The course of co-option: Co-option of local power-holders as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies. With case studies on Dutch experiences during the Aceh War (1873-c. 1912) and the Uruzgan campaign (2006-2010)

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Part II
The Aceh War
Chapter 4
Chapter 4: Aceh and the first decades of the war, 1873-1893

4.1 Introduction

Since the early days of the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, the [Dutch] United East-India Company) in the seventeenth century, the Dutch had learned to rely on co-option of local power-holders for obtaining control over trade and eventually also populations in various locales throughout the Indonesian archipelago. An illustration is given by the VOC's 150-year spice monopoly on the Malukan islands that was the result of both voluntary and forced contracts with local rulers backed up by a continuous threat of punitive expeditions.1 This collaboration method brought the Dutch control of local populations in places of interest and colonial officials were capable of maintaining this control -despite several uprisings- as they continuously adapted their policy to the logic of each specific locale. Dutch colonialism came to a temporarily halt when the Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands evoked the British to seize control of the Dutch colonial possessions. The British intermezzo ended on the 13th of August 1814 when the East Indies were officially returned to The Netherlands (although the actual hand-over would start in 1816). The Dutch government now took over the helm (the VOC was disbanded in 1799) and over the course of the century established political authority in the complete archipelago. The Dutch colonial state had to re-establish the collaborative equations with local power-holders as the British intermezzo had left the peoples of the Indies with a ‘rebellious spirit’ and many of the former co-optees had decided not to accept a renewed subjugation to Dutch colonial policy and its economic methods.2 This practice of restoring and extending control in the Indonesian archipelago would require nearly a century of continuous campaigning; it was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that the idea of the ‘Netherlands-Indies’ fully materialized as only then the Dutch succeeded to establish political authority into the last corners of the archipelago.3

One of those territories to be added to the Netherlands-Indies was the northern Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh. Although the Dutch launched a first expedition in 1873, it was not until c. 1912 that the last remaining rebels gave up their guerrilla war and Aceh was finally pacified.4 Thereby the almost forty-year Aceh War became the most protracted campaign fought during the expansion of the Dutch colonial state. Moreover, the war took a heavy toll on the scarce colonial resources as it required the continuous commitment of a vast number of colonial officials.

forces and claimed a substantial part of the colonial budget. A campaign of such magnitude and duration was unprecedented and therefore the Aceh War is unique in Dutch colonial history. Moreover, winning this war turned out to be crucial for the establishment of the colonial state of the Netherlands-Indies as the approach developed to win the Aceh War was the key to ‘unlimited expansion’. This brought the colonial government control of the populations in the various locales throughout the archipelago, which sufficed for embarking on a process of further development of the colonial state. It is this new approach to colonial warfare that emerged during the Aceh War that matters to us in the context of this analysis; which methods and means were instrumental for obtaining control of the population in the rebellious northern Sumatran Sultanate?

The first two decades of the Aceh War proved disastrous to the Dutch. Despite tremendous efforts the colonial army did not succeed in pacifying Aceh. We will discuss these years later in this chapter in order to provide a background for a more detailed analysis of the Aceh War. Here it suffices to mention that the Dutch did not succeed in establishing effective collaborative relationships with local power-holders in Aceh’s fragmented societal landscape and that after twenty years of warfare Dutch control was limited to a fortified line surrounding the capital Kutaradja (as the Dutch called it) and its port Ulêëlheue. The situation changed for the better when the Dutch gradually adopted a population-centric strategy during the latter part of the 1890s. This new strategy, that was later dubbed the ‘Aceh strategy’, prescribed pacification through combined military and political actions under command of a single military officer who embodied both civil and military authority.

Mainstay of this approach was a thorough ethnographical analysis of the local population as brought to perfection by the colonial government’s advisor on Islam and indigenous affairs, Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgonje. Considering the nature of the Aceh strategy, it is not surprising that Brocades Zaalberg and De Moor have referred to the Aceh experiences as ‘the roots of Dutch counterinsurgency’, and that other scholars have categorized the Dutch colonial ethnographic studies that supported this strategy as ‘counterinsurgency research’.

8 Acehnese names and titles are spelled as suggested either by Anthony Reid in his work An Indonesian Frontier, Acehnese and other histories of Sumatra (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005), or James T. Siegel in The Rope of God (Ann Harbor: the University of Michigan Press, 2000). As there exists no plural form of Acehnese words, the original term is unchanged in plural.
Just like their British and French contemporaries the Dutch colonial officials introduced the principle of minimum force, or so-called ‘functional force’ or ‘surgical force’, in their new strategy.11 Under influence of major (later general, and ultimately Governor-General) Joannes Benedictus ‘Jo’ Van Heutsz the idea of the selective use of force as a measure against malevolent elements among the population exclusively became firmly rooted in the Aceh strategy. The local people were considered future subjects who should be treated with care. As discussed in chapters two and three, this principle was typically explained according to the normative framework of the colonial era. This was also the case for the Dutch colonial officials in the Indonesian archipelago. The reality of the Aceh strategy, therefore -and despite the Dutch military’s official policy that the law of armed conflict was applicable to colonial warfare-, was characterized by the use of brutal force whenever military commanders deemed this necessary.12 Thus, we can ascertain that also in this new Dutch strategy the use of force never was far away.

The doctrinal need for precise application of force, however, fuelled the military adaptations that were part of the Aceh strategy; it stimulated the further development and adoption of a revolutionary new concept of small, offensive, and agile contra-guerrilla units, the so-called Korps Marechaussee.13 Albeit this military adaptation was one of the key elements of the new strategy, this study predominantly focuses on the political side of the new method, as we will analyze co-option of local power-holders as part of the Aceh strategy. Like aforementioned, co-option of local power-holders had been a feature of Dutch colonial rule in the archipelago since its earliest days. The lack of results during the Aceh War demonstrated the need for a new political system of co-option in order to obtain control in protracted pacification campaigns in rebellious locales. This system was introduced in 1898 by Snouck Hurgronje and Van Heutsz and is often referred to under the name of the formal contract that regulated the relationship between co-optee and colonial administration, the Korte Verklaring (KV, short declaration).14 Whereas co-optive relationships in the past had been based upon mutual obligations and equality between colonial administration and

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local power-holders, the new system first and foremost placed co-optees in a position of dependency. The Aceh strategy thus aimed at obtaining control over the population through co-optive relationships in which the colonial administration’s dominance was uncontested.

In order to augment our understanding of co-option as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies, we will study the implementation of the KV during the Aceh War. This cannot be done thoroughly without also studying the failure to establish effective co-optive relationships before the introduction of the new method. One of the main drivers for the change in the political approach was the 1896 treason of the colonial administration’s main Acehnese ally at that moment, a warlord named Teuku Uma (Teuku is a title for a male descent of an ulèëbalang’s (Acehnese lord) family). The end of this co-optive relationship was one of the largest debacles in Dutch colonial history as Uma departed the colonial administration’s side at the moment he had become its pivotal asset at the local political marketplace. Thus, in this part of this study we will enhance our insight in co-option through an analysis of the Dutch fiasco with Teuku Uma (Chapter Five), and the implementation of the new co-option policy that followed this failure (Chapter Six). We will end the second part of this book by discussing the findings on co-option during the Aceh War in the light of the analytical framework constructed in the first part (Chapter Seven). But before we engage in the detailed study of co-option, we should first sketch the background of the Aceh War. Therefore this chapter will discuss respectively Aceh’s history and the situation in the nineteenth century as well as the causes of the war. Additionally we will sketch the course of the war from 1873 until 1893, when the co-optive relationship between the Dutch and Teuku Uma was officially sealed. We will conclude this chapter by drawing some conclusions on those first two decades of the war. But for a thorough understanding of the local circumstances we will now start with describing Aceh itself.

4.2 The background of the war: an analysis of nineteenth century Aceh and the causes of the war

Understanding nineteenth century Aceh requires us first to delve into its history in order to uncover the roots of the Acehnese state. Therefore we need to go back as far as the eleventh century when Arabs and Indians sought their way east in pursuit of trade, and the northwest point of Sumatra became their bridgehead for disclosure of the riches that laid beyond. By the end of the thirteenth century this had resulted in the introduction of Islam and political

16 See Martijn Kitzen, ‘Between treaty and treason’.
17 Both chapters four and five include elements that are based upon fragments of Martijn Kitzen, ‘Between treaty and treason’.
18 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 1.
organization in the form of trade-oriented port-kings. Marco Polo actually visited the region in 1293 and described the influence of Arab traders on one of those kingdoms as it ‘is so much frequented by Saracen merchants that they converted the natives to the law of Mahommet’.\(^\text{19}\) Thus the region that later would become known as Aceh was home to a variety of port-states that shared Islam and trade. Although sharply divided, it appears those statelets respected each other’s suzerainty.\(^\text{20}\) Yet it is in this period that the roots of the Acehnese state can be found. When confronted with a Portuguese attempt to secure dominance over the Straits of Malacca, the port-states united in a successful attempt to expel the foreign intruders. Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah of Aceh, ‘a hitherto unimportant state at the extreme northwest of the island’, was the instigator who rallied and led the anti-Portuguese forces during their campaign (1520-1524).\(^\text{21}\) This not only resulted in a victory against the Portugese, but also led to the creation of the Acehnese Sultanate. For a century the Sultanate prospered until it reached the peak of its power under Sultan Iskander Muda (‘Young Alexander’, 1607-1636). The sultan controlled all important ports and therefore he also controlled the trade in valuable spices, especially pepper. His monopoly of the pepper trade was so absolute that he openly proclaimed the Dutch and British merchants ‘the beggars of Europe’, who were obliged to come and eat the pepper out of his hand at the prices of his demand.\(^\text{22}\)

The Acehnese Sultanate united the four regions that became known as Aceh.\(^\text{23}\) These regions are Aceh Besar (or Aceh Proper, Great Aceh), Pidië, the East, and the West. Aceh Besar consists of the coastal plain of the north coast and the valley of the Aceh River. This region was the Sultan’s heartland and therefore it contained the capital, Banda Aceh Dar-es-Salaam, which was situated near the mouth of the river. The trade monopoly increased the city’s importance, as Acehnese spices were only available to foreign traders through the capital’s market. The Sultan’s wealthy court was a centre of Islamic trading and education networks. This further augmented the Islamic identity of Aceh, which had already become entrenched as the state’s ideological basis for the struggle against the Portugese in the region.\(^\text{24}\) The capital’s wealth and cosmopolitan importance benefited Aceh Besar as a whole and consequently it became one of the most densely populated areas of Sumatra. Pidië (vulgo Pedir), situated to the east and south of Aceh Besar, is a broad, well-irrigated plain and traditionally important as it is the main producer of rice in Aceh. The East and the West are the marshy or mountainous coastal strips that were home to most of the pepper plantations. Those areas were less

\(^{21}\) Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 2-3. Anthony Reid, An Indonesian Frontier, 6-8.
\(^{23}\) The following fragments are based on James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 12-14, and Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 1-5.
populated than Aceh Besar or Pidië, and the economic profitable industry drew a lot of settlers from the latter regions. The inlands of the East and West consist of inaccessible mountain lands. Exception is the area around the volcanic lake Laut Tawar as well as the lands direct to its south that are home to respectively the Gajo and Alas people.

The Sultanate not only physically united these regions, it also introduced a new administrative system. The country was divided into ulêëbalangships and mukim. The latter were called after the original amount of village parishes (mukim) that convened for Friday prayers in a single mosque under the leadership of an Imam. The ulêëbalang (from the Malay hulubalang or war-leader) were originally feudal lords who received tenure over a number of mukim. Pidië was fragmented in such principalities in order to enhance the Sultan’s control over this former independent kingdom, and in the East and the West ulêëbalangships followed the geographical realities, as they typically were situated perpendicular to the coast with one of the many rivers as their axis.

Following internal and external problems, the Sultanate faced a sharp decline after the death of Iskander Muda. While the Sultan remained an important symbol for all Acehnese, by 1699 the monarch’s power was limited to the capital and its port. This loss of state authority allowed the emergence of a new political pattern during the 17th and 18th centuries. The administrative structure of the Sultanate, however, shaped this new political system as it were the officials of the state that filled the power vacuum. The Ulêëbalang gradually became hereditary chiefs with an entrepreneurial character, whose potential to cultivate land or open up trade appealed to the local communities. The shared recognition of the Sultan and the common ancestry of the administrative system, however, could not obscure that the formerly unified Acehnese state had gradually become a fragmented assembly of distinct statelets. The various miniature states even fought each other, and could openly ignore the Sultan. In times of crisis, however, the Sultan’s symbolic power acted as a unifying agent for countering internal problems as well as external threats.

Now we have explored the history of the Acehnese state it is time to focus on Aceh at the time of the war, the nineteenth century. Although the war lasted well into the 20th century, a description of Aceh and its international relations during the nineteenth century suffices for explaining the war’s background. We will first discuss Aceh’s political and societal situation and conclude with its position vis-à-vis the largest colonial powers in the region, the Dutch and the British, in order to reveal the origins of the Aceh War.

25 Anthony Reid, An Indonesian Frontier, 8.
4.2.1 Aceh in the nineteenth century

The decline of the Sultanate not only affected the Sultan’s political authority, it also ended his trade monopoly. As a result commerce was no longer restricted to Banda Aceh Dar-es-Salaam. In all four regions of Aceh ulëëbalang entrepreneurship thrived as local markets became accessible to foreign merchants. This process of political as well as economical fragmentation was further enhanced by European entrepôts, which came to dominate trade in the nineteenth century. Consequently the position of the ulëëbalang, who ‘levied tolls on their own markets, frequently warring each other for control of territory or trade’, was further strengthened; they became firmly entrenched as the most powerful political agents in Acehnese society.27 The new balance of power and the adjoining pattern of political organization that had evolved can be illustrated by the situation in the Sultan’s traditional heartland, Aceh Besar, which was prosperous and densely populated with an estimated 300,000 inhabitants in the nineteenth century.28

Aceh Besar was historically divided in three federations of ulëëbalang, the three sagi (corners).29 Each sagi was named after the number of mukim that it originally contained. Thus, the federation on the west-bank of the Aceh river was known as the XXVI mukim, the one on the east-bank as XXV mukim, and the federation in the up-stream hill lands was called XXII mukim. Reid has effectively demonstrated that by the nineteenth century these names merely reflected the original situation as especially the large and powerful sagi of XXII mukim had witnessed an exponential growth of its population and actually comprised 36 mukim at that time.30 The leaders of the sagi were hereditary chiefs, who originally had led the federations in war. They were known as Panglima (title for superior lord) Sagi. The three Panglima did not only exert authority over their respective sagi, they were also considered the guardians of the Sultanate.31 This position was acknowledged by each new Sultan through a tribute made upon his installation. Especially the family of the Panglima Polem who ruled the sagi of the XXII mukim obtained a powerful position in this system of political organization. The other two Panglima Sagi’s political authority did not match their formal position as rivals within their federations had become more important than those chieftains. The importance of such newly emerging agents was officially acknowledged through their appointment as additional custodians of the Sultanate. By the nineteenth century the twelve most important ulëëbalang (four from each sagi, including the Panglima) formed the council that overviewed the succession of the Sultan.

28 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 4.
29 Graphically Aceh Besar can be presented as a triangle. The name sagi refers to the corners of this triangle. See Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 4-5, Azarja Harmanmy, “Vertrouwbare berigten”, 26-27.
30 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 4.
31 Ibid.
The political system in Aceh Besar not only reveals that the uléëbalang had grown more important than the Sultan, who by now could only exert his authority with the agreement of the most important uléëbalang. It also shows that even within the boundaries of their own sagi, uléëbalang were not only working together in alliances, but also competed with each other as is demonstrated by the decline of the role of the Panglima Sagi of XXV and XXVI mukim and the additional appointments in the hereditary council. Thus, despite the existence of an abundance of traditional titles and hierarchical structures, it were the uléëbalang who had become the primary political agents in Acehnese society. The competition and cooperation between those agents determined the balance of political power in nineteenth century Aceh. The complicated, fragmented nature of this system is easily illustrated when one takes note of the fact that next to the dozens of uléëbalang in Aceh Besar, there were more than 100 uléëbalang-led statelets in Pidië, the East, and the West. Thus the uléëbalang were the legitimate local power-holders who dominated the political marketplace at the grassroots level in nineteenth century Aceh.

The dominant position of the uléëbalang, however, is somewhat misleading; although their political power had evolved since the decline of the Sultanate, uléëbalang legitimacy was not as well developed. Aceh’s adat (traditional, customary law) regulated the uléëbalang’s position through sarakata (letters patent) issued by the Sultan. Thus the monarch retained some of his influence, and despite ‘the complete flouting of his authority’, the uléëbalang paid ‘great honor’ to the Sultan. Moreover, this role as source of legitimacy gave the Sultan some leverage to exploit divisions and rivalry between uléëbalang in order to extend his own authority. Additionally the Sultan remained powerful enough to collect some tolls and influence trade. Typically the Sultan would also use his influence to rally uléëbalang to fight for his cause as he did not posses a band of armed followers. Armed rivalry between the Sultan and the numerous local power-holders that manoeuvred on Aceh’s political marketplace was not unusual, as conflicts were even fought over such unsavoury matters as dancing boys.

Therefore, it can be said that albeit political authority had shifted from the Sultanate to the uléëbalang, the former was still a significant political force in nineteenth century Aceh.

The cause of this contradictory reality was the uléëbalang’s faltering legitimacy and their need to have their status confirmed by the Sultan. Whereas the once centrally ruled Acehnese state was fragmented into numerous chiefdoms, its legal framework remained essential to the uléëbalang. Despite their disregard for a higher central authority, they still were adat chiefs sanctioned from above. This unique feature of the nineteenth century Acehnese polity triggers questions about the legitimacy of the uléëbalang vis-à-vis the population in their chiefdoms; apparently the uléëbalang perceived a lack of legitimacy from below. Were they truly legitimate

32 Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 12.
33 James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 47. For a complete overview of the relationship between uléëbalang and Sultan, see James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 35-47.
34 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 16-17.
authorities in the eyes of the people, or was Acehnese society even more complicated than it already seemed? As we have seen in Chapter Two, answering these questions requires a better understanding of the position of those chiefs in the interlocking mesh of societal institutions. The partial networks of kinship, economy, and religion in nineteenth century Acehnese society have to be vetted in order to understand how local power-holders with weak legitimacy maintained their authority as the primary political agents in this society.

In order to understand Acehnese societal institutions, it is necessary to consider the specific composition of that society. Siegel has distinguished four distinct influence groups within Acehnese society, ulêèbalang, ulama (religious scholars), peasants and the Sultan and his group. Each group was encapsulated in its own world and did not depend on other groups for its basic role and identity. The Sultan fulfilled his symbolic position, the peasants lived in villages with their kin, the ulama studied in their religious schools, the dayah, and the ulêèbalang focused on their entrepreneurship (even without the Sultan's blessing). The groups accepted each other's position on the premise that Aceh was an Islamic society in which they could live side by side without being placed in strict hierarchical relationships. The application of Islamic property law in Aceh -as one of the few areas in Indonesia-, for instance, even guaranteed full land ownership rights for common farmers. Albeit Islam was the binding agent in Acehnese society, it was this other historical force, trade, that allowed the ulêèbalang to become the dominant political agents in this society. Their economic position not only allowed them to control trade and augment their own entrepreneurial activities, it also earned them influence over the people living in their chiefdoms. Thereby the ulêèbalang became the sole societal actors that were capable of bridging the gap between the distinct groups. How did it come that those chiefs managed to establish their political authority through their economic position, and why the other societal institutions, and especially religion, did not succeed in producing equally important political authorities that appealed to all groups in Acehnese society?

A localized variant of kinship was -and is- the basis of Acehnese society. Most Acehnese lived in villages, ‘where relationships were governed by kinship’, and which were led by genealogically determined leaders and a council of adult men. In the power vacuum caused by the decline of the Sultanate such structures had flourished, leading to largely autonomous kin-governed territorial units consisting of several mukim ‘which vied with the ulêèbalang for power’. By the nineteenth century, however, it was clear that the latter had prevailed in this struggle, as they had become the dominant actors on the local political marketplace. Kinship-based political authority thus succumbed to ulêèbalang authority that was based on an elaborate economic structure. Only in the less accessible inlands -which were also of less

36 This fragment is based on James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 11, 48, 68–69.
economic interest- kinship was the primary societal institution. How did the *uléébalang*’s economic power win and secure their dominant political position in Acehnese society?

Although often considered typical feudal lords, Aceh’s nineteenth century *uléébalang* were anything but feudal lords, and the people living in their *uléébalangships* (such a territory was sometimes called a *nanngrou*) were certainly no serfs. Typical feudal traits such as property and head taxes, or obligatory labour service did not exist in Aceh at that time. The relationship between authorities and their subjects were framed in matters of commerce. Where commodities were traded *uléébalang* authority materialized. The rights of the chiefs, the *wasé uléébalang*, allowed them to collect import and export duties over goods (typically 5 to 10 percent) and, for instance, levy toll for the use of roads. In return the *uléébalang* acted as intermediates linking sellers and (foreign) buyers and they were supposed to maintain the roads and guarantee security and peace in their territories. Moreover, in their role as entrepreneurs the chiefs typically held the largest stretches of agricultural land, which allowed them to be the most important facilitators of the local agricultural producers, especially in the fields of pepper, betel, and rice. *Uléébalang* involvement in the pepper industry even had led to dozens of new pepper-growing settlements along the coast strips of the East and the West, which had evolved into independent *uléébalang*-led statelets. Nineteenth Century *uléébalang*, thus, were primary figures of commerce, who combined this with political authority. Therefore we should now consider the nature and structure of this authority.

As explained in Chapter Two economic charisma typically spawns authority through a system of patronage. By addressing his follower’s need for resources for survival, an economic authority might grow to a full political authority who holds control of the local population. This is what also happened in the case of Aceh’s *uléébalang*. The chiefs drew their political authority from an elaborate patronage network. Within this network two distinct types of clients and corresponding ties can be distinguished. First there were the *uléébalang*’s closest followers, or *rakan* (although titles varied regionally). These clients totally depended on their patron. They lived in the vicinity of the chief and were even paid, fed and clothed by him. The bond that emerged from these ties was strong enough to create a kin-like solidarity in the form of extended families. This multi-stranded relationship between patron and client, however, was one of mutual interdependency. The *rakan* were pivotal to the *uléébalang* as they provided him with a militia-type capability to enforce his will if necessary.

In addition to these closest followers, the chief also used his economic power to weave a web of dependents among the local population, which primarily consisted of villagers. Local trade officials and kinship-authorities such as village and *mukim* heads were bought into the *uléébalang*’s patronage system, while the chief’s role as an entrepreneur in spices connected him with those depending on the spice industry. *Uléébalang* authority was mainly


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exerted through the kinship-authorities who regulated administration and settled disputes at the village level. Only when conflicts could not be solved through these local channels, cases were brought before an ulêëbalang court (often with an outcome that only benefited the chief himself). Although all involved took advantages from their relationship with the chief in return for their assistance in his trade and administration, these dyadic ties were single-stranded (economy-focused) and less solid than the ones with the rakan. Acehnese societal cleavages prevented a more profound crosscutting of ulêëbalang and villagers. The latter respected the chiefs’ authority, but did not consider them part of their own distinct group. Ulêëbalang legitimacy, therefore, was weakly rooted in the major part of the population. Moreover, the chiefs’ tendency to act out of self-interest and let personal economic profit prevail over communal benefits added to this weak legitimacy. This is exactly the reason why the ulêëbalang sought the recognition of the Sultan -who was deeply respected by the villagers as Aceh’s primary cultural symbol- through sarakata; it placed their limited ties with the villagers in a sphere of immortal traditions and therefore strengthened their political authority. Despite this traditionalization of ulêëbalang authority, their legitimacy remained fragile throughout the nineteenth century. In addition to their economic position, which brought them control over local resources (typically agricultural land and trade), and the Sultan's acknowledgement, it was not unusual for the chiefs to maintain their political authority with help of the rakan, who were used to enforce compliance of non-collaborative segments within the local population. Thus also the dark side typical for economically driven local power-holders manifested itself. To sum up, ulêëbalang legitimacy in nineteenth century Aceh was a complicated matter; on one hand it was strong enough to provide the chiefs the leverage to become the primary political authorities within Acehnese society, while simultaneously it could be so weak that the chiefs sometimes had to refer to the use of coercion against their subjects.

