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**‘A Common Approach? The British and Dutch in the
Netherlands East Indies, 1945-1946’**

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Background and abstract

At the end of the Second World War the British-led Allied command structure known as South East Asia Command (SEAC) became responsible for the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and its restoration to Dutch rule. This paper analyses to what extent the British and Dutch political and military authorities adopted, coordinated and adjusted a common approach to return the NEI to Dutch control. The paper concludes that there was good coordination at the end of the Second World War when a common approach was adopted on the grand strategic, strategic and operation levels. As time progressed and circumstances changed, however, cracks appeared in the common approach that eventually led to a rupture. The coordination between both countries and their officials deteriorated in the last months of British presence; from a very good coordination to a situation where only very basic information was exchanged.

About the author

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Introduction

August 1945 had three major surprises in stock for the Netherlands. The first was the unexpected Japanese surrender, largely as the result of two atomic bombs, on 15 August.¹ The second was the sudden boundary change between the American South West Pacific Area (SWPA) and the British South East Asia Command (SEAC) which transferred the Netherlands East Indies (NEI)² to the British sector, a change that the Dutch government had not been consulted about.³ The third and final surprise was the Indonesian declaration of independence on 17 August.⁴

It was now the responsibility of SEAC to reoccupy the NEI until the Dutch government was ready to take over. The Netherlands were unable to use their own troops for the reoccupation, as it was reconstituting its armed forces after being liberated as the last of the Western European countries, and had hardly any troops in the SEAC area. This meant that the reoccupation had to be carried out by British troops, a challenging task as British MP James Callaghan correctly identified in the House of Commons on 20 August:

... this very successful strategy of the Americans has left ... behind them large forces of well-equipped troops, well-housed, well-dug-in, well trained and not a bit feeling like surrender ... in Indo-China, in Malaya, throughout the Netherlands East Indies ... Throughout the whole of Asia there are new problems and new landmarks arising. A fierce resurgent nationalism is to be detected throughout the whole of the Netherlands

¹ P.J. Drooglever, M.J.B. Schouten, and Mona Lohanda, *Guide To The Archives On Relations Between The Netherlands And Indonesia 1945-1963* (The Hague: Institute of Netherlands History, 1999), 33, 56-57

² Though the Dutch referred to the 'Dutch Indies' or 'Netherlands Indies', this paper will use the widely used English language name of 'Netherlands East Indies'.

³ Peter Dennis, *Troubled Days of Peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945-46* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 5; Richard McMillan, *The British Occupation of Indonesia 1945-1946: Britain, the Netherlands and the Indonesian Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 10; Drooglever, Schouten and Lohanda, *Guide to Archives*, 33, 56-57

⁴ Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: US Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002).

East Indies, throughout Indo-China and Malaya, certainly in Burma, which will give headaches to the Empires of Britain and of the Dutch.⁵

⁵ House of Commons Debate, 20 August 1945, vol. 413 cc351-353,
<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1945/aug/20/debate-on-the-address>

This research paper analyses the extent to which the British and Dutch political and military authorities adopted, coordinated and adjusted a common approach to return the NEI to Dutch control. It aims to offer a narrative history that provides insight into a relatively under-researched period in Dutch and British history, and that furthers our understanding of contemporary issues. The paper concludes that there was good coordination at the end of the Second World War when a common approach was adopted on the grand strategic, strategic and operation levels. As time progressed and circumstances changed, however, cracks appeared in the common approach that eventually led to a rupture. The coordination between both countries and their officials deteriorated in the last months of the British presence, from a position in which very good coordination was maintained to one in which only very basic information was exchanged.

The paper starts by explaining methodology and sources, as well as providing some caveats regarding those sources. Chapter two then explains the most important terms and definitions regarding the framework used for analysis and places the main actors into this framework. The next chapter describes the background of how the British and Dutch ended up in the NEI, the situation they faced and how it came about. The extent to which the British and Dutch authorities were able to adopt a common approach is analysed in chapter four. Chapters five, six and seven present three chronological episodes in which one or more actors decided, or circumstances forced them, to adjust their approach, and how and if both countries were able to coordinate a common approach. Chapter eight concludes and gives a short analysis as to the relevance of this case study for our understanding of contemporary issues.

The focus of the paper is the Dutch and British perspectives on events on the island of Java, as this was the heartland of the Indonesian revolution. Other parts of the NEI feature only when necessary to illustrate similarities or differences and this means neglecting, for example, the revolution on Sumatra, the international dimension of the reoccupation, and the Dutch-Australian and Dutch-American coordination elsewhere in the NEI. As the political and military situation in the NEI and the coordination of the common approach were both hugely complex issues, this relatively short paper has been obliged to omit a lot of nuances and detail, leaving only the general trends and developments as well as the most important events. The limited level of detail is also visible in the use of some terms: for example, the term 'British' refers to the 'British Empire' and therefore includes the British-Indian troops that constituted the majority of the 'British' troops used in the NEI. In the same way hardly any distinction has been made between 'mainland' Dutch, Dutch people who were born and raised in the NEI and considered it their homeland, and the many Indo-Dutch of mixed origin. For the proclaimed Indonesian Republic and its adherents, this paper will use the terms 'republic' and 'republican'. Finally, the paper uses narrative history and chronology rather than a thematic approach to better illustrate the complicated web of relations, actions and reactions of Dutch and British officials at home and in South-east Asia, as well as showing change over time.

The research methodology is a literary review of published Dutch and English primary and secondary sources, as well as limited archival research. A good deal of source material is available, although the number of books dealing (almost) exclusively with this part of history remains unfortunately limited, especially in English. Where possible Dutch language sources are supplemented with English language sources. The main secondary source used for this paper is J.J.P de Jong's *Diplomatie of Strijd: Het Nederlands beleid tegenover the*

Indonesische Revolutie, 1945-1947,⁶ which is probably the most comprehensive book regarding this period and covers the complete episode of the Dutch struggle to recover the NEI from a political perspective, covering all three main actors: Dutch, British and Indonesian (although without using British archives). It is a well-researched and valuable book which unfortunately has not been translated into English. The most valuable primary sources are the first six volumes of the *Officiële Bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische Betrekkingen 1945-1950*.⁷ Published between 1971 and 1976, these books, made available online, contain thousands of pages of official documents and correspondence in English and Dutch, with annotations covering excerpts of other documents and context.

All sources should be treated with caution for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is an impossible task to look at all available official documents and it is unclear whether all official documents have been made public. Secondly, private papers or published autobiographies of key actors may suffer from lack of knowledge by the author because he was either too wrapped up in events at the time, or only wrote his autobiography years after the events with a less than accurate recall of events. Third, while secondary sources are probably more objective, all will to some extent suffer from the ideas, values and norms held by the author. This is especially true as the period in history that is subject of this paper is a deeply emotional one about which opinions are still much divided: the Second World War left many people dead or traumatised, economies in ruin and countries devastated. Both the Dutch and British Empires were breaking up under the strain of nationalism, while the drive for independence was a very divisive issue on the Indonesian side as well; not all stood to gain

⁶ Or "Diplomacy or Battle: The Dutch Policy towards the Indonesian Revolution, 1945-1947": J.J.P. de Jong, *Diplomatie: Het Nederlands beleid tegenover the Indonesische Revolutie, 1945-1947* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1988)

⁷ Or "Official Documents Regarding the Dutch-Indonesian Relations 1945-1950", hereafter referred to as NIB: S.L. van der Wal, *Officiële Bescheiden Betreffende de Nederlands Indonesische Betrekkingen 1945-1950*, vols. 1 to 6., Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën - Kleine Serie ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971-1976).
<http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/nib/>.

by it. This divisiveness can still be seen in the available literature: the same facts lead different authors to draw different conclusions. This paper can only hope to add to this historical debate, while drawing attention to an under-researched subject in world history.

Definitions and framework

Before turning to the NEI it is necessary to set some definitions, explain the analytical framework, and position the key actors within this framework. As stated above, the paper analyses the extent to which the British and Dutch political and military authorities adopted, coordinated and adjusted a common approach to return the NEI to Dutch control. In this paper ‘a common approach’ is defined as a way of dealing with issues regarding the NEI that was acceptable to both parties. This common approach should take the form of a particular idea, plan, or method decided upon (adopted) at the end of the Second World War and, if necessary, changed (adjusted) along the way to fit changing circumstances, increase effectiveness, and/or to decide what to do next. Good coordination of the common approach between the British and the Dutch means that ideas, plans or methods of the common approach were made together or at least agreed upon by both parties, whereas the simple communication of the ideas, plans or methods between both parties is regarded as the minimum level of coordination.⁸

In order to understand what Great Britain and the Netherlands aimed to achieve, how they planned to do this and how it was coordinated, this paper uses the framework of strategy, which is about reconciling ends (or end-states) with ways and means. This framework starts, at the highest level, with ‘grand strategy’. Grand strategy can be defined as ‘the collection of plans and policies that comprise the state's deliberate effort to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance that state's national interest’.⁹ It shapes

⁸ Based on MacMillan Online Dictionary: <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>

⁹ Peter Feaver, “What Is Grand Strategy and Why Do We Need It?,” *Shadow Government: Notes from the Loyal Opposition*, April 8, 2009, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/04/08/what_is_grand_strategy_and_why_do_we_need_it.

the underlying political, military, diplomatic and economic strategies.¹⁰ The whole of grand strategy and the underlying strategies demands ‘not only a deep understanding of the past but also a comprehensive and realistic understanding of the present’.¹¹ It should be flexible and adaptable because ‘by its nature, it exists in an environment of constant change, where chance and the unexpected are inherent’.¹²

At the next, or strategic, level the grand strategy is translated into (separate) diplomatic/political, military and economic strategies, although all strands will always influence each other. This paper will focus on the military and diplomatic/political strands, the latter including administration. The third level is the operational level, ‘the level at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained, to accomplish strategic objectives and synchronise action, within theatres or areas of operation’.¹³ Although this is a military definition, it is equally applicable to other strands. Because a distinction between operational and tactical levels is beyond this paper’s scope, everything below strategic will be considered operational (level).

There are no clear dividing lines between the levels because ‘there is invariably compression and blurring and so the framework should be applied with judgment’.¹⁴ Furthermore, the levels as well as the strands will influence each other in unpredictable ways, meaning a diplomatic success on the operational level can have adverse consequences on the military

¹⁰ Jeffrey Taliaferro, Norrin Ripsman, and Steven Lobell, “Introduction,” in *The Challenge of Grand Strategy: The Great Powers and the Broken Balance between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15

¹¹ Williamson Murray, Richard Hart Sinreich, and James Lacey, *The Shaping of Grand Strategy: Policy, Diplomacy, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5

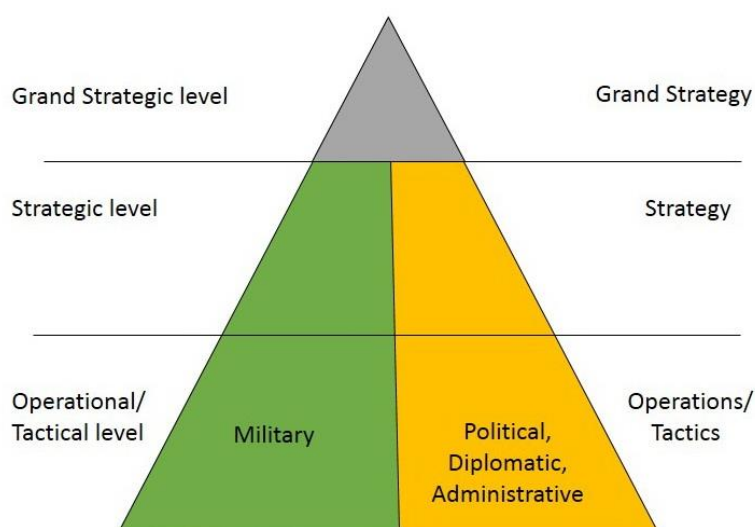
¹² Murray et al., *Shaping Grand Strategy*, 5

¹³ UK Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre. *Joint Doctrine Publication JDP 01: Campaigning*. 2nd ed. (Shrivenham: Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, 2012).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/campaigning-a-joint-doctrine-publication>, 2-1

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-2

strategic level. Finally, for the purpose of this paper the strategic framework is used loosely, as a broad framework to arrange thoughts.

