
Siding with the Enemy: Reluctant Mobilization and the Colonial Anxiety, the Netherlands Indies in the Brink of the Japanese Invasion

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Abstract

After the Netherlands was occupied by the Germany NAZI, the Dutch colonial state in the Indies was reaching to the edge of the Pacific War. To deal with the situation, the colonial government endeavored many attempts to boost the defense of the colonial state especially by advancing up their army's weaponry and mobilizing manpower. Although gained robust support to modernize the weapons, the government only had a little success to infuse manpower to their forces. This article mainly discusses the considerations within the circle of the colonial government in order to improve the defense of the Netherlands Indies. It seeks to the answer for the question on why the colonial government's plan to mobilize manpower only met few successes. It eventually argues that the anxiety and the attitude of the colonial government impeded their own plan to improve the defense.

Keywords: *mobilization, defense, the colonial government, loyalty, anxiety*

Abstrak

Setelah Belanda diduduki oleh NAZI Jerman, negara kolonial Hindia Belanda masuk ke dalam arena Perang Pasifik. Untuk menyikapi situasi ini, pemerintah kolonial menempuh aneka cara demi meningkatkan pertahanan negara terutama dengan memperbaiki persenjataan militer dan mobilisasi tenaga manusia. Meskipun memperoleh dukungan kuat untuk memodernkan persenjataan, pemerintah kolonial hanya sedikit saja berhasil dalam memobilisasi massa. Artikel ini mendiskusikan pertimbangan dan pemikiran yang berkembang dalam lingkaran pengambil keputusan pemerintahan kolonial dalam upaya meningkatkan pertahanan Hindia Belanda. Pertanyaan yang diajukan adalah mengapa rencana pemerintah kolonial untuk memobilisasi massa hanya sedikit saja berhasil. Dikemukakan argumen bahwa kekhawatiran dan sikap pemerintah kolonial menghambat rencana pemerintah sendiri dalam meningkatkan pertahanan militernya.

Kata kunci: *mobilisasi, pertahanan, pemerintah kolonial, loyalitas, kekhawatiran*

Introduction

Since the *Pax Nederlandica* had been successfully established in the early twentieth century, the political situation in the Netherlands Indies seemed promising for the perpetuation of the Dutch colonial state (Ricklefs, 2001: 227).¹ In 1936, after the depression, in the age of the triumph of the Dutch conservatism, Governor General B.C. de Jonge announced his belief that the Dutch had been active in the Indies for three hundred years and another three hundred years would be needed before the country would be ready for autonomy (Jong, 1984: 359). However, already within a few years, De Jonge's assumption came under pressure when the world's political landscape changed rapidly by the onset of the wars.

On May 10, 1940 Germany attacked the Netherlands and drew it into the Second World War. The invasion forced the Dutch Queen and government to flee to London. Although many have assured that the link between London and Batavia was still well maintained, the growing tension in the East, however, brought a great problem for Colonial Government in Batavia due to the urgency on strengthening the defense of colonial state particularly to prevent every potential foreign threat (Touwen-Bouwsma, in: Groen and Bouwsma [eds], 1992: 57). After the Netherlands were defeated, the Dutch colonial government in East Indies declared the *staat van oorlog en beleg*, the state of the war and siege (Post [ed.], 2010: xv). As the colonial government realized the weakness of the defense, the budget for military was significantly expanded therefore the weaponry was modernized and people was mobilized in a sort war preparation programs.

This article touches upon on the actual decision to boost the defense of the colonial state in the eve of the Japanese invasion. Additionally, this was not only a practical issue of reinforcing the military apparatus, but had strong political dimensions. This article mainly focuses on the Dutch colonial government's deliberation

to slot in the colonial's subject into the array of war-support organizations.² Furthermore, this article analyzes the consideration of the government to institute indigenous forces and explains how the decision was reached. In this article, the government's endeavor to improve the defense of colonial state by incorporating the indigenous is designated to gauge the nature and the attitude of the late colonial regime. Two questions are addressed on how the government dealt with the indigenous mobilization and why the government effort to institute mass mobilization ended up with little success.

Problems of the Defense of the Netherlands Indies

Regardless a lot of military officers being employed as civil administrators in the colonial state (Doel, in: Cribb [ed.], 1994: 56-75), the defense of the Netherlands Indies was often criticized due to its military weakness. In comparison with other European colonial powers in Southeast Asia, the Dutch army in the Netherlands Indies had always been less developed. The problem of the defense linked directly with the number or outfit. Considering the European population living in the Netherlands Indies and the extensive area that had to be protected, the Dutch colonial force was not impressive. For instance, in 1900 the French in Indo-China were supported by 50,000 men, the British in India had a army of 280.000 men and the Netherlands Indies only employed 31,000 men (Bussemaker, 2001: 373).

