

The civil-military role of the KNIL during the Japanese Occupation and Independence War in the Dutch East Indies from 1942 till 1949

How the civil-military role of the KNIL has changed, and how it affected the Dutch East Indies

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Introduction

"As you all know, General Ter Poorten was given the thankless task of fighting an overwhelmingly superior, battle-hardened, and well-trained enemy practically without the help of allies, using land and air forces that had yet to experience combat and that, as a result of Dutch austerity policies, were minimal in number and inadequately equipped—by the military standards already in place at the time—for combat against a foreign enemy."

- Colonel W.P. Van Veen on the impossible fight of the KNIL, commanded by Ter Poorten, against the Japanese during the invasion of 1942¹

The Dutch East Indies was a colony of the Netherlands, and the military tasked with keeping the peace and order in the colony was the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch Indisch Leger* or the KNIL (the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army). The KNIL protected the Dutch authority in the colony, which was economically important to the Netherlands. During the Second World War, the Dutch East Indies was being invaded and occupied by the Japanese Empire. The KNIL fought back against the Japanese but lost. After the capitulation of the Dutch East Indies, soldiers of the KNIL were evacuated to Australia or held captive in Japanese concentration camps.² The end of the Second World War was also the end of the Japanese Empire, which led to an increase in Indonesian nationalism and eventually to the independence of the country that is now called Indonesia. The KNIL had a significant influence during the Independence War. To regain order and control after the Japanese left, the Dutch sent their army (*Koninklijke Landmacht*, or KL) to the Dutch East Indies to help the KNIL. Rémy Limpach argues that the KNIL gained more men with the liberation of prisoners of war. The KL and KNIL acted aggressively to maintain order, and Indonesian and Dutch forces perpetrated structural violence.³ The aftereffects of the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War can still be seen in society today, especially in Indonesian culture. For example, the National Army of Indonesia (TNI) consists of previously KNIL soldiers (and PETA soldiers).

According to the Netherlands Institute for Military History, the Dutch government's view on the Dutch East Indies between 1945 and 1949 has long been that there were only some incidental excesses and that it was a 'clean' war. Still, the groundbreaking book *De Brandende Kampongs van Generaal Spoor* (2016) by Rémy Limpach told otherwise. Limpach shed light on the KL and KNIL using extreme violence on a grand scale during

¹ 'Rapporten over de operaties en het handelen van diverse commandanten van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (KNIL) in de aanloop naar en tijdens de Japanse aanval op Indonesië', Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

² Ami M. Van de Ryt, 'Japanese Occupation of Indonesia,' *Perspectives in History*, 2001.

³ Rémy Limpach, 'Business as Usual: Dutch Mass Violence in the Indonesian War of Independence 1945–49', in *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence*, ed. Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2018), 64–90, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315767345-4>.

that period.⁴ Much research still must be done to uncover the historical events in the Dutch East Indies and the role the KNIL had in them. There are many unanswered questions about that period for Indonesians as well as for Dutch families with Indonesian roots. Whereas the reputation of the KNIL in the past was that it was honourable to have served them, new information calls into doubt the historical influence and ethics of KNIL operations. Koos-jan de Jager mentions in his web article that the reputation of the KNIL was not the best in recent years, as the KNIL is often seen as associated with war crimes and extreme violence, while in the past, it was the opposite; back then, it was honourable that someone had served for the KNIL.⁵ Building on this new historical turn, this thesis researches the transformation of the KNIL from 1942 to 1949. Insights from this thesis will extend existing literature and knowledge on the KNIL's role and importance. Because of this, the question of how the role of the KNIL changed and in what way is still relevant today. We do this by creating a better view of the KNIL and its importance. This thesis will focus on the transformation of the KNIL, as the KNIL has been through an impactful transformation during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War, which resulted in the shift of civil-military relations within the KNIL and the Dutch East Indies. These two periods were significant for the development of Indonesia and the future of the KNIL.

Research question

The main research question of the thesis is **“How did the KNIL’s civil-military role in the Dutch East Indies change during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War from 1942 to 1949?”** Sub-questions are being answered to better answer the main question. These are; **“How was the KNIL affected by the Japanese Occupation?”** **“How did the KNIL reestablish itself after the Japanese Occupation?”** and **“What effect did the Indonesian Independence War have on the KNIL’s civil-military role?”** With the main question, we want to focus on what role the KNIL had during the two periods and how it changed, giving it an all-round and more complete analysis. The first sub-question focuses on the KNIL and their presence and fight during the Japanese Occupation. The second sub-question focuses on the KNIL and their return as a colonial army in the Dutch East Indies. The third and last sub-question focuses on the presence of the KNIL during the Independence War.

The research is done from the primary sources found, such as the KNIL operation reports by commanders before and during the Japanese invasion, restructuring reports of the KNIL after the invasion, and pieces about the morale and mental and physical health of KNIL soldiers. Also, a diary by KNIL soldier H.S. Bulthuis, in which he writes that after the Japanese Occupation, there were still Japanese soldiers, and the English

⁴ ‘Brandende Kampongs’, Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, accessed 5 March 2025, <https://www.nimh.nl/onderwerpen/brandende-kampongs>.

⁵ Koos-jan de Jager, ‘Een geschiedenis van het KNIL’, Historiek, 2 September 2024, <https://historiek.net/een-geschiedenis-van-het-knil/150194/>.

did not allow the Dutch Marines to arrive in the Dutch East Indies.⁶ This thesis is academically and socially relevant because little is written about the transformation of the KNIL during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War. In addition, the newly described operations of the KNIL came to light in the 2016 book *De Brandende Kampongs van Generaal Spoor* by Rémi Limpach, in which he turned the view of the Dutch on the events that happened and the influence the KNIL had during the Indonesian Independence War, as mentioned before. Since 2018, almost no new academic work has been written about the KNIL and its presence and transformation from 1942 to 1949. Some Indonesian authors write about the KNIL, but there is a lack of new academic work in the West. Through the years, more and more information on the events in the Dutch East Indies from 1942 to 1949 comes to light. This thesis positions the history of the KNIL within broader debates on civil-military relations to assess whether the KNIL was in a position that was undervalued by the people of the Dutch East Indies or whether they had more power and interfered in politics. It is essential to look at the transformation of the KNIL during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War, as they had a considerable effect on the country of Indonesia and its existence. This thesis will give a better insight into the KNIL and its transformation by examining its civil-military relations. This provides a look at the role the KNIL had and adds to the changing reputation of the KNIL in recent years.

⁶ 'Fotoalbum en (getypte) dagboeknotities van soldaat H.S. Bulthuis, ingedeeld bij het 18e Squadron van de Militaire Luchtvaart van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (ML-KNIL), onder meer gelegd te Tjililitan op West-Java en de Willemkazerne op Bali', Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

Literature review

The KNIL had an essential role in both events, and it would be insightful to see what its role was in those years and how it transformed. To better understand colonial armies and their role and transformation, we will first look at the historiography of the transformations in colonial armies globally. Secondly, we will examine the historiography of the transformations the KNIL endured throughout its existence. Lastly, we will look at the historiography of the transformations of the KNIL during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War. With this narrowed-down approach, we will have a better understanding of the role the KNIL had during the periods set in this thesis.

Transformations in colonial armies

To better understand transformations in colonial armies in general, we can first look at the historiography worldwide. In his PhD, *The Creation and Impact of British Colonial Armies in Africa*, Andrew Brooks writes about the colonial armies of the British in Africa and shows how those colonial armies eventually became the national armies of the countries that became independent. Two armies, the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) and the King's African Rifles (KAR), were created to defend the British colonies against French threats. Brooks explores how these two colonial armies were developed, using each independent country as a separate chapter to give the reader a more structured reading. In his second chapter, he describes the importance of ethnicity in an army and how the martial race theory influenced the recruitment of soldiers in a colonial army. Brooks does this by again case-studying every country involved in the WAFF and KAR. He mentions the way a colonial army can develop and how a government must be aware of the power of an army so that it does not become too powerful to engage in a coup, for example.⁷ Bhupinder Singh Taggar also talks about the British and colonial armies, but he focuses on India and the Punjab region. He argues that by creating a colonial army, the British immensely reshaped Punjab, having economic and social impacts on the area. It also had long-term effects, as with the choices the British made, the overrepresentation of Punjabis in the Indian Army became a contention and influenced regional and national dynamics in India.⁸ This connects to the concept of civil-military relations, which is applied in this thesis. Furthermore, in this thesis, it will also be argued that the KNIL recruited more men of a particular ethnicity than of other ethnicities, which was part of their structure and strategy.

Another author who talks about colonial armies and their transformation is Claude E. Welch, Jr. He focuses on the civil-military relations in the British Commonwealth. He mentions that the British historically preferred the military to be separated from politics, even isolated. This is to serve the country as a soldier at its best. It would be impossible

⁷ Andrew Brooks, 'The Creation and Impact of British Colonial Armies in Africa' (Ph.D., United States -- California, Stanford University, 2019), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2467649184/abstract/219FF47A777E4258PQ/1>.

⁸ Bhupinder Singh Taggar, 'Transformations and Punjabization of the British Indian Army: A Study of Colonial Punjab, India', *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2021): 35–39.

to maintain discipline if they were not isolated from politics. Welch Jr. also mentions the selection of troops by the British regarding martial races.⁹ This can also be applied to the KNIL troops in the Dutch East Indies, as many different tribes were recruited, or some tribes more than others. Colonial armies were often mingled with police and military roles, focusing on subduing internal dissent. While the British army and its civil-military relations were, in the first place, apolitical, they served political purposes, eventually maintaining the colonies of the coloniser. He concludes by stating that the apolitical civil-military relations mostly remained in the Old Dominions of Great Britain, but in colonies in Africa and Asia, this changed with the inscription of the Indigenous people into the colonial armies. It varied whether newly independent nations in the commonwealth successfully adapted to the British frameworks of civil-military relations and maintained civilian control over the military.

Adriano Malache, Paulino Macaringue and Joao-Paulo Borges Coelho talk about the creation and transformation of the Mozambican armed forces. They argue that the only way for Mozambique to become independent is through establishing the Mozambican armed forces, having learned from anti-colonial movements in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Vietnam and China. The Mozambican armed forces have had a different transformation from other colonial armies, as they did not inherit the military rules of the old colonial rulers and were in very much the same shape as their predecessors. The FAM/FPLM maintained its popularity among the people as the victorious army that liberated them, and at the same time, it was looking for external partners to help them overcome outside threats. In this case, it was Russia that helped them. Mozambique's armed forces went through a civil war after the country's independence, which led to professionalisation efforts. These efforts, such as the national army being apolitical, contradicted its popular image, which was having close relations with the people and FRELIMO, which was known as the People's Forces for the Liberation of Mozambique (FPLM). These events significantly impacted the civil-military relations of the armed forces over the years.¹⁰

KNIL transformations

Zooming in on the transformations of the KNIL throughout its whole existence will grant a better understanding of the topic. Ruth McVey has written an article about the transformation of the KNIL after the Independence War in Indonesia. She describes the differences between the army leaders and the civilian political chiefs, how the civilian political leaders want to emphasise democratic values recognised by the Dutch, and how the army leaders have less exposure to Western education and political ideas. She also elaborates on the making of the national army after the Independence War and how it was professionalised, preferring an apolitical army. This notably happened after

⁹ Claude E. Welch, 'Civil-Military Relations in Newer Commonwealth States: The Transfer and Transformation of British Models', *The Journal of Developing Areas* 12, no. 2 (1978): 153–70.

