8.

State-making is war-making

Military violence and the establishment of the State of East Indonesia in 1946

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Introduction

This chapter analyzes the establishment of the State of East Indonesia (Negara Indonesia Timur, NIT) in December 1946 during the Denpasar Conference and the simultaneous deployment of Dutch military violence. It focuses in particular on the quashing of the leadership of the Republican forces in Bali (the People's Security Army or Tentara Keamanan Rakyat, TKR), the military campaign in South Sulawesi, and the full-out attack on the Sumatran city of Palembang. I argue that these military actions were strongly related to the establishment of the State of East Indonesia, which

Prime minister Najamuddin Daeng Malewa delivers his first speech as the Prime minister of the Negara Indonesia Timur (NIT), 13 January 1947. The NIT was the first federal state of the Republik Indonesia Serikat. *Source: Collection Fotoafdrukken Koninklijke Landmacht, NIMH.*

was part of a federal construction to counter the Republic of Indonesia. In response to the Indonesian Proclamation of Independence on 17 August 1945, acting Lieutenant Governor-General Huib van Mook focused on the 'Great East' – as the islands east of Java were called in colonial times – because the occupation of Java was not feasible on a short-term basis.[1] In order to set up the new state of East Indonesia, the Dutch sought to establish 'law and order' in that region. This counterinsurgency strategy strongly opposed the political motivations of large groups of Indonesians. But failure was not an option for Van Mook: the success of the Dutch federal policy depended on the successful establishment of the NIT.

The 23-year-old Balinese freedom fighter I Made Widja Kusuma plotted an attack that was to take place prior to the Denpasar Conference, which was held in the Balinese capital between 17 and 25 December 1946. The conference's intended outcome was the establishment of the State of East Indonesia, and the conference itself was a result of the previously held Malino Conference of representatives from the outlying regions, and of the Linggarjati Agreement that had been concluded between the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia just prior to it. Before the conference, Kusuma walked around Denpasar dressed in religious clothing. As the former fighter later indicated, the objective of the attack was not so much to attack Governor van Mook as to cause a disturbance. 'We wanted to show the world that the Balinese resistance meant business.'[2] According to Kusuma, Van Mook's delayed arrival put a stop to his plans. Later, another militant did manage to throw a hand grenade at the Dutch-built Bali Hotel, the building in which the conference took place.

Such acts of resistance were of no avail. Much to the indignation of the Republican movement in Bali, the new State of East Indonesia was founded just before the end of the year, with the Balinese monarch Tjokorda Gede Raka Sukawati installed as head of state. Looking back on the establishment of the state, Balinese veteran Rai Susandi (1926-2019) later said that the Dutch did not accept Indonesia as a united entity but wanted to divide it into a federal nation, which the militants opposed. 'That's why Van Mook called us terrorists.'[3] The Dutch policy of promoting an Indonesian federation, which took shape from 1946 onwards, has been presented by some historians as part of a gradual process of decolonization and by others as a 'divide and conquer' strategy.[4] But it is remarkable that the dynamics of the establishment of the NIT in relation to political violence in the outer territories has received so little historiographical attention, particularly given the importance of East

Indonesia to the Dutch federal policy. In the Indonesian literature, General A.H. Nasution made a connection between military violence in Bali and the setting up of the State of East Indonesia, and so did the Balinese author and veteran N.S. Pendit. In the Dutch literature, by contrast, W. van den Doel, J.J.P. de Jong and T. Bouma have focused mainly on the political process. R. Limpach in his study on Dutch military violence repeats an argument previously made by H. Alers and B. Harvey, namely that Van Mook likely took a firm approach to the outlying regions in order to support his policy of creating an Indonesian federation, but Limpach only focused on military violence and didn't connect what happened on the ground to the federal policy and the chronology of political and military events.[5]

The American sociologist, political scientist and historian C. Tilly, who studied the formation of nation-states in Europe, argued that there is a mutual dependency between state-making and warfare. States undertake a variety of steps in the process of state-making, the most important of which is warfare. This could involve the elimination or suppression of enemies within the territory of the new state-in-the-making as well as the provision of protection for the state-makers' own 'clients'. In the case of the state that the Dutch wished to create in post-war Indonesia, this meant protecting the monarchs who were cooperating with the Netherlands and who were becoming part of the new state, and eliminating or suppressing *their* enemies. States consistently use the concept of 'security' to legitimize the use of violence, and they do so from a position of authority that they claim is legitimate.[6] Anything contrary was deemed subversive, as the Balinese veteran Rai Susandi recently put it in an interview. Indonesian political motives were thus suppressed at the time, but they were also not taken sufficiently seriously in later Dutch historiography.[7] The silence around freedom fighters or anti-colonial resistance movements even had its strong effect on Western history writing, as the Haitian-American anthropologist M.R. Trouillot argues.[8]