This analysis of the role of economy as a societal institution in nineteenth century Aceh brings us to the last of these institutions, religion. As mentioned Islam was -and still is- the binding agent of Acehnese society. Aceh’s adat was closely linked to religion as it was considered the local ‘means of fulfilling Islam’. Through the adat Islam culturally united all groups of Acehnese society under the leadership of the Sultan. In reality, however, each distinct societal group had its own vision on Islam and adat; they accepted it as the underpinning connecting them all, but brought it into practice according their own interpretation. The villagers, for instance, incorporated religion within their kinship structure, as the function of imeum (imam) had become a hereditary office that combined the spiritual and administrative leadership of a mukim. Thus also Islam encountered the strict distinctions within nineteenth century Acehnese society. In the vision of the ulama, the predominant religious authorities, Islam stressed ‘the unity of all men despite the social identities which

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42 James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 70.
separated them.\textsuperscript{44} Therefore the core message of the ulama not only concerned the afterlife, but also urged for a new society in which men would abandon their identity and unite as Muslims. This explains why, despite the respect they enjoyed, the ulama were not well tied to the other groups within Acehnese society; their call to leave behind traditional social identity did not appeal to the people. Consequently the religious authorities did not exert political authority, and neither did they consider themselves that way. Yet, the ulama were certainly not without political power, as the Dutch would experience during the Aceh War. The religious authorities held enough influence to mobilize the masses. But what then were the sources of this power?

Although the ulama did not underkeep solid ties with the other societal groups, their bond with the largest group, the peasants, was far from absent. The religious scholars typically were individuals who had left their village and kins at young age to study in a dayah.\textsuperscript{45} The ulama originally were peasants who had shifted their societal identity. Although this connection did not suffice for transferring a message of societal transition the people did not want to hear, it amplified messages that did appeal to the population. This happened in the case of the Acehnese struggle against the Dutch. The ulama perceived the Kompeuni, as the Acehnese commonly named the Dutch (referring to the VOC), to be kafirs (non-believers) and therefore called upon the population to conduct a perang sabil (holy war, Jihad).\textsuperscript{46} The link between ulama and peasants allowed the former to successfully convey this message through a series of cleverly written epic poems such as the hikayat perang sabil. Additionally, the nature of this message that called on the Acehnese to defend their religion against invading infidels was such that it could not be ignored by anybody considering himself to be a faithful Muslim. Consequently it were the ulama who succeeded in transforming the resistance against the Dutch into a popular cause which attracted many followers. The colonial authorities, in this regard, spoke of the ulama-led resistance as orang muslimin (muslim people). Despite their leadership in the war effort, the religious authorities did not claim political authority. The ulama respected the ulêébalang as the key political actors in Acehnese society. Liberated areas were returned to the ulêébalang -although typically the ulama retained some influence- and conflicts between ulama and ulêébalang mainly concerned the ‘personal immoralities’ of some of the latter (such as opium smoking, gambling, and pederasty).\textsuperscript{47} Thus, albeit Islam did produce actors with political influence, the ulama, those never became the dominant political authorities within nineteenth century Acehnese society.

To sum up, we can conclude that nineteenth century Aceh was far from an entity. Although nominally a Sultanate and despite the survival of many traditional administrative structures and the adjoining titles, the sultan’s authority was mainly symbolic. Aceh was fragmented in numerous chiefdoms and true political authority rested with the ulêébalang, commercial

\textsuperscript{44} James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 73-74,77.
\textsuperscript{46} See, among others, Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 151-152, James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 74-77.
\textsuperscript{47} James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 50,71.
entrepreneurs who controlled resources (such as trade and land) in those chiefdoms. Their economic position allowed them to provide the population at the grassroots level with the means necessary for survival (access to agricultural industry and trade) through a system of patronage. However, as Acehnese society was further fragmented into four distinct identity groups without strong ties between those groups, ulèëbalang legitimacy was not solidly rooted in the population. Their economic power gave them enough leverage to overcome this problem and to prevail over rivalling kinship authorities -who were left in charge of administration at the village level- and the Sultan -whose sarakata gave him some influence in ulèëbalang affairs. Additionally, in case their legitimacy failed, the ulèëbalang did not hesitate to enforce the local population’s compliance with help of personal militias consisting of their closest followers, the rakan. The ulama, who could call upon their position as religious authorities, were potentially the most important competitors of the ulèëbalang. Their core message that called upon the Acehnese to abandon their traditional societal identity in favour of a single common identity as Muslims, however, did not appeal to the population, and neither did the ulama aspire political authority. Their political influence, on the other side, could be considerable as they were connected -albeit loosely- to the largest part of the population, the peasants, and Islam remained one of the underpinning forces that appealed to all Acehnese. Thus nineteenth century Aceh was a complicated, fragmented society in which control rested with the ulèëbalang, but in which there were also many other groups and authorities of whom the ulama were to become the most influential during the Aceh War.

4.2.2 Aceh’s international position and the causes of the war

The return of the authority over the East Indies from the British to the Dutch government in the years following 1814 left much to argue. Especially on Sumatra and the Malay peninsula borders and influence spheres were blurred, which provoked colonial adventurers such as Raffles to claim additional territories for their country (of which the establishment of the Straits Settlement at Singapore is probably the best example). The London Treaty of 17 March 1824 was concluded to end this situation of uncleanness and to definitely call a halt to colonial disputes between the British and the Dutch in the East. The treaty arranged, among others, for an exchange of possessions; all British settlements in Sumatra (Benkulen) were transferred to the Dutch, while the British took over all Dutch possessions in India and the Malay Peninsula (Malacca). While the British respected Dutch suzerainty over Sumatra and most of the other islands of the Indonesian Archipelago and promised in the treaty not to interfere, they also sought to limit an expansion of Dutch influence. This led to a special accommodation for the hitherto independent Sultanate of Aceh. The 1824 London
Treaty envisaged ‘a status of independence friendly to the Dutch’.\(^{49}\) This meant that the Dutch by treaty not only respected Aceh’s independence, but also became responsible for it. Simultaneously, however, the treaty also called upon the Dutch to secure international shipping against Acehnese pirates.\(^{50}\) The London Treaty required the Dutch colonial government to guarantee Aceh’s independency in such a way that also the safety of trade in the surrounding waters was secured. Thus the treaty acknowledged Aceh’s international position as an independent state recognized by the two major powers in the regions. The commitment to protect shipping in Acehnese waters, however, would become a ground for future troubles.

The Dutch explained the treaty pragmatically and emphasized the obligation to respect Acehnese independency. This fitted official Dutch policy that called for onthouding (abstention) in the outer regions as the colonial government feared expensive military expeditions and still was in the process of re-establishing its rule on the most important islands of the archipelago.\(^{51}\) Whenever the pepper-trade with Aceh was harassed by malpractices and piracy from the side of the Acehnese -which happened frequently-, the Dutch pointed at the London Treaty’s prohibition on Dutch interference and reacted ‘that their intervention could be neither useful nor practical’.\(^{52}\) As a result Aceh became the subject of classic gunboat diplomacy when American, French, and English ships started to shell Acehnese coasts in retaliation for the depredation of their trade.

This situation continued until the early 1850’s when the Dutch realized they could no longer tolerate Acehnese piracy in the light of increasing international involvement with Aceh. Despite an awareness that true power rested with the uléébalang, and that the ‘Sultan’s authority was nil in his own territory [Aceh as a whole]’ the colonial government opted for a friendship treaty with the Sultanate as this was considered to be the best option within the framework of the 1824 treaty.\(^{53}\) The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Trade was signed in Banda Aceh on March 30, 1857 and both parties agreed to underkeep peaceful relations and to cooperate in the field of commerce. Despite this spirit of friendship distrust between Acehnese and Dutch gradually grew worse. The Acehnese felt more and more threatened by Dutch economic expansion in adjacent territories such as Deli, while the Dutch were embarrassed by Acehnese diplomatic attempts to seek allies against the Dutch. Furthermore the Sultanate’s lack of determination to end piracy -which could be expected, as the Sultan was in no position to effectuate this- annoyed the Dutch colonial administration. With the


nearing completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 the situation became of strategic urgency.\textsuperscript{54} The Malacca Straits would replace the Sunda Straits as the main shipping route from Europe to the Orient. The Dutch obligation to protect international trade traffic in Acehnese waters became far more serious. The Acehnese realized this and stepped up their diplomatic effort to seek balance against the Dutch; they went as far as offering their submission to the Ottoman Sultan - who declined. The Dutch saw only one option; new negotiations with the British to break open the 1824 London Treaty in order to allow for Dutch interference in Aceh.

Although the British initially were skeptical, the timing of the request was excellent. Even the old Straits hands, who naturally opposed any extension of Dutch influence, came to realize that they would benefit from a Dutch occupation of Aceh.\textsuperscript{55} Not only was their trade often harassed by Acehnese pirates, it was also disturbed due to the chaotic situation within the Sultanate. More than once feuds between \textit{ulèëbalang} led to blockades of ports that caused a complete shutdown of trade in a particular region. Furthermore, newcomers in the region’s commerce such as France, America, Germany, and Italy were challenging the Anglo-Dutch trade monopoly. This led the British Foreign Office to adopt the view that ‘strategic corners in the world were better in Dutch hands than in those of some stronger Power’.\textsuperscript{56} Thus the British were willing to change their position and consequently the agreement reached in the Sumatra Treaty of 1871 lifted the ban on Dutch interference in Aceh in return for the Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast and certain trade benefits.\textsuperscript{57} Aceh’s international position had now become fragile; a Dutch violation of its sovereignty would no longer provoke a reaction from the other major power in the region.

Initially the Dutch opted for a strategy of careful rapprochement with Aceh. The rationale beyond this approach was to move the Sultan towards surrendering Acehnese sovereignty to the Dutch. This would allow the Acehnese to remain formally independent, while the Dutch would control Aceh’s external affairs, end piracy and guard the stability of local trade.\textsuperscript{58} The normally divided Acehnese leaders now agreed that a strategy of delay was the best answer to Dutch attempts to bring Aceh under indirect colonial rule. This would buy the Acehnese time to find new allies who would support them against Dutch interference. Dutch patience with Aceh, however, quickly faded away. By the beginning of 1873 Dutch Governor-General J. Loudon, the highest authority in the Dutch Indies, decided to change the policy and embraced a military operation against Aceh as a necessity.\textsuperscript{59} Rumors of upcoming American and Italian interference in Aceh as a result of Acehnese diplomatic efforts in Singapore provided him with a \textit{casus belli}. Loudon deliberately exaggerated the reports on foreign intervention in

\textsuperscript{55} See Paul van ’t Veer, \textit{De Atjeh-oorlog}, 33, Anthony Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 62-63. \\
\textsuperscript{56} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 52. \\
\textsuperscript{57} For a complete oversight of the 1871 Sumatra Treaty and its background see Anthony Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 52-78. \\
\textsuperscript{59} A profound overview of the change of Dutch policy in 1873 based on archival sources is provided by both Anthony Reid in \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 91-97, and C.R. Beamer in ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 48-52.
order to convince his superior in The Hague, Minister of Colonies I.D. Fransen van de Putte of the necessity to declare war on Aceh. With permission of the home government, the colonial administration agreed to send a commissioner with four battalions ‘with an ultimatum to acknowledge our sovereignty or war’. 60 Despite clear indications that neither the United States nor Italy intended to intervene in Aceh, Loudon decided to press on as he wrote to his superior in The Hague that even without a foreign threat an expedition against Aceh would be necessary. 61 A continuous series of rumors about foreign interest in Aceh, however, was provided by the Dutch Consul-General in Singapore and served to keep up the momentum in favor of the advocates of war. On 22 March 1873 a first ultimatum was delivered to the Sultan of Aceh. Although the Sultan answered he did not wish to wage war against the Dutch, further negotiations were fruitless; on 26 March 1873 war was declared on Aceh.

Aceh’s international position as an independent state thus had finally succumbed to the grinding machine of colonial expansion. Although Acehnese attempts to forge alliances with other powers had provided the Dutch with a reason to declare war in order to prevent foreign intervention, the true reasons were provided by the need to secure international shipping in Acehnese waters and stabilize trade in the region. Furthermore, Dutch sovereignty over Sumatra would only be completed when Aceh was added to the Dutch possessions. Remarkably, the Dutch during the 1850s revealed some awareness of the limited nature of the Sultan’s power and the fact that true power rested with the ulèëbalang entrepreneurs. Despite this knowledge Dutch - and also English - official relations with Aceh during the nineteenth century were kept with the Sultan and his officials. This seems to be a consequence of the 1824 Treaty that considered Aceh as an independent Sultanate. The course to deal with the Sultan as the official sovereign would be continued in the war as it was felt that the purpose of Dutch intervention in Aceh should not only be submission of the Sultan, but also a strengthening of his position vis-à-vis rival actors in order to enhance his control of Acehnese society. 62 This preoccupation with the Sultanate would have great consequences for the Dutch war effort.

4.3 The first decades of the Aceh War, 1873-1893

The decision to launch a military operation against Aceh was typical for the quest for Dutch dominance of the archipelago. During the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century Dutch troops were involved in many conflicts in order to restore and expand the colonial state’s authority. As most opponents used irregular tactics the Dutch had a lot of experience with this type of warfare; hence fighting irregular wars was not uncommon to the Dutch Colonial Army. During the Java War (1825-1830) colonial troops even adopted tache

60 Loudon to Van de Putte, telegram 22 February 1873, Nederlandsche Regering, Officiele Bescheiden betreffende Het Ontstaan van den Oorlog tegen Atjeh in 1873 (’s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1881), 44.
61 Loudon to Van de Putte, letter 25 February 1873, Officiele Bescheiden, 76.
62 Ibid., 94.
d’huile-type tactics avant la lettre by building small fortifications (bentengs) in order to secure areas. The security offered by these bentengs attracted the local population and local economy prospered as markets were established under the protection of the bentengs. On Sumatra the colonial army had fought vicious irregular campaigns to restore Dutch authority as all old co-optive agreements—going as far back as the seventeenth century—with local power-holders proved to be worthless after the British intermezzo. Most notable is the war against the Padris, a conservative Islamic movement that had seized control over Minangkabau-Padang and the Padang highlands on Sumatra’s west coast after an almost twenty year civil war that started during the British period. It took a total of sixteen years (1821-1837) of intermittent military operations, known as the Padri Wars, to definitely defeat the Padris.

Despite such experiences the colonial army remained faithful to the principles of European-style conventional warfare. This had disastrous consequences as a remarkable pattern of colonial campaigning evolved during the nineteenth century. Typically, first a small expeditionary force was sent in. It was often defeated due to a combination of factors, of which underestimating the enemy was probably the most important one. After initial defeat a larger, better-equipped force was deployed. This force fought a tough battle with the enemy and in most cases prevailed because of its sheer numbers and firepower. If necessary the Dutch could repeat this step several times and even call on fresh troops from Europe. Albeit a tactically ineffective pattern, its strategic effect was that Indonesian rulers concluded that the Dutch Colonial Army was a formidable political force that had to be reckoned with; in their eyes Dutch resources seemed inexhaustible—while in fact they were severely limited. This force posed a threat as much as it offered an opportunity to local power-holders as the choice for collaboration with the Dutch meant that they could hope on the support of the colonial army in struggles against rivals. Rationally, thus, collaboration with the Dutch seemed to be preferable over confrontation. Yet, internal conditions and considerations would not always lead to this conclusion. In those cases the colonial battering ram was employed according the typical pattern of (successive) European-style expeditions that would settle the confrontation in favour of the Dutch.

Albeit this approach mostly sufficed to establish Dutch authority, sometimes even successive expeditions did not succeed in reaching this goal. In those cases it was also necessary to revisit the modus operandi of the colonial army. Adaptation of the conventional concepts and tactics to the needs of irregular warfare was pivotal for prevailing against persisting indigenous opponents. This was the case in the Aceh War. As we have seen the situation in Aceh made the confrontation with the Dutch inevitable. The successive expeditions sent to Aceh from 1873 onwards were of limited effectiveness, and the adoption

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63 J.A. de Moor, ‘Warmakers in the Archipelago’, 52.
64 Anthony Reid, An Indonesian Frontier, 11-13.
65 Ger Teitler, Het einde van de Padri-oorlog, het beleg en de vermeestering van Bonjol 1834-1837, een bronnenpublicatie, (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2004), 9.
67 J.A. de Moor, ‘Warmakers in the Archipelago’, 55.
of the Aceh strategy during the 1890s was key for the eventual establishment of Dutch authority. Here we will discuss those first two decades of the Aceh War in order to provide a background for the next chapters. We will start with the first two expeditions launched against Aceh in 1873 and 1874 as the unsatisfactory Dutch disposition that resulted from these initial efforts heavily influenced the further course of the war. The lack of effectiveness of these expeditions materialized as a stalemate in which Dutch control was limited to a fortified line surrounding the capital and its port. Next we will discuss how the Dutch sought to breach this situation by launching many other expeditions and smaller ‘excursions’ in the years following the second expedition. Despite some successes, in 1884 a shortage of resources and political will forced the Dutch to fall back on their fortified line surrounding the capital in order to keep at least some foothold in Aceh. It was this so-called concentration policy that provoked the emergence of new ideas for winning the Aceh War. We will conclude this section by describing the most important of these new developments, namely Snouck Hurgronje’s analysis of Acehnese society (first published in 1892) and Van Heutsz’s brochure on the submission of Aceh (first published in three parts in 1892-1893), which later provided the underpinning of the Aceh strategy. Thus this background sketch of the Aceh War will cover the main events from the outbreak of the war in 1873 until 1893.

4.3.1 Establishing a foothold: the first Aceh expeditions

The first expedition was launched against Aceh in April 1873 and resulted in complete failure. A total of 3,369 troops (mainly infantry, supported by cavalry and artillery) under the command of general J.H.R. Köhler failed to reach their objective, the capture of the kraton of Kutaradja (as the Dutch wrongly called Banda Aceh), the presumed capital and residence of the Sultan of Aceh. The lack of intelligence was alarming, as even the exact position of the kraton was unknown to the Dutch. Disaster was complete as the soldiers were unable to find their objective (although unwittingly they came very near) and consequently were forced to retreat. The fierce resistance they encountered caused 45 dead, including Köhler, and 406 soldiers wounded. Within three weeks the soldiers were back on board of their ships. In his colonial warfare classic Small Wars Callwell mentions this expedition to illustrate the consequences of inadequate intelligence. This lack of knowledge, however, was not


70 G.D.E.J. Horz, Beknopte Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog (Breda: Koninklijke Militaire Academie, 1924), 5-6. Kutaradja is actually the Acehnese name for the Sultan’s palace, literally meaning the King’s fort. See Anthony Reid, The Contest For North Sumatra, xiii.

71 Ibid., 88-89.

72 C.E. Callwell, Small Wars, 45-46.
only demonstrated by the ignorance about the exact location of the kraton. The assumption that by capturing its capital Aceh could be defeated is also the consequence of a huge misinterpretation of the political situation.

In European-style conventional warfare, the fall of the enemy’s capital would automatically mean the collapse of effective government and, therefore, defeat. As we have seen, albeit nominally a Sultanate, true power in nineteenth century Aceh rested with the various ulêêbalang. Consequently, the Dutch strategy of subjecting the Sultan by co-opting or removing the Sultan was not the path to victory in this war. Aceh’s fragmented society provided a serious problem to the Dutch. Although the Sultan only held token power when the Dutch declared war on him, they experienced that his symbolic position was strong enough to unite the population for resistance. This resistance led the Dutch to believe that their assumption was right; Aceh could only be conquered by subjecting the Sultan. Thus the Dutch preoccupation with the Sultanate that had also prevailed during the period of peaceful relations with Aceh cast its shadow over the Dutch efforts during the Aceh War. Despite an awareness that the situation was far more complex, and reports from indigenous informers that the Sultan’s power was almost non-existent, the Sultanate would remain the centre of gravity of Dutch war policy. Although this would change with the embrace of the Aceh strategy in the 1890s, even then the submission of the Sultan would remain something of an idée fixe, much to Snouck Hurgronje’s discontent.73

The second Dutch expedition consisting of 13,000 troops under the command of retired general J. Van Swieten, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch Colonial Army, landed on Acehnese soil in December 1873. This time the better equipped and informed force managed to reach its objective within two months. On January 24th 1874 the kraton was seized, but the Sultan managed to evade captivity by retreating into the interior, where he died of cholera on January 26th.74 Although the expedition resulted in a clear tactical victory, the death of the Sultan forced the Dutch to revise their political plan as the idea was to establish Dutch rule by coercing the Sultan into collaboration with the Dutch colonial government. Van Swieten, as overall commander of the campaign, decided -against his own instructions- that the Dutch would ignore the pretenders to the Sultan’s throne, and that they would take up central authority in Aceh themselves.75 This radical change in the political course demonstrated Van Swieten’s awareness of the situation on the ground; in his opinion Dutch dominance could not be achieved through the person of the Sultan.

The decision to proclaim Dutch sovereignty over Aceh was deemed the best way forward to establish control over Aceh’s complicated fragmented society. The Dutch high command not only confirmed Van Swieten’s new course, it also issued detailed instructions to establish a permanent military post in the kraton of Groot Atjeh (Aceh Besar) as a symbol

75 J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 190-191.
Simultaneously the other Acehnese regions, which the Dutch called *Onderhoorigheden* (Dependencies), were to be brought under Dutch rule through their local rulers. Thus the Dutch adopted an administrative division between *Groot Atjeh*, which came under direct colonial rule, and the *Onderhoorigheden*, that were to be ruled through their local chiefs. The rationale underlying this policy again demonstrated the Dutch pre-occupation with the administrative structure of the Sultanate; it was assumed that the seizure of the *kraton* -in Dutch eyes the symbol of central power- was sufficient to bring Aceh as a whole under Dutch rule. Van Swieten issued proclamations to the people and their chiefs in both the *Onderhoorigheden* and *Groot Atjeh*, stressing Dutch willingness to establish peaceful co-optive ties with local power-holders -this demonstrates that co-option was crucial for direct as well as indirect rule. It was emphasized that Islam and *adat* would be respected by the colonial administration, and that local power-holders would retain their authority as long as they submitted themselves to the colonial administration. It was also clearly communicated that those chiefs unwilling to collaborate with the Dutch would be subjected to coercive measures. Additionally, the *ulèëbalang* of the three *sagi* were specifically warned not to appoint a new Sultan.78

Initially the new policy caused much optimism. The Dutch military success in *Groot Atjeh* immediately led to an advance by local power-holders there, while in the *Onderhoorigheden* the rulers of most of the statelets had signed a six-article declaration of submission by March 1874.79 The latter accepted Dutch sovereignty, symbolised by the Dutch flag, and were summoned to rule justly, fight piracy and slavery, deny support to enemies of the Dutch, and not to engage in relations with foreign powers in return for official recognition -materialized in a certificate- as local rulers by the Dutch colonial administration. With Dutch presence limited to *Groot Atjeh*, this was achieved through a ‘proclamation tour’ by three naval vessels that visited respectively Aceh’s east, north, and west coast.80 Colonial administrators on board of the ships were tasked to persuade the local power-holders of the numerous *ulèëbalangships* to submit, or, if necessary, to coerce the *ulèëbalang* into submission by imposing a naval blockade. Encouraged by these successes Van Swieten considered the situation stable enough to call an end to the second expedition in April 1874. In his eyes the Dutch had established a sufficient level of control that would easily be augmented without military action, as the Acehnese would soon start to realize that Dutch presence was ’both permanent and tolerable’.81

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79  An overview of those *ulèëbalang* is provided in Kielstra, *Beschrijving van den Atjeh-Oorlog*, 339-362, while the model declaration and certificate of recognition can be found in the same book as bijlagen XXIX and XXX.
81  Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 111.
This analysis of the situation, however, did not match the reality on the ground. The local power-holders who had submitted themselves in *Groot Atjeh*, were typically minor players on the local political marketplace who either found themselves in the line of fire or saw collaboration with the Dutch as an opportunity to enhance their own position *vis-à-vis* more powerful rivals. This is illustrated by the main Dutch ally, Teuku Nyak of Meuraksa, who approached the Dutch in order to protect his possessions and augment his influence in the *sagi* of the XXV *mukim*. While unintentionally focusing on such lower-level power-holders, Van Swieten unwittingly missed some great opportunities to co-opt more powerful leaders. Teuku Nyak Chut Lemrong, the Panglima Sagi of the XXVI *mukim*, for instance, sought Dutch help in order to definitely confirm his status, which was suffering from claims by rivals. Van Swieten declined the offer commenting that he thought that the $8,000 Teuku Lemrong demanded for his cooperation was too high a price to pay for such allegiance. Thus Dutch influence on the population of *Aceh Besar* was limited and only in the direct surroundings of Kutaradja they could rightly claim some level of control. This limited influence made the Dutch in the eyes of most *ulëëbalang* not an attractive partner to collaborate with; the colonial administration simply had nothing to offer.

