Abstract

This dissertation explores the interaction between Australian foreign policy and the Indonesian Revolution. Central is the point that Australian foreign policy was shaped by the Indonesian Revolution to an extent that few historians have recognized so far. After the Second World War, the Indonesian Revolution both posed a threat and was an opportunity for Australia. They wanted to create a stable region and were aware of how important it was to have Indonesia as a defensive ally, especially after the quick Allied defeat at the hand of the Japanese. They also saw a chance to build up a trade relationship with a country that was both rich in natural resources and had a lot of potential customers of Australian products. Before the Revolution, Australia had mainly counted on the British and their stronghold Singapore for their defence, and had been unable to conduct trade with the Netherlands East Indies on large scale, due to the protectionist policies of the Netherlands. Australia became aware that its own interests conflicted with those of the United Kingdom and the colonial system. It was because of this old colonial order that the Netherlands East Indies and Australia did not maintain extensive contacts with each other politically and diplomatically speaking, but were both still very much focussed on the countries that had colonized them. Even though those were on the other side of the globe, and Australia and the Netherlands East Indies were neighbours.

With the Indonesian Revolution this could all change, and Australia saw the opportunity. However, the United Kingdom had dominated Australian foreign policy for so long, that Australia was still unsure what its own opinions on the situation were. But these developed pretty quick, after Australia was dragged into the conflict. The result of the Borneo Campaign was that they had to assume responsibility over the eastern part of Indonesia after the war, until the Dutch would return. A polarizing, nationwide dockworkers' strike in the meantime made sure that everyone in Australia itself knew what was going on in the Netherlands East Indies. While they initially tried to work together with the Dutch to find a

solution for the conflict, the Australians soon became fed up with their stubbornness and the relation soured after a couple of diplomatic incidents. The British consequently denied the Australians a place at the negotiating table, and though they accepted their position at first, their frustration grew with each failed British attempt to mediate an agreement between the revolutionary leaders of the Republic of Indonesia and the Dutch.

When the Dutch launched a military attack on the Republican areas in July 1947, the Australians decided that it was time to act. Breaking through all traditional boundaries that divided countries in political allegiances at the time, it referred the Indonesian dispute to the Security Council, directly defying requests from their closest ally the United Kingdom not to do precisely that, in support of a non-white, non-Western, and non-Christian country that did not even exist yet.

This was both a symbol of an emerging Southeast Asian – or Pacific – region, of maturing Australian independence, and of the unavoidable demise of the colonial system, but it was also a momentous development in the Indonesian struggle for independence. The Renville Agreement that was signed after the ensuing negotiations between the Netherlands, the Republic, Belgium, the United States, and Australia was itself not such a success for the Indonesians, but it would have far-reaching effects. For the first time since the outbreak of hostilities after the Second World War, the international community had committed itself to a peaceful ending to the Indonesian Revolution. And this support would turn out to be crucial in the subsequent episodes that would ultimately lead to Indonesian independence.

This thesis shows that studying the Indonesian Revolution and its impact through emerging power structures, instead of along the traditional lines, can provide surprising new insights, both in the significant role Australia has played in the Indonesian Revolution, and how that revolution would help bring about a more independent Australian foreign policy.

‘Australia’s Near North’

The Dutch-Australian Political Clash over Indonesia, 1945-1948.

Simon Boeke, 28-06-2017

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

- Australian Documents on Foreign Policy – ADoFP
- House of Representatives Official Hansard – HoROHansard

Introduction

This thesis will shed new light on how the Indonesian Revolution shaped Australian diplomacy and foreign policy between 1945 and 1948. In turn, it will also show how the developments in Australian diplomacy were an important factor in the internationalisation of the Indonesian Revolution. Histories of Australian diplomacy and of the Indonesian Revolution usually do not devote a lot of attention to the interplay between the two, and this research will show that this is at least partially a mistake. The Indonesian Revolution was one of the moments where Australia redefined its position in the world. The country distanced itself from its previous allegiances and sought collaboration with its largest neighbour. Indonesia was still a Dutch colony at the time, but – in a move unprecedented for the white, Christian, Western country – Australia's Labor government would eventually side against its former allies and decide to help the Indonesians.

In order to focus concisely on the Australian contribution, this thesis is confined to the period between the surrender of Japan on 15 August 1945 and the signing of the Renville Agreement on 17 January 1948. At that point, Australia's realignment had become perfectly clear. Although Indonesia was not yet fully independent by then, this thesis will argue that the course for independence had taken a definite turn with the Renville Agreement. It was there that the international community, through the Security Council, committed itself to the troublesome situation in Indonesia. Moreover, it had been the Australians who brought the Indonesian dispute before the Security Council. They thereby cut through an 'Asiatic versus western' dichotomy in what was heralded in Australian newspapers as a diplomatic 'triumph'.

Directly after the war, nobody would have thought that such a triumph was possible. When the Indonesian Revolution started, Australian foreign policy was still dominated by the United Kingdom, and the racist 'White Australia policy' was still in place. What was more, Australia had just fought a war alongside their Dutch allies – who were very anxious to reclaim their sovereignty over Indonesia – and still hosted their colonial government. And yet, within

two years, the Australian government would pursue its own foreign policy, directly defying their former colonial mother country and the Dutch by helping the non-white Indonesians in their struggle for independence. Researching the Indonesian Revolution from an Australian perspective can make these changes understood, and will at the same time show the importance of studying countries other than the Netherlands and Indonesia to get a full picture of Indonesian Revolution.

This thesis is divided into three chronological chapters. The first lays the groundwork with a short overview of the history of Australian independence in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by an equally short outline of the origins of the Indonesian Revolution and the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East-Indies (N.E.I.), with specific attention devoted to the Borneo Campaign. The rest of the chapter covers the period between the surrender of Japan on 14 August 1945 and the final retreat of Australian forces from Indonesian soil on 19 March 1946.

After the war was over, the Netherlands lay in ruins and was not capable of sending soldiers to their colony straightaway. Their British and Australian allies moved in to liberate the N.E.I., repatriate the Japanese soldiers that were still there, keep order, and free the many Dutch prisoners. The Australian area of occupation included Borneo and all the islands east of Java, and naturally brought the Australians in close collaboration with the British – who were in command of the military operations in the N.E.I. – and the Dutch. During these first months of the Indonesian Revolution, the Australians still very much wanted to work together with the British and Dutch, but the first cracks in the respective relationships became apparent. With the British, this was because right from the start they excluded Australia from taking part in any negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesians. With the Dutch, it was because of Dutch impatience, and an Australian dockworker ban on loading, unloading, and repairing Dutch ships.

Still, relations had not completely soured at that point, and the second chapter deals with the attempts and ultimate failure to reach a diplomatic solution in Indonesia between March 1946 and July 1947. After the Australian soldiers had returned to Australia, the government had more freedom to support the Indonesian struggle for independence. It was convinced that a good relationship with a (to some degree) independent Indonesia would benefit Australia, and it established friendly contacts with a number of leaders of the Republic of Indonesia, notably with Sutan Sjahrir. But, much to Australia's disappointment, the United Kingdom continuously refused to let Australia play an active role in the peace process. With the Australian-Dutch relations worsening, the Australian government came to the conclusion that mediation by the Security Council was the only viable solution to the problems in Indonesia.

The third chapter starts with Operatie Product in July 1947, and ends with the ratification of the Renville Agreement on 17 January 1948.[1] Operatie Product was the tipping point for the Australians, who decided to take matters into their own hands. Fed up with the slow and unsuccessful attempts at mediation by the British, and too frustrated with the Dutch to still care if the outcome of the conflict would be satisfying to their former allies, they appealed to the Security Council to broker a ceasefire and an agreement between the Netherlands and the Republic. This motion was the moment when the Australian realignment became apparent. The Dutch condemned the action, while the Indonesians praised it and subsequently asked the Australians to represent their case in the new negotiations that took place under United Nations auspices. The appeal was also in direct defiance of the United Kingdom, which had specifically asked Australia not to go to the Security Council. The resulting negotiations saw Australia and Indonesia working together to persuade the traditional

[1] 'Operatie Product', just as 'Operatie Kraai' are the Dutch terms for what is more commonly, but also quite misleadingly, known as 'Eerste en Tweede Politionele Actie', First and Second Police (or Military) Action, and Agresi Militer Belanda I and II in Dutch, English and Indonesian historiography respectively.

colonial powers Belgium and the Netherlands to accept the new world order, thereby for the first time manifesting themselves as constituent countries of an emerging Southeast Asian region. The fifth and last country involved in the negotiations was the United States of America. Although the American role in the creation of the Renville Agreement was criticized by the Australians at the time, the fact that they committed themselves to the situation in Indonesia would later prove to be crucial.

In order to understand what made the Australian government turn to the Security Council, this thesis makes use of a number of sources, most notably the *Australian Documents on Foreign Policy*. These documents, published in sixteen volumes between 1975 and 2001, consist of political and diplomatic cablegrams, letters, press statements and minutes of meetings of the Australian cabinet. These sources reveal the processes that were going on within the Australian government at the time, the diplomatic relations between the Australians and the Dutch, Indonesians, British and others, and the ideas and personal opinions of Australian politicians like Prime Minister Ben Chifley, Minister of Foreign Affairs H.V. Evatt, and many more members of the Australian government.

The focus on the high diplomatic and political side of the road to Renville means that other perspectives will be treated only peripherally. Military history, race related issues, juridical analyses, the Cold War, political scientific reflections etc. could all help to explain Australia's role in the Indonesian Revolution, but lie outside the scope of this research. This thesis highlights the information, decisions, and actions within the halls of power, but it is not blind to wider context. It also makes recourse to Australian newspapers, recognising how the media could influence political decision-making. This is especially important in the months leading up to the Australian elections of September 1946, where Prime Minister Chifley would book a large victory, and also in relation to the widely condemned communist-led bans on

Dutch ships, which helped shape the Australian public opinion about the Indonesian Revolution.