¹⁰ Adriano Malache, Paulino Macaringue, and Joao-Paulo Borges Coelho, 'Profound Transformations and Regional Conflagrations: The History of Mozambique's Armed Forces from 1975–2005', 2005.

regional rebellions in 1958. The professionalisation ambitions of the Indonesian national army also led to collaborations with foreign entities, such as the United Nations.¹¹ When talking about the TNI, the Indonesian national army, David Jenkins mentions the influence of the Japanese towards the creation of the new national army in Indonesia. The PETA (*Pembela Tanah Air*) is one of the Indonesian militias created by the Japanese to secure their position in the Dutch East Indies. Jenkins describes in his article that the TNI was established not only with former soldiers of the KNIL but also with former soldiers of the PETA. This gave the TNI a combination of different philosophies, with the KNIL being more professional, Western-oriented, and more separate from society, and the PETA being more Japanese-oriented, having a closer relationship with civil society. This made for a strong combination during the creation of the Indonesian national army.¹²

Abdul Haris Fatgehipon also discusses the transition from the KNIL towards the TNI (the Indonesian National Army) after the Independence War. In his article, he mainly focuses on the Christian Maluku tribe and how they were more Dutch-oriented than Indonesian nationalists. This was due to their desire to make Maluku independent from the Indonesian nationalists, who were more Javanese and Islam-oriented. This also created a separation between the Maluku people and other tribes within the KNIL and led to a Maluku rebellion within the KNIL in 1950. To dampen the chaos of the rebellion, the Dutch government decided to bring KNIL soldiers and their families to the Netherlands while waiting for the uprising to calm down. He further elaborates on how the bringing back of Indonesian KNIL soldiers to the Netherlands was a dilemma for many as they defended the Dutch interests during the Independence War. However, they never imagined living in the Netherlands, as they still had strong connections with their homeland.¹³

When looking at the KNIL before 1942, the KNIL had recruited special forces, men from Africa. Ineke van Kessel dedicated her article to these men. She describes that between 1831 and 1872, African men, primarily from Ghana, were being sent to the Dutch East Indies to serve the KNIL. This all had to do with the low capacity of human resources within the KNIL. The reason that the Dutch had chosen men from Africa to join the KNIL was that it was thought that these men were physically superior in comparison to the European men. They were more resistant to the tropical climate and had a more robust physique. In addition, it was thought that the African men were already used to harsh life situations, such as bad quality food and work. Van Kessel also mentions that African men were considered less of a danger within the KNIL in comparison to the Ambonese or other Indigenous Indonesian tribes. The Dutch were afraid that Indigenous Indonesians could fight for their freedom if they got to a level of training where they were strong enough, thus creating an uprising. Furthermore, the Africans were considered

¹¹ Ruth McVey, 'The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army', *Indonesia*, no. 11 (1971): 131–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3350748>.

¹² David Jenkins, 'Soeharto and the Japanese Occupation', *Indonesia*, no. 88 (2009): 1–103.

¹³ Abdul Haris Fatgehipon, 'The Exodus of KNIL Soldiers from Maluku to the Netherlands in 1950s', *TAWARIKH* 12, no. 2 (30 August 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2121/tawarikh.v12i2.1437>.

excellent soldiers who did not die as fast as Europeans or were seen as less cowardly and unreliable than the Javanese. This reputation was all thanks to their service in the British troops in West India. Yet, while the Africans were indeed good soldiers, their discipline was less steady than expected. Some African soldiers were not happy that they were being treated unequally in comparison to the Europeans and were, therefore, intent on mutiny. The enthusiasm for Africans in the KNIL decreased, which resulted in 1915 being the last year Africans were being called up for the KNIL.¹⁴ This showed that the KNIL already had human resource problems decades before the invasion of the Japanese. Moreover, the choice of martial races within the KNIL was already a strategy to avoid a lack of disciplined soldiers or an uprising by Indigenous Indonesian tribes.

The Japanese Occupation and the Independence War

In this section, we will focus more narrowly on literature about the KNIL in the periods of the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War. By zooming in on these periods alone, we will gain the best understanding and historiography on the thesis topic. Susie Protschky and Bernard Z. Keo specifically identify the lack of attention paid to the KNIL during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War in academic work, an assessment upon which this thesis builds. They focus on the KNIL and its soldiers in Australia, the Indonesian soldiers who evacuated to that country during the Second World War and came back to fight during the Independence War of the Dutch East Indies. They draw on the national press of Australia as a source to analyse how the KNIL soldiers were being treated and how the independence movement of Indonesia affected Australia's view on sovereignty and citizenship. Protschky and Keo argue that there were issues of race, colonialism, and citizenship. Indonesian KNIL soldiers were not given the same respect as their European counterparts by the Australians and were inherently prone to violence, justifying the Dutch rule over the Dutch East Indies and maintaining order. This comes back to the partial support of Australia for Dutch rule over the Dutch East Indies during the Independence War.¹⁵ P.C. Boer also focused on the connection between the KNIL and Australia. He describes the usage of planes (especially of the Lodestars of the ML and KNILM) that had a significant role in the evacuation of KNIL soldiers, but also women and children, from the Dutch East Indies to Australia during the Japanese Occupation. He also mentions the importance of the airlift that was made between Java and Australia, which transported personnel and essential supplies.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ineke van Kessel, 'Werf Een'Compagnie Neger Soldaten': Afrikaanse Soldaten in Het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger', *Historisch Nieuwsblad* 9, no. 2 (2000): 40–43.

¹⁵ Susie Protschky and Bernard Z. Keo, 'Revolution, Race and Citizenship in Press Representations of Indonesians of the Dutch Colonial Army (KNIL) Interned in Australia, 1945–47', *Australian Historical Studies* 54, no. 2 (3 April 2023): 247–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2022.2140813>.

¹⁶ P.C. Boer, 'The Depot Squadron of the Netherlands East Indies Army Aviation Corps February-March 1942: The Java-Australia Airlift and the Evacuation Flights to Australia', 2010, https://www.academia.edu/47538854/Article_Depot_Squadron_of_the_KNIL_Army_Aviation_Corps_versi_on_April_2021.

In his aforementioned book *De brandende kampongs van Generaal Spoor*, Rémy Limpach expansively writes about the extreme violence that happened in the Dutch East Indies during the Indonesian Independence War from 1945 to 1949. He focuses on the KNIL in a few sub-chapters and describes the KNIL as one of the actors that profited from the mass violence done on the Indonesians and strengthened its cooperation with the KL and marine brigades. He concludes that the extreme violence towards Indonesians was a case of structural violence.¹⁷ S. Sulasman is another author who focuses on the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia, especially on the island of West Java. He describes that the Japanese first received a warm welcome from the Indonesians, but this changed rapidly with progressive policies that were implemented by the Japanese on the local population. Sulasman only mentions the KNIL thrice, talking about the fast retreat and surrender of the KNIL to the Japanese occupiers. With that, he provides a context of the KNIL's role and the power transition that led to great hardships for the Indonesians.¹⁸ Interestingly, the article by David Jenkins on Suharto (the president of Indonesia from 1966 to 1998) and the Japanese Occupation of the Dutch East Indies gives surprising information about the KNIL. This is because Suharto was a KNIL soldier until the disbanding of the colonial army by Lieutenant General Hein Ter Poorten. It tells the state of the KNIL during the Japanese Occupation and that the KNIL eventually became non-existent, with deserters Suharto being one of them. Jenkins continues by describing how Suharto's experience in the KNIL (his training and the promotion he had towards sergeant) has made him survive the Japanese occupiers and develop a role in the military and political landscape of the (post-) Independence War. He also mentions that Indonesians fought as cadets for the Japanese.¹⁹ This is an interesting fact that is not often talked about in other articles.

Jenkins also included the PETA in his article, which was a voluntary army of Indonesians created by the Japanese to fight the Allied forces together. This gives an extra dimension to the military power balance in the Dutch East Indies during the two periods implemented in this thesis. To expand further on the PETA, the Indonesian author Taqwa Ridlo Utama has authored an article where he differentiates the PETA from the KNIL. He does this by doing a comparative analysis of the two military forces. While he mainly focuses on the military aspects of the two military forces, he also describes the ethos of both. Utama mentions, for example, that the KNIL had training that was more focused on Western doctrine, and the PETA was more focused on the Japanese doctrine of *bushido*. The KNIL was more separate from civilian life due to the Western military professionalism, and the PETA emphasised more on the harmony between militarism and the people due to the *Bushido* doctrine. Both armed forces were integrated into the National Army of Indonesia after the Independence War. A part of the KNIL soldiers were loyal to the Indonesian nationalists and integrated into the newly formed Indonesian

¹⁷ Bart Luttikhuis et al., review of *De brandende kampongs van Generaal Spoor*, by Rémy Limpach, *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 173, no. 4 (2017): 559–79.

¹⁸ Sulasman Sulasman, 'The Heat of the Sunrise: The Suffering of Sukabumi People during the Japanese Occupation in West Java, Indonesia (1942-1945)', *TAWARIKH* 6, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.2121/tawarikh.v6i1.586>.

¹⁹ David Jenkins, 'Soeharto and the Japanese Occupation', *Indonesia*, no. 88 (2009): 1–103.

army, while another part stayed loyal to the Dutch Kingdom, according to Utama.²⁰ Steven van den Bos talks about the KNIL in his thesis but focuses more on the KL and the legal military apparatus of the KL and KNIL soldiers, and its prosecution after the war.²¹ There are a few academic sources that centralise the KNIL during the period of the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War, but there are not many. Most of them talk about the KNIL for a bit, as the focus is not on the KNIL, for example, that the KNIL is a subchapter or comes across in a paragraph or two. Sophia Kruyswijk-van Thiel takes a rare turn towards the historiography of the KNIL in her thesis, as she writes about the Women's Corps of the KNIL, which has not been written about in prior scholarship. She talks about the role of the Women's Corps and the experiences of its members, as they served as a noncombatant force, focusing on administration and aid. This gives an extra dimension to the research on the role of the KNIL.²²

Thesis contribution

As previously said, most of the academic work done on the KNIL is not focused on the KNIL, and if it is, it talks about the KNIL in a specific context. Existing work covers the KNIL in Australia, the Women's Corps of the KNIL, the Aviation Corps, or performs a comparative analysis of the KNIL and the PETA. There is no academic work that focuses on the KNIL as a whole and the role it played during the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945 and the Independence War from 1945 to 1949. Most of the authors previously mentioned talk about the capitulation of the KNIL to the Japanese in 1942 and how many soldiers were evacuated to Australia. This caused chaos and uncertainty in the Dutch East Indies, as there was now a new ruler present. A prevalent assessment of the role of the KNIL is that it performed in a way that was necessary to beat the Japanese, with difficulties, as the KNIL expected huge help from the British and Australians, which they did not get, according to a KNIL general who has worked with General Ter Poorten.²³ Yet, scholarship has also found that during the Independence War from 1945 to 1949, the Dutch, together with the KNIL, used their forces too aggressively, as they used structured violence against the local populace of Indonesia. Bringing these two periods in the KNIL's history together helps us understand to what extent the KNIL's actions during the Independence War caused a deviation from its previous path or instead extended prior civil-military relations. The research gap of the KNIL being researched as a whole in those two periods and the role it had can add to the historiography about the KNIL. The two aforementioned periods are essential as they had a considerable impact

²⁰ Taqwa Ridlo Utama, 'Comparative Analysis of Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger (KNIL) and Pembela Tanah Air (PETA) Military Training as Precursors to the Indonesian National Armed Forces', *Jurnal Pertahanan: Media Informasi Tentang Kajian Dan Strategi Pertahanan Yang Mengedepankan Identity, Nasionalism Dan Integrity* 10, no. 2 (31 August 2024): 201–19, <https://doi.org/10.33172/jp.v10i2.19532>.

²¹ Steven van den Bos, 'Military Justice in the Dutch East Indies', 2015.

²² S. Kruyswijk-van Thiel, *Het Vrouwenkorps-KNIL* (Amsterdam: Dutch University Press, 2004).

²³ 'Rapporten over de operaties en het handelen van diverse commandanten van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (KNIL) in de aanloop naar en tijdens de Japanse aanval op Indonesië', *Archieven.nl*, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

on the creation of Indonesia, and the KNIL had a significant impact and contribution to that. Thus, focusing on these periods will broaden our knowledge of the role of the KNIL and the transformation it had to endure.

Civil-military relations

In this thesis, I will be using the concept of civil-military relations to research the role of the KNIL in the Dutch East Indies and its transformation. The concept of civil-military relations is closely related to the transformation of armies, in this case, colonial armies. It shapes the relationship between the military and the civilian state and gives the army its purpose, whether it has border defence priorities or is there to maintain public order, etcetera. Civil-military relations is described by Peter D. Feaver as the relationship between civilian authorities and the military establishment in a society. He further extends his research by arguing that there can be a 'Civil-Military Problematique', which is a paradox that states must have militaries to be able to defend themselves but must ensure that it does not grow too big so that a military can threaten the state. Feaver also talks about external and internal factors that can explain the civil-military relations of an army and its size.²⁴ In this case, external factors can be seen as the threat from outside, such as the Japanese during the occupation. Internal factors can be seen as threats from within the country, such as the Indonesian people who wanted independence during the Independence War (when looking from a KNIL perspective).