Generally, maintaining defense of the Netherlands Indies was assigned to the regular army namely KNIL (*Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*) and KM (*Koninklijke Marine*). In 1912, the government agreed to expand the role of the KNIL by establishing the KNIL-ML (*Militaire Luchtvaart-afdeling* or Army Air Force) (Bussemaker, 2001: 373). The KNIL regiments were regular army and based on a professional contract, without

conscription. This regiment employed various peoples including Indonesian, the Dutch, other Europeans and Africans.³ The greatest number was indigenous soldier, more than half of indigenous KNIL's soldiers were filed by Javanese-Madurese and the rest was consisted of Ambonese, Manadonese and other ethnic groups. Shortly after Java War had ended, Diponegoro's followers—who initially had fought against the Dutch—were also siding with the KNIL.⁴ Moreover, after pacification, the colonial force was also strengthened by traditional armies in a limited extent, for instance Legion Mangkunegaran, Barisan Madoera, and Bali as supplement.⁵

With the experience of the Javanese war and other local rebellions in the nineteenth century, KNIL was assigned two different tasks namely defending the island from enemy conquest and expanding colonial sovereignty over the whole island.⁶ In the twentieth century, the KNIL's double tasks were maintained continuously but as the whole island of Java had been relatively subdued its offensive task was shifted to be police task (Jong, 1984: 624).

During the economical crisis in the early 1930s the government had to rationalize its army due to the need to cut the expenses of the colonial state. In 1934 the government provided only 42 million gulden for the army as the cavalry unit was subsequently erased, infantry was reduced inasmuch as 25% and KNIL's soldier was trimmed down from 36,500 men to 33,300 men (Bussemaker, 2001: 283). Those reductions significantly weakened the function of defense, and elevated the real function of police which was only suffice to overcome internal and local turbulences but not to overcome foreign enemies. Later, this changing function of KNIL was mostly argued as one of the determining factors of its defect to cope with the modern war when facing the Japanese invasion.

Another impact of the crisis that affected the army was a mutiny on 4 and 5 February 1933.

The mutineers hijacked a heavily armed cruiser HNMS *de Zeven Provinciën*, who then sailed from Aceh to Surabaya. Embarrassingly none of the KM's units were able to stop this ship, even though it was finally stopped in Sunda Strait by the attack of the air-crafts which killed more than twenty three mutineers. Although people at that time thought this incident was related with communism, later it became obvious that the mutiny was triggered by the unprecedented reduction in salary.⁷ Furthermore, this incident had shown the poor morality of the Dutch navy personnel at that time and on the other hand also increased feeling of anxiety of the Dutch toward the indigenous loyalty.⁸

Military Budget: An Improvement

In response to *de Zeven Provinciën* mutiny, many people also began to realize that strong finance was an important aspect in order to strengthening the defense. The government of Netherlands Indies, Volksraad members and dignitaries who realized the weakness of the Netherlands Indies' defense, encouraged the Dutch authority in Batavia and the Netherlands to strengthen the Netherlands Indies. Especially in 1935, after Japan had left the League of Nations and doubled its total budget mostly spent on military, a petition signed by all representatives of Volksraad was addressed to the government. It urged two things: a higher budget for the defense and pointed out the establishment *Algemeen Weermacht-comite* (a National Defense committee) which would organize all efforts in terms of defense in the Netherlands Indies. Although the colonial government agreed to this proposal, unfortunately this petition was rejected in the motherlands. According the Netherlands, the improvement of the defence of the colonial state at that time was not urgent because at that time the Netherlands Indies was not involved in warfare.

Interestingly, in 1936, the colonial government made another noticeable effort

to improve defense of the Netherlands called *de staatsmobilisatieraad* (State Mobilization Council or SMR). The main idea of this establishment was improving the defense and keeping the economic stability. This council, working under the direct control of the Governor General, concerned with the efforts to strengthen defense without disrupting economic life. Therefore, its tasks coped with the trade and industry, armed force infrastructure and anti air raid, and demolition to prevent their assets were controlled by enemy (Kemperman, in: Jong, 2002: 33; Busemaker, 2001: 397).

In 1937, *Vaderlansche Club* (VC), the Dutch influential party, also issued a proposal about strengthening the Netherlands Indies which demanded a greater expenditure for the defense especially to buy a large number of advanced weapons.⁹ However, the government leant on the plan of increasing budget for armament as expected by VC. In 1937 the Netherlands Indies expended 77,3 Million gulden for the defense which meant an 18.8 Million gulden increase from the previous year. This amount increased in the next years, which became 124.7 Million (1938), 147.3 Million (1939) and 276.1 Million (1940). The highest budget was recorded in 1941 when the government allocated more than 300 million gulden for defense which equaled 70% from total national budget of 424.2 Million. Yet, it also faced refusal from some of Indonesian Volksraad members. With regard to the refusal of some Indonesian representatives, however, it was the second time they disagreed with the government's plan on defense budgetary. Initially, nine Volksraad members—all of them were Indonesian nationalists—had refused Starckenborgh's plan of raising military budget up to 280 million gulden in 1940. Mainly speaking, those Indonesian council members felt that the expenditure was the unfair to be expended before the government passed their request of Indonesia Berparlemen which urged the extending of civil right for Indonesian (Jong, 1984: 611).

