

The silences and myths of a ‘dirty war’;

Coming to terms with the Dutch-Indonesian decolonization war (1945–1949)¹

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Listening to discussions about the current ‘wars on terror’ that are being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, we can hear echoes from the era of our painful European decolonization wars. In the United States too, the legacy of the lost war in Vietnam is recurrent in the discourse of opponents of today’s ‘war on terror’.² Just as in the past, the moral legitimacy of a military intervention that is supposed to bring ‘peace and order’ to a country, is today a hotly debated issue. In France and the Netherlands, especially, the memories of the wars that were fought against their former colonies have resulted in an understandable distrust of the words ‘peace and order’.³ Many elderly men and their families know all too well that they are a euphemism for a nerve-racking war which, when compared to conventional wars, has been difficult to represent and remember in a public and coherent way.

Another feature familiar from the decolonialization wars is the disagreement between those who believe that military force is the only way to stabilize a country in turmoil and others who see military intervention merely as an aggravation of political unrest. The analogy even relates to the disparity between the warring parties: on the one side the combination of Western imperialism, questionable noble intentions and military might, on the other side an alliance of rebellious parties in a non-Western setting, who, being militarily weak but large in numbers, resort to unconventional warfare.

The lack of military means – primarily an economic circumstance – determines the nature of the violence deployed by the weaker party, which is often direct, visible and daunting. The consequence is that this weaker party is represented as ‘barbarian’, a qualification that supplies their enemy with a morally convincing argument to destroy them. The ‘barbarians’, on the other hand, present themselves as defenders of their territory against a foreign oppressor and are willing to sacrifice their lives and those of

¹ I am indebted to Tom Mateson, Frances Gouda, Gary Price, Bill Frederick and Peter Schumacher for their invaluable support, their suggestions and the editing of previous drafts of this article.

² Besides the Dutch-Indonesian decolonization war (1945–1949), which is the present case study, I am referring to the French War in Indochina (1946–1954), the French Algerian war (1954–1962), the British involvement in the Malaysian communist insurgency (1948–1960), the Portuguese-Mozambique decolonization war (1964–1975) and the Angolan-Portuguese decolonization war (1961–1975). The U.S. involvement in Korea (1950–1953) and its defeat in the Vietnam war (1957–1975) posed similar problems of representation in the public realm, yet the difference is that in the European context the wars were considered internal affairs, whereas the U.S. involvement in warfare is connected to its role as a superpower and its ambition to impose a specific world order through the use of force.

³ Up to the end of the 1970s, in Dutch government circles the decolonization war in Indonesia was referred to as a ‘police action’. Any reference to the term ‘war’ would have meant an implicit acknowledgement that the Dutch state had fought against a legitimate political entity. In fact the decoration that Dutch veterans received on their return from service was called ‘the Star for Order and Peace’.

their compatriots in order to reach what they believe to be a righteous goal. Their strength lies in a strong ideological commitment, which in their eyes justifies the deployment of terror as a means of coercing their compatriots, securing their supplies and exhausting the enemy. In military theory this is referred to as asymmetric warfare.⁴ As the lack of central control blurs the distinction between politically- and criminally-motivated violence, the population is not only robbed for the benefit of the troops but is very often also subjected to sheer criminal violence.

This tentative analogy between the decolonization wars and the current war on terror is drawn in order to show how the remembrance of an asymmetrical conflict can be problematic - as we will no doubt soon start seeing once the current crisis comes to an end.

The first problem is finding a common denominator for the commemoration of a war that is disputed from the very start and which, most importantly, is made up of widely divergent and seemingly incompatible experiences. Moreover, the content and public status of the remembrance, years later, is primarily determined by the current interests of the governments, not by the experiences of the military and civilians who were directly involved in the fighting. How do these constraints and ambivalences influence the way the conflict is remembered and commemorated? Is there a specific pattern to describe the way the parties – who were mismatched in their military capabilities – look back on their fighting experience? What are the differences between the representations of the victor and the defeated? How and by whom is this process controlled and does it change over the course of time?

The aim of this article is to try to answer these questions using a historical outline of the way in which the Dutch-Indonesian decolonization war, which lasted from 1945 to 1949, has been remembered and commemorated.

My emphasis will be on the Dutch part of the process, as this article draws on my PhD thesis concerning the way Dutch society has come to terms with war crimes committed by the Dutch military in Indonesia between 1945 and 1949.⁵ Regardless of my own, specific interest in the Dutch context, it would be difficult to provide an equal coverage of the Indonesian side as sources are hard to come by. Oral testimonies, personal and official documents that refer to the ‘dark side’ of the much-cherished Indonesian independence struggle, are non-existent. Indonesian scholars have so far shown little or no interest in the consequences of the regime of terror imposed by the Indonesian military on civilians to force them to support the revolution. This is not surprising and is partly related to the particular function of history in a post-colonial society, such as Indonesia, where it is an indispensable tool for nation building.⁶

⁴ An important account of guerrilla warfare in Indonesia is: A.H. Nasution, *Fundamentals of guerrilla warfare* (London, 1965). See for a general historical account of guerrilla warfare: W. Laquer, *Guerrilla; an historical and critical study* (Boulder, 1984), R.B. Asprey, *War in the shadow, the guerrilla in history* (2002).

⁵ S.Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog, de Nederlandse oorlogsmisdaden in Indonesië en hun verwerking* [Burden of war, coming to terms with Dutch war crimes in Indonesia] Amsterdam: Balans, 2002. Besides offering a grassroots view of the struggle, this study presented a detailed analysis of how Dutch politicians, historians, veterans and journalists, the mediators of knowledge and meaning, have dealt with the issue of Dutch war crimes.

⁶ It is beyond the scope of this article to fully consider how Indonesians have dealt with the violent excesses committed by their own military against the Dutch, Eurasian and Indonesian populations during the

The main argument of this article is that the representation and commemoration of conflicts fought through unconventional warfare is more complicated than the remembrance of traditional warfare. In the defeated country, as well as in the country that has prevailed, the diverse experiences and loyalties at the micro-level do not correspond with the coherent, historical narrative of the conflict that is constructed, in hindsight, on the basis of political convenience. In both countries, interpretations that threaten an acceptable and expedient representation of the war are often repressed.

One could argue that this observation is not particularly novel. After all, the repression of displeasing issues related to war is a universal feature of any society regardless of the type of warfare. The degree of successful repression will be chiefly determined by the position and independence of the press, of the judiciary system and of the academic community. Yet, the point I will try to make here is that traditional warfare creates relatively more shared experiences and that this eases the process of coming to terms with a war and its consequences.

Though many scholars have dealt with the aftermath of war and the influence of painful memories from a Western perspective, little attention has been paid to the possible connection between the structure of warfare and a specific pattern of remembrance of a conflict in a non-Western setting.⁷

In the case of the Dutch-Indonesian war of decolonization, for some time we have seen two conflicting attitudes: a long silence and repression of honest assessments on the Dutch side, and the myth of the unifying heroic independence-war against the Dutch oppressor on the Indonesian side. Yet political and cultural changes in both countries

revolution. Moreover an extensive treatment of this subject would have to draw primarily on sources of the former colonizer – Dutch intelligence reports, personal documents of Dutch military personnel – as Indonesian sources on the revolution are scarce. Dengel notes that many historical accounts are based purely on present day recollections of former events, due to the lack of documents and the difficulty of gaining access to the few government files that do exist. H.H. Dengel, *Neuere Darstellung der Geschichte Indonesiens in Bahasa Indonesia; Entwicklung und Tendenzen der Indonesische Historiographie*. Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1994, 91, 92.

⁷ During the last decade of the 20th century a vast amount of literature on the theme of war and remembrance has been published. See for memories of French wars: Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1984) [*Realms of memory* (New York, 1996-1998)], Henry Rousso, *The Vichy syndrome: history and memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge Mass., 1991); Benjamin Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli, la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* [Decay and oblivion, the memory of the Algerian war] (Paris, 1998). For Australia and WWI, see Alistair Thomson, *Anzac memories, living with the legend* (Melbourne, 1994). For Germany and Japan and WWII, see Ian Buruma, *Wages of guilt: memories of war in Germany and Japan* (London, 1994). For the Netherlands and WWII, see Chris van der Heijden, *Grijs verleden* [Grey past] (Amsterdam/Antwerp, 2001) and for the Indonesian decolonization war see, Stef Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*. For the United States, see Arnold R. Isaacs, *Vietnam shadows: the war, its ghosts, and its legacy* (Baltimore, 1997) and Robert J. McMahon, "Contested memory: the Vietnam War and American society, 1975–2001", In *Diplomatic History*, 26:2 (Spring 2002), pp.159–84. For Great Britain, see Jay Winter, *Sites of mourning, sites of memory* (Cambridge, 1995), Susan L. Carruthers, *Winning hearts and minds: British government, the media and colonial counter-insurgency, 1944–1960* (London, 1995). For Italy, see, Angelo del Boca, *L'Africa nella coscienza degli italiani, miti, memorie, errori, sconfitte* [Africa in the minds of Italians, myths, memories, mistakes, defeats] (Rome, 1992). For Portugal, see, John P. Cann (ed.), *Memories of Portugal's African wars, 1961–1974*, proceedings of a conference at King's College London, June 10 1997; and also, Luis Quintais, *As guerras coloniais portuguesas e a invenção da História* (Lisboa, 2000).

seem to have challenged these positions. In the Netherlands, the ongoing democratization of history has given voice to the veteran-community. In Indonesia, the collapse of the authoritarian Suharto-regime has unleashed a strong sense of regional identity which will hopefully foster more critical interpretations of the national liberation war by a new generation of historians.

This account starts off with a brief historical outline of the conflict, followed by a description of the differences between the parties involved. Subsequently the ‘Dutch silence’ and ‘Indonesian myth’ are set out. The following sections deal with the attempts to disrupt the ‘silence’. In the conclusion I take stock of the arguments and evaluate the validity of my contention that the process of coming to terms with an asymmetrical conflict is characterized by a specific pattern.

