



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

**The Dutch Changing Societal Memory Concerning the
Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949)**
From fighting a legitimate war, to being on the wrong side of history

A Thesis Submitted to The Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for The Degree of Master of Arts in International Relations

Joost van Santen
s1872044

Supervisor: Dr. V. Thakur
Word count: 13.494

Leiden
July 3rd, 2020

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Literature Review.....	6
Methodology.....	12
Chapter Scheme	15
Background.....	16
Corpus.....	18
Analysis	21
Conclusion	44
Primary sources.....	46
Literature.....	46

Introduction

Dutch society was shocked when during a television interview in 1969, Joop Hueting admitted that the Dutch soldiers had used excessive violence in the Indonesian War of Independence between 1945-1949. The government tried to nullify the statement, but to no avail. For days, the headlines of the newspapers were dominated by the interview Joop Hueting had given. As a reaction, many letters were sent containing confessions of committed war crimes by fellow veterans.¹ Other veterans were furious and argued that these were blown out of proportion and only incidental.²

The lack of information concerning these war crimes was due to the fact that the government based their evidence on archival material, consisting of military reports only. Since war crimes were usually not reported, they were missing in these official reports. The stories of the war crimes became known through personal diaries, disclosed sessions with a therapist, or deathbed confessions.³ Some stories of the violence had reached the Dutch government during the war and had led to questions in parliament but there was never an immediate response.⁴ Two veterans who were trained in social sciences gathered evidence of violence during the war and they finally dared to publish their results in 1970. The Dutch government in its turn decided to fund independent research during the 1970s.⁵

Even though the war crimes are accepted as facts today, there are very few Dutch soldiers that have been prosecuted for taking part. The ones who were convicted got away with light sentences. The priority of the Dutch government lay in the protection of the veterans from too much harm: after all, the soldiers followed orders of the higher command, which was authorized by the Dutch government.⁶

For this thesis I have studied the Dutch societal memory concerning the Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949) and how it has changed over time. I have explored the reflection of this change in a diachronic corpus of documentaries dealing with the Indonesian War of Independence, covering a period from 1945-2019. The choice for documentaries is based on the idea that producers of documentaries are often critical representatives of society. If they are

¹ Scagliola, *Cleo's Unfinished Business: Coming to Terms with Dutch War Crimes in Indonesia's War of Independence*, 424.

² Romijn, *Learning on 'the Job': Dutch War Veterans Entering the Indonesian War of Independence, 1945-46*, 317.

³ Scagliola, *Cleo's Unfinished Business*, 419-420.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁵ Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar: Indonesië van Kolonie tot Nationale Staat*, 491-492.

⁶ Scagliola, *Cleo's Unfinished Business*, 419 & 425.

influenced by a changing opinion, it should be visible in their work. Documentaries also make a good source of research because they offer detailed insight into relevant topics such as violence, self-image, and justification. The main research question is the following: *How has the Dutch societal memory concerning the Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949) changed over the past 70 years?*

Three hypotheses have been tested: 1) the Dutch reflective societal memory changed from denying violence against freedom fighters towards the acknowledgement of the violence; 2) the Dutch reflective societal memory changed from denying the violence against freedom fighters towards a neutral stance where the wrongdoings of both parties are shown; 3) the Dutch reflective societal memory changed from denying violence against freedom fighters towards defending the veteran's actions as deemed necessary.

The research is necessary because the academic field of the Indonesian War of Independence focusses mostly on Dutch soldiers. Scholars are focusing on the individuals and try to reveal the excessive violence committed during the war. However, not only the individuals are important to research. As was shown after the appearance of Joop Hueting on Dutch television, society was shocked by his claims. Even today, the Dutch society is affected by the past events. For example, this year the Dutch King formally apologized to the Indonesians for the war crimes. This resulted in lively debates on television on whether the King was right to apologize.⁷

The thesis is structured as follows: firstly, the current academic field is presented in the literature review. Secondly, the methodology of the thesis will be elaborated, it will explain what is researched, why it is researched and how this research will be conducted. Thirdly, there is a short background section which will give information concerning the Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949). Fourthly, the chosen documentaries will be point out in the corpus. The fifth part will be an analysis of the corpus. Finally, the conclusion will determine how the Dutch societal memory concerning the Indonesian War of Independence has changed and how further research can continue on this topic.

⁷ Algemeen Dagblad, *Koning Biedt Excuses aan voor Nederlands Geweld in Indonesië*, retrieved from: <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/koning-biedt-excuses-aan-voor-nederlands-geweld-in-indonesie~ae345c22/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>, consulted at 15-04-2020.

Literature Review

The research done on the Indonesian War of Independence is extensive. There are two broader themes in the literature. The first one is how the Dutch government reacted throughout the war. Scholars have been paying a lot of attention to the convulsive attitude of the Dutch government towards the colony. The second theme deals with the individuals and how it was possible that the Dutch volunteers transformed in battle weary soldiers who had committed war crimes.

For the research described here, the memory of the war is important. Therefore, this literature review starts with an elaboration on the visual method of research in International Relations (IR), paying attention to memory studies. After that, an overview will be given of the current explanations for the Dutch soldiers' actions and how Dutch government responded to the war.

Visual research in IR studies

Visual research in IR is mostly based on aesthetics, which means that academic works are no longer solely based on official documents, elite level interviews and survey data, but also on the artistic genre (novels, music, and film).⁸ Aesthetic scholars are exploring different forms of insight by using images, narratives, and sounds. They are convinced that aesthetics is about rethinking fundamental issues which drive global politics. They try to create a critical attitude in understanding the political world.⁹

This turn towards the aesthetic has started at the beginning of the 2000s. International Relations scholars have since used emotional engagements with international politics and visual representations of war, security, and diseases, whereby there is more focus on the visual. However, the use of documentaries as a method to study IR is still not popular. Harman argues that film and narrative feature film challenge and develop the methods and outputs of IR. She argues that feature films are an important method of research in the discipline of IR. The potential of moving images is that they reveal the invisible, and hidden, relations. They show dynamics of informal politics in a better way than the written word can. Films are confronting limiting boundaries which prevent the full potential of IR studies.¹⁰

Bleiker argues that world politics needs to be researched in a new fashion by using aesthetics. Instead of trying to represent politics realistically, he argues that one should assume that there always will be a gap between interpretation and reality. He argues that the representation of

⁸ Callahan, *The Visual Turn in IR: Documentary Filmmaking as a Critical Method*, 11.

⁹ Bleiker, *Aesthetic Turn in International Relations*, 2.

¹⁰ Harman, *Seeing Politics*, 13-15.

reality is politics.¹¹ “Any form of representation is inevitably a process of interpretation and abstraction”.¹² IR could profit from aesthetics, because it has political relevance and is inevitable.¹³ The aesthetic IR scholars are divided in two camps, the first advocates the use of aesthetics as part of a wider range of pluralist methods to understand the complex modern world. The other camp dismisses aesthetics as they argue that aesthetics adds little to the theorizing world order.¹⁴

Critical aesthetics is not about the explanation of symbols, but it makes more concrete what effect experiences have and thus moves from ideology to what it influences.¹⁵ Shapiro argues that the politics surrounding cinema are the best way to disturb and even provoke critiques of violence.¹⁶ Plantinga describes documentaries as representations that combine the spoken word with visuals.¹⁷ The difficulty of moving images is that they are often censored or used as propaganda by politicians to create films that spread a certain political ideology. It is meant to build a national identity and to export a representation of the population to the rest of the world.¹⁸

The Indonesian War of Independence, and the hardships which people had to endure, are better understood when researching it via documentaries. As Harman argues, the combination of moving images and sound to show a narrative, creates a connection between the subject and the audience. Moving images personalize events, which let people understand events better than only reading about them.¹⁹ Harman further argues that visual images are important to IR because it impacts society. It can challenge the perception of individuals, and even societies, in how politics is perceived.²⁰

Memory studies

Memory studies are increasingly used as a theoretical method in looking at the past. Most Dutch scholars use memory to explain the psychological-individual. However, Pattynama argues that it can also be understood as a cultural phenomenon, or a personal/social one. Memory can be the result of collective activity. This can be divided into two parts 1) the remembered past is a

¹¹ Bleiker, *The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory*, 510.

¹² *Ibid.*, 532.

¹³ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴ Harman, *Seeing Politics*, 48.

¹⁵ Callahan, *The Visual Turn in IR*, 12.

¹⁶ Shapiro, *Cinematic Politics*, 40-41; 47.

¹⁷ Plantinga, *What a Documentary is, After All*, 111.

¹⁸ Harman, *Seeing Politics*, 176.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

construct of the people of the present. They shape (un)consciously the past to complement it to present interests. 2) A shared past is essential for the collective identity because it binds the people within the group.²¹ In this thesis, the first one is important because at the time of publication, a memory is a reflection of how history is perceived and thus how society at that time remembers the past. When looking at different periods it is possible to get an idea of how societal memory changes over a larger period.

When conducting memory studies, it is important to note a few things; first, that historical memory is a way to connect past wrongdoings with present-day injustices.²² Historical narratives are both products and resources of political struggle rather than frameworks which exist before political contestation.²³ However, memory is not only politically constructed, but also socially, which is argued by Locher-Scholten. An example of a materialized memory is that of monuments. These monuments depict the interpretations of the past by the ones who erected the monument.²⁴ Sturken takes another step by connecting cultural memory with traumatic events, and states that this memory shows both the structures, and the fractures of culture.²⁵ Today, moving images have an important role in societal memory in which documentaries take part. These documentaries rely mostly on stories from witnesses.²⁶ History is seen as objective because conclusions are drawn from evidence and the official facts. Memory on the other hand is seen as subjective and it is vulnerable for the mistake-prone humans. Memory is an authentic way of recalling the past.²⁷

Burke claims that cultural representations (these are feature films in her study) are always a representation of the past. Films, or other cultural representations, can never fully recapture the past. Therefore, cultural representations are created in a certain way, becoming social constructs and versions of history. Cultural and societal ideas and ideology of the time in which films are produced are visible in the representation. In other words, cultural representations tell a lot about the time in which they were produced.²⁸ Thus, according to Burke, when exploring memory, it is more important to ask oneself why historical actors constructed their memories

²¹ Pattynama, *Cultural Memory and Indo-Dutch Identity Formations*, 178. In: Bosma, *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands*.