If this was the reality in *Groot Atjeh*, where the Dutch at least held some presence, it is easy to imagine that Dutch control in the *Onderhoorigheden* was completely absent. Although the (threat of) a naval blockade had made all but the *ulëëbalang* of the most hostile statelets (Pidië, Meureudu, Samalanga, Simpang Ulim, and the statelets north of Meulaboh) sign the six-article declaration of submission, Dutch control remained nominal only. The Dutch lack of means meant that statelets that had accepted colonial rule were not interfered, even when it became clear that they started to support the resistance in *Groot Atjeh*. Moreover, the most important coercive tool, the naval blockade was far from effective as not half of the 50 ships necessary for this measure could be gathered in Acehnese waters. Thus, Dutch authority over the *Onderhoorigheden* existed on paper only, and J.M. Somer correctly has summarized this episode in the Aceh War as ‘the concluding of meaningless declarations’.

The main shortcoming of the Dutch strategy as formulated by Van Swieten was that it did not establish the Dutch colonial administration as an actor capable of obtaining control over the Acehnese. Although Van Swieten rightly concluded that submission of the Sultan would not suffice to bring Aceh’s fragmented society under Dutch rule, the replacement of the Sultan by Dutch colonial authority was insufficient as well. The fundamental flaw of this approach is its assumption that Aceh could be centrally ruled from the *kraton* of

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82 Azarja Harmanny, ‘*Vertrouwware berigten*’, 59-60.
83 Paul van ‘t Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 98.
84 Until c. 1900 the Spanish silver dollar was the preferred currency in Aceh. This currency was locally referred to as *reunggét Atjéh*, or Acehnese dollar. See J. Kreemer, *Algemeen Samenvattend Overzicht van Land en Volk van Atjèh en Onderhoorigheden*, Deel II (Leiden: Brill, 1923), 56, 58-59. Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 293.
85 Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 112.
86 Ibid., 113-114.
Kutaradja. In other words, the Dutch removed a central authority with merely symbolic power and replaced this with their own central administration. Of course the latter lacked the former’s symbolic power and neither did the Dutch possess the means to establish their authority themselves. The Dutch had grossly overestimated the capture of the kraton as they had believed that this action alone would suffice to bring the Acehnese under their rule. Contradictory to his own analysis of the role of the Sultan, Van Swieten introduced a Dutch administration modeled after the Sultanate’s impotent administrative structure. This choice to claim Dutch suzerainty over Aceh as a whole, while only establishing permanent presence in a small bridgehead surrounding the kraton ‘would plague the Dutch government for the remainder of the nineteenth century’. Therefore the second Aceh expedition, despite its military success, was a political failure, as it left the Dutch without any grip on Aceh’s fragmented society in both Groot Atjeh and the Onderhoorigheden. What van Swieten had left behind in Aceh was a garrison of 4,000 soldiers under siege in Kutaradja. What now were the consequences of this disposition?

4.3.2 A desperate quest for control

It did not take long for the Dutch to realize that their claim of control over Aceh was nothing more than an illusion. Since its establishment the bridgehead in Kutaradja had been continuously harassed by Acehnese fighters and there was mounting evidence that the submitted statelets of the Onderhoorigheden increasingly supported the resistance in Groot Atjeh with manpower, money, and supplies. Albeit Acehnese society was highly fragmented, the Dutch presence acted as a binding agent that mobilized whole Aceh in a mutual struggle against the Dutch, just like a Portuguese invasion had first united Aceh in the sixteenth century. Meanwhile it also became clear that Dutch control over the Acehnese could not be obtained centrally. An 1875 report on Acehnese society by Assistant-Resident R.C. Kroesen (who was the senior civil advisor of Van Swieten’s successor, general J.L.J.H. Pel) identified the ‘lack of unity of authority’ as the mean reason for the ‘reluctance to submit’. Due to its high degree of fragmentation Aceh could not be centrally ruled; other measures were needed. Moreover, Kroesen’s report also revealed the importance of the ulama in unifying and mobilizing the population against the Dutch. Although at that time different uléébalang were the main leaders of the resistance (most notable among those leaders was the Panglima Polem of the sági of the XXII mukim), it was a first sign of the pivotal role of the ulama in the organization of popular resistance.

89 For troop levels see Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 296.
90 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 113-114.
92 Ibid.
This new appreciation of the situation led Dutch authorities in both Kutaradja and Batavia to adopt the view that control over Aceh could only be obtained by unconditional submission of the various ruling chiefs in Groot Atjeh as well as the Onderhoorigheden. Now, given the shortage of resources of the Dutch colonial state, a discussion developed over the methods needed to achieve this aim. Governor Pel in Kutaradja stressed that credible Dutch authority in Aceh could only be achieved if the local administration would be able to submit local power-holders through force of arms. On the other side there was the suggestion that money should be used to buy the local power-holders’ submission - there was always enough money available for this purpose as it was deemed cheaper than commitment of military resources. Pel deemed this unsuitable:

‘If the enemy is brought to submission by force of arms then we will be able to lay down the law; if however he becomes persuaded by means of money to submit, we shall then be obliged to negotiate with him.’

Thus, the local colonial administration pleaded for a coercive capability to dominate the collaborative relationships with Acehnese chiefs; without a credible stick, the chiefs would return to their behaviour of formal submission, while simultaneously thwarting Dutch attempts to consolidate and augment colonial rule. Consequently, it was decided -with Batavia’s endorsement- that offensive military operations in Groot Atjeh as well as the establishment of Dutch presence in the Onderhoorigheden were pivotal for obtaining control over this highly fragmented society.

Given the shortage of resources of the Dutch colonial state the execution of this new strategy was troublesome from its onset. Four successive Dutch Governors (Pel, G. Wiggers van Kerchem, A. Diemont, and K. Van der Heijden, all soldiers who embodied military as well as civil authority) launched a series of offensive actions, including a total of thirteen expeditions and three smaller excursions, during the next years of the war. Yet, once military action seemed successful, their lack of means forced the Dutch to accept a period of inaction that typically allowed the Acehnese to recuperate and reorganize. This is clearly illustrated by the 1877 ban on offensive operations. Hitherto the war had costed a tremendous 70 million guilders, and the home government in The Hague urged for a cut in the expenditures. The adoption of a ‘policy of goodwill’ (including the rebuilding of the Great Mosque of Banda Aceh) and a constraint on military operations ushered a period of inaction, which allowed the Acehnese to organize for an 1878 offensive against the main Dutch positions surrounding

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93 Governor Pel to Governor-General Van Lansberge, 30 April 1875, quoted in C.R. Beamer, ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 129.

94 For a summary of the policies and offensive actions of these governors see J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 204-214, 236-237.
Kutaradja.\textsuperscript{95} This abruptly ended the ‘policy of goodwill’ and provoked a brutal Dutch reaction culminating in general Van der Heijden’s 1879 punitive expedition that was characterized by the use of indiscriminate force against villages.\textsuperscript{96} Enemy activity almost ceased after this expedition, as did The Hague’s will of additional funding. Under these circumstances the Dutch considered the situation sufficiently stable to halt further military action and Van der Heijden’s troops were quickly reduced from 10,500 to 6,500 men.\textsuperscript{97} As by now the costs of the Aceh War exceeded the incomes from the Netherlands-Indies, the Dutch were anxious to claim that the Acehnese were finally convinced of Dutch superiority, and that their submission could now be obtained through persuasion within a matter of time. Thus, the Dutch announced the end of the Aceh War on 6 April 1881.\textsuperscript{98} Rule was transferred to a civil Governor, A. Pruys van der Hoeven, who adopted a policy of further military constraint.

Anthony Reid has described the fluctuation of Dutch policy as a ‘ruinous oscillation’; the periods of military action brought the Dutch military success, while the periods of inaction made this success unsustainable.\textsuperscript{99} Every time when control over additional segments of Acehnese society seemed within hand’s reach, their shortage of resources forced the Dutch to fall back on positions surrounding Kutaradja without maintaining a sufficient capability to effectively consolidate and augment their newly gained influence. Consequently this new Dutch influence quickly faded away. By 1881, therefore, Dutch control over Aceh as a whole was still non-existent. Moreover, the use of brutal force had completely alienated a substantial part of the population from the Dutch administration, while the fluctuating policy had revealed Dutch weaknesses. As a result the seeds of resistance had now spread more widely. The Dutch would soon reap what they had sown.

The Dutch efforts in \textit{Groot Atjeh} had resulted in the 1878 surrender and consecutive deportation of Habib Abd ar-Rahman, an Arab and former co-regent and guardian of the Acehnese Sultan who had assumed the overall leadership over the resistance in 1876. Albeit a large success in Dutch eyes, Abd ar-Rahman’s removal was far from a step forward; his understanding of Acehnese society and ability to unite the local power-holders of the various societal fragments were unique.\textsuperscript{100} Abd ar-Rahman’s position as resistance leader was so strong that he probably came the closest to the form of central authority that the Dutch had wrongly attributed to the Sultan. The Dutch, however, did not realize and explore this and according to Reid therefore lost the biggest opportunity thus far to augment their control over Acehnese society. Abd ar-Rahman’s removal by the Dutch brought to light that the \textit{ulëëbalang} were divided over the course of the war effort. Some advocated submission to the Dutch, while most were in favour of continuation of the resistance. This division freed the

\textsuperscript{95} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 183-184.
\textsuperscript{97} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 201-203.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 182.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 185.
way for Van der Heijden’s brutal raid of 1879, which would have unforeseen and unpleasant consequences for the Dutch. Although enemy activity ceased after this expedition, the situation below the surface was all but calm.

The unintended effect of Dutch military operations was that they fundamentally changed the nature of Acehnese resistance. Thus far the war effort on Acehnese side was predominantly conducted by individual uléêbalang, who had confronted the Dutch in pitched battles either in defense of their own district or in unison with other uléêbalang as was the case under Abd ar-Rahman. By the end of 1879 most of those chiefs, as well as the newly appointed Sultan (or Pretender Sultan as the Dutch called him, we will come back to him later) had fled Great Aceh as a result of the brutal punitive expeditions. The latter established his court in exile in the city of Keumala in Pidië, while most uléêbalang took refuge in the hills between Pidië and Great Aceh. The elusion of the Acehnese war leaders ushered a shift from more or less organized resistance to an insurgency of which the ulama were the main instigators. This fitted a pattern that emerged as early as 1873 in which ‘traditional leaders lost influence to those known for their ability to organize war or to inspire religious enthusiasm’. Due to the uléêbalang’s absence their already faltering legitimacy further weakened, which offered an opportunity for the ulama to augment their influence over the local populace. The ulama duly exploited this chance as they successfully appealed to the people by preaching that the war against the Kompeuni was a perang sabil. Moreover, when yet another Dutch policy change implemented by civil Governor Pruys van der Hoeven called upon co-option of the previously expelled uléêbalang through gifts and salaries, this behaviour further diminished the chiefs’ faltering legitimacy and allowed for an increase of ulama influence in Great Aceh.

As always, the uléêbalang entrepreneurs preferred personal gain above the interest of the people living in their districts, and more and more of those chiefs started to cooperate with the hated Dutch colonial administration. The mobilization of the population by the ulama was so successful that by the end of Pruys van der Hoeven’s governorship in March 1883 the Dutch saw themselves confronted with a full-blown guerrilla. Under the next civil governor, P.F. Laging Tobias, the conflict was increasingly regarded as a battle between the civilized Dutch and primitive Acehnese ‘society as a collective’; the war had now become a people’s war under the leadership of the ulama.

The Dutch were insufficiently aware that the notion of the war as a people’s war involving Acehnese society as a whole better reflected the situation on the ground than they actually understood at that moment. Their intervention had affected the societal balance of power and therefore the situation was becoming murkier than ever before. Next to the ulama, the decline of uléêbalang authority was also exploited by opportunistic adventurers who sought to augment their own position by organizing and leading gangs of Acehnese irregulars against

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102 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 108.
the Dutch. The ulëëbalang themselves struggled to maintain their leading position which meant they played both sides (the Dutch as well as the Acehnese resistance) or changed side easily in pursuit of their own interest.\textsuperscript{104} Thus, despite the predominant role of the ulama, and the fact that by now it was also clear that Teungku (title for distinguished ulama) Chik di Tiro was the most important leader of the guerrilla, the popular resistance was as fragmented as Acehnese society itself.\textsuperscript{105} This all posed a formidable challenge to the Dutch; due to the unintended effects of their own policy, they now had to deal with an even more complicated opponent. Consequently, the situation in Great Aceh was growing out of control as the Dutch were increasingly confronted with guerrilla raids and shifting allegiances during 1883 and 1884.

The rebellion against the Dutch was not restricted to Great Aceh, also the Dependencies were the scene of growing unrest. Dutch control over those Dependencies had remained largely superficial, despite naval blockades, several expeditions, and the establishment of Dutch presence in the most defiant statelets such as Pidië, Gigiëng, Idi, Simpang Ulim, and Meulaboh.\textsuperscript{106} Of course, on paper Dutch control over the Onderhoogheden had dramatically increased as a new declaration of submission was introduced that contained detailed instructions on the duties and rights of the local chiefs under Dutch authority. By 1884 this long declaration of eighteen articles was signed by most of the ulëëbalang of the Dependencies (a total of 43, while ten older co-optive agreements with others were still valid).\textsuperscript{107} Compliance to these declarations, however, remained nominal only, as the Dutch attempts to enforce this suffered from the same lack of means and corresponding policy oscillations as the war effort in Groot Atjeh. Even in those ulëëbalangships where the colonial administration succeeded in establishing a post, control was severely limited. Such posts were harassed by the Acehnese and the Dutch needed escorts to visit the ports. The weakness of the Dutch prevented any serious attempt to win the trust of local power-holders, and when the popular uprising spread local ulama started to launch attacks against Dutch posts in several statelets. Reid, therefore, has justly ascertained that the most important achievement of those posts was that they provided the insight that despite their nominal submission the Dependencies were supporting the Acehnese war effort in every way they could.\textsuperscript{108} It is in these disorderly circumstances that the name of Teuku Uma (whom we will discuss in the next chapter) first emerges, when he harassed the Dependencies of the west coast with what the Dutch called his ‘thug’ band.\textsuperscript{109} The appearance of Uma and his gang was symptomatic for the deterioration of the situation in 1883 and 1884; it demonstrated the new reality of a widespread people’s war in which self-interested local power-holders were contributing to

\textsuperscript{104} See, Emmanuel Kreike, ‘Genocide in the Kampongs?’, 305, Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 206.
\textsuperscript{105} Tiro in Pidië was home to one of the most famous dayah in Aceh. The head of this religious school was given the title Teungku Chik (Sheikh). See Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 204, 298.
\textsuperscript{106} See J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 206-221, Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 204, 189.
\textsuperscript{107} J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 209, for the declaration in eighteen articles see also 195-202, and Bijlage IV.
\textsuperscript{108} Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 189, 205.
\textsuperscript{109} Paul van’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 141.
Chapter 4 The Course of Co-option

the resistance through individual exploits, and the leadership of the ulama was creating a growing mass of willing fighters throughout Aceh.

Unsurprisingly, the Dutch were forced to radically rethink their position when the situation completely grew out of control in 1884. As the small Dutch Colonial Army was already overstretched and The Hague was unwilling to provide more funding for the war, a new strategy for the Aceh War was to be formulated without the allocation of additional means. In order to maintain at least some foothold in Groot Atjeh the Dutch implemented the so-called concentration policy in 1885. This required the Dutch to abandon two thirds of the land they had occupied, while a total of about 4,700 troops were concentrated in a fortified line surrounding the capital Kutaradja and its port Ulëelheuë -only a small part of Great Aceh. Other elements of this policy were the appointment of again a military commander, general H. Demmeni, as civil and military governor, a renewed sea blockade of Aceh’s coasts, and non-interference in the Dependencies in order to reduce costs. The new strategy corresponded with the latest imperial ideas as the establishment of a Dutch fortress was considered to signal ‘effective occupation in the spirit of the 1884 Berlin conference that ‘divided’ up Africa’. Within the safety of their perimeter the Dutch soldiers waited for the Acehnese to come and submit themselves. This concentration policy would dominate the Dutch operations in Aceh until it was abandoned in 1896. However, as it soon became clear that an attitude of complete passiveness was totally inadequate, the Dutch embarked on a new search for an appropriate method to win the Aceh War. It was this new attempt to find a solution that spawned the core ideas of the Aceh strategy that finally succeeded in establishing Dutch control over the Acehnese. Let us now take a closer look at these roots of the Aceh strategy.

4.3.3 Dawn of a new approach

The concentration policy called for a restraint on offensive operations outside the line, but when fortified posts came under attack and frequent infiltrations even caused security issues within the perimeter, this restriction became untenable. Teungku Tiro personally commanded such a 400-men infiltration raid that severely disturbed the order within the line in October 1887. Consecutively, in 1888 permission came to launch limited patrols outside the wire in order to disturb enemy activities. Two years later, in April 1890, the famous Korps Marechaussee was founded as a dedicated unit for defending the inner perimeter against infiltrating gangs, and soon this unit also started operating outside the line. More

111 Emmanuel Kreike, ‘Genocide in the Kampong?’, 308.
112 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 252-253.
113 The official task of the Korps Marechaussee encompassed patrolling within the line. By 1896, however, the Marechaussee had evolved into a highly capable Special Forces-like counter-guerrilla unit. See L. Voogt, ‘Een politionele eend in de Indische
important, however, was that the Dutch finally started to realize that a powerful political impetus was needed to secure colonial rule over Aceh, as Assistant-Resident K.F.H. Van Langen strikingly observed that:

‘During the Aceh War all the Acehnese tribes have unified, while forgetting about their previous feuds, and nothing has been undertaken from our side in order to confirm our rule by exploiting their disputes.’

As we have seen, there is no doubt that the Acehnese were unified in their animosity towards the Dutch. Internally, however, the Acehnese were not as unified, and the contradictions between different societal elements and local power-holders provided the Dutch with a potential lever for obtaining control over Acehnese society. Therefore, Van Langen’s observation points in the right direction; it was now up to the Dutch to find and exploit conflicts in Acehnese society that would lead to the collapse of the resistance and would finally bring Aceh under Dutch control.

In the only modern Dutch chronicle of the Aceh War, De Atjeh-oorlog, Paul van ’t Veer claims that Dutch awareness of Acehnese politics only began after the colonial government’s advisor on Islam and indigenous affairs Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgonje’s 1892 Verslag omtrent de religieus-politieke toestanden in Atjeh (Report on religious-politico circumstances in Aceh) was published. Since 1873, however, Dutch intelligence had gradually shifted from topographical to political information. The symbolic role of the Sultan had become clear, although the discussion on the exact importance of his leadership remained vivid throughout the Aceh War. What was also clear to the Dutch were the different roles of the ulama and ulèëbalang. What was not clear, however, was the balance of power and relations between the Sultan, ulama and ulèëbalang. Thus, the Dutch had gradually obtained an insight in the different political groups, but they remained ignorant on the exact structure of power within Acehnese society.

When general H.K.F. Van Teijn assumed governorship in 1886 a new political strategy had been implemented as part of the concentration policy. Due to the lack of fine grained information on local political relations this strategy -once again- called for recognition of the Sultan as suzerain over Aceh. Although Van Teijn stressed that the colonial administration

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115 Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 188-190.
117 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 271.
would also take the positions of the clergy and chiefs into account, co-option of the Sultan was the mainstay of the Dutch strategy; it was believed that despite its symbolic nature the Sultan’s position was powerful enough to impose Dutch control via his collaboration. As the Pretender Sultan Tuanku (title for member of the Sultan dynasty) Daud held his court in exile in the city of Keumala, his party was referred to as the Keumala-party. It is here that the true lack of knowledge on the distribution of power really shows. The Dutch assumed the existence of a Sultan’s party that thrived on his leadership, as Van Teijn would experience; however, the Sultan’s prestige as a popular leader was highly dependent on the ulama and ulèëbalang who were the real power-holders on the Acehnese political marketplace at that time. When in 1889 negotiations between the Sultan and the Dutch administration failed to yield any result, Van Teijn showed remarkable understanding of the quagmire of Acehnese politics, as he wrote to the Governor-General of the Dutch East-Indies:

‘Had we to deal only with the Pretender Sultan and his entourage, then we would already be much further along. At present, however, Teungku di Tiro and his religious party are working against our purposes, while the mutual jealousy of our well-disposed chiefs [ulèëbalang struggling to maintain or augment their position] also poses no little obstacle here.”

This hard-learned insight truly shocked Van Teijn and might have been too much for him, as he was also suffering from bad health. He offered his resignation the month after his report, but as he was only allowed to resign in 1891 he stayed long enough to witness the natural deaths of the two most important ulama (including Tiro). It was this event that finally paved the way for the development of a more profound understanding of Acehnese society as it was the immediate reason for Snouck Hurgronje’s interference in the Aceh War. In 1889 Snouck had been appointed as the colonial government’s advisor on Islam and indigenous affairs. At the age of 32, he already enjoyed a reputation as an internationally renowned Islamologist, mainly due to his 1884-1885 study on life in Mecca for which he converted to Islam. It was during this stay in the holy city of Islam that Snouck’s interest for Aceh and its inhabitants first developed. From discussions with Acehnese pilgrims he had learned the importance of Tiro as both religious and war leader, and on his appointment as colonial advisor he immediately submitted a proposal for a study visit to Aceh. As this first request was denied, Snouck was more than eager to accept Governor-General C. Pijnacker Hordijk’s

1891 assignment to study the effects of their leaders' deaths on the ulama and how this faction would continue to influence the Keumala-party.\(^{120}\)

Snouck’s investigation took place from 16 July 1891 until 4 February 1892 and resulted in the already mentioned report on religious-politico circumstances in Aceh, which was presented to the Governor-General on 23 May 1892.\(^{121}\) Although Snouck, much to his discontent, was confined to the area within the concentrated line, he succeeded in building rapport with ‘headmen and commoners from the Coasts [the Dependencies], as well as -and more predominantly- with those from the interiors of Great Aceh’.\(^{122}\) Snouck’s residence in Mecca and conversion to Islam earned him great respect with the Acehnese, who attributed him titles such as Toean Beusa Seunot to Waleeta Peureudan (Sir Snouck of Weltevreden (the seat of the colonial government)) and Doeli Chol Charoenja (His Majesty Hurgronje).\(^{123}\) His Meccan connections even allowed him to obtain information from unwilling locals, as he, for example, could call upon personal ties with respected Islamic religious scholars for winning the trust of ulama.\(^{124}\) Such methods, backed up by his knowledge and language skills, distinguished Snouck from other colonial officials and were pivotal for unravelling the complex maze that constituted Acehnese society. Thus, he managed to compose a detailed ethnographic analysis of Acehnese society, which not only dealt with the position and roles of the different societal groups and the structure of power, but also included valuable information on religion, local customs and culture. Snouck himself was highly satisfied with the result and later reflected upon his work as the right diagnosis of the disease at a time ‘when many doubted me, while other doctors thought the complaint was beyond healing’.\(^{125}\) Indeed Snouck’s work was not unanimously accepted, as we will see later. For now it is first important to take a closer look at the exact nature of Snouck’s diagnosis and the corresponding cure he suggested.

