘Last van de oorlog: de Nederlandse oorlogsmisdaden en hun verwerking’ (Amsterdam: Balans, 2002), and ‘The silences and myth of a dirty war: coming to terms with the Dutch-Indonesian decolonization war’, *European Review of History*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2007, pp. 233-262.

⁵ Henk Wesseling, *Vele ideeën over Frankrijk* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1987), p. 86.

⁶ Jaap Goudsbloem, *Dutch Society* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 70. See also: ‘the power of historians’, special issue ‘geschiedbeoefening en het historisch bedrijf’, *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, November 1995.

⁷ Scagliola, ‘Last’, p. 192, 360; Jacques van Doorn, *Belast verleden, over de historisering van de publieke moraal*, NWO-KNAW-lecture, Amsterdam, 18 May 2000; Scagliola, ‘Heen en weer geslingerd tussen feiten en emoties: een kritiek op de visie van J.J.P. De Jong’, *De Nieuwste Tijd*, No. 1, June 2001, pp. 49-59.

⁸ Ton Zwaan, *Civilisering en decivilisering: studies over staatsvorming en geweld, nationalisme en vervolging* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1999), pp. 151-152, 162, cited in Piet de Rooy, ‘Geweld in de polder’, *BMGN*, Vol. 119, No. 1, 2004, pp.62-70.

⁹ This is quite inconsistent when taking into consideration the harsh military campaigns launched in the Netherlands Indies in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The explanation for the absence of knowledge on this violence in the Netherlands is that issues related to warfare in the colony were not part of Dutch collective memory. They were primarily discussed in the restricted social world of a military, administrative and entrepreneurial colonial elite.

¹⁰ Jacques van Doorn, *De laatste eeuw van Indie: ontwikkeling en ondergang van een koloniaal project* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1995), p. 307. Van Doorn has pointed out that never before had such a large-scale exchange of experiences taken place between the colony and the motherland.

¹¹ Some literature that deals with guerrilla-warfare in the context of the Dutch-Indonesian decolonization war: Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and revolutionaries: the Jakarta people’s militia and the Indonesian revolution 1945-1949* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); Anton Lucas, *One soul, one struggle: region and revolution in Indonesia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991); William H. Frederick, ‘Shadows of an unseen hand, some patterns of violence in the Indonesian revolution, 1945-1949’, in Freek Colombijn and Cees van Dijk (eds.), *Roots of violence in Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), pp.143-167. For an analysis of Dutch military strategy, see Petra Groen, *Marsroutes of dwaalsporen: het Nederlands militair-strategisch beleid in Indonesië 1945-1950* (Den Haag: SDU, 1991). For an account on Dutch Special Forces deployed in Indonesia, see Jaap de Moor, *Westerling’s oorlog, Indonesië 1945-1950* (Amsterdam: Balans, 1999). For the seminal sociological study on the subject of war crimes in Indonesia, see Jacques van Doorn and Wim Hendrix, *Ontsporing van geweld: over het Nederlands-Indisch/Indonesisch conflict* (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1970).

¹² Cribb, *Gangsters*.

¹³ Scagliola, ‘Last’, p. 63.