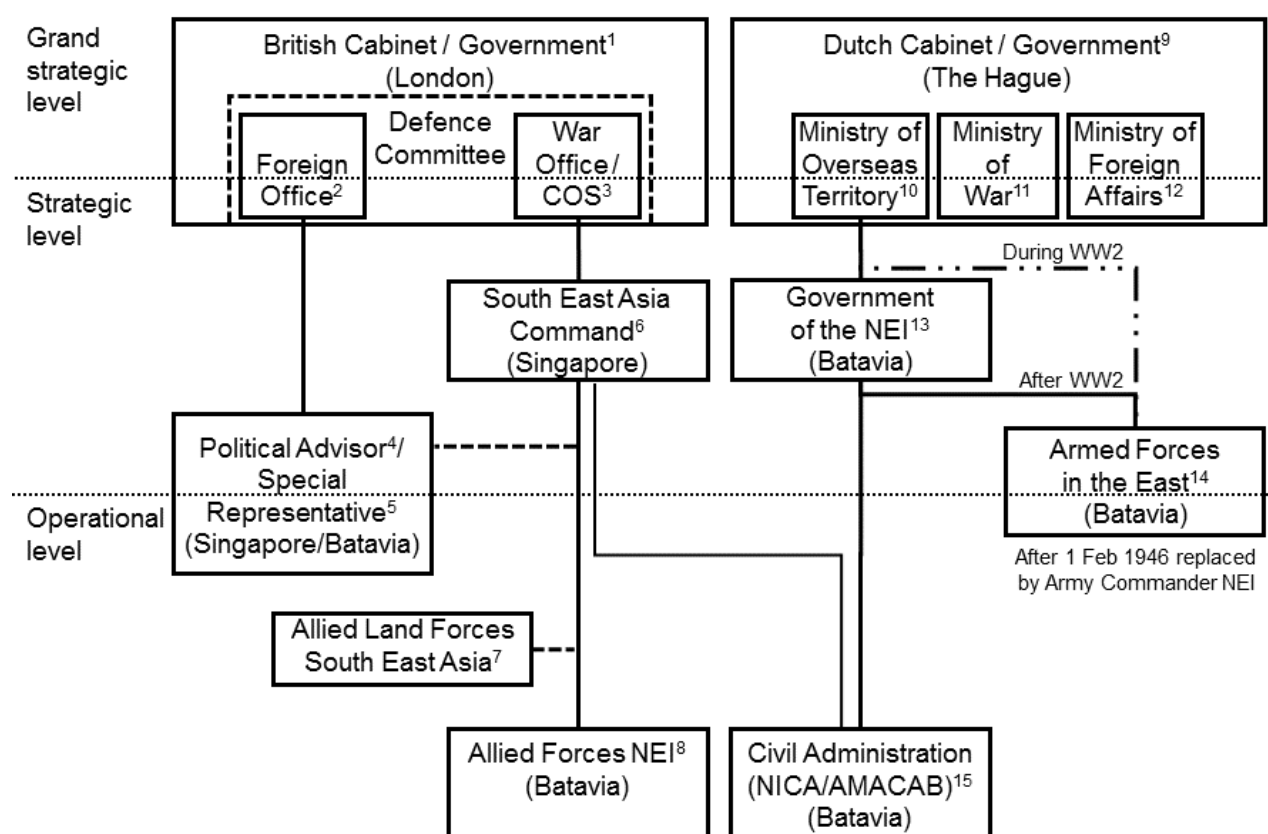


When placing the key actors in this framework, the Dutch and British governments (meaning their cabinets) sit unmistakably at the grand strategic level. Just below the government, still at the grand strategic level, resides the British Defence Committee, as a cross-government committee. The main actors on the strategic level were the various ministries in London and The Hague, but especially the British Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia (SACSEA) and the Dutch Lieutenant Governor-General of the NEI who resided in South-east Asia. The latter two are mirror images in a way: SACSEA was a military strategic commander with very broad powers that allowed him to make decisions on the political strategic level as well, while the Lieutenant Governor-General was a political strategic civilian official who was also Commander-in-Chief of the NEI Armed Forces.¹⁵ The main actor on the military operational level regarding the NEI was Commander Allied Forces NEI (AFNEI). The AFNEI were British-led, but contained British, British-Indian and some Dutch

¹⁵ The National Archives (TNA), PREM 8/265, COSSEA 466, 3; F.S.V Donnison, *British Military Administration in the Far East, 1943-46*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1956), 331; During WW2 the Lieutenant Governor-General was not Commander-in-Chief, but these powers were more or less returned after the war: Droogelever, Schouten and Lohanda, *Guide To Archives*, 53 and Enquetecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, *Verslag Houdende De Uitkomsten Van Het Onderzoek: 8A/B, Militair Beleid 1940-1945: De Terugkeer Naar Indië; Verslag, Bijlagen* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsdrukkerij- en Uitgeverijbedrijf, 1956), 715, hereafter referred to as PEC.

forces – though the numbers of the latter increased quickly after March 1946. After 1 February 1946 the Dutch Army Commander NEI (as successor the Commander Armed Forces in the East) became more prominent as more Dutch troops entered the NEI. The civilian counterpart of AFNEI was the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA), which was almost exclusively Dutch. A fourth actor that deserves mention, though almost exclusively acting at the tactical level, was the organisation in charge of the Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI), which comprised both British and Dutch personnel.

The chain of command was designed and used pragmatically, but could therefore be confusing. The prime example is the Lieutenant Governor-General who was the approximate equivalent of SACSEA when discussing strategy, but at the same time was his subordinate as Commanding Officer NICA. In order to facilitate a better understanding of this paper's analysis, figure 1 provides a basic organisation chart, including key actors. (Note that this chart is not meant to be all-encompassing). The actors involved seem to have coordinated with and informed each other on the basis of pragmatism (horizontally, vertically and diagonally), rather than following a strict chain of command.



Notes: key leaders, commanders and remarks

- Chain of command is approximate and only to create a better understanding of the key actors appearing in the story
- Not all actors in the list feature in the story, or are mentioned by name.

1 27 July '45-28 Feb '50: PM Clement Atlee

2 27 July '45-28 Feb '50: Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin

3 27 July '45-4 Oct '46: SoS for War John Lawson

4 Oct '46-20 Dec '46: SoS for Defence Clement Atlee (PM)

COS = Chiefs of Staff Committee

4 1943-1 Apr '46: Esler Dening

5 19 Jan '46-24 Apr '46: Sir Archibald Clark Kerr (Baron Inverchapel)

Sep '46-30 Nov '46: Lord Killearn (Miles Lampson)

6 16 Nov '43-31 May '46: VAdm Lord Louis Mountbatten

31 May '46-30 Nov '46: LGen Sir Montagu Stopford

7 AFNEI was a subsidiary command to SEAC, while staying in contact with both SEAC and ALFSEA. ALFSEA was the main contributor of forces to AFNEI.

15 Aug '44-8 Dec '44: Gen Sir William Slim

8 Dec '44-19 Apr '46: LGen Sir Miles Dempsey

19 Apr '46-30 Nov '46: LGen Sir Montagu Stopford

8 30 Sep '44-30 Jan '46: LGen Sir Philip Christison

30 Jan '46-19 Apr '46: LGen Sir Montagu Stopford

19 Apr '46-30 Nov '46: LGen Sir Robert Mansergh

9 24 June '45-3 July '46: PM Willem Schermerhorn

3 July '46-7 Aug '48: PM Louis Beel

10 24 June '45-3 July '46: Min of OT Johan Logemann

3 July '46-7 Aug '48: Min of OT Jan Jonkman

11 24 June '45-3 July '46: Min of War Schermerhorn (PM)

3 July '46-7 Aug '48: Min of War Fiévez

Regarding the NEI the Ministry of War was only responsible for recruiting and training units. When sent to the NEI these troops came under command of the Armed Forces in the East through the NEI government and the Ministry of Overseas Territories.

12 24 June '45-1 Mar '46: Min of FA Eelco van Kleffens

1 Mar '46-3 July '46: Min of FA Herman van Roijen

3 July '46-7 Aug '48: Min of FA Baron v Boetzelaer v Oosterhout

13 Mar '42-25 May '42: Lt GG Hubertus van Mook

25 May '42-14 Dec '44: vacant, Van Mook served as Min of Colonies

14 Dec '44-1 Nov '58: Lt GG Hubertus van Mook

14 4 Mar '42-1 Feb '46: Lt Adm Conrad Helfrich

Post disbanded in favour of separate Army Commander NEI and Naval Commander NEI. In practice the former was clearly *primus inter pares*.

1 Feb '46-May '49: Lt Gen Simon Spoor (Army Commander NEI)

15 Commanding Officer NICA was the Lieutenant Governor-General.

Figure 1: Organisation chart and key actors regarding the NEI, 1945-46¹⁶

¹⁶ Primarily based on Drooglever, Schouten and Lohanda, *Guide To Archives*, 39-67, 186-192

The Netherlands East Indies

This chapter provides the general context, describing the Dutch involvement in the NEI, its strategic importance and the main internal and external threats to the NEI up to its capitulation on 8 March 1942. The chapter ends with the Japanese actions in the NEI that helped to foment resistance to restoration of Dutch rule. The Dutch involvement with the East Indies started at the end of the sixteenth century, when the Dutch arrived in the area in search of valuable spices and started colonising parts of it to increase profits. The famous Dutch East India Company installed the first Dutch administration by appointing a Governor-General to run the company's Asian trade from the captured city of Batavia on the island of Java.¹⁷ After 1815 the Dutch had lost most of their Asian possessions but retained the Indonesian archipelago, now called the NEI. The NEI dwarfed the mother country, measuring about 3,000 miles east to west and 1,000 miles north to south, covering 700,000 square miles.¹⁸ (See map 1). The archipelago consisted of six main island groups: Java (including the small island of Madura), Sumatra, Borneo (part of which belonged to the British), Celebes, the Moluccas and the western half of New Guinea.¹⁹

The NEI, and especially the main islands of Java, Sumatra and Borneo, were very important to the Netherlands for two reasons: strategic location and economic value.²⁰ First, its location 'at the crossroads of sea and air routes between Europe, the Far East and Australasia' gave

¹⁷ John Jansen van Galen, *Afscheid van de Koloniën* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas Contact, 2013), 33-44

¹⁸ Approximately 4,800km by 1,600km, covering 1,900,000km².

¹⁹ Donnison, *British Military Administration*, 413; Departement van Economische Zaken, Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Statistisch Zakboekje Voor Nederlands Indië 1937* (Batavia: G. Kolff & Co., 1937). <http://62.41.28.253/cgi-bin/kit.exe?a=d&cl=search&d=CFCIGJ19360101-0144.1.2&srpos=2&e=-0-----Journal%2cBook%2cCollective-2nl----10--1----statistisch+zakboekje-----IN-0>

²⁰ Of the 60.7 Million inhabitants in 1940, 41.7 Million (69%) lived on Java, 8.3 Million (14%) on Sumatra and 2.2 Million (4%) on Borneo. Departement van Economische Zaken, *Indisch Verslag 1941, Deel II Statistisch Jaaroverzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië over Het Jaar 1940* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1941), [Foreign Affairs, July 1, 1940, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/70012/rupert-emerson/the-dutch-east-indies-adrift>.](http://62.41.28.253/cgi-bin/kit.exe?a=d&cl=search&d=CGCIGD19400101-0002.1.5&srpos=36&e=-0-----Journal%2cBook%2cCollective-2nl----50--1-----indisch+verslag-----IN-0, 14-16; Rupert Emerson,)

the NEI strategic importance, not only to the Netherlands, but also to the British Empire, as it connected India to Australia.²¹ Second, and deemed crucial by the Dutch, was the NEI's absolute and relative value. In absolute terms the NEI were very rich in resources: by 1940 they produced 90% of the world's quinine, 40% of the world's rubber, and mined 18% of the world's tin. Furthermore they exported oil and had reserves of various minerals, such as thorium (a substitute for uranium).²² However, the widespread idea of the NEI's relative value to the Dutch was vastly overstated; the NEI were seen as essential for the prosperity and even survival of the Netherlands. Public debate and general opinion at the time suggested that the NEI contributed between 33 to 50% of the Netherlands' income, though it actually was – on average – somewhere between 10 and 20%. Dutch investment in the NEI, however, was undoubtedly large.²³ The overstatement of the NEI's relative value was epitomised by the well-known and often repeated title of a 1914-pamphlet: *Indië verloren, rampspoed geboren* (Indies lost, adversity born).²⁴ This widespread belief ensured that both the Dutch government and population were not willing to lose the NEI.