Re-occupation of East Indonesia

Early in the twentieth century, most of the areas that were part of the so-called Great East at the time – such as Bali, Sulawesi, Lombok and Borneo – were completely occupied by the Dutch East Indies government for economic and political reasons. By the end of the 1930s, Bali, South Sulawesi and the Bornean sultanate of Pontianak were given so-called self-government. This meant that the rulers were given more power

than they had had immediately after the conquest.[9] The strengthening of self-government, and with it of feudal power, was mainly motivated by the rise of Indonesian nationalism in Java. Especially in Bali and Borneo, the growing discontent about colonial society, which was based on racism and oppression, had led to the emergence of a host of nationalist-inspired organizations.

In 1942, Japan put an end to Dutch rule in the East Indies. A year later, the Japanese began training many local youths in Bali, as in Java, within Japanese paramilitary organizations. The PETA (Pembela Tanah Air), the Heiho and other such units were intended to help repel an expected Allied landing. This process of training youths started later in South Sulawesi.[10] Two days after Japan's capitulation, these trained military groups stood ready to defend the Indonesian independence that had been proclaimed by Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta on 17 August 1945. Republican governors were soon installed in both Bali and Sulawesi, which put significant pressure on the feudal-colonial system. In Lombok, by contrast, the Republican movement was relatively small.

Most of the islands in East Indonesia were occupied by Allied forces quite soon after the Japanese capitulation. Borneo and Sulawesi were occupied in September. However, South Sulawesi soon proved to have a strong pro-Republican following. It was led by Sam Ratulangi, the Republican governor of Sulawesi, and supported by the lawyer Tadjuddin Noor and the nationalist Najamuddin Daeng Malewa. The Republican political party PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia) was established before long, as was the Sulawesi People's Welfare Centre PKRS (Pusat Keselamatan Rakyat Sulawesi) and various armed groups such as the Lipan Bajeng.[11] The armed groups in South Sulawesi were placed under the command of LAPRIS, the Indonesian People's Rebel Army in Sulawesi.

It was not until 2 March 1946 that some 2,000 soldiers of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger, KNIL) landed in Bali, operating under the name of Gajah Merah (Red Elephant). There they had to contend with an estimated 6,000 fighters hiding in the mountains and jungle under the leadership of I Gusti Ngurah Rai, leader of the Republican armed forces TKR (Tentara Keamanan Rakyat, later renamed Tentara Republik Indonesia, TRI). The Gajah Merah soon imprisoned Ketut Pudja, the governor of Bali who had been appointed by Sukarno. In May 1946, Rai united all the armed groups in Bali under his command in the MBO DPRI SK organization

(General Headquarters of the Republic of Indonesia Struggle Council in Lesser Sunda, or Markas Besar Oemoem, Dewan Perjoeangan Republik Indonesia Sunda Kecil). Rai had accepted orders from Sukarno to defend independence on the island. The Balinese historian Anak Agung Bagus Wirawan has not labelled the Dutch re-occupation of these islands part of a *de*colonization process, as is done in the Netherlands to mark the period 1945-1949, but a *re*colonization.[12] This reflects the fact that it was a military occupation of a territory where a Republican government was already in place.

By contrast, the Dutch viewed their own presence in the archipelago as legitimate. They considered the resistance in East Indonesia to be unlawful violence and labelled the perpetrators 'terrorists'. This was clearly a one-sided and criminalizing perspective. The resistance movement in Bali aspired to an equal, free and just society and was politically diverse, just as the Dutch resistance to Nazi occupation had been during the Second World War. Various armed and unarmed resistance groups sprang up. One of the few progressive politicians in The Hague at the time did try to correct this one-sided image being portrayed. As early as 1946, Frans Goedhart, a former anti-Nazi resistance fighter and journalist who became a Labour Party member (PvdA), visited Bali and gave his insights into the motivation of the resistance movement there. Painting a different picture than that suggested by the term 'terrorists' commonly used in the Dutch press, he depicted the armed groups as politically motivated and fighting re-occupation. In Bali, he spoke with the imprisoned Republican governor Ketut Pudja and others. On 12 August, Goedhart wrote in the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* that the Balinese resistance headed by I Gusti Ngurah Rai was continuing its fight in a smart and brave manner. He referred to the Balinese fighters as 'partisans'. (The same term was later used in the English translation of the memoirs of a veteran of the Balinese resistance.[13]) Rai was not just anybody, Goedhart explained to the Dutch public. He was a man who enjoyed the deep respect of many and who was also a former resistance fighter against the Japanese. Rai had outwitted the Dutch with his guerrilla tactics, Goedhart said. He had maintained contact with Java and enjoyed widespread support among the population.[14]