¹⁴ Scagliola, ‘Last’, pp. 357-358

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- ¹⁵ Paulus Bijl, *Emerging memory: photographs of colonial atrocity in Dutch cultural remembrance* (Utrecht: Utrecht University Press, 2011).
- ¹⁶ Robert Cryer et al., *An introduction to international criminal law and procedure*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), p. 268. For rules on colonial warfare see: Frédéric Megret, 'From "savages" to "unlawful combatants": a postcolonial look at international humanitarian laws', in Anne Orford (ed.), *International law and its others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 265-283
- ¹⁷ R.P. Budding, *Beheersing van geweld: het optreden van de landstrijdkrachten in Indonesië 1945–1949* (Dieren: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1996), pp. 52–53.
- ¹⁸ Frits Rüter, *Enkele aspecten van de strafrechtelijke reactie op oorlogsmisdrijven en misdrijven tegen de menselijkheid* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1973), p. 25.
- ¹⁹ Scagliola, 'Last', pp. 80-92. See also Groen, *Marsroutes*.
- ²⁰ Van Doorn, *Ontsporing*, p. 244.
- ²¹ Van Doorn, *Ontsporing*, p. 244.
- ²² Stef Scagliola, 'Interviews met veteranen als historische bron: de meerwaarde van oral history in de context van de krijgsmacht', in Harry van den Berg, Stef Scagliola and Fred Wester (eds.), *Wat veteranen vertellen: verschillende perspectieven op biografische interviews over ervaringen tijdens militaire operaties* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications/Amsterdam University Press, 2010), p. 257.
- ²³ *Nederlandsch Indië 1945/Indonesië 1945/Achter het Nieuws 1969*. Transcripts of the VARA broadcast on 17, 25 and 27 January 1969 (Hilversum, 1969).
- ²⁴ Scagliola, 'Last', pp. 311-314. The basis for this conclusion is a statistical analysis of the 885 letters, Achter Het Nieuws archief, Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum (henceforth Archief AHN, B&G).
- ²⁵ Scagliola, *Last*, pp. 134-135; see letter 2868, Archief AHN, B&G, pp. 298-299.
- ²⁶ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer*, 1968-1969, p. 1236.
- ²⁷ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer*, 1968-1969, pp. 2445-2446.
- ²⁸ *Excessennota*, 1968-1969, 10.008, p. 8.
- ²⁹ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer*, 1968-1969, p. 3614.
- ³⁰ Notulen coordinatiecommissie, 27 March 1969, 2, commissie '45-'50; Dossiers van de commissie Indonesie 1945-1950, files 1-24; Archief van het ministerie van Algemene Zaken.
- ³¹ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer*, 1968-1969, 3568; Scagliola, 'Last', p. 171.
- ³² Notulen ministerraad, July 1969, Algemeen Rijksarchief, no. 4688, inv. 952, fiche 280.
- ³³ Van Doorn, *Ontsporing*, see note 15.

³⁴ Remco Meijer, *Oost-Indische doof, het Nederlandse debat over de dekolonisatie van Indonesië*, (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1995), interview with Jacques van Doorn, p. 62-63.

³⁵ Jacques van Doorn, 'Geweldsuitoefening: een probleem van gedeelde verantwoordelijkheid', in *Maandblad Geestelijke Volksgezondheid*, January 1973, p. 12.

³⁶ Van Doorn and Hendrix, *Ontsporing*, p. 15; Meijer, *Oost-Indische doof*, p. 63.

³⁷ Excessennota, bijlage 2, De Zuid-Celebes affaire, pp. 1-5, pp. 41-45 (Den Haag: SDU, 1995).

³⁸ De Moor, *Westerling*, see note 15.

³⁹ Scagliola, 'Last', pp. 242-243. Based on personal communication between Willem IJzereef and the author on 8 May 1996.

⁴⁰ Scagliola, 'Last', pp. 217-221.

⁴¹ Of course, one cannot blame scholars for adhering to professional codes, especially when they take the lead in unravelling such sensitive topics. But what I argue is that professional code leave the overlapping 'space' between the professional paradigm and public historical knowledge intact. I have personally experienced—in writing my dissertation *Last van de oorlog*—the same tendency to formulate arguments in a careful way out of respect for persons involved who I happened to know. Now, ten years later, with more insight into how politics and the historical profession are subtly intertwined, I strongly feel that a more critical stance, also towards one's professional peers, may sometimes be called for.

⁴² L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, 14 Vol. (Den Haag 1969-1991). This work entails fourteen 'parts', published in a total of twenty-nine volumes.

⁴³ J.Th.M.Bank, 'L. de Jong over de oorlog in en de dekolonisatie van Indonesië', in Madelon de Keizer (ed.), *Een dure verplichting en een kostelijk voorrecht: dr. L.de Jong en zijn geschiedwerk* (Den Haag: SDU uitgeverij, 1995), pp. 127,128.

⁴⁴ Scagliola, 'Last', pp. 221-240. See also Peter Romijn, 'Myth and understanding: recent controversy about Dutch historiography on the Netherlands Indonesian conflict', in R.S. Kisner (ed.), *The Low Countries and beyond* (New York and London: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 219-229.

⁴⁵ Wilma Nanninga, 'Ik ben kortzichtig geweest', *De Telegraaf*, 28 April 1988. See also De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, Vol. 14: Reacties (Den Haag: SDU uitgeverij, 1991), p. 1011.