Having great amount of money, the government of the Netherlands Indie secretly sought an alliance with the US, British and Australia although politically speaking the Netherlands Indies was considered absolute neutral for its foreign affair policy, after 10 May 1940. In this regard, the alliance of the British and the Netherlands Indies was an extensive cooperation that was conducted due to the dire situation in Europe and Far East. Regarding during her flee, the queen stayed in London, when the battle of London occurred, the Netherlands Indies gave financial support by donating 334,000 pound sterling. This amount of money, which was collected from people, was used by RAF to buy 40 Spitfire fighter airplanes.¹⁰ Furthermore, another country which played important functions in the strengthening the Netherlands Indies was US. This country was not only for its alliance in order to setting a common defense but also its role for providing the Netherlands Indies modern weapon (Jong, 1984: 610).

Since the government was able to raise a great amount of money during that time, it seems that finance was not the actual problem. Busemaker argues that the problem was on the ineffective expenditure for weaponry. The Netherlands Indies too much depended on foreign supply for weaponries even for trifling stuffs such as rifle and ammunition. Corresponding with its diminutive personnel, the KNIL was the only regiment in the world which employed M-95 carbine using 6,5 mm ammunition. After the fall of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Indies could not supply its ammunition. Therefore KNIL depended in terms of support of new rifles on Australia especially after US and British canceled to sell their rifles to the Netherlands Indies. Moreover, another essential problem was actually to champion the public support in the mass mobilization.

Hampered Mobilization

As an impact of the growing threat in Far East in 1938 which latter worsened by the tempestuousness political situation in Europe, the Netherlands Indies showed more vigorous effort to improve its defense in warfare. Manpower was a decisive part in the war therefore sloting in the indigenous population was considered a great help to empower the army. With the great population of Java, which was about 43 million, it was supposedly not a real problem to gain manpower in short time. In fact, it turned out otherwise. The government experienced that winning the support from the people was a considerably difficult matter.

To deal with the war preparations and raising public enthusiasm at once, a commission that had been established in the end of the First World War called *Weerbaarheidcommissie* was re-instituted. It had to maintain the mobilization by setting up several organizations. Systematically speaking, there were three varieties: adding manpower into the regular army, instituting voluntary organizations and applying conscription.

The first attempt of adding manpower was instituted within regular army such as KNIL and KM. Since 1937 onward, the Dutch military authority had stimulated people to join in the regiment for example by imposing advertisement in the newspapers, extending the registration, and inviting the retired Dutch military officers. This effort was continued until the arrival of Japan. Interestingly enough, since 1939 the Javanese almanac published by Balai Pustaka, also included a series about happy ending story of a poor Javanese villager who latter became a successful KNIL soldier written by a Dutchman in its yearly publication. Those series was translated from Dutch to be narrated in Javanese's way of thinking that commonly dealt with adequate life, harmonious family and honorable position.¹¹ By elevating the expectation of the readers the author seemed to persuade the readers, which were mostly

Javanese, that by involving themselves into KNIL regiment, the poors stood a high chance to realize their dream.

Apart from the attempt to lure people into the army, government also prepared the people to support the war in a number of voluntary activities. The government mobilized common citizens to involve in an array of organization such as *stadwacht*, *landwacht*, COVIM, LBD (*Lucht Burger Dienst*) and Pekope (*Perkumpulan Korban Perang*-war victim aid). The mobilization was officially begun in July 1940 when the formation of the *Stadswacht* or town guard was announced. They were mostly functioned as an additional reinforcement for the army that therefore were not directly sortied in the battlefield. The employment of voluntaries served two main purposes: to provide support to the regular army and to help the civilian secure themselves, especially in air-raid attack because the bombardment in modern war killed innocents indiscriminately.

Women also contributed in this war support organizations. COVIM was a prominent organization established at that time which consisted of women from all ethic groups.¹² The only female member in the parliament, C.H. Razaux-Schultz, encouraged women role in the war preparation and pushed their involvement beyond their daily tasks. Thus, in the preparation of the war the women's tasks were quite extensive: not only dealing with domestic matters such as taking care of the supply of rations but also overcoming the absence of their male comrades by for instance supervising defensive preparation in their surroundings or driving truck and ambulance, as performed by VAK (*Vrouwlijk Auto Korps*) (Jong, 1984: 640, 655).