Anti-Malino resistance

It became apparent soon after the Dutch arrived that there was significant support in East Indonesia for the Indonesian Republic. But this became

even clearer after the Malino Conference, which took place between 16 and 25 July 1946 in a small town in South Sulawesi of the same name.[15] It was the first conference that included Indonesian representatives from regions where the Republic had not yet been established. Conceived mostly in Jakarta and The Hague, it was to be part of a series of conferences with a clear agenda aiming to bring about a new political reality: a federal structure for Indonesia and the establishment of its first federal state, East Indonesia.

Moves to federalize the archipelago had already started before the war. Some Indonesian nationalists supported such moves at the time, including Sam Ratulangi, who would become the Republican governor of Sulawesi, and Najamuddin Daeng Malewa, a member of the pre-war People's Council (Volksraad) in the Netherlands East Indies. At the end of the 1930s, such people viewed federalism as a means of achieving independence. However, Emilia Pangalila-Ratulangi (1922), the daughter of the former governor, recently recalled that after the war, many Indonesians saw the form of administration proposed by the Dutch as a ruse, a *siasat*. They believed the Dutch intended to retain their power. Her father, she said, had drawn a sharp line after the return of the Dutch: either you fought against the Dutch or you agreed with their return. He opted for the former.[16]

At the Malino Conference, the representatives from the outlying regions, most of them appointed by the Dutch, decided that the new form of government for Indonesia should entail a federal construction. From the perspective of the Dutch, this new state would at best be led by the old traditional aristocracy. The conference participants did not, however, have in mind a puppet state. They mostly had their own agendas, and many wanted to get rid of the Dutch as soon as possible.[17] The two most important representatives to play a role in the establishment of East Indonesia were the Balinese monarch Tjokorda Raka Sukawati and the previously mentioned Sulawesian nationalist Najamuddin Daeng Malewa. Both had been members of the People's Council. Some of the Indonesian representatives from East Indonesia accepted the Malino agenda as a necessary step towards further political reform. However, many Republican-minded Indonesians saw it as a Dutch ploy to weaken the Republic. Later that year, the State of East Indonesia was to be established at the Denpasar Conference. But the resistance to the establishment of such a federal state, which was strengthening in Bali and also in South Sulawesi, became increasingly problematic to the Dutch, for it tarnished the image they presented to the outside world of an area loyal to

View of the conference room in the Bali Hotel where the Denpasar Conference was held from 7 until 24 December 1946. During this conference representatives of various projected federal states discussed the composition of the United States of Indonesia. It resulted in the founding of the Negara Indonesia Timur (NIT). *Source: Nationaal Archief/Anefo.*

the Netherlands. The Denpasar Conference was supposed to function as the perfect model of a democratic decolonization process.

Initially, the Malino Conference seemed to cause hardly a stir in Bali. L.C. van Oldenborgh, head of the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS) in Bali, observed in his weekly report on 15 August 1946 that there was little interest in the Malino Conference. According to him, this was because the masses were not in the slightest politically interested, as demonstrated by the meagre 40 Indonesians attending an important lecture about Malino in the Malay language.[18] His interpretation was typical of the inability of the

Dutch authorities to understand that the low level of interest might reflect the lack of popularity of the Malino agenda. It was also a view that reflected the pre-war colonialists' image of the apolitical Balinese.[19]

Van Oldenborgh suddenly changed his tune in the last week of August. The resistance was conducting a widespread underground campaign, he reported, with pamphlets containing fierce anti-Malino agitation. The actions mainly targeted the monarchs, who were presented as 'NICA accomplices' (referring to the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration) and not true representatives of the people. Van Oldenborgh wrote about 'anti-Malino elements' that returned to the villages to exert their influence there.[20] Astonishment can frequently be read between the lines of the intelligence reports about the capability of members of the resistance, including the fact that the propaganda came from intellectuals who spoke Dutch. In the first week of September, it was reported that the 'widespread' and 'very well organized' underground movement was much larger than had been stated in the previous report. With an extensive pamphlet campaign, the resistance movement was strongly opposing the conference.[21] Rumours persisted about an underground operation that was anti-Dutch, anti-Malino and pro-Republican.