The authors Alan Chong and Nicole Jenne lay their focus on the Asian military and its contribution to civil-military relations in their book chapter. They mention that in most of Asia, civil-military relations were developed in the same way. The majority of the European or Japanese powers used indigenous civilians in their colonial army to maintain law and order domestically. Many Asian armies can also claim revolutionary status and can put themselves 'above normal politics' as they fought against foreign rule during the creation of their own sovereignty. They also state that the colonial powers of the past still dictate contemporary civil-military relations. Asian militaries are often engaged in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), reflecting a broader scope of military roles beyond traditional warfare and having them frequently blend with the civilian sector.²⁵ This concept will be applied to the transformation of the KNIL by looking at what the KNIL's power was as a colonial army. During the Japanese invasion, the KNIL had to capitulate, and it was not present anymore in the Dutch East Indies. However, with the defeat of the Japanese, it came back as an army to build up the colony and bring safety and peace, as F.H. Bauer has mentioned in his memoirs about the First Police Action. There was much damage done to the Indonesian people and villages by the Japanese, and the Dutch wanted to bring back order and peace.²⁶ However, as discussed, the effect was a period of structural violence from 1945 to

²⁴ Peter D. Feaver, 'CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS', *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. Volume 2, 1999 (1 June 1999): 211–41, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.211>.

²⁵ Alan Chong and Nicole Jenne, '16: Conclusion: Asian Military Evolutions as a Contribution to Civil-Military Relations Thought', 2023, <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/edcollchap/book/9781529229349/ch016.xml>.

²⁶ 'Memoires F.H. Bauer : Boek 2 Indonesië 1948-1950', Indisch Herinneringscentrum, accessed 29 May 2025, <https://www.onsland.nl/collectie-object/https%3A%2F%2Fdigitale-collectie.indischherinneringscentrum.nl%2Fdetail%2F41458c68-f55c-f46d-9b85-fdbfe6ee66c6>.

1949. Looking at the civil-military relations in this period will shed light on the KNIL's presence and transformation during these periods.

Methodology

In the methodology for analysing the role and transformation of the KNIL during the Japanese Occupation and Independence War in the Dutch East Indies, qualitative research will be conducted using content analysis and primary sources. Klaus Krippendorff uses an interdisciplinary and flexible approach to content analysis. He focuses on meaning-making rather than inflexible procedures. He states that content analysis is about making sense of large amounts of text and information by grouping it into categories or themes. It is about understanding the meaning of the words, not just counting them. Krippendorff also states that the role of the researcher in interpreting the meaning of the words is essential.²⁷ This approach will be used; however, we will mainly focus on the meaning of words and identify themes within the texts. Primary sources such as diaries from KNIL soldiers, photos from soldiers during the two discussed periods, and reports on the operational decisions made by the KNIL are used. Secondary sources will be used to back up the argument we will make.

An official KNIL document about the restructuring of the KNIL and its battalions can tell us how they were restructured after the Japanese Occupation. The document also states that the KNIL was weakened and had to regain strength and build up from KL troops. Reports from the military will give that first-person perspective from a higher hand within the KNIL and justify the actions of the KNIL. These reports are more objective as they are official documents made by the military.²⁸ The restructuring document will be analysed by using content analysis, looking at the structure of the KNIL when it comes to the types of soldiers by rank and types of vehicles and weaponry used. Here you can make up how big and powerful a battalion of the KNIL was.

The diary of a KNIL soldier named H.S. Bulthuis gives us a perspective of the soldier when we want to analyse the operations of the KNIL. He was a Dutch soldier who was sent from the Netherlands to the colony to bring back order. His diary begins in June 1945, which is two months before the capitulation of the Japanese in the Dutch East Indies.²⁹ Diaries from soldiers of the KNIL will be used for the research. They will tell what happened during those years from a first-person perspective and give insight into the operations of the KNIL. Through content analysis, the emotion of a KNIL soldier can be read through the months and years a soldier had to be in service of the army, as almost every day or every week has been put on paper. The themes that are being discussed by Bulthuis will be looked at to get a better understanding of the situation the

²⁷ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 2. ed., [Nachdr.] (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publ, 20).

²⁸ 'Stukken Betreffende de Vorming van Bataljons Infanterie van Het KNIL. Met Oorlogsorganisatie-Tabellen van Deze Bataljons', Nationaal Archief, accessed 17 January 2025, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.10.14/invnr/3604/file/NL-HaNA_2.10.14_3604_0002?eadID=2.10.14&unitID=3604&query=KNIL.

²⁹ 'Fotoalbum en (getypte) dagboeknotities van soldaat H.S. Bulthuis, ingedeeld bij het 18e Squadron van de Militaire Luchtvaart van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (ML-KNIL), onder meer gelegd te Tjililitan op West-Java en de Willemkazerne op Bali', Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

KNIL was in in those years. These dairies can be personal and would not tell the whole story and the role of the KNIL; thus, they can be subjective.

Reports of KNIL commanders who have experienced the Japanese Occupation are also particularly valuable. These can tell in detail what happened in the Dutch East Indies during the Japanese invasion in 1942, which gives us a perspective on how strong the KNIL was and what their actions were. In this bundle, there is also an interview with an old KNIL commandant who talks about the atmosphere within the KNIL and how a general, in this case General Ter Poorten, saw the KNIL as a small army with not a lot of resources.³⁰ Using content analysis, the words used in the reports can be analysed to determine whether they are inspiring and uplifting or demotivating and darkening, looking at their morale and the decisions the commanders made. This document tells much about the KNIL and their position in the early years of the Second World War, whether they were prepared and probably also why the KNIL capitulated against the Japanese army in 1942.

A bundle of written pieces about the morale and physical and mental health of KNIL soldiers will be used. The 58th, 59th, and 60th documents in the bundle tell the morale of different races that are not keen on an independent republic of Indonesia and are worried about their position in society.³¹ Documents from soldiers of the KNIL, but also from families of these soldiers about the well-being of the named soldiers, can give a good view of the morale within the KNIL, but also about the civil-military relations of the KNIL. The weakness of these documents can be the quantity, as there are more than two hundred documents in a collection, and it would be challenging to see which are useful to use and which are not.

Portraits of KNIL soldiers who have been evacuated to Australia to fight for the Allies during the Second World War will also be used.³² These sources are more graphical, so they can be used to support a view or statement about an occurrence; they do not tell that much more because they do not contain texts about actions being made. It does tell in which 'form' they were or what amount of power was left of the KNIL about the situation the army was in at that point. It also shows the different races that fought for the KNIL, such as Ambonese, Javanese, and Dutch soldiers. By analysing the portraits, you can differentiate the men from each other, and it gives graphical verification to the different ethnicities serving the KNIL, seeing that one of a higher rank (Lieutenant

³⁰ 'Rapporten over de operaties en het handelen van diverse commandanten van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (KNIL) in de aanloop naar en tijdens de Japanse aanval op Indonesië', Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

³¹ 'Stukken Betreffende de Stemming En de Geestelijke En Lichamelijke Gezondheid van de KL- En KNIL-Troepen in Indonesië', Nationaal Archief, accessed 12 December 2024, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.10.14/invnr/3729/file/NL-HaNA_2.10.14_3729_0031?eadID=2.10.14&unitID=3729&query=KNIL%20indonesie.

³² 'Portretten van Militairen Uit Nederlands-Indië Die Naar Australië Geëvacueerd Zijn Na de Japanse Bezetting in 1942.', Nationaal Archief, accessed 21 November 2024, <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/fc9c8357-aad8-aebb-c7b8-f6709ea623e2?searchKey=d2a2589fe313f734ba0ec31d0fe1ac8d>.

Colonel Van Straten in this case) is mostly white European. This gives a glimpse of the ranking structure of the KNIL after the Japanese invasion in 1942.

When looking at the role of the KNIL during the Independence War, the memoirs of F.H. Bauer describe the intentions of the KNIL for the first Police Action in Indonesia against the Indonesian Republicans.³³ Content analysis will be applied to this primary source, focusing on certain words and themes. Words such as 'necessary intervention,' 'state of emergency,' but also 'sincerity' and 'good intentions' are important words that tell us that the First Police Action was not of an evil thought and decision but was instead a good one and needed. This will give us a better insight into the Police Actions operated by the Dutch government, which in recent years became more controversial with the extreme violence used, as mentioned earlier in the thesis. The strength of this document is that it was written by a former KNIL soldier, so he was present during the operations. On the other hand, the weakness of this document is that the words are only from one side of the coin. These are the words of a KNIL sympathizer and not from a nationalist republican who fought on the other side.

³³ 'Memoires F.H. Bauer : Boek 2 Indonesië 1948-1950', Indisch Herinneringscentrum, accessed 29 May 2025, <https://www.onsland.nl/collectie-object/https%3A%2F%2Fdigitale-collectie.indischherinneringscentrum.nl%2Fdetail%2F41458c68-f55c-f46d-9b85-fdbfe6ee66c6>.

How was the KNIL affected by the Japanese Occupation?

"I started a three-month training course. It wasn't difficult, as most of the drilling practice consisted of marching, similar to what I'd already experienced during my training for sergeant. I even passed with the highest marks. And because I was rated number one, I was given the job of courier and told to learn Japanese."

- Suharto (Indonesian president from 1967-1998) on his training while joining the Japanese police force *Kenpeitai* after leaving the KNIL in 1942³⁴

In this first chapter, we begin to analyse the KNIL during the Japanese invasion and occupation. This event heavily influenced the contemporary Indonesian Army, as the Japanese doctrine is rooted in its soldiers. Still, it also affected the colony in more aspects, such as politically and socially. We will focus more on the political and militarist changes. Reid mentions the divide-and-rule strategy used by Japan during the occupation, where they leveraged existing social divisions, thus affecting local power dynamics. This strategy strengthened the nationalist movements and the way towards the independence of Indonesia.³⁵ The Japanese invasion occurred in 1942 when the Second World War was still going on, and while the Japanese occupied most of East and Southeast Asia. The Dutch East Indies is also located in Southeast Asia and was a colony of the Netherlands, which was on the side of the Allied forces, thus the enemy of Japan. The main task of the KNIL was to defend the colony and keep it from harm, internally, and externally with the growing Japanese threat. In order to get an answer to the sub-question, we will look at the civil-military rule before the Japanese invaded the Dutch East Indies, the KNIL as colonial army against the Japanese as imperial army, the strategy the Japanese used in order to get the power on the Dutch East Indies, and the presence and operations of the KNIL in Australia. The end of the subchapter will give a conclusion and answer to how the KNIL was affected by the Japanese Occupation.

Civil-military rule before the Japanese invasion

First it is essential to look at the civil military rule in the Dutch East Indies before the arrival of the Japanese, to state the civil-military relations of the KNIL and whether the Japanese invasion and occupation of the Dutch East Indies changed these civil-military relations. Civil-military relations are important to an army, or an armed force, and can give us a better look at changes and transformations in armies as they have a strong link. The reports on the actions made by KNIL commanders state that there was already a lack of munition and men before the arrival of the Japanese (1932 to 1939). However, this was just enough to fulfil their tasks, which was to keep the Indonesian society peaceful and safe. With the Second World War emerging, it is stated in these reports

³⁴ David Jenkins, 'Soeharto and the Japanese Occupation', *Indonesia*, no. 88 (2009): 10.

³⁵ Anthony Reid, 'The Japanese Occupation and Rival Indonesian Elites: Northern Sumatra in 1942', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 1 (1975): 49–61, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2054039>.

that the KNIL commanders lack munition and human resources for the Japanese threat that thorned the South East Asian region, and that it was all due to the austerity policy of the Dutch.³⁶ The KNIL was established to keep the peace within the Dutch East Indies, thus used as a counterinsurgency. It can be stated that, before the Japanese Occupation, the KNIL was focused on the politics of the Dutch East Indies, trying to influence the population.