²² Temin & Dahl, *Narrating Historical Injustice: Political Responsibility and the Politics of Memory*, 905.

²³ *Ibid.*, 908.

²⁴ Locher-Scholten, *From Urn to Monument: Dutch Memories of World War II in the Pacific, 1945-1995*, 106. In: Smith, *Europe's Invisible Migrants*.

²⁵ Radstone & Schwarz, *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, 302.

²⁶ Hendriks, 'Not a Colonial War': *Dutch Film Propaganda in the Fight against Indonesia, 1945-49*, 414.

²⁷ Mookherjee, *Memory*, 201-202. In: Bleiker, *Visual Global Politics*.

²⁸ Burke, *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film: Memory, Myth, and the Cultural Legacy of War*, 23.

in a certain way, instead of looking at how accurate the memory is in comparison with the historical facts.²⁹

The next part of the literature review is divided in two themes. The Dutch soldiers' actions and Dutch government. There is a connection between the two, because the soldiers executed orders and the Dutch government concealed the actions of those soldiers.

Dutch soldiers

Romijn gives several arguments to explain the motivations of Dutch soldiers. He points out that most Dutch volunteers were resistance fighters who fought the Nazi's. They thought they went as liberators, not oppressors and their military campaign was marked with war crimes. Romijn further argues that the use of the word 'excessive violence' as chosen by the Dutch government instead of war crimes, was typical in the wars of decolonization. Decolonization wars most often resulted in an escalation of violence between both parties. The Dutch defended their used violence by explaining that they were forced by the situation. They argued that there was a situation of emergency because of the guerrilla tactics used by the Indonesians.³⁰

Scagliola says that the Dutch troops were forced to use harsh measures against the Indonesian freedom fighters, and that therefore only a small number of soldiers were prosecuted for war crimes. He further argues that the war crimes were concealed because of the Dutch political culture of consensus-seeking. Another explanation given by him, is that the Dutch were not familiar with a culture of violence. The veterans felt betrayed because of the lack of support from the population and the government when arriving home from the war. Therefore, a lot of veterans suppressed their memories of the war crimes.³¹

Burgers argues that the perception the Dutch soldiers had of those freedom fighters was the reason for the excessive violence. The soldiers saw the Indonesians as criminals, instead of the military of a nation. Therefore, events occurred which would be war crimes in a regular war such as, for example, the execution of prisoners who had surrendered, or the torture of prisoners to gain intelligence.³²

In another article, Oostindie states that the Dutch acknowledge that the excessive violence, the war crimes, was a massive failure in Dutch warfare. By using egodocuments of Dutch soldiers,

²⁹ Temin & Dahl, *Narrating Historical Injustice*, 914.

³⁰ Romijn, *Learning on 'the Job'*, 319.

³¹ Scagliola, *Cleo's Unfinished Business*, 419-420.

³² Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar*, 448.

it is shown that the war crimes were more structural than exceptional.³³ Foray argues that the Dutch had trouble in recognizing that the Indonesian freedom fighters were comparable to the Dutch resistance fighters during the German occupation.³⁴

Dutch government

According to Hendriks the Dutch government deliberately tried to minimize the number of reports about the violence. This is in line with the evasiveness concerning the war, by calling it police actions. Another reason for the Dutch justification of the war crimes is the image of an Indonesia that is not yet capable of self-governance.³⁵ Oostindie takes it further and argues that the Dutch government was not only protecting their veterans by concealing the facts about war crimes, but they did it for themselves as well. He further elaborates that the veterans are divided about the topic. One half of the veterans claim that orders were followed and executed in the best way possible. The other half claims that the used violence was immoral and excessive.³⁶ He also argues that the Dutch additionally had other reasons for resisting the independency claims of the Indonesian freedom fighters. Not only was the colony economically and geopolitically important, the Dutch also had a developmental and ethical mission to complete. However, Oostindie adds that there was also a feeling of revanche. Sukarno, one of the leaders of the freedom fighters was linked with Japan whilst the Dutch East Indies was still occupied by the Japanese during World War II.³⁷

Pattynama argues that the Netherlands, just as other former colonial powers, suffer from colonial amnesia. This means that the colonial past is uncomfortable and silenced but will not get away. The Netherlands tried to steer the political, historical, and cultural consequences of their actions to their own preferences.³⁸

Not only the Dutch soldiers and the government were involved in the war. Society has an important task in remembering past events. Locher-Scholten argues that the process of decolonization of the Dutch East Indies was passed over in silence. It was not part of the public memory and forgotten. It resurrected in the 1960s, marking the start of a resurrection in Dutch culture.³⁹ Scheffer argues that a society needs to reconsider its perception of the past and that

³³ Oostindie, *The Decolonization War in Indonesia, 1945-1949: War Crimes in Dutch Veterans' Egodocuments*, 255.

³⁴ Foray, *The Trauma of Liberation: Dutch Political Culture and the Indonesia Question in 1945*, 88.

³⁵ Hendriks, 'Not a Colonial War', 403.

³⁶ Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands: Sixty-Five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing*, 89.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁸ Pattynama, *Cultural Memory and Indo-Dutch Identity Formations*, 176.

³⁹ Locher-Scholten, *From Urn to Monument*, 115.

colonial history does need to be a part of the collective memory. If not, truth will be violated, and the historical record distorted.⁴⁰

Black argues that countries reconcile the past by downplaying animosity. By trying to build a friendly relation, past events are marginalized, or the role of certain groups is neglected.⁴¹

Oostindie describes the development in Dutch public debates on the Indonesian War of Independence as follows. During the war there was a widespread belief in the war which would retain colonial control. Nowadays, there has been a shift towards recognition of past mistakes and the Dutch acknowledge that they were on the wrong side of history.⁴²

It is necessary to research the development of the Dutch societal memory of the Indonesian War of Independence because it explains how our society has changed over time. It is also more important to know the development than the difference between the past and present. As the literature shows, there are some explanations for the Dutch behaviour during the war, and there is the acknowledgement of past mistakes, however, what lacks is a description on how the Dutch society experienced this change.

As mentioned above, most memory studies put all the attention towards politics and veterans whereby the Dutch society has been neglected. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the Dutch societal memory on the war. The Dutch society needs to be researched more and especially the development of the societal memory towards the Indonesian War of Independence. There will be a renewed perspective on the topic by using documentaries.

⁴⁰ Pattynama, *Cultural Memory and Indo-Dutch Identity Formations*, 175.

⁴¹ Black, *Contesting the Past*, 254.

⁴² Oostindie, *The Decolonization War in Indonesia, 1945-1949*, 261.

Methodology

What:

This thesis focusses on the societal memory of the war for independence fought between the Dutch and the Indonesians between 1945-1949 and how this memory has changed over time. Qualitative research has been done, using documentaries from the time of the event until now. The documentaries have been watched with four themes in mind namely, violence, justification, self-image, and different voices. The choice for documentaries was made because it is one of the ways to store cultural memory. Images are more and more integrated as another way to store cultural memory.⁴³ It is important because it helps in mediating difficulties from the past. The past is adopted as part of the present. It is in line with questions regarding the necessity of remembering the past. Bal argues that societal memory is collective, not individual. She describes it as: “an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and re-described even as it continues to shape the future”.⁴⁴

Why:

Focussing on the societal memory of the Dutch through documentaries is interesting as an additional point of view to the extensive literature on the individual experiences of violence. The decolonisation period has been researched very thoroughly. The Dutch academics have put a lot of effort into investigating the events occurring in the Dutch East Indies between 1945-1949. Most historic research however attempts to recreate the war. The focus was on the violence that was used and the experiences of the Dutch soldiers. Far less researched, is how Dutch society has remembered the war. There is a lack of research concerning this societal memory and especially how this has shifted over time. What was the reason that this memory went from unmentionable during and just after the war to an acknowledged failure in 2020?

The documentaries were (mostly) broadcasted on national television, thereby potentially reaching a larger public. Whereas academic sources, newspapers or novels have less publicity. I therefore argue that documentaries have (had) a bigger impact on society. In addition, documentaries are representations of an event; it will never entirely recreate it. Dutch' societal memory and the relationship with the past is mediated through documentaries. Societal

⁴³ Pattynama, *Cultural Memory and Indo-Dutch Identity Formations*, 178.

⁴⁴ Bal, Crewe & Spitzer, *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, vii.

ideologies are shown in moving images and by exploring those ideas, societal memory can be better understood.⁴⁵

How:

To examine the societal change, I have performed a discourse analysis based on multiple documentaries produced in different time periods. I have selected 5 documentaries from time periods 1945-1947, 1976, 1994, 2006, and 2019 respectively to be able to examine the development over time. There are more documentaries published in recent years, however, there is not a comparable amount from the earlier decades. The documentaries from 1947, 1976 and 1994 were picked because these are the only documentaries from that period. The documentary published in 2006 (*Bevrijding of Merdeka*) was chosen because it explores more than the other documentaries on how a battalion of soldiers coped with the war. The documentary from 2019 was selected since this is the most recent one. It also includes an interview with Joop Hueting, the veteran who gained recognition as the first who spoke publicly about the war crimes.

I have first watched the documentaries without paying attention to specific themes, to get familiar with the content of the documentaries. The second time I have focused on the themes selected for my analysis. In a third round, I have verified and corrected my analysis.

The themes I have focused on are the following: violence, self-image of the Dutch, the justification of the war and the different voice. The used violence was hidden by the government for a long time, so I wanted to investigate in a qualitative way when and how the representation of their actions during the war changed over time. I further wanted to be able to create a timeline of how the societal memory of the Dutch has developed and how this has affected peoples' self-image. I have also looked at the justification of the war. Did the morals or arguments regarding the violence change and if so, how? I also wanted to analyse the different points of view presented in the documentaries. Below there is a brief description of the themes.

Violence

Violence is concealed in the early years after the Indonesian War of Independence. This makes it necessary to investigate as a theme. It is generally accepted that propaganda does not show the gruesome violence.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Burke, *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film*, 25.

⁴⁶ Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, 19.