In southern Borneo, the Resident also reported that prominent Republican figures were absent from a meeting about the Malino meeting and that 'part of the radical group' was fiercely against Malino. A political report written up in August mentioned open expressions of sympathy for the Republic and 'antipathy against Malino and the Malino spirit'.[22] There was underground activity taking place to procure armaments and prepare for combat. The main building of a night market (*pasar malam)* in the town of Kandangan – due to be opened on 31 August on the occasion of Queen Wilhelmina's birthday – was set on fire. In Banjarmasin, a government official wrote that southern Borneo had been under constant Republican influence. Large groups of young Indonesians opposed the upcoming conference in Denpasar. They were dismissing Malino and sabotaging the Denpasar elections. According to the official, at the core of the 'extreme anti-Malino standpoint' and the 'anti-Denpasar movement' was a long-cherished desire for freedom that had its roots in the pre-war political movements of the independent schooling movement Taman Siswa and the political parties PNI and Parindra.[23]

In Lombok, local leaders went so far as to openly oppose the establishment of the federal state. They had previously refused to select delegates for Malino, and they made it clear that they wished to serve neither under Java

nor under Bali. A Dutch former government official in Lombok later wrote in a retrospective: 'When the NIT was set up, we had to talk them into it, they were unwilling... We brought all these leaders together in the cinema to have a big forum, and we laid matters out there.'[24] Unrest arose on the island concerning imminent pro-Republican activity around the Queen's birthday. An informant for the Dutch found out that Republicans had drawn up a plan to turn off all the lights in the Europeans' social club and to launch a large-scale attack against official buildings in the towns of Ampenan and Mataram. The plan was foiled just in time.

In South Sulawesi, too, unrest grew in the months following the Malino conference. Large-scale attacks were staged around Makassar, Gowa and Pare-Pare by resistance organizations and gangs. They targeted the residences of colonial inspectors (*controleurs*) and local officials as well as other symbols of colonial power. The People's Sovereignty Party (Partai Kedaulatan Rakyat*)* held a conference in Makassar at the end of November, where it demanded that Sulawesi be affiliated with the Republic and Sulawesi representatives to the Denpasar Conference be delegitimized.[25] The historian Willem IJzereef has written that the period from July until the end of December 1946 – following the Dutch takeover from the British, which took place at the same time as Malino – was characterized by an increase in the number of violent incidents in Sulawesi.[26] Various causes could be identified, such as the lifting of the state of war. But conversations with local people led one Dutch colonial observer to surmise that there was a 'connection between the course of the negotiations between our Government and the Republic and the growing resistance activity here, and, according to the reports that reached me, also elsewhere, such as in S. and W. Borneo'. According to the observer, the fighters believed that the strongest possible resistance against the Dutch would result in the fastest possible inclusion into the 'free territory', i.e. the Republic.[27]

During a congress in Yogyakarta in the second week of October organized by the Kebaktian Rakyat Indonesia Sulawesi (KRIS) – a pro-Republican group from Sulawesi – it was stated that 'popular defence movements against the Dutch' were widespread in East Indonesia. Both Republican and Dutch sources showed that such movements existed in Sulawesi, Bali, Borneo, the Lesser Sunda Islands and even the Moluccas, which were long known as being loyal to the Netherlands. These movements were able to challenge the authority of the Dutch in those areas.[28] While Republican authorities could not obtain accurate information from outlying areas oc-

cupied by the Dutch, it was becoming increasingly clear that the situation was significantly less rosy than the picture the Dutch authorities and their propaganda were painting. In September, the PNI was prohibited in South Sulawesi. Its schools and offices were closed and its leaders arrested. This led to a demonstration in Makassar with the slogan 'Once free, forever free!'.[29] All this politically motivated resistance could be viewed as a response to the negotiations in Malino, which were intended to result in the establishment of a new state later that year.

The business of selling protection

The Dutch also had their hands full in Bali with the work of eliminating enemies of the new federal state. In the run-up to the Denpasar Conference in December 1946, the Dutch military intensified its campaign of violence against the Balinese population and the Republican forces headed by I Gusti Ngurah Rai.[30]

The Linggarjati Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia had just been concluded a few weeks earlier, on 15 November. The most important part of this agreement was the de facto recognition of the Republic as the authority in Java, Sumatra and Madura. In return, the Republic agreed to the establishment of the NIT, or the State of East Indonesia, which was an important breakthrough for the Netherlands. On 20 November 1946, right after Linggarjati and shortly before the December conference in Denpasar, the Balinese TKR commander I Gusti Ngurah Rai was killed together with an estimated 95 of his men during a battle at Marga called the Puputan Margarana. Under the banner of 'peace and order' and security, the Dutch had violently eliminated the most significant opponents to the Denpasar Conference, denying their status as official Republican troops and referring to them as 'gangs' in their reports.[31] In reality, Rai symbolized the existence of a persistent and well-organized Republican resistance movement in Bali. It had been directed against the Dutch occupation of the island in a straightforward conflict with the Dutch 'decolonization' agenda dictating a voluntary union.