Working with a selection of primary sources also means that it is especially important to embed the research in the existing historiography, to make sure that the choices made by the editors of the published source material do not result in unbalanced or biased research. George McTurnan Kahin's *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Benedict Anderson's *Java in a Time of Revolution*, and Anthony Reid's *The Indonesian National Revolution* are all classic examples of the many general histories of the Indonesian Revolution that have been written over the years. Historical works that deal specifically with how Australia and the Indonesian Revolution influenced each other are rarer, but one shining exception is Margaret George's *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution*, an interesting, but, due to her early death, unfinished work. Other historical works that deal with the impact of the Indonesian Revolution on Australia mainly focus on the dockworkers' strikes. Rupert Lockwood's *Black Armada* is a prime example of many more articles and books written about this specific episode.

Some other relevant books for this study are often exclusively concerned with either Australia or the Indonesian Revolution, which makes them incomplete at times. It is for instance interesting to note that the two main biographies of Chifley – written by L.F. Crisp and David Day – contain only eight paragraphs about the Indonesian Revolution in almost a thousand pages between the two of them, despite the fact that Chifley arguably played an important role in the Australian foreign policy regarding Indonesia at the time.[2] Diplomatic histories like *Munich to Vietnam*, edited by Carl Bridge, or Christopher Waters' *The Empire Fractures*, do often note the huge changes in Australian foreign policy after the Second World War, but gloss over the Indonesian Revolution as an important factor in this development. Other examples can be found in Dutch historiography, where a too narrow focus on Dutch

[2] L.F. Crisp, *Ben Chifley. A Biography*, (London 1961); David Day, *Chifley*, (Pymble 2001).

sources sometimes lead to unbalanced studies. While Loe de Jong, Willem IJzereef, J.J.P. de Jong, C. Giebel, and many more have devoted some attention to Australia's role in the Indonesian Revolution, they have often failed to understand it, and appreciate its significance. Such an unbalance does not automatically disqualify a study, but it does need a counterbalance. And this thesis tries to do exactly that: it seeks to provide a new perspective on the emergence of a region that was liberating itself from its colonial ties. Counterbalancing the many studies concerned with the relationship between colonizer and colonized, this thesis will show how two countries in different stages of decolonization shaped each other's and their own future.

Chapter 1: Vital interest and first impressions

This chapter starts with a very short outline of the very different ways in which Australia and Indonesia became independent, and more specifically shows the long-lasting influence of the British on Australian foreign policy, and why the Indonesian Revolution came so sudden and was so violent.

The Australian desire to leave their mark on the war in the Pacific led to the Borneo campaign, which in turn led to half a year of Australian occupation of a large part of Indonesia. Without being fully aware of the fact at the time, this was the start of Australia's involvement in the Indonesian Revolution. And soon it would turn out that their ideas about the future of Indonesia conflicted with the ideas of their Dutch allies, whose N.E.I. government they had hosted during the war. But where the Dutch felt that Australia was not doing enough to supress the revolution, a large group of dockworkers – led by communists – felt that Australia was doing too much, and went on strike in support of the Indonesian revolutionaries. This move deeply polarized Australian public opinion, and the Australian government was now caught between Dutch pressure, British interests, internal unrest, and a weary army that needed to be demobilised as soon as possible.

Australian sovereignty and the Second World War

In the year 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was formed. An Australian constitution was proclaimed, the first general elections were held, and the Duke of York opened the first Australian Parliament. Significant as this was for the independence of Australia, the country was not yet fully separated from its mother country and the road to complete autonomy was still long.[1] Australia was inexperienced in self-governing, especially when it came to foreign

[1] W.J. Hudson and M.P. Sharp, *Australian Independence. Colony to Reluctant Kingdom*, (Melbourne 1988) pp. 24-36.

policy.[2] But foreign policy soon became extremely important when Pearl Harbor was attacked on 7 December 1941, and the United Kingdom and Australia declared war on Japan the following day.[3]

The Japanese advanced swiftly. The British stronghold Singapore fell on 15 February 1942, and on 9 March, only three months after Pearl Harbor, the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) had to surrender the Netherlands East Indies to Japan. Now only sea separated Australia from its enemies. The Japanese attacked Australian harbours and ships, carried out bombings of Australian cities and strategic resources, and heavy fighting took place in the Australian administered part of eastern New Guinea.[4]

It had become clear that the United Kingdom was not capable of protecting its Dominion. In 1942, Australian Prime Minister John Curtin therefore advanced the Westminster Adoption Act – which was deemed unnecessary by his predecessors – to make Australia a truly sovereign country. He did this in order to give his government the full liberty to collaborate with the United States of America – an important ally – and make independent decisions regarding the war and its aftermath.[5] But even as they embarked on a course towards a more independent foreign policy, it was not until the Indonesian Revolution was in full swing before the Australians would want and dare to make decisions that countered British interests.[6]

Japanese occupation of Indonesia

Even though the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies was feared in Australia, it was welcomed in Indonesia. Large numbers of people greeted the Japanese as liberators, fed up as they were with the Dutch colonial regime. The Japanese knew how to exploit these

[2] Hudson and Sharp, *Australian Independence*, pp. 6-7.
[3] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, (Cambridge 2008) pp. 165-170.
[4] Bob Alford, *Darwin 1942. The Japanese Attack on Australia*, (Oxford 2017) pp. 34-72.
[5] Hudson and Sharp, *Australian Independence*, pp. 125-129.
[6] Carl Bridge ed., *Munich to Vietnam. Australia's Relations with Britain and the United States Since the 1930's*, (Carlton 1991) pp. 1-3.

sentiments and launched a big anti-colonial propaganda campaign.[7] The Indonesian nationalists Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta were freed from their prisons and given positions in the Japanese administration in Indonesia. For this collaboration, the two nationalist leaders would be scorned by the Dutch, who claimed that they were traitors and war criminals.[8] But while working together with the Japanese, Sukarno, Hatta, and other revolutionaries also tried to further the cause of Indonesian independence. With the Japanese military situation becoming increasingly precarious towards the end of the war, nationalist sentiments in Indonesia grew. The Japanese started to support Indonesian independence when they realized that they were losing the war, in the hopes that the Indonesians would fight the Allies and slow their advance towards Japan. But when Japan suddenly surrendered on the 15 August 1945, it caught the Indonesian revolutionary leaders by surprise. Underprepared, but pressured by radical youth groups, Sukarno and Hatta hastily issued the 'Proklamasi': the Indonesian declaration of independence.[9]

After this proclamation, Sukarno and Hatta assumed the positions of president and vice-president respectively of the newly formed Republic of Indonesia and tried to institute their power. This was of course not an easy task, and there were numerous challenges. The vast Indonesian archipelago, consisting of tens of thousands of islands, inhabited by tens of millions of people, was partly already in the hands of the Allies and partly still governed by the Japanese on orders of the Allies. The revolutionary government was not recognized by all Indonesians; it only had a very limited bureaucracy and no organized army. Rallying support was also not easy in the first weeks, as the Republican government had no effective means of spreading

[7] Keat Gin Ooi, *Post-War Borneo, 1945-1950. Nationalism, Empire, and State-building*, (Abingdon 2008) pp. 24-28.
[8] C. Fasseur, 'Het verleden tot last. Nederland, de Tweede Wereldoorlog en de dekolonisatie van Indonesië', *1940-1945: Onverwerkt verleden?* (Utrecht 1985), pp. 133-155 at p. 133.
[9] Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars. Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia*, (Cambridge 2007) pp. 164-165.

news.[10] Weapons and trained fighters were in short supply, but desperately needed, because even though the internal situation was very difficult, the external pressure was even higher. None of the Allied powers recognized Indonesian independence, and the Netherlands was especially vocal in denouncing the revolutionary leaders.[11] The Indonesians and the Dutch were about to enter a vehement conflict.

The Borneo Campaign

The Second World War caused massive shifts in global and regional configurations of power structures around the world. The Australians were aware of that and realised that they had to adapt their foreign policy – previously exclusively focussed on the United Kingdom and Europe – to the new situation.[12] In August 1944, the Australian government sent the Australian representative to the Netherlands the following cablegram:

> A consideration of first importance is that decisions on the administration of enemy and enemy-occupied Pacific territories immediately after Allied occupation, will have far-reaching consequences, affecting the future of the region in which we have a most vital interest, and it is therefore important that we should be aware at first hand of developments in these territories and should participate in decisions.[13]

The Australians did not just want to sit back and watch the new world order unfold, they wanted to shape it to their advantage, and were willing to go quite far to do so.

On 15 February 1945, Prime Minister Curtin wrote General Douglas MacArthur, who was in charge of the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) command, that it was of 'vital importance to the future of Australia' that the Australian army would see action in the Pacific

[10] Chandler, David P., Robert Cribb and Li Narangoa ed., *End of Empire. 100 Days in 1945 that Changed Asia and the World*, (Copenhagen 2016) pp. 132-133, 137-138.
[11] Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution. Occupation and Resistance, 1944-1946*, (Ithaca 1974) pp. 136-137.
[12] Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures. Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s*, (Collingwood 1995) pp. 1-3.
[13] W.J. Hudson ed., *ADoFP. Volume VII: 1944*, (Canberra 1988) no. 246.