Inspired by experiences in their motherland when the Dutch citizens were defending The Hague and Rotterdam against Germany parachutists, the *Stadswacht* was formed to secure some important cities in the Netherlands Indies and to take care an alleged fifth column.¹³

This effort was also adopted in plantation by establishing the *Landswacht*. Compared with the other efforts, these war support organizations—formed based on a private initiative (Kemperman, in: Jong, 2002: 32-3)—were the most ready one to involve in the battlefield as it had received a fuller military training (Berdoeri, 2004: 158). In the plan, the *Stadswacht* registered its member from various ethnic group including the Dutch-Eurasian, Indonesian and Arab-Chinese with percentage 50% for Dutch-Eurasian and 25% each for the rest. As far as the *Stadswachten* members were concerned, there was also *Aziatisch Personeel*, a term referred to Asian employees of Dutch-European firms or companies, that were growing popularly as *stadswacht* members. For some extent, their main reason of involvement in the *stadswacht* was solely employment, as for some cases their enterprises usually forced their employees to get involved in the *Stadswacht*. Accordingly, they had two choices, either participating in the *Stadswacht* or getting fired.¹⁴ However the *Stadswacht* was expected compiling about 100 up to 1000 men in every city depending on the importance and the large area which had to be covered. to gather about 100 to 1000 men in every city depending on the importance and the coverage area which had to be defended. By the arrival of Japanese army, this effort successfully gathered 28.000 men as *Stadswachten* in thirty six towns (Post, in: Post [eds], 2001: xvi).

Regarding the lack of local response, Indonesian nationalists contribute to counter the progressing growth of *Stadswacht* as in their view this program would potentially jeopardize their agenda. Since GAPI decided to give no support to the formation of the *Stadswacht*, its affiliated parties and sympathizers withdrew from the program. Even, to some extent, the central party insisted its members in local branches to withdraw from the *Stadswacht*. For instance Parindra Semarang, which initially had joined the *Stadswacht*, had to cancel

its participation after central Parindra had warned this local branch.¹⁵ In East Java, an enclave of *santri* (Islamic scholar) which was influenced strongly by NU, the formation of the *Stadswacht* failed to attract participation from local people. Consequently the *Stadswacht* in Surabaya was only supported by around 120 Indonesians. With respect to mobilize people, the government encouraged NU members to join the *Stadswacht* but their leader had already informed them that they should not be involved in the government program because when the war erupted, the Japanese would only fight the Dutch, not Islam (Zuhri, 1974: 151-6).

Considering this ignorance and refusal from Indonesian, Chinese was a good addition to the *Stadswacht*. Chinese organizations, such as *Chung Hua Hui*, were instrumental in mobilizing people for the *Stadswacht* (Berdoeri, 2004: 152). Another important device for *Stadswacht* was the bureaucracy, as large numbers of civil servants could be employed in the *Stadswacht*. In another case, Javanese traditional realms or *zelfbesturen* such as the Mangkunegaran and Kasunanan also made an effort to support the *Stadswacht* in financial ways. In the early formation of the town guard, Kasunanan donated 50,000 gulden and Mangkunegaran provided 25,000 gulden for the establishment of the *Stadswacht* in Solo.¹⁶ To the more general purpose to improve the defense, Kasultanan Jogjakarta and Pakualaman also contributed 30.000 gulden tax money.¹⁷

Another attempt to reinforce the army was through militia—an action of developing a non regular force which consisted of common citizens and bore a similarity to regular armed forces in terms of the conscription it imposed. Actually, this idea to institute militia came from some nationalists in the parliament. They saw the formation of militia, in which the Indonesian was incorporated, would run parallel with their demand to extend the civil rights for the Indonesian. This civil mobilization, however,

instigated a great debate especially when it dealt with the indigenous militia.

Theoretically, by applying conscription the Netherlands Indies would obtain a large number of men in army. From a rough count, in the end of 1930s there were more than 400.000 eligible draftees either the Dutchmen or the Indonesian. However, the government seemed to respond cautiously even reluctantly so as to avoid any involvement in this program, especially in the respect of forming their indigenous regiment of the militia. In this case, though the government had received a proposal urging indigenous conscription from some Indonesian nationalists, they had not shown a serious attempt to make it came to materialize. A single exception was Van Mook, the Dutch officer born in Semarang, Central Java. Personally Van Mook supported *Gerindo's milisi bumiputra* and he kept pursuing Amir Sjarifudin, a leader of Gerindo, to continue this action, latter Van Mook offered an administrative position to him (Wilson, 2008: 156). Corresponding to *Gerindo's milisi bumiputra*, since the occupation of Japan upon China, there were some militias operating in the Netherlands Indies which were organized by certain groups. Mainly those groups upheld an anti fascist ideology.

Finally the military conscription was imposed gradually by inviting all of potentially eligible drafted European. According to the ordinance, all of Dutchman with maximum 46 years of age in the Netherlands Indies was obliged to register himself. Otherwise, every violation to this regulation would be sanctioned with imprisonment and fines.¹⁸ As time went by, this attempt faced difficulties as the number of manpower which was provided by European draftees did not meet the requirement. Although several times ignored by the government, finally in January 1941, only a few days after Thamrin pass away, the possibility of forming indigenous militia was once more surfaced.¹⁹ However this prospect of indigenous militia seemed gloomy without heading a wide acceptance and

eventually, the government went to a decision on limited indigenous militia.