That a political reality was being promulgated through violence became even more obvious as the planned opening of the Denpasar Conference on 14 December approached. The opening was repeatedly postponed because the Dutch architect of the federal agenda, Van Mook, had not yet arrived. This was in turn because the Dutch government in The Hague had not yet approved the constitutional amendment required for the foundation of the new federal state of NIT. The proposal of establishing a State of East Indonesia

caused great consternation among reactionary forces in both the Netherlands and the East Indies wanting to preserve the unity of the Netherlands East Indies state. They moreover opposed the Linggarjati Agreement because it recognized the Republic of Indonesia. Van Mook, still waiting for the go-ahead from The Hague, found himself having to act according to his own judgement in response to the worsening situation in the outlying areas. 'In four areas of South Sulawesi, I had to declare a state of war today,' he reported.[32] In Van Mook's perception, it was due to a lack of clear action and clear statements from the Dutch side regarding the new form of government that Republican influences were gaining ground. Without a clear signal that the new State of East Indonesia would have a status equal to that of the Republic, Van Mook considered himself powerless to bring real stability in the area.

On 10 December, the Dutch Minister of Colonial Affairs, Jan Jonkman, finally issued a statement adopting a unilateral Dutch interpretation of the Linggarjati Agreement. This allowed him to order the Denpasar Conference to proceed. A day later, the special forces known as the DST (Depot Speciale Troepen) and the notorious Captain Raymond Westerling, started their advance in South Sulawesi. All 'remnants of discord, degradation and terror' must be eliminated from East Indonesia with the utmost speed, Van Mook contended in his opening address at the Denpasar Conference.[33]

Dr Onvlee, a well-informed missionary from Timor who was present at the Denpasar Conference, wrote in a letter to the mission consul in Jakarta that in his view the turmoil in South Sulawesi was a reflection of the opposition to the Malino agenda.[34] A member of the temporary court martial (Temporaire Krijgsraad) similarly wrote that Malino had resulted in more organized violence: 'After Malino 1946, the organization of resistance in South Sulawesi became ever stronger. In the final months of 1946, it led to such serious terror (the victims of which were Indonesians in more than 90 percent of cases) that strong military countermeasures had to be taken.'[35] Both witnesses reported a clear connection between the political negotiations and the increase in violence, resulting in Van Mook's deployment of the special forces. In South Sulawesi, special forces, KNIL, KL (Koninklijke Landmacht) and – local – police forces killed at least an estimated 5,182 Indonesians, for which no political responsibility was taken.[36] The Indonesian widows and other surviving relatives of the victims have recently filed lawsuits against the Dutch government. In cases brought to court by the Committee of Dutch Debts of Honour (Yayasan Komite Utang Kehormatan Belanda, KUKB), ten widows from South Sulawesi were awarded compensation and apologies.

An important reason for the use of force in Bali and South Sulawesi was to provide protection to the partners of the Dutch with the aim of forming a successful federal state. As Tilly states: the formation of a state also involves protecting that state's so-called 'loyalists'. Van Mook had to offer security to his Indonesian partners, those who were working with the Dutch in East Indonesia. At a meeting in Jakarta on 13 November, Sukawati had expressed his concern about the unrest in outlying areas. Former prime minister Willem Schermerhorn, who was part of a negotiating committee appointed by the Dutch government in The Hague, replied that in order to form the federal states, the Netherlands would bring the situation under control by enforcing the rule of law.[37] The Indonesian leaders who came to power not long thereafter within the NIT appear to have approved of the military violence employed in South Sulawesi. Onvlee even wrote that one of the prominent leaders had mentioned the necessity of forceful measures.[38] The NIT leaders Najamuddin and Sukawati could only establish their position as reactionary cornerstones of the new Indonesia if opposition against the new state was eliminated. An important reason for the use of force in Bali and South Sulawesi was therefore to provide protection to the partners of the Dutch with the aim of forming a successful federal state, as Schermerhorn himself had already indicated.

Violence played a crucial role in the attempt by the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands, supported by a number of Indonesian politicians, to create a political reality for the benefit of a new state. The chronology of events demonstrates this very clearly. The military necessity that Van Mook invoked in South Sulawesi was, in fact, a political necessity. Moreover, the command given by the Dutch authorities in Indonesia – backed by The Hague – to Captain Westerling and his special troops was to 'restore order', which resulted in the committing of crimes.[39]

State security

The Dutch policy of using force to create a political reality became even more clear during the Denpasar Conference that started on 17 December 1946. The discussions focused on providing the new state with security, one of the key aspects of state-making as explained by Charles Tilly. The Republican objections to this conference were naturally also directed against the Indonesians who gathered at the conference and who were viewed as lackeys of the Dutch.