War ‘on a scale to guarantee her an effective voice in the peace settlement.’[14] MacArthur responded by proposing to Curtin that the Australians could take part in the invasion of Borneo.[15] The invasion would start on 1 May and feature Australian infantry exclusively, with American naval and air support. Although the Australian commander-in-chief had his doubts concerning the campaign, he was overruled by his government that agreed to the plan.[16]

The Borneo Campaign has later been criticized by historians as having been a waste of resources and lives, because the Japanese forces were already cut off from the rest of their army and posed no real threat to Allied operations.[17] But Australian newspapers at the time wrote enthusiastically about the Australian war effort which was seen as having two major objectives: gaining control over the rich natural resources in Borneo and establishing a strategic foothold from where new operations could be launched.[18] But the resources (mostly oil and rubber) on isolated Borneo were already unavailable to the Japanese factories and the main body of the Japanese army at the start of the campaign.[19] The Americans and Australians on the other hand were not in desperate need of these resources and did not have any guarantee that the Japanese would not destroy the oil fields and rubber plantations before they could conquer them.[20] Besides, it did not make much sense to waste lives fighting in Indonesia when the whole archipelago would be freed after the Japanese surrender anyway.[21] ‘MacArthur’s brainchild’ – as John Coates calls the Borneo Campaign – seems therefore not to have been merely a tactical

[14] W.J. Hudson and Wendy Way ed., *ADoFP. Volume VIII: 1945*, (Canberra 1989) no. 37.
[15] *Ibid*., no. 53.
[16] *Ibid*., no. 88-90.
[17] Max Hastings, *Nemesis. The Battle for Japan, 1944-45*, (London 2007) pp. 368; Daniel Marston ed., *The Pacific War Companion. From Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima*, (Oxford 2005) pp. 137-141.
[18] ‘Australian Landings in Borneo Campaign Has Two Important Factors’, *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser* (11 May 1945) pp. 1.
[19] Ooi Keat Gin, *The Japanese Occupation of Borneo, 1941-1945*, (Abingdon 2011) pp. 136.
[20] Gavin Long, *Australia in the war of 1939-1945. Series 1 (Army), VII. The Final Campaigns*, (Canberra 1963) pp. 485-487; Marston, *The Pacific War Companion*, pp. 154.
[21] C. Giebel, *Morotai. De bevrijding van de Grote Oost en Borneo*, (Franeker 1976) pp. 80.

delusion, as, among others, Coates or Max Hastings claim, but a deliberate move to satisfy the Australian political demands.[22]

Ben Chifley – who replaced Curtin when he died in office on 5 July 1945 – admitted that the campaign had more to do with prestige than with the defeat of Japan, adding that it was important for Australia to 'strengthen future Australian-American relations which are of paramount importance from the aspect of security in the post-war period.'[23] When considering these two reasons, it can safely be said that the Borneo Campaign was an early example of Australia's new foreign policy. From now on they would often prioritise their Asian interests over their European ones, and their alliance with the United States over their alliance with the United Kingdom. But whether the campaign had given them enough prestige to demand a say in future negotiations concerning Indonesia remained to be seen.

Friction between the Australians and the Dutch

Australia's arrival in Borneo meant that they now carried responsibility for a part of the N.E.I., which would lead to quite a bit of tension between the two countries. It was not as if Chifley did not want to transfer authority over Borneo to the Dutch: in fact, he felt increasing pressure from the Australian press and parliament to demobilize any troops that were not crucial for the war against Japan.[24] But the Dutch were not yet ready to take over. They had asked the Australians in August 1944 if they would be willing to facilitate and train thirty thousand Dutch soldiers, because their own country was under German occupation. The Australians went back and forth on the idea but in July 1945 finally decided that it was 'neither logical nor equitable' to reduce Australia's own fighting efforts in order to help the Dutch.[25] This not only meant that

[22] Hastings, *Nemesis*, pp. 368; Peter Dennis, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, (Melbourne 2008) pp. 98-103.
[23] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 97, 138.
[24] *Ibid*., no. 88.
[25] 'Training Of Dutch Troops', *The Daily Warwick* (9 August 1945) pp. 4.

Australia had to stay in Borneo for a while longer, but it also was a big disappointment for the Dutch, who aired their grievances in the press, leading to public reproaches from both sides.[26]

The whole affair dealt a serious blow to Dutch-Australian relations, but the Dutch needed Australia as a base for further liberation of their colony, and François van Aerssen, the Dutch Minister to Australia, sent Chifley and H.V. Evatt, the Australian Minister for External Affairs, an emotional letter on 10 August, extensively apologizing for the Dutch comments that had appeared in the press. He asked Chifley not to let the relations between their two countries deteriorate, and said he did not understand why Chifley was opposed to the basing of Dutch troops in Australia, as these soldiers would be able to relieve the Australian army in the N.E.I.[27] It is indeed strange that Chifley and Evatt did not seem to be the least bit concerned with who was supposed to take over the duties that Australian soldiers were performing in Borneo and New Guinea, but when asked about it by a member of the House of Representatives, Chifley answered evasively, promising only to 'look into the matter'.[28] Anthony Reid suggests that Australia was surprised by the Japanese surrender and had no real plan for what had to happen next.[29] It was clear however, that controlling the massive and largely impenetrable island of Borneo was a difficult task in itself, and it appears that although the Australians wanted to leave sooner rather than later, they did not want to waste any of their own army resources on the Dutch.[30]

But the Australians would not be able leave yet and their duties in the N.E.I. would only be expanded. On 13 August, the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, asked the Australians to 'initially be responsible for Borneo and all Japanese occupied territories east thereof.'[31] This

[26] 'Why Holland Not Training Force Here', *The Courier-Mail* (9 August 1945) pp. 3.
[27] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 170.
[28] *HoROHansard. Question: Dutch troops in Australia*, no. 31 (01-08-1945) pp. 4831.
[29] Anthony Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution 1945-50*, (1974 Hawthorn) pp. 42.
[30] *ADoFP. Volume VII*, no. 289.
[31] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 186; Willem IJzereef, *De Zuid-Celebes Affaire. Kapitein Westerling en de standrechtelijke executies*, (Dieren 1984) pp. 16-17.

meant an enormous extension of the area under Australian control, but the transfer was supposed to take effect on the 15th, so the Australian government had to accept a deal that was de facto already in place. The Australians, however, were not going to wait for Attlee to explain what he meant by 'initially', and decided to draft their own schedule. They wanted the South East Asia Command (SEAC, the British-led counterpart to the SWPA) to gradually start taking control of the regions under Australian command. If all went well, most Australian troops would return home in October. Some Dutch, but probably mainly British soldiers would then have to assume most of the remaining military tasks in the N.E.I., with the Dutch at the same time reinstating their civil administration.[32] This called for close cooperation with the Dutch, and the Australians indeed had no doubt that Australian-Dutch relations would continue to flourish during these transitions. But the first cracks had already appeared, and relations between the two countries became even more strained when the Australian communists started to make their contribution to the Indonesian Revolution.

The Black Armada

Of course, not only diplomats and politicians debated the Indonesian dispute. There were many extra-parliamentary movements and initiatives that tried to influence, or draw attention to the Indonesian Revolution. This is not the place to mention them all, but the Australian communists – who were organised in the Communist Party of Australia, had their own newspaper, *The Tribune*, and had a great deal of influence in several trade unions – were responsible for a strike that was influential enough to divide Australia and polarize the relations between the Australians and the Dutch.

[32] J.A. Beasley, 'Re-organization of South-West Pacific Area. Statement by the Minister for Defense, 7th September 1945', *Current Notes on International Affairs, August-September 1945*, (Canberra 1945) pp. 174-177.

Australian communists had already shown sympathy for the Indonesian wish to become independent, and these sympathies were ignited on 23 September, when the Indonesian crew of four Dutch ships in the harbour of Sydney refused to work, claiming that the goods on the ships would be used to suppress the revolutionary government. The following day, the Waterside Workers Federation of Australia (WWF) – a large trade-union of dockworkers led by prominent Australian communists – declared that Indonesians in Australia had asked them to support the strike of the Indonesian crew, and told the press that the WWF 'will not be a party to assist the suppression of such a government'. Hundreds of workers in ports all over Australia joined the strike.[33]

Dutch officials understandably were very annoyed by the situation and accused the strikers of thwarting Dutch attempts to provide relief to the Indonesian people, claiming that the first four boycotted ships were so-called 'mercy ships' that only carried clothes and food.[34] *The Tribune* rallied behind the strikers and called the Dutch 'imperialists' who associated with Japanese 'thugs', 'notorious sadists and killers'.[35] Other newspapers took a more nuanced position, but it was nevertheless the second time in two months that a publicized incident would be a source of embarrassment for the governments of Australia and the Netherlands.[36]

And not only the press showed interest in the strikes. Leader of the Opposition Robert Menzies heavily criticized the government in the House of Representatives. He called the situation with the dockworkers 'the supreme example of the feebleness of the government' and said that if the government would not do something about the strike, it would 'make perfectly clear that anarchy is the rule'. The opposition stood united in its severe critique of the communists ('rogues who disfigure the life of Australia'), of Sukarno ('the puppet of the Japanese'), even of some Australian ministers (of whom the opposition said that they made

[33] 'Wharfies May Ban All Dutch Ships', *The Mercury* (24-09-1945) pp. 2.
[34] '9 Dutch Mercy Ships Held Up At Australian Ports', *The Sun* (24-09-1945) pp. 2.
[35] 'Labor Aid For Indies Republic', *Tribune* (25-09-1945) pp. 1.
[36] 'Wharfies Refuse To Load Dutch Ships: Demands By Crews', *The Telegraph* (24-09-1945) pp. 6.

'communist propaganda') and warned for the negative effects the unwillingness to take actions against the strikers would have on Australian-Dutch relations.[37]

Prime Minister Chifley responded by saying that: 'The hold-up of ships bound for Javanese ports is a matter between the Dutch authorities and their own subjects.'[38] But despite his confident attitude, the dockworkers' strikes made the government quite uneasy. The Dutch made it clear that the Indonesian strikers in Australia – a few hundred men that were mostly N.E.I. subjects – would no longer be a Dutch responsibility if the Australians failed to do something about the ban on Dutch ships. This was a problem for the Australian government, as they could not give the Indonesians any legal status because of the 'White Australia policy', which barred non-white people from immigrating to Australia.[39] It was necessary to overcome the gridlock, however, as the relief supplies were urgently needed in Indonesia.[40]

On 13 October, it was finally decided that the Indonesian strikers would voluntarily go aboard a British ship and be sent to ports under SEAC – but not Dutch – control.[41] The 'black ban' on what were at one point over five hundred Dutch ships, known at the time as the 'Black Armada', was far from over – in fact it lasted until the very end of the conflict in December 1949 –, but the repatriation of the Indonesians meant that the Dutch got their ships back. And because the communist dockworkers were willing to work the mercy ships (but not the military ones), the relief supply could be resumed.[42] So, although the strike remained a source of conflict between the Labor government and both the Australian opposition and the Dutch government, Chifley had shown that he would not change his policies when confronted with Dutch criticism, not even when this criticism was shared by many Australians.