The Aceh report itself was more than an ethnographical analysis, it was also a detailed study of the root causes for resistance and non-collaboration in Aceh. Snouck distinguished four groups in Acehnese society -James T. Siegel follows Snouck in this regard-, the ulèëbalang, the ulama, the gampong dwellers (or peasants, the largest group), and the Sultan and his people and analysed the dynamics of interaction between those groups that followed the Dutch intervention to answer the question why ‘the Achehnese [sic] throughout their twenty years contest with the Dutch have not yet grasped the uselessness of their resistance to the


\(^{121}\) A popular edition without the classified chapters appeared as De Atjèhers (The Acehnese) in 1893. We will focus on the original report, as this contains the relevant (secret) elements that influenced the Dutch war policy. The translation of the authentic terms, however, is informed by the 1906 English edition entitled The Achehnese. See C. Snouck Hurgronje, De Atjèhers, twee delen en platen (Leiden: Brill, 1893-1895), and C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, two volumes, transl. O’Sullivan, A.W.S. (Leiden: Brill, 1906).


\(^{124}\) K. van der Maaten, Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog, Deel I (Rotterdam: Weeber en Verstoep, 1948), 43-44.

\(^{125}\) C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, Volume I, XVII.
kafirs'.\textsuperscript{126} It was concluded that in this web of interaction the Sultan was 'far from being an indispensable element', and that the war had led to the rise of the ulama, as the authority of the ulëëbalang, the traditional rulers over the gampong dwellers, was disrupted by the Dutch intervention.\textsuperscript{127} In Snouck's view the war had brought the Islamic clergy an opportunity to wrest power from the adat chiefs. Although their appeal to conduct a perang sabil against the Kompeuni brought them the sympathy of many Acehnese, the ulama also used a 'tactic of terrorism' to enhance the local population's collaboration with their resistance.\textsuperscript{128} Unwilling ulëëbalang or gampong dwellers, for example, were forced to make contributions in money or goods to the war effort (so-called sabil-contributions). As the main interest for most Acehnese lay in personal survival and the protection of relatives and possessions, the bulk of the population opted to collaborate with the ulama in order to limit personal damage.

Of course the Acehnese were also subjected to Dutch attempts to establish control. The fluctuating policy of the past and the restraints of the concentration policy, however, had excluded the Dutch as a reliable partner in the eyes of many Acehnese. The colonial administration proved unable to protect well-disposed Acehnese from the resistance's counter-collaboration measures and Dutch attempts to fight the irregulars often struck the population harder than it hit the ulama and their gangs of fighters.\textsuperscript{129} Snouck has captured this Dutch powerlessness and the accompanying situation in a powerful metaphor:

>'Thus we are, by taking a constrained position, in the situation of a chained monkey, who can be harassed to a point of maddening infuriation by a group of boys without too much danger for their own well-being; the gampong dwellers surrounding us have too fear the bites of the monkey as well as the stabs of his attackers.'\textsuperscript{130}

This not only illustrates Dutch impotence, it also shows that the Acehnese population was caught in an interposition between the ulama-led resistance on one side, and the Dutch colonial regime on the other. Although both parties vied for the people's collaboration, it were the ulama who prevailed in this competition; the Dutch inability to establish themselves as a credible partner for collaboration made the religious scholars the dominant as well as the preferred agents for the local population to collaborate with. The imperative of limiting the damage to their own interest caused many -including the ulëëbalang- to support the resistance and the dominance of the ulama and their gangs of fighters is clearly demonstrated.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 120, and C. Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Het Atjeh Verslag’,72.
\textsuperscript{128} C. Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Het Atjeh Verslag’, 62.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 62-63.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 62.
by the fact that even the Acehnese within or adjacent to the concentration line started to switch sides or adopted a position of duplicity towards the Dutch.

Snouck’s diagnosis, thus, concluded that the Dutch intervention had shaped beneficial conditions for the ulama to seize the authority that traditionally lay with the ulèëbalang. The Dutch presence gave the religious scholars the leverage to augment their influence over the population as they could appeal to the responsibility of every Muslim to wage a perang sabil against the kafirs of the Kompeuni. Moreover, in the fog of war the ulama could also employ coercive methods to obtain control over the population. The ulama had become the dominant faction in Acehnese society as they thrived on the war against the Dutch. Consequently, it was neither in their interest to win the war nor to cease resistance as this would lift the conditions that brought them power.\(^{131}\) The oscillating Dutch war policies had only acted in favour of the ulama and their irregular gangs as they had undermined the position of the ulèëbalang, and failed to target the resistance leaders and fighters. Due to this failure the Dutch had outmanoeuvred themselves as a credible partner to collaborate with; for the Acehnese, who found themselves caught in an interposition between the ulama on one side and the Dutch on the other side, it was obvious that the choice for the ulama was far better for their personal survival.

If the Dutch wanted to obtain control over Aceh they had to become the dominant as well as the preferable agent for the Acehnese to collaborate with. Therefore Snouck developed a cure that sought to exploit the struggle between ulama and ulèëbalang in order to establish Dutch rule; Van Langen’s idea of exploiting disputes within Acehnese society materialized in Snouck’s approach.\(^{132}\) The underlying rationale of this approach was that the Dutch had to gain control through co-option of the ulèëbalang. These traditional adat rulers were the true legitimate authorities, and the restoration of their authority would spawn and consolidate Dutch control over the Acehnese. Snouck was absolutely right about the ulèëbalang as the primary legitimate authorities within Acehnese society, however, he seemingly misrepresented them as similar to European hierarchical, feudal lords who were strongly tied to the peasants through their right to land.\(^{133}\) As we have seen afore ulèëbalang authority followed from their economic dominant position and although they were the legitimate leaders within Acehnese society, this legitimacy was only weakly developed. This misconception in Snouck’s vision would have consequences on the long term, which we will discuss in Chapter Six. It has to be mentioned that Snouck’s work contains many observations that contradict his conclusion of the ulèëbalang as feudal lords (a clear example is discussed in Chapter Six, paragraph 6.2.2). It might be that he accepted this idea as it better connected to the perception of the colonial officials and allowed him to formulate an understandable and acceptable strategy for winning the war. However, this cannot be proven and remains highly

\(^{131}\) Ibid., 72.

\(^{132}\) Snouck mentions Van Langen’s 1888 work *De Inrichting van het Atjehsche Staatsbestuur onder het Sultanaat* a couple of times in his report. Overall he seems to regard Van Langen as naive, because the latter attributes too much importance to the Sultan. Snouck, however, also expresses his admiration for Van Langen who presents detailed information on Acehnese society.

speculative. Siegel in this regard correctly remarks that ‘it is difficult to say what Snouck exactly thought about the uleebalang [sic]’.\textsuperscript{134} Anyway, for now it is first important to have a closer look at Snouck’s suggestions for the application of his cure.

The suggested approach consisted of three points; ignoring the Keumala-party, targeting of the resistance and its supporters, and stimulation of the local economy.\textsuperscript{135} First, the colonial administration had to completely coldshoulder the Sultan and his entourage as they were only minor actors in the Acehnese political arena. Instead of engaging the Keumala-party it had to be communicated to the adat chiefs that the colonial administration not only had replaced the Sultan, but -as opposed to the Sultan- also wanted to truly govern the Acehnese by bringing order and security and improving relationships between those chiefs.\textsuperscript{136} Second, Snouck considered ‘inflicting a sensitive blow, so that fear discourages the Acehnese from what has become a dangerous liaison to the gang leaders, as a condition sine qua non for the restoration of order’.\textsuperscript{137} This use of force functioned as a measure for altering the collaboration equation in favour of the Dutch. Although the population had to be spared as much as possible -even in case of a dubious attitude- Snouck advocated not only the targeting of ulama and other resistance leaders, he also stressed the need to deploy force against those elements of the population that actively supported the resistance. Such measures, however, required thorough intelligence that was to be established through systematic espionage of the gangs. Not only should this discourage active collaboration with the resistance, it also functioned to demonstrate the interpositioned population that the Dutch were the dominant party. Thus, it had to establish the colonial administration as the dominant actor for engaging in collaborative relationships. Third, Snouck stressed the importance of also becoming the preferred party for Acehnese chiefs to collaborate with. While the use of force functioned to restore trust in the power of the Kompeuni, the stimulation of agriculture, industry, and trade had to restore a belief in the beneficial intentions of the Dutch.\textsuperscript{138} Moreover, as an amelioration of their livelihood would strengthen the position of the uleebalang and gampong dwellers it would bring them in a better position to withstand the resistance’s attempts to enforce collaboration.

Thus, by adopting this threefold strategy the Dutch had to re-orient their war policy towards the relevant elements in Acehnese society in order to become the dominant as well as preferable actor in the struggle for control over the Acehnese. Imperative for the implementation of such a policy change at the local level was greater knowledge of Acehnese society and politics which in Snouck’s opinion not only required a specialized civil-military intelligence apparatus as part of the local colonial administration, but also a higher level of cultural awareness of individual colonial officials in order to approach the Acehnese in the

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 96.
right way. However, without permission from above a change of strategy was impossible. Whereas Dutch war policy had changed (too) frequently in the past, The Hague and Batavia remained reluctant to engage in a new, more offensive -and therefore expensive- approach for winning the Aceh War. This triggered another future key actor of the Aceh War, major J.B. Van Heutsz, to publish a brochure entitled *De onderwerping van Atjeh* (The submission of Aceh) in which he called upon the Dutch political leadership to end its hesitant attitude and demonstrate the will and determination to prevail in the Aceh war through the adoption and perseverance of a robust approach in *casu* Aceh.

According to Van Heutsz, who had last served in Aceh as Governor Van Teijn’s chief of staff, ‘the Acehnese would never submit unless forced to do so and only he, who demonstrates to possess the power to have his will respected, will be the master, whose orders they will obey’. Consequently, Van Heutsz urged for a strategy that would obtain Dutch control, or in his words ‘put a foot on the neck of the Acehnese’, by demonstrating them that it was better not to mess with the colonial administration. The use of force in combination with a strict naval blockade and other non-violent sanctions such as fines was to exclude any option but submission to the Dutch. Just like Snouck, Van Heutsz thought that the Sultan should be ignored, and it were the legal chiefs (i.e. the *adat* chiefs, the *ulêêbalang*) whose co-option was pivotal for definitely establishing Dutch rule over the Acehnese. Over all, however, the suggested strategy change remained somewhat vague, and the main influence of the brochure was its call to demonstrate Dutch will and determination through a more offensive approach. As a result Van Heutsz was invited to write a white paper for the Dutch minister of colonies, which provoked a reaction from Snouck, who agreed on the need for offensive actions, but differed on the realization of this approach.

Although K. van der Maaten reports that Van Heutsz and Snouck had been acquainted since earlier days in the Netherlands, it goes without doubt that this discourse was the start of their successful professional cooperation in the Netherlands-Indies. This was the brochure’s true merit; it

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139 Ibid., 94, 97. With regard to civil-military interaction at the local level Snouck denounces the rivalry between the army, the navy, and the civil administrators. He urges for more ‘punctual cooperation’.


145 K. van der Maaten, *Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog*, 106. Reportedly Snouck and Van Heutsz first met in Breda where the former enjoyed his middle education, while the latter followed a course as a sergeant. Later they again ran into each other as respectively lecturer and course member at the Dutch Army staff college. Although there is no uncertainty about their encounter at the staff college, the Breda connection is doubtful as this must have taken place before 1870, when Van Heutsz was transferred to Maastricht. Snouck Hurgronje, who was born in 1857, was barely a teenager at this time. This makes the Breda connection highly unlikely.
sparked an exchange of thoughts between two men who would pioneer a new strategy that would finally mark the watershed in the Dutch Aceh policy.

Although Snouck’s report and Van Heutsz’s brochure ushered in the dawn of a new approach at their appearance in 1892-1893, the actual becoming of this strategy lay in the future. Despite Governor Van Teijn’s experience, and Snouck’s extensive ethnographical analysis of Acehnese society that had revealed the true distribution of power, the policy of the Dutch in Aceh remained to bring the Sultan to submission. Albeit the overall objective did not change, the local colonial administration in Kutaradja kept searching for methods to break the stalemate caused by the restraints of the concentration line. The challenge was to augment Dutch control over Aceh from within the perimeter of the line with limited resources only; large military actions were neither possible, nor thinkable. When colonel (later major-general) Ch. Deijkerhoff became the eleventh Governor of Aceh in January 1892, he took the initiative to seek the help of an Acehnese ally who yielded enough influence to convince the Sultan to submit to the Dutch. Such an ally was found in the powerful Acehnese warlord Teuku Uma, an opportunistic political adventurer who had benefited from the war to grow from a minor actor to the uncontested lord of almost complete Aceh’s west coast. In September 1893 the treaty between Uma and the Dutch administration was sealed and for the next years the political strategy of the Aceh War was dominated by what was afterwards called the Teuku Uma policy. We will elaborate on this episode of the Aceh War in the next chapter; first it is time to draw some conclusions on the first twenty years of the war.

4.4 Conclusion

After twenty years of war Dutch control over Aceh was limited to the concentration line surrounding Kutaradja, and -as Snouck revealed- even within the perimeter of this line the population’s attitude towards the colonial administration was dubious. The Dutch had desperately struggled to augment their control beyond the original bridgehead, but ultimately failed to accomplish this. The resulting stalemate at least secured Dutch possession over the capital; sufficient to claim Aceh as Dutch territory by the imperial standards of that day. But why was it that the Dutch expansion machine had stalled in Aceh? For sure, the failure to establish control over the Acehnese can be largely attributed to the continuous changing of the Dutch war policy. All these different policies, however, shared a common feature, namely the misinterpretation of the Acehnese societal landscape. Even when the positions of the Sultan, ulama and ulèèbalang became more clear, the Dutch were highly ignorant of the relationships between those groups, which shaped the local political marketplace. Despite an awareness of the limited authority of the Acehnese Sultan that pre-dated the Aceh War, the Dutch war authorities wrongly attributed great political power to the Sultan and the Sultanate’s administrative institutions. This assumption made the Sultan a central

objective in any Dutch policy, either as an actor to be co-opted or to be outmaneuvered. Similarly the nature of the power of the ulèëbalang was misunderstood, which, for instance, led to co-option of minor actors, while major actors were ignored. Moreover, the Dutch also weakened the position of the ulèëbalang as they were unaware of those chiefs’ fragile legitimacy. Dutch military operations often separated local chiefs from their populace, and when ulèëbalang were co-opted after a punitive action, the local population did not think well of their chief’s association with the brutal Dutch administration. The ulama duly exploited this weakening of ulèëbalang legitimacy as they greatly augmented their grip on the Acehnese by preaching the perang sabil against the Kompeuni. Consequently, the main result of the Dutch intervention thus far had been the strengthening of the ulama and their resistance against the new colonial administration.

In terms of co-option it can be said that from the onset of the war the Dutch were willing to practice cultural legitimation, but failed to acknowledge the exact pattern of legitimacy of Aceh’s highly fragmented society. Of course the colonial administration quickly understood that Acehnese society was spread over autonomous -but interdependent- locales such as Great Aceh, Pidië, and the many other coastal micro-states of the Dependencies that were defined by the frontiers of ancient kingdoms or the geographical realities of the environment. The complexity of Acehnese society was further augmented through the existence of four different identity groups; ulèëbalang, ulama, gampong dwellers, and the Sultan and his entourage. It were the connectedness of those groups, their mutual relationships, and their interactions that shaped the structure of Acehnese society within the boundaries of each distinctive locale as well as in its completeness. Dutch intelligence had gradually revealed the existence of those groups, but failed to grasp the exact nature of their political relations. This only changed with Snouck’s report on Acehnese society. Snouck rightly identified the ulèëbalang and the ulama as the main political actors in war-infested Acehnese society. In his opinion the war had brought the clergy the opportunity to wrest power from the chiefs, who were the original legitimate authorities. Although this analysis correctly pictures the political situation and pattern of legitimacy in Aceh after twenty years of war, even Snouck’s view contained a misconception, as he -contrary to many of his own observations- portrayed ulèëbalang legitimacy as of a hierarchical, feudal nature. As we have seen ulèëbalang authority was mainly based on their economic position, and their legitimacy vis-à-vis the population under their influence was only weakly developed. This misconception would have huge consequences for the future, which we will discuss in Chapter Six. For the colonial administration’s understanding of Acehnese society during the Aceh war, however, Snouck’s report marked the watershed and meant a huge leap forward as it correctly identified the main political actors and their mutual relations. When Snouck’s analysis was accepted as the underpinning for the Dutch Aceh strategy during the latter part of the 1890s it finally allowed the Dutch to thoroughly practice cultural legitimation -albeit based upon a wrong understanding of the exact nature of the chiefs’ legitimacy.
Thus far we have not discussed the mobilization of local militias through co-opted power-holders. The main reason for this is that the Dutch made only limited use of such additional resources during the first half of the Aceh War; they simply lacked sufficient stable co-optive relationships to employ this measure in an efficient way. Snouck illustrated that even when more durable co-optive relationships allowed the Dutch to mobilize local militias, the resistance’s counter-collaboration efforts thwarted the effective use of these local fighters. Such militias were more a liability than an asset and therefore the Dutch did not succeed in initiating a successful mobilization during the first two decades of the war. The underlying reason for the shortage of sufficient stable co-optive relationships, of course, lies in the lack of understanding of Acehnese society. The answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt varied with the oscillations of the war policy. The uléëbalang of Great Aceh were intermittently subjected to rapprochement -also through coercive methods- or expulsion, and the Dutch attitude towards the Sultan was the subject of similar fluctuations. The Dutch only engaged in more durable co-optive relationships with local power-holders in the area surrounding their Kutaradja bridgehead and, through declarations of submission, with the numerous uléëbalang who ruled the individual Dependencies. In both cases, however, the durability of the co-optive relationships remained highly hypothetical. Even in the eyes of well-disposed local power-holders the Dutch were unable to establish themselves as either the dominant or preferable partner for co-option during the first two decades of the war. To understand the reasons for this we have to take a closer look at the methods for co-option as used by the colonial administration.

Wherever the Dutch engaged in more durable relationships, they failed to establish dominance as a consequence of their lack of resources. The reliance on a poor system of naval coercion, for instance, did not suffice for maintaining dominance over the statelets of the Dependencies that had nominally subjected to Dutch rule. Despite the signed treaties the micro-states increasingly supported the resistance with the Dutch in no position to interfere. The Dutch in Aceh, typically, lacked a capability for collaboration domination. Even in the scarce cases the Dutch managed to establish and maintain dominance -i.e. in the vicinity of the bridgehead- the lack of resources prevented them from also becoming the preferable partner for co-option. The colonial administration had sufficient means to coerce those local power-holders into co-option, but lacked the resources to protect those agents against the highly effective counter-collaboration of the ulama-led resistance. In order to limit personal damage, the co-optees adopted an attitude of duplicity against the Dutch, which rendered the co-optive relationships ineffective. Thus, even in the case of a consistent strategy towards local power-holders, the Dutch were incapable of establishing themselves as credible partners for co-option. The limited resources affected the coercive as well as the persuasive side of the co-option continuum. Contradictory, the only means available in a sufficient quantity was money. But without a capability to enforce compliance or to protect

their co-optees, the use of money as a reward-based persuasive method was of limited use, as Pel had already remarked in 1875.

Yet, in 1893 the war-weary Dutch policy-makers were determined not to spend more resources on what they deemed a protracted conflict with no option to reach a satisfactory solution. A Dutch withdrawal would be explained as a sign of weakness by the other colonial powers in the region and the colonial subjects in the Indonesian archipelago. Victory seemed unattainable. A continuation of the existing stalemate at least secured Dutch possession over the capital; sufficient to claim Aceh as Dutch territory. Therefore it is understandable that Dutch authorities in The Hague and Batavia decided not to allocate additional resources to Aceh. If the local administration wanted to augment its control it had to search for methods that would not require additional means. A hitherto insufficiently exploited path had been that of mobilization of additional resources from within Acehnese society. What if the local administration could forge a true durable relationship with a local power-holder who could greatly augment their capabilities? And what if such a local power-holder yielded enough influence to assist the Dutch in obtaining their political goal, the submission of the Sultan? Let us turn to the next episode of the Aceh War, that brought a new Dutch policy to obtain control through a co-optive alliance with one of Aceh’s most powerful local leaders, warlord Teuku Uma.
Chapter 5
Chapter 5: The Teuku Uma policy

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we have obtained an overview of nineteenth century Aceh, its society, and the first two decades of the war. In this chapter we will focus on a specific episode in which the Dutch colonial administration adopted a policy designed to obtain control over the population through collaboration with a dominant local power-holder, warlord Teuku Uma. As we have seen in Chapter Three this was the preferable method for winning colonial wars; thus far, however, the Dutch had been unable to establish an effective co-optive relationship with such a local power-holder. Of course, the colonial administration had -with intervals- pursued the submission of the Sultan, but it failed to accomplish this due to the policy oscillations informed by the ever present lack of means. Therefore, it was important for the Dutch to find a local ally whose interests coincided with the Dutch aims, so that an effective co-optive relationship could be forged without a means-consuming campaign to enforce such an alliance. In this regard Teuku Uma, an opportunistic actor who had recently risen to dominance over Aceh’s west coast, was a promising figure, as he needed Dutch support for consolidating this position vis-à-vis his rivals. The ensuing co-optive relationship with Uma (established in 1893) appeared a tremendous multiplier for Dutch control over Aceh. It even allowed the colonial administration to extend the concentration line without the use of additional colonial troops thanks to the deployment of Uma’s militia. In the end, however, the relationship ended in disaster as Uma departed the Dutch side in 1896 at the moment he had become their pivotal asset on the local political marketplace. The colonial administration in Kutaradja, thus, proved to be unable to control its main co-optee. It was this failure that would finally open the door for the establishment of effective co-optive relationships as part of the Aceh strategy.

This specific case is selected as it not only sheds a light on the difficulties of establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships as part of a colonial pacification campaign, but also illustrates the (potential) benefits and dangers of the mechanism of co-option. An analysis of how and why this co-optive relationship was forged, and how it was mutually exploited and lost will reveal the dynamics of co-option in the reality of colonial warfare in a highly fragmented societal environment. The role of Uma and his militia in the Dutch strategy will clarify the Dutch notions of cultural legitimation and consecutive mobilization, and the process used to identify and monitor Uma as a key co-optee as well as the methods used to establish and maintain the relationship will provide an insight in how the Dutch decided whom to co-opt and how they actually practiced co-option. Thus, this analysis will enable us to draw conclusions on the fundamental as well as the practical facets of co-option in the reality of a colonial pacification campaign in a highly fragmented society.

1 This chapter contains edited material from Martijn Kitzen, ‘Between treaty and treason’.
In order to provide a thorough reconstruction of the collaboration between the colonial administration and Uma, this chapter provides a chronological narrative of the relationship between both parties. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Uma and his ‘thug’ band first appeared on scene during the turmoil of 1883 and 1884, when the Dutch learned of his rising power along the west coast. In the following years the Dutch would fight as well as collaborate with Uma. This experience already revealed Uma’s opportunistic character -the Dutch would call it treacherous- as typically he did not keep promises and always preferred to pursue his own interests. As this period provides an insight in Uma’s position and behavior as a local power-holder, we will start our analysis with an overview of the years before the strategic alliance with the Dutch. Next we will discuss why the colonial administration in Kutaradja in 1892 -despite some of their earlier experiences- decided to consider a co-optive relationship with Uma as its main asset for augmenting Dutch control over Aceh. The co-optive treaty was signed in 1893, which marked the start of the collaboration that would last until 1896, when Uma once again deserted the Dutch. We will deal separately with the ‘effective’ years of the co-optive relationship from 1893 until 1895 and its decline in 1896, before we will conclude this chapter by discussing our findings in the perspective of the analytical framework for understanding co-option.

5.2 Prelude

The full-blown guerrilla that confronted the Dutch in 1883 was led and inspired by the ulama with help of opportunistic local power-holders. These latter agents ‘do not form the soul of the movement of resistance’ as ‘they have other objects in view than the holy war, objects which they would if necessary gladly avail themselves of our [the Dutch] help to attain’.\(^2\) The practices referred to by the opportunistic chiefs were known to the Acehnese as main perang (playing at war); the use of connections with different opposing parties in order to increase one’s power and wealth.\(^3\) Snouck further describes the opportunistic adventurers as charismatic personalities whose unique ability to deal with the circumstances of the war -both as soldiers and as diplomats- enables them to bind followers and successfully claim authority.\(^4\) Typically these warlords start augmenting their influence by operating as leaders of roving gangs, until they have won sufficient connections and power to challenge traditional authorities in order to establish themselves as dominant local power-holders of an ulèëbalangship. Once consolidated in their new position, the opportunistic chiefs start behaving as typical Acehnese local power-holders; they increase their wealth and power by use of the same ‘plundering’ methods (such as tolls and taxes) as employed by the other

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\(^3\) Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 274.

agents on the local political market-place and abandon the methods that were used during their period as gang leaders. This last step qualifies such chiefs as ulëëbalang themselves.