When talking about violence, this research uses four elements namely, fights, soldiers, victims, and ravaged places. Whenever one of these is shown or talked about, it is noted, and a detailed description is given. For example, was it a battalion hitting a hostage, or is it a gunfight between the Dutch and the Indonesian freedom fighters?

Self-Image

This theme is based on the reflection of the veterans towards their actions. Is there any difference between the decades? The qualifications used are: soldiers are defending their actions, approve their actions, or condemn them.

Justification

The third theme focuses on the justification of the war. How did the veterans respond to the war and are there any changes since the end of the war? Did they defend the legitimization of the colony, or did they argue that they were attacked by the freedom fighters and had to defend themselves?

The different voice

The themes focus on the behaviour of Dutch soldiers and how they reflect on their deeds. However, it is interesting to show if there are other voices shown in the documentaries. For example, are there interviews with Indonesians civilians, or even people who fought as a freedom fighter? If so, what explanation can be connected to it?

The four themes were necessary to create structure in the different documentaries. If there are any changes in the decades following the war, it ought to be reflected in the analysis of each theme. If not, there are two options 1) there are no changes in societal memory, or 2) documentaries are not a good way to measure societal memory.

There are two major difficulties, the first is that there is not much footage of the fighting during the Indonesian War of Independence. The Dutch government preferred to show how the Dutch soldiers aided the weak. So, we had to base our analysis not only on the images of the actual fighting, but also on the oral reports on these fights.⁴⁷

The second difficulty is that what was filmed, is heavily influenced by the government. The footage consists of the convoys, or the Dutch soldiers getting cheered on by the Indonesian population. Existing footage consists of the clearing of roadblocks and burned down factories.

⁴⁷ Hendriks, *'Not a Colonial War'*, 415.

These images show that the freedom fighters were using the scorched earth tactic and were literally burning down the country. A member of the camera crew who was filming during the war admitted that they received orders to film in such a way, that it would give a positive image of the Dutch soldiers.⁴⁸

Chapter Scheme

The rest of the thesis will be structured around the documentaries. First, I will give some background information on the Indonesian War of Independence. In the subsequent section on the corpus the documentaries will be explained, together with how the academic sources explain the changing societal memory of the Dutch concerning the Indonesian War of Independence. The analysis follows, structured per theme, which are '*violence*', '*self-image*', '*justification*', and '*different voices*'. The five documentaries will be described separately and in order of publication. In the conclusion, the initial three hypotheses will be discussed, and an answer will be given to whether Dutch reflective societal memory has changed and if so how.

⁴⁸ Hendriks, '*Not a Colonial War*', 408.

Background

The Second World War was overwhelming for the Dutch. The Germans occupied the Netherlands in three days, and the Japanese occupied the Dutch East Indies in three months. The Indonesian population received the Japanese forces as liberators, but they quickly realised Japan's intentions. Until the capitulation of Japan, the Dutch administrators and soldiers were kept in concentration camps. The Japanese occupation resulted in four million deaths, due to starvation, forced labour and resistance. The Japanese encouraged Indonesian nationalism but prohibited the Indonesian flag, which is suppression of nationalism. So, Japan partly accepted nationalism but in the end, they retained the control over the population. However, with the capitulation of Japan, the Indonesian Nationalists saw an opportunity to claim independence.⁴⁹ The Dutch were frustrated about this development and responded with sending military forces to restore peace and order, which the government deemed an easy task. However, they were wrong, and it ended up in four years of fighting.⁵⁰

The Dutch were surprised by the Indonesian declaration of independence two days after the Japanese capitulation. The Dutch government was not ready to release their colony, but neither were they able to control the territory. The British controlled the territory at first but pressured the Dutch to negotiate with the Indonesian nationalists. These negotiations failed by a mutual distrust.⁵¹

Before the Dutch forces arrived in 1946, the British were trying to restore the peace for the Dutch. When the first major Dutch military force arrived, they aimed to reclaim strategic locations such as Java and Sumatra. Politics were unsuccessful in solving the problem at hand, so the Dutch started a military campaign called *Police Actions*. It downplayed the true aim: re-occupation of the colony. The Indonesians used guerrilla tactics to withhold the Dutch forces. The second campaign of *Police Actions* started in 1948. The Dutch occupied a territory too large to control effectively and they had to deal with ambushes of Indonesian nationalists. During the first campaign, the Dutch were able to protect the population, whereby Dutch rule was accepted if there was peace. During the second campaign however, this became impossible. The Indonesian nationalists saw opportunities to better infiltrate and expand their guerrilla. The result was that the Dutch became suspicious and reacted more violently towards the population.

⁴⁹ Buettner, *Europe after Empire*, 84.

⁵⁰ Gouda & Zaalberg, Indonesia's Struggle for Independence and the Outside World: England, Australia, and the United States in Search of a Peaceful Solution." In *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia*, 187.

⁵¹ Scagliola, *Cleo's Unfinished Business*, 421.

The Dutch military was tired, there was no international support, which made the Dutch government slowly aware that granting independence to the Indonesians was the only option.⁵² The turning point for most soldiers was the battle of Surabaya, where they experienced that the Indonesian freedom fighters were not a gang of fanatics, but were part of a movement with a widespread feeling of nationalism.⁵³

The Dutch were pressured on the international stage to stop the war and grant Indonesia its independence, which happened in 1949.⁵⁴ Afterwards, the Dutch veterans hid their memories of the war, including the atrocities, far away. They did not receive any recognition from Dutch society, and they felt betrayed. Almost twenty years later, the memory of the Indonesian War of Independence was reactivated. Joop Hueting spoke about the war crimes on national television. This television appearance marked the change in Dutch' society minds regarding their colonial past. The feelings of an unfair loss of the prize colony made place for one of shame and guilt over topics, such as racism, exploitation, and war crimes.⁵⁵

⁵² Scagliola, *Cleo's Unfinished Business*, 421-422.

⁵³ Gouda & Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: US Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949*, 179.

⁵⁴ Dülffer & Frey, *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, 58.

⁵⁵ Pattinama, *Cultural Memory and Indo-Dutch Identity Formations*, 180.

Corpus

The first part of this chapter will provide explanations given by academics of the changing Dutch societal memory. The second part will briefly describe the documentaries, giving general comments such as the year it was published. The difference with the literature review is that I here attempt to describe how scholars write about the societal change, instead of the events of the war.

Secondary literature

Scholars have found a gradual change of attitude towards the Indonesian War of Independence. At first, the memories of the war were suppressed and concealed. Reasons for the silence is partly because the veterans felt betrayed as they did not receive any recognition. They came home and the public opinion was that the war was pointless and dirty. Hence, veterans could not express their troubles and decided not to talk about it.⁵⁶

The Netherlands and Indonesia were not speaking about the past, in order to make sure that a prosperous relationship would be possible for the future. The 1960s became the moment the Dutch started to look back. First of all, it was because the younger generation was questioning their parents about the past. Another important development was the fact that in 1965 Sukarno, who led the Indonesians to freedom, was succeeded by Suharto as president. The largest impact came from the television appearance of Joop Hueting. Silence was broken and it resulted in military protests, governmental reports, a parliamentary debate, and scholarly publications.⁵⁷

Up until 1976 there was almost no footage of the Indonesian War of Independence on Dutch television. This changed when in December 1976, the documentary *Free Indonesia (Indonesia Merdeka)* appeared.⁵⁸

Before the 1980s hardly any attention was paid to the veterans who had fought in the Dutch East Indies.⁵⁹ Gradually, though, the topic became more popular in the Netherlands. The amount of literature grew, there was a whole generation of former residents of the Dutch East Indies who travelled back and wrote about past times. Academic works remained mostly in the scholarly circles. Only the work of De Jong attracted public attention. However, he received a lawsuit by an Indonesian organization because he claimed that the myth of good rule was

⁵⁶ Scagliola, *Cleo's Unfinished Business*, 420-421.

⁵⁷ Locher-Scholten, *From Urn to Monument*, 116.

⁵⁸ Hendriks, *'Not a Colonial War', 1945-49*, 413.

⁵⁹ Burke, *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film*, 25.

wrong. In 1970 there was a commemoration for what happened in the Pacific war, attended by 10.000 people.⁶⁰

With the increasing interest in the topic, the Dutch became more aware of their past mistakes. Scholars have agreed since then that violence happened on a larger scale, eventually calling it structural violence, consisting of executions, shooting at civilians, revenge, arson, and raiding.⁶¹

Documentaries

Five documentaries have been selected for further analysis. The documentaries are all from a different period. In this section I will give a short description of each of them.

The first documentary was published between 1945 and 1947. It consists of seven shorter pieces of film. It is important to mention that it was published during the war and by the Dutch government. The documentary is called *Linggadjati in de Branding* (Linggadjati in the midst of conflict). It shows images of the first police action. It is the only one published during the war. The following hyperlinks leads to the seven parts of the documentaries.

<http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2654-nederlands-indi-in-de-tweede-wereldoorlog/2665-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-1>
<http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2590-de-dekolonisatie-van-nederlands-indi/2644-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-2>
<http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2590-de-dekolonisatie-van-nederlands-indi/2646-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-3>
<http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2590-de-dekolonisatie-van-nederlands-indi/2650-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-4>
<http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2590-de-dekolonisatie-van-nederlands-indi/2650-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-5>
https://www.vpro.nl/speel~WO_VPR_____O_040017~overheidsdocumentaire-in-7-delen-over-de-eerste-politionele-actie-1947-9-42-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-6-7~.html

The second documentary is from 1976 and is also the only documentary from that period. This one is interesting because it marks the increase in Dutch societal attention towards the Indonesian War of Independence. The title is *Indonesia Merdeka* (Indonesia Freedom). It consists of interviews with veterans and with Hatta, who was one of the leaders of the Indonesian freedom fighters, reflecting on the period of conflict.

https://www.2doc.nl/speel~WO_VPRO_7601353~vpro-roelof-kiers-1-december-1976-121-min-indonesia-merdeka-deel-1~.html

⁶⁰ Locher-Scholten, *From Urn to Monument*, 122.