The development of the conflict: 1945–1949

The aftermath of World War II had far-reaching consequences for the Netherlands and the seminal state of Indonesia. Throughout World War II, the Dutch political establishment remained isolated from political developments in Asia, where the Japanese occupation had fostered nationalistic and anti-Western feelings.⁸ Consequently the Indonesian declaration of independence in August 1945 came as a total surprise for most Dutch people. The formation of a regular Indonesian army on October 5 and the establishment of the first cabinet on November 14 followed this. But the event that finally convinced the world that the Indonesian independence movement had to be taken seriously was the bloody battle of Surabaya in November, between Indonesian and allied forces. Put under pressure by the Allies, the Dutch government agreed to grant gradual independence to its colony. However, as revenues from Indonesia were considered indispensable to the rebuilding of the mother country, the Dutch authorities could not grasp that the Indonesian leaders should be allowed to determine the form and the pace of the decolonization-process. The Indonesian nationalists for their part couldn’t accept the Dutch attempt to safeguard their own economic interests. But while the political leaders were more inclined to reach their goal through negotiation, the military objected to any compromise with the former colonizer.⁹

Finally, after endless talks, the hawks on both sides had their way and armed conflict ensued.¹⁰ With the support of its allies, the Dutch managed to deploy an expeditionary

⁸ A distinction must be made between the Dutch government, which fled to London with the royal family in May 1940, and the Dutch colonial government of the Netherlands Indies, some members of which were imprisoned in internment camps after the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands Indies in 1942, and some members of which fled to Australia.

⁹ This disagreement regarding the right approach in the struggle for independence is described as the tension between *diplomasi* (diplomacy) and *perjuangan* (armed struggle). For a personal account of the differences between military and political leaders, see the transcript of an interview with former general Abdul Haris Nasution: ‘The Story of a Soldier, an interview with general Abdul Haris Nasution.’ In *Born in fire, The Indonesian struggle for independence*, edited by Colin Wild and Peter Carey. Athens, 1986.

¹⁰ Ample scholarship has analyzed in detail the story of the Indonesian independence struggle. See for publications by Anglo-Saxon scholars: B. Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution; occupation and resistance 1944–1946* (London, 1972), A. Reid, *The Indonesian revolution 1945–1950* (Hawthorn, 1974), A. Kahin (ed.), *Regional dynamics of the Indonesian revolution* (Honolulu, 1985), C. Wild and P. Carey (eds), *Born in fire, the Indonesian struggle for independence, an anthology* (Athens, Ohio, 1986), W.H. Frederick, *Visions of heat, the making of the Indonesian revolution* (Athens, Ohio, 1988), F. Gouda and T. Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia* (Amsterdam, 2002). For a

force in 1946, which took over several key strategic areas in Java and Sumatra from the British military command. These were mainly towns near the coast which had come under British control after the Japanese defeat. Drawn-out diplomatic negotiations failed and led to the First Police Action in August 1947. This successful Dutch military campaign resulted in the occupation of West and East Java and large parts of Sumatra.

The available military forces were sufficient to control the area and, as the population had suffered immensely under Japanese rule, the Dutch military were able, in general to fulfil the task of bringing 'law and order'. They facilitated the development of infrastructure and socialised with the local population, who gradually realized that these accessible service men from the Netherlands had a completely different mentality from the authoritarian pre-war colonial Dutch community.¹¹ But regardless of their friendly and co-operative attitude, they still represented the Dutch refusal to grant Indonesians full independence.

The republican leaders, Sukarno, Hatta and Sjahrir, were focused on gaining international legitimacy by stressing their capacity for good governance and their massive support from the population. But in reality they were unable to control the violent potential of the numerous autonomous militias. Even the official Indonesian Army, the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, did not always execute the policy of the nationalist leaders. General Sudirman was convinced that only full blown armed struggle, in combination with diplomacy, could safeguard independence against Dutch bad faith.¹² But as the Indonesians' military position was far too weak to employ traditional warfare, they had to resort to guerrilla warfare, including a regime of terror imposed on their countrymen, if and when they were suspected of accepting support from the Dutch.

After the Second Police Action in December 1948, Dutch military and civilian personnel could no longer offer 'protection' to large segments of the native population. With the whole of Java and large parts of Sumatra in their hands, the area the Dutch had to control now was far too large for the limited number of troops available. As guerrilla

general Dutch account of the struggle see L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, [The Kingdom of the Netherlands during the Second World War], part 12, 'Epiloog', part 1 and 2, (The Hague, 1988). For an insight into Dutch government policy see J.J.P. de Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd. Het Nederlandse beleid tegenover de Indonesische Revolutie 1945–1947* [Diplomacy or struggle. Dutch policy during the Indonesian Revolution], (Meppel, 1988). For an overall description of the decline and fall of the Netherlands Indies empire see H.W. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië, de val van het Nederlandse imperium in Azië* [Farewell to the Indies, the fall of the Dutch empire in Asia], (Amsterdam, 2001). For an analysis of Dutch military strategy, see P.M.H. Groen, *Marsroutes of dwaalsporen, het Nederlands militair-strategisch beleid in Indonesië 1945–1950* [Lines of march and wrong tracks: Dutch military strategic policy in the Dutch East Indies 1945–1950], (The Hague, 1991). For an account of Dutch Special Forces deployed in Indonesia see J.A. de Moor, *Westerlings oorlog, Indonesië 1945–1950*, [Westerling's war, Indonesia 1945–1950], (Amsterdam, 1999).

¹¹ It is interesting to note that the military authorities, being dominated by officers of the pre-war colonial army, were worried about how the good relationship between Dutch servicemen from the Netherlands and the local population would undermine the effectiveness of patrols searching for guerrilla fighters, see G. Teitler, 'De betrekkingen tussen KNIL en KL en het vertrek van generaal-majoor H.J.J.W. Dürst Britt uit Indië in de zomer van 1948', [The relationship between KNIL and KL and the departure of major-general H.J.J.W. Dürst Britt from the East Indies in the summer of 1948]. *Mededelingen van de sectie militaire geschiedenis landmachtstaf*, nr. 13, 1990.

¹² K.E. McGregor, "Nugroho Notosusanto: The legacy of a historian in the service of an authoritarian regime, in: M.S. Zurbuchen (ed), *Beginning to remember; the past in the Indonesian present* (Singapore, 2005), 222.

warfare intensified, the Dutch developed a strategy of counter-insurgency and gradually lost the sympathy of the indigenous population in both urban areas and the countryside.¹³ The very same villages that at first had benefited from Dutch ‘protection’, would now be burned down when suspected of supporting the enemy.

In 1949, to the dismay of the Dutch colonial authorities, the Dutch government was forced to give in. The success of the Indonesian guerrilla-campaign, combined with the lack of international support for the Dutch cause, left the Dutch government no choice. A refusal to accept an agreement with favourable conditions for Indonesia, would put the financial aid to Holland from the United States – needed to rebuild the country after the devastating German occupation – in danger. In December 1949, after four years of struggle, the republic of Indonesia was finally granted independence on suitable terms.¹⁴

Contrasts in circumstances

The proportion of casualties on both sides mirrors the differences in armaments and tactics. On the Dutch side, of the 120,000 personnel deployed, 2,500 were killed in action, whereas on the Indonesian side an estimated 100,000 fighters lost their lives.¹⁵

The different phases of the struggle, with their diverse local effects, as well as the large geographical scale of Indonesia caused the experiences of individual soldiers to be hugely divergent. Only a minority of the Dutch military actually engaged the enemy in combat. While in some areas there was heavy fighting, in other places the soldiers’ worst enemies were ‘mosquitoes and boredom’. Units in isolated outposts were constantly short of supplies, while those who were encamped near urban centres, often remember their military service in Indonesia as a ‘compulsory holiday’.¹⁶

Besides the different circumstances, differences in the soldiers’ motives and histories also influenced the interpretation of the conflict, at the time and in hindsight. The 25,000 *oorlogsvrijwilligers* (war volunteers) belonged to the *Koninklijke Landmacht* (Dutch Royal Army) and many of them had fought in the Dutch resistance against the German occupier. These war volunteers had joined up primarily to free the Indonesian and Dutch colonial population from Japanese occupation. They took example from the allied soldiers who had liberated Europe and expected to be similarly received by cheering crowds in Indonesia. So they were unpleasantly surprised when, after the Japanese capitulation in August 1945, they found themselves instead involved in the suppression of a nationalist revolt.

The largest category within the Dutch Royal Army were the 95,000 conscripts, with no fighting experience whatsoever, let alone knowledge of guerrilla-warfare. This cross-section of the Dutch male population was instructed to restore ‘law and order’ in a country whose

¹³ S.Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*, p.63.

¹⁴ F. Gouda and T. Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia*, pp.271–272, 277–278.

¹⁵ These numbers include KNIL (Netherlands Indies Royal Army) and KL (Dutch Royal Army) military personnel. The 6,000 soldiers that are commemorated each year on September 7 at the Netherlands Indies monument in the city of Roermond, include casualties of illness and accidents, as well as all casualties of the subsequent conflict with Indonesia over the sovereignty of New Guinea (1960 to 1962). The estimate of 100,000 casualties on the Indonesian side is based on Dutch military reports by local commanders, but is certainly underreported. J. Hoffenaar and B. Schoemaker, *Met de blik naar het oosten, Koninklijke Landmacht 1945–1990* [Looking east, the Royal Army 1945–1990], (The Hague, 1994), p.37

¹⁶ S.Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*, p.25-29.

reconstruction was being sabotaged by ‘irresponsible rebels’. They saw themselves merely as law-abiding Dutch citizens following the orders of a democratic government.