Teuku Uma is commonly considered the champion of these opportunistic adventurers as he took tremendous benefit from the chaos of the war to rise from a relatively humble position to become one of Aceh’s most influential chiefs. His deeds are extensively commented in the Acehnese epic poem hikayat perang Kompeuni, which was first recorded by Snouck in 1892. The poem states that Uma started his career as a priman, a freeman without an office and without any authority. Originally from a less influential ulëëbalang family from the west coast Dependency of Meulaboh, he started to gain influence as a political actor in the northern part of Aceh’s West coast during the period of civil government that followed Van der Heijden’s governorship. His charismatic character allowed him to form a marauding gang consisting of minor war leaders and many followers. The first confrontation with the Dutch happened when Uma protruded to the municipality VI mukim, which lies in Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim (and lies adjacent to the west coast). The original ulëëbalang of this community had fled and the colonial administration had replaced him by one of their allies, who extorted the local population. Uma enjoyed massive popular support in his fight against the Dutch and their puppet ruler, but returned to the west coast to continue his marauding activities. In 1883 he returned to Great Aceh offering his submission to the colonial administration. The Dutch, however, recounted his earlier opposition, and Governor Laging Tobias demanded that he ‘should first prove that he is earnest by some achievement on behalf of the Government which at the same time would irrevocably discredit him in the eyes of the enemy’.

An appropriate mission for Uma to prove his allegiance was found in tasking him to release the crew of the Nisero, a British steamer that had run aground on the west coast Dependency of Teunom in November 1883 and which was consequently seized by Teuku Imam, the Raja of Teunom. This energetic ulëëbalang had become an enemy of Uma as he was one of the few west coast rulers strong enough to withstand Uma and his gang. The Dutch, therefore, deemed it highly suitable to fight the Raja of Teunom by his rival thug Uma. The opportunistic

5 Snouck’s description of Acehnese opportunistic adventurers going through a roving and a stationary phase remarkably resembles Mancur Olson’s concept of roving and stationary bandits, which was published 100 years later. See Mancur Olson, ‘Dictatorship, Democracy, And Development’, American Political Science Review 87:3 (September 1993).


nature of Uma, however, fully exposed itself to the Dutch when Uma was landed with arms and money to free the crew in July 1884. Instead of fulfilling his mission Uma killed the crew of the launch that brought him ashore and started augmenting his hold on the west coast with his new equipment and money. The Dutch reacted with a naval bombardment and by putting a price on his head, but due to his roving existence these measures resulted no effect as Uma remained out of reach of the colonial administration’s clawless grip.12 Uma’s rival Teuku Imam also benefited from this move as he eventually released the Nisero’s crew in return for, among others, a $100,000 ransom.13

What followed next was a phase in which Uma transformed from a gang leader to the most respected and influential power-holder of Aceh’s west coast by 1886. Moreover, he also established himself as one of the leading uléëbalang in Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim and thereby became firmly embedded in traditional Acehnese authority circles. How did he manage to accomplish this? Snouck summarized it as a combination of ‘tact, good luck, and knowledge of men’ with ‘cautious mental reservation’.14 Uma had successfully enriched himself as a gang-leader and acquired pepper plantations along the west coast which further added to his income. He cleverly used his wealth to build a reputation of generosity that served to create solid ties with his followers and made him popular with the Acehnese. As a matter of fact the poet of the hikayat perang Kompeuni describes how he received many gifts from Uma’s ‘generous hand’.15 The combination of military might and popularity among the people brought Uma such influence that most of the west coast’s traditional chiefs opted not to compete with Uma, but preferred ‘to retire into the background’.16 Furthermore Uma cleverly augmented his power through political marriages. It were those marriages that secured him an influential position in Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim. His most famous wife Chut Nyak Din was the daughter of his uncle Teuku Nanta, the powerful but aging uléëbalang of the sagi’s municipality of the VI mukim, while he was -among others- also married to the daughter of the less influential Panglima Sagi of the XXV mukim.17 Thus Uma became a powerful uléëbalang himself.

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12 C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, Volume II, 112. W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, De Toekoe Oemar-Politiek, Inleiding en Wording (’s-Gravenhage & Batavia: De gebroeders Van Cleef & G. Kolff en Co., 1897). Although published anonymously, the latter book was later attributed to Nieuwenhuijzen. See Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 200. Writing style, arguments and access to data indeed are similar to Nieuwenhuijzen’s series of articles also published in 1897 under the title ‘De politiek van de oorlog in Atjeh’ in the magazine Indisch Militair Tijdschrift.

13 Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 155.


Chapter 5 The Course of Co-option

Uma’s guile and his use of main perang tactics are clearly demonstrated by the way he arranged his official recognition, his sarakata, by the Sultan. Since Uma’s wealth had increased he had used it not only to adopt a generous attitude toward his followers and the general population, but he had also regularly overwhelmed the Sultan’s court in Keumala with gifts. Thus the Sultan was brought in a position in which he could not refuse anything to Uma, which eventually led to the issuing of letters patent in which Uma was officially recognized as amir ul-bahr, Lord of the Sea, of the west coast. This position officially entitled Uma to collect the Sultan’s levies along the West coast, and although Uma had augmented his position as he was now nominally acting on behalf of the Sultan he also openly flouted the Sultan’s authority and acted in his own interest:

‘He [Uma] also both in word and deed yielded to the Sultan as much as he chose, and looked on his sealed letters of appointment as a mere ornament that might at times give an official flavour to his pretensions.’

Uma adopted a similar attitude toward the leading ulama; he presented them with gifts and the hikayat perang Kompeuni tells us that he even went as far as declaring himself ready to completely obey Teungku Tiro’s will. Snouck commented that this declaration was a typical example of ‘those empty promises which Achehnese [sic] chiefs make with a view of keeping out of one another’s way’. Uma never took orders from Tiro or any of the other leading ulama, but joined their fight against the Kompeuni whenever it was in his own interest.

If Uma employed these tactics to empower his position vis-à-vis his Acehnese rivals, why shouldn’t he use similar methods against external rivals that were competing for influence over Aceh? As aforementioned the colonial administration first encountered Uma’s opportunistic character, which the Dutch called treacherous, during the Nisero affair. As Uma’s wealth and power increased he adopted an attitude of periodical rapprochement towards the Dutch. This strategy was informed by the need to secure the shipping of his yearly pepper harvest. However, when on 14 June 1886 the Hok Canton, a British owned steamer operating under the Dutch flag, anchored at Rigas bay in the west coast Dependency of Rigaïh to negotiate the trade of Uma’s pepper crop, the ship was robbed and its European crew members were taken hostage by his men.Reportedly this incident instigated as a result of an existing personal feud between Uma and the ship’s Danish captain, Hansen, who was mortally wounded in

18 C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, Volume I, 148-149. C.R. Beamer, ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 412-413. Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 261. It has to be mentioned that the Sultan showed a similar tact from his side when traditional rulers protested Uma’s appointment. The Sultan pointed out to the protesters that Uma had been named chief of the sea and not over the land.
21 Paul van ‘t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 179.
the melee aboard the ship. The hikayat perang Kompeuni, however, presents the cutting out of the Hok Canton as a carefully prepared and concerted ruse from the west coast’s Sea Lord in order to thwart the Dutch administration. Albeit this latter explanation is highly doubtful, there is no hesitation that Uma was well aware of how his rival Teuku Imam, the Raja of Teunom, had benefitted from the Nisero affair and that Uma aimed to use the Hok Canton in a similar way. Governor Demmeni immediately reacted by sending a punitive expedition that failed to release the hostages and, despite the capture of some of Uma’s blood relatives—who were to be used as hostages by the colonial administration—, only demonstrated the colonial administration’s ‘military impotence’. As a consequence the Governor-General prohibited a further military solution to the Hok Canton affair, and the Dutch paid Uma a ransom of $25,000. Together with the $15,000 plundered of the ship and a rich booty of goods this made considerable revenue that Uma generously shared with his followers and friendly chiefs as well as with Teungko Tiro, who thankfully proclaimed that ‘henceforth Teuku Uma might look on him as father’. Uma, thus, took direct and indirect benefits from The Hok Canton affair. However, as he again had embarrassed the colonial administration, there could be no rapprochement to protect his next pepper harvest. Moreover, the Dutch were eagerly seeking a way to punish this opportunistic local power-holder.

An appropriate punishment was quickly found as it was concluded that Uma would suffer most by affecting his main ground of income, the pepper trade. Yet, it took almost two years for effective measures to be implemented. Governor-General O. van Rees first overruled the by Governor Demmeni’s successor, colonel (later general) Van Teijn, suggested closure of Uma’s ports on the west coast as it opposed the officially policy. When The Hague changed its policy in 1887 Van Rees finally gave permission for a naval blockade of Uma’s ports from February to May 1888. In addition to this the Dutch supplied arms to Uma’s biggest rivals—ironically including the protagonist of the Nisero affair, the Raja of Teunom—and provided naval gun support along the west coast. Furthermore, the colonial administration put a $5,000 bounty (that if necessary could be raised to $10,000) on Uma’s head in the Straits Settlements in order to prevent an escape abroad. These measures proved to be highly effective as Uma quickly approached the colonial administration in order to submit. Uma’s urgency to appease the Dutch is clearly demonstrated by the fact that he not only sent letters, but also dispatched a personal messenger and that his father-in-law Teuku Nanta and his

26 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 262-263.
27 NA, MvK, 1850-1900, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 25/1, Van Teijn aan Van Rees, 26 maart 1888.
28 NA, MvK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Rees aan Van Teijn, 6 augustus 1888.
main wife Chut Nyak Din also sent letters announcing Uma's willingness to submit to the Dutch.  

Unsurprisingly the Dutch were not too enthusiastic about this offer, and they replied that submission could only be considered if Uma would completely comply with their strict demands:

‘Uma should first offer convincing evidence proving the sincerity of his promises of better behaviour and reliability, therefore he should quietly settle in the VI mukim, no longer interfere in the west coast and leave all pending issues of that area to the colonial administration’s power of decision, before his request for amnesty could be taken into consideration.’

The purpose of these demands was not only to deal with Uma, they also aimed at restoring the authority of the adat chiefs who had disappeared to the background as a consequence of Uma’s rise to power (most of the ruling ulèëbalang of the west coast’s Dependencies had signed declarations of submission and thus were nominally subjected to the Dutch). Simultaneously, the colonial officials were in doubt about how to exactly treat Uma if he would comply with all demands. Uma himself stressed that he could be a useful ally to the Dutch as ‘he would employ all his influence and power according to our [the colonial administration’s] insights’. Governor Van Teijn in Kutadja developed the view that Uma as an opponent could inflict much harm, but as an ally his influence and knowledge would be instrumental in restoring order in the VI mukim. This provoked the governor to ask Batavia for detailed instructions on how to act upon Uma’s submission. The reaction from his superiors left little room for doubt as it was stated that Van Teijn ‘wrongly expected prosperity from the submission of this inveterate robber’, who -according to Batavia- would never be fully accepted by the adat chiefs as even in the eyes of the Acehnese he was considered an ‘orang djahat’, a dangerous man. Therefore, it was explicitly forbidden to engage in any kind of collaborative relationship following Uma’s possible submission.

Thus, the Dutch attitude towards Uma, that resulted from the different encounters with this opportunistic local power-holder, was that he could be granted amnesty when he would comply with the Dutch demands, but he certainly would not be attributed any influence under the authority of the colonial administration. The temporarily closure of the west coast as a tool for augmenting Dutch influence proved so successful that under Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk it was also implemented for the whole north coast in two stages in 1889 and

29 NA, MVK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Teijn aan Van Rees, 28 juni 1888.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 NA, MVK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Teijn aan Van Rees, 27 juni 1888.
33 NA, MVK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Rees aan Van Teijn, 6 augustus 1888.
1890, while the west coast was re-closed in January 1890.\textsuperscript{34} Such blockades, however, not only affected Uma, but harmed all local power-holders dependent on trade, and consequently led to a decline of their power. As simultaneously the ulama became more powerful, traditional chiefs as well as opportunistic local power-holders started to ‘demonstrate signs of rapprochement’ towards the colonial administration.\textsuperscript{35} The ensuing atmosphere created the conditions for negotiations with the Keumala-party through the mediation of well-disposed chiefs. In 1889 the first indirect contacts with the court were established, and in 1890 the colonial administration dispatched friendly ulêëbalang as official negotiators to Keumala. Although these efforts remained without tangible result, the submission of the Sultan seemed within hand’s reach. The Dutch were, once again, focused on the Sultan as their main political objective. Uma, thus, faded away from the centre of the colonial administration’s attention and succeeded in maintaining his position as one of Aceh’s most powerful local power-holders by continuing his main perang tactics vis-à-vis Acehnese rivals, while carefully avoiding a new confrontation with the Dutch. A new encounter –in one way or another–, however, was inevitable if the colonial administration genuinely wanted to establish Dutch control over Aceh.

\section*{5.3 The Path to co-option}

The renewed impetus to realize the submission of the Sultan was based upon the mediation of well-disposed chiefs. As mentioned, various attempts failed to yield result. It was felt, however, that the conduct and the course of the negotiations had proven the Sultan’s willingness to submit. All what was needed now was an influential person, a single powerful ally, who held enough personal influence to convince the Sultan to submit. Van Teijn’s successor (as of May 1891), Governor F. Pompe van Meerdervoort, deemed Teuku Uma, who had repeatedly approached the colonial administration, the right person to definitely persuade the Keumala-party. Consequently he pleaded for a complete and unconditional pardon, as this would win the confidence of the Sultan and his followers.\textsuperscript{36} Aceh’s Governor had considered the disadvantages and benefits and thought that despite Uma’s past and a realistic chance that he would once again betray the Dutch, his influence on the Keumala-party was worth the risk. Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk, however, did not agree and reconfirmed Van Rees’ 1888 official instruction that there should be no collaboration in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{34} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 263. These measures would eventually evolve in a systematic naval blockade, a so-called scheepvaartregeling, which spawned Dutch control of trade as colonial officials levied tolls and duties on behalf of the ruling ulêëbalang. Resident Scherer was the main initiator of this scheepvaartregeling that according to his belief could pacify Aceh and its Dependencies within three years at an additional expenditure of 200,000 guilders annually. See G.A. Scherer, \textit{Hoe moet Atjeh gepacificeerd worden? Voordracht gehouden in het Indisch Genootschap} (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1891), 45.


\textsuperscript{36} NA, MvK, 6204, Geheim Verbaal 13 oktober 1891Kab R 14. 51/1, Pompe van Meerdervoort aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 13 oktober 1891.
\end{footnotesize}
whatever form with this ‘robber and murderer’ who had violated the ‘European as well as the indigenous laws of war’.  

On 18 December 1891 it was reported that the Sultan would visit Teuku Uma in the VI mukim to confer about their mutual submission to the Dutch administration in Kutaradja. Pompe van Meerdervoort assessed this message as highly improbable, but he found it suitable evidence for a connection between Uma and the Sultan and his party. Before he could take further action, however, he resigned over a conflict with the Governor-General concerning the naval blockades, which he had deliberately neglected because he thought that the Acehnese chiefs would only fully support the Dutch if there was no interference with their trade. When his successor colonel (later major-general) C. Deijkerhoff was installed in January 1892, he incorporated the idea of submitting the Sultan through Uma and immediately took the initiative to pursue careful rapprochement. From then on the strategy of the Aceh War would be slowly dominated by what was afterwards called the Teuku Uma policy. Now it is clarified why the colonial administration at the grassroots level in Kutaradja was once again considering collaboration with Uma, it is time to shed a light on how Batavia was convinced and how the co-optive relationship with this highly opportunistic local power-holder was actually forged.

Given the antecedents there was absolutely no doubt about Uma’s opportunistic character within the Dutch camp (colonial officials typically would call him treacherous). Even the main advocates of Uma’s co-option, such as Governor Deijkerhoff, agreed that Uma was a ‘robber and murderer’, who had not only violated agreements with the Dutch, but also had demonstrated similar behaviour towards indigenous actors. Deijkerhoff, however, wrote to his superior Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk, that he would never start negotiations with such a ‘scallywag’, were it not that the situation had changed. Uma had approached the Dutch government with an invitation to discuss his submission. On January 30 Deijkerhoff’s Assistant-Resident for Great Aceh met Uma in his house in Lampisang, where the latter offered his submission as well as to guarantee security of his home territory of the VI mukim. The next day one of the chiefs mediating with the Keumala-party, Tuanku Hussain (a member of the Sultan’s family who had relinquished his claim on the throne and lived in Kutaradja), confirmed Uma’s intentions and additionally announced that Uma also would open negotiations about the Sultan’s submission on favourable conditions for the colonial regime. The analysis of the Governor’s staff was that, once Uma collaborated with the

37 NA, MvK, 6204, Geheim Verbaal oktober 1891 Kab R14, 51/1, Beschikking Pijnacker Hordijk aan Pompe van Meerdervoort, 20 augustus 1891.
38 NA, MvK, 6206, Geheim Verbaal 13 februari 1892 D2, Indisch Depêche 31 december 1891 91/2, Pompe van Meerdervoort aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 18 december 1891.
39 For a detailed account of Pompe van Meerdervoort’s attitude towards naval blockades and his resignation see C.R. Beamer, ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 448-453.
40 NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 N7, Indisch Depêche 10 maart 1892 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 28 februari 1892, 1.
41 Ibid., 2-3.
Dutch side, the ulama hard liners within the Keumala-party would exclude and fight him. This was confirmed by a report on a 15 February meeting between Uma, Teuku Nya Muhammed, and Teuku Muda Ba’et, the powerful chiefs of respectively the IX mukim of the sagi of the XXV mukim and its adjacent municipality of the VII mukim of the sagi of the XXII mukim. The three chiefs had agreed to submit to the Dutch while abandoning the side of the Keumala-party, and had discussed a mutual defense against the ulama-led resistance, the orang muslimin. Due to the religious scholars’ influence on the Keumala-party it was not deemed very likely that Uma’s co-option would directly bring the Sultan to submission. Deijkerhoff and his staff, however, saw other possibilities.

If Uma switched to the Dutch side, this would mean a ‘sensitive blow’ to the Sultan’s reputation as it would demonstrate the Acehnese that the Dutch were the most powerful actor in theatre. That might cause the Sultan to reconsider his position and submit to the Dutch. Further Uma’s militia would provide the small colonial garrison with much-needed extra capability that could be used to clear a pocket of orang muslimin opposing the western line and give the Dutch control over the islands that belonged to Great Aceh. The administrators in Kutaradja believed Uma could fulfil these tasks as he came from a good family and his marriages had secured him a solid position as an ulèëbalang. It was felt that collaboration with a man that enjoyed such a reputation and network in Acehnese society could only benefit the Dutch cause. Moreover, it was feared that if the Dutch rejected his offer, Uma and his powerful militia would become strongly embedded in the Keumala-party as it was reported that the Sultan was more than willing to appoint Uma as one of his supreme war leaders.

But why would Uma cooperate with the Dutch? The Assistant-Resident of Aceh identified four reasons for this. First, it was known that Uma lacked funding to maintain his activities. Reportedly he was even struggling to provide his 83 closest rakan with their daily share of food, opium, and money. It was also known that Uma had suffered some decline of his power as a consequence of the naval blockades aimed at his ports along Aceh’s west coast. He feared an attack on his home territory of the VI mukim by his father-in-law’s old-time rival Teuku Nyak of Meuraksa. The latter was the original hereditary chief of this municipality who was wrested from his authority by Teuku Nanta somewhere around 1840. According to one source this threat was the true reason for Uma’s meeting with Teuku Nya Muhammed and Teuku Muda Ba’et as these chiefs had promised to support Uma with 200 soldiers each in return for a share of his pepper levies. A third reason was to be found in Uma’s conviction that the Keumala-party was preparing another policy towards the Dutch. He feared the unpredictable consequences of such a change. A final reason was believed to

43 NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 Nr, Indisch Depêche 10 maart 1892 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 28 februari 1892, 6.
44 Ibid., 15-20.
46 Ibid., 8.
48 NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 Nr, Indisch Depêche 10 maart 1892 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 28 februari 1892, 9.
be the influence of Uma’s main wife, Chut Nyak Din, who presumably wished her husband would quit his adventurous live. Probably the first two reasons were the most urgent ones, as later intelligence indicated that Uma’s position was weakened by a huge debt of an estimated $15,000 to $20,000.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, during his second meeting with the Assistant-Resident Uma already requested to be contracted by the colonial administration as a Panglima with the accompanying income.\textsuperscript{50}

The colonial authorities in Aceh had declined all such requests. From the beginning of the negotiations it was made very clear that Uma’s traitorous behaviour of the past was not yet forgotten, and an official alliance with the Dutch could only be sealed, if Uma first would give proof of his good intentions; ‘deeds first, than forgiveness’.\textsuperscript{51} Deijkerhoff also stressed the need to ‘take measures in order to immediately punish Uma, if he tries to deceive us again’.\textsuperscript{52} A possible sanction would typically include his family and Uma himself had already offered to despatch his wife or one of his sons to Kutaradja as a guarantee for his behaviour. Thus, the local colonial administration in Kutaradja was willing to co-opt Uma if he would first demonstrate his good intentions and under the condition that they obtained an instrument for dominating the co-optive relationship with this infamous opportunist. It was believed that these prerequisites would allow the Dutch to bind a dominant local power-holder, who would augment the colonial administration’s influence on the local political marketplace and provide them also with the much-needed resources to augment their military capability. In Deijkerhoff’s view the benefits of Uma’s co-option now outweighed the risk as he wrote to his superiors in Batavia:

‘Is it to our benefit to decline all of Teuku Uma’s offers, or should we exploit his attempts for rapprochement? I have asked myself the answer to this question many times during the last fourteen days. He is and remains a robber and murderer, whose deeds deserve severe punishment, if we would possess the power to do so. Now we are lacking this power, however, it seems to me, that it would be a good policy to try to connect him -if he himself takes steps in that direction [i.e. compliance to Dutch conditions]- to our interests and have his resources at our disposal.’\textsuperscript{53}

The first reactions from Batavia were negative. The Indian Council, the highest advisory body of the colonial government, was sceptical about Deijkerhoff’s plan and also demonstrated a lack of situational awareness by remarking that Aceh’s Governor ‘seemingly

\textsuperscript{49} NA, MvK, 6219, Geheim Verbaal 28 juni 1893 N8, Indisch Depêche 2 maart 1893 16/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 16 februari 1893.
\textsuperscript{50} NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 N7, Indisch Depêche 10 maart 1892 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 28 februari 1892, 7.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 16, italics by author.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 20-21.
doubted the intangibility of our military position in Great-Aceh. Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk followed the advise of the council and rejected co-option, as Uma’s unpredictable opportunistic behaviour could inflict serious damage to the Dutch effort. Yet the door to collaboration was not completely shut as the authorities decided that, after a clear demonstration of Uma’s good intentions they might reconsider the matter.

On 28 July 1892 Deijkerhoff also received the report of Snouck Hurgronje’s mission to Aceh. As aforementioned Snouck depicted Uma as an opportunistic ‘political adventurer’, who tactfully and certainly not without ‘reservatio mentalis’ had become the most important and respected head of the west coast. In the process he had caused grievance to some of the traditional chiefs of the area, as well as that he had demonstrated a total disregard of the Sultan, in whose name he was officially acting. Snouck also stated that Uma, through the influence of his father-in-law, had become the de facto ruler of the sagi of XXV mukims, as the true chief was rather powerless. Furthermore, the report showed that in the past Uma’s main concern in dealing with the Dutch had been his desire to obtain money and that his position now indeed had suffered from the naval blockades of his ports that had seriously cut his revenues. Thus the report sheds some more light on the true intentions of Uma, as due to these setbacks he needed Dutch support to deal with competing more traditional ulëébalang. In these circumstances Snouck advised the colonial government that there were some options for cautious co-option:

‘A powerful man like Teuku Uma could, once won [for the Dutch cause], give us access to the whole west coast and a part of the XXV mukim. The administration, however, should first be totally convinced, that his interests and ours concur; further, as soon as a good relationship is established, one should continuously seek to exploit it in such a manner that, when Uma dies, the administration could replace him, because a so heterogeneously composed authority like Uma’s often vanishes with its creator.’