Whereas Norman Joshua argues that during the Java War from 1825 to 1830, the strategy of building up temporary battlefield fortifications and deploying mobile forces won the minds and hearts of the people from Java. That strategy also won the war. Norman continues, saying, *"There were important lessons in counterinsurgency from the Java War. First was the use of territorial forces and fortifications (bentengs), while the second was the use of mobile forces (flying columns). Thirdly was the importance of the military role in civilian administration. While perhaps this was not the first time that a military force experimented with territorial and mobile forces or civilian administration, the lessons of the Java War were well-documented into the corpus of Dutch colonial military science."*³⁷ However, the KNIL first institutionalised the mechanisms of civil-military rule after the Aceh War from 1873 to 1904. After the devastating war, P. F. Laging Tobias, the governor of Aceh, appointed two KNIL personnel, a captain and a major, to be the civil-military authority holder. This civil-military authority holder had the responsibility over particular appointed regions. In their assigned territory, these civil-military authority holders had to adjudicate, detain, and arrest persons, and establish relationships with village heads or local chiefs. This function still existed in the 1930s and 1940s, right before the Japanese invasion.³⁸ It has never been thought that the KNIL itself could defend the Dutch East Indies from the Japanese threat during the Second World War. There has always been the idea that the allies of the Dutch would help to defend the colony. This made the KNIL consist of around 37.000 professional soldiers and 1300 Officer Corps. Besides that, there were 275 aircraft of the air force, and there was a small naval force. By the time the Japanese came to invade the Dutch East Indies, the KNIL was overrun and defeated quickly, which was also due to the lack of general mobilisation and asymmetric tactics.

Colonial Army vs Imperial Army

In the first document of a bundle of reports about the operations and actions of KNIL commanders, American general Thorpe described the difficult task KNIL Lieutenant General Ter Poorten had during the Japanese invasion. He explains how the KNIL was David, and the Japanese army Goliath, and how difficult the task would be for Ter

³⁶ 'Rapporten over de operaties en het handelen van diverse commandanten van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (KNIL) in de aanloop naar en tijdens de Japanse aanval op Indonesië', Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

³⁷ Norman Joshua, 'Counterinsurgency, Emergency, and Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia', *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* 13, no. 1 (2022): 59-62.

³⁸ Joshua, 'Counterinsurgency, Emergency, and Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia,' 59-62.

Poorten to fight with an army as the KNIL.³⁹ This reference to David vs Goliath means that the KNIL was much smaller than the Japanese army, and that the KNIL had no chance of winning the fight. Thorpe also mentioned that David had no slingshot in this case, so he eventually says that the KNIL was already defeated when you look at the power measurements, especially without Allied forces' help.

The KNIL had difficulty defending the Dutch East Indies from the Japanese Empire, as the Japanese Army was much more powerful than the KNIL. David Jenkins mentions this in his review of *The Invasion of the Dutch East Indies* by Willem Remmelink. Jenkins says that the KNIL capitulated twenty-four hours after the first attack by the Japanese at the East Kalimantan oil port of Tarakan in 1942, which was five weeks after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour. All Eastern Kalimantan was seized by one Japanese force. Not only there, but also at one of the most productive oil fields of the Dutch East Indies, Palembang on South Sumatra. Outlying KNIL detachments were being wilted because of these attacks. The air force of the KNIL put up a great fight against the Japanese, but the Japanese were just too strong. When looking at it from a more quantitative view, it was 97.800 professional soldiers of Japan against the 65.000 soldiers of the KNIL, which mainly were indigenous troops and poorly led. Only 25.000 of these were regular units.⁴⁰ This tells something about the fight of the KNIL, as it was a colonial army against an imperial army. It also describes the structure of the KNIL and how it was composed. The portraits of KNIL soldiers in 1942 do show this well. You can see a soldier from West Java, looking quite happy. However, a soldier from Central Java is looking more seriously. Then there is another soldier who is from Dutch Timor, looking a bit grumpy and looks older than the other two. What stands out is that the lieutenant colonel is not Indigenous but looks like a white Western man. His name is Van Straten, while the names of the soldiers are not stated. The description says that these four men were evacuated to Australia after the Japanese invasion in 1942.⁴¹

Some authors wrote about the evacuation of the KNIL to Australia when the Japanese occupied the Dutch East Indies. One of them is P.C. Boer, who dedicated his article to the evacuation from the Dutch East Indies to Australia. He focuses on the Aviation Corps and how they transported the Indonesians to the island of Australia. He describes that it was not only the soldiers who fled, but also women and children. All because of the Japanese threat. The Aviation Corps of the KNIL were being helped by Great Britain, which was an ally of the Netherlands during the Second World War.⁴² The Japanese were

³⁹ 'Rapporten over de operaties en het handelen van diverse commandanten van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (KNIL) in de aanloop naar en tijdens de Japanse aanval op Indonesië', Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024,

<https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

⁴⁰ David Jenkins, review of *The Invasion of the Dutch East Indies*, by ed. and tran. Willem Remmelink, *Indonesia*, no. 102 (2016): 129–35, <https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.102.0129>.

⁴¹ 'Portretten van Militairen Uit Nederlands-Indië Die Naar Australië Geëvacueerd Zijn Na de Japanse Bezetting in 1942.', Nationaal Archief, accessed 21 November 2024, <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/fc9c8357-aad8-aebb-c7b8-f6709ea623e2?searchKey=d2a2589fe313f734ba0ec31d0fe1ac8d>.

⁴² P.C. Boer, 'The Depot Squadron of the Netherlands East Indies Army Aviation Corps February-March 1942: The Java-Australia Airlift and the Evacuation Flights to Australia', 2010,

not always seen as the enemy. In the beginning, the Indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies welcomed them and saw them as liberators from the Dutch colonists. The people from Japan were physically more similar to the Indonesians than the Europeans.⁴³ This attitude changed when Indonesians were put in camps, Prisoners of War (POW) camps and concentration camps. So, not only KNIL soldiers but also women and children were placed in these camps.⁴⁴

The strategy of Imperial Japan

As mentioned before, with the portraits of evacuated KNIL soldiers, the KNIL had a structure, reflecting the Dutch policy, of excluding Indonesians from higher ranks. Only men with European or Eurasian roots were primarily filling the KNIL Officer Corps. There were some exceptions, such as Nasution, an Indonesian who became an officer. Relying upon its allies, the KNIL did not stand a chance, as the navies of the British, Australian, American, and Dutch were defeated by the Japanese in the Battle of the Java Sea at the end of January 1942. On the 8th of March, the Dutch East Indies surrendered. The Indigenous population of the colony were not fond of the Dutch, and they began to attack the Dutch military and Dutch civilians. The Dutch Authority collapsed, and it was left open for the Authority of Japan. European soldiers and civilians were put in camps by the Japanese. Imperial Japan was first seen as liberators by the Indonesians, greeted with enthusiasm. This changed quickly, as also for the Indonesians, life became miserable.⁴⁵ This can be related to the approximately 4 million Indonesian deaths during the Japanese Occupation of the Dutch East Indies, as argued by J Kevin Baird, as he brings up the violence done to the Indonesians by the Japanese with the Mochtar Affair. The Mochtar Affair was the murder of Achmad Mochtar, who was a Professor at the Eijkman Institute in Jakarta. He had been arrested and killed by the Japanese Kempeitai (military police) because of the alleged placement of toxins in vaccinations for nine hundred conscripted Javanese labourers. Mochtar had been severely tortured for months and has eventually been killed, together with other scientists. It has never become clear if Mochtar has actually poisoned the vaccinations, as he signed a confession after a colleague scientist died of torture. This all happened in the internment camps made by Imperial Japan during the occupation.⁴⁶

https://www.academia.edu/47538854/Article_Depot_Squadron_of_the_KNIL_Army_Aviation_Corps_versi_on_April_2021.

⁴³ David Jenkins, 'Soeharto and the Japanese Occupation', *Indonesia*, no. 88 (2009): 1–103.

⁴⁴ Ami M. Van de Ryt, 'Japanese Occupation of Indonesia', *Perspectives in History*, 2001.

⁴⁵ Thomas George Lamb, 'Civil Military Relations in Indonesia: The Evolution and Dissolution of Concordance' (Christchurch, University of Canterbury, 2014), 58-60, <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/e22ed064-2ca8-4dd7-b3af-c02fd6c16e5e/content>.

⁴⁶ J Kevin Baird, 'War Crimes in Japan-Occupied Indonesia: Unraveling the Persecution of Achmad Mochtar', *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 14, no. 1 (1 January 2016), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/1A8FFBB0243CC733FE00028DB9A789E3/S155746601602430Xa.pdf/div-class-title-war-crimes-in-japan-occupied-indonesia-unraveling-the-persecution-of-achmad-mochtar-div.pdf>.

This Mochtar Affair described well the horrors that happened during the Japanese Occupation and the absence of the Dutch colonialist powers. Besides the Dutch, the absence of the KNIL can be seen. As mentioned before, the Japanese were establishing other military police forces to keep order in the Dutch East Indies, such as the PETA. Next to the PETA, there was also another strategy by Japan, which was the *romusha*. The romusha were conscripted labourers from Java who had to work for the Japanese army. Baird mentions this military management strategy in his article and describes that these romusha were sent to transit camps where they were provided with housing and food, expert medical care and were drilled for camaraderie and discipline. Nonetheless, when these romusha were sent on the ocean outside the Dutch East Indies, the Japanese often neglected their basic human needs. Brutal beatings and execution for theft, defiance or escape, no medical care, and inadequate shelter were what awaited the romusha after boarding the Japanese transport ships.⁴⁷ This again tells the cruelties of the Japanese army when they were present in the Dutch East Indies, with no allied force to keep the Indonesians and their colony safe. Not only cruel towards the Dutch but also the native Indonesians. This had a significant effect on the population of the Dutch East Indies, but also on the future of the KNIL as it changed the civil-military relations within the colony.

The KNIL in Australia

As mentioned earlier in this subchapter, families in the Dutch East Indies and soldiers of the KNIL evacuated to Australia during the Occupation of Japan, as Australia was the closest Allied country to the former Dutch colony. This evacuation was of great importance to the KNIL as it was the only way to still be present in some way around the Dutch East Indies while the Japanese had the power. It made it possible for the KNIL to fight the Japanese with the aid from Allied forces, making it a crucial part in the transformation of the KNIL. The portraits of the KNIL soldiers from Java and Timor, and the lieutenant general, visualise this event, as these people were evacuated to Australia in 1942. These portraits were most likely made in Australia. The soldier from West Java is still smiling, maybe because of nervousness, or perhaps because he feels lucky that he is still alive and not killed by the Japanese. The others are all looking profoundly serious. They know the fight against the Japanese is a difficult one.⁴⁸ The civil-military relations for the KNIL drastically changed when they had to capitulate to the Japanese. They were not the armed police force anymore that had to keep the order in the colony. They were dismantled, and many of the soldiers, along with families, had to evacuate to Australia, the closest Allied country. The KNIL tried to keep on fighting the Japanese from Australia during the Second World War. The evacuation in 1942 was operated by

⁴⁷ Baird, 'War Crimes in Japan-Occupied Indonesia: Unraveling the Persecution of Achmad Mochtar', 2-3.

⁴⁸ 'Portretten van Militairen Uit Nederlands-Indië Die Naar Australië Geëvacueerd Zijn Na de Japanse Bezetting in 1942.', Nationaal Archief, accessed 21 November 2024, <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/fc9c8357-aad8-aebb-c7b8-f6709ea623e2?searchKey=d2a2589fe313f734ba0ec31d0fe1ac8d>.

aircraft of the KNIL and KL but also supported by the Air Force of the Australian Army, as they were part of the allied forces.

Moreover, the KNIL also got military support from the allied forces at places such as Perth and Sydney. As Boer describes in his article: *“Thus, via the airlift the KNIL received, amongst others, modern American (portable) anti-tank guns and ammunition to match as well as a rather large number of Johnson .30-06 light machine guns and Thompson .45 submachine guns plus ammunition. Also, urgently needed spare parts for aircraft of the RAAF and USAAF in Java went through the airlift to Bandoeng.”*⁴⁹ This shows how important Australia was for the Allied forces in the fight against Japan in Southeast Asia. This was the only way for the KNIL still to be something of a danger to its enemy, keeping battle-hardened after its capitulation in the Dutch East Indies. This Depot Squadron worked hard to keep the Air Corps of the KNIL sharp, often having problems with scarcity of spare parts, outdated equipment and the tropical climate effects on the aircraft. They had to work under immense pressure because of the Japanese threats.⁵⁰ The only way for the KNIL to still fight off the Japanese from Australia was through its Air Force. That is also why the Air Force was represented well, and why KNIL soldiers who evacuated the Dutch East Indies joined flight schools in Australia with the help of the British and Americans. KNIL soldiers also went to Jackson, United States, for flight school. These flight schools were schools for the Royal Netherlands Military Flying School (RNMFS), where Dutchmen could get a proper education in different functions for the Air Force. As the planned actions in 1943 against the Japanese began, boredom decreased, and the morale of the Air Force of the KNIL increased. The tasks of the KNIL Air Force consisted of attacks on Japanese ships (in ports and on open water), day- and night bombings on Japanese airports and military installations, offensive reconnaissance of waters North-West of Australia, and propaganda flights over Java, which were held during the end of the Japanese Occupation.⁵¹

Conclusion

With the KNIL capitulating against the Japanese after the Japanese invasion, the civil-military relations of the KNIL had changed. While they were first an armed military force with its primary goal of fighting dissent within the Dutch East Indies, they now had to fight the Imperial Army of Japan. An external threat had arrived, and it was already known that the KNIL could not manage it on its own. With the help of the Allied forces, the KNIL could hold off the Japanese for a little while but had to capitulate twenty-four hours after the first attack of the Japanese on 9 March 1942. The KNIL was just too

⁴⁹ P.C. Boer, ‘The Depot Squadron of the Netherlands East Indies Army Aviation Corps February-March 1942: The Java-Australia Airlift and the Evacuation Flights to Australia’, 2010, https://www.academia.edu/47538854/Article_Depot_Squadron_of_the_KNIL_Army_Aviation_Corps_versi_on_April_2021.