Members of the colonial *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger* (Royal Netherlands Indies Army) had quite different interests. Freed from Japanese prisoner of war camps in Asia by the Allies, the remaining members of the pre-war professional army joined the ranks of the newly established KNIL right from the start of the Indonesian uprising. With their own futures and positions at stake, they strongly supported the Dutch effort to restore the colonial order. Because of their long-standing experience of suppressing local revolts, they were better acquainted with guerrilla-warfare than the troops from the Netherlands. Another specific feature of the KNIL was its racial hierarchy, with a white elite at the top, some Eurasians at the executive level and local Indonesian recruits at the bottom.¹⁷ The number of KNIL-troops was around 43,000 in 1947. The differences between the KNIL and the conscripts of the KL was a recurrent concern for the military authorities.

Concerning the soldiers of the Indonesian army, the point to remember – and one that is often disregarded outside of a small circle of experts – is that the struggle they were involved in was revolutionary. The colonial policy of ‘divide and rule’ had resulted in many rivalries among Indonesians themselves. Therefore, besides being a nationalist struggle against the Dutch, the rebellion also attacked old elites and their alleged cooperation with Dutch or Japanese rule at the expense of large sections of the rural population.¹⁸ The success of Dutch colonial rule had, after all, been based on that ideal combination of Western imperialism and indigenous feudalism. Moreover the political leaders of the Indonesian Republic belonged to an urban intellectual elite with only remote ties to the huge uneducated peasant population. That is why these people became the primary targets of the Darul Islam and the Communist movement, the more radical competitors for political power. Add to this the total lack of bureaucratic and military infrastructure, and it is no surprise that the newly proclaimed Republic was unable to exert control over the myriad of local, untrained and unpaid, irregular troops. Contrary to the Dutch armed forces, the Indonesian troops were not raised and financed by a state that possessed economic means. This meant that many young men who joined the struggle had a fairly autonomous position and could pursue local goals under the flag of the revolution. Most importantly, they depended completely on their own initiative to secure resources and there were no superior powers to control how the lack of resources was dealt with.¹⁹

¹⁷ The KNIL is known to have recruited among specific ethnic groups, such as people from the Moluccas, Celebes (Sulawesi) and Madoera (Madura), who had a supposedly ‘martial’ tradition, followed Christian precepts and were loyal to the colonial order. However, the number of Javanese Muslim recruits was also high, both before and after WWII. One must consider that the means of making a living were quite limited and that, when it came to supporting a family, an income from the colonial army was more secure than one from the Indonesian army.

C.A. Heshusius, ‘Wie zat er in het KNIL?’ [‘Who was in the KNIL?’] in *Madjoe*, 12, (December 1991); W. Manuhutu, ‘Molukse KNIL-militairen. Tussen wal en schip’ [Moluccan KNIL-servicemen. between a rock and a hard place] in G. Teitler and J. Hoffenaar (ed.), *De politionele acties, afwikkeling en verwerking* [The police actions, completion and handling], (Amsterdam, 1990).

¹⁸ For an account of the regional difference and local dynamics of the Indonesian social revolution, see the various articles in Audrey R. Kahin (ed.), *Regional dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution: unity from diversity* (Honolulu, 1985).

¹⁹ Danang Widoyoko, Irfan Muktiono, Adnan Topan Husodo, Barly Harliem, Noe Agung Wijaya, (eds) *Bisnis Militer Mencari Legitimasi* [Looking at the role of Indonesian military in business] (Jakarta, 2003). See for an English translation of a chapter in this publication: http://www.indonesia-house.org/dbindhouse/bm/lcw_bis_mil/

The irregular troops, organized in a countless number of *laskars*²⁰ with nationalist, Muslim, communist or local ethnic affiliations, were estimated at 94,000 in Java and 73,000 in Sumatra. The Republic did claim to control the regular Republican Army, the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, which consisted of 110,000 troops in Java and 64,000 troops in Sumatra.²¹ But even within this army there were differences in affiliation. Some of the military careerists had been socialized within the Dutch educational system, whereas a younger group among the leading figures received military training during the Japanese occupation and held strong anti-Western views.²²

The irregulars were all formally integrated into the TNI in June 1947, but on the ground they operated fairly autonomously and often competed with each other for military power and control of limited resources such as food, clothing and even weapons.²³ The bloodiest and most well-known internal struggle was the effective suppression by units of the TNI of a communist uprising supported by left-wing army units in the town of Madiun in September 1948.²⁴

A specific challenge for the Republican government in West Java were the troops of the Darul Islam, a movement which aspired to establish an idealised Islamic state, and would continue to represent a threat to the Republic even after the departure of the Dutch.²⁵

As in many other decolonized countries, the process of nation building went on after independence, entailing many violent repressions of local uprisings directed against the new centralized government in Java.²⁶

Different kinds of violence

The asymmetric relationship between Indonesian and Dutch troops can be seen in the different ways in which each side used violence. Due to the Dutch advantage in weapons, the numbers of Indonesian deaths were higher. But the deployment of guerrilla-tactics by the Indonesians has

²⁰ Laskar is the Indonesian word for 'irregular fighting force'.

²¹ These numbers are based on the research of military historian P.M.H. Groen, who analyzed the military strategy of the two Dutch Police Actions in her dissertation *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen, het Nederlandse militair-strategisch beleid in Indonesië 1945–1950* [Lines of march and wrong tracks: Dutch military strategic policy in the Dutch East Indies 1945–1950] (The Hague, 1991) p.79. She used estimates made by the Indonesian general A.H. Nasution in his extensive standard work on the Indonesian independence struggle *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia* vol.IV, p.65, vol.V, pp.137, 138.

²² See for Japanese efforts to mobilize and train Indonesian youth for military purposes: B. Bouman, *Van driekleur tot rood-wit, de Indonesische officieren uit het KNIL 1900–1950* [From tricolour to red-white, the Indonesian officers of the KNIL 1900–1950] (The Hague, 1995) pp.181–185.

²³ W.H. Frederick, 'The appearance of revolution, cloth, uniforms and the 'pemuda' style in East Java, 1945–1949' in H. Schulte Nordholt (ed.), *Outward appearances: dressing state and society in Indonesia* (Leiden, 1997). Referring back to Dutch intelligence reports, Frederick points out the enormous pressure put by Indonesian militias on villages to supply resources. The importance of membership to one or another group lay primarily in the group's potential to put pressure on villagers to provide regular meals, clothing and other useful goods.

²⁴ The outcome of the struggle, which saw the defeat of Soviet-oriented military factions, was decisive in securing U.S. support for the Indonesian Republic at the expense of the Dutch. For a description of this struggle see the account by Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg in *American visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia*. pp.175–185.

²⁵ See for an account of the role of this movement in the independence struggle: C. van Dijk, *Rebellion under the banner of Islam, the Darul Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague, 1981).

²⁶ See for a geographical overview of regional rebellions in Indonesia between 1950 and 1954: R. Cribb (ed.) *Historical atlas of Indonesia* (Honolulu, 2000) p.162. For a political account of this period, see: M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of modern Indonesia*, (Basingstoke, 2001) pp.289–311.

allowed the Dutch to focus on the use of ‘foul methods’ by their enemies and deny full public acknowledgement of themselves as perpetrators of violence.²⁷

Indeed, when Dutch troops operated in an area where Indonesian irregular militias were completely dependent upon local communities for intelligence and resources, they would witness countless cases of punishment or intimidation of the local villagers. This could vary from robbery, destruction of property and arson, to more extreme forms of terror, such as abduction, murder and mutilation.

The Dutch themselves were subjected to terror too, yet in a more indirect way, with far less visible contact between perpetrator and victim. The Indonesian’s idea was to frighten, exhaust and disorient the enemy through small and unexpected assaults. They set up ambushes, booby traps, performed acts of sabotage and practiced mutilation. Another specific tactic was the scorched earth policy, the destruction of all valuable resources in an area that could no longer be retained and would soon be occupied by Dutch troops. The consequences of this policy for the livelihood of local villagers were devastating. Of course, this contributed to the belief that it was not the ‘treacherous’ Indonesian resistance fighters, but the ‘honourable’ Dutch military that acted in the interest of the population.

Though guerrilla warfare was the overall tactic on the Indonesian side, many Dutch personal accounts mention that there was a different attitude between regular TNI units and improvised irregular troops. A description by a Dutch soldier illustrates the difference and its sociological connotations:

The TNI, they were officers, they were all educated, all boys from the HBS²⁸ in Bandoeng. Yes, they really were struggling for their freedom. But their major opponents were loose gangs such as the Darul Islam, ‘rampokkers’²⁹ as they were called. These bandits would even burn down their own people’s villages, they were ordinary criminals.³⁰

This view contains the implicit message that Dutch troops were not suppressing a freedom struggle but eliminating outlaws. But it does not take into account the scale of Dutch technical strength, which of course determined the scale of Indonesian casualties. Though Dutch military orders always emphasized the need to spare civilians, mechanical violence deployed from a distance in an area where enemy troops were localized, would lead to civilian casualties. This was certainly the case with bombardments carried out by the Air Force.³¹

²⁷ There have always been veterans of the Indies who, sometimes out of shame and guilt, have tried to speak out on war crimes committed by Dutch military. See note nr.90.

²⁸ Hogere Burgerschool [Former Dutch High School for the 12-18 year age group].

²⁹ *Rampokkers* is the Malay word for ‘looters’.

³⁰ Transcript of an interview with Indies veteran G. van der Kemp, 17-12-1996. Archief Historisch Genootschap Zoetermeer [Archive Historical Association Zoetermeer].