⁴⁶ Scagliola, *Last*, pp. 227-240; De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, Vol. 12: Epiloog (Den Haag: SDU uitgeverij, 1988), pp. 990-1025.

⁴⁷ Jolande Withuis and Annette Mooij, 'From totalitarianism to trauma: a paradigm change in the Netherlands', in Jolande Withuis and Annette Mooij (eds.), *The politics of trauma: the aftermath of WWII in eleven European countries* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2010), pp. 204-212. See also: Scagliola,

‘Met tropenkolder in de polder: de opvang van Indie-gangers met psychische klachten’, in Martin Elands (ed.), *Oost, West, thuis best: de opvang van uit Nederlands-Indie teruggekeerde militairen 1948-1951* (Doorn: Veteraneninstituut, 2004), pp. 54-76.

⁴⁸ Julika Vermolen, ‘De Affaire Poncke Princen’ (MA thesis, University of Utrecht, 1994), p. 43, fn. 189. National Archives, Ministry of Defense, A0619, HKGS-NOI 1949, inv.nr. GG71, bundel C9.

⁴⁹ Rudy Kousbroek, ‘P. Princen en de doofpot van onze Indische historie’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 20 August 1993.

⁵⁰ Vincent Houben, ‘A torn soul: the Dutch public discussion on the colonial past in 1995’, *Indonesia*, Vol. 63, 1997, pp. 47-66.

⁵¹ *Elseviers Magazine*, 21 May 1994, cited in Vermolen, ‘De affaire’, p. 39.

⁵² *NRC-Handelsblad*, 10 June 1993, cited in Vermolen, ‘De affaire’, p. 39.

⁵³ Interview with colonel J.W. van Neden, 28 May 1998.

⁵⁴ Anonymous pamphlet, spread in the village of *Wamel* in the summer of 1994. A copy of this pamphlet is available through the author.

⁵⁵ Police report of investigation on summary executions by German troops in Wamel on 20 September 1944, initiated by a surviving relative of one of the victims:

<http://www.documentatiegroep40-45.nl/nieuws/6-linux/101113/>, retrieved 18 July 2012.

⁵⁶ Houben, ‘A torn soul’, p. 60-61.

⁵⁷ *Wetboek van militair strafrecht en wet op de krijgsmacht*, ed. by B.S. Mante, (Den Haag, 1947), pp. 53-54.

⁵⁸ [http://www.bohler.eu/user/file/110914_-_bs8793_\(uitspraak_Rawagedeh\)_\[nl\].pdf](http://www.bohler.eu/user/file/110914_-_bs8793_(uitspraak_Rawagedeh)_[nl].pdf).

pp. 4-5, retrieved 18 July 2012

⁵⁹ ‘Yayasan Rawagedeh’, 13 February 1999. Interview with K. Sukarman, 8 February 2012.

⁶⁰ Henk Koetsier en Jan Eijken, ‘Mogelijke oorlogsmisdaad nog steeds in de doofpot’, *Trouw*, 6 December 1997: Interview with Henk Koetsier, 13 January 2012.

⁶¹ Jeffrey Pondaag regularly contacted the author to discuss the issue.

⁶² Interview with Batara Hutagalung, 9 February 2012.

⁶³ [http://www.bohler.eu/user/file/120507_-_brief_minister_van_buza_\(ceddung\).pdf](http://www.bohler.eu/user/file/120507_-_brief_minister_van_buza_(ceddung).pdf), retrieved 18 July 2012.

⁶⁴ Lidy Nicolassen, *Volkskrant*, 19 June 2012, the institutions are the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies and the Dutch Institute for Military History.

⁶⁵ Scagliola, ‘Silence and myth’, p. 16.

⁶⁶ Personal communication between Jacques van Doorn and the author. .

⁶⁷ Kathrin McGregor, 'Nugroho Notosusanto; the legacy of an historian in the service of an authoritarian regime', in Mary Zurbuchen (ed.), *Beginning to remember: The past in the Indonesian present* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), pp. 209-232.

⁶⁸ Letter 2942, Archief AHN, B&G.

⁶⁹ *Enquêtecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945* (Den Haag, 1956).