The NEI was not immune from the worldwide rise of nationalism and this became the main source of increasing internal tension, one that the NEI's government proved unable to alleviate. Nationalism in the NEI originated at the end of the nineteenth century when relatively enlightened Dutch people, though never doubting the validity of having colonies, started advocating an obligation to improve the life of the indigenous population and to

²¹ Emerson, "Dutch East Indies Adrift"

²² Donnison, *British Military Administration*, 413; Emerson, "Dutch East Indies Adrift,"; Jacob van Splunter, "Strategic Minerals and Decolonization: The United States and Great Britain versus the Netherlands, 1945-1951," *The International History Review* 17, no. 3 (August 1995): 486.

²³ Baudet, "Nederland en de Rang van Denemarken" *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1975): 430–443.; Andrew Roadnight, "The Greatest Prize in Southeast Asia: US Policy Towards Indonesia in the Truman and Eisenhower Years" (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 1998), 12; Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions*, 69-70; Robert McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 39-41

²⁴ C.G.S. Sandberg, *Indië Verloren, Rampspoed Geboren* (D.A. Daamen, 1914), <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=YcgAQgAACAAJ>.

increase self-government within the Dutch empire. This new attitude led to two major changes in the NEI. Firstly, and paradoxically, it led to an expansion, often by use of military force, of the Dutch administration's control into the hinterland, where the Dutch had left administration up to that point to the local rulers and their militias. Secondly, it broadened the scope of government policy to include more than just the economy, for example to increase the education of the indigenous population. This education would lead to a growing indigenous intelligentsia, often educated at universities in the Netherlands.²⁵

The first three decades of the twentieth century saw an increase in the self-consciousness of the local population, led by the newly created intelligentsia, and the wavering Dutch policy in the NEI was unable to address it. Reforms were usually too slow in coming and political reactions in the Netherlands sometimes forced the NEI government to withdraw promised reforms. If an Indonesian organisation became too vocal or too radical for Dutch liking the government forbade it and banished its key leaders.²⁶ The main reform in those first decades was the creation of a *Volksraad* (People's Council) in 1919. It only had an advisory role, however, its members were appointed or chosen by a select group of people, and the majority of seats were Dutch-only.²⁷

After 1933 there was an almost permanent crackdown on nationalism after a mutiny by naval personnel, mistakenly blamed on nationalism though actually caused by salary cuts, led to great political upheaval in the NEI and the Netherlands. Nationalist leaders were arrested and

²⁵ Jansen van Galen, *Afscheid*, 95, 105-108; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 21-23; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 11-13, 31-32; Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution, 1945-1950* (Hawthorn: Longman, 1974), 3, 56

²⁶ Jansen van Galen, *Afscheid*, 113-127, 162-163, 221; Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution*, 6-8; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 26-27; Mun Cheong Yong, *H.J. van Mook and Indonesian Independence: A Study of His Role in Dutch-Indonesian Relations, 1945-48* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 13-15

²⁷ Jansen van Galen, *Afscheid*, 125-127

exiled. Among them were three that would play a major role during and after the war: Sukarno, Muhammed Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir - all educated in Dutch schools in the NEI and the latter two at universities in the Netherlands. Apart from conservative Dutch opinion, there also existed a moderate Dutch voice in the *Stuw* group ('thrust' or 'weir') that strove to guide the NEI towards independence within a Dutch commonwealth. Some of its leading members, such as co-founder Hubertus van Mook²⁸ and Johann Logemann,²⁹ would play a crucial role in 1945-46. Due to the crackdowns the NEI presented a 'superficial air of calm'³⁰ in the decade before the Second World War.³¹

Externally, the NEI's geography and economic importance made it a focal point in the clashing interests of Great Britain, the United States and Japan. For the British, whose empire contained sufficient raw materials and minerals, the strategic importance of the NEI was mostly geographical, although the British had invested a lot in the NEI. For Japan and the US the NEI was an important trade partner. During the Great Depression (starting in 1929) Japan's link became stronger and of greater concern to the Dutch government. At the end of the 1930s the Dutch tried to impose trade restrictions on the Japanese to diminish their influence.³² A US embargo on trade with Japan made the Japanese even more reliant on

²⁸ Born in 1894 in Java, married a NEI-born and raised Dutch girl and considered the NEI his home country. Yong, *H.J. van Mook*, 8-9; H.W. von der Dunk, "Mook, Hubertus Johannes van (1894-1965)", in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/BWN/lemmata/bwn1/mook>

²⁹ Born in Rotterdam in 1892, chose to pursue a career as NEI civil servant. Went to the Indies in 1912 and was on leave in the Netherlands when he was surprised by the German invasion. C. Fasseur, "Logemann, Johann Heinrich Adolf (1892-1969)", in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/BWN/lemmata/bwn4/logeman>

³⁰ Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution*, 9

³¹ Jansen van Galen, *Afscheid*, 120-122, 162-163, 221; Yong, *Van Mook*, 13-15; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 26-27; Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution*, 4-9

³² John Le Clair, "Japan's Trade with the Netherlands Indies," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1, 1937, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/69705/john-c-le-clair/japans-trade-with-the-netherlands-indies>; Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions*, 76-77, 83-84, 100-102; Emerson, "Dutch East Indies Adrift,"; Roadnight, "Greatest Prize", 9-13; Nicholas Tarling, "'A Vital British Interest': Britain, Japan, and the Security of Netherlands India in the Inter-War Period," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 9, no. 2 (September 1, 1978): 180-218, doi:10.2307/20062724

trade with the NEI and when the Netherlands government-in-exile declared war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbour, the NEI were obviously under threat.³³

Like its motherland the NEI tried to rely on a policy of strict neutrality, though in the NEI there was no credible force to back this up. The NEI's enormous size made it basically indefensible. Furthermore, its *Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger* (KNIL; Royal Netherlands Indies Army) was traditionally used territorially, in a policing role, and only up to battalion level. The Royal Netherlands Navy's East Indies fleet plan was to remain concentrated at the most strategic point, the Java Sea. The main NEI 'strategy' was to gather as much intelligence as possible, gain time and hope for allied support.³⁴ The policy of neutrality, however, meant that there could be no planning with allies before war was declared or hostilities commenced.³⁵

The bond with Britain became stronger when war came to the Netherlands in 1940 and the Dutch royal family and government fled to Great Britain, but this did not lead to an alliance in Asia until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941. By then it was too late to create a strong defensive alliance, especially since the Japanese moved quickly. The first landings in the NEI started on 10 January. On 15 February Singapore fell, isolating the NEI, and on 8 March the latter capitulated. A few days before this capitulation a small group

³³ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 37-38

³⁴ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 31-32; Anonymous, *Het Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger in den Strijd Tegen Japan* (Maastricht: Leiter-Nypels, 1945), 5-7

³⁵ J.A. van Hamel, "Can The Netherlands Be Neutral?," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1, 1938, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/69798/j-a-van-hamel/can-the-netherlands-be-neutral>.

of officials, led by the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor-General Hubertus van Mook, had left the NEI for Australia.³⁶

The occupation of the Netherlands and the NEI had three serious consequences. Firstly, the isolation of both countries from their government in London and their representatives in Australia would lead to a disconnect in attitudes and mutual understanding after the war. Secondly, the quick capitulation in the NEI destroyed the myth of Dutch superiority and strengthened nationalist belief that, given arms, they could have done the same.³⁷ Finally, it led to an acceleration of nationalism as will be shown below.

At first the Japanese occupation turned out to be more oppressive than Dutch rule – especially in the most economically valuable parts of the NEI - though nationalism enjoyed some initial success. Firstly, the Japanese gave an impulse to the Indonesian language by forbidding the use of Dutch. Secondly, lack of Japanese administrators and knowledge of the NEI, and the internment of all Dutch people, forced the Japanese to use Indonesians to administer the country, allowing the latter to develop administrative skills. Finally, most Indonesian leaders were willing to cooperate with the Japanese to forward their nationalist agenda. Sukarno became the most significant collaborator, while Sjahrir refused and created an underground movement. Hatta did cooperate, but was also an important link to Sjahrir's underground.³⁸

³⁶ Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy, *Eenige Hoofdpunten van Het Regeeringsbeleid in Londen* (Den Haag: Rijksuitgeverij, 1946), 210; Yong, *Van Mook*, 24-26; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 34; Anonymous, *Strijd Tegen Japan*, 7-9, 12

³⁷ Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 101-102; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 46-47

³⁸ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 47-48; Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution*, 10-13; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 103-108, 111-115

As the tide of war shifted the Japanese proved more and more willing to support Indonesian nationalism, but almost exclusively on Java and Sumatra, with three important results.³⁹

Firstly, it led to a tremendous rise in national self-consciousness and political awareness, especially among urban youths, but also among adults and traditional elites. Secondly, it led to the creation of a volunteer regular force, PETA (defenders of the Fatherland), as well as various para-military youth organisations versed in guerrilla tactics, such as the *Barisan Pelopor* (Vanguard Corps). By the end of the war the PETA had about 70,000 relatively well-trained members on Java and Sumatra while the *Barisan Pelopor* had 120,000 members on Java alone. Finally, it raised the prospect of an independent Indonesia as the Japanese set a date for the transfer of sovereignty: 24 August 1945. Although this was pre-empted by the Japanese surrender, Indonesian *Pemudas* (nationalist youths) abducted the cautious Sukarno and Hatta and forced them to proclaim Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945.⁴⁰

Thanks to the Japanese catalyst, the new Indonesian Republic had an embryonic administrative framework, military and police force.

³⁹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 47-48

⁴⁰ Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution*, 14-17, 25-29; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 108-110, 127-129. Kahin translates *Barisan Pelopor* as "Pioneer Column".

Adopting a common approach

The context regarding the British involvement in the NEI and the adoption and coordination of British and Dutch grand strategy, strategy and operational plans until the end of September 1945 – just before entry into the NEI – are the subject of this chapter. It will demonstrate that there was a common approach that was generally well-coordinated.

The NEI's representatives in Australia had almost no intelligence about events in the NEI, but the smooth liberation and reoccupation of the first part of the NEI during the war confirmed expectations that a re-entry into the rest of the NEI would present no problems. The lack of intelligence was due to the NEI's location on the periphery of Allied operations as well as the failure of most intelligence gathering attempts by the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS), operating out of Brisbane.⁴¹ In coordination with the Americans and based on the American-Dutch Civil Affairs Agreement⁴², Dutch New Guinea was liberated by US troops in April 1944 and quickly handed over to the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA).⁴³

The reoccupation of the NEI, however, would not take place in cooperation with the Americans as responsibility for the whole of the NEI was transferred to Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's SEAC (before only responsible for Sumatra: see map 2) at the end of the war. Though sometimes seen as a surprise, or even a move that went against the wishes of the

⁴¹ Clifford W. Squire, "Britain and the Transfer of Power in Indonesia, 1945-46." Doctoral Thesis, University of London, 1979, 38-39; PEC, 8A/B, 524-572; Bob de Graaff, "Hot Intelligence in the Tropics: Dutch Intelligence Operations in the Netherlands East Indies during the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 4 (October 1, 1987): 563–84, doi:10.2307/260811.

⁴² Although set up at the beginning of 1944 the treaty was not formally signed until 10 December 1944. See United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1944. Volume V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, the Far East*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1944v05>, 1286-1289.

⁴³ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 40

Dutch government⁴⁴, the transfer was actually neither. The boundary change had already been proposed by the British in the first half of 1944, probably to protect its sphere of influence against meddling Americans. The Dutch government, aware of the discussion, decided to stay neutral,⁴⁵ thereby foregoing the chance to influence the final decision, though it was clear that some key actors preferred the British⁴⁶ over the Americans because of the latter's anti-colonialism.⁴⁷ The fact that the final decision was delayed until 17 July 1945, soon after a change of the Dutch government, might account for both the surprise and the Dutch government's statement that they had not been consulted.⁴⁸ The British and Dutch now had to coordinate to reoccupy the NEI.