³¹ R.P. Budding, *Beheersing van geweld, het optreden van de landstrijdkrachten in Indonesië 1945–1949* [Control of violence, the army’s actions in Indonesia 1945–1949], (Dieren, Netherlands, 1996), pp.52–53. In his account, Budding analyses the measures taken by the Dutch military command to control excessive violence. He describes how in the last year of the war, despite explicit orders from General A. Spoor to spare the population, both mopping-up operations and air attacks caused many civilian deaths. Budding quotes the Deputy Chief of Staff of the TNI, T.B. Simatupang, *Report from Banaran: the story of the experiences of a soldier during the war of independence* (New York, Cornell University, 1972)

Preventing so-called ‘collateral’ damage was similarly problematic with regard to mechanical violence on the ground. Due to the enemy’s tactic of hiding in homes and villages, a thorough search of premises before an attack to ensure the absence of civilians was often considered too risky. The only militarily acceptable alternative was to use artillery from a safe distance. As the shortage of men in the last year of the struggle increased, commanders were more and more inclined to resort to this method. Casualties of these attacks were considered victims of ‘functional’ military violence: regrettable indeed, but unavoidable and necessary to achieving a military objective.

Violent acts that did not serve a military purpose, and moreover discredited the army, such as looting, stealing, raping, mutilating, torturing and murdering, were referred to as ‘non functional’ military violence.³² However, some of these violent acts could be regarded as functional according to the context in which they occurred. Indeed, to check the Indonesian’s guerrilla attacks, the Dutch too developed a policy of terror, which sanctioned the use of torture, execution and retaliation.³³ The problem was that the extent to which these acts could be considered ‘necessary’ to gain important information or to eliminate a threat against the troops, could only be assessed in hindsight. What if the men who had been executed on the basis of inaccurate intelligence turned out to be innocent? What if the inhabitants of a village that had been burned down had had nothing to do with the ambush the day before? Moreover the effectiveness of this policy could be affected by the inability of a commander to control the violent potential of his unit. As in any war, the tendency to overreact in a context where extreme aggression is all around was a recurrent concern.³⁴

As the quote from the Dutch soldier shows, many forms of Indonesian violence were perceived as criminal and sadistic and not as politically motivated. Non-colonial troops clearly experienced tension between their acknowledgement of the Indonesians’ legitimate objective – they are entitled to their freedom – and their witnessing of morally repugnant behaviour. In fact, many Dutch servicemen often did appreciate their adversaries’ cause, but at the same time condemned their fighting methods as being barbarian and immoral. This attribution of ‘barbarism’ to the weaker enemy reveals the naïve belief that a change in the balance of power can be brought about by fighting for a cause in an allegedly ‘honourable’ way.

In general, the weakest party in an unconventional war cannot afford to be selective in choosing its allies and often resorts to support from dubious parties, such as local warlords or mafia clans.³⁵ As political struggle and criminal activities become intertwined

³² C.F. Rüter, *Enkele aspecten van de strafrechtelijke reactie op oorlogsmisdrijven en misdrijven tegen de menselijkheid* [Aspects of the judiciary reception of war crimes and crimes against humanity], (Amsterdam, 1973), p.25.

³³ J.A.A. van Doorn and W.J. Hendrix, *Ontsporing van geweld; over het Nederlands-indisch/Indonesisch conflict* [Derailment of violence, the Netherlands Indies/Indonesian conflict] (Rotterdam, 1970). Van Doorn and Hendrix were the first scholars to address the issue of Dutch war crimes in Indonesia. For a brief account on the issue in English see: J.A.A. van Doorn and W.J. Hendrix, *The process of decolonization 1945–1975; the military experience in comparative perspective*, Comparative Asian Studies Program (Rotterdam, 1987).

³⁴ Scagliola, *Last van de Oorlog*, pp.90, 91.

³⁵ This does not, of course, imply that powerful states engaged in warfare do not choose criminals and warlords as allies. When the interest of a state or of political stability in an area is given priority, the ethics of international human rights play a minor part. Yet compared to irregular entities, states that formally

it becomes more difficult to distinguish between them.³⁶ During the struggle this relationship can be functional, but serious problems arise once the end of the conflict is in sight and the issue of war crimes on both sides has to be settled as part of negotiations.

The general amnesty, which the Dutch and Indonesian authorities signed in November 1949, reveals these ambiguities. Though no effort was made to avoid the sensitive term ‘war crime’,³⁷ the commentary on the agreement clearly stated that the term only refers to crimes that are ‘in no way connected to the political struggle, and if committed in an ordinary war would have given cause for prosecution’.³⁸ Yet no criteria were added to determine whether or not a crime was politically motivated. On the Dutch side, in general, the reference was to the jurisprudence of court martials and the High Military Court, which made the already-mentioned distinction between functional and non-functional violence. On the Indonesian side there is no official record of prosecution of violent excesses, yet there are many off-the-record references to retaliation against people who cooperated with the Dutch.³⁹

Of course prosecution of all crimes on both sides would have been unrealistic. But with no judicial imperative and the absence of interest groups to press for the prosecution of perpetrators of ‘war crimes’, the violence on both the Dutch and Indonesian side not only remained unpunished, but also unarticulated and unquestioned.

abide by international law have much to lose when their unlawful alliances are disclosed by human right activists or the media.

³⁶ The role of criminal elements in the Indonesian struggle for independence has been explored in detail by R. Cribb in: *Gangsters and revolutionaries; the Jakarta People’s Militia and the Indonesian revolution 1945–1949* (Honolulu, 1991) and by A. Lucas in: *One soul, one struggle; region and revolution in Indonesia* (Sydney, 1991). See for a surprising resemblance between the role of criminals in the Indonesian context and the connection between criminality and insurgency in current conflicts: R.T. Naylor, *Wages of crime: black markets, illegal finance, and the underworld economy* (New York, 2002).

³⁷ The term war crime is in quotation marks because of the disagreement among Dutch scholars about its validity in the context of guerrilla warfare. Formally, the The Hague convention, which entered into force in 1907, was the official judicial rule during the conflict (1945–1949). Yet, the validity of the convention is questioned as two conditions were not met: firstly, there was no official declaration of war, and secondly, the opposite party should have respected the same conditions. When this was not the case, the obligation to respect the convention ceased. However, a number of articles of the convention – the ones that refer to ill-treatment, robbery and destruction – had been carried over into both Dutch and Netherlands Indies martial law. This included a rule concerning the treatment of dead, wounded, or sick military opponents. The jurist and scholar, Rüter, states that these articles provided sufficient judicial basis to define the crimes committed by Dutch servicemen as war crimes. See: C.F. Rüter, ‘Een onderzoek naar de “oorlogsmisdrijven” in Indonesië, maar hoe?’ [‘A search for “war crimes” in Indonesia, but how?’] *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 10-2-1969. My opinion is that a more careful analysis of local circumstances by Dutch authorities could have led to a clearer distinction between those crimes committed in circumstances beyond soldiers’ control and deliberate offences. Out of respect to the veterans and considerations of political convenience, these different categories have never been properly articulated, giving way to speculation about, and exaggeration of, both Indonesian and Dutch atrocities.

³⁸ ‘Amnestie-ordonnantie van de Hoge vertegenwoordiger van de Kroon’ [Amnesty decree of the High Representative of the Crown] 3 November 1949, *Indisch Staatsblad*, 1949 n.326, in: *Excessennota* (The Hague 1995) pp.157,158; L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, p.1024.

³⁹ The American scholar William Frederick mentions retaliations among Indonesians in his article ‘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, 2002) p.143–167. Another reference to violence among Indonesians during the revolutionary period and after can be found in Geoffrey Robinson’s account on the history of Bali, *The dark side of paradise, political violence in Bali* (New York, 1995) p.147–179.

Dutch silence

In the Netherlands, up to this day, in spite of a growing consensus on the importance of human rights ideology, public recognition of the fact that from 1945 to 1949 the Dutch military committed ‘war crimes’ on a considerable scale is still not forthcoming.⁴⁰

This can be ascribed to the problematic modes of remembrance of a lost war fought against an ‘invisible’ enemy. The silence refers to a traumatic, shameful past, which is difficult to formulate. This is especially true because there has been no support from the government, which for a long time has refused to reflect on its own responsibility concerning this issue. But besides the traumatic memory of anguish, death and violence that served no purpose, there are other elements that complicate the remembrance of this war.

As Jean-Pierre Rioux has stated with regard to the lack of consensual imagery in France regarding the Algerian war, the Dutch experience in Indonesia cannot be connected to a specific battlefield that is still within reach of its veterans.⁴¹ The fighting took place in a far and foreign country which can only be visited as a place to mourn and remember by a small minority. The memory ‘evaporates’ more easily as it cannot be connected to a specific site. Moreover, this ‘foreign’ experience isolates the veteran from the reference frame of his surrounding civilian community.⁴²

Another difficulty is the lack of coherence with regard to war experiences. The political and nationalist terminology to which we are accustomed, does not necessarily correspond to the diversity of experiences at the micro-level. For the men who fought there was no overall clear beginning, peak and end of the conflict. Besides, given the gigantic scale of the territory, these differences in intensity are compounded by the intangible nature of guerrilla warfare with its sneak attacks and selective battles.

Yet what I find to be the most important obstacle in coming to terms with this war is the problematic categorization of the violent events in terms of perpetrators and victims.

⁴⁰ Although there was an official government inquiry in 1969, resulting in the government report *Excessennota* and from the 1980s the subject of Dutch war crimes has often been discussed in the media, thorough research on this topic, including the hearing of leading officials, has never been done.

⁴¹ J.P. Rioux, ‘La flamme et les bûchers’, in: J.P. Rioux (ed.) *La guerre d’Algerie et les francais*, (Paris, 1990), p.497–508. Rioux, who draws on the theory of collective memory of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, states that the Algerian war is barely represented in French collective memory because it lacks three basic elements: a site to mourn and remember, a shared language to articulate the war-experiences, and consensus on the meaning of particular dates. According to Halbwachs these are the social forces that determine the place of a historical event in the collective memory. M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950). See for an English account of veterans of the French-Algerian conflict: ‘Rehabilitating the traumatized war veteran: the case of French conscripts from the Algerian war, 1954–1962’ in M. Evans and Ken Lunn, *War and memory in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 1997).

