IMPERIAL WARFARE AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

The Aceh War in a new context

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1. Introduction

In March 1873, the Dutch colonial government issued an ultimatum to the Sultan of Aceh demanding his submission to Dutch authority. The Sultan refused. This diplomatic exchange led to the first military expedition to Aceh, which ushered in a period of forty years, by some accounts even seventy years[1] of intermittent warfare between the Dutch and the multitude of militias in Aceh. The reason why the plural militias will be used in this thesis is because there was no centralised resistance against the KNIL. Resistance against the KNIL was organised on a local basis. This was due to the fact that the power of the Acehan sultanate had broken down and power was wielded by local religious and feudal lords.[2] The official casus belli for the Dutch government was to stop the piracy undertaken from Aceh in the Straights of Malaya. The war has become known for the copious amounts of violence used by the Royal Dutch Indian Army (KNIL). One of the Dutch commanders, General J.B. van Heutsz, has garnered much damning praise as the 'Butcher of Aceh', while others referred to him as the 'Pacifier of Aceh'. This controversial legacy continued after his death, when in 1935 the Van Heutsz memorial was erected in Amsterdam there were heated debates whether or not van Heutsz deserved a monument. Only quite recently has the monument been rededicated as the *Monument Indië-Nederland*.

Aceh was by no means the first, or the last colonial war fought by the Dutch in Asia. After 1795, the Dutch government took control of the former VOC possessions and started to expand its influence across the archipelago in the following hundred years. The islands of Java, Bali, Sumatra, Lombok, the Moluccas, Celebes were all forced under Dutch control, more often than not after a series of protracted and bloody wars. Aceh was actually a relative late comer to these new conquests. Situated on the northern tip of Sumatra it was declared a neutral zone between British controlled Malaya, and Dutch controlled Sumatra under the *Straights Settlement* of 1824.[3] The treaty also stipulated that while Aceh was a neutral zone, the Dutch colonial government was responsible for keeping the piracy in that area in check.

This situation left much to be desired. First, how can neutrality be respected, while keeping piracy in a neutral area in check? What kind of military action is required? Thirdly, with which party should one treat to stop piracy in a certain area? The recent experiences of anti-piracy operations around the Horn of Africa still show that these matters continue to plague

[1] Paul van 't Veer, *De Atjeh Oorlog* (Amsterdam; De Arbeiderspers 1969).
[2] Van 't Veer, *Atjeh-Oorlog*, 19.
[3] J.W.F. Herfkens, *Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis: De Atjeh-oorlog van 1873-1896* (Breda 1905), 1-5.

governments. The Dutch and British governments came up with a solution called the *Sumatra Treatise* of 1872, which saw the Dutch relinquish control of Elmina in Ghana, in return for getting a free hand in Aceh.[4] What followed were forty years of intermittent warfare, wherein often no quarter was asked or given by all combatants. The war offered many people to rise to prominence. Many Acehan resistance leaders are still revered as freedom fighters, Dutch soldiers saw service in the colonial army as quick path to rise through the ranks, and for many it was. Van Heutsz was arguably the most famous, or infamous depending on one's viewpoint, but also men like Jan Hendrik Colijn, who would become a board member of the Dutch Royal Petroleum company and would later serve as a minister and prime minister. Both Colijn and van Heutsz came from humble background and became prominent members of Dutch and colonial high society.[5]

Soldiers were not the only ones who profited from the Aceh War, the successor of the VOC, the Dutch Trading Company (NHM), sought to develop the Acehan economy, and relied heavily on their connections with the government, the colonial army, and the colonial administration to secure their holdings in Aceh. Many of the men who became Minister of Colonial Affairs were either former directors of the NHM or closely affiliated with the company.[6] Investing in mining, plantations, infrastructure, and trade, the NHM had a vested interest in Dutch military success in Aceh. One of van Heutsz' successors, Lieutenant-Colonel Frits van Daalen undertook a punitive expedition into Gajo and Batak in 1904 to bring it under Dutch control, but also according to one source, to stop raiding parties in those areas, which were harassing NHM properties.[7] The expedition into Gajo and Batak also gained a reputation for being particularly brutal, in a colonial war already known for its brutality, with over half of the Acehan casualties being non-combatants.

The topic of colonial mass violence has gathered the interest of historians in recent years. While a large part of that literature is mostly concerned with either the British or French colonial empires. The brutal tactics used by Field Marshall Thomas Bugeaud in Algeria, the *Razzia*, have been a topic of very particular interest for colonial historians.[8] While most of the literature describes the *Système Bugeaud* as a military operational concept, the effects of these tactics have also received a fair share of attention, particularly the destructive effects of the

[4] Herfkens, *Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis*, 1-5.
[5] Van 't Veer, *De Atjeh Oorlog*, 217-219.
[6] *https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp1wzq/periode_1872_1888_kiesrecht_en*.
[7] R. Broersma, *Atjeh: Als Land Voor Handel en Bedrijf* (Utrecht 1925), 6-7.
[8] Thomas Rid, 'Razzia: A Turning Point in Modern Strategy', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21.4 (2009), 617–35; Thomas Rid, 'The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33.5 (2010), 727–58.

Razzia on the civilian population. These kind of scorched earth tactics have been used extensively in other colonial conflicts. The English soldier and writer, Major Charles Edward Callwell, in his seminal work, *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice*, sees these kinds of approaches as being the only proper course of action to take considering the fact that regular, or 'civilised' forces are up against the 'semi-'or 'uncivilised' who would only understand force.[9] Another group of historians have chosen to focus their efforts on the Dutch colonial empire in Asia. Authors like Henk Schulte Nordholt, Petra Groen, Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, Roel Frakking, Jaap de Moor, and others have written extensively about the Dutch colonial empire and the violence that was part and parcel of it.[10] What is less extensively covered is the economic side of modern imperialism, and how it interacted with the military component in Asia, unlike European Imperialism in Africa.

One of the more interesting articles on how commercial interests influenced policy in European empires was written by Benoit Daviron titled 'Mobilizing labour in African agriculture: the role of the International Colonial Institute in the elaboration of a standard of colonial administration, 1895–1930'.[11] One relevant aspect Daviron highlights is the way in which Dutch colonial policy influenced other colonial powers in regards to organising labour and encouraging self-sufficiency in their respective empires, or as Daviron puts it,

"*the Dutch experience in Indonesia, which was presented as a model to be duplicated, and provided a rationale for public intervention, which was portrayed as essential to the development of 'native' agriculture.*"[12]

This is relevant to consider, because the way in which Dutch imperialism is described by predominantly Dutch historians, is that their work focuses in large part on it being in a vacuum. Daviron puts forward the arguably obvious point that this was far from the case. This is not to say that historians like Jeroen Touwen and J. Thomas Lindblad should be disregarded. Their

[9] Charles Edward Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practices* (Watchmaker Publishing 2010), 14-21.
[10] Petra Groen, 'Colonial Warfare and Military Ethics in the Netherlands East Indies, 1816–1941', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 14.3–4 (2012), 277–96; Roel Frakking, '"Gathered on the Point of a Bayonet": The Negara Pasundan and the Colonial Defence of Indonesia, 1946-50', *International History Review*, 39.1 (2017), 30–47; Roel Frakking, '"Who Wants to Cover Everything, Covers Nothing": The Organization of Indigenous Security Forces in Indonesia, 1945–50', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 14.3–4 (2012), 337–58; Emmanuel Kreike, 'Genocide in the Kampongs? Dutch Nineteenth Century Colonial Warfare in Aceh, Sumatra', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 14.3–4 (2012), 297–315; Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, 'The Use and Abuse of the "Dutch Approach" to Counter-Insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 36.6 (2013), 867–97.
[11] Benoit Daviron, 'Mobilizing labour in African agriculture: the role of the International Colonial Institute in the elaboration of a standard of colonial administration, 1895–1930' in *Journal of Global History* (2010) 5, 479-501.
[12] Daviron, 'Mobilizing labour in African agriculture', 496.

academic work has provided valuable insights into the economic aspects of Dutch imperialism in Indonesia. Touwen's work on trade and economic development in Indonesia provide relevant points regarding the output and trading networks during the colonial times.[13] The same goes for Lindblad's work on the economic aspects of Dutch expansion in Indonesia.[14] In this article a more comprehensive approach to Dutch Imperialism is convincingly provided, wherein the intermingling of commercial and governmental actors is highlighted.

One other way to look at the economic aspects of the Aceh Way by historians is highlighted in an article by Emmanuel Kreike[15] where he argues that the Aceh War saw tactics used which Kreike describes as environmental warfare, wherein Dutch tactics relied in large part on the destruction agricultural fields, tracts of jungle, and other forms of scorched earth tactics, which led to an indirect genocide of the Acehan people.[16] While Kreike points out relevant issues about colonial warfare, he does overreach in his assessment that the Aceh War resulted in an indirect genocide. The term itself dates from 1944 when it was coined by Raphael Lempkin. Applying the term to a conflict that ended before the adoption of what constituted a genocide seems anachronistic. Secondly, the term genocide implies intent on the part of the perpetrator to destroy a people and culture. While it cannot be denied that the war was harsh and brutal, the goal by either the military commanders, or the political leadership was never to destroy the Acehan people or their culture.

These works are comparatively recent in the scholarly debate around the topic of the Aceh War, the first accounts of the war were the work of former colonial officers who wrote up their account of the war, or they were commissioned by their commanding officers to write official accounts of certain expeditions. The accounts they give are written in a detached style and are also frank in their descriptions about the war. One such work, written by J.C.J Kempees[17], was written about the expedition into the Gajo, Alas, and Batak lands. For modern readers, one of the more difficult parts to read would be the accounts he gives of the casualties for both sides. While the soldiers of the KNIL suffered relatively light casualties, the natives in this mountainous part suffer heavily when kampongs did not surrender outright. Cold hard figures are supplied, after one assault the KNIL soldiers count two hundred eighty-six dead

[13] Jeroen Touwen, *Extremes in the archipelago: Trade and economic development in the Outer Islands of Indonesia, 1900-1942* (KILTV Press 2001).
[14] J. Thomas Lindblad, 'Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870-1914' in *Modern Asian Studies* 23:1 (1989), 1-23.
[15] Kreike, 'Genocide in the Kampongs?'.
[16] Kreike, 'Genocide in the Kampongs?', 299.
[17] J.C.J. Kempees, *De tocht van Overste Van Daalen door de Gajo-, Alas- en Bataklanden: 8 Februari tot 23 Juli 1904* (Amsterdam 1905).

men, women, and children.[18] This frankness is not limited to the rather ghoulish nature of the body count. It is also applied to explaining, or justifying the reasons for this expedition, two non-combatant members of this expedition are of particular interest, one is a *mantri*, or local representative of the director of the National Botanical Gardens who is to survey the local flora. The other is a mining engineer named P.J. Jansen whose job it is to find out if there are practical deposits of ore that can be excavated. In addition to this, the military expedition is also to secure, and expand mountain roads for the purpose of securing an overland connection between the west, and east coast of Aceh, to facilitate transport.

This assertion is backed up the Dutch historian Roelof Broersma in his book on Aceh.[19] In it, he is honest about the economic reasoning behind a number of military expeditions, and also praises the military commanders who carried out these "pacification" operations. While this is arguably difficult to read for modern readers, Broersma and others were products of their time, and saw Dutch domination, both economically and military as the normal order of the world. This can be backed by the fact that even critics of Dutch colonial policy in the Dutch parliament, were on board with the colonial project. The main difference being the way in which policy was implemented.[20]

Despite the heavy colonial tone of these works, they are still a useful tool in any historical assessment of this period. What stands out about these books is their candid and open remarks about motivations, and actions undertaken that appeal most and will bring an added value to the research. Hopefully they will also provide an interesting contrast when working with the archival material.

One of the more 'recent' books on the Aceh War was written by Dutch journalist Paul van 't Veer in 1969. He was one of the first to suggest that the Aceh war never really ended but lingered on until 1942 up until the moment the Japanese invaded.[21] While this work would by current standards not be viewed as 'academic', the narrative tone used in the book is personal, at some points even visceral. This is generally offset by the virtues of the book, van 't Veer manages to keep an open mind towards people like van Heutsz, who is usually seen as the "Butcher of Aceh", but van 't Veer nuances this image, backed up by convincing arguments, which is to his credit. His book is also one of the few publications out there that point out that

[18] Kempees, *De tocht van Overste Van Daalen*, 42.
[19] Roelof Broersma, *Atjeh: Als Land voor Handel en Bedrijf*, 6-7.
[20] *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1896-1897* (17 November 1897). Socialist MP Pieter Jelles Troelstra rails against the influence of big capital as a driving force behind the Aceh War, but remarks that these same interests can be put to good use and help benefit the Acehan people.
[21] Van 't Veer, *Atjeh Oorlog*.

commercial, political, and military interests were often intertwined.

In combination with the KNIL being engaged with several Acehan resistance groups, commercial interests also looked with interest towards Aceh. The ever present NHM was eying the pepper trade, and other commodities. The presence of the NHM in Aceh provides a relevant focal point. The company itself was a strange beast, being both a private company, but also given a certain amount of sovereignty in the Dutch East Indies, such as being able to collect taxes, and which it could possibly expand with collateral given to it by the government if the NHM was asked to help finance a government project. All the while maintaining their independence from government interference.[22] The commercial activities undertaken by the NHM, and other companies during the Aceh War would not have been possible without military protection. This did not always have to be the KNIL, as the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company proved when it paid protection money to one of the Acehan resistance leaders,[23] who proceeded to use that money in his fight against the KNIL.

This episode was the exception however, and the KNIL was used to clear most areas of resistance, to both establish Dutch authority, and make the area safe for economic development. This forces the following question to be asked, was the use of mass violence by the KNIL in the period between 1898 and 1910 in Aceh attributable to economic interests who were eager to develop the Acehan economy? This question is not suggesting that the tactics used by van Heutsz, van Daalen, and others were directly ordered from any company headquarters. This would require a level of high coordination, and that van Heutsz and his successors would be willing to take orders from civilians, at a time when Aceh was a province under direct military rule of the KNIL. Rather, this question is looking at the way in which the punitive raids of the KNIL are viewed from the perspective of the NHM, and its subsidiaries. This was the original intent for this thesis, but during the research and the writing of this thesis, the focus has shifted from the original question as to how state and commercial interests came together in the Dutch East Indies by using Aceh as a focal point. As it turned out during the research and writing phase that there was a continuation of the old company state,[24] but under a new name.