The grand strategies of the British and Dutch overlapped concerning overall intent and end-state (return to the status quo ante bellum in the NEI), but differed in the relative importance of this end-state. The Dutch grand strategy was straightforward: rebuild the nation and the empire as it was before the war and regain its standing in the world. For this the NEI were deemed indispensable; not only did the NEI provide a large portion of economic wealth, it also ensured the Netherlands' status as colonial power.⁴⁹ The Dutch also planned a change in the structure of the empire as was revealed in the famous '7 December Speech' by Queen Wilhelmina, in 1942.⁵⁰ In it she stated:

it is my intention, after liberation, to create the occasion for a joint consultation about the structure of the Kingdom and its parts, in order to adapt it to the changed

⁴⁴ McMillan, *British Occupation*, 10

⁴⁵ A decision that was severely criticised by the parliamentary enquiry commission in the 1950s. See PEC, 8A/B, 486-487

⁴⁶ Wartime PM Gerbrandy was staunchly pro-British. See Christopher Thorne, *Allies Of A Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 613-614

⁴⁷ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 40-42; Thorne, *Allies*, 409-417; McMahon, *Colonialism*, 75-81

⁴⁸ McMahon, *Colonialism*, 81

⁴⁹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 56-57; McMahon, *Colonialism*, 39-41; Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London/New York: Allan Lane, 2007), 159

⁵⁰ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 36-37

circumstances . . . the population of the Netherlands and of the Netherlands Indies has confirmed, through its suffering and its resistance, its right to participate in the decision . . . I visualise, without anticipating the recommendations of the future conference where consultations regarding the future form of the Kingdom will be held, that they will be directed towards a commonwealth in which the Netherlands, Indonesia, Surinam and Curaçao will participate, with complete self-reliance and freedom of conduct for each part regarding its internal affairs, but with the readiness to render mutual assistance.⁵¹

Though the speech was primarily aimed at retaining the support of the generally anti-colonial Americans, it was in line with earlier speeches by the Queen (10 May 1941) and the Governor-General of the NEI (summer of 1941); both had already referred to a readjustment of the structure of the Kingdom in line with the times.⁵² This speech would remain the basis of Dutch government policy after the war, though it was very broad and vague: it appealed to the progressive opinion of people like Van Mook – who helped draft it – while it was also acceptable to conservatives.⁵³ In the NEI, where hardly anybody was able to receive Allied broadcasts, the speech was virtually unknown until well after the war.

The British grand strategy aimed at recovering the British Empire and within this aim the NEI played only a minor role. The trade between the British Empire and the NEI had never been of great importance, though the former had a fair amount of investments in the NEI and was especially interested in the thorium that was mined in the area. Most important to the

⁵¹ Actually broadcast on 6 December 1942 in London, but by that time it was already 7 December in the NEI. It was broadcast in English. Text is available in various publications, including Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy, *Indonesia* (London: Hutchinson, 1950), 192-194 and Yong, *Van Mook*, 200-202.

⁵² For original texts of these speeches see Gerbrandy, *Hoofdpunten*, 223, 231-33.

⁵³ Yong, *Van Mook*, 28-29

British Empire was securing the imperial lines of communication that ran through the NEI, and keeping the anti-colonial US out of its imperial backyard. Finally, the British felt a moral obligation to support their staunch Dutch wartime ally.⁵⁴ Although Britain had just voted in a Labour government, its attitude was pragmatically colonial and therefore generally supportive of Dutch aims.⁵⁵

On the strategic level the approach towards the reoccupation of NEI differed as the priorities of Dutch and British commanders differed and their lack of resources reduced their options. Firstly, unlike the Dutch, the British Supreme Allied Commander (SAC) SEA, Admiral Mountbatten, had more areas to consider than just the NEI (see map 3). His strategy, forced by limited means, was to prioritise the various areas and task the Japanese with keeping peace and order until Allied forces arrived. After the arrival of SEAC forces three tasks had to be executed: disarming and repatriating the Japanese (prisoners of war), Repatriation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI), and handover of the administration to the civil authorities. The NEI, with the priority on Java and then Sumatra, were at the bottom of the list of territories where these tasks were to be executed.⁵⁶ Amongst the reasons for this were the comparatively low strategic importance (especially to the British) and the Allied expectation the NEI would not present any problems, probably encouraged by the success in New Guinea.⁵⁷ Although there was agreement on the general strategy, the Dutch naturally

⁵⁴ Emerson, "Dutch East Indies Adrift"; Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, 159; Van Splunter, 486; McMahon, *Colonialism*, 76-77; Thorne, *Allies*, 460; TNA, FO 371/46395, No. 6398, file 8658, Minutes of the Cabinet Defence Meeting, 10 Oct 1945, 6

⁵⁵ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 54-55; Den Doel, *Afscheid*, 98; Squire, 5-6, 14-15

⁵⁶ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 58-59; Woodburn Kirby, *War Against Japan Volume V: The Surrender Of Japan*; *History Of The Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series* (London: HMSO, 1969), 228-230; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 82; McMillan, *British Occupation*, 10

⁵⁷ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 59; Thorne, *Allies*, 613; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 228-230; Yong, *Van Mook*, 31

wanted the NEI to have a higher priority and Van Mook unsuccessfully tried to convince Mountbatten to occupy the NEI as soon as possible.⁵⁸

Secondly, the lack of means prevented both the British and the Dutch from swiftly executing their strategy. The Dutch, as the last Western European country to be liberated, lacked both properly trained and equipped armed forces and the strategic lift capacity to transport them; Dutch ships would remain part of the Allied shipping pool for six months after the war's end, as per wartime agreement.⁵⁹ The British, for their part, lacked the numbers to execute all tasks simultaneously. To make matters worse operations in South-east Asia were halted until Japan had formally signed the surrender document, which happened on 2 September. Moreover, the British government was unable to fulfil its promises to train and equip Dutch troops and soon decided to give a high priority to the repatriation and demobilisation of their own troops. The Dutch government failed to put high-level diplomatic pressure on the British to improve matters.⁶⁰ All this meant additional delays in SEAC's schedule of reoccupation, building Dutch military capacity and shipping Dutch forces to the NEI, where a power vacuum was growing in the meantime.

On the operational level there was good coordination, illustrated by three key arrangements for reoccupation that were made and agreed upon by both the British and the Dutch. First, the earlier Civil Affairs Agreement for Sumatra was extended to apply to the whole of the NEI. The agreement stipulated a military phase during which SACSEA 'would have full authority to take any measures made necessary by the military situation'.⁶¹ SEAC would

⁵⁸ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 59

⁵⁹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 61; Groen, *Marsroutes*, 18-19

⁶⁰ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 59-64; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 13-19; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 230

⁶¹ Donnison, *British Military Administration*, 415; for the agreement text see TNA, WO 203/3260

have control over NICA (with the Lieutenant Governor-General doubling as Commanding Officer NICA), until SAC considered a transfer of authority possible. On the ground NICA personnel would directly accompany British troops.⁶²

The second arrangement was an operations plan, made by Mountbatten's staff. According to this plan British military forces would occupy strategic points on the islands, expand these points, and increase their number as more troops became available. According to the plan of 15 September, Batavia would be occupied by two brigades at the end of September, followed by one brigade in Surabaya in the middle of October. Next in line were Medan, Padang and Palembang (on Sumatra) in November. By the end of September Lieutenant-General Philip Christison was appointed to lead this operation as commander of Allied Forces NEI (AFNEI).⁶³ Apart from the time schedule – the Dutch wanted to reoccupy the NEI sooner rather than later – both the Dutch *Bevelhebber der Strijdkrachten in het Oosten* (BSO; Commander Armed Forces in the East), Lieutenant-Admiral Conrad Helfrich and Van Mook were in agreement with these plans, though they failed to agree amongst themselves on how to employ either the directly available Dutch troops (twelve companies) or those they expected to arrive before the end of 1945 (seventeen battalions).⁶⁴

The third arrangement was the quick deployment of RAPWI teams to gather intelligence concerning the locations, state and number of people to be evacuated. The teams were a mixed affair: some were Dutch while others contained British and Dutch troops. They were deployed by air drop starting 8 September. Although they were not tasked to look at the

⁶² Donnison, *British Military Administration*, 415-418; Dennis, *Troubled Days*, 79-80

⁶³ There is some confusion about the exact date. See Dennis, *Troubled Days*, 86-88

⁶⁴ Groen, *Marsroutes*, 21-22

political situation in the NEI, their first reports were encouraging; reoccupation did not seem to present any insurmountable difficulties, although the numbers of RAPWI quickly surpassed SEAC estimates.⁶⁵

In sum, the overlap in grand strategies of both countries amounted to a common approach focussed on the end-state of the restoration of Dutch authority in the NEI, even though this end-state was far more important to the Dutch than to the British. It is unclear, however, whether the grand strategies were coordinated at government or ministerial level. On the strategic level both countries adopted a common approach that was well-coordinated, though they struggled with the means to execute it: the British because they did not have sufficient forces to do everything at the same time and the Dutch because they lacked forces in theatre in the first place. However, the British and Dutch could have done more to transport Dutch troops to the NEI. Finally, on the operational level both countries were in full agreement and the approach was a joint one: the British supplied the military means and the Dutch the administrators to accompany them, while the RAPWI was a joint military effort. This shows good coordination at the operational level.

⁶⁵ Dennis, *Troubled Days* 83-84; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 67; McMillan, *British Occupation*, 13-14

Unilateral adjustment of strategy

After adopting a common approach to reoccupy the NEI it was time to execute the plans. However, as this chapter will show, the common approach was soon unilaterally adjusted on the strategic level, though good coordination meant a common approach was quickly restored.

At the end of September 1945 the emerging intelligence picture led to a drastic change in the outlook of Mountbatten. The first RAPWI reports were mixed, but generally optimistic. As De Jong has shown, this optimism was not unwarranted; the population and local authorities were helpful and the situation was quiet, though there was a large difference between the rural and urban areas, with a far tenser situation in the latter. The arrival of the first joint contingent in the harbour of Batavia on 15 September increased tension, though not dramatically. The contingent, under command of the British Rear Admiral Patterson, included a RAPWI team and a NICA contingent.⁶⁶ Commander of the NICA detachment Charles van der Plas' first report to Van Mook stated: 'we have underestimated the size of the anti-Dutch actions and the gnawing of years of anti-Dutch propaganda ... Interesting are the many English slogans demanding independence'.⁶⁷ He remained optimistic provided troops for re-occupation would not take too long to arrive. He was concerned, however, that the British were 'very afraid of a rerun of Greece'⁶⁸ and would not be firm or firm enough against Sukarno and associates'.⁶⁹ From 19 September onwards more minor incidents were occurring between the *pemudas* and recently returned internees, especially in Batavia and Surabaya; the Japanese, who by the terms of the surrender were obliged to keep order until

⁶⁶ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 67-68; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 69-72

⁶⁷ NIB, vol. I, 125 (my translation)

⁶⁸ The British reoccupation of Greece in 1944 led to their decisive involvement in a civil war that restored an authoritarian regime. British involvement was costly and led to international condemnation. De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 54

⁶⁹ NIB, vol. I, 128-131, quote on p.129 (my translation)

Allied takeover, did not interfere.⁷⁰ On 25 September Lady Mountbatten, working with the RAPWI, visited Batavia where she met with some former British prisoner of war; they sketched a situation that was far worse than official reports suggested. After Mountbatten spoke to his wife and two of the former prisoners he immediately changed his instructions. Exactly why Mountbatten valued the opinion of former internees higher than the RAPWI reports remains unclear; when asked for an up-to-date assessment, Patterson even cast doubt on the reliability and stability of these former prisoners.⁷¹ Squire argues that Mountbatten, based on his experience in India and recent events in Burma and French Indo-China, was convinced that cooperation with the nationalists was essential. In an interview Mountbatten described it to Squire as ‘not of the politics of the possible but the politics of the inevitable’.⁷²

Mountbatten now unilaterally decided to abandon his third task – the restoration of the NEI to Dutch administration – thereby violating his instructions, his government’s policy and the Civil Affairs Agreement. Instead he opted for a limited occupation of ‘key areas’ and to refrain from re-establishing Dutch rule.⁷³ He personally informed a flabbergasted Van der Plas who in turn informed Van Mook that the ‘Supreme Commander impressed most strongly upon me that Great Britain will on no account be drawn into internal troubles in Java. British soldiers will not be used for putting down any revolt or riots ... Supreme Commander urged on me discussions specially with Sukarno and Hatta’.⁷⁴ Van der Plas requested permission to begin discussions with influential Indonesians.⁷⁵ Mountbatten’s new approach apparently found favour with the British Secretary of State for War, Jack Lawson (who happened to be

⁷⁰ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 71-72

⁷¹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 75-76; Lord Louis Mountbatten, *Personal Diary of Admiral the Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia, 1943-1946*, ed. Philip Ziegler (London: Collins, 1988), 256; Squire, “Transfer of Power”, 72-74

⁷² Squire, “Transfer of Power”, 74-75

⁷³ Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 228-229; TNA, WO 203/3260; Squire, “Transfer of Power”, 77

⁷⁴ NIB, vol. I, 182n2

⁷⁵ NIB, vol. I, 182

in Singapore), and together they gave new instructions to Christison just before the latter left for the NEI.⁷⁶ Lawson was soon reprimanded by British PM Clement Atlee for making a policy statement without consultation, and the British Chiefs of Staff reminded Mountbatten that his tasks were unchanged, while Van Mook sent a telegram to remind Mountbatten of the Civil Affairs Agreement.⁷⁷ All to no avail, as Mountbatten refused to abandon his new strategy.