⁵⁰ Boer, ‘The Depot Squadron of the Netherlands East Indies Army Aviation Corps February-March 1942: The Java-Australia Airlift and the Evacuation Flights to Australia’.

⁵¹ A Staarman, ‘Inzet van de Militaire Luchtvaart van het KNIL vanuit Australië, 1943-1945’, *Militaire Spectator* 164, no. 8 (1995): 359–68.

scarce in human resources, and the amount of professionally trained regular units was just 25.000 (of the 65.000 units). The rest of the units were indigenous troops who were poorly led. They had to fight 97.800 well-trained Imperial Japanese units. The inferior weapons and human resources have always been the issue for the KNIL; they are created to keep order in a colony, not to fight a bigger threat from outside. On the other hand, they did get help from the Allied forces from the US, UK, and Australia. This kept the fight ongoing, even after the dismantling of the KNIL in the Dutch East Indies after the capitulation.

The KNIL kept on fighting the Japanese from Australia, where they had a decent Air Force, supplemented by the US, British and Australian Air Forces. From there, the KNIL conducted attacks on Japanese ships, bombings on military installations, offensive reconnaissance on the Northwest of Australia, and propaganda flights over Java during the end of the Second World War. Meanwhile, on the Dutch East Indies, the population were being held captive in internment camps by the Japanese. Soldiers who served the KNIL, but also families. At first, only Europeans, but later also Indigenous Indonesians. These soldiers and civilians were brutally treated by the Japanese in those internment camps. Take, for example, the Mochtar Affair, where Indonesians were being poisoned, and the Indonesian Professor Mochtar got the blame and was later murdered for it. This all could happen as on the islands of the Dutch East Indies itself, there was no police force such as the KNIL to prevent these cruel events. However, the Japanese formed an armed group by themselves, called the PETA. The PETA had quite the same goal as the KNIL, as they had to maintain the Japanese power on the Dutch East Indies. Important Indonesian figures who had served the KNIL could gain a commanding role in the PETA. Thus, people such as Suharto served the PETA during the Japanese Occupation. This particularly affected the KNIL, as the KNIL lost commanders, while their competition gained commanders.

How did the KNIL reestablish itself after the Japanese Occupation?

“The mood among the boys does not improve, because A - they are bored, B - there are reports that the situation in the Indies is bad - still many Japanese - Dutch Marines are not allowed into the Indies by the English.”

- Excerpt from the diary written by KNIL soldier H.S. Bulthuis on the situation at a camp in Penang, Malaysia⁵²

In this chapter, we are going to analyse the re-establishment of the KNIL during the end of the Japanese Occupation and the beginning of the war for the independence of Indonesia. This short period is more of a transitional period, but especially important because it correlates to a lot of civil-military changes in the colony. With a strong imperial power leaving and a new staggering power coming in the form of the Indonesian nationalists or also called the Republicans. This also affected the KNIL, as the Dutch saw an opportunity to reestablish itself on the colony with the leave of the Japanese. This was necessary as there was chaos on the Indonesian islands after the Japanese left, and this had to be altered by the KL and KNIL. To answer the sub-question, we will look at the allied cooperation, the growing Indonesian nationalism and the PETA. In addition, we will look at the last months of the Japanese Occupation, including the repatriation of KNIL soldiers and the rearrangement attempts of the KNIL after the occupation. Together with content analysis on a diary by a KNIL soldier, the sub-question can be answered. This will be done at the end of the sub-chapter with the conclusion on the reestablishment of the KNIL after the Japanese Occupation.

Allied cooperation, growing nationalism, and the PETA

However, how did the KNIL reestablish itself after the Japanese had left the colony? We look at a diary written by H.S. Bulthuis, a KNIL soldier of the 18th squadron of the Military Aviation Corps of the KNIL. He was stationed in Tjililitan in West Java and at the Willem barracks on Bali. He wrote a diary about his life and the operations of the KNIL at the end of the year 1945, months before the end of the Japanese Occupation. In the diary, we can see how the KNIL operated in that period. It is interesting to see what Bulthuis wrote down in his first notes. He describes the cooperation between the Allied forces when it comes to fighting off the Japanese. Bulthuis begins in the Netherlands, gets trained and gets inspected, and travels through Belgium towards England. He gets on a boat in England towards Sydney, Australia, bypassing Portugal, North Africa, and the equator. What is remarkable is that Bulthuis mentions communists and Indonesians protesting with a grand demonstration on the quay in Sydney, where the ship with

⁵² ‘Fotoalbum en (getypte) dagboeknotities van soldaat H.S. Bulthuis, ingedeeld bij het 18e Squadron van de Militaire Luchtvaart van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (ML-KNIL), onder meer gelegerd te Tjililitan op West-Java en de Willemkazerne op Bali’, Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

soldiers is leaving towards the Dutch East Indies.⁵³ It is not clear for which goal the demonstration was held. It suggestively had to do with Indonesian nationalism and the desire for a free and independent Dutch East Indies. Before the invasion of the Japanese on the Dutch East Indies, there already were nationalist sentiments, or better called anti-Dutch sentiments. Elly Touwen-Bouwsma describes the nationalist sentiments in Gorontalo, and how they took down the Dutch administration in their region and called out the Republik Gorontalo on 23 January 1942, just before the Japanese arrived at Gorontalo.⁵⁴

The Japanese Occupation of the Dutch East Indies made the nationalist sentiments for a free Indonesia even more complicated. Touwen-Bousma dedicated her article to the nationalist movement during the Japanese Occupation and mentions the different military and police forces that the Japanese established. Indonesian civil servants were put under the control of these military forces, but this was a strategy by Japan to secure their power. These forces were an enemy to the KNIL, or better formulated, an alternative to the KNIL, which took over the Dutch power over the islands of the Dutch East Indies. They also mention that the Indonesians were put in advisory councils and, with that, waited for their chance to take their well-deserved freedom and independence.⁵⁵ The situation became complicated, as mentioned before, the Indonesians saw the Japanese as liberators from the Dutch power that was heavily present. However, the absence of Dutch power after the Japanese invasion did not result in freedom for the Indonesian people. Japan set up armed forces such as *Pembela Tanah Air* (PETA), which was established to secure Japanese power in the Dutch East Indies.⁵⁶ This implies that it was a copy of the KNIL but not entirely.

The structure of the PETA consisted of Japanese doctrine, and not of the Western military values that existed in the structure of the KNIL. The PETA has Indonesian leaders, while the KNIL had Dutch leaders. This came from the Japanese doctrine that the military is close to civil society and not separated. Described by Utama, PETA's ethos was more built on *bushido*, a Japanese doctrine that emphasises the harmony between militarism and civil society, making the two more connected to each other. While with the Western-centred KNIL, militarism and civil society were more separated due to professionalism.⁵⁷ While the Indonesians saw the Japanese taking over the Dutch

⁵³ 'Fotoalbum en (getypte) dagboeknotities van soldaat H.S. Bulthuis, ingedeeld bij het 18e Squadron van de Militaire Luchtvaart van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (ML-KNIL), onder meer gelegd te Tjililitan op West-Java en de Willemkazerne op Bali', Archieven.nl, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

⁵⁴ Elly Touwen-Bouwsma, 'The Indonesian Nationalists and the Japanese "Liberation" of Indonesia: Visions and Reactions', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1996): 1–2.

⁵⁵ Touwen-Bouwsma, 'The Indonesian Nationalists and the Japanese "Liberation" of Indonesia: Visions and Reactions', 18.

⁵⁶ Taqwa Ridlo Utama, 'Comparative Analysis of Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger (KNIL) and Pembela Tanah Air (PETA) Military Training as Precursors to the Indonesian National Armed Forces', *Jurnal Pertahanan: Media Informasi Tentang Kajian Dan Strategi Pertahanan Yang Mengedepankan Identity, Nasionalism Dan Integrity* 10, no. 2 (31 August 2024): 201–19, <https://doi.org/10.33172/jp.v10i2.19532>.

⁵⁷ Utama, 'Comparative Analysis of Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger (KNIL) and Pembela Tanah Air (PETA) Military Training as Precursors to the Indonesian National Armed Forces' 201–19.

power, they were also more integrated in the military with the new Japanese doctrine. With the combination of realising that the Japanese were not precisely the liberators that were expected (being cruelly treated in the internment camps) and the relatively more power the Indonesians gained from the Japanese in comparison to the Dutch, the want for an independent Indonesia only increased.⁵⁸

Sentiments of independence were so strong that before the Japanese capitulation, Indonesian nationalists declared the Dutch East Indies independent and a sovereign nation-state on 17 August 1945. Japan capitulated a month later, in September 1945. However, this did not mean that independence was respected by everyone, as the Dutch, together with the Allied forces, tried to regain their power over the Dutch East Indies. This meant that the KNIL had to be reestablished to create order and maintain it, after the Japanese had left chaos behind. This also changed the civil-military relations in the Dutch East Indies. With the declaration of independence by the Indonesians, a national army was established, called the TNI. This army consisted of former KNIL soldiers and staff, and former PETA soldiers and staff. However, Joshua argues that during the Independence War the strategic positions in the high command of the TNI were held by former KNIL staff, and not PETA staff. He gives an example with Abdul Haris Nasution, as he is trained by the Western doctrine of the KNIL and led the strategies of the TNI operations during the Independence War. The lines between the KNIL and the PETA were not that clear though, as former KNIL members such as Nasution, Simatupang, Subroto, and Suharto also had Japanese training, which they gained during the Japanese Occupation.⁵⁹ The cases of Nasution and Suharto from attaining a high rank in the KNIL is exceptional, as not many Indonesian were able to get a high rank, while Dutch men gaining a high rank was much more common. This has also been discussed in the first chapter and can be linked to the portraits of the KNIL soldiers and lieutenant general.⁶⁰ This was the structure of the KNIL according to Western military values. With the PETA, which was established by the Japanese during the occupation, this was not the case.

As said before Indonesians were more often put on higher ranks, such as putting Indonesian civil servants under the control of the military forces such as the PETA. This was part of bushido, and Japanese militarist values. The story of Suharto is a good example for this, as he was an Indonesian that led a PETA force as sergeant. This was during the Occupation, and he invaded Java with that Japanese force on March 1, 1942. Suharto's story is well documented by David Jenkins in his article *Soeharto and the Japanese Occupation*. He argues that fellow Indonesian nationalists Sukarno and Hatta used the Japanese doctrine and their new higher military positions to advance the

⁵⁸ Touwen-Bouwsmma, 'The Indonesian Nationalists and the Japanese "Liberation" of Indonesia: Visions and Reactions', 1-2.

⁵⁹ Norman Joshua, 'Counterinsurgency, Emergency, and Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia', *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* 13, no. 1 (2022): 57–78.