[37] *HoROHansard. Industrial trouble in New South Wales*, no. 39 (25-09-1945) pp. 5816-5833.
[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 5833.
[39] Keith Windschuttle, *The White Australia Policy*, (Sydney 2004) pp. 316-326.
[40] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 297.
[41] *Ibid.*, no. 303.
[42] Rupert Lockwood, *Black Armada*, (Sydney 1975) pp. 4.

Conflicting interests

The Dutch were very eager to return and regain control over their colony, not least to liberate and repatriate the tens of thousands of Dutch prisoners of war and civilians, some of whom were still in Japanese-organized camps.[43] But the dockworkers' strike was only one of the problems the Dutch faced in their attempts to send people to the N.E.I. And the civilians and soldiers they were able to send were not warmly welcomed by the SEAC and the British, because they were seen as ill-disciplined, and were met with hostility by the Indonesian population.[44] On top of that, the SEAC found that resistance on Sumatra and especially Java was more widespread and stronger than the SEAC had expected, meaning that what the British thought they were going to do – peacekeeping – would actually be more like fighting a decolonization war on behalf of the Dutch.[45]

In the territories occupied by the Australians, things were not as bad as on Java, but the arrival of Dutch officials led to conflicts with the Indonesians there too, and they looked forward to returning home.[46] They gradually realized, however, that the major difficulties the British were experiencing – who in November had to deploy no less than thirty thousand soldiers to win the famous Battle of Surabaya against the Indonesian revolutionaries – meant that they were not going to be relieved at the end of October, as they had originally planned.[47] Peace negotiations were being organized in the meantime. But the Dutch refused to sit down with Sukarno and Hatta, while the Australians and British were adamant that they had to be included, fearing that the two leaders would lose all authority if they were denied a place at the table. This, they feared, could result in the extremist elements gaining the upper hand in the

[43] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 285, 302.
[44] Richard McMillan, *The British Occupation of Indonesia 1945-1946. Britain, the Netherlands and the Indonesian Revolution*, (London 2005) pp. 85-91.
[45] *Ibid*., pp. 3-4.
[46] IJzereef, *De Zuid-Celebes Affaire*, pp. 25-50.
[47] Long, *The Final Campaigns*, pp. 566-567.

divided Indonesian revolutionary movement, which in turn could lead to civil war.[48] And the imminent return of responsibility over the N.E.I. to the Dutch would not make things easier.

The Australian retreat

On 19 March 1946, the Australians finally transferred the last of their authority of their region to the SEAC.[49] A number of incidents had occurred, but things in the territory under their control were relatively stable and the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration had been able to establish itself. Australian troops had been returning home from October onwards, and the last divisions were disbanded in the first half of 1946. Australia's military commitment to the war and its aftermath was thus concluded. But the prospects of a solution to the troublesome situation in the neighbouring country to its north were only getting worse.

The main Australian interest in the Indonesian Revolution was a stable region, which explains why their approach to the dispute was inconsistent at times. Due to the unpredictable dynamics of the revolution, it remained unclear who the Australians had to back to achieve their own goals. And while the sympathy of the individual members of the government shifted more and more towards the Indonesians, there were many factors that made it difficult to openly advocate any sort of Indonesian self-governance. International law, the British support of the Dutch, and the similarities between the Dutch and the Australian society, politics, and people, were some of the realities that made publicly supporting the Indonesians a very risky move for Australian politicians.[50]

At the end of 1945, Sukarno had already asked the British and the Americans if they would lobby for a United Nations inquiry into the Indonesian question. When they refused, Sukarno asked the Australians the same thing.[51] Australia was not very receptive of the idea at

[48] *ADoFP Volume VII*, no. 340, 357.
[49] Long, *The Final Campaigns*, pp. 573.
[50] *ADoFP Volume VII*, no. 340, 357.
[51] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 387.

the time, as they believed that direct negotiations between the Netherlands and the Republic would yield the best results. But the next chapter will show how by July 1947 this all had changed.

Chapter 2: The rapid march of events

This chapter will explain why, between March 1946 and July 1947, the Australians came to believe that referring the Indonesian dispute to the Security Council was the only way any progress could be made in the peace process. This change of heart had less to do with a strong confidence in the inexperienced and divided Security Council, than with the disappointment of the failures of successive rounds of negotiations and the categorical exclusion of Australia therefrom. The Dutch and Indonesians stood miles apart and could not compromise too much for fear of radical groups torpedoing the agreement. But although hardliners could be found on both sides, the Australians mainly blamed the Dutch for their unwillingness to cooperate. Personal relations with the Dutch deteriorated during this period, with contacts between the highest Dutch representative in Australia and the Australian Prime Minister breaking down for several months. The Dutch were perceived as stubborn and unrealistic. With the Indonesians, on the other hand, contacts only got better. And although the Australians did not yet want to interfere with the peace negotiations, they became increasingly frustrated with the British, who led these talks, because it became increasingly clear that British and Australian interests were not the same. So, when the Dutch broke the Linggadjati Agreement in July 1947 by launching a military operation in Indonesia, the Australians saw no other option than to get the Security Council involved.

The 'obviously bewildered' Dutch

During the months following the war the Dutch continuously criticized the Australian diplomatic actions. Before Evatt met van Aerssen in January 1946, William Dunk, the Secretary of External Affairs, gave his supervisor a general outline of what had happened over the last few months. He noted that the Australian-Dutch relations had worsened, partly because of the dockworkers' strike and the refusal to let Dutch troops train in Australia, but also because

of repeated Dutch press statements in which they attacked the Australian government, and the stubborn and inflexible attitude of the Dutch towards the revolutionaries.[1] This attitude – a characteristic noted by many historians, although not acknowledged by someone like J.J.P. de Jong – made it difficult for the Australians to cooperate with the Dutch.[2] Dunk described how the Dutch dealt with the situation in the N.E.I.:

> The Dutch are obviously bewildered by the rapid march of events in N.E.I. They had a country, lost it to the Japs and just as they looked like re-occupying it Indonesian difficulty prevented them. They do not seem to be able to understand why former friends are not fully and openly supporting them against what they regard as an Indonesian 'revolt'.[3]

Dunk suggested that Evatt would make clear to van Aerssen that the Australians were 'desirous of continuing friendly relations' but that these could only be maintained if the Dutch wanted to cooperate.[4] But cooperating would become increasingly difficult following a series of incidents.

New negotiations

The complicated relation with the Dutch notwithstanding, the Australians were not yet ready to embrace international mediation as the solution. In November 1945, Sukarno had asked the Australian representative to the N.E.I., Macmahon Ball, if the Australians would want to consider bringing the Indonesian problems to the attention of the United Nations. Ball himself was quite enthusiastic, but his government was not.[5] They feared that such a move would jeopardize the British-organized negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesians. The

[1] W.J. Hudson and Wendy Way ed., *ADoFP. Volume IX: January-June 1946*, (Canberra 1991) no. 42.
[2] Bastiaan Bommeljé, 'Nederland deed het zo slecht nog niet', in: *Historisch Nieuwsblad* (July 2011), as found on https://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/27887/nederland-deed-het-zo-slecht-nog-niet.html on 19-06-2017.
[3] *ADoFP. Volume IX*, no. 42.
[4] Idem
[5] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 379.

Australians thought that if the matter would be referred to the Security Council, the Indonesians would no longer be willing to negotiate with the Dutch directly, thereby delaying peace by several months.[6]

And the Australians were quite optimistic about the new round of negotiations that started at the end of 1945. Earlier, in October 1945, the British had already tried to organize a conference, but the Dutch did not want to include Sukarno, which meant the talks failed even before they began.[7] However, the Indonesian state institutions were still very much under development, and in the autumn of 1945 the Indonesian assembly formed a new cabinet, led by Sutan Sjahrir. Sukarno was still president, but Sjahrir was now head of the government. And because he had not collaborated with the Japanese, Sjahrir was an acceptable partner for the Dutch.[8]

But the negotiations proceeded slowly. Sjahrir was approved of by the Dutch, but he in turn said that he would only be willing to talk to Huib van Mook, the Governor-General of the N.E.I.[9] Yet van Mook had made the mistake of meeting Sukarno, and had been recalled to the Netherlands to explain himself.[10] The Australians used this short pause to try to persuade the British – who were mediating the peace talks – that they too needed a representative at the negotiations. The British refused, saying that it would lead to a case of 'too many cooks'.[11] This was difficult to stomach for the Australians, who had hoped that the Borneo Campaign, the liberation of a large part of the Indonesian archipelago, and their clear interest in the future of their own region would have been enough to secure them a spot at the negotiating table. But for now, they had to accept playing second fiddle to the United Kingdom.

[6] *ADoFP. Volume IX*, no. 304.
[7] *ADoFP. Volume VIII*, no. 379.
[8] George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, (Ithaca 2003) pp. 152-154.
[9] *ADoFP. Volume IX*, no. 41.
[10] Frederik Erens and Adrienne Zuiderweg, *Linggadjati, brug naar de toekomst. Soetan Sjahrir als een van de grondleggers van het vrije Indonesië*, (Amsterdam 2009) pp. 59-60.
[11] *ADoFP. Volume IX*, no. 74.

Van Mook was allowed to resume his position and the talks were continued in the Netherlands between 14 and 24 April. Things finally seemed to move ahead and the Australians prepared steps to further improve their diplomatic relation with Indonesia. If Australia could not weigh in on the negotiations, they could at least make sure that they were ready to establish a good relationship the moment the Republican government would be officially recognized. Alfred Brookes – who had replaced Ball as Australian representative to the N.E.I. – made a couple of suggestions as to how the Australian-Indonesian relations should be shaped. He thought that the chance had come for Australia to finally show Indonesia that it was willing to commit itself to a strong alliance.[12] More of a sketch than definite proposals, these suggestions were not immediately pursued any further, and it turned out that Brookes had spoken a little prematurely, as a series of setbacks would retard the course of Indonesian independence.