The Loyalty of the Indigenous and Civil Right: A Colonial Debate

Along with the history of the Netherlands Indies, the government had to think carefully when they had to assess recruitment for every military service due to the vital military role for the state. Besides considering the standard requirement for the military service such physical-medical condition and loyalty, the promoter also had to gaze steadily on the financial and political consequences.²⁰

The indigenous loyalty always had been source of anxiety for the Dutch therefore the idea to armament the indigenous beyond the royal army was considered as taboo. The presumption over indigenous loyalty had emerged among the Dutch in the Netherlands Indies since the Indian mutiny in 1859 which, in their view, captured disloyalty of indigenous soldier. This issue suspended all of discussion over the indigenous conscription in the rest of the century. Having overcome series of war, mostly against Islamic community, in nineteenth century, the Dutch would never intend to hang on their security to the local considering the majority population in the Netherlands Indies was Moslem (Teitler, 1980: 23).

As the government attempted to surpass its army and to encourage the awareness on the matter of the defense in the Netherlands Indies, in 1904, they did not keen to involve the Indonesian into the program but preferred to concentrate on the role of conscription for European to build a strong defense for the Netherlands Indies.²¹ An attempt to include the indigenous, specifically indigenous Christian, into the conscription was done by L.H. Berg in 1907, who tried to convince the government about the importance of extensive force. In doing so, he calculated the necessity of army roughly and described the procedure of

recruitment quite systematically.²² Criticisms to his idea appeared one year later when the Dutch military officers were questioning the consequences from his proposal related with practical, political and economical matters.²³ The opponent had parallel opinion with the idea of the Governor General, Idenburg, who in 1906 had stated the indigenous conscription was a risky issue to deal due to the great difficulty to obtain the sympathy of the indigenous people as if this matter would be carried out, then the Dutch government would face financial problem to maintain a massive army (Bussemaker, 2001: 417).

As Bussemaker has noted, the discussion about the indigenous involvement to reinforce the army was growing more intensive and reached a peak in the years around the World War I. In 1912, the government made a refusal over the possibility of the indigenous conscription using cultural evidence by stating that the Javanese had no military tradition, hence the indigenous conscription could not be effectively applied. This consideration was countered by the Dutch military thinkers such as the retired naval officer Van der Sluis who projected non Javanese inhabitant such as peoples from Preanger, Madura, Bali and Lombok to be drafted. Further, it became clear that this government's argument over the Javanese did not suit with military service was not the true reasons but more part of a polite way of diplomacy. In the view of military, though the indigenous loyalty was still a great matter, the military thinkers also included some practical considerations that increasing manpower was vital for the defense of the Netherlands Indies. Therefore their ideas were different with common opinion of the government. However the discourses regarding proposal of indigenous conscription expressed that the government constantly doubted the loyalty of indigenous people besides the government also hesitated over political consequence (Graaff, 1997: 423).

When the war in Europe erupted and the Netherlands were occupied by Germany, a changed priority in the military program occurred in the Netherlands Indies. Shifting from the previous years, by 1940 the effort to improve manpower was equivalent with the effort of machinery the military equipment. In facing crucial time due to the war, the Dutch either administrative or military authority came to the decision on a consideration about the importance of improving defense in the matter of manpower by including the indigenous. At that time, two requests on the possibility of extending the manpower for the army were proposed by GAPI a few days after German invaded Poland and by the *Weerbaarheid* Commission in October 1940. However, GAPI's manifest headed no large acceptance from the Dutch government. On the other hand, the *Weerbaarheid* Commission successfully convinced the government by its proposal. Supported by a consideration from the military circle, the *Weerbaarheid* Commission urged the government to take an important decision about the possibility to apply conscription for the Indonesians.²⁴ According to the *Weerbaarde*s Commission the establishment of an indigenous militia, which was limited in some regions, could be a preferable option to prevent the growing threat in the east. However, this crucial issue was initially adjourned by the government due to practical problem.

The *Weerbaarheid* Commission's proposal was submitted to the Governor General and then it was continued to the Walter minister in London on 5 December 1940. According to this proposal, the conscription aimed to form two territorial divisions as supplement for the army. The conscription would be applied in Java and Madura, Ambon and Manado, which meant limited in the sense of region. Regarding the consideration to the draftees from Java and Madura, the government realized besides those were the most densely populated islands, there were also devices to mobilize people such as some

traditional soldiers employed by traditional realms such as Legion Mangkunegaran and Barisan Madoera which could be good supplement for the army. Consequently, the plan expected about 30.000 men could be able to gather from Java and Madura. With regard to Ambonese and Manadonese draftees, those ethnic groups were the most favorite choice for the Dutch as described in the proposal as people who had lent their heart to the country. Moreover the government also considered their religious background as Christian and their loyalty (Bussemaker, 2001: 415). By imposing conscription toward Ambonese and Manadonese, the government expected 3,000 men could be gathered from each region. With regard of the military strategy changed in May 1941, those draftees would be integrated within the KNIL.