The reason to take this approach is that in the current scholarship of colonial mass violence, the interaction between civilian and military actors is often overlooked or treated separately. While this might be useful to lineate between different historical disciplines, it

[22] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), nummer toegang 2.20.01, inventarisnummer 9.
[23] Van 't Veer, *Atjeh Oorlog*, 217-219.
[24] Philip J. Stern, *The Company State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford 2004).

overlooks an important aspect of modern imperialism, and colonialism in general, chiefly the interconnectedness of commercial and military interests for this endeavour. This process has been described more thoroughly in the case of modern imperialism in Africa. Where the close cooperation between military and commercial actors was widespread, and also the violence that accompanied it.[25] There is literary and archival evidence that points to a link between the two in the case of the Aceh War. In the Year Reports the agents of the NHM send to Amsterdam and Batavia, the drawdown of troop levels in Aceh in 1904 and 1905 are causes for concern. Firstly, a group of consumers are leaving the area, but also because the protection the KNIL offers to agents of the NHM who venture into the interior of Aceh is deemed too important to lose.[26] As mentioned before, the Dutch historian Roelof Broersma also alludes to an interconnectedness of state and commercial interests in his account of his travels across Aceh.[27]

The main difficulty for researching this topic is a probable lack of direct evidence in archival records. But there is way to work around this, by contrasting reports of the NHM with the chronology of the war and gauging the reaction in those reports, a clearer picture about the relation between state and commercial agents might come through, and hopefully new insights on Dutch imperialism in Asia.

The main primary sources for this thesis are the NHM archives located in The Hague in the National Archives. The source material they provide is detailed, like their VOC predecessors they provide meticulous information on the workings, and the activities of the NHM and their agents in the East Indies. There are some problems with their recordkeeping, namely that their manner of reporting is akin to that of a dour accountant only interested in cold facts about yields, trade figures, and surpluses. To answer the main question of this thesis they provide some insights, but do not explain all. Furthermore, finding the proverbial smoking gun, while always a major challenge, proved to be a futile search. What the archival documents did provide was the essential glue for piecing together this thesis, in combination with the secondary literature a picture emerged of the workings of NHM in Aceh, Dutch colonialism in relation to other European colonial powers. In particular the works of Ann Stoler, Lindblad, and Benoit Daviron provided vital insights into researching this thesis.

The outline of this thesis will follow the following structure, chapter one will look at the Aceh War in the context of other colonial wars, and their respective goals. In particular the

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[25] Yonah Seleti, 'The Development of Dependent Capitalism in Portuguese Africa', *Studies in the Economic History of Southern Africa Volume One* ed. Konzascki et.al. (New York 1990), 30-75, 36-38.
[26] *Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), nummer toegang 2.20.01, inventarisnummer 5107.*
[27] Broersma, *Atjeh*, 6-7.

French campaign in Algeria and the Opium Wars will be used as examples. The second chapter will look at the role of the NHM as a driving force for colonial expansion in Aceh, and its impacts on colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies. The third chapter will look the three underpinning C's of colonialism, Command, Control, and Coercion and how this played out during the Aceh War.

2. The Aceh War: A Typical Small War?

2.1 What is a Small War?

To determine if it is possible to frame the Aceh as a "*Small War"* and how it compared to other colonial wars, we first have to determine what a Small War is. The term Small War was popularised by the British military thinker and author, Major Charles E. Callwell. In his book, *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice* he lays out what a Small War is and how it should be waged. The term itself is an interesting one, and it gives a good look into the nineteenth century Europeans engaged in expanding European colonial power in Asia and Africa. Callwell makes this distinction because in his view, wars between European powers lend themselves to be called "*Great War*", because it involves regular armies fighting on a relatively well-defined battlefield. Whereas Small Wars are defined by their lack of these two features.[28]

This distinction is relevant, because it takes the act of war and makes an effort to minimise a non-European opponent. While on the face of it, making a distinction between military operations is not that controversial. In our own time, conducting different military missions is considered integral to current military action. The distinction made by Callwell allows him to assert that European armies can also conduct themselves differently when engaging a non-European foe. When a war between two armies of regular soldiers, the newly created Geneva, and The Hague Conventions, served a legal framework that in ideal circumstances would keep the chaos, and destruction of war in check. Callwell argues that these conventions only applied to nations that were signatory to them, therefore Small Wars have an extra dimension that allows for harsher tactics. Callwell himself describes that one approach would be a 'scorched earth' type of tactic waged against any African of Asian opponent.[29]

Callwell draws inspiration from colonial wars fought in from the 1830's up until 1900. This period provides enough examples of Small Wars, and he draws his own conclusions from them. The most striking of them is that use of indiscriminate violence against native populations during a colonial war or punitive expedition. He also discerns three types of Small Wars, wars of conquest, punitive expeditions and what in modern parlance would be termed counter-insurgency.[30] These three types, while at first glance are given a hard boundary, are nuanced in that a campaign that started out as war of conquest, punitive expedition, or counter-insurgency

[28] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 1-4.
[29] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 14-21.
[30] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 5-8.

can morph into an operation that encompasses all three.[31] This is ascribed to the again the legal distinction that when regular armies fight, at a certain point a ceasefire is announced, after which a peace treaty is signed. Callwell implies that because of a lack of civilisation, African and Asian peoples are not able to do the same when they are engaged in war with European countries.

This is an oversimplification, even for Callwell's own time, European powers often negotiated treaties with native rulers to solidify colonial rule. The Dutch had a document called, *"The Long Declaration*", which was later on condensed into the so-called "*Short Declaration*" which local Sultans, and Rajas signed as the official gesture of submission.[32] The British imperial wars were also concluded with official treaties, like the *Treaty of Waitangi* in 1840 or the settlement of the Anglo-Zulu War. The fact that these treaties were signed by local rulers, did not prevent others local leaders from continuing the fight against a power that invaded their homeland. This was especially the case when a European power was fighting a colonial war in an Islamic country. The French conquest of Algeria, and the Aceh War are good examples of this. In the case of the Aceh War, the Dutch often failed to understand the local intricacies of who exercised formal and real power.

The most relevant observation of Callwell on what a Small War is, and how to fight it, are the prescriptions he makes. The term itself is not meant to qualify such a conflict as a small war, involving limited commitment of men and materials.[33] In many colonial wars, the commitment to a total victory by European powers could be very substantial, especially if there were military setbacks early on in a campaign. Many British and Dutch campaigns were prone to this. The British defeat at Isandlwana was followed by unleashing the industrial might of Britain against the Zulu Empire, where British superior firepower proved a decisive factor in the outcome of the war. Many Dutch campaigns in the Indonesian archipelago saw initial setbacks followed by ruthless military campaigns in an all-out effort to subdue local populations.

A point that Callwell does not fully discuss but is described by Daniel Headrick in his book *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*[34], is the important role of technology in conducting Small Wars. It is possible that the advent of steamships, modern medicine, and firearms were a given when Callwell wrote his book, but

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[31] Idem.
[32] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare and Military Ethics', 287.
[33] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 1-4.
[34] Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York 1981).

these developments were vital in securing European domination. Headrick points this out by citing mainly British examples, though what is actually more relevant is the point Headrick inadvertently makes, his description of the logistical processes behind the advancements in technologies, and the people who controlled those processes are more interesting.[35] One interesting example he gives is how an British shipbuilder, MacGregor Laird, developed the first steamships, through his connections pushed for the adaptation, and implementation of them during the 1830's and 1840's. Even going so far to create his own private colonial policy, parallel to that of the East India Company and the British government.[36]

If we were to make an assessment of what a Small War is, I would offer up the following definition for this thesis. Small Wars are conflicts waged by European powers in Africa and Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which had as their main goal to establish national sovereignty over a foreign land. The conduct and 'success' of these conflicts were made possible on a tactical level, which emphasised brutality. This was supported on a strategic level by a logistical system, supported by private entrepreneurs, that provided European powers with an edge in materials necessary for conducting these types of conflicts.

2.2 Bugeaud and the Bureaux Arabes

The French conquest of Algeria which started in 1830, and by some accounts was never fully completed[37] was arguably one of the first Small Wars waged by European powers. While this conflict did not take place in the period commonly referred to as '*New Imperialism*' it did have a profound influence as model for colonial warfare, and in a number of ways exemplified them.

The French conquest of Algeria was already ten years old by the time Marshall Thomas Bugeaud, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, was appointed to supervise it. Bugeaud, who was both soldier and politician, was a strong advocate for a forceful subjugation of Algeria. French control at the time was limited to urban areas and the surrounding area, while the areas in between were the territory of Algerian militias, under the command of Abd El-Kader.[38] In one of his speeches in the National Assembly, Bugeaud argued that:

[35] Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*, 23-37.
[36] Idem.
[37] Rid, 'Razzia: A Turning Point in Modern Strategy', 621.
[38] Rid, 'Razzia: A Turning Point in Modern Strategy', 619.

"*Gentlemen, you don't make war with philanthropic sentiments. If you want the end, you have to want the means. If there are no other means than those indicated, they have to be used. I would always prefer French interests to an absurd philanthropy for foreigners who behead our wounded soldiers and prisoners of war.*"[39]

This quote posits a similar message that Callwell posed, namely that a harsh opponent requires harsh methods in order to win a war. The methods Bugeaud employed were not new, they were based on the lessons the French army learned during the Vendee and in Spain from during the Revolution and the Napoleonic period. In general, it can be summed up as depriving the local population, and thereby the opponent of their livelihood, while simultaneously rewarding locals who stay loyal. In Algeria this was augmented raids, or Razzias on the local population. Besides these harsh military tactics, Bugeaud also employed the *Bureaux Arabes* which be the proverbial carrot to convince the local population to accept French control.

Bugeaud implemented his plan of both carrot and stick when he assumed command in Algeria. The Razzias that were organised in that period did not primarily focus on attacking the local population directly. Rather Razzias were aimed disrupting livelihoods, burning crops, raiding cattle.[40] In a sense, this can be viewed as an indirect genocide as Kreike argued the Aceh War was. This is not to say that Razzias were bloodless affairs, one of the more infamous ones took place at a place called Dahra on 19 June 1845, where after an initial assault the most civilians fled to a nearby cave, which the French troops sealed off, and a lit a fire and channelled the smoke into the cave, effectively turning it into an oven. The following morning, French soldiers found the corpses of nearly six hundred men, women, and children.

The Razzia alone would not be enough to coalesce the Algerians into accepting French rule, for that purpose the Bureaux Arabes was founded. They were tasked with co-opting the local population. The men in charge were usually young officers who were fluent in Arabic and were mindful of the local customs. They supervised translators, local militia, and local administrators whose task it was to engage with the population and show them the benefits of French civilisation. The local militia forces they recruited were called the *goum,* horsemen who served in policing duties, and assisted regular French troops during Razzias. In this supporting role they proved to be effective, their main drawback was that these units tended to lack discipline and could act ruthlessly.[41]

[39] Rid, 'Razzia', 621.
[40] Rid, 'Razzia', 618-620
[41] Rid, 'Razzia', 625-628.

While the Bureaux Arabes was an institution that did try and had some success in winning the 'hearts and minds' of the local population. The Bureaux Arabes with its staff of interpreters, and local administrators was probably vital in obtaining local intelligence. While the goum could be seen as a success story, but these units were tribal levies, or mercenaries, who would be engaged in Razzias against other tribes. This begs the question of whether the Bureaux Arabes was aware of intertribal rivalries that might entice certain tribes to take up the offer to fight other tribes, this time with external backing?[42]

What does become clear is the French efforts of pacification had a clear objective in Algeria, and that was control. As with most military campaigns the role of the army is one of force. Force to coerce the other into acting against their own interests and opt in to the objectives of their adversary. For the French in Algeria the best way, as they perceived this, to do this was to use the Razzia. By destroying the livelihoods of the local tribes, they implicitly gave them a stark choice. Submit and be saved, continue to resist, and starve. The French army in Algeria took up the words of Bugeaud, that if they wanted the end, they have to want the means as well, and applied them with devastating effect.

The French conquest of Algeria, and the methods employed by Bugeaud particularly, set an example for European colonial powers and their wars in the colonies. The first point that exemplifies this, are the tactics used, chiefly the Razzia. The punitive tactics used by the French found their way into Dutch colonial military doctrine. The tactics employed emphasised the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The protracted wars of colonial conquest have a strange paradox within them. While one side has the advantage of firepower, technology, and finance, like the French in Algeria, the Dutch in Aceh were not able to use these advantages, when often faced with an elusive adversary, and which triggered a use of brutal tactics. What also stands out about the 'French Approach' is using an organisation like the Bureaux Arabes, presenting a soft side of colonial domination. The Dutch were slow to implement this part, only really taking shape when Christiaan Snouck Hourgronje acted as an adviser to the KNIL leadership in Aceh.[43] The economic aspects of pacifying Aceh however, were not primarily organised from any military organisation, but a private company which complicated matters.

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[42] Idem.

[43] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Depot 204 F 15, Collectie 79 J.B. van Heutsz, inventaris nummer 1 'Korte weerlegging van de voornaamste bezwaren door Dr. Snouck Hurgronje aangevoerd tegen mijn stelsel "De Onderwerping van Atjeh"'

2.3 The Opium Wars

The Opium War of 1839 to 1842 is one of those Small Wars whose aftershock rocked the latter part of the nineteenth century. When it was concluded the first of the *Unequal Treaties* was signed, whereby the once mighty Chinese Empire was humbled by what the Qing court saw as Western Barbarians. The war started because of the illicit import of opium from India into China which saw the British East India Company rack up large profits, often bypassing Qing officials. Trivial as it might sound, by the end of the century, European colonial powers, together with the United States and Japan were busy carving up parts of the Chinese Empire. The war heralded the advent of '*Gunboat Diplomacy*' which would come symbolise European, and later on American power projection across the world.[44] At the turn of the twentieth century, this period in Chinese would partly inspire the Chinese Revolution of 1911, and still inspire Chinese foreign policy till this day. The conflict is also a good example of a colonial war where state, and commercial interests coalesced to shape colonial policy for Great Britain and the EIC.

The EIC was almost an anachronism in the 1830's. Where Britain's colonial rivals 'nationalised' the colonial enterprise when it came to use of force. The EIC was still a private military trading company forging an Asian empire on Britain's behalf. As such it is tempting to see the EIC as the prime mover in this conflict. There is merit to this point, Britain's trade deficit with China was such that opium was one of the few goods, next to silver, the Chinese would trade tea for. Chinese efforts to stop this trade formed a direct threat to coffers of the EIC. The EIC was assisted in its martial efforts by the British government in the form of men and materials. In essence the policy of the EIC was not out of the ordinary for the company. During the previous century it expanded its area of control in India, and indirectly also of the British state. The EIC would only be liquidated after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, but by then it had outlasted its Dutch counterpart the VOC by sixty-two years, and just like the VOC, its possessions would be nationalised. Unlike its Dutch counterpart, its commercial activity in the colonies would be taken up by the private entrepreneurs and ventures.