⁴² This is a specific feature of Dutch society, which contrary to its neighbours, has not witnessed a large-scale military conflict on its own soil involving Dutch servicemen for centuries. The public outrage and shock with regard to the failure of *Dutchbatt*, the Dutch peacekeeping force sent to former Yugoslavia to protect the men of Srebrenica from the Serb campaign of genocide in the summer of 1995, demonstrates this lack of experience with regard to the practice of warfare. See for an extensive account of the historical, political and military aspects of the fall of the Srebrenica enclave, J.C.H. Blom (ed.) *Srebrenica, een ‘veilig’ gebied: reconstructie, achtergronden, gevolgen en analyses van de val van een Safe Area* [Srebrenica, a ‘safe’ haven: reconstruction, background, consequences and analysis of the fall of a Safe Area] (Amsterdam, 2002). The results of this report led to the resignation of the Dutch government on April 16 2002.

Whereas in traditional warfare the identity of the attacking and defending force is relatively clear, as is the difference between military and civilians, this distinction is almost absent in guerrilla warfare. Guerrilla fighters are very dependent on the assistance of the civilian population and one of their military principles is to disappear into civilian communities in order to prepare their attacks and get resources.⁴³

Of course this compromises the civilians and increases the risk that they will become victims of counter-terror deployed by the occupying force. The use of terror and counter-terror leads to a fragmented chain of violent events that requires flexible loyalties on the part of the non-combatants in order to survive. They are caught between the fighting parties, and their loyalty to a cause that is perceived as just – the quest for independence, liberty or autonomy – does not protect them from the methods that are used to achieve this goal. On the contrary, their dependency on protection often forces them to join one party or the other and become accomplices. Once the first move is made towards one party it is almost impossible to back out and to distance themselves from the violence attributed to that party. Consequently they are drawn into a vicious circle of brutal attacks and revenge. The result of this is that people tend to become both perpetrators and victims, depending on the record of their loyalty.

Strangely enough, on the side of the Dutch military the roles of victim and perpetrator also coincide. Although their military preponderance suggests they represented the ‘strong and mighty’ who fought against ‘the weak and oppressed’, the nature of guerrilla warfare has so far impeded an appreciation of the Dutch military as perpetrators of violence. In the perception of many Dutch servicemen, the violence they deployed was exceeded by the terror inflicted upon the local population by Indonesian guerrilla fighters themselves, in order to get supplies and to prevent villagers from collaborating with the Dutch. In some areas and periods this is in line with the facts, in other cases this reasoning can be seen as a coping strategy that helps to deal with memories of the terror they inflicted upon Indonesians. Soldiers can salve their conscience by emphasizing the compelling need to eliminate ‘outlaws’.⁴⁴

The problem with guerrilla violence is that it works as a snare. The constant threat of surprise attacks or booby traps conditions the military to shoot first and assess afterwards. This sometimes has dramatic consequences when the perceived ‘threat’ turns out to be an innocent person and is a traumatic experience for servicemen. In fact the dynamics of irregular warfare lead to circumstances in which control is easily lost, creating the opportunity for violence to escalate. This is aggravated by the small-scale and intimate nature of the guerrilla encounter. Not only can a soldier lose control of his nerves and of his gun, but also a commander can also easily lose sight of his men.⁴⁵ Pressures on the unit, such as lack of supplies, rest, fresh troops, or the death of a comrade, increases the risk of derailment. It is precisely the context of guerrilla warfare that facilitates the

⁴³ Though in general the appearance of guerrilla-groups is less standardized than that of regular armies, during the Indonesian Revolution uniforms had a strong symbolical meaning and provided a way of differentiating and identifying people. At the same time, uniforms were also a tool for misleading enemy forces, rivals and the police. Frederick describes how it was common for loose gangs of all kinds to wear one uniform or another, deliberately deceiving bystanders and throwing the blame onto others. See Frederick, *The appearance of revolution*, p.214.

⁴⁴ S.Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*, pp.77, 78.

⁴⁵ Van Doorn and Hendrix, *Ontsporing van geweld*, pp.171,180.

representation of Dutch soldiers as ‘victims of the system’ instead of as representatives of an occupying force.⁴⁶

In sum, all these elements produce a lack of consensus among the different groups of combatants regarding the way the violence is to be interpreted and remembered. The event remains complex, with many points of view. It can only be forged into a moral model, appropriate for collective rituals of commemoration, in a society where the state maintains a firm hand in the making of official history – which is certainly the case in Indonesia.

Indonesian myth

Under Sukarno’s rule, but even more under Suharto’s New Order, history was primarily considered as a useful tool for nation building. For the nationalist leader, Sukarno, the struggle for independence was essential to strengthen the legitimacy of national identity. He presented it as the last and decisive struggle against colonial oppression after numerous rebellions against Dutch rule during the colonial era. Elements that threatened this image of continuity, unity and patriotism, such as rivalries between ethnic and religious groups and repression by indigenous rulers, were considered unhelpful.⁴⁷ By ignoring every other social, cultural and economic dynamic, the history of the nation was limited to one continuous struggle against its enemies. This approach made it possible to portray rebellious parties, such as the separatists and communists that would challenge central Javanese power after independence in 1949, as being simply new ‘internal’ enemies of the nation-state that had to be dealt with.⁴⁸

The transition from Sukarno’s leadership to Suharto’s New Order in 1966, led to an even stronger emphasis on the role of the military in Indonesia’s history. A central figure was the historian Nugroho Notosusanto, who directed *Pusat Sejarah Abri* (the Centre of Army History) before he became Minister of Education and Culture in the early 1980s. His anti-communism and anti-intellectualism privileged the military at every crucial moment. He also legitimized their so-called *dwifungsi*, their dual political and defensive role in Indonesian society, based on the military’s crucial role in the national struggle.⁴⁹ Through his writings and the many school-texts based on them, he was responsible for the dominance of military history in the historical consciousness of the Indonesian people.⁵⁰

This martial interpretation of national history also entailed a rigorously constructed tradition of hero worship. Since 1959, the government encouraged patriotism by identifying 94 ‘heroes’ (85 men and 9 women), who had in some way contributed to the

⁴⁶ Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*, pp.90, 91.

⁴⁷ H.A.J. Klooster, *Indonesiers schrijven hun geschiedenis, de ontwikkeling van de Indonesische geschiedbeoefening in theorie en praktijk 1900–1980* [Indonesians write their history, the development of Indonesian history in practice and theory] (Dordrecht, 1985), p.3.

⁴⁸ G. van Klinken, ‘The battle for history after Suharto’, in: M.S. Zurbuchen (ed.), *Beginning to remember; the past in the Indonesian present* (Singapore, 2005), p.234.

⁴⁹ K.E. McGregor, ‘Nugroho Notosusanto: the legacy of a historian in the service of an authoritarian regime’, in: M.S. Zurbuchen (ed.), *Beginning to remember*, p.222.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.235; see also: M. Wood, *Official history in modern Indonesia; New Order perceptions and counterviews* (Leiden, 2005) p.98, 99. Nugroho Notosusanto also directed the writing of the final, 6th volume of the official *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* [National history of Indonesia] (1975) which dealt with Indonesia’s recent history, 1945–1965.

development of the Indonesian nation.⁵¹ A specific group were the ‘heroes of the independence struggle’, mostly military men, with Sukarno and the commander of the TNI, general Sudirman, as the most famous figures. Their representation and glorification in public spaces is a characteristic feature of Indonesian society. Beside countless monuments, in the city of Jakarta alone four museums are dedicated to the 1945–1949 period and are visited by huge numbers of schoolchildren all through the year. Indeed, schools at all levels are obliged to contribute to the remembrance of specific dates, such as *Hari Pahlawan* (Heroes day) on November 10. This commemoration is dedicated to the memory of the 6,000 Indonesian men who lost their lives during the battle against British forces in Surabaya, in 1945.⁵²

Another feature of the Indonesian hero-cult is the reburial of leaders of the independence struggle, often accompanied by overly dramatic ceremony. This ritual is connected to the Javanese tradition of reburial, which is an important part of the veneration of ancestors.⁵³ But besides places of remembrance that have been constructed in hindsight in urban areas, there are also true *lieux de memoire* out on the battlefields. Group hikes along historical sites have become popular, particularly among veterans, since the end of the seventies. Many of these are sponsored by veterans’ associations. The most remarkable is the 183-km long trail that follows the route of general Sudirman’s forced retreat from Yogyakarta during the Dutch attack in December 1948.⁵⁴

In 1975 the *Lembang Sejarah dan Antropologi* (Institute for History and Anthropology) together with the Ministry of Culture and Education started the *Proyek Biografi Pahlawan Indonesia* (Project for the biographies of the national heroes of Indonesia). These life histories are intended for a large audience, including secondary school students and are fairly predictable, making the heroic achievements and sacrifices of these heroes the very climax of their lives.

This politicized and nationalized representation of the 1945–1949 era has exactly those elements that are absent from the Dutch representation of the war: a glorious past, coherence in war experiences, the support of the civilian community, places to remember and a clear division of roles between Indonesian heroes and Dutch oppressors. However, it is a strongly manipulated remembrance that omits the reality of guerrilla warfare.⁵⁵ Yet because of the

⁵¹ Robert Cribb, *Historical atlas of Indonesia* (Richmond, 2000) p.182. This atlas includes a map with a regional overview of three types of national heroes: 1. pre- or proto-nationalist resisters to Dutch colonialism; 2. contributors to the ‘national awakening’ 1910–1942; 3. contributors after 1942.

⁵² See for an account of the Indonesian hero-cult the website of the faculty of social history at Erasmus University Rotterdam: <http://www.fhk.eur.nl/websites/hero/> This draws chiefly on the work of the German Indonesianist, Klaus H. Schreiner-Brauch, *Nationalismus und Personenkult im Indonesischen Geschichtsverständnis* [Nationalism and personality cult in Indonesian historical consciousness] (Hamburg, 1993).