Press statements by British officials made Mountbatten's new strategy known to the world and subsequent reactions by Dutch officials showed large differences of opinion between both countries and on various levels within each country.⁷⁸ On 28 September Lawson declared to the press in Singapore that Britain's 'obligations to the Allies did not involve fighting the peoples of Java ... for the Dutch'.⁷⁹ Van der Plas reacted quickly by issuing a radio broadcast inviting Indonesians, including Sukarno, to talk about the future of the NEI as well as visiting various key leaders in Batavia.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, Dutch Minister⁸¹ of Overseas Territories, Johan Logemann, added to the damage done by Lawson by taking a hard-line approach and publicly disavowing Van der Plas' broadcast.⁸² On 29 September Christison, after arriving in Batavia with the first 800 British-Indian troops, made matters worse at his own press conference when he remarked: 'The Indonesian Government will not be expelled and will be expected to continue civil administration in the areas outside those

⁷⁶ TNA, CAB 106/165; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 77-78; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 314; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 89

⁷⁷ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 78; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 91; NIB, vol. I, 190-192

⁷⁸ NIB, vol. I, 183-188

⁷⁹ NIB, vol. I, 184n2; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 90-91

⁸⁰ TNA, CAB 106/165; NIB, vol. I, 183 and 183n1; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 78-81 (although he mistakes the date, placing the broadcast after its repudiation. Probably the confusion rises from Van der Plas' statement during the Parliamentary Enquiry in 1953. See PEC, 8C-II, 1389); Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 315

⁸¹ Equivalent to a British Secretary of State.

⁸² NIB, vol. I, 183n1

occupied by British Forces'.⁸³ This constituted a de facto British recognition of the Indonesian Republic.

Although both governments as well as Mountbatten were quick to condemn or correct the statements of Lawson and Christison, the common approach clearly lay in tatters, and the Indonesian nationalists moved quickly to exploit the situation.⁸⁴ On Mountbatten's orders, Christison issued a statement on 3 October claiming he had been 'grossly misstated', though it seems unlikely that he was.⁸⁵ It did nothing to assuage the Dutch, nor did a British Foreign Office statement to the same effect. Van Mook requested clarification of the Dutch government's standpoint, while both the Dutch government and Mountbatten asked the British government for its official policy. Mountbatten proposed three options: stick to repatriating the Japanese and the APWIs, or restore law and order either by forcing the Dutch to negotiate with the Republicans or by using military force. The last option required far more troops.⁸⁶ It appears that actors at all levels suddenly seemed unsure how to continue. Meanwhile the relative calm in the NEI was replaced by a major outbreak of violence and many deaths.⁸⁷ Indonesian groups, controlled as well as uncontrolled by the Republican government, started arming themselves, on many occasions helped by the Japanese. At the political level Sukarno publicly refused to negotiate with the Dutch and threatened violence if they moved against Indonesian independence. De Jong has concluded that Mountbatten, by changing his instructions and assisted by Christison's statements, fulfilled his own prophesy

⁸³ Yong, *Van Mook*, 36-37; NIB, vol. I, 201; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 63

⁸⁴ NIB, vol. I, 186, 188-189; 201; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 98-99; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 92

⁸⁵ TNA, CAB 106/165; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 91-92; Yong, *Van Mook*, 35-37; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 79-80, 449n64

⁸⁶ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 80; NIB, I, 192-193; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 92, 98-100; 105-106; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 91-95; Den Doel, *Afscheid*, 98

⁸⁷ The well-respected Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD; Dutch Institute for War Documentation) estimates the dead and missing of this so-called *Bersiap* (be prepared!) period (October-December 1945) as approximately 20,000 Dutch and Indo-Dutch; tens of thousands of Indonesians and local Chinese, 1,000 Japanese and 660 British/British-Indians. See René Kok, Erik Somers, and Louis Zweers, *Koloniale Oorlog 1945-1949: van Indië naar Indonesië* (Amsterdam: Carrera, 2009), 15

of the dangerous situation on Java. Christison, on the other hand, claimed that the repudiation of Van der Plas' moderate radio broadcast led to the explosion of violence.⁸⁸ Most likely it was a combination of both.

⁸⁸ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 80-85; TNA, CAB 106/165

The changed situation forced both countries to adjust and realign their approach, starting at the grand strategic level. The Dutch government's aims did not change and their main policy remained to restore the NEI to Dutch authority before discussing constitutional changes to the NEI's status within the Dutch Kingdom: a stubborn attitude that showed the Dutch government's disconnect with realities in the NEI. It is important to note, however, that the government's room for manoeuvre was limited due to public opinion, which hardened as information about the *Bersiap* reached the Netherlands. Furthermore Van Mook received permission to talk to moderate republicans, though he was not allowed to make promises beyond those in the '7 December speech'. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs communicated the Dutch position to his British counterpart.⁸⁹ The British government had more trouble adjusting its grand strategy because the Foreign Office (FO) and the Chiefs of Staff (COS) could not completely agree. The COS considered only the repatriation tasks feasible with the limited means available, while the FO realised that the British were in a precarious position. It did not want to quell Indonesian nationalism using violence, nor could the British afford to be seen 'to surrender to the extremists and fail to restore Dutch administration'.⁹⁰ The fact that most of the troops on the ground in the NEI came from British India – itself in a process of decolonisation – did not make things easier. Both the FO and the COS, however, agreed to press the Dutch to negotiate with the republicans. On 10 October the Cabinet Defence Committee reaffirmed Mountbatten's original tasks, though limiting handover of the administration to Dutch civil authorities to the areas already occupied by the British, while requesting more information in order to make a better informed decision in the near future.⁹¹ At the grand strategic level, both governments

⁸⁹ Yong, *Van Mook*, 38-42; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 111; NIB, vol. I, 217-218, 220-221, 281, 290-292, 317

⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/46395, No. 6398, file 8658

⁹¹ McMahon, *Colonialism*, 90-91; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 110-111; Den Doel, *Afscheid*, 98-99; NIB, vol. I, 299-300

remained basically unchanged in their (common) approach and commitment to their original end-state.

At the same time the common approach was adjusted at the strategic level. On 10 and 11 October 1945 Van Mook and Van der Plas met with Mountbatten and Christison in Singapore for uneasy talks in which Mountbatten tried to pressurise Van Mook into negotiation with Hatta and Sukarno, while Van Mook insisted negotiations could only take place from a position of military strength. Mountbatten's point that British forces should be used to disarm the Japanese and repatriate the APWIs (the first two tasks) as this would have a profound effect on the local population was countered by Van Mook who said that the safety of the APWIs could best be guaranteed by suppressing the nationalists. In the end, however, both came to an uneasy agreement: Mountbatten would speed up the deployment of British troops to more locations in the interior, while Van Mook agreed to speak to moderate Indonesian nationalists – thereby excluding Sukarno and Hatta. The British Foreign Office appointed Esler Denning, Mountbatten's chief political advisor, to support negotiations between the Dutch and the Republic.⁹² Mountbatten and Van Mook agreed on a combination of a show of force and negotiations to find a solution, thereby reconciling the preferred ways of both governments, though British troop strength limited their options.

The operational plan was the next step of realignment and adjustment and a common approach was clearly visible. A meeting with key players was held in Batavia on 15 October. As the upcoming deployment of British forces was not accompanied by Dutch forces there was not much to coordinate. Nevertheless some interesting topics were discussed that

⁹² NIB, vol. I, 300-317; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 112-116; Den Doel, *Afscheid*, 104-105; Yong, *Van Mook*, 44; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 103-105

showed adjustment and a common approach. Van Mook agreed to reorganise and demilitarise NICA and change its name to Allied Military Administration Civil Affairs Branch (AMACAB) to reduce tension and Indonesian resistance. Furthermore he announced he was going to talk to Sukarno, though this was by then still not allowed by the Dutch government. Three days later Christison informed Helfrich that he expected Dutch troops to be acceptable to land in the NEI from 27 September onwards.⁹³ Things seemed to be going in the same direction again.

In conclusion, Mountbatten's change in strategy and his decision to forego the task of restoring Dutch authority immediately highlighted the differences in British and Dutch interests, priorities and constraints. Coupled with the careless press statements of representatives of both countries, this sent shockwaves through the system. Within a fortnight, however, coordination between both countries, especially on the strategic and operational levels, had resulted in an adjusted common approach. This, however, hid the fact that on the grand strategic level a disconnect was appearing between a stubborn Dutch and an undecided British government.

⁹³ NIB, vol. I, 361-364; Yong, *Van Mook*, 47; Vice-Admiral The Earl Mountbatten of Burma, *Post Surrender Tasks: Section E of the Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia 1943-1945* (London: HMSO, 1969), 294

Constant adjustment to the common approach

After a readjustment the common approach seemed to be in somewhat calmer waters, though as this chapter will show there were a series of major and minor crises that put the coordination and common approach of both allies under pressure. In all it was a period of almost constant readjustment of policy and plans.