One aspect of the Opium War is the role that technological advances played in colonial expansion. The cliché "*Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim Gun, and they have not*"[45] is what comes to mind. The advent of modern firearms, like breech-loading rifles, bolt-action rifles, and machine guns gave certainly gave an advantage to armies that used them against opponents who relied on spears, swords, and muzzle-loading muskets. Firepower alone, did not

[44] Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 23-37.
[45] Hilaire Belloc, *The Modern Traveller* (1898).

provide the only advantage. The introduction of modern medicine greatly reduced the impact of tropical diseases which plagued European armies fighting in tropical climates. The advent of better transportation, such as trains, and steamships allowed for greater mobility and logistical support than was previously possible.

The effects of these advancements established a new power relation between Europeans, and the rest. During the seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, European expeditions into the interior of Africa and Asia would succumb to malaria, food shortages, and hostile polities which were still powerful enough to repel European invaders. The Opium War was one of the first conflicts that showcased one of those advancements, namely steamships. It is useful to find out as to how and why these inventions came to be adopted, and the people that pushed for their adoption.

The adoption of the steamship happened before the Opium War, as with all first-generation technology, these ships were expensive to run, and maintain, but they did provide a solid advantage of sailing ships, the ability to travel against the currents and the wind. The EIC adopted a number of steamships for commercial purposes for traversing the rivers of India. One British shipbuilder, MacGregor Laird, envisioned that steamships would in time become oceangoing vessels used by navies, and merchant fleets alike. In the years leading up to the Opium War, he used his connections with the EIC, and the British government to covertly greenlight the build of what would become *HMS Nemesis*, which was steamed to India for use in the Opium War.[46]

This example is in a number of ways emblematic for the way in which business interests are an important factor in colonialism. It combines the larger commercial interest of the state, and private commercial interests coming together and affecting European expansion at the expense of the rest. This does not necessarily mean that this was a scheme thought by white men, who had nefarious designs on the world. In the case of MacGregor Laird, his main interest, or concern was that he needed a buyer for his steamships to keep his business afloat. He probably reckoned that getting a contract with either the Royal Navy or the EIC would be the best way to ensure survival.

One aspect that is difficult to ignore is the way in which Callwell describes the Opium Wars, and other Small Wars. As mentioned before the distinction between a Small War and a normal war is the presence of absence of a regular army. Callwell describes China being semi-civilised, thus categorising it between a tribe and a state. Which is a quaint remark to make

[46] Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 23-37.

considering the length and dept of Chinese history. Callwell's main reference point for regular armies is the European model, and countries like Japan that adopted it garner more praise for it.[47] What is interesting to note is that he does speaks with a certain measure of admiration for the Chinese Navy, finding it odd that there is a Chinese navy, but not a European style army.[48] This indicates that the rational rigour he professes during the entire book has a number of racist undertones in it, typical of the time.

2.4 Commerce, War and Empire

"*A conquering state policy is a production policy. It is exerted on both land and people. On land, to expand its reachable and economically valuable area through civil engineering, roads, and railways, drains and irrigation canals, bridges and harbours, fast communications, agronomic surveys, geography, and a land registry. On people, to increase their number and activity by a fair, honest, domestic, and foresighted administration, through a good fiscal system, through education, aid, and public health too, which puts in its hands, along with microbiology and sanitation, powerful means of which our predecessors had no idea, and that are nowhere as promising as in tropical regions.*"[49]

This quote from Jules Harmand' book sums up the belief in the European ideal of what Rudyard Kipling dubbed as the *White Man's Burden*.[50] So what is being put forward here? Firstly, it is indicative of the notion of the *White Man's Burden*, in the end native populations will be better off, because the blessings of European civilisation, and science will benefit all, even the colonised. Secondly, Harmand plainly states that this end result can only be the case if Europeans come to dominate Africa and Asia and be allowed to develop those areas for economic gains.

What were those economic gains in the Dutch East Indies? Lindblad states that the profits from Java accounted for a third of the revenue of the Dutch state. Though they were not the only one's profiting. The NHM, having a virtual monopoly over most agricultural output, also profited in that sense. Although in their case, this was not their only revenue model. In addition to this they also acted on behalf of the colonial government in tax collecting,

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[47] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 22.
[48] Idem.
[49] Jules Harmand, *Domination et colonisation* (Paris 1910), 151.
[50] Rudyard Kipling, *The White Man's Burden* (1899). https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kipling.asp accessed on 18-11-2017.

overseeing trade and acting as de facto customs agents.[51] In addition to this, the logistical train of the KNIL was operated by the NHM, reports sent from their station in Banda Aceh to Amsterdam often lament the fact that KNIL soldiers are being transferred to other parts of the archipelago, leaving them with fewer customers.[52] This did not mean that the NHM were all powerful and all present. As mentioned earlier, local rulers in Aceh, and elsewhere in the archipelago also benefitted from cooperating with the colonial enterprise. They did not profit directly from colonial enterprises, they garnered their profits by receiving a certain percentage of the profits, as was the case for example with the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company.[53]

These enterprises would not have been possible if were not for imported technology, the balance sheets for the Dutch East Indies show a predictable picture, primary products went out, finished products necessary for the development of infrastructure went in.[54] What needs to be kept in mind that these imports did not result in a wholesale industrialisation of the archipelago, or any specific area. For instance, the expedition of Lieutenant Colonel van Daalen into the Gajo, Alas and Batak lands had next to a primary goal of pacification, a secondary goal of building a track on which ox carts to travel. That new road was meant to facilitate overland trade.[55]

To come back to the quote of Harmand, these kind of advancements, aided by technology were to be hallmarks of European expansion. It placates to a sense of superiority over non-European peoples. There is another side to this point, it was not as Harmand puts it that non-Europeans lacked technology or were not able to get it on their own, but they were actively prohibited in acquiring them. Headrick points this out to explain the overwhelming advantage in firepower enjoyed by Europeans.[56] This assertion is also backed up by archival records from the Dutch Colonial Ministry, where a shipment of Beaumont rifles to Aceh arouses suspicions and efforts are made to stop the shipment, lest the rifles fall into the hands of Acehan militias.[57]

This highlights one other aspect of European imperialism, they were aware of what gave them an advantage over an opponent was among other things, firepower. As the KNIL found out at great cost, not only in Aceh, but everywhere in the archipelago, is that when it came to

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[51] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 9.
[52] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 5107.
[53] F.C. Gerretson, *Geschiedenis der Koninklijke Deel 2* (Haarlem: Joh Enschedé 1936), 198.
[54] Adrian Clemens, J. Thomas Lindblad, Jeroen Touwen, *Changing Economy in Indonesia: Regional Patterns in Foreign Trade 1911-1940* (Royal Tropical Institute 1992). 35-38.
[55] Kempees, *De tocht van Overste Van Daalen*, 13-14.
[56] Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 108-111.
[57] Nederlands Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, toegangsnummer 2.05.18, inventaris nummer 764.

morale qualities, like bravery, and endurance, their opponents were more than match for them. Van Heutsz admits as much himself in public correspondence.[58] The real advantage would in an a-symmetrical situation be firepower. Which was used with devastating effect by the KNIL which arguably had an overreliance on using superior firepower.[59] This in part explains the level of violence and brutality which recurring aspects of colonial wars were, especially in regard to the Aceh War. The ruthless efficiency with which it was put to use was not an unintended consequence, but at the time was also one which was highly recommended by military theorists like Callwell.[60]

Callwell also advocates for a scorched earth strategy which would starve the opposing forces into submission in due time.[61] While these tactics are harsh by today's standard, they were also seen as cruel during Callwell's time. The tactics employed by the KNIL, when they became known to the Dutch public were seen as particularly harsh and caused a backlash. That backlash was hushed after a while, which gives a certain ambiguity to the attitudes towards colonial warfare in the motherland. On the one hand it seems that colonial warfare was seen as enhancing the prestige of the motherland, but people would rather be oblivious of the tactics used to achieve victory. When there was a backlash, authorities were able to control it, and it would usually die down after a while.

If we look at the Aceh War, it bears a lot of the hallmarks that are described by Callwell, especially in the period between 1894 and 1910. A regular and modern army fighting indigenous militias to expand colonial power. There some problems with Callwell's argument, the first being that it sees this wars in a purely military context, while leaving out other motivations. These will be further examined in the next chapter.

[58] NA-HA, Depot 204 F 15, 1.
[59] Kempees, *Tocht van Overste van Daalen*, 42. In addition to the body count given, the number of carbine rounds expanded is also given.
[60] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 50-62.
[61] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 14-21.

3. The NHM as a driving force in the Aceh War

3.1 Expansion in the Archipelago

By 1942 the Dutch East Indies spanned from Aceh in the west to Dutch Papua in the east. Despite the ethics of imperialism, this was a feat for a small nation that sat on the northwest edge of Europe, with a population a little over nine million. This expansion did come at a cost and it carried with it the seeds of destruction. Control was maintained by an army numbering 38.000, over a population numbering around sixty million.[62] This force was effective for its specific task, for repelling an invading army it appeared to be inadequate. As the Japanese invasion proved to be. There were also other factors that limited the Dutch control of the archipelago. Because of the limited size of Dutch colonial administrators and military administrations, there was a need to co-opt local elites for administrative functions, and to recruit local Indonesians into the ranks of the KNIL.[63] For the Indonesians that served in the civil service or the army it made sense to cooperate. Steady income, standing in a local community, securing advantages, such as European education for their respective families. Thereby inadvertently helping to create the first Indonesian nationalist movement.

So how did this unstable case of imperial overstretch came to be? The period between 1894 and 1910 saw a rapid expansion of Dutch power in the archipelago. The islands of Lombok, Flores, Bali, Borneo, West Papua, and the Aceh peninsula were all subjugated during this time. These conquests were often brutally efficient in its execution. The resources these places possessed often provided motive, but also national pride and colonial rivalry provided the incentives for these conquests.[64] The case of Bali exemplifies the imbalance of power between the KNIL and their local opponents. The island was subjugated in 1906, with the final expedition being equipped with howitzers, light artillery, bolt-action rifles, and machine guns. The Balinese in a moment of desperation performed a *puputan*, a ritual ending, dressed in all their finery and charged at the guns, with predictable results.[65] The soldiers responsible for these conquests all earned their stripes during the Aceh War, which officially ended during this time, but was the longest running conflict with Dutch involvement ever. The lessons learned in that conflict, and the officers that applied those lessons were put to work in the rest of the

[62] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare', 290.
[63] Idem.
[64] Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, 'Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago Around 1900 and the Imperialism Debate' in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25:1 (1994), 91-111, 95.
[65] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare', 290.

archipelago. Soldiers like Hans Christoffel, whose unit earned the nickname *'The Tiger Column'* for its tactics[66], applied his skills in Flores, Kalimantan, and other places. General van Heutsz, when he left his position as governor of Aceh and was appointed Governor General of the Dutch East Indies, which inadvertently united the archipelago for the first time.

This wave of expansion, or rather the timing of it was both swift and sudden, and its lasting legacy would in the end be an independent Indonesia. Compared to three-hundred and fifty years of Dutch presence within Southeast Asia this is a comparatively short period. Unlike its British counterpart, the VOC never created a territorial empire outside of Java, being content with trading posts and trying to enforce its trading monopolies in the spice trade. When in 1816, control of Java was given back the new Dutch government, full control of the island was not even achieved until after the Java War of 1825-1830.

There are a number of theories surrounding the topic as to why Dutch expansion in the Indonesian archipelago went with jumps and bolts. One of the more interesting theories is discussed by Elsbeth Locher-Scholten.[67] Her argument is that the period between 1873-1894 was one of 'reluctant imperialism'.[68] The reluctance stems from two factors, first was the Aceh War. The period that Locher-Scholten describes is exactly the period that projected a colonial power seeing the limits of its power when engaged in a protracted, and at that time, an unwinnable war. The second factor is that Batavia and The Hague did not coordinate a coherent colonial policy, which meant that decisions on colonial expansion were usually made in Batavia.[69]

One of the more common ways in which Batavia conducted colonial policy was getting local rulers to sign the aforementioned *Long Declaration*. While this type of expansion was relatively peaceful, and enforced by the KNIL, the real gain for Batavia were the land grants local rulers gave, which were then sold to private entrepreneurs and backed up by the NHM. Concentrating on cash crops and mining, these plantations provided a boon in the export of colonial raw materials. This was usually done on the backs of local people who had fulfil a certain number of feudal duties, but also by transporting coolie labour across the archipelago, mostly from Java to other islands. As Lindblad argues, this system of economic exploitation was so profitable that by the 1860's the profits of Javan plantations were making up to a third

[66] Broersma, *Atjeh als Land*, 50.
[67] Locher-Scholten, 'Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago', in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25:1 (March 1994), 91-111. This article is an overview of the different theories which she synthesises.
[68] Locher-Scholten, 'Dutch Expansion', 95.
[69] Locher-Scholten, 'Dutch Expansion', 97.

of the Dutch governmental revenue.[70] One of the reasons this system was successful, was that the proceeds benefitted the local leaders, colonial administrators, NHM officials, and in the end the Dutch state. When the Sumatra Treatise gave the colonial government the legal room to bring Aceh under control, it was thought that this economic model would be able to grow.[71]

With the start of the Aceh War, a number of issues arose. Despite inferior weaponry, the Acehan militias proved to be more than a match for the KNIL. The first expedition failed miserably, which sparked a second one which only managed to take modern Banda Aceh and its immediate surroundings. This stalemate led to a period of twenty years of bush warfare, where despite the brutality no real gains were made. This did not prevent entrepreneurs, merchants, and the NHM from trading in the areas that the KNIL did control, while relying on local trading networks for goods that lay beyond Dutch control. During the period between 1873-1894 there were also local Acehan rulers who would sign one of the *Declarations*, hedging that Dutch control would benefit them.

3.2 NHM and the Dutch government

To understand the position of the NHM in Aceh, we need to look at the founding of the NHM, and its role as an economic interlocutor for the Dutch government, and as a private company with its own interests. The NHM was founded in 1824 by royal decree. In a number of ways, the NHM took the vacuum left by the bankruptcy and dissolution of the VOC. The major difference between the two was that the VOC had its own military forces, whereas the NHM was solely meant as a vehicle for Dutch trading goods, and financial services. As their own charter manifesto clearly states. Articles 58 and 59 delineate the NHM as a private commercial company, not subject to Dutch governmental interference.[72] This role became more pronounced with the end of the Dutch imperial ambitions in Asia after 1950. The NHM had by that stage specialised as a financial institution, turned into the *Algemene Bank Nederland*, which later was merged with the *Amsterdam Rotterdam Bank* to form *ABN-AMRO*. Article 60 of the NHM charter, also reveals the dual nature of the NHM in regard to colonial trade, this article authorises the NHM to act as a tax collector for the colonial administration.[73]

[70] Lindblad, 'Colonial Rule and Economic Development', 11.
[71] Jelte Rep, *Atjeh! Atjeh!* (Baarn 1996), 10-12.
[72] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 9.
[73] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 9.