⁵³ T. Kamsma, ‘Sporen van de Politie Acties, een rondleiding langs de militaire musea van Yogyakarta [The trail of the Police Actions, a tour along the military musea of Yogyakarta], in: *Checkpoint, maandblad voor veteranen*, n.6, (July/August 2004). See also Klaus H. Schreiner-Brauch, ‘History in the showcase: representations of national history in Indonesian museums’ in Sri Kuhnt-Saptodewo, V. Grabowsky and M. Grossheim (eds), *Nationalism and cultural revival in Southeast Asia: perspectives from the centre and the region* (Wiesbaden, 1997).

⁵⁴ See note 42.

⁵⁵ William Frederick deals with the issue of Indonesian violence during the struggle for independence and the lack of scholarly attention given to this subject by Indonesian historians in his article ‘Shadows of an unseen hand, some patterns of violence in the Indonesian revolution, 1945–1949’, in *Roots of violence in Indonesia* (Leiden, 2002). He mentions a few Indonesian scholars that have dealt with this issue, such as R.

embarrassment felt by Indonesians about their fratricidal struggle and the rewarding result of the guerrilla tactics that achieved full independence, there is a strong motivation to comply with this myth.

Nevertheless, a rigorous scrutiny of general Nasution's standard work on guerrilla warfare – an exception to the otherwise generally hagiographic historical texts – does reveal the vital function of terror against the local population in areas controlled by the Dutch.

*We came along as armed gangs which merely created disturbances. Many of the people felt harassed[...] long time was needed with intensive activities of agitation and propaganda, intimidation and terrorization, in order to be able to influence the people and to make them into sympathetic friends.*⁵⁶

This confirms an anecdote told by the emeritus professor of cultural history at the university of Djokjakarta, Y.B. Mangunwijaya, about the ambiguity of heroism. He describes how a major of the TNI-army objected to being received with full honor by a crowd in Malang after his return from the mountains at the end of the war in 1949:

*Brothers and sisters, you have spoken beautifully and suggested that we are heroes. Unfortunately this is not true, we are not heroes, and these last few years we have become robbers, murderers and criminals.*⁵⁷

The voice of the people who were subjected to this violence is almost absent in Indonesian history. We know little about the vicissitudes of illiterate villagers, nor is there much attention in Indonesian historiography for the alliances of the nationalist movement with criminal gangs, the massive retaliations after 1949 against alleged supporters of the Dutch, and the insurgency wars in various regions that reflected the lack of national unity after independence.⁵⁸

Gunawan, 'Jagoan dalam revolusi kita' [Fighters in our revolution], *Prisma* 10, 41-50, and 'Dunia grayak dan revolusi lokal' [Criminal gangs and the local revolution], in, *Revolusi nasional di tingkat lokal* [National revolution at the local level], (Jakarta, 1989), Ongkokham, 'The inscrutable and the paranoid; an investigation into the sources of the Brotodiningrat Affair' in, R. McVey (ed.), *Southeast Asian transitions: Approaches through social history* (New Haven, 1978); S. Kartodirdjo, *Revolution in Surakarta, 1945–1949; a case study of city and village in the Indonesian revolution* (Ph D. thesis 1982, Australian National University); L.S. Budi, 'Permasalahan sosial perkotaan pada periode revolusi; Kriminalitas di Yogyakarta, 1947–1948' [Urban social issues during the revolution; Crime in Yogyakarta, 1947-1948], *Lembaran Sejarah* 1,2, 1997.

⁵⁶ A.H. Nasution, *Fundamentals of guerrilla warfare*, p.188.

⁵⁷ F. van der Veen, 'Het optreden van de Nederlandse en de republikeinse strijdkrachten, 17 augustus 1945–15 augustus 1949' [The action of the Dutch and republican armed forces], appendix II in L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, p.1113. The source of Mangunwijaya's anecdote is a historical account by a retired war veteran, lieutenant-general Van der Veen, who was a fierce opponent of the term 'war crimes' when referring to excessive Dutch violence.

⁵⁸ On the subject of violence among Indonesians during the revolution see note 55. The matter of retaliation against Indonesians after 1949 is still taboo in Indonesia and is completely unknown territory for scholars. According to the Indonesianist W.H. Frederick, the reprisals began soon after the ceasefire of August 1949 because certain Indonesian power groups wanted to be sure that only whole-hearted nationalists gained positions of authority. He will deal with this topic in a forthcoming study. For an overview of the various

But how fair is it to criticize the historical tradition of a country that to this very day has not been able to convince all its inhabitants that they belong together? Although there has always been a small group of Indonesian historians who try to maintain the standards of scientific historical research⁵⁹, we should take into consideration the specific function of history in a post colonial society. The French historian Benjamin Stora has pointed to a similar functional relationship in Algeria between nation building, glorifying heroes of the independence struggle and the distortion of history.⁶⁰ But if the ‘usefulness’ of narratives were a criterion for the need to articulate them, this would mean that suppression from above and self-censorship out of discomfiture are not the only elements that account for the silence on these issues.

Surprisingly enough there is also a spiritual element that is said to influence the appreciation of history and that is related to Javanese culture. The Dutch-American scholar, Frances Gouda, has observed that in the eyes of many Indonesians, and of the Javanese in particular, history is not useful for its own sake. It provides a key to understanding the behaviour of ancestors in the near or distant past who are considered to be able to exert power on their descendants. Thus the importance of history lies in its prophetic potential. She considers the dual meaning of the Javanese verb *méngeti* – meaning both ‘this writing of history’ and ‘to prophesy’ – as a clear illustration of this cultural trait.⁶¹ If this is the predominant interpretation of history, no wonder the experiences of illiterate villagers are considered irrelevant, even by themselves. But other scholars, such as Mary Zurbuchen, emphasize the dangers that are connected to making private memory public in a society such as Indonesia. However, as it is a society in rapid transition, its appreciation of historical sources will probably shift too.⁶²

Coming to terms with the war: the first steps

The Dutch too cherished their war heroes, yet in the fifties this category consisted only of men and women who had resisted German occupation between 1940 and 1945. By neglecting the

regional insurgency conflicts after 1949, see M.C. Ricklefs, *Modern Indonesia since 1200*, (Pelgrave, U.S., 1981).

⁵⁹ Y.B. Prakarsa, ‘Penguasa Orde Baru dan sejarah pada 1980an: Pembicaraan dalam beberapa makalah, Seminar Sejarah Nasional III–V’ S1/BA thesis Gadjah Mada University, 1994 [The power of the New Order and history in the 1980’s, discussed in a number of papers, Seminar on National History III–V’ S1], quoted in, G. van Klinken, ‘The Battle for History after Suharto’, in, M.S. Zurbuchen (ed.), *Beginning to remember*, p.236. Van Klinken draws on Prakarsa’s assessment that protests among Indonesian scholars against the influence of the state in the realm of history are limited to a few individuals. An exception is the historian Taufik Abdullah, but as most scholars and educators are dependent on the authoritarian state there is not much room for dissent and discussion.

⁶⁰ Benjamin Stora, ‘Aux bancs del’histoire officielle’, *Liberation*, 28-10-2004.

⁶¹ Gouda draws on the work of Nancy Florida, the scholar of Java’s historiographical and literary traditions, who claims that similar cultural practices are part of many other ethnic cultures throughout the Indonesian archipelago. See Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the past, inscribing the future: history as prophesy in colonial Java* (Durham, 1995) pp.396–397, in: Frances Gouda, ‘The unbearable lightness of memory: fragmentations of cultural memory and recycling the Dutch colonial past’, lecture at the summer institute of the Fulbright Centre Netherlands, Amsterdam, 10-6-2004.

⁶² M.S. Zurbuchen, ‘Historical memory in contemporary Indonesia’, in, M.S. Zurbuchen (ed.), *Beginning to remember*, p.16.

war veterans of the Indies⁶³ and focusing on the bravery and perseverance of a relatively small group of resistance fighters, Dutch society was able to cherish the illusion of massive resistance to Nazi-occupation.⁶⁴

Consequently the state's policy with regard to the commemoration of war was to create a sense of national unity. The metaphor of a small and innocent country that had survived German occupation was far more attractive than the reality of a colonial power which had lost a former territory. This was probably the reason why the government initially excluded the Indies veterans from the National Monument in Amsterdam, which was officially unveiled in 1956. Subsequently the *Veteranen Legioen Nederland* (Dutch Veterans Legion)⁶⁵ took the initiative of organising an alternative commemoration at the same monument, but on a different date. Only from 1962 on – the year of the transfer of the last Dutch Asian colony, New Guinea, to the United Nations – did the official national commemoration on May 4 include the Indies veterans, though in a very cautious way. The monument honoured 'all who since May 1940 have fallen', leaving out any reference to the specific circumstances of the Indies veterans.⁶⁶ The collective experiences of World War II were expressed in commemorations at the national level that strengthened the sense of unity, together with monuments at the local level that could be connected to specific sites and events. In comparison the shameful 'war of nerves' served no purpose, left no traces in the landscape and therefore remained a repressed chapter of Dutch history.

But as in many other countries, the 1960s saw a new questioning spirit emerge that inspired Dutch journalists to tackle more sensitive topics. With the awe for authority diminishing, the public was confronted with issues such as the extremely high percentage of deported Dutch Jews, homosexuality, abortion and the colonial war of 1945–1949.⁶⁷ Television enabled journalists to reach a wider public in ways that appealed more directly and profoundly to their emotions than written texts could. This was exactly the effect of the public confession made by veteran Joop Hueting in a leftist current affairs program in 1969 regarding war crimes. He said:

⁶³ The term 'veterans of the Indies' refers to all Dutch military personnel deployed by the Dutch government between 1945 and 1949 in the war in Indonesia. 120,000 KL servicemen were transported from the Netherlands to Indonesia from 1946 onwards. 31,000 men of the Royal Netherlands Indies Army (KNIL) and 3,000 Royal Marines (KNIL) – both groups of Dutch nationality - were already in the Netherlands Indies/Indonesia when the independence struggle started in 1945. Belonging to the upper layers of colonial hierarchy, many of them of mixed blood, these groups had been interned in camps after the Japanese invasion of the Netherlands Indies in March 1942. After their liberation they had to enlist in the KNIL immediately to fight against the Indonesian independence movement. Besides white and Eurasian recruits with the Dutch nationality, the KNIL recruited many indigenous soldiers in the lower ranks. See: J. Hoffenaar and B. Schoenmaker, *Met de blik naar het oosten*, p.39.