⁶⁰ 'Portretten van Militairen Uit Nederlands-Indië Die Naar Australië Geëvacueerd Zijn Na de Japanse Bezetting in 1942.', Nationaal Archief, accessed 21 November 2024, <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/fc9c8357-aad8-aebb-c7b8-f6709ea623e2?searchKey=d2a2589fe313f734ba0ec31d0fe1ac8d>.

nationalist cause. This was also the case for Suharto and by gaining training from the KNIL and the PETA, he had significantly more military training and experience than his fellow PETA officers, which positioned him as a key figure in the formation of the TNI. Suharto did not accept the Japanese brutality that was an aspect of the Japanese doctrine where they emphasized *seishin* (the spirit). The dark side of 'the spirit' he did not accept, which he brought with him towards the creation of the TNI.⁶¹

The last months and repatriation

The KNIL had to be reestablished after the Japanese Occupation of the Dutch East Indies to secure the Dutch power. But with the different military forces that were created, this would be a difficult task. To make sure the KNIL was strong enough men from the Netherlands were sent to the colony to fight for the KNIL, with cooperation from the KL, the Dutch national army. This was the case with H.S. Bulthuis, the KNIL soldier who wrote a diary. He was sent from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies in on 21 June 1945, just before the capitulation of Japan on 17 August 1945. Soldier Bulthuis eventually describes the situation of the last months of Japanese Occupation. As mentioned in the beginning of this subchapter, he travels from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies through England and Australia. In Australia he acknowledges the support from the Australians, but also from the evacuated people of Indonesian for the soldiers during war time. He also describes the poor facilities they get, especially when it comes to sleeping. And that he got quite ill, stating that it came from a lack of salt. What is more noticing is when Bulthuis describes the camps that were being handed over to the English, and that a few weeks later they had to wait on Batavia because camps were being attacked.⁶² The camps that were being attacked were presumably camps that were handed over to the English and attacked by the Japanese. Or they could be Japanese and attacked by the English, with later being handed over to the English.

Bulthuis jumps to December 1945 in his diary, so by then the Dutch East Indies is freed from the Japanese by the Allied forces. He describes the freedom and possibilities to go to the cinema, and other nightlife options. There are fireworks, and soldiers were drinking and partying, which gave smiles, singing, and laughter among soldiers, Dutch and English. The other interesting fact he describes is how many different ethnicities are travelling together on New Years Day of 1946. This shows how happy the people were with their freedom after the Second World War, and thus the occupation, has ended. However, behind the festivities, the Dutch East Indies is still in turmoil. Bulthuis describes the damage done by the Japanese that still can be seen. The boredom of soldiers increased because of messages coming in saying that there are still a lot of

⁶¹ David Jenkins, 'Soeharto and the Japanese Occupation', *Indonesia*, no. 88 (2009): 1–103.

⁶² 'Fotoalbum en (getypte) dagboeknotities van soldaat H.S. Bulthuis, ingedeeld bij het 18e Squadron van de Militaire Luchtvaart van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (ML-KNIL), onder meer gelegerd te Tjililitan op West-Java en de Willemkazerne op Bali', *Archieven.nl*, accessed 27 November 2024, <https://www.archieven.nl/nl/zoeken?mivast=0&mizig=210&miadt=2231&micode=545&miview=inv2>.

Japanese soldiers present in the Dutch East Indies, and that Dutch Marines were not allowed to enter the colony, because the English did not allow them to. All in all, does Bulthuis describe the hardships that he faces as a soldier, and the troubles that are still there. However, he also mentions the positive things he experiences during his time in the Dutch East Indies, Singapore and Malaysia. Bulthuis, for example, describes the places he visits and adores the architecture and nature. He also mentions festivities, such as Malaysian and Chinese girls dancing for them.⁶³ This shows that there was also a form of happiness with the defeat of the Japanese. It is not clear at which date Bulthuis finishes his diary, when talking about jumping on *de Oranje*, and saying farewell to Penang, a place he has been many times, and where his camp was. According to the Shipping and Maritime Museum, *de Oranje* was a ship that brought passengers from Europe to the Dutch West Indies and vice versa, it was a passenger ship for repatriates, soldiers who had become very weak over the years from the internment camps of the Japanese.⁶⁴

Rearrangement attempt

The period between the capitulation of the Japanese and the start of the Independence War in the Dutch East Indies was a chaotic one. As the primary source by the KNIL soldier H.S. Bulthuis tells us, there were festivities in the colony as the Japanese were finally gone after 4 years, but there was also a rearmament by the Dutch and their allies, which clashed with the increasing nationalism for the Indonesians, who wanted freedom and independence after being used and seen as second-ranked citizens by their colonists, both Japanese and Dutch. A radio speech from 1947 in the United States by Lieutenant Governor General Van Mook of the KNIL describes the situation shortly after the Japanese Occupation better. In the radio speech he talks about the economic and political situation in the Dutch East Indies shortly after the occupation and acknowledges the chaotic and challenging situation. What stands out is the way he talks about the oppression and cruelty the Indonesians had to live in, not only because of the Japanese but also because of the Dutch. He despises a rearrangement of colonial power by the Dutch after the Japanese left and called it foolish, stupid, and even criminal. That does not ignore the fact that he despised the Japanese much more. Van Mook mentions how the Japanese has left the Dutch East Indies in chaos, and that Indonesians were used as labour-slaves, being tortured, starved, and worked to death, using Sukarno and other prominent Indonesians as central authority.⁶⁵

⁶³ 'Fotoalbum en (getypte) dagboeknotities van soldaat H.S. Bulthuis', Archieven.nl.

⁶⁴ 'Repatriëren met ms Oranje', Het Scheepvaartmuseum, 26 October 2018, <https://www.hetscheepvaartmuseum.nl/collectie/artikelen/1450/repatriering-met-ms-oranje>.

⁶⁵ 'Tekst van Een in de Verenigde Staten Gehouden Radiorede van Van Mook Houdende Een Overzicht van de Economische En Politieke Ontwikkeling van Indonesië Sinds de Capitulatie van Japan.', Nationaal Archief, 5 September 1947, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.21.123/invnr/259/file/NL-HaNA_2.21.123_259_0006?eadID=2.21.123&unitID=259&query=indonesi%C3%AB%20japan.

The KNIL had risen as a phoenix from its ashes after the Japanese Occupation, as Teitler describes it. However, that was not for long, as it was dismantled after the official independence of Indonesia in 1949. Teitler makes a remarkable distinction, as he argues that the war against the Japanese was more marine focused, while the battle against the nationalists (Independence War) was more land force focused.⁶⁶ This is a good remark which can be supported with the presence of the KNIL. As argued before, the KNIL capitulated against the Japanese after a short fight and got dismantled. The only way to fight the Japanese is from outside the Dutch East Indies, which was from Australia. They only option to fight them was on the sea, so that is why you can argue that the fight against the Japanese was more marine focused. The fight against the nationalists was more land force focused because the nationalists were situated on the lands of Indonesia, and with a chance for the Dutch to get their power over the colony back again, they had to reestablish a colonial army (the KNIL) to secure it. Teitler does also mention that the KNIL and KL (Dutch national army) were not being seen having a significant distinction between each other, as they fought well as a whole during the Independence War. He partly counterargued this by saying that on the highest level of command there were military disagreements between the KL and KNIL. He argues that the question rises if this was also the case for the lower levels of command.⁶⁷ In pieces regarding the formation of infantry battalions of the KNIL, it is mentioned that they do not have to resources to keep a whole battalion. This was written in 1946, just after the occupation. The piece describes that a battalion has weakened and must be strengthened with new KL soldiers, with the army commander stating that disbanding the battalion cannot be done. This did happen with General Spoor mentioning that he did not went beyond his powers. This can be read in just the first two documents of the fifty-nine documents of the primary source.⁶⁸ Here you can already see the military disagreements between the commanding levels of the KL (army commander) and the KNIL (General Spoor).

Conclusion

We would argue that the rearrangement of the KNIL in the period from the last months of Japanese rule towards the Independence War for a sovereign and independent Indonesia were not that easy, and would have a significant effect on the civil-military relations in the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese had left much damage to the Dutch East Indies and its people, and because of growing nationalism there was a lot of turmoil. The increase in nationalism can be traced back to the militia forces that were created by the Japanese, such as the PETA. This was due to the training and philosophy

⁶⁶ G Teitler, 'De oorlog om Indië, 1941-1949. Clio en Ares in het Verre Oosten.', *Militaire Spectator* 161, no. 3 (1992), <https://www.militairespectator.nl/sites/default/files/bestanden/uitgaven/1992/1992-0103-01-0035.PDF>.

⁶⁷ Teitler, 'De oorlog om Indië, 1941-1949. Clio en Ares in het Verre Oosten.'

⁶⁸ 'Stukken Betreffende de Vorming van Bataljons Infanterie van Het KNIL. Met Oorlogsorganisatie-Tabellen van Deze Bataljons', Nationaal Archief, accessed 17 January 2025, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.10.14/invnr/3604/file/NL-HaNA_2.10.14_3604_0002?eadID=2.10.14&unitID=3604&query=KNIL.

of the Japanese that were implemented in the PETA. This doctrine was called *bushido* and entails that there is harmony between militarism and civil society. This resulted in Indonesians who served the PETA gaining high rank functions in command, while they previously not enjoyed a service in command in the KNIL, where there was much more race divide in ranks. These Indonesians in command, such as Suharto, Sukarno and Hatta waited for the right moment to use their experience in the army to declare independence and built their own national army, which became the TNI (a combination of former KNIL soldiers and commanders, former PETA soldiers and commanders, and soldiers from other militias). As the KNIL was weakened at the end of the occupation, repatriation back to the Netherlands was possible. This is what happened to Bulthuis as he had written in his diary. A rearrangement of the KNIL was not only complicated because of external factors such as the PETA and the new TNI, but also because of internal factors. The KNIL and KL operated closely with each other, however, the command of both did not always agree with each other. This also caused tensions. So, the wish of the Dutch trying to take back their power on the Dutch East Indies was not that easy. The biggest problem that the KNIL had always faced, namely lack of human resources, was again a problem during this period.

What effect did the Indonesian Independence War have on the KNIL's civil-military role?

“Now we were standing before that line again. We knew of fortifications that had been built behind it by republican forces. Stories had filtered through of a state of complete lawlessness and terror that was rampant among the population: we knew of hunger, of disease and wounded, of lack of clothing from neglected yards and fields.”

- KNIL soldier F.H. Bauer on the situation in the Dutch East Indies in 1947 before the First Police Action⁶⁹

In this chapter we are going to analyse the civil-military relations of the KNIL during the Independence War from 1945 to 1949. As the KNIL was absent during the occupation, it had to be reestablished by the Dutch to regain the Dutch power on the Dutch East Indies. However, after the Japanese Occupation, the Dutch East Indies, renamed Indonesia by nationalists, had become a damaged and chaotic colony. This also caused for a change in the civil-military relations of the KNIL during the Indonesian war for independence. As discussed in the previous sub-chapter. To get the most complete view on the civil-military relations of the KNIL and its transformation, the last period, the Independence War, will be analysed in this sub chapter. In order to get an answer to the sub-question we are going to examine the declining morale of the KNIL, the political changes during the Independence War and the creation of a new national army, and the struggles for the KNIL to keep its existence. We will also look at resemblances of other colonial armies when it comes to the creation or dismantling of it, with the last section of the sub question containing the Police Actions operated by the Dutch government. The sub-question on the effect of the Independence War on the civil-military role of the KNIL will be answered at the conclusion at the end of the sub-chapter.

Declining morale

The documents bundle about the spirit and health of KNIL soldiers from after the occupation describe the morale of Indigenous soldiers within the KNIL. They say that Ambonese, Menadonese and Surinamese (people from Suriname, a Dutch colony in South America) saw the rising nationalism of Indonesia as a loss to the Dutch and say that the fight for the KNIL has been for nothing if the nationalists will win and Indonesia becomes independent. This was written in April 1946.⁷⁰ It continues by saying the Indigenous soldiers are afraid of Indonesia being independent, as they will not be

⁶⁹ ‘Memoires F.H. Bauer : Boek 2 Indonesië 1948-1950’, Indisch Herinneringscentrum, accessed 29 May 2025, <https://www.onsland.nl/collectie-object/https%3A%2F%2Fdigitale-collectie.indischherinneringscentrum.nl%2Fdetail%2F41458c68-f55c-f46d-9b85-fdbfe6ee66c6>.