Article 60 of the NHM charter provides a strange case in empire building. In a period, traditionally typified as one where the State would increase in power and authority, the Dutch government authorised a private company to exercise state sovereignty. While the EIC was also a private company busy with empire building, which could indicate that using private companies for this purpose was not that uncommon. The main difference would be that the EIC was in operation since the seventeenth century and continued to operate in a way it had grown accustomed to, while the NHM was a newly founded company. These were some of the mandates to make the NHM look like the successor of the VOC. While there is merit to this assertion, if we look at the charter of the NHM, the military aspects of colonial rule were responsibility of the KNIL and giving the NHM a distinct character to the VOC. In contrast to the VOC, the NHM faced limits in the way in which it could enforce its own interests through military force, being dependent on the KNIL for that purpose. From this co-dependency arises the symbiotic relationship between the NHM and the Dutch state.

One good example of how dependent the NHM was on the KNIL in Aceh is the way in which they were awarded the contract to supply the forces stationed there. In 1883 the NHM won the contract to supply the KNIL in Aceh.[74] According to reports sent from Kota Raja to the head office in the Amsterdam, this gave the local agency a reliable stream of revenue. Especially during the height of the fighting when troop levels surged. This could indicate that the economic revenue model for the NHM was more dependent on government contracts than is previously thought. The reports actually lament the loss of revenue when combat operations were winded down, or when European troops were transferred to other parts of the archipelago. As result of this, the local NHM subsidiary, the Aceh Association (AA), and its sub-contractors became insolvent.[75] The NHM did not only supply the KNIL in Aceh, they were also actively involved in aiding the war effort in other ways. Case in point was the designated building of a coaling station at Sabang, which the AA partly financed.[76] While primarily built to ease the logistics of the navy patrolling the coast of Aceh to enforce the blockade, during its development van Heutsz urged that Sabang could also be used as entrepot port, primarily to control the flow of goods between Penang, and Aceh.[77] The primary urge to control the flow of goods coming into Aceh was that smugglers between Penang and Aceh were quite adept in supplying Acehan militias with rifles, which would be aimed at KNIL soldiers. The Sabang

[74] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), nummer toegang 2.20.01, inventarisnummer 14209.
[75] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 5107.
[76] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 14209.
[77] Idem.

project was an attempt to curb these smuggling activities, or to make an attempt at the very least. It is not clear how effective this plan was, but if a ship leaves Penang for Aceh, the coast gives ample opportunities to bypass Sabang, and make land unnoticed. The full effect of this plan is difficult to estimate. Sabang provided a good platform for the navy to patrol the sea between Sumatra and Malaya. In the end, the final pacification in 1910, made this plan obsolete.

What makes the NHM an odd case is that it was incredibly interconnected within the Dutch establishment. While it is not even uncommon today that politics and business interests are interwoven, there is a stark difference. Dutch members of parliament did not receive a salary at this time. To pursue an active political career, be it as a government minister, or a member of parliament one needed to have a private source of income. Be it a salary, family estate or a pension. Hendrik Colijn, who would become Prime Minister in 1925 and 1933, served as a board member at the Royal Petroleum Company, to amass his own personal fortune which allowed him to pursue a political career.[78] Companies like the NHM used this as a means to influence policies that would affect their corporate interests. One other way the NHM would bind the Dutch makers and shakers, was by offering them directorships after their political tenures. A former Minister of Colonial Affairs, Jacob Cremer was chairman of the NHM after his tenure.[79] While Cremer would be one of the prominent names in this list, he was not the only one. Usually these were non-executive directors.[80] The NHM executives that were not actively involved in politics did enjoy close personal relations with politicians, and the Dutch royal family.[81] It would be wrong to state that appointing Dutch politicians and civil servants as executive, and non-executive directors as a plot to bend the will of parliament to corporate interests. First and foremost, preserving and growing Dutch influence in the Indonesian archipelago was a matter of national pride for many in the political establishment.[82] Secondly, it appears that this interconnectedness was not seen as strange, but a normal course of events. The exception to this was the Social Democratic Workers Party (SDAP), their parliamentary deputies assailed government policy in the Dutch East Indies. Especially in regard to what they saw as the capitalistic exploitation of the Indonesian people. What they did not do was challenge the notion whether or not these colonial possessions should exist.[83] With deputy Henk van Kol going so far to state that:

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[78] Van 't Veer, *Atjeh-oorlog*, 217-219.
[79] Teunis de Graaf, *Voor Handel en Maatschappij: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* (Utrecht 2012), 110
[80] De Graaf, *Voor Handel en Maatschappij*, 99.
[81] De Graaf, *Voor Handel en Maatschappij*, 158-159.
[82] *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1896-1897*, 17 november 1897.
[83] Jos Perry, *De voorman: Een biografie van Willem Hubert Vliegen* (Amsterdam 1994), 234-235.

"*regarding the attitude of the social democratic party in only a few words; with a number of articles her actions should often be defined. Powerless to intervene directly, the social democrats had limit themselves to encourage the good, to criticise and fight against the wrong in government policy*."[8485]

In one aspect the NHM was similar to the VOC of old. The VOC was a means for the Estates General in the Dutch Republic to assert sovereignty outside of the constraints of its territorial borders. As mentioned previously, the NHM had the right to collect taxes on behalf of the Dutch government in the East Indies.[86] In Aceh this could be a dangerous venture. One of the reports from Kota Raja to the head office in Amsterdam states that even in 1907 it was still too dangerous to operate plantations outside of the immediate area of Kota Raja without the benefit of military protection.[87] While these reports do not explicitly mention the difficulties of tax collection in Aceh, it is probable that an unescorted tax collector would not fare any better than an undefended plantation. While tax collectors have never been the most welcome of guests, tax collectors representing the *Kompeunie*[88] were the most unwelcome sight for sore eyes. Why would tax collectors need protection? In Aceh specifically, central authority broke down in the 18th century. By imposing taxes on the population, the Dutch state tried to centralise authority. This ambition contravened the sense of independence that the collection of local Acehan leaders enjoyed up to that point. More to the point, it would undermine their own authority towards the people they ruled over. Kompeunie tax collectors were the clearest representation of that change in authority. The same argument can be made regarding the plantations, they were seen as an investment by the NHM and their proprietors, but by Acehan leaders, with their own economic interests, a threat to their economic activities. For the NHM, tax farming was one their important sources of revenue, in addition to other government related contracts, which at their height were around forty percent of the NHM's profits.[89]

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[84] H.H. van Kol, Nederlandsch-Indië in de Staten-Generaal van 1897 tot 1909: een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der koloniale politiek in Nederland (Den Haag 1911), 11.
[85] Quote in Dutch: "*Over de houding der sociaal-democratische partij slechts weinig woorden; bij verschillende artikelen moest haar optreden reeds zo dikwijls worden geboekstaafd. Machteloos om rechtstreeks in the grijpen, moesten de soc. dem. zich bepalen tot aansporen tot het goede, tot critiek op en strijd tegen het verkeerde in de Regeerings-daden.*"
[86] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 9.
[87] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 5107.
[88] In the Dutch East Indies, the Dutch government was often referred to as the *Kompeunie* (Company) it being a reference to the VOC, and the NHM who were in the eyes of Indonesians one and the same.
[89] De Graaf, *Voor Handel en Maatschappij*, 46.

A relevant question to ask, is why would the state grant this privilege to a private company? Especially considering this period, where the state took on an ever more active role at home to foster the notion of the nation-state. One explanation for this, is that colonies had to be profitable to the coloniser. Why else would a country undertake the expense that comes with establishing colonial rule? Having a fully staffed bureaucracy on the European model governing a colonial possession would hamper the profitability of that colony, thereby making the point of colonial exploitation futile from an economic perspective. From this viewpoint, outsourcing certain governmental responsibilities makes sense. For the colonial administrators, for whom financial equilibrium was a constant problem, especially during wars that lasted forty years, making their administration as lean as possible reduced costs. This situation did not appear in a vacuum or developed naturally. As stated above, the NHM needed government contracts to finance its main activity of promoting and developing Dutch trade and industry. For every contract awarded to the NHM, the Dutch parliament had to enact a law authorising the contract.[90] This puts Dutch colonialism in a position where one can argue that any extension of authority in Indonesia, was a business venture. A business venture that according to Touwen was able to increase output and revenue for private interests.[91] Arguably something the Social Democrats would have something to say about.

The relationship between the NHM and the Dutch government is one that can be described as one of a mutual dependent symbiosis. The NHM would act as the flying wheel for developing Dutch trade and industry. The Dutch state would provide through government contracts the necessary capital needed for that endeavour. In Indonesia this mutual dependency was blurred to the effect that the NHM, and the Dutch state became one and the same. While the NHM benefitted from state protection, and patronage to carry on its economic endeavours, the same cannot be said for the Indonesians living under Dutch rule, or even the colonial government, which had to foot the bill for the troops involved with conquering and occupying ever expanding territories. The taxes levied were both monetary and in kind. The taxes in kind could be sold for monetary value by the NHM at a later date, as they were part of the Cultuurstelsel which obligated to reserve part of their farming output for cash crops to be sold by the NHM. By the time the Aceh War started, the Cultuurstelsel was in decline, but Aceh which was exporter of foodstuffs, became an importer, indicating that there is a possibility that enforced cash crop growing was taking place. The KNIL also confiscated livestock and foodstuff as part of their pacification campaigns, enforcing the notion of the Kompeunie. This

[90] Idem.
[91] Touwen, *Extremes in the archipelago*, 42-50.

does not mean that the NHM never ran any financial risks itself, as we will see later in this chapter. Its presence would be harder to sustain, had the NHM not had an intimate relation with the Dutch establishment. What is also important to remember is that the peculiar nature of the NHM did also not make it all powerful in colonial affairs. Military commanders like van Heutsz and van Daalen were in this sense too much military men to act at the beg and call of private interests. Although it can be argued, that in the Dutch East Indies they were one and the same, and that the KNIL were to certain extent the enforcers for the NHM. Turning what seems at first glance a military operation, into a racket.[92] In some respects however, van Heutsz saw the added value of the NHM in the pacification of Aceh, figuring that a population that was occupied with being productive would not be able to mount any resistance. Lest they would be struck by a flying column of KNIL soldiers destroying their livelihoods.

3.3 The NHM in the Dutch East Indies

When discussing the activities of the NHM in the Dutch East Indies, we have to look at the way the NHM was structured, from there on we can discuss its three main activities, banking, plantations, and mining. The NHM was not too dissimilar from the VOC in the way it was structured. The headquarters was situated in the Netherlands where its board of directors managed corporate affairs. Being situated at first in The Hague, and later in Amsterdam. The NHM was also an organisation that was local in its operations. Its agencies, or *agentschappen*, were situated from Nijverdal in the east of the Netherlands to Yokohama. The different local agencies all focused on different activities to support, with local agencies in the Netherlands promoting a nascent Dutch industry, while in the Dutch East Indies they focussed on raw materials, and the agencies in cities like Yokohama would focus on moneylending and finding markets for Dutch products. In some cases, the NHM occupied the former possessions of the old VOC as a sign of continuation.[93]

Arguably, one of the more important links within the NHM were the local agents that facilitated all the workings of the NHM. These were not permanently contracted employees of the NHM since their statutes prohibited this.[94] The statutes do not explicitly say why this is the case, most likely to prevent corruption. Although there is evidence to suggest that this particular

[92] Smedley D. Butler, *War is a Racket* (Philadelphia 1935).
[93] De Graaf, *Voor Handel en Maatschappij*, 73-77.
[94] *NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 9.*

statute was not effective in preventing this.[95] What is also remarkable about the local agents is that they were often hired for a certain project, thus not being permanently employed by the NHM in the literal sense, but more in the practical sense. As was the case with a firm called *De Lange & Co.*[96] De Lange & Co was used to for the Aceh Association which served as an investment company for projects in Aceh, including for the construction of the port of Sabang. The same company turns up in other projects. If one of the objectives of using this joint venture structure was to reduce the risk of financial malaise or less than legal business practises, it did not work. De Lange & Co. were involved in a coffee speculation scheme that ended up with them in serious financial trouble requiring a bailout by the NHM, with their debts being forgiven in the end to continue the joint venture.[97]

The NHM was in large parts the flying wheel that was supposed to jump start Dutch enterprises. One of their main activities was therefore financing, and later banking. The capital required for this task was obtained by giving out shares. From the start the NHM had a strong capital position, when it was founded in 1824, the company was worth around *fl*37.000.000.[98] This initial starting capital proved to be a valuable tool to act the flying wheel for the Dutch economy. The rate of success for NHM investments varied, with a number ending up in failure. Reasons for economic failure were varied, but one cause that keeps coming back is that local NHM agents, or their partners, such as *De Lange & Co.* were engaged in speculative ventures or embezzled their respective funds.[99] One advantage the financial position provided for the NHM was that it could control the entire colonial supply chain in theory, in practise this differed. Its statutes authorised that level of control, but being authorised, and exerting control are two different things.[100] The NHM had two major advantages in exerting this kind of control, first there is aforementioned close connection with the Dutch government. Which not only gave them formal control of colonial logistics, but it would also ensure that this control would not be relinquished in favour of other competitors. This does bring a number of problematic issues to the fore. First, can you effectively control the logistical chain if you have to rely on middle men who are sometimes of dubious character? Secondly, to what end are you willing to go to maintain that control, and finally what happens when that control is not being monitored?

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[95] De Graaf, *Voor Handel en Maatschappij*, 76.
[96] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 14209.
[97] Idem.
[98] De Graaf, *Handel en Maatschappij*, 40.
[99] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 14209.
[100] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 9.

One of the main activities of the NHM in the Dutch East Indies was owning, and operating plantations. After its foundation most of these plantations were situated on Java, it being the only island that was under Dutch control. As Dutch domination of the archipelago spread to the Outer Islands, like Sumatra, Celebes, Bali, and other islands, the NHM followed. The NHM sponsored botanical expedition to find out whether newly gain land would be suitable for agricultural use.[101] In areas where there already was a specific use of agricultural land, for example, pepper, coffee, or other indigenous crops, the NHM would expand these operations.[102] The NHM was not the only party setting up plantations, while she was the dominant party having a finger in most Dutch enterprises operating there. A sizeable chunk of the plantations was also operated by British, French, and American companies. This presence of foreign companies gave the colonial government in Batavia considerable headaches, since the only thing that could gave these companies an alignment with the colonial state was the prospect of cheap indentured labour.[103] The prospect of military protection might also be an enticing prospect, though it is not clear if these foreign companies wanted or needed it. There are some indications that they would rather organise their own private security.[104] Despite the presence of foreign companies, and the ever present NHM, there was still room for local farmers competing with these large conglomerations.[105] Despite the advantages of the NHM over their foreign, and local competitors, success in these ventures was never certain. There were a number factors in play which would hinder the financial success of plantations. The first, and arguably the most important was the climate and soil of a plantation. As happened on numerous occasions, the selected soil, and cash crop could not be grown, or not sufficiently enough. The second reason could be that security issues hampered a success, which was the case in Aceh.[106] Although in the end, a majority did prove to be worth the investment.