⁶¹ Lutikhuis & Harinck, *Voorbij het Koloniale Perspectief: Indonesische Bronnen en het Onderzoek naar de Oorlog in Indonesië, 1945-1949*, 55.

https://www.2doc.nl/speel~WO_VPRO_043506~vpro-roelof-kiers-1-december-1976-74-min-indonesia-merdeka-deel-2~.html

The documentary from 1994 is also the only one published in this decade. It is a triptych showing not only the years of war of 1945-1949, but also how it was before the war. It goes deeper into the relation between the Dutch and Indonesians. The documentary is called *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië* (What used to be the Dutch East Indies).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aanQ7VgaSOo>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKvrIioB6qY>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IcjFxcReCA>

The fourth documentary is from 2006 It is called *Bevrijding of Merdeka* (Liberation or Freedom). It was selected because it gave the most information on the Indonesian War of Independence. It discusses the difference between staying a Dutch colony, or gaining independence. It follows a Dutch battalion in its mission in the Dutch East Indies.

<https://www.2doc.nl/documentaires/series/hollanddoc/2010/Bevrijding-of-Merdeka.html>

The last documentary is from 2019 and was chosen because it is the most recent one on the subject. It is called *Onze Jongens op Java* (Our Boys on Java). It consists of interviews with veterans, including a notable interview with Joop Hueting. These interviewees look back on their past and the events which occurred during the war.

<https://www.bnnvara.nl/documentaires/videos/519705>
<https://www.bnnvara.nl/documentaires/videos/522913>
<https://www.bnnvara.nl/documentaires/videos/523393>
<https://www.bnnvara.nl/documentaires/videos/523855>

Analysis

The previous chapter gave a brief overview on how academics described the gradual change in Dutch societal memory concerning the Indonesian War of Independence and an introduction to the documentaries. In this part, the documentaries will be analysed according to the four themes: *violence, self-image, justification, and the different voice*. The themes will be discussed chronologically, and an overview will be created to give insight in the differences.

The first theme looks at violence, using both images of that violence and the oral reports of the people interviewed in the documentaries. The second theme analyses the self-image of the Dutch (soldiers) towards the war. This theme will explore whether the soldiers' self-perception has changed, and if so, in what way or how. The third theme, justification, is meant to describe the legitimization of the war, and if or how this changed over time. The fourth and last theme is different voices, whereby it is explored whether the perspective of the opposition received attention in the documentaries.

1. Violence

1.1 *Linggadjati in de Branding*

Linggadjati in de Branding was recorded for the Dutch government during the war. The Dutch government was carefully determining which moving images could be made available for the public. The visuals show clips of young Indonesian nationalists training for battle. During these images, it is told that the Japanese had stirred up the Indonesian nationalism against the Dutch and that was the sole reason for the conflict. The tactics of the Indonesians were the blockade of food and destruction of infrastructure and factories, which harmed civilians the most.⁶² The only thing seen from battles is the moment the Dutch soldiers fired their guns into the air.⁶³ The background music is optimistic when showing the Dutch and becomes tearful when talking about the destruction of the lands by the freedom fighters.⁶⁴ Fires are shown, with tanks passing by and only when looking closely, a corpse can be seen.⁶⁵

⁶² The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 2*, 3:24-4:55 & The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 5*, 00:24-1:15.

⁶³ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 3*, 5:34-5:38.

⁶⁴ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 4*, 3:34-3:50.

⁶⁵ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 6+7*, 6:28-6:55.

1.2 *Indonesia Merdeka*

In this documentary, there is more openness towards the number of casualties, whereby the battle of Surabaya is mentioned at which 16.000 Indonesians were killed.⁶⁶ There is not much awareness of the violence. The other moments where violence is shown are the moments where the aggressiveness of the freedom fighters who murdered and kidnapped Dutch is treated. A correspondent elaborates on a story where he had to pretend to be British to prevent being killed by nationalists.⁶⁷

One Indonesian freedom fighter explains that it was necessary to fight, because the British refused to cooperate. This refers to the start of the conflict where the British were trying to control the conflict. One Indonesian recites the quality of the Indonesian militias as unordered, without technique, but with heroism and patriotism. An example is that they captured a tank but were unable to control it and needed a Japanese to explain it to them.⁶⁸

At one point in the documentary there are fragments shown from an Indonesian movie, depicting the Dutch as the oppressor who kills innocent civilians.⁶⁹ The interviewed Indonesians in this documentary describe the jetfighters who scouted the area for twelve hours looking for Indonesians to shoot at. The freedom fighters shot at moving vehicles. It resulted in many deaths.⁷⁰

The Dutch used terror during the Second Police Action because they were unable to control Java. The Indonesians argued that their hostile guerrilla behaviour resulted in the Dutch paranoia. The fact that the Dutch were using terror was a sign of defeat concluded the freedom fighters. The Indonesians argued that the terror would bring the civilians on their hand.⁷¹

1.3 *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië*

This documentary also claims/states that the Japanese were responsible for training the Indonesians and making them familiar with weaponry.⁷² The war resulted in casualties on both sides. The Dutch wanted revenge for the injustice done to their countrymen in the concentration camps. The Indonesians wanted freedom and came up with slogans 'to kill all the Dutch'.⁷³

⁶⁶ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 1:58:29-1:59:15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:42:05-1:45:15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:54:25-1:55:00.

⁶⁹ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part II*, 13:37-16:20.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 17:28-18:55.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 54:14-55:12.

⁷² Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part I*, 55:05-55:37.

⁷³ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part II*, 16:12-16:51.

In this documentary, casualties are shown more often, however the violence itself remains unseen.⁷⁴ The documentary pays attention to an event when Indonesians arrested several Dutch but also murdered 350 with swords.⁷⁵ An Indonesian veteran tells that the Indonesian army was always prepared to fight but that they had also experienced that the Dutch had improved their forces during the negotiations of Linggadjadi.⁷⁶

The battles are described as short but violent, whereby the soldiers were always scared to be attacked by an invisible enemy.⁷⁷ Once the Dutch soldiers were so fed up with being shot at all the time, that a group of five soldiers walked towards the enemy provoking them to shoot. It quickly got out of hand and the soldiers felt that they had to destroy an entire Indonesian campsite. The veteran talking about the incident justified their action as self-defence by telling that he saw no other way out, because of the encircling Indonesian guerrillas.⁷⁸ Another anecdote of violence is when a wounded Indonesian soldier was tracked and found at a riverbank. A Dutch soldier killed the victim, instead of helping him.⁷⁹ In this documentary an Indonesian veteran shows the scars he has from Dutch bullets, thereby describing how it happened.⁸⁰

Revenge was common and both sides were guilty of committing crimes because of it. The difficulty during the war was that reports did not include how enemies died. It could have happened during combat, but also afterwards, when captured.⁸¹

1.4 *Bevrijding of Merdeka*

In this 2006 documentary, the Dutch veterans explain that most Indonesian fighters were just terrorists, not freedom fighters and that they hid under the guise of the nationalists. The difference was that, according to the veterans, these terrorists attacked their own villages, killed the men, and kidnapped the women and children.⁸²

⁷⁴ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part II*, 17:49-17:57.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10:48-10:55.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 23:13-23:44.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 47:05-48:48.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 34:09-35:30.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 49:55-50:20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 30:11-31:03.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 50:20-51:15.

⁸² Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 19:45-20:30.

They also talk more openly about the fighting that took place. There are stories of fights nearby the canteen, where freedom fighters were even shooting from driving trams.⁸³ These guerrilla tactics were also seen outside of the city, where, for example, Indonesians ambushed Dutch transports. Once a platoon went on a patrol to fight the ambushers. The Indonesians sabotaged the road and placed a bomb. One of the soldiers prevented the bomb from exploding, whilst the platoon was taking fire from every angle. A veteran recalled that one of his fellow soldiers made a joke and was shot death a second later. All freedom fighters were able to flee except one, who was then shot in the head. Another Dutch soldier was wounded and in his final moments asked for a cigarette before he died.⁸⁴

The veterans argue that they used heavy fire on the Indonesians, but that they never shot prisoners. It was even their duty to help all wounded. Other veterans confessed that it did happen. Once, one of the veterans had written in his diary that they had captured two prisoners who were certainly gang members. They were executed. It was justified by this veteran because those things happen in war, adding that it was the only time it happened in his battalion.⁸⁵ Another story told by one of the veterans is that he was ordered to execute a prisoner, which he refused. The commander then asked a soldier from the Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (KNIL)⁸⁶, who did not complain and executed the prisoner. The veteran tells that it was not okay to execute the prisoner, but that he understood why the KNIL-soldier did it. He had lost relatives due to the nationalists, so it was an act of revenge.⁸⁷ Another example is of a prisoner that had escaped from a truck, the soldiers started shooting at the escaping prisoner. The captain re-captured the prisoner by shooting him in the ankles and then ordered his execution. The veteran telling the story admitted that it was not right, but that one followed order not to be disciplined and that one did not question authority. Afterwards it resulted in guilt and since there are no ways to redeem yourself, in sleepless nights.⁸⁸

A veteran is followed when walking towards a marketplace in Indonesia. He tells the story of the most horrific thing that happened during his time in Indonesia. He says how ashamed he is for being a Dutch veteran because one morning the Indonesians set off a bomb, and by way of revenge, the Dutch sent jet fighters and ravaged the marketplace. When visiting the marketplace

⁸³ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 29:40-30:45.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 39:22-43:32.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 45:22-48:20.

⁸⁶ Royal Dutch East Indies Army.

⁸⁷ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 49:06-50:14.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 51:36-54:15.

on patrol the following day, they saw the pile of bodies. He feels ashamed and calls it a war crime.⁸⁹

1.5 *Onze Jongens op Java*

In this documentary, there are several stories told by Dutch veterans. One thing they are all claiming is that they were often shot at from multiple sides and that they would scarcely see an opponent.⁹⁰

One time some Dutch soldiers were scouting the area, then the platoon heard gunshots and went looking after the scouts. They found them slaughtered.⁹¹ Others who were found after an ambush were tortured, hands and feet wide, tongue cut off, penis cut off and placed in the mouth, eyes out of their sockets and replaced with their balls. The army command told that one should never let oneself be taken prisoner and that the last bullet had to be saved for themselves.⁹²

Some other time, the Dutch camp was attacked from both sides by 200 Indonesian soldiers. The officer felt responsible and shot a mortar towards the enemy. It was their only hope since there were so many guerrillas. They were lucky, the mortar hit the guerrilla commander in the head together with four others. The guerrillas fled.⁹³

When talking about violence, one veteran is convinced that 70% of the soldiers did not intend to kill, when enemies were approaching. The first salvo was shot over the head of the enemies. The second salvo was in front of them, hoping to scare them. The third time it was aimed at the enemy, otherwise they would kill you. The remaining 30% was directly shot at the enemy.⁹⁴

One of the veterans started to work for the intelligence services. When he arrived, he saw soldiers standing around a prisoner. The prisoner had a tube in his mouth where water was poured in. The veteran admits later that he also used this torture method. Another method he mentions was beating and putting prisoners under high voltage through the batteries of the telephone. When questioned why he did that, he answered: you do not think about that at the time and many years later you think it is insane.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka.*, 1:04:23-1:07:40.