⁶⁴ The Dutch historian De Jong estimated that during WWII some 45,000 people were active in the resistance across a population of about 9 million people between 1940 and 1950, Centraal Bureau Statistiek [Central Office of Statistics], L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, pp.744–746.

⁶⁵ This organization presented itself as the mouthpiece of the Indies veterans, yet it only represented a small minority of them. Its markedly right wing and militant persuasions discouraged many veterans from joining the VLN and forming an influential interest group.

⁶⁶ E. Locher-Scholten, 'From urn to monument: Dutch memories of the Second World War in the Pacific', lecture delivered at the conference 'Memory and the Second World War in international and comparative perspective', Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie [Netherlands Institute for War Documentation], April 1995.

⁶⁷ H. Righthart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig, geschiedenis van een generatieconflict* [The endless sixties, history of a generation gap] (Amsterdam, 1995).

*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.*⁶⁸

Hueting's disclosures unleashed a vast range of public confessions by other veterans in the following days.⁶⁹ But the diversity of the reactions illustrated the heterogeneity of the war experiences: relief, praise, insults and outrage, every sentiment was represented. There was no way the 885 people who reacted could have reached a consensus on one interpretation of this war.⁷⁰ Veterans who dismissed the allegations claimed they were victims of the system, of short-sighted political leaders and of Indonesian criminal gangs that looted and killed under the pretext of fighting for independence.⁷¹

These were exactly the elements that made the Dutch government realize it had to react cautiously to the public confessions. An inquiry was unavoidable, but the form of the report, the choice of the sources and of the editors could minimize the political impact of the outcome. In fact, the commissioned government report was only based on government records and contained just a fraction of what had really transpired during the Indonesian struggle. Essential to neutralizing the issue was the government's decision to refer to the violence as 'excesses' instead of as war crimes. This suggested that it was not a question of concerted political or military policy, but instead a matter of individuals who had lost their sense of human decency and gone astray.⁷² Prime Minister De Jong's efforts to promptly disassociate the matter from its political and judicial implications was successful. With the exception of a small left-wing minority, parliament and public opinion were satisfied and did not press the government to take painful measures against Indies veterans or former political and military leaders.⁷³

Another important motive for not insisting upon more thorough research was surprisingly enough related to the former enemy. After years of hostility, the regime change from the politically unpredictable Sukarno to the anti-communist Suharto in 1965, had offered the Dutch government the chance to re-establish political relations between the Netherlands and

⁶⁸ *Nederlandsch Indië 1945/Indonesië 1945/Achter het Nieuws 1969*. Transcription of the VARA [Vereniging Arbeiders Radio Amateurs, a Dutch left wing broadcasting company] broadcastings on January 17, 25 and 27 1969 (Hilversum, 1969).

⁶⁹ The editors of the program *Achter het nieuws* [Behind the news] received 885 letters in January 1969, of which 316 were from veterans. In the following month the media-scholars Stam and Manschot monitored the general public's reaction to the broadcasts through the ratings and an analysis of editorial texts in the press. L. Stam and B. Manschot, 'De Hueting-affaire', *Massacommunicatie*, vol.1, n.1 (1972).

⁷⁰ I have analyzed the content of all the letters written by veterans. Of these 316 letters, 27% were positive and 73% were negative about the broadcasts. Of the 27% positive reactions, 59% of those letters contain a description of a violent act perceived as a war crime. The most frequently mentioned violent act is the execution of Indonesians after their interrogation. S. Scagliola, 'War crimes on screen; reactions by Dutch veterans of the decolonization war 1945–1949', paper delivered at the conference 'Decolonisation, loyalties and nations; a history of diminishing choices', IIAS/NIOD/Maison Descartes, Amsterdam Nov 30 –Dec 1 2001.

⁷¹ Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*, pp.302–317.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp.141–143

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.158–170

Indonesia. A thorough investigation into the topic of war crimes would have put an important economic interest for both countries at risk. Shedding light on Indonesian excesses, would have meant compromising important Indonesian political figures who had been cherished as war heroes in Indonesia since independence.⁷⁴ It was clearly of mutual interest to the Dutch and Indonesian governments to stick to the ‘silence and myth’ strategy.

In Indonesia, after General Suharto’s coup in 1965, the influence of the army on government authorities had increased considerably. As we have seen, historical accounts written in this period again emphasized the role of the military as protectors of the Indonesian people, a position that has its origins in the supposedly leading role of the military during the revolution of 1945–1949.⁷⁵ So, strangely enough, in the victorious country the historical truth about violence during the struggle remained unarticulated because of the continuing dominance of the military, whilst in the defeated country silence was preserved by the veterans’ sense of guilt, powerlessness and embarrassment.

Coming to terms with the war: the democratisation of history

After years of relative silence a fierce controversy arose in 1987 when a draft chapter from Professor Lou de Jong’s new book with the title ‘Dutch war crimes’ was leaked to the press. The Indies veterans were outraged by De Jong’s representation of the Dutch military as perpetrators, especially as he was considered the most prominent Dutch historian of the Second World War.⁷⁶ But in comparison to the controversy of 1969, this time the veterans displayed a stronger sense of self awareness.

This was partly the result of the popularization of history that had made topics like World War II and the colonial war accessible to a broad public through television series and videos. Journalists, and especially filmmakers, had become interested in the war experiences of veterans and made up for the lack of interest of historians.⁷⁷ Moreover due to the growing interest in the issue of human rights, historical topics that dealt with violence were increasingly viewed from a moral perspective. This combination of moral concern, interest in personal histories and deconstruction of national history initiated a process of democratization

⁷⁴ I have compared the published text of the government report on ‘excesses’ in 1969, the so called *Excessennota*, with the first draft of the report. This shows that Prime Minister Piet de Jong, who edited the text, changed paragraphs containing: 1. sensitive material concerning the Indonesian government, 2. the judicial aspects of prosecution, 3. remarks that the report was based on incomplete data. Concept *Excessennota*, map 26, 30–31, archief coördinatiecommissie ’45–’50. Ministerie van Algemene Zaken [Draft report on excesses, folder 26, 30-31, archives of the co-ordinating committee ’45-’50. Home office]

⁷⁵ Klooster, *Indonesiers schrijven hun geschiedenis*, pp.133, 134. An influential military historian is N. Notosusanto, *Some effects of the guerrilla on armed forces and security in Indonesia, 1948–1949* (Jakarta, 1971).

⁷⁶ I have analyzed and compared the censored draft text with the final published text of the paragraph. L. de Jong, draft paragraph, ‘Oorlogsmisdrijven’, Hueting collection ; L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Epiloog, 987-1034. For a description of the controversy surrounding De Jong’s disputed chapter see, P. Romijn, ‘Myth and understanding: recent controversy about Dutch historiography on the Netherlands-Indonesian conflict’ in Robert S. Kirsner (ed.) *The Low Countries and beyond* (London, 1993), p.222.

⁷⁷ Examples of tv series and documentaries: H. Jacobs and J. Roelants, *Indisch ABC. Een documentaire over historie en samenleving in Nederland-Indië-Indonesië*, VARA,1970, [Indies ABC. A documentary on the history and society of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia]; J. Bodriesz and Gerard Soeteman, *Ons Indie voor de Indonesier; de oorlog, de chaos, de vrijheid*, NOS, 1984 [Our Indies for the Indonesians; war, chaos, freedom]; H. Wigbold, *de kampong staat in brand, Nederlandse militairen in Indië,1945–1949*, RVU,1989 [The kampong is on fire, Dutch military in the East Indies 1945–1949].

of history. Gradually the war of the generals turned into the war of the soldiers.⁷⁸

At the same time, this process gave way to the development of a 'victim culture' in which the veterans claimed they had been traumatized by their Indonesian experience. In fact, a typical feature of this era was the institutionalized involvement of relief-organizations. From the mid-eighties on, the telephone number of a psychological aid-organization would appear on the screen after a documentary about a particular subject had been broadcast. The veterans repeatedly made appeals to the state, which from the beginning of the 1980s had been willing to grant psychological support to war victims who had been in German concentration camps and Japanese internment camps in Indonesia.⁷⁹

The fierceness of the controversy with Lou de Jong in 1987 and the persistent interest up to this day in the veterans' cause, are strongly related to this trend of 'psychologizing' the war. By presenting themselves as victims of a bad policy the veterans finally succeeded in getting political and public attention for their cause. In 1988, an official monument was unveiled for Indies veterans at Roermond in the southern province of Limburg, which commemorated 'All who have made the greatest sacrifice that can be demanded from a soldier'. Though the initiative came from a private local association, government authorities are involved in the yearly commemoration. At the same time, a wide range of individual experiences are now shared with the general public through personal memoirs. From a silenced group, the veterans have evolved into active consumers and producers of histories that, however romanticized – and, perhaps biased they may be – mirror the diversity of their experiences in a more accurate way than professional accounts. By using history as a tool for self-assertion Dutch veterans have finally managed to give voice to their fragmented war memories.

In Indonesia the political changes since the resignation of Suharto in May 1998 have affected history as well. With human rights ideology slowly becoming more important, local ethnic and religious loyalties are gaining ground at the expense of national unity.⁸⁰ In fact, Van Klinken observes the emergence of several historiographical streams in post-New Order Indonesia: societal or populist historiographies based on Islamic or leftist ideology; ethno-nationalist historiographies in sub-national regions written by dissenting elites aspiring to power; and a renewed interest in local histories. The latter connect most closely to people's everyday lives and their experiences in the past.