Serious setbacks

The negotiations in the Netherlands broke down because the Dutch ministers who attended the talks were unwilling to make any concessions with the Dutch elections coming up. The fact that the Dutch were even open to negotiating with the Indonesians was interpreted as a positive fact by the Australians and the British, but it was resented by influential politicians and political groups in both the Netherlands and Indonesia. The leader of the largest Dutch party, the KVP, characterized the negotiations as 'a week of shame'. On the other side, Sjahrir was kidnapped for three days on 27 June by Indonesian radicals who were opposed to any sort of talks with the Dutch government.[13] With Sjahrir under vehement internal pressure and the conservative KVP winning the Dutch elections in May, it became clear that the negotiations were stuck.[14] Extremists on both sides had made it impossible for either side to give the other party what

[12] *ADoFP. Volume IX*, no. 199.
[13] Erens and Zuiderweg, *Linggadjati, brug naar de toekomst*, pp. 61-62.
[14] David Goldsworthy ed., *Facing North. A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 1: 1901 to the 1970s*, (Carlton 2001) pp. 150.

they wanted. The British rightly feared that the Australians were contemplating other means to overcome this standstill, and Attlee sent Chifley a cablegram stating that he hoped that Chifley was 'prepared to discourage Dr. Sjahrir from relying upon the Australian Government's intervention on his behalf.'[15] It was of course not an order, but it was easy for Chifley to simply ignore such a direct request from a country that had dominated Australian foreign policy for so long. And indeed, Chifley agreed to do what Attlee asked, but once again asked in vain if the Australians could not participate in the negotiations.[16] It would take another year before the Australians realised that what the British wanted was not necessarily good for them, and that they had to develop their own policies.

Meanwhile, the Australian government became frustrated with the situation and their own powerlessness, and they became tired of the Dutch constantly stalling the peace process. More than the Indonesians, the Australians felt that the Dutch just did not want to compromise. Brookes especially was furious, and in a cable to Dunk called the Dutch 'Nazi's' that were living in a 'dream world bounded by their pre-war prejudices.'[17] These allegations were a little too harsh for Dunk, who reported to be 'greatly disturbed' by Brookes' comments.[18] But it was not only the hot-tempered Brookes who was unhappy with the Dutch attitude. A short while later, Chifley and van Aerssen also collided. In June 1946, Van Aerssen attacked the Australian government over an incident with the Dutch destroyer Piet Hein. The ship had been damaged and entered several Australian harbours for repairs, but the union ban on Dutch military ships was still ongoing, and the dockworkers refused to repair the ship. Now Dutch frustration surfaced and van Aerssen publicly said that the Dutch people felt insulted by the way the Australians treated them.[19] Again, the bans were a cause of embarrassment for the Australian

[15] W.J. Hudson and Wendy Way, *ADoFP. Volume X: July-December 1946*, (Canberra 1993) no. 3.
[16] *Ibid.*, no. 8.
[17] *ADoFP. Volume IX*, no. 245.
[18] *Ibid.*, no. 273.
[19] 'Serious Charge By Dutch Minister In Piet Hein Case', *The Canberra Times* (13-06-1946) pp. 2.

government and public opinion was divided over the matter, with most newspapers siding with the Dutch. The *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote that the majority of Australians were 'just as puzzled and disgusted' as the Dutch by the refusal of the Australian government to do something about the strikes.[20]

The question of what the majority of Australians thought about the Indonesian conflict became even more relevant with the Australian elections in mind. They were supposed to be held in the autumn of 1946 and it was probably because of these upcoming elections that Chifley refused to back down when questioned in parliament about the Piet Hein case. He insinuated that the sending of the Piet Hein all the way to Australia was an intentional provocation by the Dutch, as the ship allegedly had been already damaged in the English Channel. To this he added that he was not at all pleased with the public statements made by van Aerssen and referred to the earlier press scandal where unfavourable opinions by Dutch officials had appeared in the newspapers.[21] As a result of this confrontation, contact between van Aerssen and Chifley broke down for several months.[22]

The Indonesians of course knew of the troubled relationship between the Dutch and the Australians, and of the Australian wish to make their mark on the peace process. So throughout 1946 they requested the Australian government to take action in the United Nations on their behalf. Subsequent Australian representatives to the N.E.I. – first Ball, then Brookes and later Justice Richard Kirby, who was sent to Indonesia primarily to investigate the murders of the Australian officers – were in favour of such a step. There was a clear divide in opinions between these men – who actually were in Indonesia, saw how widespread the freedom movement was, and were impressed with the charisma and leadership of Sukarno and especially Sjahrir – and the more distant Australian government that constantly refused the requests.[23] In 1945, they

[20] 'Shameful Case of the Piet Hein', *Sydney Morning Herald* (14-06-1946) pp. 1.
[21] *HoROHansard*. *Question: Shipping*, no. 25 (20-06-1946) pp. 1647-1649.
[22] Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution*, (Carlton 1980) pp. 59.
[23] *ADoFP*. *Volume VIII*, no. 376; *Volume IX*, no. 199; Goldsworthy ed., *Facing North*, pp. 150 respectively.

did not want to defy their Dutch allies and endanger their own military mission in Indonesia. In 1946, all their troops had come home again and their relationship with the Dutch was considerably worse, but now they did not want to cross their British allies (and their military missions in Java and Sumatra) and also felt that a move to the U.N. could potentially delay an agreement between the Netherlands and the Republic even further.

Elections and the Linggadjati Agreement

The Australian elections took place at the end of September 1946. The ruling Labor Party lost a few seats, but won the election by a wide margin.[24] Chifley, who had previously not been elected but was installed after the death of Curtin, had won the approval of the majority of Australians and now had three years ahead of him, which he could use to shape Australia and the Australian-Indonesian future. But despite the explosive situation in the N.E.I., the future of Indonesia had not played a very significant role in the Labor campaign. In fact, it was hardly mentioned at all: not in the election program, and not in Chifley's speeches.[25] Maybe he was aware that most Australians were primarily concerned with recovering from the war, and that their feelings concerning Indonesia were mainly tied to the unpopular union strikes, against which Chifley had consistently refused to act.

But although it was hardly mentioned in the Labor campaign, interesting developments were taking place in the N.E.I. Around the time of the Australian election, the negotiations had reopened in Linggadjati. The British especially had been pushing for an agreement as they were planning to retreat their military from the N.E.I. in November 1946, and they were worried that fighting would break out after their retreat. And indeed, on 14 November an agreement was signed that was well received in Australia. In the Australian parliament, Evatt commented on

[24] Michelle Grattan ed., *Australian Prime Ministers*, (Sydney 2000) pp. 260.
[25] Australian Labor Party, *Policy for the 1946 federal election*, (1946), as found on http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-19734296; on 17-05-2017; A.W. Stargardt ed., *Things Worth Fighting For. Speeches by Joseph Benedict Chifley*, (Carlton 1952) pp. 13-21, 89-94, 125-145, 195-215, 261-272.

the problems in Indonesia the following day, and said that he believed 'that the great problem may be settled. The latest news indicates that it will be.'[26] And two months later the Australian representative to the N.E.I., Bertram Ballard – who had replaced Brookes after he had fallen ill – reported: 'Of course there are faults on both sides, but the fact is that the truce has been a plant of forced growth.'[27]

Yet, at the same time, it was an agreement between the Dutch and the Indonesians on which the Australians had once again failed to make their mark. Nor were the elements of the proposed solution radically different from the last one – recognition of the de facto control of the Republic over Java and Sumatra, recognition of Dutch sovereignty over the N.E.I. and the prospect of a federal state with the Dutch Queen as head of state – and once again it had to be ratified by both the Indonesian and the Dutch parliaments.[28] The only thing that was clearly different compared to the situation earlier, was that the last British troops had left the N.E.I. in November 1946.[29] A new breakdown in diplomacy between the Netherlands and the Republic could potentially lead to a much larger escalation of the conflict than previously had been the case.

Because it took a very long time to ratify the agreement, the Australian government had a lot of time to discuss and prepare their future cooperation with Indonesia. In parliament, Indonesia was discussed every month. The opposition wanted to know when the murderers of the Australian officers would be brought to trial, Evatt explained what future trade policies the government wanted to pursue, the form and nature of Australian representation in Indonesia was debated and the opposition asked when the shipping ban would be lifted almost every month.[30]

[26] *HoROHansard*. *International Affairs*, no. 46 (15-09-1946) pp. 334-347.
[27] *ADoFP. Volume X*, no. 330.
[28] Erens and Zuiderweg, *Linggadjati, brug naar de toekomst*, pp. 73-74.
[29] Goldsworthy ed., *Facing North*, pp. 151.
[30] *HoROHansard. Question: Dutch-Indonesian Settlement*, no. 47 (20-11-1946) pp. 365-366; *HoROHansard. Question: Indonesia*, no. 49 (04-12-1946) pp. 959;

But the Dutch government was not yet ready to accept the new political reality until 25 March 1947, when they finally signed the agreement, more than four months after the end of the negotiations. All of the numerous incidents that occurred in this period were used by the colonial hardliners in the Netherlands to undermine the agreement even before it was ratified. The Dutch hesitation also put pressure on Sjahrir and the more moderate elements in Indonesian politics, who were criticized for their restrained responses to Dutch aggression by more radical Indonesian political groups.[31]

Dutch threats

After the signing of the Linggadjati agreement, the Australians tried to be on their best behaviour. Internally, they criticized the 'maddening deliberation' that was part of every additional discussion between the Dutch and the Indonesians, and they communicated their frustration with the Dutch, who were seen as 'incapable of quick action', but in public they were nonetheless careful not to sour the already strained relations with the Dutch any further.[32] But they were not so careful that they listened to van Mook's reprimands that they should not talk to the Indonesians.[33] They conferred with Sjahrir and also with the Indonesian Minister of Welfare, A.K. Gani, and prepared to tie up all loose ends. For the Dutch and the Indonesians, however, the situation felt less like loose ends and more like a Gordian knot.

At the end of May, two months after the ratification of the Linggadjati agreement, Ballard reported to the Department of External Affairs that things were not going well at all in Indonesia. Discussions between the Dutch and Indonesians about the implementation of the Linggadjati agreement had reached deadlock and Ballard feared that the Dutch might resort to

HoROHansard. International Affairs, no. 9 (26-02-1947) pp. 175-190; *HoROHansard. Question: International Affairs*, no. 12 (21-03-1947) pp. 1040-1048; *HoROHansard. Answers to Questions: Indonesia*, no. 13 (25-03-1947) pp. 1140.