⁹⁰ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode I*, 14:20-14:35.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 34:50-35:50.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 36:11-36:50.

⁹³ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode II*, 30:17-32:20.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39:56-40:55.

⁹⁵ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode I*, 38:50-39:42 & 40:54-41:48.

Another story is about something that happened after a patrol. There was a villager laughing at them. The commander remembered his face and went back later to take him to camp and beat the laughing man with the antenna from a tank.⁹⁶

On a patrol an Indonesian soldier was shot. He hid behind a rock near a river. The commander ordered to shoot him, because it was too much trouble for the Red Cross to come over. The interviewed veteran refused, so another had to do it, which happened. He feels guilty that he did not threaten to tell it to the court-martial.⁹⁷ When an enemy was found when searching a village, it often led to execution after a short interrogation. However, this was mostly done by KNIL-soldiers because there was a chance that the Dutch soldiers would refuse. KNIL-soldiers did not complain.⁹⁸ Another example was that during an action the Dutch took some prisoners. These prisoners were put at the edge of the road, then a soldier came and killed those prisoners, with the argument that he wanted to try out his gun.⁹⁹

Table 1: theme ‘*Violence*’.

Documentary	<i>Linggadjati in de Branding</i>	<i>Indonesia Merdeka</i>	<i>Voorheen Nederlands-Indië</i>	<i>Bevrijding of Merdeka?</i>	<i>Onze Jongens op Java</i>
Summary	Violence was not shown, only how destructive the insurgents were.	There is more transparency towards the casualties and towards the fact that the Indonesians saw the Dutch as oppressor.	Violence is not shown; however, the veterans talk about their fears and battle experiences.	The veterans are talking about violence, but not in too much detail. They are acknowledging the horrors the Indonesians had to endure from the Dutch.	The veterans talk about violence brought upon them and the excessive violence conducted by the Dutch, sometimes admitting own crimes.

2. Self-Image

2.1 *Linggadjati in de Branding*

The soldiers are described as our nations brave, admirable, soldiers who are helping the locals by bandaging their wounds. They are hard-working, slim in numbers but still fighting against

⁹⁶ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode I*, 39:45-40:55.

⁹⁷ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode II*, 33:40-35:30.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40:55-42:39.

⁹⁹ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode III*, 25:48-26:48.

the murderous terrorists.¹⁰⁰ The Dutch volunteers are presented as fresh, strong soldiers who shared a common ideology of peace and order on a job which became very tough.¹⁰¹ It shows the Dutch as superior to the Indonesian freedom fighters and for that reason, the prediction was that the war was going to be short and without much casualties.¹⁰² The Dutch are shown as successful in every mission.¹⁰³ The documentary shows the cooperation in negotiations between the Dutch and Indonesians, showing the good intentions between the politicians of both countries.¹⁰⁴

There are a lot of smiles and well-wishes when the Dutch are passing from the barracks through the streets. It creates a sense of order, happiness, motivation, as if there was no violence at all.¹⁰⁵ The Indonesians return from the mountains back to their villages when the Dutch arrive. It shows that the Dutch were portraying themselves as the righteous side of the conflict. At first the population is flabbergasted by the Dutch and then realise that they are safe and welcome them with joy.¹⁰⁶

2.2 *Indonesia Merdeka*

In this documentary, the Dutch describe the war as the extension of the inevitable loss of their prosperous colony.¹⁰⁷ The veterans argue that they acted out of self-defence because they were besieged by the freedom fighters. The Indonesians wanted to have order, but the Dutch government seemed to prefer a restart of the economy.¹⁰⁸ It is shown that the Dutch were not taking the Indonesian government seriously at that time. They were convinced that when the army arrived the war would be a certain win.¹⁰⁹

The household of a former plantation owner is interviewed. The wife argues that the Indonesians were trying to belittle the Dutch by for instance making sure that the Dutch did not have any servants, that there was no electricity and no water, and that they could not buy products from the markets. The animosity towards the Dutch was clearly felt.¹¹⁰ A former plantation owner however is very positive about his life in the Dutch East Indies. He says that

¹⁰⁰ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 1*, 4:55-5:43.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 6:05-7:16.

¹⁰² The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 4*, 1:45-2:20.

¹⁰³ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 6+7*, 5:20-5:30.

¹⁰⁴ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 2*, 00:40-1:34.

¹⁰⁵ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 3*, 2:43-3:45.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:48-5:05 & The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 6+7*, 3:05-3:22 & 3:45-4:05.

¹⁰⁷ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 1:39-1:54.

¹⁰⁸ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part II*, 6:32-7:35.

¹⁰⁹ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 1:45:20-1:45:59.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:49:30-1:50:55.

the relationship with the workers on his plantation was prosperous for both sides. His workers acknowledged him as the higher in rank which was based on race and according to him this was not harmful if he, the owner, was respectful to his workers. This was however not the case in all these plantations.¹¹¹ Another plantation owner talks about how he went back to the plantation, and how he found his own servants. He recalls that these workers were glad to see him. He says that they worked together to rebuild the plantation. Despite the independence, he told the workers that they were forming their own 'state' and that they should be friendly to everybody. When people were to come to the plantation, coffee ought to be offered. He was convinced that this was the way forward and the former order would be restored. Both plantation owners claim that the Indonesians welcomed the Dutch plantation owners happily whenever they returned. However, they tell that the same Indonesians were also happily welcoming the Japanese a few years earlier.¹¹²

The first arriving Allied soldiers were meant to disarm the Japanese. When the Dutch arrived under the leadership of Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies Van Mook, the task was to free the Dutch from the Japanese concentration camps. In the documentary the banners with texts about the right of freedom for the Indonesian people are clearly visible. It is shown that the Dutch are not welcome anymore.¹¹³ It is also shown that the Indonesian soldiers were more disciplined and larger in number than the Dutch military staff had imagined.¹¹⁴

In the documentary it is said that the British envy that the Dutch would have a colony and that they would be without, caused the Dutch to grant independence to Indonesia. It is also said that the United States idealised freedom and therefore would not allow colonialism. The Dutch government is blamed for not being able to look forward and for thinking that a little oppression would be enough to restore the former authority. When looking back, the plantation owners claim that the Dutch deaths are the symbol of the failed Dutch policies.¹¹⁵

2.3 *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië*

One of the interviewees in this documentary does not feel sorry for the colonial social injustice, but he says he was aware that changes were forthcoming. The injustice that was present in the

¹¹¹ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 5:24-7:00.

¹¹² Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part II*, 22:22-29:07.

¹¹³ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 1:38:30-1:39:20.

¹¹⁴ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part II*, 36:02-36:36.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:06:02-1:08:25.

colony was only maintainable by keeping the Indonesians uneducated, which became impossible to uphold since the Indonesians could go to school.¹¹⁶

Both a Dutch and an Indonesian interviewee explain the same situation immediately after the Japanese capitulation. The Indonesian says he was happy and did not care that the Dutch were back on the street. The Dutch says they blended in and adjusted to the new circumstance. Both claim that there was no animosity yet between the two nationalities.¹¹⁷

A former internee describes himself and the other volunteers as impaired. They signed up as a volunteer to go to the Dutch East Indies to fight fascism. However, the Japanese had capitulated, so the volunteers were used against the nationalists.¹¹⁸ Soldiers volunteered partly out of a sense of adventurism.¹¹⁹ A Dutch veteran recalls his first day in Indonesia. He came into the barracks and saw that a soldier took a prostitute inside and after he was done, passed her to his fellow soldier. He was appalled about what was going on in the barracks.¹²⁰

The Dutch sent a large force with a total of 150.000 soldiers. This was a huge number for a country with ten million citizens. Taking into account the total number of citizens, this is in proportion more than the United States sent to Vietnam. All this happened in 1945, directly after the occupation of the Netherlands by the Germans, with a country that was plundered and impoverished. An explanation is that there was a sense of responsibility to take revenge on the Japanese collaborators and that the defeat against the Germans still hurt.¹²¹

2.4 Bevrijding of Merdeka

It was really overwhelming for the young men who were sent to Indonesia.¹²² Once arrived a weapon was given, despite not knowing how to load and shoot it.¹²³ The soldiers did not know anything about the desires for freedom of the Indonesians. They went to help their fellow countrymen.¹²⁴ Fear was present for most soldiers. Every sound was a possible enemy, so some

¹¹⁶ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part I*, 45:48-46:40.

¹¹⁷ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part II*, 4:12-5:27.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18:13-19:52.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23:59-25:42.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 37:58-38:57.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 23:48-24:58.