Additionally H.T. Damsté reports that Snouck personally advised Deijkerhoff ‘if Uma holds out his hand, take it, but hold it’. Snouck, thus, also advocated co-option under the condition that it was practiced carefully and only if the colonial administration was convinced of the candour of Uma’s intentions. His analysis demonstrates an understanding of the charismatic

54 NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 N7, Indisch Depêche 31 maart 1892 36/1, IV Advies van de Raad van Nederlandsch Indie, vergadering 18 maart 1892.
55 NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 N7, Indisch Depêche 31 maart 1892 36/1, V Pijnacker Hordijk aan Deijkerhoff, 25 maart 1892.
58 Ibid, 95.
nature of Uma’s authority and he expected that in the current situation recognition of this authority would lead to an effective co-optive alliance.

Snouck’s report, however, would win Batavia’s approval for the Teuku Uma policy in a way unrelated to his insightful analysis of this opportunistic political adventurer. In the report Uma was somewhat of a detail as the core analysis identified the ulama as the true war-mongers, who mobilized the population against the Dutch. As aforementioned the Sultan and his Keumala-party were considered highly irrelevant to the conflict. For Snouck the solution in Aceh, therefore, was to re-adopt an offensive strategy in order to pursue and kill the Islamic clergy and their armed bands. This was to be followed by a pacification campaign, in which the colonial government would firmly consolidate its control. During the concentration policy, such an approach was out of question, as it required a new Dutch engagement with massive commitment of additional resources. Deijkerhoff fiercely opposed Snouck’s report and wrote an angry 105-page reaction to his superiors in which he denounced new Dutch offensives as these would further alienate the population, which was already tired of war. In language that almost resembles modern counterinsurgency doctrines Deijkerhoff emphasized the importance of the population, patience, political reconciliation and counter-guerrilla actions. Deijkerhoff acknowledged the ulama’s influence, but considered the ulèëbalang as more important, because they enjoyed respect and were the legitimate leaders whose mediation was essential for influencing the population. Thus, the Governor saw the latter as vital for establishing Dutch rule over Aceh as they were instrumental in obtaining control over the population. In his opinion this could be established without Snouck’s proposed offensive operations against the ulama. Moreover, Deijkerhoff seems also personally aggrieved by Snouck as his reaction is permeated with disdain seemingly caused by the latter’s disregard of the local administration during his research in Aceh. An earlier letter to the Governor-General in which Deijkerhoff disapproved of both Snouck’s advice and Van Heutsz’s brochure contained a similar tone. Further it has to be mentioned that under Pompe van Meerdervoort the administration in Kutaradja had already commissioned an ethnographical study of the Acehnese by its medical officer J.R. Jacobs. When Deijkerhoff took over Aceh’s governorship he also became the patron of this study of which he mentions that it will clearly demonstrate some of Snouck’s errors -which it did not. More important than Deijkerhoff’s annoyances was that the administrators in Batavia also rejected Snouck’s recommendation for the obvious reasons; instead of a return to military aggressiveness, they favoured a political approach, which would not require additional resources and would

61 Ibid., 64.
63 Ibid., 16, see also Julius Jacobs, Het Familie- en Kampong leven op Groot-Astjeh, Eene Bijdrage tot de Ethnographie van Noord-Sumatra, Deel I (Leiden: Brill, 1894), 5. The study is also dedicated to Deijkerhoff.
'exploit discord between the Acehnese and support the secular chiefs against the ulama'.

Thus the colonial government followed just the political element of Snouck’s advice, while his call (and Van Heutsz's) for military actions in support of this political approach was ignored. The result was a new policy under which the Dutch aimed to establish control over Aceh through the ulèëbalang’s influence and resources.

This change in political policy inspired the events that took place in Aceh in 1893. Now collaboration with ulèëbalang was the preferred approach, the chances that Batavia would give permission for Uma’s co-option had risen considerably. In February Uma again approached the local administration in order to discuss his submission. Uma was told that as long as the Dutch fortifications suffered from fire from the VI mukim, it was impossible to consider a more favourable attitude towards Uma. When subsequently the shootings stopped, the time had come for Deijkerhoff to call upon Uma to definitely demonstrate his good intentions; the local administration in Aceh deemed it suitable that Uma would clear the sagi of the XXV mukim of the orang muslimin. This must have been a great opportunity for Uma to secure and augment his position under a mandate and with support of the colonial authorities in Kutadja. The actions began in July 1893 and Uma succeeded in quickly establishing dominance with the help of a coalition of well-disposed chiefs. Undoubtedly the supplies of food and opium as well as money provided to Uma by the Dutch (a total of $23,818 was spent on the operation in the XXV mukim) were instrumental in forging this alliance of ulèëbalang. Furthermore the Dutch supported Uma and his troops with artillery and several infantry companies, that executed feint attacks and occupied tactically essential positions that were cleared by the Acehnese allies. As the operation was on, Deijkerhoff was still in doubt about Batavia's permission for further collaboration with Uma, as he informed his superiors that he had 'further plans with Uma, that, I do not doubt, will bear Her [the colonial government's] complete approval'. When Deijkerhoff sent Batavia a cable with Uma's progress as of 8 August, the answer from Pijnacker Hordijk was that he was curious to learn if the Governor

64 NA, MvK, 6222, Geheim Verbaal 1893 Q14, Indisch Depêche 25 november 1893, Gouverneur Generaal aan Minister van Koloniën, 25 september 1893, see also Advies van de Raad van Nederlandsch Indie, vergadering 8 september 1893. Although these reports are from September 1893, the political policy changed as of end January 1893. J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 228.


66 NA, MvK, 6221, Geheim Verbaal 23 september 1893 B12, Indisch Depêche 17 augustus 1893 71/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 2 augustus 1893 621/K.

67 Ibid., 7.

68 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 14 september 1893 82/1, III Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 29 augustus 1893.

69 During the collaboration with Uma a typical pattern of military operations would develop in which Uma's militia would do the fighting, while the Dutch would use their fire power to support him and consecutively occupy enemy positions which were taken by Uma's men. See, for instance, NA, MvK, 6221, Geheim Verbaal 23 september 1893 B12, Indisch Depêche 17 augustus 1893 71/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 2 augustus 1893 621/K., 12, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 24 augustus 1893 77/2, I Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 16 augustus 1893, 7, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 september 1893 87/1, I Deijkerhoff aan Legercommandant Pittius, 30 augustus 1893, 4,9,11.

still acted in accordance with his instructions of 20 August 1891, which explicitly excluded any form of collaboration with Uma.\textsuperscript{71} It now becomes clear that Deijkerhoff acted on his own initiative, for in his next dispatch to Pijnacker Hordijk he replies that he operates in conformity with previous instructions, merely allowing Uma an opportunity to show his good intents.\textsuperscript{72} Deijkerhoff also mentions that he promised his personal recommendation for forgiveness by the colonial administration, once Uma had chased the muslimin from the XXV mukim. He also promised the title of Panglima Perang Besar (great warlord), but did not mention any financial or administrative benefits. On 10 August the ulama and their supporters were successfully chased from the XXV mukim in a last combined operation of Acehnese militias supported by Dutch troops.\textsuperscript{73} Batavia was now confronted with a fait accompli.

Deijkerhoff’s after action report to the Governor-General refers to the discussion with Uma about the conditions of his ‘proof of intent’.\textsuperscript{74} In February Aceh’s Governor had expressed that in his opinion no talks were to be conducted as long as the concentrated line was harassed from the western village of Lamtih. It seems that after this initial step Uma himself offered to sweep the whole sagi. Considering his own interest, this hardly comes as a surprise. As aforementioned Uma conducted the operation with some help of Dutch forces, but relied mostly on allied chiefs to provide him with additional manpower. One of those chiefs had been equipped by the Dutch with 28 rifles. This modus operandi provided a lot of information on local politics as it became clear that most chieftains in Great Aceh preferred to stay in the background or fulfilled a dubious role (i.e. collaborating with both the resistance and the Dutch). It was remarkable that there was such a low number of casualties on Uma’s side, which the administrative staff in Kutaradja attributed to the nature of Acehnese warfare. This allowed opponents to negotiate before fighting and one of the parties could opt not to stay and fight, but instead retreat without suffering harm.\textsuperscript{75} In Deijkerhoff eyes’ Uma had passed the test and he requested total forgiveness for Uma by the colonial administration in Batavia. The fact that of the 28 rifles, which were lent to one of Uma’s allies, twenty had already been returned to the Dutch provided even more evidence of his pro-Dutch attitude.\textsuperscript{76} Also, on 25 August Uma personally came to Kutaradja in order to submit himself and ask Deijkerhoff for forgiveness, which prompted the latter to despatch another request for a positive decision from Batavia.\textsuperscript{77} Confronted with all these developments, the Indian

\textsuperscript{71} See NA, MvK, 6221, Geheim Verbaal 23 september 1893 B12, Indisch Depêche 10 augustus 1893 70/1, III Telegram 201, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 8 augustus 1893 & IV Telegram Pijnacker Hordijk aan Deijkerhoff, 9 augustus 1893.

\textsuperscript{72} NA, MvK, 6221, Geheim Verbaal 23 september 1893 B12, Indisch Depêche 10 augustus 1893 70/1, V Telegram 204, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 9 augustus 1893.

\textsuperscript{73} NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 september 1893 87/1, I Deijkerhoff aan Legercommandant Pittius, 30 augustus 1893.

\textsuperscript{74} NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 24 augustus 1893 77/2, I Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 16 augustus 1893.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 25.

\textsuperscript{77} NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 14 september 1893 82/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 31 augustus 1893. It is worth mentioning that Deijkerhoff in this letter also stresses the importance of forgiveness of influential
Council and the Governor-General now approved Uma’s rehabilitation, warning that treason was still assessed as a realistic danger, and that ‘vigilance was required to prevent Uma from using his newly-acquired power against us’. Thus, on 5 September 1893 Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk finally empowered Governor Deijkerhoff to establish a co-optive relationship with Teuku Uma:

‘I [Pijnacker Hordijk] authorize You [Deijkerhoff] to grant an unconditional and complete pardon to Teuku Uma on behalf of the Government of the Netherlands-Indies with allotment, if you still deem this desirable, of the title of Teuku Panglima Perang Besar and the guarantee that he will not be punished or fined for previous occasions.’

**5.3 The co-optive relationship with Uma**

On 30 September 1893 a ceremony was held in Kutaradja in which Governor Deijkerhoff sealed the treaty with Teuku Uma, as the latter and 15 of his lieutenants pledged allegiance to the Dutch. A five-article certificate of ‘appointment and confirmation’ arranged Uma’s installation as Panglima Perang Besar, under the name of Teuku Djohan Pahlawan. In this function Uma became the colonial administration’s supreme warlord for Aceh and its Dependencies and he was entitled to raise a permanent legion of 200 soldiers under command of two of his brothers and a trustee, and 40 lieutenants. The legion was all paid for by the Dutch administration which meant that Uma himself received an allowance of 1,000 guilders a month, his three commanders 150 guilders, the lieutenants 50 guilders and the fighters 25 guilders. This brought the total costs of the legion at 8,450 guilders a month, or 101,400 guilders annually. According to the official treaty Uma was obliged to fulfil Dutch request to fight ‘folks who cause riots’ throughout Aceh and its Dependencies, and during operations under his command all Acehnese chiefs had to follow his orders.
The colonial administration would provide the necessary war supplies and Uma himself received -in addition to his allowance- a newly built house. In order to control their new co-optee the Dutch obliged Uma to report himself as soon as possible if summoned to Kutaradja, and forbade him to interfere in internal Acehnese affairs unless tasked by the colonial government or when it concerned his own influence sphere (i.e. XXV mukim and the west-coast). These formal checks and balances could be enforced by cutting Uma’s income through a blockade of his pepper trade or denial of Uma’s allowance as well as diminishment of the other support he received.84 The staff in Kutaradja, thus, had made its provisions to dominate the co-optive relationship and punish Uma in case he would deceive them once again. Now both requirements for Uma’s co-option -proof of his good intents and a capability to punish him- were met and the official treaty was sealed, the colonial government could start exploiting the influence and resources of their new ally.

Uma’s successful operation in the XXV mukim inspired a further development of the new Dutch policy in Aceh.85 Co-option of the leading ulëëbalang was the key element and the civil administrators were urged to build up rapport with the mukim chiefs in XXV mukim, all of whom had received financial compensation for their support during the operation and would from then on receive an allowance of 25 guilders a month each. By supporting the secular adat chiefs in their feud with the ulama, the Dutch strived to relieve the war-weary population in Groot-Atjeh. The logic underlying this strategy was the assumption of the Dutch administrators that the ulëëbalang were the legitimate rulers, who enjoyed support, or at least the acquiescence, of the majority of the population.86 In Deijkerhoff’s view this collaboration could only be maintained by the expansion of Dutch rule outside the concentration line to the areas of the XXV and XXVI mukim, and later also the XXII mukim.87 By utilizing the militia and power of the chiefs, control could be established without additional colonial troops and Dutch offensives.

When the new Governor-General C.H.A. van der Wijck came into office in October 1893, Deijkerhoff sent him a detailed explanation of his strategy, which had already been implemented by then and that -according to Deijkerhoff- had surprised the government with an almost unprecedented success achieved with few resources.88 The strategy was based on four pillars, namely (i) chasing away the muslimin gangs, (2) using allied militias as force multipliers, so that additional Dutch forces or offensive operations were not required for the execution of the plan, (3) creating an area cleared of enemy gangs surrounding

84 W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, De Toekoe Oemar-Politiek, 53-54.
85 See NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 12 oktober 1893 93/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 23 september 1893 & NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 X14, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 108/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 19 december 1893.
86 As aforementioned ulëëbalang legitimacy was fragile and predominantly based on their economic dominant positions. The bond between those chiefs and their subjects was not as tight as the Dutch assumed. Both the staff in Aceh as well as Snouck Hurgronje failed to observe this.
87 NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, VII Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 27 oktober 1893, 11.
88 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 X14, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 108/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 19 december 1893.
Chapter 5

The Course of Co-option

The concentration line in Groot Atjeh, whereas the population, chiefs, and clergy were all supposed to collaborate with the Dutch and would keep the enemy out of their territory, if necessary with Dutch materiel support, and realizing (4) the provisional occupation of the mentioned territory by Dutch troops and Acehnese militias, which were to be replaced as soon as possible by an ‘Acehnese legion’ under the command of Uma, the champion of this new strategy. The legion would eventually leave, when the local chiefs could guarantee safety. Thus, Uma became instrumental for achieving control over the population in Aceh. Hence the new policy became known as the Teuku Uma policy.

Not only Uma’s fighting power, but even more his tactful skills at negotiating deals with other actors were vital to obtain support from influential local power-holders. This led lieutenant-colonel W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, Deijkerhoff’s Chief of Staff, to observe that:

‘Teuku Djohan’s [Uma’s new name was mostly used by those serving in Aceh’s administrative staff] legion prompted dominance on all sides; it could not only be considered a pistol on the chest of the orang muslimin, but also a tool to boost the zeal of uléebalang and imams who are not unsympathetically disposed towards us, concerning the protection of their territories against incursions by ulama gangs.’

Uma indeed had demonstrated a remarkable talent in achieving collaboration with various local power-holders in the XXV mukim. The situation had become quiet and the Dutch government was pleased. Deijkerhoff ordered repairs of roads and bridges, and opened the market within the concentration line to traders from this sagi. The Dutch administrators thus stimulated the local population to resume their agricultural activities. Even a festival for the local population was organized on which occasion the newly co-opted chiefs were officially installed as allies of the Dutch and rewarded with small amounts of money. Soon, however, rumours were heard about the remarkable methods used by Uma. Of course, Snouck Hurgronje was the first to report on these methods. Although Snouck admitted the success of Uma’s operations, he was triggered by the ease of that success in the XXV mukim. Indeed, it was very remarkable that Teungku Kutakarang, one of the main ulama leaders after Teungku di Tiro’s death and a resident of the XXV mukim, had suddenly refrained from all activities,

89 W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, De Toekoe Oemar-Politic, 103. Deijkerhoff, in this regard, makes the same remark and also mentions the ‘pistol on the chest’ metaphor in a letter to Van der Wijck. NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 X14, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 108/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 19 december 1893, 23.

90 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 November 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 September 1893 87/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 14 september, 11-13.

91 See, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 18 januari 1894 & Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 20 januari 1894’, ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 138-153, NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 55, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 16/1 Brief van Snouck Hurgronje. Although this last source lacks a date and address it is a reaction to Deijkerhoff’s 19 December 1893 letter to Van der Wijck. This letter is not included in ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje.
whereas simultaneously his opponents were all chased away by Uma’s men. Snouck deemed it highly probable (and history would prove him right) that Uma and Kutakarang had made a deal, as the latter had preached that the fight against Uma should not be considered a holy war. This effectively meant that Uma’s militia (contrary to Dutch colonial forces) was not to be fought by Kutakarang’s followers. Thus, Uma could easily pacify the sagi and in the process help Kutakarang to secure his position by chasing away his competitors.  

The administrative staff in Kutaradja remained enthusiastic about Uma’s co-option and Deijkerhoff even claimed that due to Uma’s mediation many of the XXV mukim’s ulèëbalang now fully supported the Dutch and actively opposed the muslimin gangs. Snouck was worried about the lack of critical review of the results achieved by Uma. According to Snouck the only interest of the chiefs was for them to exercise control over their territory undisturbed; a trait that had caused the Dutch as much advantage as troubles during the war. Further collaboration with the Dutch colonial administration inevitably would lead to interference with their business and a decline of their authority on the long run. This self-interest explained their lack of zeal for the Dutch cause, as expressed by Kutaradja’s Chief of Staff Nieuwenhuijzen. Moreover, it gave them a reason to collaborate with the ulama gangs against the Dutch, as they provided some extra fighting power to defy Dutch interference with their rule. Now it was assumed that an ‘adventurer’ could suddenly convince them to trust the Dutch administration. This was simply to good to be true. One of Snouck’s sources in Aceh did some research and confirmed rumours that the occupation of newly established posts by Uma’s legion was a farce. The informer stated that the guards were only on station to make sure the Dutch would give them their allowance of rice and opium. Another rumour was also confirmed; some chiefs and imams in the controlled areas still allowed the ulama to collect taxes from the population in order to finance the perang sabil. It was also reported that Uma even staged attacks on enemy positions in order to mislead the Dutch. These were all serious concerns, as it slowly became clear that Uma was using bribes and deals with ulèëbalang and ulama to establish a superficial level of control. The Indian Council still approved Deijkerhoff’s strategy and the role of Uma as it had brought the Dutch their first large success in years. Due to the methods allegedly used by Uma, however, Deijkerhoff was urged ‘not to show any distrust, but also not to trust Uma’. Aceh’s Governor was not going to show the required critical attitude towards Uma, as throughout the period of co-option he kept on praising his Panglima Perang Besar. Moreover, it seems that Deijkerhoff deliberately stimulated Uma’s methods as, for example, the expenditure for operations included a vast

93 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 S5, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 16/1 Brief van Snouck Hurgronje, 3-4.
95 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 S5, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 16/1 Brief van de Gouverneur Generaal, 8 maart 1894, 26.
96 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 S5, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 16/1 Advies van de Raad van Indië, uitgebracht in de vergadering 9 februari 1894, 25-30.
amount of money for rewards, and he also provided plenty of opium for distribution among local chiefs. 97

Uma thus demonstrated his superb command of main perang tactics as he cleverly exploited his connections with the different opposing parties in order to increase his own power and wealth. In his home territory of the sagi of the XXV mukim as well as in the west coast Dependencies under his influence, Uma could call upon an extended network of family and friends, who were mobilized to create an apparently peaceful atmosphere, of which they all took some material or immaterial advantage. In the rest of Aceh, however, Uma’s influence and connections were limited. Snouck had correctly pointed at the boundaries of Uma’s influence and Deijkerhoff also seemed to realize this as his strategy emphasized a ‘locals-first’ approach. He preferred the use of the militias of local ulëëbalang to clear their territory from enemy activity and, after that, he would bring in Uma’s legion. The idea behind this approach was that the latter’s presence would allow the members of the local militia to resume their daily livelihood.

Inspired by the large success in the XXV mukim, Deijkerhoff was determined to keep up the momentum of his new strategy and he intended to rapidly organize a similar operation in one of the other sagi of Great Aceh (which had priority over the Dependencies in order to relieve the pressure from the concentration line). When Teuku Nya’ Banta, the Panglima Sagi of the XXVI mukim, approached the administration in Kutaradja with a plan for clearing his territory of muslimin on the condition that he would receive the same support as Uma, the next opportunity revealed itself. 98 Nya’ Banta was trusted by the Dutch as he was raised and educated at the expenses of the colonial administration after his father, an important Dutch ally, was murdered by a rival. 99 He was powerful enough to withstand his competitors in the sagi and was officially recognized as its leader by both the Dutch and the Sultan. Although it seems logical for such an ally to offer his help to the colonial administration, this was undeniably also an internal Acehnese attempt to form a counterbalance against Uma’s newly won position. Through the eyes of Acehnese local power-holders Uma’s alliance with the Dutch had made him a most dangerous competitor, whose influence had to be contained. Further evidence for this thesis is provided by the fact that Nya’ Banta’s father in law Teuku Nyak of Meuraksa, indeed the long-time rival of Uma’s family, was the driving force beyond Nya’ Banta’s offer. Together with their relative Teuku Chut Tungkub of the sagi’s municipality of the XIII mukim Tungkub they formed an alliance of some 1,300 local fighters that was to clear the XXVI mukim for the colonial administration in order to consolidate their position

97 See, for example, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 14 september 1893 82/1, III Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 29 augustus 1893, and NA, MvK, 6226, Indisch Depêche 17 januari 1894 5/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 3 januari 1894.
98 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 24 augustus 1893 77/2, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, toelichting op veertiendaagsch verslag, 16 augustus 1893.
as influential local power-holders on Aceh’s political marketplace and to prevent a further augmentation of Uma’s influence.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 september 1893 87/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 14 september 1893, 14.}

The operation started on 2 September 1893 and was characterized by an initial progress of the involved militias. But soon cracks appeared in the improvised war machine. Teuku Chut Tungkub was unable to rally his militia, because his subordinate chiefs (all mukim chiefs who were the crucial connection between the ulêêbalang and the peasants living in the villages) demanded money for their further collaboration. Tungkub, known for his ‘greed and avarice’, refused to pay his subordinates, so they did not engage in combat.\footnote{Ibid., 14-15.} Albeit Tungkub solved these problems, his contribution to the operation remained troublesome and on 28 September he informed the Dutch that he could no longer support his Acehnese allies. A few days later, however, he again approached the colonial administration with a request for weapons and money, which would allow him to mobilize his people.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 26 oktober 1893 95/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 11 oktober 1893, 6-7.} The administrators in Kutaradja, however, were fed up with Tungkub’s hesitance, that by now seriously hampered the whole operation. He was arrested and punished with an administrative sanction for his ‘deceitful and mendacious behaviour as well as a disrespect for the Netherlands-Indies’ authorities’ which meant that he was detained in a fortification in the west coast Dependency of Meulaboh.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 13 november 1893 99/1, I Extract journaal van de Gouverneur van Atjeh etc., 10 t/m 22 oktober 193, 24 oktober 1893, 7.} In the mean time the operation received a further setback as Teuku Nya’Banta was wounded and Teuku Nyak was temporarily unable to command his militia in the field.

Now the operation had definitely stalled, Deijkerhoff decided to use his new trump, Uma’s legion. First Uma was ordered to meet with Nya’ Banta and Nyak on 8 October 1893 in order to discuss the operation thus far.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 26 oktober 1893 95/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 11 oktober 1893, 8.} Deijkerhoff deliberately staged this as a threat in order to encourage the local ulêêbalang to pick up the fighting. It was made clear that if nothing would happen, Uma would become the overall commander of the action, and thus he would be able to augment his influence in the XXVI mukim. Teuku Nyak was the first to protest and asked Deijkerhoff to keep Uma out of the affairs of the sagi. However, as there was not much change by 20 October, Deijkerhoff ordered Uma to clear the XXVI mukim from muslinin.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 25 oktober 1893, 872/K, 15.} When Uma joined the fight with 100 of his fighters on 21 October 1893, he was promptly appointed commander over the local ulêêbalang and their militias exactly as was arranged in the official co-optive treaty.