[31] Erens and Zuiderweg, *Linggadjati, brug naar de toekomst*, pp. 75-77.

[32] Philip Dorling ed., *ADoFP. Volume XI: Indonesia 1947*, (Canberra 1994) no. 34.

[33] *Ibid*., no. 27.

violence to undo the status quo. Their economy was badly suffering from the fact that they had to maintain a large army, while at the same time they did not receive too many revenues from the export of goods out of Indonesia, due to the fact that many important production areas were controlled by the Republic or were destroyed by several years of war. And where the Dutch saw their army as a means to threaten the Indonesians into complying with their demands, the Indonesians refused to cooperate as long as the Dutch did not reduce their forces.[34]

The Dutch became so impatient that on 27 May they issued a threat to the Republican government. Van Mook told Ballard that if the Indonesians did not agree to the proposals, there would be only two options left: 'either withdrawal by the Dutch or the use of force, and [van Mook] added that the former was most unlikely.'[35] Ballard was convinced that the only way to prevent a disaster was through pressure from the outside. The Indonesians thought the Dutch were being unreasonable, while the Dutch thought the Republican government was a mess, and these two factors only seemed to strengthen the other party's conviction that their own position was the right one.[36] So when the Indonesians sent their response to the Dutch – mainly a reaffirmation of their position – it was clear to all parties involved that the situation was not going to be solved in a diplomatic way.[37] The Dutch had threatened to use force if the Indonesians would not accept their proposals, and felt that the Indonesian response was in fact a rejection. Even the relatively moderate Dutch policymakers reluctantly agreed that the 'provocative' reply could only be answered by making use of 'limited' violence.[38] The Australians were well aware that 'limited' violence made little sense and that the violence

[34] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 62.
[35] *Ibid*., no. 72.
[36] *Ibid*., no. 73.
[37] *Ibid.*, no. 80, 88.
[38] *Ibid.*, no. 86.

would probably escalate into a full-scale war. And they made very clear that they would be fully behind the Indonesians if it did.[39]

Sjahrir had assured himself of Australian support by sending personal letters to Chifley and Evatt in which he expressed his 'profound sense of gratitude'.[40] Sjahrir thanked Chifley extensively, although the Australians had done very little to help the Indonesians so far. He might have realized, however, that Australia – still a member of the Security Council of the United Nations at the time – could become their most important ally in a possible armed conflict with the Dutch. Whatever their precise strategic motivations may have been, Sjahrir's letter, and the equally warm reciprocal message sent by Chifley and Evatt, contained little political content and seems to have served primarily as a reassurance that the personal relations between the two governments were good, and that both parties were desirous to collaborate more closely at a time when they both could not expect too much from others.

Move towards war

Given their cordial relationship with Sjahrir, it was a big disappointment to the Australians when he had to resign as Prime Minister on 27 June. With Sukarno and Amir Sjarifuddin – Sjahrir's successor as Prime Minister – they did not have the same kind of personal relationship at all. Excluded from the negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesians by the British, and with Sjahrir gone, the Australian government saw their influence over the future of Indonesia diminished to an absolute low point. They started losing their patience with the United Kingdom and the United States, two countries that even in the face of an imminent decolonisation war were still counting on the goodwill of the Dutch and Republican leaders to come to a peaceful agreement. Following the breakdown in diplomacy after the Dutch threat

[39] David Fettling, 'J.B. Chifley and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945-1949', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 59 (2013) pp. 517-531 at p. 525.
[40] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 74.

and the Indonesian 'provocation', the British and the Americans once again tried to solve the issues by setting up a conference that included only representatives from the Netherlands, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom. But the Australians knew by now that these sorts of talks would probably not lead to any kind of real solution.[41] Trying to reason with the 'incomprehensible Dutch' was seen as offering an even more remote chance of reaching an agreement.[42]

The Australian government now sent word to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Christopher Addison, that if the United Kingdom would not manage to secure a deal between the Netherlands and Indonesia, the Australians would 'have no recourse but to raise the matter perhaps in the Security Council or the Assembly'.[43] For the first time the Australians directly opposed British foreign policy. It had dawned on them that the British support for the Dutch both had to do with colonial affairs and European interests, two things that they themselves had very little to do with. The British and Dutch dreaded decolonisation, but Australia had no colonies and did therefore not care about any snowball effect that might be the result of Indonesian independence. Furthermore, when it came to their empires, the colonial powers benefitted from protectionist trade policies, because it allowed them to exploit their colonies without any competition. The Australians, however, were very eager to break the trade with Indonesia open to profit from that country's abundance of natural resources and its many potential customers. The geopolitical interests were likewise divided. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands worked together to rebuild a stable and prosperous Europe, while Australia mainly wanted a stable Southeast Asia, and was not afraid to disagree with the Dutch in order to achieve that.[44] To make its position absolutely clear, the Department of External Affairs sent

[41] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 91.
[42] *Ibid.*, no. 115.
[43] *Ibid.*, no. 116.
[44] *Ibid.*, no. 105.

another cablegram to London, almost at the same time as the first, stating that they felt that British 'policy completely disregards our own vital interests'.[45]

Addison responded by asking the Australians to consider their future moves very carefully and not to go to the Security Council.[46] The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ernest Bevin, was quoted as saying that he was 'tired of attacks and suggestions that United Kingdom's policy had failed'.[47] Bevin's remarks were somewhat ironic, as on 21 July, two days before he made this statement, Operatie Product had started, showing precisely how complete the British diplomatic failure was. This outbreak of open fighting was the last straw for the Australians: they ignored the British and Americans pleas and appealed to the United Nations to intervene.

[45] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 117.
[46] *Ibid.*, no. 124, 129.
[47] *Ibid.*, no. 141.

Chapter 3: No alternative means

In the six months between 21 July 1947 and 17 January 1948, the course of the Indonesian struggle for independence changed drastically. When the Dutch launched their military operation to beat the Indonesians into submission, the Australians could no longer sit idly by. This was the moment when they finally realized that it was their own responsibility to do something about the situation. Chifley ignored Attlee's pleas not to intervene and gave the Australian delegation at the United Nations the order to bring the Indonesian question under attention of the Security Council. Within two days, on 1 August, a resolution was adopted that called for an immediate ceasefire and new negotiations. This was a major step both for emerging Indonesian, and maturing Australian independence. A month later, a 'Committee of Good Offices' was established to mediate between the two warring parties, and Indonesia chose Australia to represent them in a sign of great confidence. The negotiations moved ahead very slowly, but now the Australians were finally included, and they wanted to make the most of it. The text of the Renville Agreement, signed on 17 January 1948, probably did not really satisfy anyone who was involved in drafting it, but the agreement decisively cemented the international component to the Indonesian Revolution, and symbolized the new modus operandi in Southeast Asia, as this chapter will show.

No longer bound

On 21 July 1947, Australia awoke with the N.E.I. government broadcasting that they 'no longer considered [themselves] bound by the Linggadjati Agreement nor by the truce'.[1] Fighting had started that night and it was crucial to act very quickly. But that same day, Burton, the new Secretary of External Affairs, received a British cablegram, asking the Australians to make clear to the Indonesians that the Australians would not help them raise the matter in the Security

[1] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 128.

Council.[2] The Australian government coldly replied that the request was noted, but that they had not received any suggestion for alternative means of dealing with the situation. They continued by saying that they were aware that the British had once again offered their 'good offices', but that it was clear to the Australians that the Dutch were not willing to negotiate at this point. Furthermore, they reasserted that they could not be inactive when military actions were in progress in Indonesia.[3] In the meantime, the acting Indonesian parliament (KNIP) had also reached out to Chifley, asking him to help the Republic in this time of crisis. They reported that Gani – perhaps the cabinet member with whom the Australians maintained the best relations after Sjahrir's resignation – had been arrested, and concluded: 'While we can still greet you as a free people– MERDEKA!'[4]

Pressure to act started to mount for the Australians. They rejected the British approach, but in this crucial moment the Australians hesitated for about a week before taking action. More than a month had passed since the Dutch had threatened to use violence, and when the war finally broke out, it did not surprise anybody. The Australians certainly knew that it was coming, yet they did not know how to react. The KNIP asked for help, Ballard asked for instructions, and Burton was 'puzzled as to course of action'.[5] In a cable to Evatt, Burton explained that bringing the matter before the Security Council would probably be interpreted in Australia as the government sympathizing with the waterside workers. The United States decided to do nothing, except for expressing their regret that it had to come to this. Sjahrir – who was on a mission to gather support for the Indonesian struggle in foreign countries – and Sjarifuddin commented that Indonesia looked to Australia and India for assistance. Burton emphasized once more that 'unequivocal action' was demanded by 'Australian vital long-term interests'. But although he made some suggestions, it was not up to him to take the decisions.

[2] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 129.
[3] *Ibid.*, no. 131.
[4] *Ibid.*, no. 133. 'Merdeka' translates as 'freedom'.
[5] *Ibid.*, no. 133, 138, 149.

And Evatt, in the meantime, was on his way to Japan.[6] Being aware that this was a matter of the utmost importance, he told Burton to take it up with the Prime Minister.[7]

It seems strange that Chifley, who had stated on multiple occasions stated how important the future of Indonesia was for Australia, adopted such a passive attitude at this critical stage. And he was indeed publicly scorned for this by opposition leader Menzies.[8] Margaret George suggests that Chifley just did not think the situation was that urgent, while David Fettling writes that he spent these days lobbying the United Kingdom.[9] But it was in fact Attlee who cabled Chifley first, and Chifley did not respond until five days after the start of the military action.[10] The most likely answer to the question why Chifley – who was on vacation at the time – did not immediately return to Canberra and made the resolute decisions the situation demanded, is that he needed some time to think, but at the same time did not want to show weakness at such an important moment, so therefore tried to act as if nothing special had happened. The *Sydney Morning Herald* pardoned his indecisiveness by pointing out that hurrying back to Canberra and calling a cabinet meeting would have been quite a useless undertaking, given the fact that four other ministers of Chifley's cabinet were abroad, with Evatt – whose judgment on foreign policy was very important to Chifley – travelling by ship to Japan that week.[11]

But it was a difficult decision and Chifley still had a couple of things to consider. Firstly, whether the Security Council had jurisdiction over what could be interpreted as a domestic Dutch affair.[12] Secondly, what the advantages and disadvantages would be of leaving it up to

[6] 'Dr. Evatt To Visit Japan', *The Canberra Times* (08-07-1947) pp. 6.
[7] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 142.
[8] 'Govt. May Act On Dutch Steamer', *The News* (26-07-1947) pp. 5.
[9] George, *Australian Revolution*, pp. 83-84; Fettling, 'J.B. Chifley and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945-1949', pp. 526.
[10] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 164, 166.
[11] Grattan ed., *Australian Prime Ministers*, pp. 260; 'Mr. Chifley Faces Major Issue', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (28-07-1947) pp. 3.
[12] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 139.