⁷⁰ ‘Stukken Betreffende de Stemming En de Geestelijke En Lichamelijke Gezondheid van de KL- En KNIL-Troepen in Indonesië’, Nationaal Archief, accessed 12 December 2024, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.10.14/invnr/3729/file/NL-HaNA_2.10.14_3729_0031?eadID=2.10.14&unitID=3729&query=KNIL%20indonesie.

tolerated into the new society led by a republican government of Javanese people. The freedom of all other Indonesian tribes that are not Javanese would end. They speculate this as there is still murder and manslaughter under the republican government, and that is also why some military personnel still see the Dutch as only hope for life on Java and in Indonesia, as they can give them food and rest. They add that there is too much discord within their ranks to create a steady government.⁷¹ Note that these texts about morale have all been a reflection written by KNIL Lieutenant General S.H. Spoor in April 1946. This is remarkable as General Spoor is also the person mentioned in the title of *De Brandende Kampongs van Generaal Spoor* by Rémy Limpach. According to Luttikhuis et al., Limpach was the first scholar who demonstrated the extreme violence used by General Spoor during the war for independence. Extreme violence was not only been committed by the higher ranked KNIL and KL officers, but also by Indonesians themselves, and other armed militias that were present in Indonesia. This was due to the multi-faceted armed conflicts in the 'hybrid' Independence War, as Limpach calls it.⁷²

Political changes and new national army

What does that mean for the civil-military role of the KNIL in that period? First, the name. In a telegram towards the Dutch government in The Hague, General Spoor writes on 18 September 1948 that the name of the KNIL must be changed to reflect Indonesia's new name following its independence, replacing the former designation of the Dutch East Indies. However, he still thinks that the KNIL will be transformed into the national army of the Indonesians with the Dutch still having some influence over them, with or without a fusion of another army.⁷³ This other army Spoor is talking about is has to be the TNI, however, that is not certain. As the independence of Indonesia was declared by Sukarno in 1945, more armed forces began to form, most of them outside Jakarta, where there was no control from the nationalists. These armed groups were formed with their own political motives. This was also a big concern for the KNIL and the Dutch, as it would be challenging to create a new or renewed colonial army.

The military situation in Indonesia was just too troubled. Sukarno and his nationalists had to create a national army which represented the new independent nation. They created the BKR, which existed of members of the PETA, the KNIL, among other armed groups. However, armed groups outside Jakarta with their political motives (called Pemuda groups) did not join the BKR. The control of the BKR was difficult, so the nationalists created the TKR, which would be a hierarchical and purely military

⁷¹ 'Stukken Betreffende de Stemming En de Geestelijke En Lichamelijke Gezondheid van de KL- En KNIL-Troepen in Indonesië', Nationaal Archief.

⁷² Bart Luttikhuis et al., review of *De brandende kampongs van Generaal Spoor*, by Rémy Limpach, *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 173, no. 4 (2017): 559–79.

⁷³ 'Telegram Inzake de Naamswijziging van Het KNIL Wegens de Invoering van de Benaming "Indonesië" in de Grondwet', Nationaal Archief, 18 September 1948, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.10.14/invnr/4910/file/NL-HaNA_2.10.14_4910_0001?eadID=2.10.14&unitID=4910&query=KNIL%20indonesie.

organisation under its control. The structure of this so-called People's Security Army was improved as former KNIL officers were included to the army.⁷⁴ In the TKR, tension between the KNIL and PETA officers arose. The friction was due to the different trainings they both had in the past and their military ideas. As well as from individuals from other groups, such as Lasykar and Pemuda, who also had a variety of different beliefs and allegiances. They were motivated by political or ideological causes and were not career military officers such as the ones who were member of the KNIL.⁷⁵ In addition, the ethnic and religious differences also played a big issue in the TKR (later called the TRI, and in 1947 called the TNI), as most of the officers were Javanese (70-80 per cent of the total officer corps), but they did not represent all the different ethnicities that lived in Indonesia.⁷⁶ Here you can conclude that the KNIL's existence in the Dutch East Indies during the Independence War mainly was gone. Other armed groups and the forming of a national army by the nationalists made it impossible for the Dutch to rebuild their KNIL as it was before, as the only colonial army in the Dutch East Indies. Former KNIL officers joined the new national army. Looking at the diary by KNIL soldier Bulthuis, KNIL soldiers who were weakened by the Japanese Occupation and came from the Netherlands had a chance to go back to the Netherlands as a repatriate. The KNIL was much weakened because of the occupation that it had not the strength to renew itself in an army that had to regain the colonial power of the Dutch. The Japanese left the country with too much damage, and nationalism only had grown since then.

Cong and Jenne mention nationalism as one of the most essential aspects to civil-military relations.⁷⁷ This greatly resembles the civil-military relations of the KNIL during the Independence War, as the KNIL had to deal with the increased nationalism in the Dutch East Indies, alongside other armed groups who all had their own political motives. In this case nationalism even came to a declaration of independence for Indonesia which was the beginning of the end for the KNIL. As the KNIL started as the colonial army for the Dutch in their colony the Dutch East Indies, tackling domestic insecurities and keeping order, it collapsed with the invasion of Japan, and it tried to rearrange and rebuild itself after the Japanese left the colony. However, with the political and military frictions during the Independence War and weakened by the Japanese, the KNIL was never being able to restructure itself as the colonial army it was before. The influence of the KNIL has not been gone after its existence. The TNI had many former KNIL commanders and soldiers who had joined them and has brought the Western training of the KNIL, and its values and professionalism with them, as said before. However, the Japanese style of training and its values which are that militarism

⁷⁴ Thomas George Lamb, 'Civil Military Relations in Indonesia: The Evolution and Dissolution of Concordance' (Christchurch, University of Canterbury, 2014), <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/e22ed064-2ca8-4dd7-b3af-c02fd6c16e5e/content>.

⁷⁵ Lamb, 'Civil Military Relations in Indonesia: The Evolution and Dissolution of Concordance'.

⁷⁶ Lamb, 'Civil Military Relations in Indonesia: The Evolution and Dissolution of Concordance'.

⁷⁷ Alan Chong and Nicole Jenne, '1: Introduction: Asian Military Evolutions – Entrenching Varieties of Civil-Military Relations and Their Security Initiatives in Asia', 2023, <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/edcollchap/book/9781529229349/ch001.xml>.

and civil society are in harmony are also brought to the creation of the TNI. The life of Suharto can be an example to this, as he at first was a KNIL soldier, but became a police officer fighting for the Japanese. Jenkins describes this phenomenon and says that Suharto was one of the many Indonesian recruits for the newly formed armed forces of the Japanese. These forces were established to be the same as the KNIL, a policing force keeping order, however this time with Japanese militarist values instead of the Western values the Dutch gave the KNIL.⁷⁸

Existence struggles and colonial army resemblances

The struggles to create a good working KNIL was present, as a document about forming a first battalion in 1948 shows.⁷⁹ On the second page in this bundle, it is written that there are shortcomings when creating that battalion, such as personnel shortages, lack of material, spread dislocation, and lack of alloy room especially for families. The document also describes the goal of the battalion, as it had to act against a rebellious armed group or gang. This gang existed of around 120 men and were formal Lasykar soldiers who joined the enemy, taking their weapons with them.⁸⁰ This shows the chaotic period of the Independence War and the struggle for power by many different armed groups, whether it was the KNIL or an armed gang that voluntarily took its weapons to fight, for whatever goal they had during that time. Most of them had political motives, while you can also say that for the KNIL. The KNIL was the colonial army of the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies and had to keep the order there, but that was when the Dutch still held the power there. With the Dutch presence gone due to the Japanese Occupation, the KNIL could not be the police force it first was and keep the order. That task has gone with the new armed groups that were established to uphold their motives. The presence of the KNIL during the Independence War could only be for political reasons too, as they now represent the Dutch and its government directly. Thus, this means that the civil-military relations of the KNIL have drastically changed. The KNIL was created as a police force to keep the order in the colony before the Japanese Occupation, but became an armed force that directly served the Dutch government using close cooperation with the Dutch national army to regain the power in Indonesia after the occupation. The KNIL operated as an entity with more political motives than before, also due to the upcoming of more different armed militias with all their own political motives.

The fact that a colonial army had to go through transformations is not abnormal, as more colonial armies transformed during times of war, and war for independence. Most changes in structure and civil-military relations that happened to the KNIL can be seen at other colonial armies. In his PhD dissertation, Brooks describes the creation of the

⁷⁸ David Jenkins, 'Soeharto and the Japanese Occupation', *Indonesia*, no. 88 (2009): 1–103.

⁷⁹ '1 Bataljon Infanterie KNIL (Inf I). 1947 - 1949', Nationaal Archief, accessed 2 May 2025, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.13.132/invnr/3353/file/NL-HaNA_2.13.132_3353_0002?eadID=2.13.132&unitID=3353&query=KNIL.

⁸⁰ '1 Bataljon Infanterie KNIL (Inf I). 1947 - 1949', Nationaal Archief.

national armies in British Africa, and how the colonial past influenced that creation. Considering civil-military relations, Brooks argues that the basis of the national armies of the newly independent countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Malawi, Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania) was form through the colonial armies West African Frontier Force and the King's African Rifles. He argues that also in these colonial armies, and later in the national armies, there were struggles in the officer corps due to representation. About the structure of these British colonial armies Brooks says "*The native colonial officer corps was only created in the heyday of colonialism. Before this moment, White officers controlled all positions of command. Like the rank and file, the missionary corps had an ethnic bias. I argue that the colonial officer corps came to be filled with ethnic groups that had large numbers of missionaries. Missionaries were the primary providers of education in the colonial era, since the European state did not want to invest in creating public schools.*"⁸¹

The fact that white officers controlled all positions of command before colonialism, thus independence, can also be applied to the Dutch East Indies and the KNIL. That positions of command also came to include native (indigenous) men was also what was reflected in the national army of Indonesia. The transformations of colonial armies, from police force of a colony towards national army of a newly formed independent country are very similar over the world, as can be seen in this comparison. Bhupinder Singh Taggar does quite the same in his article, where he explains the transformation of the colonial army in India and Punjab, and how ethnicity has been particularly important in civil-military relations. The British Indian Army saw the Punjabis as a warrior people and enlisted them in the army. This also caused for overrepresentation of Punjabis in the British Indian Army. Not only the people of Punjab, but the region itself became important. This was due to the geographic location of Punjab which was strategically important to the British. Which is why the British invested heavily on technology, transport, and commerce in Punjab.⁸² The fact that the Punjabis were seen as the most dependable soldiers in their army can also be brought back to the KNIL. The KNIL had an overrepresentation of Javanese people and lacked other ethnic groups that were not that much present. This was still the case for the new national army of Indonesia. As mentioned in the second section of this subchapter 70-80 per cent of the total officer corps of the TNI was Javanese. That the KNIL had a good representation of Javanese natives can be directed back to the Javanese War. According to Joshua the Java War from 1825 to 1830 gave the KNIL a good learning about militarism and civil-military relations. There was the importance of the military role in civilian administration, and the strategy of building up temporary battlefield fortifications and deploying mobile forces won the minds and hearts of the people from Java.⁸³

⁸¹ Andrew Brooks, 'The Creation and Impact of British Colonial Armies in Africa' (Ph.D., United States -- California, Stanford University, 2019), 207, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2467649184/abstract/219FF47A777E4258PQ/1>.

⁸² Bhupinder Singh Taggar, 'Transformations and Punjabization of the British Indian Army: A Study of Colonial Punjab, India', *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2021): 35–39.

⁸³ Norman Joshua, 'Counterinsurgency, Emergency, and Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia', *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* 13, no. 1 (2022): 57–78.