¹²² Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 12:32-13:22.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 23:13-23:35.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21:02-21:35.

soldiers would even shoot at fireflies.¹²⁵ During the day, the soldiers were busy enough, but at night the fear struck.¹²⁶

One veteran draws the conclusion that the war was wrong. The opponent was harmed, whilst they were only fighting for their freedom, against colonialism.¹²⁷ Another veteran is convinced that they brought a lot of harm to the Indonesians. He acknowledges that some of these freedom fighters were extremist, still they fought for their own freedom. He argues that it was wrong that the soldiers were not aware of the desires of the enemy.¹²⁸ Another one recalls why he had to go to war, it seemed so pointless looking back at it.¹²⁹ There is a veteran who honestly claims that he has not done anything excessive. He acknowledges that it could have happened, and that he also understands why, and he wonders how veterans who were guilty of such excessive behaviour cope with it. When misconduct happened, the soldier was scolded, but one was never dropped. Misconduct was solved within the battalion. The good things are remembered as well, for example, how they helped villages with food and healthcare.¹³⁰ The veterans are critical of the term police action, questioning if it is still a police action when it is done with tanks, artillery, the navy, and the air force. Back then, the soldiers were proud of the superiority they had and the fear they instilled on the enemy. The veterans also mention that whenever they searched a village after a battle, the only thing they saw was death.¹³¹

Some veterans wonder why their mates died and they did not. They conclude that in war you only have losers. The biggest losers are buried.¹³² Nowadays it is easier to talk about the violence, but at that time you felt guilty. The problem was that nobody talked about it, especially not the KNIL-soldiers.¹³³

The Dutch veterans explain that the first death was the hardest to deal with. The camp would be silent and there were no card games played. The second death, the soldiers were talking for an hour about their fallen partner and then started playing cards again. From then on, whenever someone died, the cards were immediately drawn. The veterans mention that it was tough to deal with the losses and that some fellow soldiers did not survive the feelings of guilt.¹³⁴ A

¹²⁵ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 23:38-24:27.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14:52-15:26.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13:57-14:09.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 26:26-26:46.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 48:28-49:03.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:08:50-1:11:03.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 1:02:21-1:03:55.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 43:13-43:43.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 54:58-55:23.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 31:18-33:15.

veteran is shown who went back to the graveyard where the veterans are buried. Whilst crying, he talks about how his companions died in battle.¹³⁵

2.5 *Onze Jongens op Java*

The reason for going to Indonesia was obligatory military service. Others conscripted for the marines to be trained by the Americans. Another motivation was that people from all over the world liberated the Dutch from the German occupation and now it was their turn to liberate the Indonesians. Others went for the adventure.¹³⁶ One veteran gives as argument that he went because others had risked their lives for his freedom, now it was his turn to risk it for other men's freedom.¹³⁷ There was nationalism within the Dutch army, they were singing songs about capturing Sukarno on their way to Indonesia.¹³⁸ The Dutch initially were not allowed to dock ship. They were ordered back to Singapore due to the political situation. Then they were harboured three months in Malacca. This hurt the veterans because they had the idea that they could have helped a lot during those months, for instance by helping the British troops to suppress the plundering gangs.¹³⁹

The veterans talk about the badly prepared soldiers, the training was minimal. The equipment was of a bad quality and there was a shortage in arms. Only the KNIL-soldiers were professionals.¹⁴⁰ A KNIL-veteran describes their forces as rougher and far better than the Dutch counterparts.¹⁴¹

It was impossible to identify the enemy because they did not wear any uniform. It made it hard for the soldiers who were expecting to be shot at because not only men, but also women and children shot at them. The veterans claim they never aimed for children.¹⁴² The Dutch soldiers did not get the idea that they were seen as oppressor, they explain that they were seen as the people who have always been in Indonesia and who were trying to regain order.¹⁴³

The guerrillas were labelled as freedom fighters, but also as terrorists. The contradiction here is that the veterans at the same time claim that they were not aware of the intentions of the opponent. The Dutch were trying to protect the colony and their inhabitants, and they fought to

¹³⁵ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 58:34-1:01:27.

¹³⁶ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode I*, 3:06-3:17 & 3:46-4:40 & 4:58-5:16.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9:05-9:18.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11:03-11:20.

¹³⁹ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode II*, 6:38-7:55.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14:04-17:33.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18:12-18:35.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 32:05-33:05.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 31:13-31:38.

defend their economic interest. When looking back, those freedom fighters were legitimate, and the Dutch side was wrong. However, one veteran did not understand why the freedom fighters fought against them, since they came to restore order. They all conclude that it was all for nothing, a lost cause.¹⁴⁴ One of the veterans argues that it is unbelievable that the Dutch were so egoistic, or dumb, to occupy Indonesia. Especially, because the Dutch experienced occupation by the Germans in the five years before the war. The painful fact is that fellow humans were not seen as humans.¹⁴⁵

Veterans struggled going back to Dutch society, they preferred the vastness of Indonesia, the camaraderie and wished they could have stayed longer. The government treated them badly, they organized nothing for the veterans. They received a month free passage on the train network and 300 guilders, or a voucher to buy a bicycle. There was no aftercare at all, they were left alone to find their way back into society.¹⁴⁶ The reason for not talking about the war was for some of them either because there was a lack of interest or because they did not want to brag about it. Others do not have a real reason; it just did not happen. The reason to take part in the documentary was to restore the image of the veterans, instead of only being labelled as war criminals.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode II*, 8:34-12:57.

¹⁴⁵ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode I*, 41:50-42:16.

¹⁴⁶ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode IV*, 13:27-17:15.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25:47-28:32.

Table 2: theme ‘Self-image’.

Documentary	<i>Linggadjati in de Branding</i>	<i>Indonesia Merdeka</i>	<i>Voorheen Nederlands-Indië</i>	<i>Bevrijding of Merdeka?</i>	<i>Onze Jongens op Java</i>
Summary	The Dutch soldiers are portrayed as superior, healthy and on the good side in the war. The opponents are pictured as bad and destructive.	There was a conviction that the war would be easily won. The feudal system was good for both sides and some argue that it benefitted both sides.	Some veterans had no feelings of guilt for the colonial injustice; however, they were aware that things were changing in the world. Most events were a total shock for the soldiers.	Soldiers were full of fear and impaired. Back then they were proud of their superiority. They argue that it was not only bad what the soldiers did, however, there was an understanding for the Indonesian cause.	All veterans had difficulties in dealing with the past. They reflect upon their actions as unnecessary, but they cannot be blamed, for their wrongdoings. They had the idea that it was unnecessary to fight an unwinnable war.

3. Justification

3.1 *Linggadjati in de Branding*

The first four minutes of the documentary show the hardship the Dutch endured during the Japanese occupation.¹⁴⁸ What followed is the Dutch idea of how the world should develop from now on, with cooperation between West and East. However, the Dutch argue that the terrorist made it impossible. The documentary depicts the Indonesian freedom fighters as terrorists, who murder everyone they see and the ones who block any chance of the reconstruction of Indonesia.¹⁴⁹ It is argued that the others are harming the country and the Dutch need to prevent further destruction so that they can help build for a better future.¹⁵⁰ The guerrillas are pictured as the ones who destroy everything. The Dutch who were tracking them, were the ones who were doing everything they could to prevent these destructions from happening.¹⁵¹ The freedom fighters were blamed for the famine which struck the Indonesian population hard.¹⁵² After the

¹⁴⁸ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 1*, 00:00-3:40.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:54-4:25.

¹⁵⁰ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 2*, 3:24-4:55.

¹⁵¹ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 5*, 3:07-4:10 & 5:01-5:45.

¹⁵² The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 2*, 4:58-5:19.

pictures of famine, the Indonesians who were demonstrating in favour of the Dutch are shown.¹⁵³

The Dutch government is convinced that the Dutch are supported by everyone who understands the necessity of the police actions to help stop the freedom fighters. They argue that there is no other solution than the use of force to protect the Indonesians.¹⁵⁴ The justification of the first police action is to rebuild the country. To make the reconstruction of the country successful, it was necessary to recover the economy by the production of goods. This could only be successful when there was cooperation and no racial hatred between West and East.¹⁵⁵

3.2 *Indonesia Merdeka*

The Dutch argue that they were doing something good in Indonesia and this message was also spread under the Indonesians.¹⁵⁶ The plantation owners defend the feudal relations. They argue that the relationship was positive and that these workers earned not much, but enough to buy everything they needed.¹⁵⁷

The justification of the Indonesians was that they deserved to be educated. The negatives of the colonialism were the discrimination. This was visible in politics, economically, and socially. It was not possible to move up on the social ladder. Their belief that the Indonesians could claim independence was strengthened by the idea that the Dutch also revolted against the Spanish in 1568.¹⁵⁸

The Dutch think they were necessary, because of the total chaos caused by Japanese destruction. The Dutch wanted to help rebuilding Indonesia and say that afterwards Indonesia would become independent. The idea was that a government was necessary instead of a vacuum. Schools and infrastructure were needed.¹⁵⁹

3.3 *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië*

Since the Dutch government, instead of the Dutch East Indies Company, have been responsible for the colony, they felt the responsibility to develop the colony.¹⁶⁰ The Dutch argument was

¹⁵³ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 2*, 5:20-5:30 & The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 6+7*, 6:00-6:10.

¹⁵⁴ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 3*, 00:00-2:31.

¹⁵⁵ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 6+7*, 8:20-9:43.

¹⁵⁶ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 4:00-4:44.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7:30-9:20.

¹⁵⁸ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 11:23-13:55.

¹⁵⁹ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part II*, 00:00-2:35.

¹⁶⁰ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part I*, 19:38-20:55.

that Indonesia first needs to be liberated from the Japanese and then Indonesia could prosper again.¹⁶¹ Another reason for the war is that the Dutch needed the profits from the colony.¹⁶² For a long time, the Dutch believed that they were rebuilding the country together with the Indonesians.¹⁶³

There is not much sympathy for the young Indonesians who were becoming the Indonesian army. It was believed that this army would be defeated easily. The soldiers arrested the Dutch and locked them up.¹⁶⁴ The volunteers went to restore order, justice, and safety, which was harmed by terrorists who also fought against their own population. Later it became known that these were nationalists.¹⁶⁵ The Dutch were furious that the British were cooperating with the nationalists.¹⁶⁶ The Dutch believed that the response should be hard and that these nationalists should receive no mercy. This was shown by former KNIL-soldiers.¹⁶⁷

When the Agreement of Linggadjati was finally signed, the two parties disagreed on how the agreement should be executed. In the end it was nothing more than a small sign of good will, in a scene of chaos and hostility.¹⁶⁸

This documentary asks questions as to why these men were sent to a dirty war. Was it to defeat some extremists, was it to protect the Dutch civilians and companies, were they leverage during negotiations, or were they there to regain/retain order in the country? There is a lot of frustration, apart from the nastiness of the war. The Dutch population supported the fact that the soldiers went to the war, only to spit them out when returning.¹⁶⁹

3.4 Bevrijding of Merdeka

Some veterans started their military career in the resistance against the Germans. From there on they joined the army to help liberate the rest of the Netherlands and in the end to help regain the colony. Another reason to join was to see more of the world and to seek adventure.¹⁷⁰ The First Police Action was labelled with the code name Product aimed at securing the factories. It

¹⁶¹ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part II*, 19:52-20:05.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 40:30-41:02.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 42:37-42:52.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 8:30-10:35.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26:50-27:34.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 11:49-12:27.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12:29-12:55.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 22:43-23:20.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 52:32-55:04.