One other industry that saw heavy investment of the NHM's capital was mining. Mining in this case also came to refer to oil extraction, which would become one of the major exports from Aceh. As was the case with botanical specialists accompanying military expeditions, the NHM also sent out mining engineers to survey for possible mineral deposits.[107] While this was considered standard, it is rather striking to see that this was also actively encouraged, or ordered

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[101] Kempees, *De tocht van Overste Van Daalen*, 11-12.
[102] Ann Stoler, *In the Company's Shadow; Labor Control and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation History, 1870-1979* (Columbia University Press 1983), 40.
[103] Stoler, *In the Company's Shadow*, 30-39.
[104] NL-HA, Min BuZa, 2.05.18, 764.
[105] Touwen, *Extremes in the Archipelago*, 42.
[106] *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* 07-01-1898, consulted on Delpher.nl on 08-05-2018.
[107] Kempees, *De tocht van Overste Van Daalen*, 11-12.

on personal authority by colonial authorities, like van Heutsz.[108] While the NHM initially was more interested in plantations in Aceh, they soon found that the mineral wealth of Aceh provided an incentive to increase their presence. As with the plantations, mining was also an area where the NHM was not the only party involved. While dominant, they had to content with the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company drilling for oil in Perlak.[109] While the KNPM was also well connected with the Dutch government, it did had a decidedly different approach towards conducting its operations by interacting with local sultans, or strongman, to gain oil concessions.[110] A relevant point to keep in mind about the oil field in Perlak, and one that shows the absurdity of colonial exploitation, is that the oil extracted from Acehan soil was refined at a refinery in Pangkalan Bradan, one hundred and thirty kilometres to the south. This construction project was the authorised by the Dutch government and partially built under the auspices of an Acehan militia leader who was still fighting the KNIL at that point.[111]

One common way that historians have wrote about the economic development in the Dutch East Indies was using the European planter as the model of their work. In other works, the focus has been a numbers game, focussing on output. It does leave out an important group and that is the indentured and indigenous labour force.[112] Ann Stoler being one of the first looking this overlooked group in the context of Sumatra. The focus on European entrepreneurs is understandable to a certain point. In a way they were also risking life, and fortune for financial success. This approach becomes problematic if we look at the role the NHM played, being the financial backer of many of these plantations. It can even be argued that without the NHM, many of these entrepreneurs would not have been able to raise the required capital. This entrepreneurial focus does overlook the main problem in colonial economies, and that is the workforce, and where to find them. During the nineteenth century, this was solved in some parts by hiring indentured labourers. For the Dutch East Indies, many came from either Java, which suffered from overpopulation, and China. This workforce consisted of both men and women, and the conditions in which they worked were hard, but with the outlook that when their contract expired, they could return. For European planters, their main issue was with retaining their indentured labour force. In 1880, the Dutch government the first Coolie Ordonnance, or what

[108] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), nummer toegang 2.20.01, inventarisnummer 5283.
[109] Koninklijke Nederlandsche Petroleum Maatschappij, KNPM, later merged with Shell to form Royal Dutch Shell.
[110] Van 't Veer, *De Atjeh Oorlog*, 217-219.
[111] Idem.
[112] Stoler, *In the Companies Shadow,* 25-26.

would be known as the Penal System, which gave European planters an exorbitant amount of control over their labourers.

These ordonnances had the outcome one can expect, in a pamphlet written by a Dutch lawyer in Medan, J. van den Brand, *The Millions from Deli*, documented the abuses perpetrated by European planters.[113] This caused such an outcry that the Minister for Colonial Affairs, Alexander Idenburg, ordered an investigation into these allegations. The resulting report by Dutch prosecutor J.L.T. Rhemrev supported most of the allegations made by van den Brand. Concluding that most of the legal protections indentured labourers were entitled to were null and void. Among the most common abuses were restricting the personal liberty of labourers, manslaughter, and abuses of the "most disgusting nature".[114] In a number of cases of physical abuse, some European planters were not criminally charged, or colonial administrators covered up the crime.[115] This rapport while damning, did not have any major impact on the treatment of indentured labourers. In fact, minister Idenburg buried the rapport, which was only rediscovered in 1985, a full eighty years after its publication.[116] This rapport highlights the amount of violence, both physical, and sexual, that was employed to keep control of the workforce which was typical of the time.

3.4 The NHM and Labour Control

The use of indentured labour in European colonies was common after the abolition of slavery. This was the preferred option in areas where there was an 'insufficient native population'.[117] The British were the first to start with using indentured labour from India as a means to supplant the freed slaves in their sugar plantations. Soon, other colonial powers would get their indentured labourers from India. These were soon to be called coolies in the colonial parlance. India was not the only country being used as a source for indentured labourers, Chinese indentured labourers were also common throughout the world. In the Rhemrev Rapport, a number of the cases he describes, involve Chinese indentured labourers being abused by their employers.[118]

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[113] J.L.T. Rhemrev, *Rapport van de resultaten van het my by Gouvernements-besluit van 24 Mei 1903, no. 19 opgedragen onderzoek*, 1.
[114] Rhemrev, *Rapport van de resultaten*, 2.
[115] Rhemrev, *Rapport*, 7.
[116] Hans Mol, 'Schrikbewind in de Tropen' in *NRC Handelsblad* 19-04-2001. Consulted on 09-07-2018.
[117] Daviron, 'Mobilizing labour in African agriculture', 482.
[118] Rhemrev, *Rapport van de resultaten*, 2-7.

Plantations on Sumatra, and Aceh were in need of indentured labourers, for several reasons. One was that in comparison with Java, Sumatra was not densely populated. For comparison, Aceh is about thirty percent bigger than the Netherlands, but at the time had a population of half a million. The available local labour force was, considering the import of indentured labour, was not too keen on working on European plantations.[119] There are three reasons why this might be the case. First, plantation work was physically demanding. Secondly, local farming was the economic mainstay for most of the population. Thirdly, the treatment of indentured labourers by plantation owners, which included rape, manslaughter, beatings, and other forms of abuse, did not invite persons to work at those plantations. This was not only the case on Aceh, and Sumatra. One of the reasons why European colonial powers started to look for indentured labourers outside of India, was that the supply of Indians also dried up.[120] One relevant point to realise is that if the Dutch colonial government wanted press local Acehnese into indentured servitude, they could have used the KNIL. Instead they made use of adat law, whereby they could enforce seigneurial duties, including forced labour. This is in part the result of favouring feudal elites to solidify Dutch authority.[121] Acehnese resistance was mostly organised by religious leaders with resistance to Dutch rule seen as a jihad.

As stated before, the first indentured labourers arriving in the European colonies, were from India. This network of labour distribution was facilitated and operated by local networks which operated in the grey area between slavery and indentured servitude, and the British East India Company.[122] This system was rife with abuses such as, kidnapping, and enslaving people to sell them into indentured servitude. For while the EIC might have been a regulating force in transporting indentured labourers across the Indian Ocean and beyond, other colonial powers were looking for a labour force that could be put to work on plantations. Because of these practises, the British Raj actively sought to limit the number of Indians being shipped to work as indentured labourers. Despite signing treaties with the French regulating the flow of indentured labourers, with a number of conditions on the treatment of indentured labourers, reports came back to the British Raj describing the high mortality rate of Indians in the French colonies.[123]

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[119] Ann Stoler, In the Company's Shadow, 45-46.
[120] Daviron, 'Mobilizing labour in African agriculture', 484.
[121] Van 't Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 296.
[122] Richard B. Allen, 'Slaves, Convicts, Abolitionism and the Global Origins of the Post-Emancipation Indentured Labor System', in *Slavery & Abolition*, 35:2, 328-348, 331-332.
[123] Daviron, 'Mobilizing labour in African agriculture', 484-485.

While indentured labour did share a number of similarities with slavery, and was possibly worse on some levels, there were some differences between the two. First, because indentured labourers were technically employees instead of property, plantation owners could, and did charge them for daily necessities, withheld from their salaries. Which meant that the money that was available to buy off a contract, or settle incurred debts was limited. Secondly, because indentured labourers served on a contract basis, while the contract did not give much legal protection, it did allow for indentured labourers to leave a plantation once their contracts expired, leaving behind any incurred debts. For plantation owners this provided a problem. How could they retain indentured labourers for their plantations? It was a problem which they sought to solve, by any means they could find.[124]

The Dutch government 'solved' this by introducing the aforementioned Penal Sanctions, which gave the plantation owners full powers in law enforcement matters concerning the indentured labourers. In many ways this kind of legislation looks odd. The nineteenth century, and the twentieth century saw, in Europe at least, a move to a more active government introducing legislation regarding mandatory school ages, and labour protection laws. What the Dutch government effectively did in this case it legislates itself out of law enforcement, entrusting that to private parties. This did not go unnoticed during the parliamentary debates proceeding the adoption of the Penal Sanctions. Opposition was in part inspired by deputies who either lived in the Dutch East Indies and saw the abuses, or because they were opposed to them from a point of principle. One of these deputies, Herman des Amorie van der Hoeven, spoke at length against them, citing that '*the Minister for Colonial Affairs has given in to the unjust demands of the planters*.[125]

Why would deputies have doubts with enacting penal sanctions to aid planters with their control of indentured labour? There is the moral argument, that coercion in labour relations is not the way civilised people should act, which often appears when critics of the Penal Sanctions speak up in parliament. Not without reason it appears. The abuses documented by the Rhemrev Rapport in 1905, were already being reported on before the Penal Sanctions were enacted into law.[126] The passing of the Penal Sanctions was on the other hand, the logical conclusion within colonial policy in the nineteenth century. To reiterate the quote from Jules Harmand, "*A*

[124] Stoler, *In the Company's Shadow*, 45.
[125] *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer 1878-1879*, 28 november 1878. Consulted on 13-07-2018 on www.statengeneraal.nl. Dutch translation: *Tot mijn leedwezen heeft de Minister met de beginselen gebroken, die mij voorkomen de ware te zijn, zoowel in de Oost als in de West, door toe te geven aan onregtvaardige eischen van de planters.*
[126] *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer 1878-1879*, 28 november 1878.

conquering state policy is a production policy. It is exerted on both land and people."[127] While it does not follow that enacting harsh laws affecting colonial subjects is an evil masterplan concocted from dim lit back rooms, it can be argued that despite objections at the time laws such as these kept being enacted. With those laws came the biproducts of, physical abuse, torture, rape, and manslaughter.

So how does this relate to the Aceh War? If we look at the traditional way historians have described the conflict, and more specifically the nature of Acehan resistance towards the Dutch conquest attempts, it is usually viewed as holy war waged by the Acehan militias against the Dutch unbelievers.[128] This viewpoint does serve as a good method to view the conflict. Nevertheless, it does limit the ways in which to look at the Acehan resistance. As Callwell theorised in his book, indigenous resistance groups excelled at gathering, and using information regarding their enemy.[129] It is also worthwhile to look at Acehan resistance from a perspective that the presence of Dutch colonial rule in Aceh as a disruption of local life. This can be supported by the decentral nature of Acehan resistance. The Aceh War was never fought as a standoff between the KNIL and a centralised Acehan military, but rather a collection of militias, defending their kampongs. This is highlighted during the campaign of van Daalen into the Gajo, Alas, and Batak lands in 1904. Every kampong that was overrun by the KNIL organised its own defence, without aiding or assisting other kampongs that were in van Daalen's path.[130]

The resistance that the KNIL encountered, not only during van Daalen's campaign, but for most of the forty years the war lasted, was fierce, and often quarter was not asked or given by both sides. This is in part due to the reputation enjoyed, by the NHM and the colonial government, collectively known as the *Kompeunie*. In some ways, the Acehnese figured out that the Dutch colonial authority was, what Philip Stern called, a Company State.[131] Van 't Veer argues that Hugo Loudon's greatest challenge was to convince his Acehnese interlocuters that the KNPM was not part of that Company, which would ease KNPM operations in Aceh.[132] The plantations in Deli, just south of Aceh, and what took place there in terms of methods in trying to control the workforce, must have gotten through to local Acehan militia leaders. Who would arguably not be willing to let their people suffer in the same way their neighbours to the south had. It would be wrong to dismiss the aspect of holy war against the unbeliever as a historical

[127] Harmand, *Domination et colonisation*, 151.
[128] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare and Military Ethics', 280.
[129] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 25-37.
[130] Kempees, *De tocht van Overste Van Daalen*, 8-16.
[131] Stern, *The Company State*
[132] Van 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 217-219.

perspective, but that aspect overlooks the symbolism of the *Kompeunie* in the minds of the Acehan militias that fought against the KNIL. What is relevant to remember about Acehan resistance was that it was not principally targeted other Dutch companies, or even non-Dutch companies. The KNPM was able to placate one Acehan militia commander, and convincing them that they were not all linked to the *Kompeunie*, which is remarkable considering they were just as well connected to the Dutch government as the NHM.[133] The same welcoming treatment applied to an unnamed French company that tried to transport modern rifles into Aceh as part of a payment for a large tract of land.[134] It can therefore be argued, that Acehan resistance was primarily aimed against the projection of Dutch colonial power, which was symbolised by the NHM.

3.5 Commerce, War and Resistance in Aceh

What were the Dutch projections of colonial power in Aceh, and how does it relate to the major theme of gaining and maintaining control? One example was the aforementioned coaling station and port at Sabang. The port at Sabang was perhaps not the most visible for Acehan militias, but it is important to further discuss it here, because it explains in part the importance of infrastructure projects during the war. Their primary goal of these projects was to facilitate the KNIL in their operations, their secondary goal was that they were commercial projects, in which the NHM would have a controlling stake.

Because of their military nature, projects like the port in Sabang, but more importantly the Aceh Tramline were also prime targets for Acehan militias eager to strike. The Aceh Tramline is a good example of this. It being the lifeline for supplying the different forts, or *bentengs*, that were meant to defend the perimeter around Kota Raja, the only area which the KNIL controlled with a modicum of safety.[135] For the KNIL the tramline was a means to an end. Shorten their supply lines and increase the speed with which reinforcements and supplies could reach the soldiers garrisoning the forts. For the Acehan militias, striking the tramline would not only deal a psychological blow to the KNIL soldiers in the forts, but if effectively done, it could also isolate those forts. Thereby potentially starving the garrison and striking a blow against the *Kompeunie*. By doing this, the tramline also became a symbol for the Dutch leadership. It not only prompted diverging more soldiers from other parts of the perimeter to

[133] Ibidem.
[134] NH-HA, Min BuZa, 2.05.18, 764.
[135] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare and Military Ethics', 288.

defend against possible attacks, but it also became a psychological burden on the troops guarding the tramline, never knowing where an attack might take place, and if they would survive an attack if it happened.