Police Actions

What is not mentioned before explicitly but was an essential aspect during the Independence War were the Police Actions by the Dutch government on the Indonesian islands. Memoirs of Lieutenant General of the KNIL F.H. Bauer about the Police Actions describes what he saw and experienced during the Police Actions.⁸⁴ Bauer talks in his memoirs about the hardships the Indonesian people had to endure, and how the armed force who had to operate the Police Action has to bring back peace, faith and trust to the Indonesian people who had experienced much already during the occupation of Japan. He mentions Lieutenant General Spoor, and how he talks about the good cause and the sincerity of the Police Action. The First Police Action is a consequence of the Indonesians not respecting the demarcation line, and other violations to the Linggadjati Agreement that was made between the Dutch government and the new Indonesian Republic.⁸⁵

The Dutch were afraid of losing the Dutch East Indies because the colony had great economic significance to the Netherlands, especially after the Second World War. J. Hoffenaar argues in his article that the Dutch did see the colony as having more independent authority over itself in the future, but not that fast, and surely not after 1945. No agreements on a ceasefire between the Dutch and Republicans of Indonesia, and growing conflicts resulted in the first Police Action which was started on the night of 20th to 21st of July 1947. The first Police Action, also called 'Operation Product,' was successful for the Dutch, as they had occupied the most critical plantation- and oil areas on Java and Sumatra. The Police Action was stopped on the night of 4th to 5th of August on behalf of Lieutenant Governor General van Mook after the intervention by the UN Security Council. The Indonesians gained more and more support from the international community, while the Dutch support declined. On the other side, did the call for a harder approach grew stronger in the Netherlands.⁸⁶

The Dutch government decided to start the second Police Action on 19 December 1948. This Police Action, also called 'Operation Crow', was a success in the eyes of the Dutch, as significant parts of the Republic territory were reclaimed by the Dutch, and Republican leaders were held captive. However, the victory was more of a pyrrhic victory, as Hoffenaar describes it, because to international pressure rose. The global society reacted strongly on the second Police Action, and the UN intervened with accepting a resolution, this resolution eventually led to the Dutch losing all political power and influence over Indonesia. By 17 August 1950, Indonesia could call themselves a unitary state. A combination of a distressed financial position between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, having no adequate answer to the rising Indonesian nationalism, and the slight support of the English caused for the decision to

⁸⁴ 'Memoires F.H. Bauer : Boek 2 Indonesië 1948-1950', Indisch Herinneringscentrum, accessed 29 May 2025, <https://www.onsland.nl/collectie-object/https%3A%2F%2Fdigitale-collectie.indischherinneringscentrum.nl%2Fdetail%2F41458c68-f55c-f46d-9b85-fdbfe6ee66c6>.

⁸⁵ 'Memoires F.H. Bauer : Boek 2 Indonesië 1948-1950'.

⁸⁶ J. Hoffenaar, 'De Indonesische Kwestie (1945-1949): De Nederlandse Militaire Inbreng Nader Bekeken', *Militaire Spectator* 156, no. 4 (1987): 173-74.

operate these two Police Actions.⁸⁷ Hoffenaar also mentions that in 1969, KL and KNIL soldiers were being called war criminals, and how they could have operated these Police Actions a few years after they were persecuted themselves. He also mentions the analysis of a woman named miss Groen who argued that the thought of the General Spoor was to break the Indonesian resistance by crushing its leadership, however, this will only cause a continuation of a guerilla war and would eventually led to a defeat on the side of the Dutch.⁸⁸ It is interesting to see that already in the year 1969 people called the Dutch soldiers in the Dutch East Indies war criminals by comparing them with the Germans and Japanese in WWII. This shows that there was already a sense of discontent about the Dutch actions during the Independence War. It is stunning to know that it had to take till 2016 with the book by Rémy Limpach to show more of the cruelties that had occurred during that period.

Conclusion

It can be said that the regain of power for the Dutch was not successful, as the Independence War of Indonesia threw a spanner in their plans. The colony was too much in a turmoil because of the different armed forces present. The nationalists and their new declared independent Indonesia tried to reduce the chaos and bring back the peace and order with a newly created national army, which in a later stage was named the TNI. Their strategy was not to discriminate, and it was possible for former KNIL commanders and former PETA soldiers and commanders to serve the new TNI. It was also possible for other armed forces such as militias and gangs to serve them. The positive effects to this were that the TNI was structured around different doctrines, particularly the Western doctrine of the KNIL and the Japanese doctrine of the PETA. This was not a new phenomenon, as for other newly formed national armies in the periphery, they also were created from former colonial armies, such as the latest African armies. These doctrines brought a deeper value to the structure. However, the presence of two different trainings also brought tensions with them. A friction between KNIL commanders and PETA commanders arose as they had different military ideas. Next to it were also other militias such as Lasykar and Pemuda who had other beliefs and allegiances.

For the KNIL the situation had only become more difficult, as it was not the only armed force anymore as before the Japanese Occupation. The morale in the KNIL was also not high. Ethnicities such as the Ambonese, the Menadonese and the Surinamese were afraid of their position within the new Indonesian society. They mentioned that the KNIL had failed and let the Dutch down if the nationalist (Javanese) declares the new country of Indonesia. This decline in morale was also due to the structure of the KNIL, where no other than white men with European descent was in command. The Surinamese,

⁸⁷ Hoffenaar, 'De Indonesische Kwestie (1945-1949): De Nederlandse Militaire Inbreng Nader Bekeken', 175.

⁸⁸ Hoffenaar, 'De Indonesische Kwestie (1945-1949): De Nederlandse Militaire Inbreng Nader Bekeken', 175-177.

Ambonese, and Menadonese were only regular soldiers and had no power militarily, thus were afraid of a new society and significant changes. The Dutch government tried to regain its control on the colony with two Police Actions. They stated that these Police Actions were a reaction to the breach of several agreements by the Republic of Indonesia and that the Dutch, together with the KNIL, had to bring back peace and order to the country and trust to the people. However, they did this using extreme violence, what increased the voice of the UN and international society against these Police Actions. With struggles to keep the existence of the KNIL, the KNIL stopped to exist with an agreement of the Netherlands and Indonesia in 1950.

Conclusion and recommendations

In sum, the KNIL underwent a significant transformation during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War. The transformation also meant a change in the civil-military relations of the KNIL and, automatically, the Dutch East Indies. This can be seen as the KNIL, at first, functioning as a police force to keep order and peace within the colony, only acting against internal threats. However, this changed with the invasion of the Japanese. The KNIL suddenly had to defend the Dutch East Indies against an external threat, which was also much stronger and bigger than the small armed force that the KNIL consisted of. The KNIL was vastly outnumbered and under-resourced. The army's limited professional force and inferior equipment were no match for the well-trained Japanese forces. The power of the KNIL is depicted well in the document about the operations of KNIL commanders, where it is said that the KNIL is a small armed force that had no chance against the Japanese Imperial army and had to get aid from allied forces such as the Australians, Americans and British to stand a chance. However, they did not get the assistance in time during the invasion of the Japanese, which caused the KNIL to capitulate not long after. The KNIL continued operating in Australia by doing reconnaissance operations and air raids on the Japanese, with cooperation from the Allied forces. Meanwhile, in the Dutch East Indies, Japan interned both European and Indonesian civilians and former KNIL soldiers and subjected them to cruelty.

The moment of the invasion of Japan and the subsequent capitulation of the KNIL caused a significant change in civil-military relations in the Dutch East Indies, as the military power now lies on the Japanese with their *bushido* doctrine. The *bushido* doctrine differs from the professional Western doctrine which the KNIL used in training and structure. The Western doctrine separates the military and civil society from each other and also creates a structure where ethnicity plays a significant role in rank, as could be seen in the portraits of the KNIL soldiers and commanders in Australia. In contrast, the *bushido* doctrine stems from a closer relationship between the military and civil society, which means that there is more harmony between the two. This doctrine also creates a structure where ethnicity is less important. In the case of the KNIL and the Dutch East Indies, this meant that more ethnic Indonesians could attain a higher rank in the PETA or other Japanese-established armed forces than in the KNIL. The cases of Sukarno, Hatta, Suharto, and others are great examples of this. The establishment of the PETA and the gaining of leadership roles for Indonesians who were former KNIL personnel is a good example of the weakening of the KNIL's influence.

The weakened KNIL, together with the increasing Indonesian nationalism fostered by the PETA and its *bushido* doctrine, among other things, made the re-establishment of the KNIL challenging. The higher ranks of the Indonesian commanders also meant more power. This made the situation for an independent Indonesia came closer. After the Japanese left, and with the higher-ranked Indonesian military personnel still in power, the new Republic of Indonesia was declared. This was to the displeasure of the Dutch, who wanted to regain the colony to rebuild the country and for other economic

purposes after the Second World War. They wanted to do this by re-establishing the KNIL as a colonial army. However, the situation drastically changed, which made it exceedingly difficult for the Dutch to do this. Former KNIL soldiers fought for the Japanese and were now choosing the side of the nationalist Republicans. The morale of the KNIL was also exceptionally low, with Ambonese, Surinamese, and Menadonese soldiers being unsure of their role in the new society of the Indonesian Republic, also calling the new republic a loss to the Dutch military efforts. This could be read in the writings of Lieutenant General Spoor on the KNIL's morale. Moreover, the newly proclaimed Republic of Indonesia also tried to build a new national army called the TNI. This army eventually consisted of former commanders and soldiers of the KNIL, the PETA and other militia groups.

The dire situation within the KNIL can also be read in the diary of KNIL soldier H.S. Bulthuis, who talks about his repatriation. Many KNIL soldiers were wounded or just too weak to keep fighting, so they had to repatriate back to the Netherlands. KNIL soldiers had it rough; for example, in the case of Bulthuis, he had a lack of salt, which made him sick. Bulthuis also talks about the problematic situation with the allied forces, where the British did not allow the Dutch to send its Marines to the colony straight after the capitulation of the Japanese (while there were still many Japanese soldiers present in the Dutch East Indies). Both external threats, such as the rise of the TNI, and internal problems including conflicts between the command structures of the KNIL and the national army of the Netherlands, the KL, hampered the KNIL's reorganization efforts. Furthermore, the persistent problem of limited human resources continued to undermine Dutch efforts to regain control over the Dutch East Indies.

The Dutch government eventually came to the decision to operate a Police Action to bring back peace, faith, and trust to the people of Indonesia. They did this because they saw that there was still chaos, and people were hungry, sick, and distrusted. This was described in this way by F.H. Bauer in his memoirs. However, the main reason was the breaches of the peace agreements by the Republicans, which were concluded by the Dutch and the Republicans. The Police Action was successful in the eyes of the Dutch, as they occupied important locations, using extreme violence. However, the Dutch decided on the operation of a second Police Action. This was also successful in the eyes of the Dutch, but the pressure of the UN and the international society grew. The pressure resulted in the Dutch accepting the fate of the Indonesians and leaving its former colony for good. This is also where we argue that the transformation of the KNIL was the most significant. The KNIL became a part of the national Dutch army (KL) because it operated directly from the orders of the Dutch government. It did not function as a police force anymore but as a part of an army using extreme violence to (re)gain power, acting from a political standpoint. However, the new civil-military role of the KNIL did not exist for long, as the KNIL was too weak to regain power in the Dutch East Indies. They were first diluted because of the rise of the PETA and other militia groups during the Japanese Occupation and were immediately after that again diluted due to the creation of the new Indonesian national army, the TNI, during the Independence War.

The thesis and its arguments link to the literature in a way that it states the transformation of a colonial army. The case of the KNIL can be seen as unique, as the situation during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War was complicated and changed Indonesia significantly in a short period. By looking at both these two periods, the change in civil-military relations and the transformation of the KNIL can be seen better than before. The research gap in the historiography on the transformation of the KNIL is that few academics have tapped into the fact of researching those two periods together, which is what we have applied in this thesis. These findings will contribute to the existing literature on the KNIL. Interestingly, there were similarities between colonial armies in the past, as Welch Jr had written about the British using a structure that only martial races could serve in their colonial armies, such as the Punjab in India. The race choices can also be applied to the KNIL, as to them, the Javanese were seen more as capable of being a soldier compared to other ethnicities from the Dutch East Indies. Two out of three portraits of the KNIL soldiers evacuated to Australia were from Java.

As previously mentioned, content analysis was used to analyse the primary sources. In this thesis, there were also limitations during the research. These limitations were that the primary sources used were all from the 'Dutch side' of the view. They were all in Dutch or in English. They were not in Indonesian or in Japanese. This is due to the lack of speaking Indonesian or Japanese, which can result in a more one-sided view on this topic. However, there has been a thought of looking at the KNIL from a different point of view by using the book *De Brandende Kampongs van Generaal Spoor*, which was written by Rémy Limpach. This book did steer the view on the reputation of the KNIL significantly, from the KNIL being an honourable armed force to an armed force that used extreme violence on the Indonesian people from 1945 to 1949. Another limitation is the readability of some documents. Sometimes, it is unclear what has been written (in handwriting) and cannot be corrected because it has not been translated digitally. Or the text has been vague due to digitalisation, as was the case for the 7th, 8th and 9th page of the document on reports on the actions of KNIL commanders.

We will recommend further research on the KNIL and its role during the Japanese Occupation and the Independence War, as there are many more unanswered questions that need to be brought to light. Further research on the economic changes or social changes of the Dutch East Indies with the role of the KNIL as the centre point can expand the view of the KNIL and its motives for its actions, such as the Police Actions during the Independence War and what effect it had on these other factors. Focusing on the ethnic structure of the KNIL and what it meant to the different races serving the KNIL and their position in the new society of the Republic of Indonesia can create a better understanding of the position of the KNIL.

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