Of course, the local chiefs were far from pleased with this measure. The Dutch had allowed a dangerous outsider into their locale to interfere with their affairs. Teuku Nyak had
already communicated his disapproval of this move, but soon many additional complaints about Uma were sent to and filed by the administration in Kutaradja.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 14 december 1893 109/1 III, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 5 december 1893. 12.} Whereas a similar situation, that occurred simultaneously along the west coast where Uma’s former rivals were worried about his new powerful position, was handled with care (a conference between local power-holders and Dutch administrators was organized and Uma was made to promise he would consider his former enemies as friends, and ultimately he was forbidden to interfere with the administration of the west coast), the Dutch ignored the appeals of the allied chiefs in the XXVI mukim.\footnote{See, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 september 1893 87/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 14 september 1893, 20-21, and NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 25 oktober 1893, 872/K, 16, NA, MvK, 6232, Geheim Verbaal 11 april 1895 G6, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 29 januari 1895.} Moreover, Deijkerhoff considered it his only mistake that he had relied on Nya’ Banta’s and Nyak’s capabilities for too long. Furthermore the settlement of Teuku Chut Tungkub’s detainment demonstrated a clear disregard for the local chiefs who requested his release.\footnote{Ibid., 7-13.} Bail was set at a tremendous $10,000 as well as the consignment of his both wives and children. When the local chiefs of the XIII mukim Tungkub were unable to raise the money, Dutch troops arrested the family. This caused a general panic in that municipality and made the population leave the scene. Thus, what began as an initiative by three local power-holders to consolidate their own position and prevent Uma’s interference in the sagi of the XXVI mukim, led to the opposite effect; the allies had lost the trust of the Dutch -although the colonial administration permitted all three of them to remain in their position-, the situation on the ground had become very confused, and, most important, Uma was allowed to intervene.

Uma successfully restored the peace in the XXVI mukim and the sagi was declared free of muslimin by 17 November 1893.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 23 november 1893 102/1, IV Telegram No. 337 Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 17 november 1893.} Now Uma was practicing main perang across the boundaries of his own area of influence. The support made available to him by the colonial administration provided the leverage for this modus operandi. This resulted in the cooperation of some chiefs and clergy, including Nya’ Banta and Chut Tungkub (who was forgiven once the bail was paid on October 28 1893) who saw no other option to maintain their position, while others persistently refused to collaborate with Uma.\footnote{‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck’, undated, ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 172-174. As aforementioned this letter can be dated to end 1895 as it is probably a draft version of a more formally formulated letter included in NA, MvK 6235, Geheim Verbaal 31 december 1895 M19, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1895 44/c. See also NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, VIII Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 28 oktober 1893, 877/K.} The latter were completely hostile to the Dutch, while the former copied Uma’s behaviour and started to arrange deals with the colonial administration as well as with the resistance (now including Uma’s enemies). Snouck consequently concluded in 1895 that during the two years that Uma had exerted control over the XXVI mukim, this control was far from complete and rather superficial. The relatively
peaceful situation that had existed in this *sagi* since the events of 1893 was the result of a precarious balance, ‘a *modus vivendi*’ between the colonial administration, the local chiefs, and the leading *ulama*.111 This came at the cost of the colonial administration’s authority as the *main perang* tactics practiced by Uma and other local power-holders officially allied to the Dutch undermined Kutaradja’s position. The deals cut between these Dutch co-optees and the *ulama*-led resistance clearly illustrate this; the colonial administration’s payment for guarding the posts in the area was shared between *ulèëbalang* and *ulama*, and the latter were permitted to freely collect tax for the holy war against the Dutch.112

When Uma was ordered to pacify the *sagi* of the XXII *mukim*, the result was even worse. Initially Deijkerhoff had hoped to keep up his momentum and ordered Uma to invade the *sagi* immediately after the operations in the XXVI *mukim* ended on 17 November 1893.113 The operation in XXII *mukim* ended in December, but soon it became clear that follow-up would be necessary as the results were unsatisfactory. A renewed offensive was launched in February 1894 and lasted until April, but also failed to yield a successful result.114 From then on actions against (parts of) the XXII *mukim* became a frequently recurring event during Uma’s period as a Dutch co-optee. The reasons for this can be found in the attitude of the chiefs and clergy of the central valley of the Aceh River that dominated the XXII *mukim*. This area had always been a stronghold of *ulama* resistance, making its local power-holders less sensitive to Uma’s *main perang* practices. At best Uma’s methods resulted in a temporary break in enemy activities in some areas of this *sagi*, but they certainly did not suffice to consolidate a solid foothold in this pocket of resistance.115 The only tangible result of the repeated actions in the XXII *mukim* was the establishment of two temporary posts, Anak Galung and Senelop, some six kilometres into the *sagi*.116 However, when General J.A. Vetter, Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch Colonial Army, visited Aceh on an inspection trip in 1895, he reported that those posts were too vulnerable to sustain as they were situated too deep in hostile territory.117 Moreover, Vetter also remarked that whereas the situation in the XXV and XXVI *mukim* was quiet and the population’s attitude was favourable to the Dutch, there had been no such change in neither the situation nor the people’s attitude in the XXII *mukim* since the commencement of operations in this *sagi*.118

111 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck’, undated, 176. See also NA, MvK, 6230, Geheim Verbaal 1 december 1894 E1, Indisch Depêche 26 juli 1894 68/1, Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck 15 juli 1894, 1.6. This letter is not included in ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje.


113 NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 23 november 1893 102/1, IV Telegram No. 337 Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 17 november 1893.

114 See NA, MvK, 6226, Geheim Verbaal 8 mei 1894 N6, Indisch Depêche 14 maart 1894 18/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 27 februari 1894, 7, NA, MvK, 6227, Geheim Verbaal 23 juli 1894 E1, Indisch Depêche 19 april 1894 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 10 april 1894, 7.

115 Ibid., 176-178.


118 Ibid., 3,8,42.
What did the colonial administration think of these results of the Teuku Uma policy thus far? Of course, Deijkerhoff was positive about the effects of Uma’s co-option. He remained so until the end of the collaboration and fiercely argued against any attempts of the colonial administration in Batavia to limit Uma’s role in Aceh.119 The methods used by his protégé were subordinate to the benefits for the Dutch, also to the assumed benefits for the population brought about by the stability in especially the XXV and XXVI mukim. As mentioned in the previous paragraph army commander Vetter also noted the peaceful situation and benevolent attitude in those sagi of Great Aceh. However, Vetter was critical about the lack of progress in the XXII mukim, the main pocket of ulama-led resistance. Furthermore, he considered Uma’s position too powerful to match with Dutch interest and urged for a more solid base (i.e. additional colonial troops) for consolidating colonial rule in the XXV and XXVI mukim and establishing control in XXII mukim.120 Enhanced military patrolling among the people would make the Dutch less dependent on opportunistic Acehnese allies, and thus the Dutch ‘would no longer need to assume [from their co-optees] that the situation was quiet and peaceful, but certainly know this’.121 Snouck went one step further and called the stable situation in Great Aceh a ‘beautiful panorama that he [Uma] magically projects on the eyes of the administration and which is founded on deception’ and that this would last only as long as Uma would be allowed to play ‘en grande seigneur’ with Dutch guilders.122 Governor-General Van der Wijck, who was advised by Snouck, therefore constantly raised questions concerning Uma’s integrity -albeit he initially supported Uma’s role.123 The consecutive collision between the colonial administrators in Batavia and Kutaradja eventually led to a conference in December 1895. This conference between Van der Wijck and Deijkerhoff was based on Vetter’s inspection report and heavily informed by Snouck and thus led to a constraint on Uma’s role in Aceh. Against Deijkerhoff’s will it was decided that Uma’s role would be restricted to his own sagi of the XXV mukim and small parts of XXII mukim while the XXVI mukim would be controlled by the Dutch Colonial Army with help of the local chiefs.124

In the light of the concentration policy, however, it is understandable that Deijkerhoff regarded his Teuku Uma policy a success. The combined operations of the Dutch Colonial Army and Uma’s legion had extended the line, as ten new posts (among which Anak Galung and Senelop) were established in 1894 and 1895. The temporary new posts, which were to be replaced by more solid fortifications, together formed the Buitenlinie (outer line). Dutch

119 See for instance NA, MvK, 6234, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1895 L12, Indisch Depêche 7 maart 1895 2/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 6 februari 1896, and NA, MvK, 6236, Geheim Verbaal 29 januari 1896 R1, Indisch Depêche 9 januari 2/1, Van der Wijck en Deijkerhoff aan Bergsma, “Conferentie met generaal Deijkerhoff, Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, op 27 december 1895, naar aanleiding van het rapport van den Legercommandant van 14 december 1895 LA Geheim”.
120 NA, MvK, 6237, Geheim Verbaal 23 April 1896 Z5, Indisch Depêche 26 december 1895 981/1, Vetter, Nota betreffende mijn bevindingen in Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden en de daarop gegronde voorstellen, 14 december 1895, 43, 52-55.
121 Ibid., 60.
122 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck’, undated, 170.
124 NA, MvK, 6237, Geheim Verbaal 23 April 1896 Z5, Indisch Depêche 9 januari 2/1, Van der Wijck en Deijkerhoff aan Bergsma, “Conferentie met generaal Deijkerhoff, Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, op 27 december 1895, naar aanleiding van het rapport van den Legercommandant van 14 december 1895 LA Geheim”. 
casualties had decreased considerably as the frequent attacks and infiltrations had ceased, and all this was achieved without a significant enlargement of Dutch troops. Therefore, it is not surprising that Minister of Colonies Bergsma supported Deijkerhoff, criticized Batavia’s attempts to change the policy in Aceh and even nominated Deijkerhoff for promotion to Knight third class of the highest Dutch military order, the Militaire Willemsorde. Bergsma’s opinion, however, was ill-informed as it was based upon reports on the situation within the concentration line. Bergsma was impressed by these reports and considered the situation in Aceh as a whole of less importance. His assessment of the effects of Uma’s collaboration was positive and, consequently, he characterized the situation in Aceh in 1895 as follows:

‘Within the concentrated line and in the territories between this line and the temporary posts [the outer line] the safety of persons and properties was almost as desired; the only offence that was now and then committed was cattle-lifting.’

The enhanced safety situation within the line did not come at the expense of the Dutch Colonial Army. But what price did the Dutch pay to maintain their co-optive relationship with Uma? The administration in Kutaradja invested vast amounts of money in, and supplied weapons and other goods, to their Acehnese allies. As aforementioned the annual costs for maintaining Uma’s legion were more than 100,000 guilders. Additionally, the allocated budget for the various local militias of other ulèëbalang (all together varying between 600-900 soldiers) totalled another 120,000. Further, 66,300 guilders were reserved for the allowances of co-opted chiefs and their subordinates. The importance of money for establishing and maintaining these co-optive relationships is further stressed by Deijkerhoff’s remark that there was ‘no better means than money to link Acehnese local power-holders to our interests’. As the main co-optee, Uma also received many other benefits and privileges, including a new house, built for the Panglima Perang Besar at the expense of 11,364 guilders (according to Deijkerhoff this move was also necessary to enchant Uma’s main wife Chut Nyak Din). In comparison with the total costs of the colonial forces, such an amount might not be extravagantly high, but the immaterial costs of the Teuku Uma policy were far higher of course. By relying on Uma for military actions as well as for the co-option of other chiefs, the Dutch strategy in Aceh had become dependent on a single local power-holder of dubious

126 See NA, MvK, 6232, Geheim Verbaal 5 april 1895 R5, Telegram Bergsma aan Van der Wijck, 5 april 1895, and NA, MvK, 6232, Geheim Verbaal 11 april 1895 F6, Bergsma aan Koningin-Regentes Emma, 11 april 1895.
127 NA, MvK, 6234, Geheim Verbaal 18 september 1895 B14, Bergsma aan Van der Wijck, 18 september 1895.
129 NA, MvK, 6226, Geheim Verbaal 8 mei 1894 N6, Indisch Depêche 17 januari 1894 5/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 3 januari 1894, 6.
130 See NA, MvK, 6227, Geheim Verbaal 23 juli 1894 E31, Indisch Depêche 21 mei 1894 41/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 9 april 1894 & Besluit Van der Wijck, 19 mei 1894.
reputation. As a consequence of the empowerment of Uma, the Dutch apparently controlled the biggest part of Great Aceh; but did the Dutch also control Uma?

It was clear that Van der Wijck and Snouck rather thought the opposite, and they were proved right. They had warned many times against Uma's opportunistic behaviour. He would ultimately pursue his own interests and not those of the colonial authorities that nominally commanded him. It turned out that the alliance lasted as long as the conditions were favourable for Uma to practice his main perang methods with support of Dutch money and goods. The turning point came in December 1895. Not only did Batavia oblige the local administration in Kutaradja to put a constraint on Uma's role, but far more important was the death Teungku Kutakarang, Uma's trustworthy ulama-ally in his home ssgi of the XXV mukim. Immediately a surge of enemy activities was reported. It was clear that the alliance lasted as long as the conditions were favourable for Uma to practice his main perang methods with support of Dutch money and goods. The turning point came in December 1895. Not only did Batavia oblige the local administration in Kutaradja to put a constraint on Uma's role, but far more important was the death Teungku Kutakarang, Uma's trustworthy ulama-ally in his home ssgi of the XXV mukim. Immediately a surge of enemy activities was reported. Kutakarang's successor refused to participate in Uma's main perang practices. He dispatched messengers announcing that from then on the fight against Uma and his legion was also regarded as a holy war. Effectively this meant a call to the people to stand up and fight against Uma. This was a huge blow to Uma, as suddenly his position had come under attack from within his own power centre, the XXV mukim. The superficially stable situation in Aceh now deteriorated quickly.

5.4 The end of the co-optive relationship and its aftermath

In January 1896 the inner perimeter of the concentrated line was infiltrated and the main Dutch barracks near Kutaradja came under attack. Moreover, the posts of the line were frequently threatened. Especially in the south the situation was bad, as resistance from the XXII mukim grew fiercer. Deijkerhoff decided that it was time for another operation in this ssgi, and ordered Uma to assemble his legion and auxiliary militias in order to launch an attack at the end of March. Eventhough some reports had revealed Uma was about to defect, Deijkerhoff was convinced that his protégé would solve the issue in the XXII mukim. In the preparations for this operation the administration in Kutaradja delivered a lot of new equipment and supplies to Uma. Some 878 rifles, including 378 of the new Beaumont-type, and 25,000 bullets were distributed. In addition, $18,000, opium and other supplies were handed over to Uma. However, the excursion, which was scheduled for 29 March, would never take place. When operations did not commence on that day, it became clear that Uma had departed from the Dutch side. Deijkerhoff now desperately cabled Van der Wijck asking...

131 NA, MvK, 6234, Geheim Verbaal 6 januari 1896 1/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 21 december 1895.
133 A. Kruisheer, Atjeh 1896, 11.
for immediate assistance and informing him that not only had Uma abandoned the Dutch side, but that also other chiefs had started to do the same.  

On 30 March Uma sent Deijkerhoff a letter in which he explained that he had decided to take a break from his war activities, for the Dutch had offended him, his connections, and the people of Aceh. Uma cynically suggested that those responsible for these offenses, a Dutch colonial official and an Acehnese agent, should be ordered to mount an offensive against the XXII mukim. Furthermore he insisted that despite his refusal to fight he would maintain his loyalty to the Dutch and especially to the administration in Kutaradja:

‘... and if Your Excellency [Deijkerhoff] wishes to punish me, I will not resist, for my feelings for the Kompeuni are unchanged, and I hope to remain under the shadow of the Governmental flag, while I haven’t changed my feelings for Your Excellency, the colonel of the staff [Nieuwenhuijzen], Resident [K.F.H.] Van Langen, and the Assistant-Resident in Kutaradja.’

Uma repeated this message in several successive letters in one of which he even called Deijkerhoff his father. Uma’s claim of unchanged loyalty to the Dutch, however, was highly doubtful; an investigation of the accused offenses produced the insight that it concerned minor incidents which were heavily exaggerated by Uma. Moreover, a report by Resident Van Langen demonstrated that Uma had truly departed the Dutch side for various reasons varying from the decline of his influence to superstitious prophecies about his death and the birth of a son who would become ‘Raja of Aceh’ (Chut Nyak Din was pregnant, but ultimately this pregnancy turned out to be illusionary). At the end of March 1896 Uma’s position at the local political marketplace had become such that it simply was no longer in his interest to continue the current collaboration with the Dutch. The ‘treason’, thus, was a logical outcome of the calculus of self-interest.

Whereas Uma’s loyalty to the colonial administration did certainly change, his opportunistic character proved to be of an unchangeable nature. This was most clearly demonstrated in his letters of 12 and 23 April in which he suggests that a payment of 150,000 guilders a month would be enough for him to resume his activities and secure entire Aceh

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138 Ibid.
140 See NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 14 april 1896 33/1, Proces Verbaal van verhoren van Controleur der 2e klasse K.W. Gisolf & Hoofddjaksa Mohamad Arif.
and its Dependencies from ‘Trumon to the corner of Perlak’ for the Dutch and maintain a peaceful and orderly situation similar to that on the island of Java. 142 This enormous sum of 1,800,000 guilders annually, together with a ban on interference of other uléëbalang with Uma’s war efforts, apparently sufficed to tip the balance of Uma’s interest in favour of further collaboration with the Dutch. This comes as no surprise as such a price would unquestionably make him the most powerful local power-holder in entire Aceh. At that time, however, the Dutch authorities were unanimous in rejecting the proposal as they mutually concluded that Snouck’s analysis had always been right; ‘indeed, sad but true in all respects’, Uma had been performing a ‘comedy’ for the Dutch and they now no longer intended to prolong this play. 143 On 26 April 1896 the co-optive relationship formally ended when the ‘traitor’ Uma was officially fired as the colonial administration’s Panglima Perang Besar and he lost Dutch recognition of his position as an uléëbalang. 144 From now on the hunt for Uma was open and it was publicly proclaimed that ‘the Netherlands-Indies’ government does not want to deal with such a person, who can be trusted by no one, and betrays everyone’. 145 Whereas Uma first was an entrusted co-optee of the Dutch, he now had become their enemy; but what where the ramifications of this ‘treason’?

The direct consequence of Uma’s defection was the collapse of ‘Deijkerhoff’s house of cards’. 146 Dutch control outside the inner perimeter of the concentration line quickly faded away as local chiefs - driven by their need to survive- opted to collaborate with a more powerful party, i.e. Uma or the ulama-led resistance. Moreover, the Dutch rewards and support had brought Uma sufficient power to claim a leading position in the resistance. 147 Uma, the ulama-led gangs, and the Sultan now joined efforts against their mutual enemy, the Dutch colonial administration. This was the beginning of a cooperation that ultimately would also physically unite the three parties as from 1898 they all conducted their hostilities against the Dutch from Pidië. 148 Thus Uma’s ‘treason’ boosted the Acehnese resistance and painfully demonstrated that the local administration’s perception of Dutch control over the Acehnese outside the concentration line was founded on an illusion. The direct result of Uma’s abandonment therefore was that the Dutch once again were enclosed in the fortified zone surrounding Kutaradja. All attempts to end the stalemate of the concentration policy had been in vain as the colonial regime found itself in the same position as at the beginning of this policy in 1885.


143 NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 18 mei 1896 45/1, Vetter aan Van der Wijck, 9 mei 1896.

144 NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 11 mei 1896 42/1, Besluit waarnemend Gouverneur Van Langen, 26 april 1896.


147 C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Acehnese, Volume I, XIII-XIV.

This setback demanded a response. The Teuku Uma policy had become a complete failure because the administration in Kutaradja was unable to control its main co-optee; the line between treaty and treason had been too easy to cross. The Dutch had been the preferred agent for co-option as long as it was in Uma’s interest to do so. However, the administration in Kutaradja, bounded by the limitations of the concentration policy, was far from being the dominant actor in Aceh and therefore incapable of enforcing compliance of its co-optees. Therefore the Dutch needed to tip the balance of power in their favour in order to gain control over the Acehnese. This required a change of policy that started with the replacement of Deijkerhoff. In order to save the situation Army Commander Vetter was named temporarily Governmental Commissioner for Aceh and dispatched with an expeditionary force of more than 2,000 soldiers, mainly drawn from Padang and Java.149 Vetter understood that the Dutch could only control Aceh if they were capable of demonstrating and maintaining their dominance over the Acehnese. The troop reinforcements finally brought the means for establishing the hard-needed credible coercive capability the local administration in Kutaradja lacked under the limitations of the concentration policy. Moreover, by reputation Vetter was the right person to implement a more aggressive policy; after an initial failure to quell a Balinese uprising on Lombok in 1894 due to a similar ‘treason’ of the ruling Raja, Vetter had successfully pacified the island by adopting a brutal offensive policy.150

Upon his arrival on April 8 Vetter immediately initiated a punitive expedition in the valley of Great Aceh in order to demonstrate the dominance of the Dutch colonial authorities. Using his reputation, he made it clear to the Acehnese that compliance with the Dutch would bring peace upon them, while a failure to do so would result in brutal actions:

‘I have wiped Mataram on Lombok [the capital and a resistance stronghold] from earth and I have subdued the big and mighty Tjakra Negara [another stronghold of the resistance on Lombok]. Do you wish me to impose those disasters on Aceh once again? Is it needed once again for our soldiers to come here with thousands and many canons to destroy what makes you happy? ... Where my troops won’t be confronted with resistance, nobody needs to fear for his life, property and possessions, however, where I will meet resistance, I will break it, thus it is in your hands to be spared from the disasters of war.”151


Hardened by twenty years of war, however, the Acehnese were used to such language from the authorities in Kutaradja. Acehnese local power-holders, knowing that a surge in Dutch offensive actions was typically a temporarily affair and aware of the strength of the resistance -a result of the passive concentration policy and the current concord between especially Uma’s faction and the ulama-led resistance-, mostly ignored Vetter’s proclamation and chose to collaborate with the Acehnese war parties. Consequently the Dutch colonial troops were met with well-organized and equipped resistance, that also enjoyed full popular support. Therefore Vetter opted to assemble his troops within the inner perimeter concentration line (the outer line was abandoned now) in order to launch mobile columns against selected targets. Of course the first of these actions was to be directed against the culprit of the turmoil, Uma.

On 27 April the excursion to punish Uma started. The operations focused on Uma’s positions and strongholds in his home territory of the VI mukim, but also in the adjacent IV mukim. Uma’s residence Lampisang was conquered on May 24 by a mobile column under command of then lieutenant-colonel Van Heutsz (of course there was no trace of Uma himself). Remarkably, Van Heutsz had suggested exactly such a ‘general Bugeaud-style’ razzia operation with mobile columns in case of Uma’s defection in his 1894 white paper. Just like the other gampongs in the area Lampisang was completely razed and Uma’s four houses, among which the newly-built house that cost the Dutch 11,364 guilders, were blown up on Vetter’s personal orders. Queen Wilhelmina and Queen-Regent Emma even congratulated the Governmental Commissioner and his troops with this achievement, but the situation in Aceh was still far from stable. The excursion against Uma ended in June with the thorough annihilation of the last stronghold in the VI mukim, gampong Lamasan. Under massive infantry protection a small army of some 800 convicts and 400 Chinese coolies as well as two engineer sections completely razed the village, cut down all the trees, and even went as far as levelling all the burial mounds. Dutch operations under Vetter were not characterized by modest y. Needless to say that these actions sufficed to discourage popular support for Uma, but also hugely alienated the population from the Dutch. However, Vetter’s goal was the establishment of Dutch dominance in Aceh, and such punitive excursions clearly demonstrated the power of the colonial administration.