Compiling a number of military and financial considerations, the *Weerbaarheid* Commission's plan on the conscription also mentioned that the formation of an indigenous militia was needed not only in the sense of strengthening the force but also could lighter the budged. The government provided 309 million gulden to run those programmes of expanding the manpower and another project of continuing modernize the armament, at the same time. By forming the indigenous militia, Major General Ter Poorten—who latter became the KNIL supreme commandant—calculated that the army could add two divisions of militia and mobilizing-motorizing seven divisions of infantry by spending 184 million for Java and Madura, and 6.5 million for Ambon and Manado, these expenditures could be paid gradually. He estimated 37.6 million and another 1.7 million would be spent each year as running cost which had been included salary and regular maintenance.²⁵ This was an inexpensive military expenditure in comparison to expanding the regular army or even to form the European militia. As a comparison, daily salaries for the Indonesian militia were 10

cent for troop, 30 cent for corporal and 60 cent sergeant, for the European militia it increased 4-5 times specifically 45 cent, 90 cent and 170 cent.²⁶ The salary for an indigenous troop in the militia was under the lowest daily standard wage at that time about 24 cent (Mansvelt, 1979: 120). By running the plan, the army could save large amount of money for continuing their project to modernize the military outfits.²⁷

Although the proposal was convincing where it concerned budgetary efficiency, it also instigated new debates. If the conscription met a success, the Netherlands Indies would be guarded by 36,000 militias next to 54,000 the regular soldiers, of which more than two third from the entire regular soldiers (about 36,000 men) were Indonesian (Kemperman, in: Jong, 2002: 32). This account, around 72,000 Indonesians in army, should make the Dutch government in the Netherlands Indies worry.²⁸ Although in the military estimation those large number of indigenous soldier was a great help, politically speaking it had an extensive compensation.

The Dutch government mistrusted in the indigenous people's loyalty especially after The *Zeven Province* mutiny which was still imprinted in their memory. Moreover, as it had been considered by the Governor General, obligating Indonesian to serve for defending the Netherlands Indies would correspond with the extension of their political right. Therefore, in the Governor General's correspondence to Walter, he asked for some considerations regarding the loyalty and political right. Walter replied that Indonesians were disloyal and he concerned that the large involvement of indigenous in the army would potentially jeopardize the effectiveness of defense.²⁹ As a solution for those problems, the Dutch government in the Netherlands Indies came to the decision in a practical sense of recruiting and classifying the draftees. Hence the government and the *Weerbaarheids* commission conceptualized a new plan about

the indigenous conscription which would be applied by adding more limitation. This plan would be run by involving local administrator in order to gather the masses. After Walter's visit to the Netherlands Indies in April-May 1941, he realized that the limited indigenous militia would be useful to defend the Netherlands Indies.³⁰

According to the new draft of *Richtlijnen voor de recruiteering der Inheemsche Militie*, in spite of physical and medical examination three additional requirements were imposed which were included educational and family background, occupation and salary, religion.³¹ Every candidate had to be suited with at least one of those categories. A preferably draftee candidate at least had to hold HIS (*Hollandsch Inlandsche School*) certificate and came from nobleman family simply indicated by title 'Mas' for the Javanese. The second qualification as eligible candidate was *landsdienaren* (public-servant) with minimum monthly wage 50 gulden or above. And the rest, the indigenous Christian could be enrolled automatically after passing physical and medical examination.

Based on those requirements it can be assumed that people who could afford the requisites should be belonging to 'the Dutch society' or, at least, culturally the citizen of the colonial state as they had been attached to the Dutch politically and culturally. This limitation only allowed people who had privileges as Dutch such as well educated people, nobleman, civil servant, and Christian, but on the other hand it restricted common people to enter the militia. By applying those criteria, the government assumed that they had solved the dilemma of indigenous people's loyalty because those who fitted the requirement had been proved as loyalist and had minimum intentions to resist. However, responding those additional requisitions for the indigenous militia in the new plan, the Dutch military officers were

not unanimous. Ter Poorten argued that the restriction would impede the effort of strengthening the army considering people who suited with the requirement not always fitted for the military service.³²

A closer look to the plan of the limited conscription, one would find that this design only inclined to the favor of the Dutch. By doing so, they were not only able to relatively assure the loyalty of the indigenous but also able to avoid the political consequence. As the Indonesian nationalist expected, their participation to defense the country should be paid by extending the civil rights for the people, as they said no conscription without representation. In this regard, G. Teitler has argued that since the turn of the nineteenth century, there was a consideration in the circle of the Dutch government that an indigenous militia would bring political consequences of extending civil right for the people. Therefore Teitler links the ethical policy of the early twentieth century to the intention of forming an indigenous militia (Teitler, 1980: 12-3). According to Teitler, the government effort to improve the living standard of the peoples in the Netherlands Indies in the matters of education, medical and agricultural related with the government attempt to encouraged self-awareness of Indonesian to defend the country.