Two important events at the end of October 1945, consisting of a combination of diplomacy and military force, confirmed the common approach of the Dutch and British.⁹⁴ Firstly, the common approach was clear to see when Denning told Sukarno and Hatta on 23 October that Britain recognised Dutch sovereignty over the NEI; this show of Anglo-Dutch unity caused a shock in the Republican camp. Eight days later Van Mook, ignoring the consternation caused in the Netherlands when his intentions for a meeting became public, kept his promise by meeting with an Indonesian delegation that did include Sukarno.⁹⁵ Secondly, there were the promised British military actions underpinning and reinforcing the diplomatic part of the common approach: the operational deployment of British troops to more 'key areas' on Java in support of RAPWI.⁹⁶ It was not a great show of strength though, and McMillan calls the British deployment in central Java, to Buitenzorg, Bandung and Semarang, 'confused and improvised . . . [and] relying on Japanese assistance⁹⁷ to an embarrassing extent'.⁹⁸ The next deployment, to Surabaya in eastern Java, was even worse. After the deploying brigade established an uneasy but relatively friendly relationship with local authorities, a divisional leaflet drop with instructions to the Republicans to surrender their weapons – contradicting

⁹⁴ Squire, "Transfer of Power", 130

⁹⁵ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 116-117; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 111-112

⁹⁶ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 114-119

⁹⁷ After a series of anti-Japanese action by irregular groups the Japanese had re-engaged and restarted fighting the republicans. See McMillan, *British Occupation*, 26-27, 30

⁹⁸ McMillan, *British Occupation*, 26-30; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 320-321

local agreements – led to a large uprising against the heavily outnumbered British-Indian force. An appeal by Sukarno, flown in on Christison's orders, calmed the situation momentarily.⁹⁹ The killing of the British brigade commander a day later, on 31 October, led to a flare up of violence in Surabaya and central Java, while the situation in Batavia became very tense.¹⁰⁰ Matters did not improve when the Dutch government reacted furiously to Van Mook's meeting with Sukarno and publicly disavowed his action. The government's decision to fire Van Mook faltered, however, when the Queen refused to sign the necessary papers.¹⁰¹

Although the fighting and the Dutch government's disavowal of Van Mook's meeting strained the common approach, the combination of diplomacy and military force would continue to hold for the moment. Mountbatten's and Denning's advice to the British government to conduct a meeting with the Republicans on 8 November and follow this up by a military action in Surabaya two days later met with approval. Moreover, the British government decided to send an extra division to the NEI and allow the disembarkation of Dutch troops starting 10 November. Meanwhile Van Mook asked for and, surprisingly, received permission from Logemann to meet with Sukarno, though Logemann added Van Mook could meet but not negotiate with Sukarno and should continue to try to remove the latter from future negotiations. Probably Logemann acted without the consent of his colleagues, as on the same day both PM Schermerhorn and Foreign Minister Kleffens told the British ambassador in The Hague on two separate occasions that meetings with Sukarno remained unacceptable. In any case, the Republican government postponed the meeting

⁹⁹ Christison claims: "I arrested Soekarno and had him brought before me. I told him he was to fly at once to Surabaya ... and stop the fighting. He was obviously scared, but agreed to do so.", CAB 106/165, 10

¹⁰⁰ McMillan, *British Occupation*, 33-53; Dennis, *Troubled Days*, 123-126; De Jong, *Diplomat*, 120-123; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 322-327

¹⁰¹ De Jong, *Diplomat*, 119-120; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 120

because recent events had driven a wedge between them and their supporters. Sukarno, probably to reassure his supporters, publicly demanded nothing less than full independence.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, the military operation in Surabaya went ahead as planned as the British felt it was important to show that violence against the Allies was not acceptable. Starting 10 November a British-Indian division cleared the city and evacuated APWIs amidst heavy fighting. The operation lasted until the end of November, though sporadic violence would continue until the end of December.¹⁰³ The fighting in Surabaya led to a resurgence of violence all over Java which strained British troops and even forced them to retreat from some places to avoid overstretching; a clear indication of the limited means available.¹⁰⁴ As the postponement of the 8 November meeting made Christison decide to postpone the disembarkation of Dutch troops, the only Dutch troops involved were the reformed KNIL companies, consisting mostly of ex-internees. These were difficult to control and prone to counter-terror, thereby increasing animosity between Dutch and British soldiers. The British, however, were not beyond conducting atrocities themselves as shown in the town of Bekasi on 24 November and 13 December.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile the recovery of APWIs was complicated by tens of thousands of refugees fleeing into the APWI camps: so-called IFTUs or Inhabitants Friendly To Us.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 124-128; NIB, vol. I, 551-553

¹⁰³ McMillan, *British Occupation*, 54-56; Dennis, *Troubled Days*, 125-126; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 115, 119-126

¹⁰⁴ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 130-132

¹⁰⁵ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 130-131; NIB, vol. II, 14-15. In Bekasi eight hundred houses were burned down as an authorised reprisal for the murder of twenty-two British plane-crash survivors. See McMillan, *British Occupation*, 70-71;

Mountbatten, *Post-Surrender Tasks*, 295

¹⁰⁶ Dennis, *Troubled Days*, 148

The postponement of negotiations and the amount and ferocity of fighting caused Mountbatten to develop adjustments to the agreed-on common approach, with diplomacy as the main effort, and he tried to ensure the Dutch government, the British government and Van Mook agreed with these adjustments. First, Mountbatten tried to pressure the Dutch government into negotiations by informing them, via an informal Dutch go-between, that he planned to withdraw British troops starting in March 1946. The furious Dutch cabinet saw through this and by 1 December the Dutch ambassador in London could confirm that this was by no means an officially decided date.¹⁰⁷ Second, on 3 December Mountbatten outlined three possible courses of action to his government: course A was to abandon Surabaya, course B was to hold Surabaya until relieved by the Dutch and course C was to impose law and order through the whole of Java. All courses had drawbacks, and Mountbatten advised course B, although this meant increasing the British military commitment. The Defence Committee could not agree, as the COS voted for course A, while the FO voted for course B. The decision was deferred to a (to be formed) top-level committee.¹⁰⁸ Third, Mountbatten took the three courses of action to Van Mook and Helfrich and subsequently held a meeting on 6 December. As in the British Defence Committee, the Dutch military opinion of Helfrich clashed with the diplomatic view of Van Mook; the latter opted for course B, while the former wanted nothing less than course C. Eventually there was some form of agreement on course B, with Dutch troops taking over Surabaya, while the British remained on central and west Java. Later on, Dutch troops would be allowed on Java as well. The British and Dutch military staffs coordinated the details (even taking a possible British withdrawal starting March into account), while Mountbatten and Van Mook informed their respective governments.¹⁰⁹ In general, it was Mountbatten who ensured an adjusted common approach

¹⁰⁷ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 132-133; NIB, vol. II, 194, 262-263; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 170-172

¹⁰⁸ Dennis, *Troubled Days*, 148-151; Mountbatten, *Post-Surrender Tasks*, 294-295; Groen, *Marsroutes*, 51-52

¹⁰⁹ Mountbatten, *Post-Surrender Tasks*, 294-295; Groen, *Marsroutes*, 51-54;

on the strategic and operational levels, even though guidance from his own government was lacking.

Two positive developments on the grand strategic level helped to adjust the Dutch government's approach and bring it far more in line with developments on the strategic and operational levels. Firstly, to strengthen the Republican government's credentials Republican President Sukarno had given up some of his power and Sjahrir, who was thought to have more support among the *pemudas*, formed a cabinet. As PM Sjahrir had not collaborated with the Japanese, the Dutch government deemed negotiations with him acceptable. Unfortunately, the increasing rift between the Republican government on the one hand and the army and irregular groups on the other forced Sjahrir to take a strong line and demand Dutch recognition of his government.¹¹⁰ Secondly, a high-level conference between both governments was planned at Chequers on 27 December.¹¹¹ Van Mook, who had pushed for a conference, went back to the Netherlands to personally brief the cabinet. He told the cabinet that long-term prospects were not good and the only possible solution was to come to an agreement with the Republican government, while the execution of course B was necessary to strengthen the Dutch negotiation position. Though the Dutch cabinet mostly agreed with Van Mook's position on negotiations and course B, it did not rule out the option of sending enough troops to the NEI to force a military solution.¹¹² Furthermore, the cabinet decided to improve relations with the British by replacing Helfrich with Colonel Simon Spoor. As the

¹¹⁰ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 139-142; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 134-137

¹¹¹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 153;

¹¹² Groen, *Marsroutes*, 50, 57-58; McMahon, *Colonialism*, 107

latter's reputation among the British was excellent the cabinet saw no objections to promoting him to Lieutenant-General.¹¹³

The Chequers conference did not result in an alignment of both governments, however, as the British government suddenly confronted the Dutch with a large change of policy; they would withdraw from the NEI as soon as they had finished the repatriation and recovery of the Japanese and the APWIs. The British change in policy was the result of a Joint Planning Staff report, distributed at the beginning of December, that concluded that the tasks of repatriating the Japanese and APWIs were being met successfully, while the task of restoring the Dutch to power proved to be a far more difficult and complex task than had been anticipated. Realising they could not be seen to quickly withdraw from their commitment to the Dutch, but at the same time not wanting to increase their commitment, the British decided to go for a middle course: a gradual withdrawal while forcing the Dutch and Republican governments to reach a diplomatic solution.¹¹⁴ Three decisions in line with this new policy were already taken (or even acted upon) before the conference took place. Firstly, to speed up the first two tasks, Christison agreed with Sjahrir to use the Republican Army to evacuate and repatriate the Japanese and the APWIs. Secondly, to avoid more commitments, the British decided to postpone course B and execute a limited clearing operation (Operation Pounce or Course Y) in Batavia instead. And finally, to prevent further clashes (which might cause involvement) and in exchange for the RAPWI assistance of the Republican Army, they again decided not to allow any more Dutch troops on Java for the time being.¹¹⁵ About the only positive news, from the Dutch perspective, was the British decision to replace Christison

¹¹³ Groen, *Marsroutes*, 58-60; Jaap de Moor, *Generaal Spoor: Triomfen en Tragiek van een Legercommandant* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 165-166, 178-179

¹¹⁴ McMahon, *Colonialism*, 108-109

¹¹⁵ Dennis, *Troubled Days*, 160; Yong, *Van Mook*, 65-69; Groen, *Marsroutes*, 60-61; Mountbatten, *Post-Surrender Tasks*, 295-297

with Lieutenant-General Sir Montagu Stopford and to appoint a high-level diplomat, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr¹¹⁶ to ‘assist in every way possible towards a solution of the present political difficulties between the Netherlands Government and the Indonesian Nationalists . . . the Netherlands are recognised by H.M.G. as the sovereign power in the N.E.I.’¹¹⁷ Although the British government apparently still supported the common end-state of Dutch restoration to the NEI it was no longer prepared to keep backing it up with military means; diplomacy would have to do.¹¹⁸

In conclusion, twice the British and Dutch used a common approach with a combination of diplomatic pressure and military action. Both times the approach led to less significant results than hoped for, as a result of a lack of adequate military means and an uncompromising attitude on the part of the Dutch government. Mountbatten went in search of a new course of action and - coordinating his actions successfully with the British government and, especially, Van Mook - he managed to adjust the common approach on the strategic and operational levels. However, at the end of the year the rift between the grand strategy of the British and the Dutch was increasing, as the British government changed policy towards a purely diplomatic solution and a withdrawal of their military commitment.

¹¹⁶ Clark Kerr was elevated to peerage as Baron Inverchapel on 6 April 1946. To avoid confusion this paper will refer to him only by his original name.

¹¹⁷ TNA, PREM 8/265; NIB, vol. III, 215-217; Yong, *Van Mook*, 70; Den Doel, *Afscheid*, 136-137; De Jong insists the Dutch were happy with the conference’s result, though fails to provide references underpinning his claim, De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 156-157. For the Chequers conference report see NIB, vol. II, 453-469

¹¹⁸ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 147; Squire, “Transfer of Power”, 157-161

Breakdown of the common approach

With hindsight it is possible to see that the Chequers conference resulted in a breakdown of the common approach on all levels, starting with the grand strategic, as the British preferred end-state became a withdrawal without loss of face. This chapter will show that, although at times it looked like the British and Dutch still had common goals and proper coordination, the British and Dutch steered their own increasingly divergent courses.