It is important to emphasize the political agency of the group of Indonesian representatives at Denpasar. The political orientation within the group

of NIT representatives was diverse, and the accepted idea of an exclusively pro-Dutch elite is contestable. There were also pro-Republican Indonesians attending the conference, such as the Balinese education official Made Mendra and the lawyer Tadjuddin Noor from South Sulawesi. In a later interview, Widja Kusuma, the Balinese freedom fighter mentioned earlier, characterized all the conference members from Bali – 'maybe except for Anak Agung Gede Agung (who was at that time still *raja* and later on minister and prime minister in NIT)' – as pro-*merdeka*. They only differed in how they thought it was best to achieve independence: one group of representatives felt supporting the guerrillas was the way to go, while another group preferred the diplomatic path. But Kusuma viewed almost all the Balinese attendants at the Denpasar Conference as part of the opposition against the Dutch.[40]

Yet those who eventually led the new state – first and foremost the first president of the State of East Indonesia, the Balinese Sukawati – belonged to the conservative, feudal group that supported the Netherlands in its strategy to retain power. While Anak Agung Gede Agung, who later became prime minister, seemed to be pro-Dutch, he was actually a brilliant opportunist who also used grave violence against political opponents on Bali.[41] The extent to which the Netherlands was bent on retaining power and was prepared to use force under the pretext of maintaining security is illustrated by the notes taken by an official of the Dutch government information service (Regeringsvoorlichtingsdienst, RVD) on 13 December 1946. This document is an important source because it was not an official report but rather the official's own observations and interpretations. He wrote that the importance of the establishment of the federal state centred exclusively on security. The establishment of the NIT was mainly intended to counterbalance the *desire* of Indonesians to join the Republic. He remarked that in the 'areas of resistance' near Java – such as Bali and South Sulawesi – such resistance was therefore directed against the NIT itself. The 'psychological value' of the new NIT was, in his view, that freedom fighters in the Malino areas now had to be crushed by their own Indonesian government.[42]

Sukawati, who was elected president during the conference, already hinted at that violent message during the conference: 'We will now have to take the reins ourselves throughout the Negara Indonesia Timur region, and with a stronger hand, and there will have to be peace and order, law and security; and where this is not yet understood, effective measures will have to be taken.'[43] From the Dutch perspective, as suggested by the Dutch official, the major advantage of equality between the Republic and the Malino areas was

that the international community would now bear witness as the Republic and the Malino areas devastated each other, thus proving to the world that both parties were not ready for true *kemerdekaan* (independence). Dutch authorities emphasized a struggle was going on between 'East' and 'West' Indonesia, between 'federalist' and 'unitary', but according to the Indonesian general A.H. Nasution it was a actually struggle between colonialism and independence.[44]

Violence flared up again in Bali during the Denpasar Conference. According to Dutch reports, 'exasperating acts of terror' took place, including arson, plunder and murder. Various militia groups murdered Balinese people considered 'loyal' to the Netherlands. In addition, a solid underground system was devised under the leadership of the aforementioned Widja Kusuma. Propaganda was distributed, and data about informers was gathered for the Republican leadership in Bali. 'Our people do not wish to be governed by another race,' reads a propaganda document from the first week of the conference and seized by NEFIS from the resistance.[45] The establishment of the NIT seems to have strengthened the opposition in both Bali and South Sulawesi.[46]

Echoes of violence

The extent to which Van Mook was committed to achieving security is evident from his expressed wish that 'everything be done to pacify the Great East and Borneo, including Bali and Lombok, as soon as possible, and to take military action in such a way that no setbacks are suffered'. He made this known immediately upon conclusion of the Denpasar Conference, where a new state had just been founded, on 24 December.[47] At that time, it was already known that Dutch troops in South Sulawesi were brutally dealing with any – alleged – opposition. But for Van Mook, only one thing mattered: establishing a successful state that could counterbalance the Republic and could protect the Indonesian partners of the Netherlands.