¹⁷⁰ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 3:37-4:29; 9:05-10:13 & 11:04-11:28.

was contradictory to what was told to the soldiers, who heard they were going to help the people.¹⁷¹

During the Japanese occupation, young Indonesians were trained to fight. After the capitulation of Japan, Sukarno declared independence and these young fighters terrorized the cities.¹⁷² The Japanese were guarding the camps where the Dutch were living. During the occupation, the Dutch were jailed by the Japanese but now the Japanese were protecting them against the Indonesians, who were attacking the Dutch.¹⁷³ The soldiers were ordered to only shoot whenever shot at. However, in practice that only happens once. After the first time, one made sure to shoot first.¹⁷⁴

Veterans question why the Dutch government did not realize that things had changed during the Japanese occupation. Sukarno was reaching out to the Dutch because he had nothing as well. The Dutch just wanted their colony back and it resulted in the police actions and harm to the people.¹⁷⁵

3.5 *Onze Jongens op Java*

Indonesia was a Dutch colony, so it was logical to liberate it from the Japanese.¹⁷⁶ The Dutch soldiers were trying to show the civilians that they were oppressed by the Indonesian militias. The Dutch medics were trying to nurture the civilians, resulting in the Dutch medics receiving gratitude.¹⁷⁷ Indonesia had to be liberated and order had to be restored, only then it would be possible to gradually let Indonesia become independent.¹⁷⁸

The Dutch wanted to regain their colony as quickly as possible after the Japanese surrender. The Indonesian nationalists wanted freedom; what follows is a war. The Dutch government downplayed the war by referring to it as police actions, which in the end cost the lives of more than 100.000 Indonesians and more than 6.000 Dutch.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 38:10-39:12.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 18:54-19:47.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 25:21-26:10.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 24:30-24:56.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 54:15-54:58.

¹⁷⁶ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode I*, 3:25-3:42.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 29:00-31:00.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:40-4:53.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:48-2:48.

When asked if they had to kill people, most answers are: it was him or me and that is an easy decision.¹⁸⁰ According to a lot of soldiers something happens in your head when one of your companions fall in battle. One becomes bloodthirsty and one does unacceptable things.¹⁸¹

The war crimes of the Dutch are mentioned in this documentary, and it was more than initially shown by earlier research. Not many veterans are acknowledging these crimes. But there are veterans that say that they heard about it, or even witnessed it. One soldier claims that there is no such thing as a clean war, so things happened that are not in line with the agreements of the convention of Genève. One veteran says it happened, but not systematically and on a large scale, and not from higher order.¹⁸² The explanations from the different veterans are contradictory. Some claim that the villages were set ablaze by the militias, other argue that the Dutch did it.¹⁸³ Excessive violence is not justified, but the argument is that the enemy was far worse. One veteran thinks that the Asians are in general crueller than the Dutch.¹⁸⁴ Some veterans acknowledge to have witnessed war crimes. Captain Westerling is known for taking the law into his own hands. He was known for using violence and for executing dozens of prisoners.¹⁸⁵ Joop Hueting tried to prevent war crimes. Once he saw a corporal going to a place of worship with his gun drawn. He was shouting at him to stop. It did not matter.¹⁸⁶

After the war, the veterans discussed its necessity and why all these soldiers had to die.¹⁸⁷ They claim that the Dutch politics were to blame, not the soldiers. The government was aware of the claims for freedom of the Indonesians, but the Dutch government told the Indonesians they were not ready. The oil and spices were more important for the Dutch than the freedom of the Indonesians.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁰ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode I*, 44:52-45:01.

¹⁸¹ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode III*, 11:00-11:55.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 12:10-15:33.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 15:37-17:25.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 18:00-19:46.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 19:47-21:58.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22:39-23:45.

¹⁸⁷ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode IV*, 4:37-5:12.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 40:08-41:05.

Table 3: theme ‘Justification’.

Documentary	<i>Linggadjati in de Branding</i>	<i>Indonesia Merdeka</i>	<i>Voorheen Nederlands-Indië</i>	<i>Bevrijding of Merdeka?</i>	<i>Onze Jongens op Java</i>
Summary	The Dutch justified that they were trying to restore the former colony.	The justification was that there needed to be order after the Japanese destruction.	The idea was that peace and order would be restored and then the Indonesians would get their freedom. The interviewed did not understand why the Indonesian youth wanted to fight.	Many soldiers signed up to go on an adventure. However, they opposed the idea that they only were used to regain the economic gains the Dutch experienced before the war.	The veterans claim that it was a mistake by the Dutch government to go to war. However, they justify their actions by telling they had no other choice.

4. Different voices

4.1 *Linggadjati in de Branding*

It is mentioned that the Dutch were prepared to listen to the Indonesians concerning their calls for self-governance.¹⁸⁹ The documentary shows the enthusiastic Indonesian civilians when seeing the Dutch forces and they wave and smile.¹⁹⁰ It is said that it was even possible to blend in with the local population at a fountain to drink.¹⁹¹ However, when looking closely, in *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 4* it is filmed that a Dutch soldier is ordering Indonesians to show enthusiasm to the passing tanks.¹⁹²

4.2 *Indonesia Merdeka*

This documentary is not only based on interviews with the Dutch. Half of the interviews is conducted with Indonesians. This made it possible see the two sides of the story. For example, Mohammed Hatta, who was one of the leaders who wrote the declaration of independence, is interviewed. Other examples are the leader of the youth movement and two former generals.

¹⁸⁹ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 2*, 00:00-00:25 & 2:35-3:20.

¹⁹⁰ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 3*, 3:24-3:27.

¹⁹¹ The Dutch Government, *Linggadjati in de Branding Acte 4*, 7:30-8:03.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 4:15-4:18.

The documentary takes time to illustrate the situation in the build-up prior the conflict. The interviews show the discrimination present in the Dutch colony. Hatta talks about the discrimination that he experienced.¹⁹³ He further explains how the independence was declared. Sukarno and Hatta were reluctant at first, but the youth pressed them (by kidnapping) to declare Indonesian independence.¹⁹⁴

Not only the conflict with the Dutch is described but the internal conflicts between the Indonesian groups as well. There were several warlords competing with one another, and it is claimed that the Indonesian government had not much influence.¹⁹⁵

The Indonesians acknowledge that they were not able to win the war, however, the Dutch were not prepared for guerrilla warfare. The lack of arms was a problem for the Indonesians. The Dutch, however, overestimated the guerrillas by thinking that these fighters would not be able to defeat the Dutch army. It resulted in unpredictable behaviour of the Dutch forces and thereby more extremities.¹⁹⁶

4.3 *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië*

The Indonesians are interviewed to talk about the situation before the Japanese occupation. In these interviews they talk about the working conditions, covering topics such as the working hours, age, and salary.¹⁹⁷

An Indonesian explains that he sees the former Dutch soldiers as brothers, everything is forgotten and forgiven, without any distrust.¹⁹⁸

An Indonesian veteran recalls an ambush he got caught in. The two parties shot at one another from five meters. The dying Dutch were calling for their mothers and the Indonesian remembers that the Dutch soldiers were young.¹⁹⁹ The difficulties of the war are spoken of. One Indonesian freedom fighter wanted to fight when he was thirteen-year-old. The problem was that his father was cooperating with the Dutch. His father explained that the only reason he worked with the Dutch was to provide for his family and he encouraged his son to follow his ideals but that he would always be welcome when coming back to his father.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 18:04-19:00.

¹⁹⁴ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part I*, 1:14:24-1:23:35.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:31:25-1:35:50.

¹⁹⁶ Kiers, *Indonesia Merdeka part II*, 12:10-13:37.

¹⁹⁷ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part I*, 2:41-4:16.

¹⁹⁸ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part II*, 31:09-31:39.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35:58-36:46.

²⁰⁰ Bosdriesz, *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië part III*, 11:26-14:06.

4.4 Bevrijding of Merdeka

There are no interviews with Indonesians, however the veterans are justifying their actions. They were not bandits; they were young humans who wanted their independence instead of being a colony.²⁰¹ The veterans defend the motivation of the freedom fighters and point out the mistake the Dutch government made by going to war.

4.5 Onze Jongens op Java

There are no Indonesians interviewed in this documentary. However, all veterans defend the motivation the Indonesians had to fight for their country.

The interview of Joop Hueting in 1969 received a lot of attention. He mentions that after his interview, the phone kept ringing and that he received many death threats. His children received police escort to their schools. Veterans thought Joop Hueting was a traitor.²⁰² The veterans respond in the documentary to the interview from 1969. They blame him for it, and they think he still is a traitor, because of his actions the veterans were represented as war criminals. They argue that he exaggerated his stories and that the story that he shot someone with a revolver was impossible, because only officers had a revolver, which he was not. Only one veteran is acknowledging Joop Hueting's claims and said that it still was hard to hear.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Bueters, *Bevrijding of Merdeka*, 1:14:41-1:14:50.

²⁰² Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode III*, 33:00-33:16.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 35:19-37:50.

Table 4: theme ‘*The different voice*’.

Documentary	<i>Linggadjati in de Branding</i>	<i>Indonesia Merdeka</i>	<i>Voorheen Nederlands-Indië</i>	<i>Bevrijding of Merdeka?</i>	<i>Onze Jongens op Java</i>
Summary	There are no other perspectives shown.	Half of the interviews are conducted with Indonesian veterans.	The Indonesians are talking about the working conditions and how they fought their war. All Indonesians claim that they hold no grudges towards the Dutch.	The Indonesians are no longer interviewed; however, the Dutch veterans are all defending the actions of Indonesian freedom fighters.	There are no interviews with Indonesians. However, the veterans defend the motivation for the Indonesians’ claims for independence. Joop Hueting is still seen as a whistle-blower.

Summary of the findings from the documentaries.

This section will start with summarizing the documentaries. Secondly the producer’s intentions will be explained and how this affects Dutch societal memory. At last, the findings will be related to the research question.