Actually, sort of political effect of an indigenous conscription had been extensively discussed within the Dutch circle since the turn of the century. As the colonial government realized the extent of political consequences of an indigenous conscription, apparently, they attempted to maneuver in many ways in order to avoid the corollary and always hesitated to make it into realize. An article written by Captain W Muurling, a member of the KNIL general, suggested instead of examining some practical aspects of the conscription, the government had to recognize their political right. According to him, the conscription

would only suit for develop Indonesians otherwise Indonesians who had not been politically mature such as villagers could not be drafted.³³ Nevertheless, this limited recruitment, favored with a strong political tendency of the Dutch colonial government, faced oppositions particularly from Indonesian nationalist. Conversely, the decision to form limited militia was continuously debated. GAPI which was absent in the vote resisted against this limited conscription and insisted an unlimited indigenous militia.

Conclusion

Regardless the colonial state eventually collapsed by the Japanese invasion, the colonial government had shown many attempts to enhance the defense on the eve of Pacific War. Having support in the terms of financial enabled the government to improve the defense, apparently it only went well to advance up the weapon but it went otherwise on the terms of manpower as only few successes were gained. It means that the actual problem of defense is much more complicated rather than some practical matters in terms of military and links directly to some political issues. Since manpower was a decisive part in the defence, the government had to mobilize the indigenous to defend the colonial state. However, this was a very sensitive issue.

The indigenous participation in the defense crushed with the colonial anxiousness at indigenous loyalty on the other hand it also bore a consequence on the Indonesian civil right. As demonstrated that with this decision, the government strove to strengthen the military force, but only took halfway measures in arming the indigenous population therefore only selected Indonesian would participate. This reflects the colonial anxiety over indigenous loyalty and an effort to avoid political consequences of extending political rights for the Indonesian. The colonial anxiety and reluctant attitude to deal with the political

consequences of the extension of civil right for the Indonesian eventually jeopardized the attempt to boost the defense of the Netherlands Indie in the brink of Japanese invasion.

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Archives

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- Telegram GG to Walter, 24 October 1940, nr. 3575/G.S.1-1, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. collection NA, accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688
- Telegram GG to Walter, 5 December 1941, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. collection NA accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688
- Telegram GG to Walter, 2 April 1941, nr. 3575/G.S.1-1, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. Collection NA, accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688.
- Telegram GG to Walter, 23 April 1941, nr. 3575/G.S.1-1, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. Collection NA, accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688.
- Telegram GG to Walter nr. 824 Geh/40, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. Collection NA accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688.

Newspapers, magazines and periodicals

- Berita Oemoem*, 10 October 1940
- Berita Oemoem*, 7 Nov 1940.
- Berita Oemoem*, 26 April 1941.
- Berita Oemoem*, 29 Oktober 1940.
- Berita Oemoem*, 24 January 1941.
- Java Bode*, 23 January 1941
- Geeft Acht*, 8 Februari 1941, 2e Nr 6.
- Geeft Acht*, 12 April 41, Nr 15.
- Staatsblad* nr. 582 1939, and 1940 no 78.

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Endnotes

- 1 By 1927 anti-colonial movements were systematically removed from the political landscape of the colonial state. As a consequence, a number of Indonesian prominent figures were exiled (Shiraisi, 2001).