Before the State of East Indonesia had even seen the light of day, its chances of survival were already under pressure from the resistance in that region. The problem was not restricted to East Indonesia. Sumatra and parts of Java also saw a great deal of violence during this period. In addition, discord arose both in the Netherlands and in Indonesia over the as-yet-unsigned Linggarjati Agreement. Signing it was crucial to the continuation of the federation policy. During that politically unstable phase, concurrent military operations were undertaken against the 'bridgeheads' or 'key areas',

as the British called the cities of strategic importance in Java and Sumatra: Surabaya, Semarang, Buitenzorg (Bogor), Palembang, Padang and Medan (Map 1). These actions have rarely been discussed in the historical literature, and when they are, they have been considered largely in isolation from the political decision-making process. Yet they cannot be separated from that process surrounding the establishment of the State of East Indonesia. As Charles Tilly contends, state-making requires the elimination or neutralization of both the enemies of the state's clients, such as in Bali and South Sulawesi, and the enemies of the state itself – that is, the Republic.

The Dutch government always reserved the option of using military action to force the Republic into making concessions at the negotiating table. The chief of staff of the Dutch military in the Indies, Buurman van Vreeden, set out his military vision as early as March 1946. If a political solution with the Republic could not be reached, West Java would need to be occupied. The Dutch government was prepared to carry out this plan; it was the British who did not give their consent.[48]

Lieutenant Governor-General Van Mook preferred a political solution. Military plans for a full-scale occupation were not raised again until February 1947, when Linggarjati was finally signed.[49] The operations conducted between November 1946 and February 1947 were viewed on the Dutch side as unavoidable clashes resulting from ambiguous demarcation lines. With the departure of the last British troops at the end of November 1946, Dutch military activity against the Republic's armed forces was no longer hampered by British restrictions and as a result increased significantly in the course of December 1946. The Dutch military occupied an area outside Surabaya, while in Buitenzorg near Jakarta, the local commander refused to accept the Republican form of administration agreed upon at Linggarjati and chose instead to use force against it.[50] These types of actions led to angry responses by Republican representatives, including a furious radio speech by the Indonesian supreme commander, General Sudirman. They considered the Dutch military initiatives to be a blatant violation of the truce agreed upon at Linggarjati.

In Sumatra, Dutch control was minimal and Republican morale was strong. On 8 December 1946, just two days before Dutch military operations kicked off in South Sulawesi, Van Mook notified Jonkman that the situation in Medan had deteriorated to such an extent that he had to take forceful action there as well. Unrest also arose in Palembang in southern Sumatra, which was strategically important due to the nearby oil fields. A po-

litical overturn in Palembang was unlikely, though. A Dutch official of the temporary civil service there wrote that Dr Isa, the Republican representative in Palembang, had accepted news of the Malino agenda with 'a friendly yet sceptical smile'. He and Isa had agreed to exchange their newspapers (the Dutch-language newspaper *Juliana Bode* and the Indonesian nationalist paper *Obor Ra'jat*) so they could keep abreast of the other side's views.[51] According to the official, the people of Palembang were not anti-Dutch but rather 'anti-colonial': they were against a political system in which the Netherlands did not recognize the Republic.

To the displeasure of the Dutch, however, Sumatra's pro-Republican stance strengthened the position of the Republic. This became clear during a meeting late in October 1946 of the General Commission for the Dutch East Indies (Commissie-Generaal voor Nederlandsch-Indië), a delegation sent to Jakarta by The Hague to assist in finding a solution – of which Schermerhorn was the chairman. The General Government Commissioner for Borneo and the Greater East – who was also attending the meeting – Willem Hoven and Van Mook both indicated that they feared that an imbalance might arise between Borneo and East Indonesia on the one hand and a unified Java and Sumatra on the other. They therefore came up with a plan for Sumatra. Hoven expressed the wish that Sumatra would stay apart from the Republic, which according to Van Mook would be a logical consequence of the establishment of the federation.[52] Their perception was that, although Sumatra was part of the Republic, it would want the same economic advantages and development as Borneo and East Indonesia and would moreover choose its own independence over dependence on Java.

As long as the Linggarjati agreement remained unsigned, the political situation resulted in a conceptual vagueness that in turn created room for the Dutch military on the ground to enforce the demarcation lines in favour of the Netherlands. In Palembang, this resulted in one of the biggest air-sea-ground attacks to take place prior to what the Dutch refer to as the First 'Police' Action (known as Agresi Militer Belanda in Indonesia) of July 1947. The attack caused a large number of civilian casualties and is known locally as the Battle of Five Days and Five Nights (Pertempuran Lima Hari Lima Malam*)*.[53] The Y-Brigade – a brigade under the command of Frits Mollinger composed of Dutch war volunteers and troops of the Gajah Merah previously stationed in Bali – launched the attack on 1 January 1947. Part of the city was reduced to smoking ruins after the assault by the Dutch air force and navy. Indonesian and Chinese sources and Dutch veterans later

reported deaths varying in number from several hundred up to 2,000 to 3,500 deaths, but the official number remains unknown. The population, which included many Chinese, was taken completely by surprise, because the airstrikes had not been announced beforehand.[54] The Republican Minister of Economic Affairs, Dr A. Gani, described the situation in Palembang as the most serious since the truce of Linggarjati.[55] A Dutch medic at the scene confirmed that the city had been 'destroyed' and that there were 'dead bodies everywhere'. The medic spent days nursing badly injured people, including children, in the city and the surrounding villages.[56] Dr Isa reported 'piles of dead bodies' and 'injured women and children'.