For a few weeks the Dutch tried to force British execution of the promised course B, but then went to work in coordination with the British, not only resuming negotiations but also managing to apply a different form of military pressure. The limited British clearing operation in Batavia, conducted during and after the Chequers conference, managed to return relative calm to Batavia.¹¹⁹ However, the Dutch were far from satisfied with this and Van Mook delayed his return to the NEI by feigning illness in Cairo in a failed attempt to force the British to conduct course B. He finally arrived in Batavia on 26 January 1946, six days before the arrival of Clark Kerr, while in the same period Christison and Helfrich were replaced.¹²⁰ Clark Kerr and the British government had decided the Dutch proposals put forward at Chequers were quite liberal, while the Republican government, by then moved to Jokjakarta, was refusing to negotiate. Instead of plan B the British now put pressure on the Republic by using a different military instrument: in coordination with Van Mook they decided to allow Dutch troops to enter Java as of March 1946.¹²¹ Mountbatten sent the proposals to London, adding his intention to reduce the number of British troops as the Dutch moved in; the COS agreed. In the meantime Van Mook tried to strengthen Sjahrir's position

¹¹⁹ McMillan, *British Occupation*, 62-63; De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 152-153; Donnison, *British Military Administration*, 431

¹²⁰ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 158; Yong, *Van Mook*, 69-71; Mountbatten, *Post-Surrender Tasks*, 308-309

¹²¹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 179-180; Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance 1944-1946* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006), 299-300, 304-306; TNA, PREM 8/265

by forwarding even more liberal proposals, though without his government's permission. Notwithstanding these proposals, it took Sjahrir's resignation and reappointment before negotiations could resume on 13 March and even then his position was not very strong.¹²²

With both parties back at the negotiating table, Clark Kerr became more neutral in his dealings and tried to force both parties to find mutual agreement to resolve the conflict. Negotiations were difficult as both Van Mook and Sjahrir were very much restricted by their own government and parliament respectively; there was a large gap in perception between the government in The Hague and Van Mook and his advisors in Batavia, and just as large a gap between the Sjahrir's negotiating team in Batavia and his parliament in Jokjakarta where independence already seemed a reality. An impasse was averted when Van Mook used the recent preliminary agreement between the French and the Vietnamese independence movement in French Indo-China for a similar offer. By 30 March both parties had moved far enough towards each other that they decided on a conference in The Netherlands between representatives of both governments: the Hoge Veluwe conference (14-24 April 1946).¹²³ Both parties decided not to fully inform their government/parliament about their proposals for fear of outright rejection, a risky strategy. Clark Kerr, to the chagrin of the British, was not invited beyond the first day of the conference, which signalled not only the confidence of both negotiating teams, but also a breakdown in the Anglo-Dutch common approach and coordination on the diplomatic strategic level.¹²⁴

¹²² De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 180-188; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 343; Yong, *Van Mook*, 71-74; Anderson, *Java*, 306, 310-322; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 173-177

¹²³ Named after the estate where the conference was held.

¹²⁴ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 188-195, 202-203 ; Yong, *Van Mook*, 76-79; Anderson, *Java*, 299-303, 322-323, 329-331; Squire, "Transfer of Power ", 200-202

In the meantime military coordination on the strategic and operational levels was quite good, though the level of common approach showed mixed results as the aims and attitudes of both armies were fundamentally different. Dutch troops started deploying to Java from 9 March and personal relationships between British and Dutch soldiers had improved by the changes of command. However, Spoor ascertained that the British were eager to withdraw and were feverishly making preparations to do so. Though recognising that a quick British withdrawal would leave the inexperienced Dutch troops dangerously exposed, he was prepared to take this risk as he judged the British operational approach far too passive. Spoor's preference for active operations clashed with Mountbatten's, who wanted to avoid further entanglement and informed Spoor that British offensive operations were unlikely even if negotiations failed.¹²⁵ As the British were still in charge the Dutch could not conduct any major operations either as they were unlikely to get approved; Spoor stated he was 'straightly forbidden any action which leads to clashes'¹²⁶ by Mountbatten. Therefore the Dutch mainly occupied themselves with developing deployment plans, patrolling, gathering intelligence, reorganising and improving discipline, but they were not above conducting some limited offensive operations without British knowledge.¹²⁷ At the same time there was excellent coordination in planning and executing the Dutch relief in place of British troops, including the transfer of arms and equipment, though British secrecy about withdrawal plans sometimes hampered the common approach.¹²⁸

Although Clark Kerr had signalled many potential obstacles to reaching a diplomatic agreement at the Hoge Veluwe conference, British diplomatic pressure was fairly light,

¹²⁵ De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 179, 192; NIB, vol. IV, 42-44; Groen, *Marsroutes*, 62-63

¹²⁶ NIB, vol. IV, 329, 329n3

¹²⁷ De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 191-196, 199-201, 205; NIB, vol. III, 426; Groen, *Marsroutes*, 63-65; Mountbatten, *Post-Surrender Tasks*, 309; McMillan, *British Occupation*, 89-91; Anderson, *Java*, 378

¹²⁸ Groen, *Marsroutes*, 67-69; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 347-348; NIB, vol. IV, 42-43; McMillan, *British Occupation*, 99-103

especially considering they were not invited to the conference itself. At first they unsuccessfully tried pressuring the Dutch by indicating a quick withdrawal of all troops if negotiations failed, as this would make the maintenance of law and order difficult for the few available Dutch troops. The Dutch were furious. Then there was a meeting between both governments in London, at which the Dutch delegation was ambiguous and evasive about Dutch intentions and the Dutch political situation. For their part, the British let them off lightly, though as a result, British expectations were very high.¹²⁹ The Hoge Veluwe conference is generally regarded as a disaster because it failed to bring an agreement and most have blamed the Dutch elections, the first since the war and less than a month away, as the main culprit.¹³⁰ De Jong, who has studied the conference and the various interpretations intently, comes to a different conclusion. He convincingly argues that the conference not only brought both parties closer than ever, but the Dutch government was able to consolidate and safeguard this result before the elections, by officially accepting the contents of the conference's draft protocol.¹³¹ This proved fortunate as the new coalition government was extremely divided on the NEI's future; one party wanted a diplomatic solution to decolonise the NEI, the other wanted to restore the NEI to the Dutch using military violence if necessary.¹³² The same concept-protocol presented problems for the Republican government as it showed they had conceded far more than more militant republicans wanted: it almost tore the Republic apart. Between the end of the conference and the beginning of September both governments would be occupied containing internal upheaval: both succeeded, but only just.¹³³

¹²⁹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 196-197, 201-204, 210; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 202-205

¹³⁰ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 211-214, 222-224; Yong, *Van Mook*, 79; McMahon, *Colonialism*, 126-127; Den Doel, *Afscheid*, 144; Anderson, *Java*, 378

¹³¹ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 207-212

¹³² De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 211, 224-237; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 215-217; Yong, *Van Mook*, 80-86

¹³³ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 215-222; McMahon, *Colonialism*, 128-129; Anderson, *Java*, 357-409; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 182-195

Coordination between both governments reached an all-time low as the British government was extremely disappointed with the conference's results while the Dutch government focussed inward and ignored them. Only the problems within the Republic prevented a total British military and diplomatic withdrawal. The British were angry and even suspected the Dutch of intentionally prolonging negotiations to create possibilities for a military resolution. While they prepared a diplomatic offensive against the Dutch, the Dutch government ignored the British; even Van Mook's warnings of a negative British reaction received no response. By the end of July the British realised that pressuring the Dutch was useless as problems within the Republic meant the latter was not fit to negotiate. In the meantime the new Dutch coalition government was struggling to reconcile their diametrically opposed opinion on NEI policy. All agreed-upon policy documents were internally contradictory and they only seemed to agree that Van Mook, whom they considered far too independent, should be curtailed.¹³⁴ The solution to Van Mook's independence and NEI policy was to send a three-member Commission-General with a strong decision-making mandate to the NEI, though it took almost two months to reach an ambiguous agreement that resulted in a four-member Commission-General, including Van Mook, but without the customary and appropriate mandate. This commission eventually arrived in the NEI on 18 September.¹³⁵ At one point the Dutch government, unaware of the level of British impatience, came up with plans to resume negotiations just as the British were about to decide on a quick and total withdrawal of their military forces and political commitment. The Dutch government's blissful ignorance of how close they had come to driving away their coalition partner is testimony to the extent to which they were internally focussed at the time.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 210-211, 232-239, 260-261; Yong, *Van Mook*, 80-86

¹³⁵ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 235-237, 260-261, 264-268; McMahon states that British and US diplomatic pressure led to the Commission-General. Considering one of the main reasons was to rein in Van Mook this seems untrue: McMahon, *Colonialism*, 130-132

¹³⁶ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 262-264; Squire, "Transfer of Power", 238-247

On the military strategic and operational level tension between the two countries was also rising as the continuing build-up of Dutch troops increased their offensive spirit. Consequently, they felt more and more constraint by British reluctance; there was no common approach anymore and coordination was limited. Between March and September Dutch troops had taken over local military command and relieved British troops. Though Dutch units were smaller and understrength, reducing the total number of troops by more than fifty percent, this had not stopped them from becoming more active than their British predecessors. As soon as possible Dutch troops started conducting raids, clearing areas, establishing patrol bases and actively patrolling. In early June they were able to deliver a punishing blow to a major offensive by the Republican Army and numerous irregular bands. The unstable political situation in the Republic had given more power to the proponents of military action against the Dutch, but the failed June offensive returned the initiative to those who preferred a diplomatic solution. The effect on the Dutch was the opposite, as many concluded that military action could bring the desired Dutch outcome.¹³⁷ Meanwhile the relationship between Dutch and British commanders became increasingly strained as the British restrained Dutch freedom of action, especially after the disappointing Hoge Veluwe conference. Spoor complained it would be better if the British left as their approaches, aims and interests were increasingly diverging while animosity between Dutch and British troops was rising.¹³⁸ At the end of May Spoor and Mountbatten agreed that the Dutch could operate outside the 'key areas', though without British support.¹³⁹ However, on 10 August the British again forbade major operations and restricted other Dutch military action to 10-15 miles outside the 'key areas'. The Dutch ignored this and on the same day launched a major

¹³⁷ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 245-250; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 212, 217; NIB, vol. V, 175; Anderson, *Java*, 378; Kirby, *War Against Japan*, 349

¹³⁸ De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 209-210; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 199-200

¹³⁹ De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 210; NIV, vol. IV, 546-549; NIB, vol. V, 175; Dennis, *Troubled Days* 204

operation in Surabaya, followed by a second one nine days later.¹⁴⁰ Just before the arrival of the Commission-General, the British restrained Dutch freedom of action even further because they felt it would benefit negotiations, leading to strong protests from Spoor.¹⁴¹

On the diplomatic strategic level the common approach was also a thing of the past as the British now only wanted a political agreement so they could be seen to leave behind an orderly NEI; the arrival of the Dutch Commission-General and the return to negotiations presented the final act of the British involvement in the NEI. Clark Kerr's job had been taken on by the British Special Commissioner for South East Asia Lord Killearn¹⁴² (whose main responsibility was the food situation in Asia)¹⁴³ in August and the latter now pressured both parties by announcing the complete British withdrawal by 30 November. Because the Republic tried to stall negotiations Killearn became openly supportive of the Dutch, even threatening to allow a Dutch military offensive. This finally forced the Republic back to the negotiating table.¹⁴⁴ On 14 October both parties agreed to a cease fire and though it was violated on numerous occasions it did reduce the number of incidents. A month later, on 15 November, the Commission-General and the Republican government initialled a preliminary agreement in the village of Linggadjati. Though lacking unambiguous backing by the Dutch government and the Republican supporters respectively, the negotiation teams expected ratification of the agreement by both parliaments.¹⁴⁵ Notwithstanding some quite negative initial reactions in the NEI, the Republic and The Netherlands, the preliminary agreement

¹⁴⁰ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 250, 265; NIB, vol. V, 264-265; Netherlands Army Museum Website: <http://www.collectie.legermuseum.nl/strategien/strategien/i003890.html>

¹⁴¹ De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 210-211; NIB, vol. V, 347-348; McMillan, *British Occupation*, 104-105

¹⁴² Before his peerage known as Miles Lampson

¹⁴³ TNA, PREM 5/329

¹⁴⁴ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 269-274; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 196

¹⁴⁵ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 276-278, 286-287, 484, 489-295; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 221-222; Yong, *Van Mook*, 94-96, 103-106; McMillan, *British Occupation*, 105

was good enough for the British. On 29 November Killearn and their last troops left the NEI; a day later SEAC ceased to exist.¹⁴⁶

In conclusion, the break-up of the common approach on the grand strategic level continued after Chequers and became clearly visible after the Hoge Veluwe conference. While the Dutch government clung to their original goal of a restoration of the NEI to Dutch control, the British government was only looking for an honourable way out. The only thing that led to coordination and some semblance of a common approach on the strategic and operational level was the fact that the British only wanted to leave the NEI with a proper agreement and without a war on the ground, fearing damage to their reputation if they left an ally in the lurch. On the diplomatic strategic level the common approach also broke down as the British were only serving their own cause: leaving the NEI. That they were mainly in agreement with the Dutch was because the latter seemed more willing to negotiate. The British self-interest can be clearly seen in their pressuring both parties, without taking the difficulties of both into proper account.