Linggadjati in de Branding (1945-1947):

It is clearly a propaganda video where violence is not shown and where the Dutch are only positively pictured. It shows an idea of Dutch superiority and suggests that they will easily succeed. Most important, it shows that the Indonesians were happy to see the Dutch soldiers. In other words, the Dutch were doing something good and were legitimately intervening in their former colony. The moving images mainly focus on the Dutch nation and how this entity was doing a right thing by liberating their former colony. Individual stories are not told and what really happened during the war is neglected.

Indonesia Merdeka (1976):

This documentary tries to grasp the broader picture by taking time to elaborate on the situation before the war and how it was after the war. It gives multiple perspectives on the conflict. Some former plantation owners are defending the system in which they were living before the

Japanese occupation. It is interesting that half of the interviews are conducted with Indonesian veterans. The documentary does not give insight into violence, but it does give insight into personal reflections on the whole development in Indonesia.

Voorheen Nederlands-Indië (1994):

This documentary takes the time to describe the situation before and after the war of independence from both the Dutch and the Indonesian perspective. It shows critiques on the Dutch decisions and questions whether the war was necessary. There is animosity towards the extreme behaviour of the Indonesians, and it is argued that the Dutch were only there to rebuild the country.

Bevrijding of Merdeka (2006):

More and more veterans are questioning the necessity of the war and how it was possible that the Dutch government did not understand that the world had changed. Excessive violence is understood, but not approved. The veterans are a lot more critical towards the actions of the past, however, not telling much about the personal acts of violence. There are no more interviews with Indonesians, however the veterans acknowledged their battle for independence.

Onze Jongens op Java (2019):

The veterans are critical, from the life in the barracks, to the violence and the lack of training and information they received. There is a lot of remorse for their deeds. The long-concealed visits of brothels are spoken of in the second episode of the documentary.²⁰⁴ The third episode starts with the difficulties of seeing your fellow soldiers die. All struggle to deal with it. They are visibly emotionally struck.²⁰⁵ The soldiers are seeing themselves more as a victim of Dutch government.

All producers' intentions were to create an image of the war fought against the Indonesian freedom fighters. In the first documentary, this is depicted as a justified war which is expected to be easily won. The following two documentaries are giving a lot of attention to the Indonesians. The Indonesians are being more personal, instead of just being the enemy. The final two documentaries are focusing on the individual experiences during the war. Thus, the

²⁰⁴ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode II*, 16:26-27:30.

²⁰⁵ Verbraak, *Onze Jongens op Java episode III*, 2:12-5:03.

producers of the last two documentaries wanted to show the difficulties a war brought upon an individual, showing that it is not just right or wrong, but more nuanced.

There is clearly a difference in how the producers depict the war. There is a change from propaganda towards attention for the enemy, to the individual struggles the individuals experienced during the war. Because the change has happened after the television appearance of Joop Huetting in 1969, one can argue that he was the catalysator of these changes. This change is a reflection of the shifting point of view with the producers of the documentaries and as such indicates a possible change in attitude of Dutch society as a whole.

Conclusion

The thesis is centred on the documentaries published about the Indonesian War of Independence. The change of the Dutch reflective societal memory concerning this war was explored via these documentaries. It posed the following research question: *How did the Dutch societal memory concerning the Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949) change over the past 70 years?* The change was tested by using a diachronic corpus between 1945-2019. Four themes (violence, self-image, justification, and different voices) were examined closely in five documentaries. Before the documentaries were watched, three hypotheses were posed, which are: 1) the Dutch reflective societal memory changed from denying violence against freedom fighters towards the acknowledgement of the violence. 2) the Dutch reflective societal memory changed from denying the violence against freedom fighters towards a neutral stance where the wrongdoings of both parties are shown. 3) the Dutch reflective societal memory changed from denying violence against freedom fighters towards defending the veterans' actions as deemed necessary.

The reflection of violence has changed over time. It changed from ignoring violence towards openness about ones one committed violence and even war crimes (Table 1). Furthermore, the research into self-image shows that the Dutch soldiers were first represented as healthy and superior but in the end depicts themselves as unhealthy, frightful, and wrong. They defend their own actions arguing they had no choice but were convinced they fought an unnecessary and unwinnable war (Table 2). The justification of the war has changed from the Dutch fighting for order and peace, towards the idea that the Dutch were on the wrong side of history and never had to fight in the first place. The idea is that the Dutch government was more interested in economic gains, instead of the development for the Indonesians, which was depicted at first (Table 3). Over time, there has been a clear development towards the different voice. The first documentary did not include the perspective of the freedom fighters, which changes in the following two documentaries. In these documentaries, half of the interviewed are Indonesians who fought against the Dutch. The third and fourth documentary does not focus on the Indonesians anymore, however, the Dutch veterans wholeheartedly defend the Indonesians motivations. In the last documentary there is an interesting moment in which Joop Hueting still defends his decision to speak in public about the war crimes. However, the other veterans still see him as a traitor and blame him for being labelled as war criminals (Table 4).

The gradual change which is shown, goes from being the colonial power which deserves its colony, towards a country more and more acknowledging past mistakes. The war crimes committed by the Dutch are always part of the discussions on the Indonesian War of Independence. This remains sensitive for veterans. This is visible in their reaction to Hueting's interview. Some acknowledge that it happened, some say that it could have happened, but they did not witness it. Others admit that they committed them and affirm how wrong it was. Another change is that the first documentaries are more focussed on a governmental level of the conflict, this shifts towards the army itself and there is a prominent place for the Indonesian veterans. More recent documentaries focus on individuals and how they try to cope with the war, on the psychological impact it had and how they experienced the war.

Taking everything into consideration, hypothesis 1 is the most plausible. In this hypothesis the idea was that the reflection of societal memory changed from denying violence against the freedom fighters, towards the acknowledgement of it. In the first documentary, there is no violence, the war is justified, and the self-image is that the Dutch are superior. This changed to veterans confessing the use of excessive violence and accusing the Dutch government of fighting an unjust and impossible war. I can only conclude that the Dutch reflective societal memory has changed. That the producers of documentaries changed their views, is visible. The change visibly started with the television appearance of Joop Hueting, I argue that this is the catalysator in the reflection of societal memory of the Dutch concerning the Indonesian War of Independence. Whether this change affected Dutch society as a whole would need further research: how many people saw the documentaries, was the change visible in how newspapers reflected on the matter, was it visible in discussions in parliament?

In this thesis, I have only used documentaries as source to test how the reflection of Dutch societal memory has changed. Future research could investigate how families of affected people are talking or writing about the events, could use the egodocuments by veterans, or as mentioned before analysing newspapers, or discussions in parliament.

Primary sources

- Bosdriesz, J. (Director). (1994). *Voorheen Nederlands-Indië* [Documentary].
- Bueters, G. (Director). (2006). *Bevrijding of Merdeka* [Documentary].
- Kiers, R. (Director). (1976). *Indonesia Merdeka* [Documentary].
- The Dutch Government. (1945-1947) *Linggadjati in de Branding*. [Documentary].
- Verbraak, V. (Director). (2019). *Onze Jongens op Java* [Documentary].

Literature

- Algemeen Dagblad. (2020, March 10). Koning Biedt Excuses aan voor Nederlands Geweld in Indonesië. *Algemeen Dagblad*.
- Bal, M., Crewe, J., & Spitzer, L. (1999). *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Black, J. (2008). Contesting the Past. *History*, 224-254.
- Bleiker, R. (2001). The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory. *Journal of International Studies*, 509-533.
- Bleiker, R. (2018, June 6). *Aesthetic Turn in International Relations*. Retrieved from Oxford Bibliographies: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0236.xml>
- Bleiker, R. (2018). *Visual Global Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Buettner, E. (2016). *Europe after Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burgers, H. (2010). *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar: Indonesië van Kolonie tot Nationale Staat*. Leiden: Brill.
- Burke, W. (2017). *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Callahan, W. (2015). The Visual Turn in IR: Documentary Filmmaking as a Critical Method. *Journal of International Studies*, 891-910.
- Dülffer, J., & Frey, M. (2011). *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foray, J. (2015). The Trauma of Liberation: Dutch Political Culture and the Indonesia Question in 1945. *Historical Reflections*, 79-94.
- Gouda, F., & Zaalberg, T. (2002). *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies / Indonesia: U.S. Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Gouda, F., & Zaalberg, T. (2002). Indonesia's Struggle for Independence and the Outside World: England, Australia, and the United States in search of a peaceful solution. In F.

- Gouda, & T. Zaalberg, *The American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia* (pp. 165-199). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Harman, S. (2019). *Seeing Politics*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Hendriks, G. (2012). 'Not a Colonial War': Dutch Film Propaganda in the Fights against Indonesia, 1945-49. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 403-418.
- Locher-Scholten, E. (2002). From Urn to Monument: Dutch Memories of World War II in the Pacific, 1945-1995. In A. Smith, *Europe's Invisible Migrants* (pp. 103-128). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Luttikhuis, B., & Harinck, C. (2017). Voorbij het Koloniale Perspectief. *Low Countries Historical Review*, 51-76.
- Oostindie, G. (2010). *Postcolonial Netherlands Sixty-five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Oostindie, G. (2018). The Decolonization War in Indonesia, 1945-1949: War Crimes in Dutch Veterans' Egodocuments. *War in History*, 254-276.
- Pattynama, P. (2012). Cultural Memory and Indo-Dutch Identity Formations. In U. Bosma, *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* (pp. 175-192). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Plantinga, C. (2005). What a Documentary Is, After All. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 105-117.
- Radstone, S., & Schwarz, B. (2010). *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*. New York: Fordham University.
- Romijn, P. (2012). Learning on 'the Job': Dutch War Volunteers Entering the Indonesian War of Independence, 1945-1946. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 317-336.
- Scagliola, S. (2012). Cleo's 'Unfinished Business': Coming to Terms with Dutch War Crimes in Indonesia's War of Independence. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 419-439.
- Shapiro, M. (2009). *Cinematic Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Temin, D., & Dahl, A. (2017). Narrating Historical Injustice: Political Responsibility and the Politics of Memory. *Political Research Quarterly*, 905-917.
- Winter, J. (2006). *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press.