The Dutch immediately tried to shift the blame onto the Indonesians, but several sources indicate that the assault had been part of a clear plan to enforce Dutch control of Palembang. On 7 January, Van Mook explained to the Minister of Overseas Territories that the Dutch military action had been triggered by aggression on the part of Indonesians trying to prevent the implementation of the Linggarjati agreement – not only in Palembang but also in Bogor (Buitenzorg) and Medan. But there are records showing that Van Mook sent a code telegram to the local government official in Palembang on 9 January asking for proof of this allegation. The reply that Van Mook received was that hard evidence was still lacking.[57] Documents at the Netherlands Institute for Military History instead show that the Y-Brigade's Chief of Staff, F. van der Veen, drew up a detailed plan for the capture of Palembang and the surrounding oil fields.[58] That Dutch troops were expecting such an attack to take place in the very near future is evidenced by the fact that in the days leading up to it, war volunteer Ch. Destrée saw preparations being made for an attack with the arrival of quartermasters and a landing boat full of small armoured cars called Bren carriers. On 31 December 1946 – a week after the Denpasar Conference – Commander F. Mollinger sent Batavia a code telegraph requesting 'permission to change the status quo'.[59] The attack on Palembang was part of a deliberate political decision to attack several bridgeheads simultaneously, as the minutes of the 15 January 1947 meeting of the General Commission reveal. Operations of this magnitude could only have been launched 'after consultation with the government'. It was expressed during the meeting that the Dutch military position could be strengthened through 'judicious timing' of the operations in not only Palembang but also Medan.[60] General Commissioner Schermerhorn even used Palembang as an example during a General Commission meeting to show that 'good results' could be achieved by taking military measures

against the Republic. Van Mook wrote in 1950 that 'peace' was only possible if the Republic 'transferred its sovereignty to the sovereign United States of Indonesia on its own [that is, Dutch] terms'. The signing of the Linggarjati Agreement was an important part of this Dutch insistence on imposing its own terms[61] – terms that were enforced by military means. On 25 March 1947, the Republic signed the Linggarjati Agreement, which established the State of East Indonesia. One month later, the East Indonesian parliament, under the presidency of the Balinese Sukawati, took office in Makassar, South Sulawesi.

Conclusion: The establishment of the State of East Indonesia led to widespread violence

The Dutch response to the proclamation of independence on 17 August 1945 by Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta was not the recognition of the Indonesian Republic but the pursuit of an Indonesian federation so that a 'decolonization' process would take place on Dutch terms. In order to establish the first state of this federation – the State of East Indonesia – Dutch Indies/ Dutch authorities not only tried to enforce the loyalty of a civil population and eliminated the state's enemies in order to serve their cooperating partners, they also used force to coerce the Republic into signing the Linggarjati Agreement, all the while citing 'peace and order' and security. As far as Van Mook and the Committee General were concerned, a successful State of East Indonesia facilitated that 'peace and order'. C. Tilly has argued that appealing to security is a cover that states often use during state formation in order to be able to eliminate political opponents. The aim throughout the conflict was to retain Dutch political and economic control in Indonesia. The military actions discussed in this chapter resulted in the deaths of thousands of Indonesians in Bali, South Sulawesi and in Palembang alone. A state's obsession with security inevitably leads to large numbers of victims, including civilians, who are often unjustly viewed by governments as a kind of 'collateral damage' on the road to military and political success.[62] This is precisely why it remains so important for historians to establish the connection between the political decision-making process and the military force employed. In the case of Indonesia, this connection reveals that the Dutch East Indies government and the Dutch government in The Hague were prepared to accept the deaths of thousands of Indonesians and to allow crimes to be committed against a civilian popu-

lation in order to establish a state on Dutch terms within the framework of 'decolonization'.

Shortly before his death, the Balinese veteran I Nyoman Nita explained in plain terms why so many Balinese chose to fight against the mightier Dutch military in 1946, even at the cost of so many lives. He quoted his pre-war teacher, a nationalist and freedom fighter who died during the Dutch occupation, who had told him: 'It's better to die than to be colonized.'[63] It is this message and conviction that has remained unrecognized and misunderstood by the Dutch, long after they agreed to transfer sovereignty to Indonesia in 1949.