- 2 Indeed, this is only discussing the government side, although this issue significantly parallels with the indigenous response. For further discussion over indigenous response and some discourses over political consequences for indigenous involvement in the war preparation programs see Uji Nugroho W, *Militia Politics: Civil rights and the debate on indigenous conscription in Java, 1940-1942*, BA Thesis Leiden University, 2011,
 - 3 'Het Africanse Recruten Korps' IMT 23 jaargang 1889.
 - 4 One noticeable Javanese high rank officer in the KNIL regiment was Sentot Prawirodirdjo, formerly Diponegoro's commander. (Brown, 2003: 81-9)
 - 5 (Jong, 1984: 359). *Geeft Acht*, 8 Februari 1941, 2e Nr 6, p. 133, and 12 April 41, Nr 15, p. 350. For a comprehensive story about the early involvement of these traditional armies in the colonial military force see *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië tweede druk* (Leiden: Brill, 1918), p. 454-7.
 - 6 Since the nineteenth century, Java had become the major concern for the colonial government in the matter of defense but the outer islands, which produced oil, rubber and other minerals and commodities, became increasingly important since the 1870s. (Bussemaker, 2001:373).
 - 7 Some historian argues including de Jong argue that there was a communist cell in the Dutch marine, but the more contemporary examinations show that the mutiny occurred spontaneously and unplanned well due to the cut at salary and poor environment of ship works (Blom, 1983).
 - 8 The number of Indonesian crew had been reduced to less than fifty percent. (Groen in Post [eds.], 2010:6).
 - 9 It included three battlecruisers, six subchasers, several torpedoes, one ship tank, sixty nine flying boats and artilleries (Jong, 1984:610).
 - 10 To some extent, this success in earning money for supporting RAF irritated some of Islam organization especially bonded MIAI because in the same time they also attempt to raise money to support Indonesians Hajj who were restrained in Mecca. Their effort to collect money went slowly to be compared with to the Dutch attempt to support RAF. *Berita Oemoem*, 29 Oktober 1940.
 - 11 W.A. van Rees, 'Onder-opsir wong Boemi', *Volksmanak Djawi 1940*, p. 222.
 - 12 Some remarks about COVIM see *Geeft Acht*, 8 februari 1941, Nr.6. p.120.
 - 13 Fifth column refers to a clandestine effort of undermining from within. In a different perspective, some historians mentioned the *Stadswacht* was equal to militia, which is true in terms of their status as a supplement force raised from common civilians, only without conscription applied as one in militia. (Jong, 1984:645-6)
 - 14 Another interesting point was the using of BV (*Beslotchen Venoschapt*—incorporation or firm) term to point out the *stadwacht* enemy. While marching in cities, the *officer* (instructuur) frequently shouted to the troops to keep alerted on any tricky attacks from BV. (Berdoeri, 2004:158)
 - 15 *Berita Oemoem*, 10 October 1940
 - 16 *Berita Oemoem*, 7 Nov 1940.
 - 17 *Berita Oemoem*, 26 April 1941.
 - 18 *Staatsblad* nr. 582 1939, and 1940 no 78.
 - 19 *Java Bode*, 23 January 1941, *Berita Oemoem*, 24 January 1941.
 - 20 Reeling Knap, C. "Wervingskeuring bij Javanen" in *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*, 66 (1935), Batavia, pp.1269-1282. Regarding physical and medical condition had been a big problem to recruit the indigenous in regular military service though on the other hand their fighting capability could not be doubted. Obvious example was the recruitment which was held in Java, from 2000 enlisted Javanese only 34 men who could afford the medical investigation. An effort to get around to this problem was to recruit the other European
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- such as Denmark, Germany or employed African and Persian. See for instance 'Het Africane Recruten Korps', *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*, 23 (1889), Batavia.
- 21 Kooij H.A., 'Indie weerbaar; eene inleiding', *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*, 35 (1904), Batavia, pp.106-316.
- 22 Berg, L.H., 'Algemeen Dienstplicht in Nederlandsch-indie', *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*, 38 (1907), Batavia, pp.951-71.
- 23 See Tissot van Patot, A. 'Algemeene Dienstplicht in Ned. Indie', *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*, 39 (1908), pp. 260-2.
- 24 Telegram GG to Walter, 24 October 1940, nr. 3575/G.S.1-1, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. Collection NA accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688
- 25 Telegram GG to Walter, 24 October 1940, nr. 3575/G.S.1-1, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. collection NA, accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688
- 26 Telegram GG to Walter, 5 Dec. 1941, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. collection NA accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688
- 27 In the respect of expenditure, KNIL arranged to spend about 65 million gulden in 1941 to buy 30 section 2 cm luchtdoelgeschut, 185 utility tractors, 1000 vrachtauto's, 400 solo motoren, 300 zijspanmotoren, 100 panserautos, 500 vechtwagen and establishing 4 training camps.
- 28 Since long time the unbalance number of the army had been criticized by some military officer, for instance Vellenga L.A, an captain of infantry, wrote an article who had attempt to convince that the KNIL employed minimum 15.000 Dutchmen. See Vellenga L.A, "Doet Nederland voldoende voor verdediging van Nederlandsch-Indie?" in *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*, 71 (1940), Batavia.
- 29 Telegram GG to Walter, 2 April 1941, nr. 3575/G.S.1-1, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. Collection NA, accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688.
- 30 See Telegram GG to Walter, 23 April 1941, nr. 3575/G.S.1-1, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. Collection NA, accession nr. 2.10.45 index 688.
- 31 Telegram GG to Walter nr. 824 Geh/40, *Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen*. Collection NA nr. 2.10.45 index 688.
- 32 Major General Ter Poorten who most of the time involved in a personal dislike with the Governor General Van Starckenborg disagreed with two points on the conscription which required intellectuality and administrative position. Military service, as he said, had no relation with intellectuality. Even it would make the attempt worst because generally people with high intellectuality incapable to do physical exercises. Furthermore, he believed that to some extent people with higher intellectuality surfaced more political tendency compared to people with lower intellectuality. In the respect of professional who employed in militia he also refused considering the fact that during the war their contribution in executive field would be intensely needed because of the lack of the capable personnel to maintain executive arrangement.
- 33 Muurling. W, "Overzicht van de Millitie Voorstellen", in *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*, 46 (1915), Batavia, pp. 864-879.