The situation as it stood at the beginning of the 1890's was one of stalemate, not only in Aceh, but most attempts at subduing the various islands in the archipelago went slow or ended in military failure. Colonial policy was therefore ambiguous towards expansion, or as Locher-Scholten described it, reluctant imperialism.[136] This is not wholly the case, while there was not a great rush by either Batavia, or The Hague to expand Dutch power in the archipelago, wars like the one in Aceh were drawn out, and costly affairs. Sapping both morale, and the government coffers, with little to show for it. For a few KNIL officers there was one thing clear, something had to change.

One of those officers was the previously mentioned J.B. van Heutsz. He had served as a subordinate officer in Aceh before, and the lack of progress was a frustrating process. One of his first actions to change this situation was to actively lobby for the command of the KNIL forces stationed in Aceh. In a letter 'refuting the objections'[137] of Dr Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje towards his plans to subdue Aceh, he carefully lays out his plan to do so.[138] Central to his approach was the use of mobile forces and forsaking fixed positions, like the *bentengs*. He judges the Acehan to be brave, and full of fighting spirit. In order to overcome these qualities, the KNIL should be active, and aggressive. Or as van Heutsz puts it, 'putting the boot on the neck of the Acehan until he finally submits'.[139]

Under van Heutsz there was a renewed impetus of military activity, which also saw the subjugation of former implacable foes. From 1898 to 1904, the groundwork was laid for the final 'pacification' of Aceh. Van Heutsz's successor, van Daalen, put even pressure on Acehan resistance during his governorship period from 1904-1910. He was one of van Heutsz's prime enforcers, although van Heutsz did try containing the amount of force used in military campaigns, van Daalen had no such qualms. As is evidenced by the accounts of his expedition into the Gajo, Batak, and Alas lands of Aceh. The official account of this expedition provides a chilling account of what was in essence, a scorched earth campaign. One of the more galling

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[136] Locher-Scholten, 'Dutch Expansion', 95.
[137] Dr Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje was a famed Dutch scholar of Islam and linguistics, in the 1890's he went into the interior of Aceh to study the local population, he came back with a detailed oversight of customs, languages, and religious beliefs, which provided essential human intelligence for van Heutsz. His 'refutations' were an attempt to promote both his and Snouck Hurgronje's ideas as way out of the stalemate in Aceh.
[138] *Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie 079 J.B. van Heutsz, 1882-1935, nummer toegang 2.21.008.79, inventarisnummer 1.*
[139] NL-HA, van Heutsz, 2.21.008.79, 1.

aspects of this account is the way battlefield statistics are written up.[140] Thousands of rounds of ammunition spent, the casualty numbers being coldly summarised, but according to Minister of Colonial Affairs Idenburg, this was done with the 'utmost sense of moderation, and professionalism'.[141]

Accounts of when Aceh was pacified vary, officially the colonial government declared Aceh pacified in 1910, although up until 1918 the civilian governorship of Aceh was combined with the military governorship, indicates that pacification was a matter of perspective. With pacification also came the other main goal of the Aceh War, economic exploitation. While enterprises were already active in areas deemed 'pacified', predominantly in the coastal areas, the interior was still perceived as virgin territory, hence the addition of botanists and mining engineers to several military expeditions into the Acehan interior.[142] The reason for this is that the idea was that unlocking the economic potential of Aceh was seen as way to hasten pacification.[143]

So, was the Aceh War worth the costs? As previously stated, this noble-minded goal did not correspond with the situation on the ground when it concerns labour conditions. When we look at the output of plantations, mines, and farms, there is for the Outer Islands, including Aceh, a rise in exports, with indigenous farmers share of production rising to 58,5% of agricultural output, with pepper farming, the mainstay for Acehan cash crops, retaining the highest level of indigenous ownership.[144] There is an argument to be made that the war made this growth in exports possible, but it is important to remember that for exports oil, coal, palm oil, and rubber, which were arguably more valuable with the advent of the twentieth century, were dominated by European companies, who were arguably more concerned with extracting value, than reinvesting profits into the local economy.

In addition to this divide in production of exports, the question "was it worth it" should also look at the lasting impact of the war. As Kreike argued, Dutch tactics for punitive expeditions centred on destroying the livelihoods for the locals. Or as he puts it, environmental warfare.[145] This tactical approach was not a novel idea, it was used by French forces in Algeria with devastating impact. The death toll on the Acehan side vary from reports, but Kreike argues

[140] Kempees, *De Tocht van Overste van Daalen*, 17, 42, 60-63.
[141] *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1904-1905*, 25 november 1904. www.statengeneraaldigitaal.nl consulted on 16-07-2018.
[142] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 5283.
[143] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 5283.
[144] Touwen, *Extremes in the Archipelago*, 42.
[145] Kreike, 'Genocide in the Kampongs?', 297-298.

for the number to be around 100.000,[146] whereas Groen argues that during van Heutsz's tenure alone, 1899-1909, as governor around 21.000 Acehnese were killed.[147] Which gives the impression that an estimate of 100.000 seems conservative, especially in the context of the other Dutch conquest of the Outer Islands, whose casualties Groen posits at around 50.000 Indonesians.[148]

The Kompeunie represented this mass violence. While the old VOC was no more, its separate parts were taken up by the state, and the NHM. While this combination might not have been as commercially successful as the VOC, the same system was expanded across the entire archipelago. As Jurrien van Goor argued, when the NHM was founded and the Cultuurstelsel was implemented, it was an attempt to re-establish the old monopoly position of the NHM, with the military aspect of that being supplied by the state.[149] This aspect needs to be kept in mind when discussing Dutch colonialism in Asia. It was never set out as a system where there were large settler populations. The Dutch East Indies were first and foremost meant for the extraction of natural resources.

The NHM played a complicitous part in the expansion of Dutch colonial rule and benefitted from it in government contracts. What is more difficult to ascertain is how they are a driving force for the war and the conduct of it. The NHM had a clear economic incentive to support colonial expansion in Southeast Asia, extra earnings from their government contracts, which they used to invest in plantations and infrastructure projects. There are certain sources that indicate that there might be a more direct involvement of the NHM in the conduct of the war, but there is no definitive evidence. What can be said as to whether or not the NHM was a driving force in the Aceh War, was that they were strongly embedded in the entire colonial apparatus.

Looking at Dutch imperial expansion in Aceh, a number issues become clear. First, as in most cases of imperial conquest, there was a strong sense of European superiority. This is exemplified by the language used by contemporary figures when they sought reasons for furthering a war that was at best a stalemate up to 1890's. Aceh was to be delivered from indigenous tyranny and be uplifted by the benefits of European civilisation. Or to paraphrase an infamous Dutch saying, "*There, something grand happened"*.[150] Secondly, Dutch expansion,

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[146] Kreike, 'Genocide in the Kampongs?', 299.
[147] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare', 289.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Jurrien van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum 2004), 95-98.
[150] W.H. van Helsdingen, *Daar wèrd wat groots verricht…: Nederlands-Indië in de Twintigste Eeuw* (Elsevier 1946).

both economic, and military, was partly based in fear. Mostly the fear that other colonial powers might encroach on territory that the Dutch establishment though was rightfully theirs.[151] This explains in part why there was a need to control the archipelago. One other possible explanation is that the need for expanding the economic activity in Dutch East Indies provided the impetus for Dutch expansion.

Aceh in this case provides an interesting example, because it is the conflict that shaped military tactics, and archival sources provide a tangible link to the pushing role the NHM played. What happened in Aceh, also corresponds with the idea of Harmand about the nature of European colonialism. It being both a policy for conquest, and production. While it is probably not the case that the NHM, KNIL, the Dutch, and colonial governments conspired in dim lit rooms to conquer and exploit, this is what happened in the end. In the next chapter will look further into the dynamic between the above-mentioned groups, and look at how command, control, and coercion were exercised.

[151] Eric Tagliacozzo, 'Kettle on a Slow Boil: Batavia's Threat Perceptions in the Indies' Outer Islands, 1870-1910' in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 31:1 (March 2000), 70-100, 91.

4. Logistics of Empire

4.1 What is the purpose of an army?

This chapter will handle the theoretical aspects of this thesis, and in turn connect it to the Aceh War and the role of the NHM during that conflict. To do that we are going to look at several issues regarding the purpose of an army, and how European Imperialism relates to co-opting the state, local elites, the stability, or the lack of it, it gave, and its lasting legacies.

When looking at warfare, one aspect that turns up in theoretical writing about warfare is that an army, or armed force is '*therefore an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to our will'.*[152] In other words, forcing or coercing others to submit. This aspect of warfare returns time and again in contemporary sources relating to the Aceh War. This should not come as a surprise, but the language in which it is used should. When colonial conquests are discussed in parliament, or in reports, the language is almost benign. With it boiling down to upholding the 'White Man's Burden' towards the 'less civilised' peoples of the world. However, this notion of coercion can also be put upside down in the context of colonial war. Whereby indigenous militias can also try to coerce a colonial army to admit defeat. By taking advantage of the weaknesses of colonial armies, being in general less mobile, and less aware of the situation on the ground, drawing out a conflict to such an extent that a colonial power admits defeat, and leaves. There is a prerequisite for this though, and that there needs to be a unified command structure directing overall strategy. In the case of Aceh, the multitude of militias, local interests, and a potential ally, were missing.

In Aceh, there were several factors in play that, eventually gave an advantage to the KNIL. First, is that the Dutch government was committed to a lasting presence in Aceh. Secondly, because of the disunity between the Acehan militias, military campaigns were organised in the years 1898-1910 that took a methodical approach to subduing resistance. Kampongs, or groups of kampongs were being attacked piece meal by the KNIL. The military expedition of van Daalen is the clearest example of this approach.[153]

The primary purpose of an army is arguably to defend its nation's national interests from foreign threats. The term 'defend' is not as straight forward as it first seems. In case of a foreign invasion, it is simple enough, but in a colonial context it does get a different meaning onto its own. First how do you determine who is a threat, and to what extent, and what is being

[152] Von Clausewitz, *On War*, (London 1995) 5.
[153] Kempees, *De Tocht van Overste van Daalen*, 63-64.

threatened? Secondly, 'national interests' is an oblique term. For example, is the financial success of a commercial company in the interest of the nation? These are not easy questions to answer, even up to this day. The original casus belli for the Aceh War, securing the shipping lanes of the Malaya Straights against piracy, was presented as being a duty for the Dutch government.[154] Granting safe passage to merchant vessels that would ultimately increase maritime traffic going to and from the Dutch East Indies, could result in increased revenue for the colonial government, and other parties.

Looking at it from this perspective, the 'term national' interests becomes even murkier. Considering that the NHM was almost symbiotically connected to the Dutch government, in both a relational, and a professional aspect, albeit a private initiative. Expanding Dutch control in Aceh, and thereby opening up more land for cultivation, and exploitation, under the management of the NHM was therefore arguably in the national interest. This a-moral approach is typical of Dutch colonial policy. Not only in Aceh, but also elsewhere in the archipelago. The emergence of van Heutsz, and his subordinates facilitated this a-moral approach that was carried out with brutal efficiency throughout the Dutch East Indies.

War, as previously stated, is in essence a political goal pursued with violence.[155] Which indicates that the civilian leadership, the government, dictates strategy for its military forces, and the military command is in charge of executing that strategy when engaged in a war. This image is in a number ways, the idealised image of a streamlined process. While in practise it has never been this clear cut. The term violence is used here, instead of armed force, because it is a better description for the situation on the ground in Aceh. Armed force suggests a level of organisation that did not exist in Aceh. Acehan resistance consisted of a multitude of militias that had one thing in common, which was resistance to the Kompeunie, but were also engaged in fighting each other. One of the reasons for that would be that control is in part limited by the available methods of communication. During van Heutsz's tenure as governor of Aceh the methods of communicating long distance between his headquarters and his civilian superiors in either The Hague, or Batavia, made large inlets due to advent of reliable long-distance telegraphing. While overcoming one difficulty, it did not solve all.

The second friction in maintaining political control over military objectives was that with the advent of new KNIL tactics, focussing more on mobility, was the following. A military column could be off the grid for a number of months, communicating by messengers only. Despite the advances in communication technology, distance still mattered. If we look at the

[154] Herfkens, *Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis*, 1-5.
[155] Von Clausewitz, *On War*, 20-21.

letter van Heutsz wrote to refute the objections of Snouck Hurgronje, he was able to dictate a new strategy, despite the fact being only a captain. Through extensive lobbying, he was promoted to command in Aceh, and was able to put his plan into practice. This indicates that KNIL commanders had a room to act independently. A liberty some of van Heutsz's commanders took to the fullest extent whereby they undertook devastating military campaigns to 'put the boot on the neck of Acehan'.

When looking at the applicability of Clausewitzian views, one may argue that using his views help explaining certain aspects of colonial warfare. What is relevant to consider is that laying a theoretical template over historical events will never be a perfect fit. Firstly, military theory is often removed from the situation on the ground. Secondly, it tends to minimise the people involved as fulfilling certain requirements, thereby reducing agency of the people involved. It can be argued that the KNIL that emerged out of the Aceh War, was not even a conventional army in the strictest sense of the word. The lessons learned in Aceh emphasised the use of the '*klewang and carbine*', and to fight with the same spirit as their adversary.[156] These lessons were well learned by van Heutsz's subordinates, people like van Daalen, and Captain Hans Christoffel, applied them with a swift ruthlessness across the archipelago.[157] Despite the occasional voice of protest raised at their methods, they were allowed to carry on, receiving medals and pensions as reward.

Do the actions of van Heutsz, van Daalen, Christoffel, and others provide an extraordinary picture of colonial violence? If it is contrasted to the colonial conflicts of other colonial powers, especially those waged around the turn of the twentieth century, they do not seem to differ in the application of military force. If we would play the numbers game, then we could allude to a difference, but that argument is somewhat disingenuous. What matters in this case is that structural causes, like mentality, racial attitudes, and superiority do a better job at explaining the purpose of colonial armies. One could argue that the tactics employed by the KNIL in the conquest of the Aceh were not extraordinary, especially when compared to other colonial wars fought by European armies. In chapter two the tactics employed by the French army in Algeria were described, with special attention to the *Système Bugeaud* and the Razzia tactics. These tactics were designed to wage a scorched earth campaign directly targeting civilian infrastructure, similar approaches were used in Aceh. One of the recurring justifications of using these tactics, and colonial conquest in general, is the outspoken attitude of European

[156] Jaap de Moor, 'Met Klewang en Karabijn: een Militaire Geschiedenis van Nederlands-Indië' in J. Hoffenaar (ed.), Nederland en zijn militaire traditie (Den Haag, Instituut voor Militaire Historie, 2003), 199-244.
[157] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare', 289-290.

superiority vis-à-vis the non-European other. The French would call it the *Mission Civilisatrice*, the British the *White Man's Burden*, and the Dutch *Ethische Politiek*, but no matter how it was named it was always used to mask a darker reality.