India to refer the situation to the Security Council.[13] Thirdly, if reference to the Security Council would – as the British warned – give the Soviet Union the opportunity to embarrass and discredit Western powers.[14] Fourthly, how the United Kingdom and the United States would react to such a move.[15] Fifthly, if a referral would be interpreted in Australia as yielding to the strikers, and how bad that would be.[16] And sixthly, if there was any other way to solve this crisis.[17]

A decision is made

On 26 July, Chifley asked Attlee one last time if the latter could promise that Australia 'would be associated as full third party' in any future negotiations concerning the situation in Indonesia.[18] Attlee responded negatively.[19] Calling the situation not so much a 'question of prestige', but a 'vital security matter', Chifley then decided that the Security Council had to step in.[20] The only remaining question was whether the Australians would leave it to India, or join them with their own proposal. The British argument that the Soviet-Union would be able to discredit the Western powers in the Security Council was disregarded in favour of the argument that refusal to go the Security Council would discredit the Western powers in the eyes of the 'Asiatic peoples' far more.[21] And the Soviet-Union argument was not even very strong to begin with. It took the Australians some time to realise once again that the British raised the point more because they were thinking about the destabilising effect referral to the Security Council would have on British colonies like Malaya, Burma and India, and less

[13] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 148.
[14] *Ibid.*, no. 155.
[15] *Ibid.*, no. 166.
[16] *Ibid.*, no. 142.
[17] *Ibid.*, no. 159.
[18] *Ibid.*, no. 166.
[19] *Ibid.*, no. 170.
[20] *Ibid.*, no. 167.
[21] *Ibid.*, no. 155.

because they were concerned about the situation in Indonesia.[22] Besides, the Australians felt that having India raise the matter would make it seem as if there was an 'Asiatic versus western' component to the conflict, while they wanted to give exactly the opposite impression, and show that Australia was different from the traditional colonial powers and could be a reliable partner to the Southeast Asian countries.[23]

After considering all these things, Chifley finally announced on 30 July that he had instructed the Australian delegation at the Security Council to invoke article 39 of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls on the Security Council to 'determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression'.[24] This was a major development. It was almost two years since Sukarno and Hatta issued the Proklamasi, and the Dutch and Indonesians were further apart than ever. Despite all the efforts and British-led negotiations, a full-scale decolonisation war had broken out. On this crucial moment, Australia abandoned the strategy of the Western countries in favour of working together with India to aid Indonesia in their struggle against a European colonial power. This was a big step towards a more international approach of the Indonesian question, and a significant sign that Australia would no longer automatically follow their former colonial overlord's lead when it came to foreign policy.[25] They defied the United Kingdom and acted on geopolitical motives rather than on cultural or historic ones, thereby opening the way for a complete reorientation of Australia in the Southeast Asian region.

Resolution 27

The Dutch response was predictable. They called it 'regrettable' and expressed their 'amazement' that Australia had used article 39, stating that the Australian government and the

[22] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 141.
[23] *Ibid.*, no. 179.
[24] 'Aust. Invokes Article 39', *The Northern Star* (31-07-1947) pp. 4; *Charter of the United Nations*, Article 39.
[25] Bridge ed., *Munich to Vietnam*, pp. 1-5.

Republic apparently shared the 'wrong conception that the republic was already a sovereign state'.[26] Sjahrir issued a statement from India saying that the Republic of Indonesia accepted arbitration by the Security Council and would comply with its decisions.[27] The other Republican leaders had become completely isolated during Operatie Product and were unable to comment publicly.[28] Newspapers in Australia were generally supportive of the move, and the Australian government was probably the most pleased with an editorial in *The Advertiser*, where the decision to bring the conflict before the Security Council was called 'nominally neither pro-Dutch nor pro-Indonesian', adding that 'in effect, Australia's move tends to favor the Indonesians'.[29] This was exactly how the Australian government wanted it to be perceived: as a neutral, juridical endeavour, that had been undertaken without any prejudice from the Australians side, meant to sort out any issues in Indonesia.[30] At the same time, it was clear to most – not only to the Dutch – that this initiative would probably prove to be significantly more advantageous to Indonesia than to the Netherlands.

The Australian proposal was immediately put on the agenda and discussed on 31 July. Representatives of India and the Netherlands – neither of whom sat on the Security Council at that time – were allowed to participate, but not to vote. India had appealed to the Security Council on the same day as Australia, but by making use of a different article. The invocation of article 39 was seen as more urgent and took priority over India's appeal.[31] The Republic of Indonesia was also invited, but due to their isolation was unable to respond to the invitation, let alone make it to the United Nations headquarters in Lake Success. The Dutch representatives made the case – as expected – that the Security Council had no jurisdiction over

[26] 'Australia to Take Case to Security Council', *The Argus* (31-07-1947) pp. 1.
[27] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 217.
[28] *Ibid.*, no. 233.
[29] Douglas Wilkie, 'As I See It', *The Advertiser* (31-07-1947) pp. 1.
[30] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 195.
[31] Baladas Ghoshal, 'India and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence', *Akademika. Journal of Southeast Asia Social Sciences and Humanities*, 54 (January 1999) pp. 105-130 at p. 113.

the matter. They claimed that because the Charter of the United Nations states that it is meant to operate between sovereign states, the Security Council had no authority over the situation in Indonesia. They insisted that the military action was a 'police action', in what was a domestic issue in the sovereign Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Australian representatives on the other hand, maintained that several members of the Security Council had tried to mediate in the conflict, but that hostilities were still continuing. They therefore argued that now was not the time to discuss juridical matters, or start an inquiry into the situation, but that it was upon the Security Council to first bring about a cessation of the hostilities. The following day, 1 August, the Security Council voted and adopted the proposal. Resolution 27 called upon the Netherlands and Indonesia to 'cease hostilities forthwith' and 'to settle their disputes by arbitration'.[32]

This very rapid adoption of the resolution was heralded in the Australian press as a major diplomatic victory, with several newspapers calling it 'a triumph'.[33] Belgium, France and the United Kingdom had all abstained during the vote, reflecting the hesitance of the colonial powers to enable the Security Council to intervene in a case that could be used as a precedent in their own colonial affairs.[34] The United States' attitude towards the situation had been an uncertain factor for the Australians.[35] But during the meetings of the Security Council it became apparent that they were mainly worried about the far-reaching judicial effects of directly referencing article 39, and they did support the resolution after the reference was dropped.[36] This was another important development, as the United States were now committed to the situation in Indonesia.

[32] *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council. Chapter VIII (1946-1951)* pp. 315-316.
[33] 'UNO Order Ceasefire in Java', *The Sunday Times* (03-08-1947) pp. 1.
[34] 'Quick Decision on Indonesia', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (04-08-1947) pp. 1.
[35] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 212, 214.
[36] *Ibid.*, no. 222; *Security Council Repertoire. Chapter VIII*, pp. 316.

Further steps

On 5 August, a ceasefire was proclaimed. At that point, the Dutch had realised most of their military goals and the Indonesians had suffered quite a few defeats, so both were willing to abide by the Security Council's request to stop fighting.[37] Sjarifuddin made it quite clear that the Indonesians did not believe in another round of talks with the Dutch and a third country acting as mediator: they wanted international arbitration.[38] The Security Council was working on that, and made a proposal to establish a commission consisting of three or five countries.[39] It took quite some time to agree on what powers the commission would have and how its members had to be selected. On 25 August, it was decided that there would be three arbitrators, one selected by the Dutch, one by the Indonesians and a third by the two selected countries.[40] The Australians had put forward the proposal after Sjarifuddin, Sjahrir, and the newly instated Indonesian representative to Australia had all made remarks that – although they were not outright endorsements – led the Australians to believe that the Republic would pick them to be on the commission.[41] The only other country that had a similarly good and understanding relation with Indonesia was India, but they were not a member of the Security Council and could thus not be part of the commission.[42]

On 3 September, Belgium accepted the Dutch nomination to be on what would be called the 'Committee of Good Offices on the Indonesian Question'.[43] On 8 September, Chifley accepted Sjarifuddin's offer.[44] Now Belgium and Australia had to nominate a third power.[45] The United Kingdom declared it did not want to be on the Committee because all their attempts

[37] Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution 1945-1950*, pp. 112-113.
[38] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 240.
[39] *Ibid.*, no. 244.
[40] *Security Council Repertoire. Chapter VIII*, pp. 317.
[41] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 264, 268, 276 respectively.
[42] Ali Sastroamijoyo, *Milestones on my Journey*, (St Lucia 1979) pp. 143.
[43] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 318.
[44] *Ibid.*, no. 323.
[45] *Ibid.*, no. 325.

at mediating so far had failed.[46] The Belgians and Dutch expressed a strong preference for the United States.[47] And while the United States had previously also said they were not available, and Indonesia was not in favour of nominating them, they did agree to sit on the Committee when the formal Belgian-Australian request came on 17 September.[48]

Committee of Good Offices

Now the points of order were to choose an Australian representative and find a location for the negotiations. Justice Kirby was put forward by Evatt as Australia's best option and was accepted without any objection.[49] The United States, however, was slow in appointing a representative, and the Belgians, in close cooperation with the Dutch, tried to the delay the process where they could.[50] But it was absolutely necessary that things started moving, because the situation for the Indonesians was dire. Sjarifuddin sent Chifley a letter reminding him that instituting the Committee was only the first step, and that now was not the time to engage in debates about formalities, as the Dutch were violating the ceasefire on a regular basis, and a naval blockade meant that the Republican regions were starting to experience a shortage of supplies.[51]