However, van Klinken concludes that these histories differ from the nationalist martial model in subject, but hardly in form.⁸¹ The problem is that historical myth-making works, whatever ends it is directed towards. So in terms of historical accuracy the alternatives to the nationalist historiography of the Suharto-era don't seem to be an improvement. Yet the media in Indonesia is freer now. A striking example is how the media coverage of certain historical events, strongly differing from 'official' (*resmi*) history, compelled the Education Department to issue a guide for teachers in 1999 on how to cope with these

⁷⁸ Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*, pp.351, 362.

⁷⁹ The development of a victim culture in the Netherlands with regard to war trauma is described in: J. Withuis, *Erkenning, van oorlogstrauma naar klaagcultuur* [Recognition, from war trauma to a culture of complaint] (Amsterdam, 2002).

⁸⁰ H. Schulte Nordholt, 'Renegotiating boundaries, access, agency and identity in post-Suharto Indonesia', in, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* [Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania], 159-4 (2003), pp.550–589.

⁸¹ G. van Klinken, 'The battle for history after Suharto', in: M.S. Zurbuchen (ed.), *Beginning to remember*, pp.237, 244, 248, 254.

discrepancies.⁸² The nationalist history of the revolution however, remains relatively unquestioned. Criticism of how this chapter of history was used for ideological purposes is limited to Suharto's own abuses in the sense that he overemphasized his heroic role during the revolution.⁸³ Yet these are important first steps, as they make people aware of the fact that what they have learned at school can be based on a lie.

The strongest challenge to the existing paradigm will probably come from a younger generation of historians and anthropologists who have already taken the initiative of collecting life histories at the micro-level.⁸⁴ This recent, but still modest, increase of subaltern awareness shows the emergence of personal memory as a touchstone for a new history.⁸⁵ Although mainly focused on recent history, it will, in the long run, hopefully also broaden historical knowledge of the revolutionary period. Individual accounts by villagers may yield insights into the ways in which they engaged in pragmatic survival strategies in order to deal with pressure from both the Dutch and Indonesian military⁸⁶.

One must consider though that young Indonesian historians understandably give priority to another skeleton in the closet: the mass-murders in 1965–1966 by the Suharto-regime of communists and of people suspected of having communist sympathies.⁸⁷ This massive violence by Indonesians against Indonesians ranks higher on the scale of human suffering and has probably overshadowed the memory of violence during the revolution of 1945–1949.⁸⁸

⁸² Ibid. p.242. This project was coordinated by the departmental historian Anhar Gonggong, a protégé of Nugroho Notosusanto, and illustrates the lack of willingness for fundamental change in the political and cultural establishment of the post-Suharto period.

⁸³ One of the few historians in Indonesia who criticizes the use of history for ideological purposes is Bambang Purwanto. In his article 'Reality and myth in contemporary Indonesian history', he describes two events in Indonesian history that have been passed down in such a way as to emphasize the heroic role of former president Suharto. Although Purwanto stresses that historians should describe social processes instead of glorifying individuals, he limits his analysis of myth to the way in which Suharto reinterpreted events and does not question the overall representation of the independence war, see *Humaniora*, vol.XIII, n.2, (2001) pp.111–121.

⁸⁴ Both Frederick and Purwanto conclude that there is little data on the way the revolution affected relationships within villages. Frederick states that the commitment of villagers has tended to be romanticized by Indonesian intellectuals. He bases his extensive analysis of violence in rural areas on a vast number of interrogation reports of captured Indonesians that are available in the archives of the Dutch Ministry of Defense. Of course, as sources from the Dutch authorities, this material must be treated with caution. Yet the reports are probably the only extensive contemporary sources concerning the use of violence at that level of society. Purwanto points to differences in the memories of the struggle for independence between the national and local level. The most striking example is discussed in an interview with a villager from Bantul, who refers to a man who is represented as a hero in national history, but whom the people of Bantul remember as a thief and a robber. See Bambang Purwanto and Mutiah Amini, 'Violence in a sacred city: Kotagede of Yogyakarta in the early revolution', paper presented at the conference 'Changing regimes and shifting loyalties: identity and violence in the early revolution of Indonesia', Netherlands Institute of War Documentation, June 25–27 2003.

⁸⁵ M.S. Zurbuchen, 'Historical memory in contemporary Indonesia', in: M.S. Zurbuchen (ed.), *Beginning to remember*, p.16.

⁸⁶ Frederick, 'Shadows of an unseen hand', p.162.

⁸⁷ R. Cribb (ed.) *The Indonesian killings of 1965–1966; studies from Java and Bali* (Victoria, 1990).

⁸⁸ Robert Goodfellow, 'Forgetting what it was to remember the Indonesian killings of 1965–1966', in: K. Christie and R. Cribb (ed.), *Historical injustice and democratic transition in eastern Asia and northern Europe: ghosts at the table of democracy* (London, 2002). See in the same volume, Klaus H. Schreiner-Brauch, 'Remembering and forgetting at "Lubang Buaya": the "coup" of 1965 in contemporary Indonesian historical perceptions and public commemorations', Ibrahim Isa, Reza Muharam and Siswa Santoso (eds),

Conclusion

What can we say about the way the former enemies Indonesia and the Netherlands have dealt with their war memoirs? How have they coped with feelings of shame and guilt, with the lack of sites of memory, with the incoherence of experiences and the problematic categorization of victims and perpetrators?

This analysis has shown that the troublesome remembrance of this war cannot be explained merely by the nature of unconventional warfare. The Dutch and Indonesian governments' current political concerns, and the role and function of history and the media, are just as influential. In Indonesia the uneasy truth about Indonesian violence against Indonesians had to be repressed for the sake of national unity. Besides repression from the state, self censorship and the traditional aspect of history play a role. In the Netherlands, the possible prosecution of military personnel for war crimes in 1969 would have damaged the reputation of former political and military leaders and would have put the newly established relationship with the Suharto regime at risk. Nevertheless, the changes in the Netherlands in the past decades, and in Indonesia in the last few years, suggest that representations that do justice to the ambiguity of a guerrilla war are at hand.

In the Netherlands the deconstruction of national history, the memory boom and the appeal of the victim-culture have created a broad range of modes of remembrance that match the diversity of experiences and offer public recognition. Traumatized veterans can get support from specialized mental health institutions which have accepted the fact that this group may also include 'perpetrators'. A national monument in Roermond has been created. Veterans who can afford the journey undertake reconciliation trips to Indonesia, have drinks with their former enemies and return home with a clearer conscience. As there is no longer the constraint of an official version of the conflict, a story about Dutch heroism and perseverance doesn't necessarily have to exclude a contrasting and less popular story about mass-execution and torture by Dutch soldiers.

Yet the problem remains that these kinds of stories are still scarce. Some veterans have spoken out in documentaries and personal documents⁸⁹, some historians have studied this issue,⁹⁰ but the image of the Indies veteran as a victim of bad policy and of treacherous war tactics prevails.

No attention has been paid so far to the interrogation methods of the colonial army (KNIL), who dominated the intelligence service, nor has there been any discussion of the punitive expeditions by Dutch Special Forces or the bombardments by the Dutch Air Force. That the Dutch military's superior strength must have been reflected in a high

The concealed history of Indonesia: an untold story of Indonesia's killing fields; a compilation of recent concerns and appeals (Amsterdam, 2004).

⁸⁹ A few have tried to press the government to apologise to the Indonesian people for the colonial war of 1945–1949. For an oral account on the experiences of a veteran with strong feelings of guilt, see *Holland's black page; the best of times, the worst of times: war and memory*, a radio-documentary by Dheera Sujana, May 2004, http://war_forgiveness.soundprint.org/HollandEssay.php

⁹⁰ Besides Van Doorn and Hendrix's 'Ontsporing van geweld', W. IJzereef has written a book on the counter-insurgency attacks and mass executions of the Dutch Special Forces under the command of Captain Raymond 'Turk' Westerling in South Sulawesi in 1947, see, W. IJzereef, *De Zuid-Celebesaffaire. Kapitein Westerling en de standrechtelijke executies* [The South-Celebes affair. Captain Westerling and the summary executions], (Dieren, Netherlands, 1984). The historian Lou De Jong has also dealt with the issue.

number of civilian casualties remains an unarticulated issue. This suggests that the democratisation of history has not yet offered a complete solution for what I have claimed to be the essential feature of unconventional warfare: the problematic categorisation of victims and perpetrators.

The reason for this is very prosaic: there is no interest group sufficiently motivated to tackle the subject of Dutch war crimes. The people that might have such an interest – Indonesian villagers and former resistance fighters – live far away and are concerned with other matters. Many of them have complex memories of their own countrymen as perpetrators also. Unlike the Dutch veterans, they have not demanded the public space to articulate and share their experiences. If they do so within the lifespan of the last Indies veterans, some old Dutch men may be confronted with testimonies of torture and execution in the near future.⁹¹

In the end, three questions are fundamental to gain a clear picture of the dynamics of remembrance: who gets the opportunity to articulate and diffuse their war experiences? Which set of experiences acquire official status? And finally, how does the historical culture influence the need to articulate people's war experiences?

Anticipating the remembrance of our contemporary 'wars on terror', it is conceivable that in the future the process of the democratisation of history – through the media, the internet and the social agency of interest groups – in combination with dissension about the original purpose of a war, will lead to the de-nationalisation of the remembrance of warfare. Fundamental changes in the nature of warfare, together with an increasing say from the populace in what is worth commemorating, will make the use of war and its remembrance increasingly difficult for the task of forging national unity.

⁹¹ Former General Aussaresses of the French-Algerian war launched a scandal in 2000 by publicly stating that he used torture as a means of obtaining intelligence from Algerian prisoners of war. See Général Aussaresses, *Services Spéciaux, Algérie 1955–1957* (Perrin, 2001).