The same break down of the common approach can be seen on the military strategic and operational level where it was clear that the British and Dutch armies had completely opposite aims and approaches. The British troops and commanders wanted to stay out of trouble as much as possible before leaving the NEI as soon as possible, while the Dutch finally had an opportunity to conduct military operations and make a start with the restoration of the NEI. On political direction the British commanders tried to rein in the Dutch, who

¹⁴⁶ De Jong, *Diplomatie*, 295-305; NIB, VI, 403-404; Yong, *Van Mook*, 96-99; McMillan, *British Occupation*, 106; McMahon, *Colonialism*, 135-136

increasingly refused to obey. Coordination was almost limited to the bare minimum: keeping each other informed – most of the time.

Conclusions

After analysing the context and the four episodes or phases of British and Dutch coordination in the NEI, the extent to which the British and Dutch political and military authorities adopted, coordinated and adjusted a common approach to return the NEI to Dutch control has become clear. This final chapter will present the overall conclusion as well as the wider application of this case-study.

At the end of the Second World War there was sufficient overlap in the grand strategies of both countries as well as an agreed upon end-state for the NEI to constitute a common approach. This translated into an adopted common approach on the strategic and operational level. Soon the strategic level became dominant as Supreme Allied Commander SEAC, Admiral Mountbatten, unilaterally decided to forgo the task of handing over the administration to Dutch civil authorities, receiving the tacit approval of an undecided British government. The Dutch could do nothing more than protest, but this was to no avail. Good coordination on the strategic and operational level, however, led to an adjusted common approach, hiding the grand strategic disconnect that was appearing. Until the beginning of December the common approach held and adjustments were made, again with a leading role for Mountbatten who managed to persuade a still undecided British government and Lieutenant Governor-General of the NEI Van Mook. In December, however, the British government changed its policy and their preferred end-state became a political and diplomatic withdrawal from the NEI without loss of face. This change became clear to the Dutch government at the Chequers conference. The cracks in the common approach on the grand strategic level developed into a rupture that caused a breakdown of the common approach at the strategic and operational levels. Coordination on these levels continued, especially during the relief in place, but became minimised as Dutch military forces became more assertive and

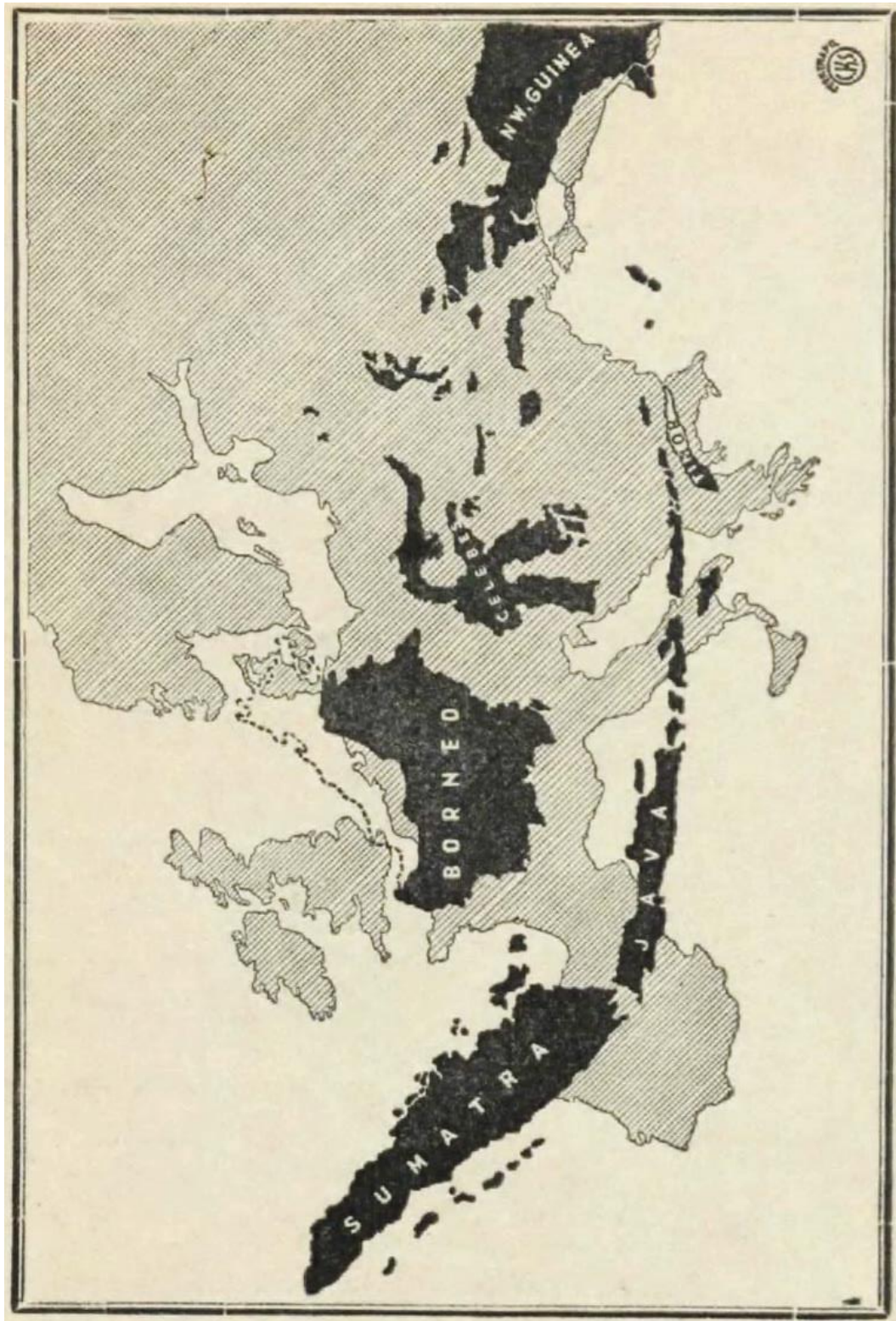
refused to be reined in. On the diplomatic level the same happened as British diplomacy became more focussed on national aims. In conclusion, as time progressed the approaches of the Dutch and British increasingly diverged, while coordination was kept up as much as possible. During the whole time the strongest connection was at the strategic level, with relatively good cooperation and coordination between Mountbatten and diplomats Clark Kerr and Killearn on the one hand and Van Mook on the other.

Although the main focus has been the horizontal coordination between dignitaries of two countries, it is worthwhile to draw a few conclusions about vertical coordination and approach as well. In this case-study there was a remarkable lack of a common approach between the various Dutch levels, with a large gap between the perception, and therefore approach of, the grand strategic level in the Netherlands and the strategic level in Batavia, with the latter far more in tune with the actual situation. The disconnect between the British government and Mountbatten was less sharp, though the latter was clearly dictating policy due to a lack of agreement within the British government. This changed in December when all British levels were in agreement and well-coordinated.

The situation in the NEI shows the difficulty as well as the importance of aligning the grand strategy, strategy and operational levels between two allies – as well as within one country – and therefore its lessons remain relevant in this day and age. Current operations, such as in Afghanistan, take place with a coalition of countries and often extend over many years. Although more case-studies are needed to draw definite conclusions, three findings seem to be relevant to current coalition operations. Firstly, there needs to be a continuous and conscious effort to keep all levels aligned: horizontally as well as vertically. Secondly,

decisions to adjust the approach on one level can have huge repercussions throughout the system, and must therefore lead to adjustments throughout the system. It also shows that the system does not instantaneously collapse when proper adjustments are not made at all levels, but these ‘cracks’ have the potential to increase over time and could lead to a breakdown of the coalition. Finally, the evidence in this case-study suggests that a decision to withdraw by one of the coalition partners means a drastically changed end-state for that partner, and will almost certainly lead to a rupture in the common approach. In such a case open communication and good coordination between coalition partners is essential to ensure an orderly relief and withdrawal.

Maps



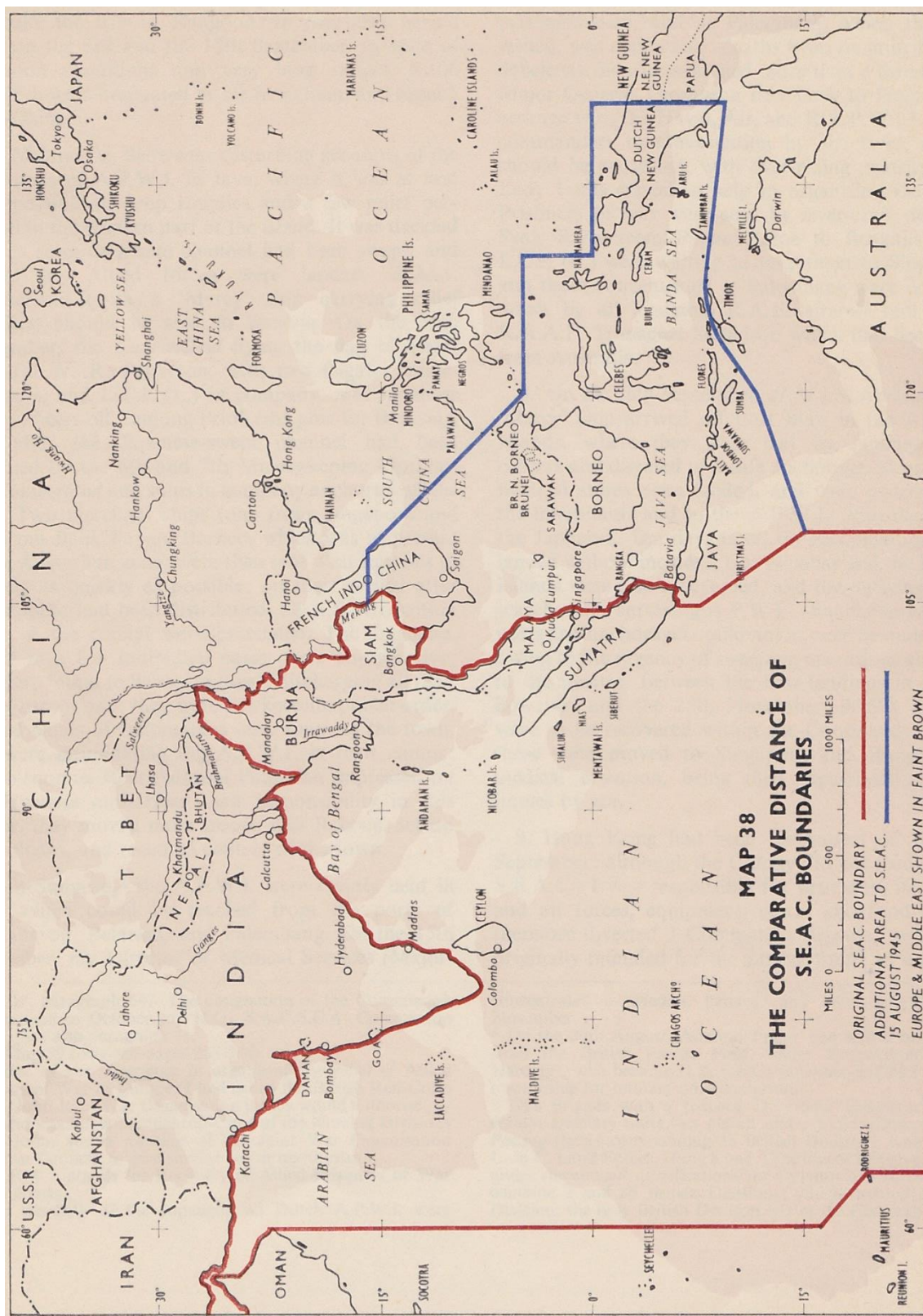
*Map 1: Comparison of the sizes of the Netherlands East Indies and Europe.*¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Departement van Economische Zaken, Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Statistisch Zakboekje Voor Nederlands Indië* 193, 1937 (Batavia: G. Kolff & Co., 1937).



*Map 2: SEAC and SWPA during WW2.*¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Jennifer Bailey, *Philippine Islands* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992), 12-13



*Map 3: Original and enlarged SEAC area.*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Mountbatten, *Post Surrender Tasks*, between pages 282 and 283

*Map 4: Dutch occupied territory by the end of 1946.*¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Adopted from De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, illustration 18, between p.192-193

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A note on Dutch author's names: In the Dutch language '*van de*', '*van der*', '*van*' or '*de*' are ignored when putting names in alphabetical order. For example: De Jong can be found under 'J' and Van Mook under 'M'.

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