On 3 October, the Americans had finally appointed their representative to the Committee, allowing for a first meeting on 8 October.[52] After working together for a while, Kirby remarked that the personal relationships within the Committee 'could not be better', and they had to be, as they were faced with enormous problems.[53] Resolutions 27, 32 and 36, passed by the Security Council between 1 August and 1 November, all condemned the continuing

[46] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 333.
[47] *Ibid.*, no. 330, 332.
[48] *Ibid.*, no. 325, 337.
[49] *Ibid.*, no. 337.
[50] *Ibid.*, no. 358.
[51] *Ibid.*, no. 354.
[52] *Ibid.*, no. 363, 368.
[53] Committee of Good Offices on the Indonesian Question, *First Interim Report of the Committee to the Security Council*, (10-02-1948) pp. 1-2; *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 383.

violence in Indonesia.[54] The Dutch especially did not really seem to care about the ceasefire, and in October they occupied the southern part of West-Java.[55]

The Australians had a set of objectives in mind that they wanted to achieve during the talks. Inside the Committee they wanted to 'secure maximum conditions for Indonesia', to 'allow the Dutch to save as much face' as possible, 'build up reputation' for the United Nations and to draw up an agreement that would combine elements of the Treaty of Manila and the Linggadjati Agreement.[56] The Treaty of Manila was signed in July 1946 between the United States and the Philippines, granting independence to the latter.[57] The Australians found this treaty appealing because it was based on much simpler principles than the complex proposals of establishing a series of Indonesian states within a federation that were part of the Linggadjati Agreement.[58]

The Committee tried very hard to accommodate everyone's wishes. They moved the meetings to Jakarta on 27 October and met separately with Dutch and Indonesian delegations. One of the first things the two countries could already not agree on, was where further negotiations had to take place. Both would not accept the other's suggestions. In the end, the Americans provided a ship, the USS Renville, as a neutral place where the talks could continue.[59] On 1 December all the preliminary discussions were over: the actual negotiating could finally begin. Before they moved aboard the Renville, Kirby had been confident that the American 'ideas on sovereignty and independence' coincided with his, and that the Belgian representative could maybe be persuaded to agree with them if a proposal was made at the 'time of perfection'.[60] At the same time, he felt that the Committee was 'sitting on dynamite',

[54] Security Council Resolution 27, (01-08-1947); Security Council Resolution 32, (26-08-1947); Security Council Resolution 36, (01-11-1947).
[55] Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution 1945-1950*, pp. 113.
[56] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 342.
[57] Artemio R. Guillermo, *Historical dictionary of the Philippines*, (Plymouth 2012) pp. 29.
[58] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 345.
[59] John Coast, *Recruit to Revolution. Adventure and Politics During the Indonesian Struggle for Independence*, (Copenhagen 2015) pp. 60.
[60] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 416.

he was fatigued by the constant discussions and travel, and reacted irritably when the Department of External Affairs was slightly critical of the way he approached the negotiations.[61] Kirby was under a lot of pressure, not only from the Australians, but also from the Indonesians, who had great confidence in him.[62]

When the negotiations on 1 December started, Kirby's hopes quickly vanished, as the first week was one of 'incredibly drawn-out and frustrating arguments'. He also lost his confidence in the American delegation, calling them 'divided' and the main representative, Frank Graham, a 'seriously sick and sickening man, with no well-directed train of thought'.[63] Kirby clearly was in poor spirits and was not unhappy when Chifley ordered him back to Australia for a couple of weeks. He would not return to the Renville until 31 December.[64] Kirby was replaced by another member of the Australian delegation, but initially he did not miss much. The discussions deadlocked once again. The Australians understood that the Dutch knew that there was no need for them to really cooperate, as their situation was in fact getting better by the day. The situation in the Republican controlled regions was deteriorating, meaning that the Indonesians felt increasing pressure to compromise, while the Dutch grasp on the areas under their control strengthened. And the enormous burden that the KNIL placed on the Dutch economy was about to be alleviated by American funds in the form of the Marshall Plan.[65] At the same time, Australia's term in the Security Council would end on 31 December. Obviously, the Dutch hoped that they would be replaced by a country that would be less critical of their policy. But the Security Council did not want another delay and decided that the Australians could stay on the Committee even after their term expired.[66]

[61] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 421, 405, 423 respectively.
[62] *Ibid*., no. 425.
[63] *Ibid*., no. 453.
[64] *Ibid*., no. 454.
[65] *Ibid*., no. 421.
[66] *Security Council Repertoire. Chapter VIII*, pp. 319.

Christmas message

The situation was so difficult, that on Christmas the Committee decided to send a message to the two governments, asking them to reconsider the whole problem and try to start negotiations anew, based on eight principles that the Committee thought were a minimum starting point for a 'just and lasting settlement'.[67] It must have been clear to everyone involved that some of these principles were unacceptable for the Dutch, and the Australian delegation indeed reported to the government that they did 'not believe for one moment that the Netherlands will accept our proposals'.[68] As expected, the Indonesians wanted to accept the principles, but the Dutch presented twelve alternative principles.[69] Along with the new proposal, they issued the threat that if the Indonesians would not accept, the Dutch would resume 'liberty of action'.[70] The Dutch principles – that included promises to end the naval blockade and free elections for the Indonesians to decide on self-determination one year after signing the future agreement – were called 'reasonable' by Kirby, although he did not believe that they went far enough. He did not advise the Republican government on whether to accept or reject the proposal, but admitted to the Australian government that he personally would reject it.[71]

Graham then proposed some more principles, to counterbalance the twelve Dutch ones, and the Dutch announced that they were willing to accept the complete set of principles.[72] For the Indonesians the deal was much harder to swallow. Accepting the deal would mean that they would be in a position that was even worse than the one they were in prior to the illegitimate Operatie Product.[73] Kirby called this 'most unjust', but everyone realised that refusing meant that the Indonesians would have to fight another war against a military superior enemy.[74]

[67] Committee of Good Offices, *First Interim Report*, pp. 20-21; *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 488.
[68] *ADoFP. Volume XI*, no. 488.
[69] Philip Dorling and David Lee ed., *ADoFP. Volume XIII: Indonesia 1948*, (Canberra 1996) no. 8.
[70] *Ibid*., no. 6.
[71] *Idem.*
[72] *Ibid*., no. 13.
[73] *Ibid*., no. 15.
[74] *Ibid*., no. 21.

Therefore, on January 17, the Renville Agreement was signed.[75] It was by no means a perfect agreement and many points still had to be worked out. It was also no guarantee that all the bloodshed was now over, or that Indonesia would become an independent state. An Australian representative in Indonesia reported that 'the general feeling since the signing of the truce agreement between the Dutch and the Republicans is of wondering what is going to happen next, rather than any great relief and jubilation at the results obtained'.[76]

[75] Committee of Good Offices, *First Interim Report*, pp. 24.
[76] *ADoFP. Volume XIII*, no. 28.

Conclusion

The Renville Agreement was of great importance to many different parties, although it was by no means the end of the Indonesian Revolution. For Australia, the Renville Agreement was the official end of a process that started after the Second World War, and found its apotheosis during Operatie Product. Australian foreign policy had been dominated by the United Kingdom for most of its history, but the decision to go to the Security Council in July 1947 signified a serious departure from the old situation. Against their former Dutch allies, British pleas, American reluctance, and criticism in their own country, the Australian government sympathized with, and openly supported the Indonesian revolutionaries. Their support was not yet concluded, and Australia continued to battle for Indonesian independence, but the internationalisation of the conflict also meant that countries with bigger sticks became involved, and Australia's role in the Indonesian Revolution would never again be as crucial as it was in the second half of 1947.

It has not been possible to include everything that was significant about Renville here. That it was a milestone for the Security Council itself, for example, or the role India and the Philippines have played in the creation of it. But it is clear that it majorly influenced the Indonesian Revolution. For the first time in the Dutch-Indonesian conflict, an agreement was signed not only by the two opposing parties but also by international representatives. Up until then, any violation of an agreement only concerned the Netherlands, the Republic and possibly the United Kingdom. But now, if one of the parties would not hold their promise, they would be breaking an agreement with the Security Council, and, just as important, with the United States. And this was a country that, unlike the United Kingdom, did not share the same colonial interests as the Netherlands, but at the same time did possess the political leverage to make them comply with the new political situation.

While most historians do not dispute that the Renville Agreement was indeed a momentous event in the Indonesian Revolution, they have not yet fully explained how the it came to be, and what the crucial role of Australia in that process was. At the same time, the relevance of the Indonesian Revolution for the development of Australian foreign policy is even less recognized in the historiography. It is presumably because of the historic ties between Australia and the United Kingdom that most works devoted to the history of Australian diplomacy only study the countries' diverging paths from within this relationship itself. Differing opinions and disputes about that involve other (former) British colonies do sometimes feature, but the importance of Indonesia is usually underestimated, except maybe for David Lee's excellent chapter in *Facing North*.[77] The reconfiguration of the way the world was ordered after the Second World War has apparently been so radical, that historians sometimes still have trouble to rise above the old structures and turn to the new.

In a similar fashion, historiography about the Indonesian Revolution also suffers from the fact that it is too often exclusively studied along the Dutch-Indonesian axis. Other countries like Belgium, India, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and certainly also Australia have decisively influenced the situation in Indonesia between 1945 and 1950. Our understanding of the Indonesian Revolution still has a lot to gain by studying the influence of these countries, like this thesis has done for Australia. It has answered the questions why and how Australia became involved in the Indonesian Revolution, how they wanted to influence the peace process, and why they felt in the end that appealing the case to the Security Council was the only solution to the conflict in Indonesia. This has all added to a new perspective on the interactive relation between Indonesia and Australia in those crucial years of nation forming. But it is a perspective that can, and should be expanded, as it is by no means complete yet.

[77] David Lee, 'Indonesia's Independence' in Goldsworthy ed., *Facing North*, pp. 134-170.

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