4.2 Co-optation of the state

One of recurring themes in this thesis has been the symbiosis of the NHM, and the Dutch political establishment. The connection between the State and Commerce in colonial history is a starting point for colonial policy. The wealth extracted from colonial possessions was seen as a vital national interest. In the Dutch case, the rapid conquest of the Indonesian archipelago was to a degree a search for resources like, oil, coal, rubber, and tin needed for the emerging industries in Europe and the United States. The NHM, being responsible for operating the colonial supply chain, played a vital role, which can arguably be described as too big to fail.[158] The NHM garnered a large percentage of their profits from government contracts. Specifically providing logistical support to the KNIL. Both supplying the KNIL with provisions, munitions, and providing transport. Due to their close relationship with the state, they occupied a central position. The pivotal position occupied by the NHM within the Dutch East Indies gave it a strong negotiating position vis-à-vis the state. If the NHM, the company responsible for being the flying wheel for Dutch industry, became insolvent it would likely necessitate a bail-out by the state.

If we take this perspective, it should not come as a surprise that the Dutch government not only enacted legislation directly benefitting NHM activities in the Dutch East Indies, like the Penal Sanctions, which gave greater powers in controlling indentured labourers, but also in smaller actions, like providing a KNIL escort for tax collectors in Aceh.[159] As stated in the previous chapter, while the VOC might have been assigned to the pages of history, in many ways the Kompeunie lived on. Certainly, in the minds of local communities in the Indonesian archipelago, and also in practise by the actions of the Dutch state and the NHM. What further accelerated this symbiosis was that Dutch parliamentarians had to have a private source of income. While they did receive a stipend to cover expenses, this would not have been sufficient maintain their livelihood. While the parliamentary compensation was increased in 1917, this did not go without heated debates. Some parliamentarians saw an increase in compensation as a way to establish 'professional' politicians, which would devaluate the standing of the group

[158] De Graaf, *Voor Handel en Maatschappij*, 46.
[159] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 9.

as such.[160] While this attitude towards the 'gentleman politician' is admirable on a certain level, it limits political participation to limited group of persons who were able to support themselves independently.

For people lacking private wealth, but with political ambitions, this situation put them in a potentially difficult position. Either postpone their political career, and pursue a career at a commercial firm, or do both. One example of the latter was van Heutsz' subordinates, Hendrik Colijn. Colijn combined his tenure as parliamentarian with a directorship at the Batavian Petroleum Company[161] (BPM), a subsidiary of the KNPM, which gave him a considerable personal fortune.[162] While much of his tenure as parliamentarian and director at the BPM was as a member of the Dutch Senate, this does present a number of troubling issues. The most important being, that the symbiosis between State and Commerce becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that reinforces itself. Colijn presents was not the only case. Several ministers for Colonial Affairs were as intimate with their ministerial offices as with the offices of the NHM. The notion of the "gentleman politician" reinforced this interaction. Politics being a part-time occupation carried with it the unintended consequence that it for opening the door to increased corporate influence. The irony of politicians being responsible for policy that benefitted the corporations they were directly linked to was not lost on most contemporaries.

The socialist member of Parliament, Pieter Jelles Troelstra, when parliamentary discussions veered towards colonial affairs, was quick to point out, the supposed connections between "Capital" and politics. During Jacob Cremer's tenure as minister for Colonial Affairs, Troelstra was one of the more notable critics of colonial policy in general, and the Aceh War in particular. Chiding Cremer that "*he would be the perfect person to point out the relationship between capital and the Aceh War*" for when he was appointed as minister he had to step down from the board of directors of Royal Mailing Service (KPM) and the Deli Corporation and other companies active on the Sumatra.[163] While Troelstra's objections, and those of other critics of certain colonial policies were there, it proved difficult for these voices to affect meaningful change to certain policies they deemed to be exploitative, or cruel. One good example of this uneasiness is the way in which the afore-mentioned Rhemrev Rapport was covered up by the

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[160] *https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrrs0qo/inkomen_tweede_kamerlid*. Consulted on 23-07-2018.
[161] Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij in Dutch.
[162] *https://www.parlement.com/id/vg09lkz7m8z5/h_hendrik_colijn*. Consulted on 23-07-2018.
[163] *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1897-1898* 17 november 1897. Quote in Dutch: "*Immers. hebben wij niet terstond na de benoeming van dezen Minister in de Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant kunnen lezen, dat deze Minister niet alleen was afgetreden als voorzitter van het bestuur van de Koninklijke Paketvaartmaatschappij. maar bovendien als voorzitter van commissarissen der Deli-maatschappij, als commissaris van de Deli-Spoorwegmaatschappij, als commissaris van de Senembah en van de Medan-Maatschappij.*"

minister responsible for its content. While this can be ascribed as to cover for commercial interests, which it arguably was to a certain degree, one cannot rule out the possibility that such tidings brought embarrassment for the *grand* colonial project. This speaks to the general political convergence towards the colonial project in the Dutch East Indies. If we go back to Troelstra's criticism about Dutch colonialism, later on in the same statement, he does note that the money and effort going into Indonesia should rather be spent on the general welfare of the local inhabitants.[164]

The same rhetoric was espoused by people more directly connected to the Dutch imperial project. It was espoused by many that European dominance would end 'despotic rule', 'bring order and progress', and would propel colonial subjects to higher level of development. Today it is easy to be cynical about these ambitions, and point out that despite the lofty intentions, that colonialism was propped up by force, violence, coercion, and facilitated the economic exploitation of the non-European world. This viewpoint is correct, and it would be naïve to take colonial officials at their word when they speak about the white man's burden.

However, this does not explain certain aspects of colonialism, and more specifically the Aceh War fully. If we look at the cooperation between van Heutsz and Snouck Hurgronje in the run up to van Heutsz's command in Aceh, there are a number of novel approaches being undertaken to end the war. The first being Snouck Hurgronje's one-man human intelligence operation into the interior of Aceh, of which he wrote a detailed account pertaining to the history, culture, religion, and legal customs of the Acehan society.[165] It is relevant to remember that this particular work was commissioned by the Dutch government, so it is not a purely altruistic work of scholarship. It was a book that was meant to aid the colonial state help craft a policy for pacifying Aceh. In it, Snouck Hurgronje argued that adat law was prime legal principle for organising life in Aceh, not noticing the important role played by religious leaders and their local interpretation of shariah law.[166]

This does signify a different approach to colonialism, whereby an attempt is made to understand the "other", instead of using just brute force. The goal in the end was still enforcing Dutch colonial rule in Aceh, making this particular form of co-optation possibly more pernicious, by subverting academic means for colonial ends. On the one hand there is the academic value of being able to further knowledge, by also assisting in conquest Aceh. This is one of the more troubling aspects of European colonialism. While people like van Heutsz, or

[164] *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1897-1898* 17 november 1897.
[165] Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjèhers* (Leiden 1895).
[166] Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjèhers*, 338-339.

van Daalen were the tip of the spear on the ground, their efforts would not have been possible, if not for the vast machinery behind it.

Understanding how this machinery works helps us to see through the different interests, both state and commercial. We could call this machinery the *Logistics of Empire*. This term does not only refer to the moving of goods and people to and from colonial possessions, but also to indirect activities that furthered imperialism. Snouck Hurgronje's ethnographic work is one example of this, but it goes deeper. Colonial administrators most obviously, but also merchants buying, and selling colonial products for the European market, bankers providing credit for colonial economic ventures, companies making sugar processing machines to name a number of activities, were all cogs in this logistical process driving demand, supply, and conquest. It is possible that they saw themselves as loyal servants of the state, honest brokers, or intrepid entrepreneurs, but they were co-opted into a system that needed violence, coercion, and force to achieve success. If we compare this Harmand's point about his vision of imperialism, he describes that colonialism is in addition to being a conquering, and production policy, Harmand also calls for a total mobilisation of science, government, and education to further the imperial program.[167]

This created a self-reinforcing cycle that made many complicit. Soldiers, missionaries, entrepreneurs, and administrators, all propped up this system. It would be a mistake however, to frame this as an affair which saw the European pitted against the non-European. In addition to armed resistance, or becoming an indentured labourer, there were also many indigenous people who willingly worked with the coloniser. Thereby also becoming a cog in the *Logistics of Empire*. To name some examples in the case of Aceh, the KNIL was dependent on native soldiers filling the ranks. In addition to the soldiers, there were also the local elites who cooperated with the Dutch. Mostly by signing leases to tracts of lands which the NHM, or other companies tried to develop for specific purposes. The money earned from those leases would then fill the coffers of the local Raja or Sultan who signed the lease. As to why these local elites were co-opted, will be discussed in the next paragraph.

4.3 Co-optation of local elites

Any potential success of European imperialism depended on the cooperation of their colonial subjects. There are several reasons why this is so, the most glaring reason is that Europeans

[167] Jules Harmand, Domination et colonisation, 151.

were outnumbered in terms of population effectives, as the colonial state was generally weak and difficult to limit in terms of physical, social, and cultural borders. The maximum troop strength of the KNIL under van Heutsz was 38.000 men, a number apparently large enough to control the Indonesian archipelago.[168] While this was in large part achieved through the use of violence, co-opting local elites was an important part to colonial rule. As Stoler argues, the myth of the European bending their surroundings to their will is in large part, a myth which left out the agency and inputs of men and women born and raised locally.[169] The same argument can be made in regard to colonial rule.

Co-opting local elites by European colonial powers was common practice in the Early Modern period. In the case of the Dutch, who had to contend with sixty million[170] Indonesians by 1900 this policy of co-optation was born out of necessity. Striking up alliances with local rulers or having them submit to Dutch rule would facilitate the submission, or pacification of a region. This system had major flaws. It only worked if the signing party was sufficiently convinced that the European counterpart was stronger or saw direct benefit in cooperation. This was especially difficult in Aceh. One of the major difficulties that faced the Dutch attempts at conquest in Aceh was the diffuse nature of the Acehan resistance. The Acehan state itself had fractured, seeing local Rajas, religious leaders usurp power for themselves from the court of the Acehan Sultan.

This situation presented the largest challenge for the colonial state in the Aceh War, and arguably one the reasons why the war lasted for forty years. How can you effectively control any given area if the opponent you are facing, are actually multiple opponents, who are fighting against you for a myriad of reasons? One possible solution was to co-opt local elites in the colonial state. By co-opting local elites, the colonial state could extend its influence, and give those elites a position of power. The particular group that was co-opted were the *oelèëbalangs* who were the representatives of the Acehnese sultan and were responsible to administrating the adat law.[171] This partly shows that co-opting local elites to further your own agenda was not done from a position of strength, but rather as an expedient way to cement a precarious position in a hostile environment. One relevant issue that this co-optation policy left out was that the

[168] Groen, 'Colonial Warfare', 290.
[169] Stoler, *In the Company's Shadow*, 25-26.
[170] http://www.populstat.info/Asia/indonesc.htm. Consulted on 02-08-2018.
[171] Jajat Burhanudin, 'The Dutch Colonial Policy on Islam: Reading the Intellectual Journey of Snouck Hurgronje' in *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* Vol. 52, 25-58, 38-39.

Dutch removed the sultan of Aceh from his position, thereby severely diminishing the position of the *oelèëbalangs.*[172]

Two questions that can be asked, regarding co-optation are, why were certain groups willing to let themselves be co-opted, and were there other options to achieve control through other means? The answer the former, the oelèëbalangs had lost their position when the Dutch removed the Acehan sultan, cooperating with the colonial state could give them a new-found authority, and arguably financial gains. To answer the latter, the short answer is yes. If we look at the idea of *Logistics of Empire*, there is an argument to be made that if resources were allocated differently it might have been possible to exert direct control over the Indonesian archipelago. This does entail that the colonial state would have become more intrusive in local society, and not just through military means, but also setting up a proto-welfare state, that delivered on the promises of the *Ethical Policy*. This avenue though, would raise the expenditure of the colonial state considerably, thereby reducing the profitability for NHM contracts which might suffer due to a different allocation of funds. Would this be a likely scenario? Arguably not, considering the political landscape in the Netherlands, and the interests of Dutch businesses active in the Dutch East Indies. Making use of local elites to establish a notion of Dutch sovereignty in Aceh, and in the rest of the archipelago, was to an extent, the logical consequence of colonial policy.

While using to local elites to establish Dutch rule, can be construed as a method of asserting control. There were tangible benefits for local elites to let themselves be co-opted by the Dutch. First, local elites who leased land for agriculture or mining concessions benefitted financially from their cooperation. Having Dutch support meant access to means that would in cases of continued resistance be denied. If we look at the late nineteenth, and early twentieth century, those means included modern firearms which could be used by local elites to fortify their own position, not only against local rivals, but potentially also against the Dutch, as was the case with Tenkoe Omar, who switched sides in 1896, and took up arms against the KNIL. The Dutch portrayed this particular episode a betrayal.[173]

This fortification was not limited to importing modern rifles, but it also offered an opportunity for these local elites to co-opt the state. The *Short Declaration* that was signed as the symbol of submission to Dutch rule, entailed a number of stipulations for Dutch decrees to be carried out.[174] The conditions laid out were not optional in any way, but this being a contract

[172] Burhanudin, 'The Dutch Colonial Policy On Islam', 38-39.
[173] Van 't Veer, *Atjeh-oorlog*, 50.
[174] Van 't Veer, *Atjeh-oorlog*, 238.

also gave those who signed it certain privileges vis-à-vis the colonial government, chiefly protection against local rivals. As mentioned above, the central authority of the Sultan of Aceh had broken down well before the first arrival of KNIL soldiers. Leaving Aceh in a state of civil war where local leaders and their militias vied for power. By cooperating with the Dutch, local elites secured themselves an ally against potential local foes. Considering that the position of the KNIL and the colonial state was precarious, this level of co-optation looks as a strange move to make for local elites. It can be argued however that the projected image of the colonial state was such that it looked like investment. A second argument could be that because of the local nature of resistance the presence of the KNIL seemed more formidable than it actually was.

The reciprocity aspect of European colonialism is often overlooked in the literature, that often focusses more on the unbalanced power dynamic between the coloniser and the colonised. This emphasis is accurate, but it often neglects that colonial rule was in largely possible through local collaboration. While the *Short Declaration* stipulates a good number of obligations for the signatory, these stipulations also give off the impression that it gives the signatory a relatively strong bargaining position. The *Short Declaration* stipulated general rules of conduct for the signee, but it can be argued that the general nature of these stipulations leave considerable room to manoeuvre.[175] In addition to this, it can also be argued that enforcing all the stipulations required a larger bureaucracy which was not present there. Furthermore, when the conventional focus is on the unbalanced relation between coloniser and colonised it takes away a certain amount of agency to the actions and choices of local communities and their leaders. This is not to say that there was an equal partnership between the Dutch state and the local elites in Aceh, but perhaps that the relationship was not as unequal as is traditionally thought. The articles in the *Short Declaration* stipulates the obligations the signee had to comply with.[176] What it did not stipulate is how compliance should be implemented. What it did do was to give the oelèëbalangs a new power basis in Acehan society.

Co-opting local elites into the colonial system, making them a cog within the *Logistics of Empire* was in many ways a double-edged sword. The main advantage for the Dutch was that it functioned as a cost saving measure. Despite the lofty rhetoric of the Ethical Policy, the Dutch East Indies remained a colony whose express purpose was to supply the raw materials for Dutch, and Western industries. Arranging colonial rule in such a way that local elites did most of the work, like local administration, or labour organisation assisted this purpose. But how much did the situation on the ground change for the average colonial subject? Arguably, there

[175] Jan Marginus Somer, *De Korte Verklaring* (Breda 1934), 357-362.
[176] Somer, *De Korte Verklaring*, 357-359.

was a great deal of continuity. The individuals in charge of one's surroundings remained the same, and so would their daily lives. With the tax collector of the NHM, and his armed escort, being the only direct contact most individuals would have with the colonial government. Did matters changed for the colonial government? This is a matter of perspective, there is a great level of continuity in the workings of the colonial state and the VOC period that went before it. For the Acehnese there was a sense that the colonial state and the VOC were one and the same. The major change one can point to is that the different pillars of the VOC, governance, commerce, and military were split up.

Co-opting local elites brought about the destruction for the colonial state. In the case of the Dutch East Indies, and Aceh War in particular, there was a rather classic case of imperial overstretch. For colonial rule to function at a bare minimum, the colonial government in Batavia was forced to heavily rely on this type of cooperation, in conjunction with a ruthless military machine. The dependence on local elites was complemented with the recruitment of specific ethnic/religious groups into the KNIL and the colonial administration at large. The vast majority of the soldiers were drawn from the archipelago. While the Javanese dominated the ranks in numbers, the Ambonese were taken in high consideration by colonial officers and officials.

This resulted in a fragile balancing act, whereby a slight disturbance in the force could destabilise the foundations of colonial rule. That foundation rested on the shaky pillars of local elites willing to work for the colonial government, and a heavy-handed application of violence in subduing local resistance. Arguably, this is not a great foundation for the long term, while perhaps in the short term it did bear fruit. To see how this delicate equilibrium plays out, we are going to look at a number of factors which created it.

4.4 Inherent instability?

When the Japanese armed forces invaded Southeast Asia as part of their Southern Expansion Strategy, or *Nanshin-ron*, they violently overturned the delicate balance that was established by European colonial empires. With successful coordinated strikes against Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and several other United States pacific outposts on December 7, 1941, they quickly overran Burma, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies in the following months. The KNIL being brought under joint allied command was unable to defend the Archipelago, save a couple of small outposts on West Papua. The Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia was swift, and it was the death knell of European imperialism in Southeast Asia, although it would still

take several wars of independence to fully hammer home the point for European full acknowledgment of the on-going decolonization process.

In the case of Aceh, this instability was arguably most visible. For the whole of Sumatra, the KNIL could only deploy a couple of thousand soldiers, against a numerically and tactically superior Japanese enemy.[177] What compounded the invasion of Aceh, was that despite official pacification resistance to Dutch colonial rule never stopped but continued underground.[178] This situation was not lost on the Japanese, who supported Asian independence movements in Asia during the Second World War. Combatting this simmering insurgency was one of the main goals of the KNIL between 1918 and 1942, as their field manual makes clear. It was revised several times after the 'end' of the Aceh War, but tended to focus on policing actions, neglecting conventional warfare.[179]

The Japanese invasion shattered the fragile balance in the Dutch East Indies in a way that the state was not prepared for. If we take a closer look at the field manual of the KNIL, it handles issues like the use of hand grenades, machine guns, and artillery as tools for police actions.[180] The field manual does stress that when engaged in these policing actions, punitive measures like scorched earth policies are prohibited.[181] Colonial policy in the Dutch East Indies rested on the contradiction of using brute force to pacify it, and attempting to develop its economic potential. While there were developments that point towards an economic development of the Dutch East Indies, the question remains how this development benefitted the peoples of the archipelago. Related to this, did economic development aid in pacification? In regard to the first question, this is highly unlikely. The second question is difficult to answer, but what can be stated is that pacification in Aceh was only possible when backed up militarily.

The situation in Aceh from 1918 onwards differs from the years prior. Major combat operations, as undertaken by van Heutsz, and van Daalen were no longer necessary in asserting control. Aceh was deemed sufficiently pacified and governorship was transferred to a civil administrator.[182] Despite this relative calm, there were the so-called Aceh Murders, often carried out by Acehans who were employed by Europeans. In the period between 1910 and 1942 a steady number of these suicide attacks took place, 161 in total.[183] While these attacks were not an existential threat to the colonial order, their morale effect on the public did pose a

[177] Lou de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, deel 11b* (NIOD 1988), 1091.
[178] Van 't Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 293-294.
[179] *Voorschrift voor de Uitoefening van de Politiek-Politionele Taak van het Leger* (Batavia 1937), 1-26.
[180] *Voorschrift voor de Uitoefening*, 16-20.
[181] *Voorschrift*, 25-26.
[182] Van 't Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 294.
[183] J. Jongejans, *Land en Volk van Atjeh Vroeger en Nu* (Baarn 1939), 311.

challenge to public order.[184] These attacks were one of the few ways in which Acehans resisted, since most of their local feudal leaders cooperated with the colonial government.[185] While it is difficult to state whether or not these were isolated events or if there was a level of coordination involved, the fact that these attacks took place is a sign of a permanent state of insurgency.

This underlying unrest in Aceh reflected the limits of colonial power. As discussed in the previous chapter, several government responsibilities were not exercised by the colonial government itself, but by third parties, as the limited bureaucracy could not assume those tasks. It is difficult to assess whether or not this was a self-enforcing process. Considering the close relationship between the NHM, and the colonial government, it does hint at this. From a practical standpoint being proficient in a policy area requires experience. In the case of colonial governance, while there was a highly experienced cadre of civil servants, there were not enough of them to be stationed across the archipelago, with some sources even suggesting that NHM agents also acted as diplomats on behalf of the colonial state.[186] This can be ascribed in part to the NHM itself, being able to collect taxes and provide logistical support for the KNIL, assuming thus an indispensable role within colonial governance. This position by the NHM gave it leverage, because without colonial taxation the lifeline of the government in Batavia would be severed, blurring the line of whose authority was exercised actually in the Dutch East Indies.

What added to the relative instability was that local elites could and did interpret their authority with considerable leeway. According to an investigation carried out R.A. Kern into the motives for the Aceh Murders, one of the reasons as to why these attacks took place was the near absolute power exercised by the *oelèëbalangs*, or local chiefs.[187] They acted as intermediaries for the government and the NHM which provided enough incentives to secure their positions and neutralise potential rivals, usually religious leaders who were often the main figures in Acehan resistance against Dutch colonial rule.[188] Relying on these local leaders, who in turn relied on military protection from the KNIL and their own heavy handed rule, arguably did not secure the position of the colonial government as it was intended.

That position was already strenuous to begin with, Dutch strategy in Aceh up until the time that van Heutsz took over was focused on maintaining a perimeter around Kota Raja, with

[184] Van 't Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 296.
[185] Ibidem
[186] *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* 26-10-1904. Mr. van Straaten of the Aceh Trading Company, brokered the surrender of Tenkoe Sabe Silang, who would be disarmed and accept Dutch sovereignty.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.

the occasional punitive scorched earth expedition sent out. With the development of the Indian Gendarmerie acting as mobile commando unit, and regular infantry units also adapting to a more mobile style of warfare, van Heutsz established a more active policy for subduing the Acehan militias. The long-term effects point to the fact that these militias were gradually being destroyed or surrendered. Messages sent from the NHM offices in 1907 from Kota Raja present a different picture, one that within immediate vicinity of Kota Raja, and arguably other towns that were garrisoned, were the only parts of Aceh that could be controlled effectively. Or as the rapporteur wrote that "*the establishment of plantations outside the immediate area of Kota Raja remained too dangerous without protection.*"[189]

This does not mean that the KNIL was incapable of protecting the interests of the NHM and the colonial government. Broersma was adamant that people like van Daalen and Christoffel were effective in pacifying certain areas of Aceh to clear the way for the NHM.[190] The problem was in order to fully achieve the goal of pacification, the amount of recourses allocated to establishing such a result were never adequate. With the conquest of the Indonesian archipelago the state and the KNIL were overstretched, which meant that the allocation of funds had to be prioritised. Compare this to the KNPM in Perlak where the KNPM managed to convince one of the local militia leaders to be allowed to drill for oil and receive allocated local labour. The KNPM payed a protection fee to receive these privileges, while the money paid was then being used to protract the struggle against the KNIL. What this episode shows is that the main selling point of the KNIL as the guarantor of security, was not as absolute as it seems. With private corporations finding ways to secure their investments without the interference of the colonial state.

This was not for a want of effort. Colonial warfare was a brutal and vicious affair, with often an emphasis on extreme violence to achieve 'victory'. There was a certain logic behind this method. By employing extreme violence on a native population, a colonial power hopes to show that it is dominant, and that they can dictate from a position of strength. In the case of Aceh, van Heutsz emphasised putting the boot on the neck of the Acehan. For van Heutsz this did not mean that his war effort was just a series of punitive expeditions, but to imprint into the minds of Acehan resistance leaders, that resistance was futile. While it appears that van Heutsz was not only focussed on military means, his subordinates did not share his public compunction against excessive violence. Officers like van Daalen en Christoffel, pursued their goals with a ruthless efficiency, not only in Aceh, but throughout the archipelago.

[189] NL-HA, NHM, 2.20.01, 5107.
[190] Broersma, *Atjeh als Land*, 6-7.

Despite the sudden speed with which the Indonesian archipelago was subjugated the supposed strength of Dutch rule was not to last. The quick collapse came in 1942 when the Japanese invaded and occupied the Dutch East Indies. Japan overthrew a system that was based on violent coercion to control the flow of available labour for colonial industries. The Dutch position in Aceh and the wider archipelago was weak. The colonial administration relied heavily on third parties to ensure stability and was unable to reliably secure its position. Due to a mix of different interests that ran counter to its interests. The Aceh War showed that while battlefield success was attainable, the effort it took to expand on it proved to be too much making the Aceh War a perfect example of imperial overstretching.

5. Conclusion

"*The past is never dead, it is not even the past*".[191] This quote from Faulkner's play *Requiem for a Nun* has hovered around this thesis. One of the clearer examples of this is that Acehan resistance against 'foreign occupation' continued after the transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch colonial state to the newly independent Indonesian state. While this might be regarded as an irony of history, and in part problematises the narrative of a unified Indonesia, Faulkner's quote rings through on other areas as well, but first the research question requires an answer.

In answering the question whether or not the tactics of mass violence used during the Aceh War are attributable to economic interests two conclusions can be reached based on the archival evidence found while researching this thesis. The first conclusion is that there is not a direct link to be found. Broersma hints that this was case in at least one case, but this cannot be corroborated. This does not mean that there is not any evidence to support this claim, but to find out if there is such a direct link, there needs to be further research done for this topic to give a more definitive answer.

The second conclusion is that while there is lack of any direct links between the tactics used and economic interests, there is a large indirect influence of the NHM and other commercial parties that informed decisions made by KNIL commanders in the Aceh War. The clearest example of how this worked on the ground can be seen in chapter three. Van Heutsz seemly not needing encouragement to remember the interests of the NHM, or that NHM sent along botanical and mining experts along when van Daalen ventured into the Gajo and Alas lands, as well as providing armed escorts for the NHM tax collectors. In addition to this there is the situation where the NHM provided the logistical support for the KNIL operations and making use of the infrastructure constructed by KNIL. But this co-optation of state means by the NHM went deeper. One clear example is the number of colonial ministers that were either former NHM directors or executives of their subsidiaries in the Dutch East Indies. What better way to secure one's economic interests if government policy emanating from the centre is enacted by the same people who work for those companies. This process of co-optation was not a one-way street, the NHM facilitated the expanding colonial state by providing crucial support for the colonial state, the aforementioned tax collecting was one area wherein the state used the NHM, but this also manifested itself informally in negotiating with local elites for submission

[191] William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (London 1957), 85.

on behalf of the state. With this amount of intertwined connections, it is not surprising that comparisons with the VOC come to mind.

In addition to similarities between the ‘modern’ colonial state and the ‘early modern’ company state, there were stark differences as well, the VOC governed its overseas possessions as a sovereign in its own right. It possessed its own army and navy which it used to enforce its own interests. The period after the VOC saw the commercial aspects of the company state being taken over by the NHM, and most of the governmental duties taken over by the Dutch state. Although these differences were real, with all three branches, state, KNIL, and NHM seeing each other as separate part. Yet this image did not translate into the minds of Indonesians, with the Acehans in particular seeing this triumvirate as the Kompeunie.

This Acehan perception was not that far of the mark considering the available sources. As we have seen with van Heutsz’s tenure as governor of Aceh. In order to achieve the planned pacification of Aceh, van Heutsz hoped to use the NHM as an agent in that process. What probably added to this perception is the fact that NHM tax collectors needed armed escorts of KNIL soldiers when they went into the interior of Aceh. Less visible than the overt cooperation between the KNIL and the NHM, was the close cooperation between the Dutch state and the NHM. Besides the government contracts and connections there was also an understanding that exploitation and abuses came to the fore. Prime example of this is the way in which the abuses of indentured labourers after the adoption of the Penal System and the publication of the Rhemrev Rapport, which remained locked in an archival cabinet for close to eighty years.

This leads us to wonder how this system was able to operate on the ground. Much in the same way as the state co-opted the NHM for its colonial policy, and the NHM co-opted the state for its commercial interests, a similar trend is to be seen with the co-optation of local elites. This proved to be the most challenging aspect of Dutch colonialism, with Aceh being a good example of how to get it wrong. The main problem facing the KNIL in pacifying Aceh was that that resistance was organised on a local, with local alliances where possible. These local militias were usually led by religious leaders, who enjoyed considerable prestige due to their continued resistance against the Kompeunie. The group of secular elites the Dutch co-opted did not enjoy the same amount of prestige and were often seen as collaborators. These local elites were responsible for organising the taxation of the population and for operating the local municipalities. This situation did not provide a stable situation for a system of government and could only be supported with the help of harsh military repression. This situation was upended when the Japanese Imperial Army invaded in 1942 and swept away the Dutch colonial institutes.

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