Yet, Vetter realized that the Dutch with their limited resources could not control the Acehnese without obtaining their collaboration. After the end of the action against Uma, the Governmental Commissioner considered his task completed; aggressive military actions once again had been introduced as a part of the policy in Aceh, and it had been revealed

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153 P. van ‘t Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 195.
to the Acehnese what it meant if Kutaradja fully unleashed its coercive capabilities. Now it was important to maintain this coercive stick, but also to reach out to the population. Therefore, Vetter’s last order to the Dutch troops in Aceh on June 27 1896 was meant to restrain Dutch brutalities as it stated that looting was prohibited and that the practice of razing gampons was only to be executed at a commander’s explicit orders. More important, Aceh’s new Governor major-general J.J.K. de Moulin received instructions from Batavia to maintain the concentration line as the core of the Dutch occupation and to use it as a base for launching targeted military strikes against pockets of resistance in Great Aceh. The new Dutch policy first anticipated controlling Great Aceh through offensive military actions before expanding the colonial administration’s influence in the Dependencies. After De Moulin’s untimely death (only ten days after he assumed his governorship), the new policy was further implemented by Interim Governor colonel J.W. Stemfoort and from November 1896 by Governor C.P.J. van Vliet. It was during this period that the new approach further evolved under influence of Vetter and Snouck. Albeit the latter opposed the idea of an initial limitation of Dutch actions to Great-Aceh, both he and Vetter agreed that the targeted actions against the Acehnese resistance should be conducted from a permanent post in each sagi. The deployment of a mobile column to an operating base within a sagi would allow the Dutch to employ ‘quick measures against those gang leaders, who try to destroy our influence there’. This method aimed at enhancing the local population’s collaboration with the Dutch colonial authorities as the presence and continued patrolling of Dutch colonial forces would not only discourage collaboration with the Acehnese war parties, but would also offer protection against intimidation and other kinds of violence.

Thus, the main consequence of Uma’s defection was another Dutch policy change in which the colonial authorities finally broke with the limitations of the concentration policy. From now on the approach in Aceh would be characterized by systematic military action. Three permanent bases were established in respectively Lhok Nga (XXV mukim), Indrapuri (XXII mukim), and Tjot Mantang (XXVI mukim) and linked to the concentration line by a modern tramway. These posts enabled the Dutch to fence off the local population from the resistance as well as to launch (swift) operations against armed gangs and their leaders, and therefore allowed the Dutch to gain a solid influence over the population in Great Aceh. Uma’s defection made the Dutch colonial authorities realize that Aceh could not be controlled without some capability for applying firm action when needed. Consequently 1896 became a pivotal year in Aceh; it witnessed the return of aggressiveness on the side of the Dutch after more than a decade of the concentration policy’s restraint. And although Uma initially succeeded in

157 A. Kruisheer, Atjeh 1896, Deel I, 308.
evading the punitive excursions that were launched against him under this new impetus, the actions made possible by this policy change would ultimately lead to his fall, as we will see in the next chapter. Now that the Dutch in Aceh had rediscovered the utility of military action and a policy had been implemented to maintain this military action, it was time to link this to a political approach. This combined military and political approach would finally bring Aceh under Dutch control and would become known as the Aceh strategy. For now, however, we will first draw some conclusions on the Teuku Uma policy, and leave the discussion of the Aceh strategy for Chapter Six.

5.5 Conclusion

What insights can be obtained from this infamous episode in Dutch colonial history? Uma’s co-option seemingly offered the Dutch colonial authorities a way to breach the stalemate of the concentration policy at the lowest costs possible - i.e. without additional troops or massive use of other resources. As we have seen in Chapter Three such an approach of co-opting dominant local power-holders was the preferred tool for establishing control over local populations in colonial warfare. Why the Dutch, who had built a considerable empire in the East Indies by use of this method, failed to implement it during this stage of the Aceh War? A thorough understanding of this failure will enhance our understanding of the utility of co-option as it sheds a light at the difficulties of establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships in the reality of colonial warfare. Therefore we will now discuss this chapter’s findings in the light of the analytical framework for understanding co-option in order to unravel the causes for the debacle of the Teuku Uma policy.

Just like during the first two decades of the Aceh War, the colonial authorities fully accepted the necessity of practicing cultural legitimation in order to enhance and consolidate Dutch control over the Acehnese. Despite a growing insight in the structure of Aceh’s fragmented society, the implementation of this concept was still based on a flawed conception of the pattern of legitimacy of the target society. Submission of the Sultan remained the main goal of the Dutch political strategy, and co-option of ulëêbalang was considered instrumental in obtaining this goal. When the Dutch combined the abstinence of the concentration policy with systematic naval blockades, the ulëêbalang, with their dependency on trade, were most affected. Consequently those chiefs started to demonstrate rapprochement towards the colonial authorities. This created the conditions for negotiation with the Sultan as well-disposed chiefs were employed to mediate with the Keumala-party. The outlook of the ensuing indirect contacts with Keumala was promising; despite the lack of tangible results, the Sultan’s submission seemed within hand’s reach. It was at this point that Uma’s co-option became part of the strategy for submitting the Sultan. It was believed that either Uma’s influence on the Sultan would persuade the latter to definitely submit himself, or that Uma’s collaboration with the Dutch would mean a sensitive blow to the Sultan as co-option of such
Chapter 5 The Course of Co-option

An important chief would demonstrate that the Dutch were the most powerful actor in Aceh. Although Snouck repeatedly warned that this rationale was funded on a misconception of the Sultan’s power and ‘Acehnese adat with regard to matters and relationships’, the ultimate goal of the Teuku Uma policy remained the submission of the Sultan.160

The Dutch, thus, sought to definitely settle the war and legitimate colonial authority through the Sultan. Uma’s co-option, however, brought them also an opportunity to directly enhance their position within the restrictions of the concentration policy. As aforementioned, the Teuku Uma policy gradually evolved in a full-fledged strategy aimed at relieving the pressure of the concentration line and establishing Dutch control in Great Aceh, while augmenting Kutaradja’s influence in Aceh as a whole. In addition to Uma, the colonial authorities aimed at co-opting local chiefs in all three sagi in order to chase away the muslimin gangs and obtain the collaboration of the local population. Whereas Uma, as the main Dutch co-optee, could be used to assist in this process, the intention of the strategy was to win the consent of the population through their legitimate chiefs at the grassroots level, predominantly the local ulèébalang. The actual implementation of this strategy, however, greatly augmented Uma’s position in Great Aceh and prevented the effective co-option of local chiefs by the administration in Kutaradja. We will further discuss this when dealing with the way the colonial authorities approached the issue of whom exactly to co-opt.

In addition to a ban on offensive actions for the colonial troops, the concentration policy also put a restraint on the availability of resources for fighting the Aceh War. This meant that already scarce resources were further limited, which especially concerned the troop level of the small Kutaradja garrison. Therefore, mobilization of local militias was essential as it circumvented the ban on offensive actions by Dutch troops and provided the local colonial authorities with a much-needed force-multiplier. The Teuku Uma policy thrived on the use of local militias to protect the Dutch positions and to act as a lever for augmenting Dutch control, especially in Great Aceh. The Dutch exploited the co-optive relationships with local power-holders in order to rally the necessary troops for chasing away the ulama-led resistance and fencing off the population at the grassroots level. The champion of this grassroots mobilization, of course, was Uma himself. Not only was Uma appointed as the colonial regime’s supreme Acehnese field commander under the title Panglima Perang Besar, his militia was also permanently paid, equipped and supplied by the Dutch. The official co-optive treaty institutionalized this militia as an Acehnese legion under command of Uma, who was obliged to follow Dutch orders to fight throughout Aceh and its Dependencies. Thus Uma’s legion became the mainstay of the Dutch strategy as it provided Kutaradja with the means to launch offensive military actions under the restrictions of the concentration policy. Moreover, the legion proved also a political instrument as it provided a counter-balance against ulama gangs and offered local power-holders and their populace protection against the resistance’s counter-collaboration efforts. The militias of those local chiefs were typically

used on a temporarily basis in order to spawn an initial level of control (if necessary assisted by Uma’s forces), while the main task of Uma’s legion was to consolidate initial control in close conjunction with the Dutch authorities. The rationale underlying this approach was that it allowed the war-weary local population to pick up its livelihood as soon as possible.

Although formally institutionalized, Uma’s militia was only loosely controlled by the Dutch authorities. Reports of staged attacks and duplicity in the occupation of posts did not trigger Kutaradja to impose a more strict control on the legion. On the contrary, until the end of the co-optive relationship the legion was considered an essential tool for augmenting control and was seemingly treated without suspicion. This offers the only possible explanation why Kutaradja delivered 878 rifles, 25,000 bullets and a lot of other supplies a few days prior to Uma’s defection. Despite its formal status and the clear regulation of the command structure and accountability towards Kutaradja as regulated by the official co-optive treaty, in its essence the legion was never anything more than a typical Acehnese gang sanctioned and supplied by the Dutch. Kutaradja’s lack of control over the legion can be directly linked to the failure to control Uma. As a warlord Uma had gradually emerged on the political scene and before establishing himself as an uléèbalang in the VI mukim he had been marauding the west coast with his gang. Consequently, his fighters had become his closest rakan who kept solid ties with their charismatic chief, who had not only led them in war, but also had provided them with the resources necessary for survival as well as that he had shared his newly acquired wealth with them. The lack of control over Uma will be further analyzed when we discuss the methods of co-option that were used by the Kutaradja government in order to establish and maintain the co-optive relationship with Uma. Now we will first focus on the way the Dutch approached the problem of whom exactly to co-opt during the period of the Teuku Uma policy.

As aforementioned the primary reason for Uma’s co-option was his presumed influence on the Sultan. In the then existing view of Acehnese society and its political structure the Sultan was considered to be the most dominant local power-holder and therefore his co-option would spawn an acceptable level of control without too much costs. As the Sultan failed to submit, the Dutch started to exploit Uma as their most important co-optee. Of course, at that moment, Uma himself was one of the most influential and dominant local power-holders in Aceh as a whole. Therefore he undoubtedly was an interesting and potentially valuable ally for the Dutch. Even Snouck, who did not share Kutaradja’s view of Aceh’s societal constitution, agreed that Uma’s position was so powerful that his co-option would deliver the Dutch vast benefits. Snouck, however, also pointed at the limits of Uma’s influence and repeatedly warned that Uma could be useful for controlling the west coast and XXV mukim, but should not be attributed a role in other parts of Aceh or Acehnese affairs.\textsuperscript{161} In other words, if Uma was to be exploited effectively by Kutaradja it could only be through his position as the dominant local power-holder in the locale he controlled. Although

\textsuperscript{161} Snouck first mentioned Uma’s potential role and limitations as a Dutch co-optee in his 1892 Aceh report and echoed his vision from then on.
Deijkerhoff did not agree with Snouck, he initially seemed to realize that control over Aceh’s fragmented society could only be won through a ‘locals-first’ approach; first local power-holders were to be co-opted and Uma and his militia were only to act as enablers in this process as they served as a guarantee for security.

The 1893 operation in the XXVI mukim was initiated according to this strategy. The most important local power-holders Teuku Nya’ Banta, his father in law Teuku Nyak, and Teuku Chut Tungkub offered the Dutch their collaboration in order to clear the sagi of muslimin. In reality, however, these local power-holders feared Uma’s growing influence and acted in order to prevent Uma from becoming too influential in their own locale. When the alliance of local chiefs stalled and failed to achieve success, Kutaradja abandoned its ‘locals-first’ strategy and brought in Uma –exactly what the local power-holders had feared. Moreover, one of the local chiefs, Teuku Tungkub was punished for his neglect. Whereas Uma was intended to serve as a facilitator in the whole process of establishing Dutch control through co-option of local power-holders, he took over the leadership of the process itself and thereby tremendously increased his influence across the boundaries of his home territory. Uma now acted as a mediator for establishing co-optive relationships between local chiefs and the administration in Kutaradja, just like he had done in his own sagi of the XXV mukim. With use of his main perang tactics Uma established a network of local power-holders dependent on him (such as Teuku Nya’ Banta and Teuku Chut Tungkub), as well as that he alienated certain others. Despite this division both groups built a precarious modus vivendi by copying the main perang tactics, which meant they cut deals in order to maintain the balance of power at the grassroots level. Dutch control over the XXVI mukim as acquired by Uma, thus, was rather superficial, but was by all means acceptable to the standards of the administrators in Kutaradja. This was confirmed when Deijkerhoff ordered Uma to pacify the XXII mukim in November 1893 immediately after the end of the operations in the XXVI mukim. Deijkerhoff’s policy now completely focused on Uma for establishing control in all sagi of Great Aceh and lower-level local power-holders were co-opted through his mediation only. Thereby Kutaradja had come to rely on a single dominant local power-holder who was tasked to establish control in locales across the borders of his own area of influence.

In hindsight it is obvious that the Dutch allowed Uma to become too influential. Instead of limiting his influence to his home territory, Uma was ordered to establish control over the whole of Great Aceh. In doing so the local administration created a monster that was difficult to dominate and ultimately went out of control; the Dutch were completely dependent on Uma who quickly became the most powerful figure in the local society. Although the administration in Kutaradja was not permeated by local influences, its dependency on Uma prevented the effective implementation of a balanced co-option strategy that included persuasive as well as coercive methods. Moreover the scarcity of resources –especially troops– and the limitations of the concentration policy severely weakened Kutaradja’s capability for co-option domination. The only credible method for enforcing compliance was that of a systematic naval blockade of Uma’s ports. This method had seriously affected Uma in

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the years before the alliance, but was never employed during the co-optive relationship. Apparently the colonial administrators were afraid that Uma would deflect, if they imposed sanctions, and therefore they refrained from doing so.

Total dependency on Uma explains why an effective system of sanctions in order to guarantee his collaboration with the Dutch was never imposed, despite calls for such measures by administrators in both Batavia and Aceh (including Deijkerhoff). Instead, the relationship with Uma was based entirely on incentives that belong to the persuasive side of the co-option continuum, such as the provision of political support, money, weapons and other materiel goods. Consequently, for Uma the colonial administration was the preferred partner to collaborate with as long as he benefitted from these incentives; there was no stick to guarantee Uma’s co-option in case the collaboration was in contradiction (either temporarily or longer) with his personal interest. While the Dutch were incapable of dominating their co-optive relationship with Uma, they did possess a capability for dominating co-optive relationships with lower-level local power-holders as demonstrated by the punishing of Teuku Tungkub during the 1893 offensive in the XXVI mukim. However, it was the insolvency to effectively control dominant local power-holders that attracted the attention of indigenous rulers. By 1894 the idea that the protracted nature of the Aceh War had paralyzed Dutch coercive capabilities persisted in the mind of dominant local power-holders throughout the archipelago.162 As a result the Dutch advantage in the overall collaborative equation was at risk. It was the brutal 1894 Lombok expedition under command of general Vetter that restored the balance in favour of the colonial state. Albeit this exemplary use of force sufficed for remaining in control of the rest of the archipelago, it did not affect Uma’s behaviour as a co-optee.163 As we have seen the Dutch only deployed a credible capability for dominating Uma when it was too late.

An additional observation prompted by Uma’s case concerns the pivotal role of intelligence. It is far too easy to blame Governor Deijkerhoff personally and consider his naivety and confidence in Uma the main reasons for the debacle that occurred. It should not be forgotten that Deijkerhoff was assisted by a staff of very competent civilian administrators and military professionals many of whom had already served in Aceh for several years. Publications by Resident Van Langen and Chief of Staff Nieuwenhuijzen have shown a thorough insight into, and understanding of, Acehnese society. Although there was enough information on Uma’s methods and intents, as well as on the superficial level of control, the decisions made by the staff in Kutaradja were miserable. Snouck Hurgronje demonstrated that intelligence is an art that not only requires information, but also an appropriate assessment of that information. As most of the information on Uma was considered to be based on rumours spread by jealous competitors, the local staff failed to process different

163 In this regard the later Prime Minister H. Colijn, who had participated in the Lombok expedition and served as a lieutenant in Aceh at that time, reported that he -like everybody else- was convinced of Uma’s loyalty after the Dutch demonstration of force in Lombok. See Herman Langeveld, Dit leven van krachtig handelen, Hendrikus Colijn 1869-1944, Deel een 1869-1933 (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1998), 72.
pieces of information into good intelligence. A thorough analysis could have revealed that Uma was indeed of use as long as his influence was limited to the XXV mukim and the west coast, where he held a position as a legitimate ruler. Furthermore, proper intelligence would have shed a light on the superficial condition of control that resulted from the dubious practices of his legion and the true nature of the co-optive relationships with lower-level power-holders he established on behalf of the administration in Kutaradja. Such intelligence would immediately clarify that the Dutch should have taken additional measures, both to control their main co-optee and enhance the overall level of control. Snouck in fact, made all these points. Unfortunately, the local administration only started listening to Snouck, when it was already too late.

Eventually, the colonial administration’s failure to achieve co-option domination is the most important insight to be obtained from the Teuku Uma policy. As aforementioned, controlling local populations through collaboration with local power-holders naturally demands a capability to control such agents. This not only requires sufficient resources, but also fine-grained intelligence in order to constantly monitor a local agent’s influence and intentions. What it comes down to is, that this is what the Dutch administration failed to establish. Thus, the Teuku Uma case became a disgrace for the Netherlands. Uma’s defection caused an inconvenient feeling to many Dutchmen, at home and overseas. Soon songs were heard demanding punishment of the traitor Uma. Also a board game, called the Teuku Uma game was produced, in which players had to catch Uma with the help of 25 pawns representing soldiers.164 The instruction-card of the game reads: ‘When both parties attend the game with the same amount of vigilance, chances are even’.165 If colonial officials managed to develop and awareness of the interests and intentions of local power-holders, indeed chances were even, as typically their own intents were well-known among the local population and their rulers. War, however, is not about even chances: it is about the best chance necessary to succeed. Therefore, not only intelligence is vital for establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships, but also the resources to dominate such a relationship. In the case of the Teuku Uma policy there was a lack of will from the Dutch colonial state to deploy sufficient resources for dominating the co-optive relationship with a dominant local power-holder. Linked to a poor understanding of Uma’s true motives and modus operandi this resulted in the absence of an effective mechanism for co-option domination. Consequently, when Uma felt it was no longer in his interest to collaborate with the Dutch, he crossed the line between treaty and treason without any obstruction.

165 Ibid., 45.
Chapter 6
Chapter 6: Pacification at last: the emergence of the Aceh strategy and the establishing of Dutch control

6.1 Introduction

After the dust of the Teuku Uma debacle had settled it became clear that a new wind was blowing in Kutaradja. The colonial administration had once again embraced an offensive policy in order to settle the protracted conflict in Aceh. The initial Dutch reaction to Uma’s defection had definitely lifted the restrictions of the concentration policy and created a basis for establishing Dutch control outside the perimeter surrounding Kutaradja. The adjoining atmosphere opened the door for the implementation of new ideas on the Dutch policy in Aceh. Although Snouck and Van Heutsz first coined their views in 1892 and 1893, only now they were about to be given an opportunity to influence the colonial administration’s policy in Aceh. As discussed in Chapter Four it was predominantly this influence that provided the core underpinning for the so-called Aceh strategy that ultimately would lead to the end of hostilities around 1912. This combined military and political approach was based on two fundamental elements; (a credible threat of) force and co-option of uléëbalang in a more balanced way.¹ The first was meant to guarantee Dutch dominance by constantly reminding the Acehnese of the strength of the colonial administration. The second principle was to obtain control through exploitation of the legitimate authority of the uléëbalang, or as special government commissioner F.A. Liefrinck stated in 1909:

‘Despite the many undesirable qualities and faults of these chiefs, they are the ones who have influence on the population and thereby have much to offer in enabling us... to reach our goal. The more that can be left to them, the better it is.²

In this chapter we will explore how this strategy emerged in the years after 1896 and how it ultimately led to the pacification of Aceh as the Dutch now managed to consolidate their newly obtained control. Of course the use of co-option of uléëbalang as a tool for controlling the Acehnese directly touches upon this book’s main question. As aforementioned, the new politico-administrative system that originated as part of the Aceh strategy became known under the name of the Korte Verklaring (KV), the formal declaration that regulated the

² Liefrinck quoted in Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 12.
relationship between co-optee and colonial administration. It was the KV system that allowed the Dutch to co-opt the chiefs in control of the various locales in Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies, but the key insight from the Uma debacle was that such an approach could not go without a credible capability for controlling these co-optees. Therefore the principle of (credible threat of) force is also carefully studied in this chapter as it was instrumental in establishing and maintaining effective co-optive relationships with the ulèëbalang. Moreover, ultimately (during the pacification phase, starting under Governor Swart) the Dutch would manage to control as much as 103 ulèëbalangships by co-opting mainly dominant local chiefs with a security apparatus consisting of some 4,000 colonial troops, which is roughly 700 men less than the Kutaradja garrison during the concentration policy. Thus, an analysis of both the military and politico-administrative components of the Aceh strategy can provide a thorough insight in the utility of co-option for obtaining control over a highly fragmented society with limited resources only.

The study of this historical case of co-option as part of Dutch colonial warfare offers us the benefit of hindsight. Before drawing some final conclusions on how the Aceh strategy with use of co-option finally pacified Aceh, we should use this advantage to reflect on some long-term effects. It was especially the misconception on the exact nature of ulèëbalang authority that would have huge ramifications as the Dutch strengthened this authority as part of the consolidation of their rule. We will deal with this at the end of this chapter in a discussion of the way the colonial administration sought to consolidate and augment the acceptable level of control obtained during the pacification. But for now we will start this chapter with an analysis of the emergence of the Aceh strategy and its military and politico-administrative components in the years immediately after Uma’s ‘treason’.

6.2 The beginning of the end: the emergence of the Aceh Strategy

In the previous chapter we have seen how a policy of systematic military action was introduced and preserved following the 1896 turmoil. The establishment of permanent bases in each of Great Aceh’s three sagi brought the administration in Kutaradja a capability for effectively augmenting its influence at the grassroots level. Fencing off the population from resistance influence as well as targeting of ulama-led gangs and Uma’s militia successfully augmented collaboration with the Dutch colonial regime under Governor Van Vliet. However, despite Vetter’s explicit orders and against Snouck’s advises the razing of gampongs in pockets of resistance remained a frequently practiced method for definitely clearing Great Aceh of enemy influence and was even advocated by civilian officials. Van Heutsz, who acted as one of the column commanders (in the rank of lieutenant-colonel) during this period and

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3 Ibid., for the garrison strength during the concentration policy see section 4.3.2. It should be noted that in his brochure ‘De onderwerping van Atjeh’ Van Heutsz claimed that Aceh could be pacified with the number of troops available under the concentration policy. J.B. van Heutsz, ‘De onderwerping van Atjeh’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 24 (1893), 127.
who did not shy away from the use of force himself, denounced the continuation of such senseless destruction as it did not encourage the adat chiefs in those areas to submit and co-opt with the Dutch. Although the military presence throughout Great Aceh featured such excessive use of force against communities under enemy influence, the overall situation quickly ameliorated and in all three sagi refugees started to return to their villages and work their land.

Their military presence thus brought the Dutch acquiescence of a major part of the local population as it allowed people to pick up their lives and livelihoods. As always the administration lacked the resources for controlling the population solely by its own means; it had to exploit this situation through the various ulëëbalang ruling the different local communities. This time, however, the Dutch realized that the dialectic of power dictated that there would always be a certain degree of freedom to act for their co-optees; it was up to them to implement a system that would check such acts were in concurrence with the Dutch interests. Even more important than this insight was that -due to its military presence at the grassroots level- the administration in Kutaradja could bargain with local power-holders from a position of strength. Although the co-optive system that resulted from these premises would only be fully developed under Van Vliet’s successor Governor Van Heutsz and his direct advisor Snouck (which we will discuss later in this chapter), their current dominance gave the Dutch an initially acceptable level of control over Great Aceh’s population. This is clearly demonstrated by the ending of the curfew that prohibited any movements outside gampongs at night in April 1897 as well as the definite dismantling of most of the fortified posts of the concentration line during 1897 and 1898 -which freed more troops for deployment in the sagi.

Furthermore colonial administrators started to register all male residents of each individual gampong in Great Aceh. Recorded men were subsequently issued so-called gampong passes under the responsibility of their own chief, who was fined by the Dutch in case of neglect. This allowed the Dutch troops to identify indigenous males encountered during patrols.

The biggest threat to this relatively stable situation came from gangs that intruded the three sagi from the Dependencies. As it was impossible for Dutch troops to maintain an ubiquitous presence throughout Great Aceh, resistance fighters awaited their chance in order to launch incursions that thwarted collaboration with the Dutch and collected taxes

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6 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 12 augustus 1897’, K. van der Maaten, Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog, Deel II, 26-27.


for the *perang sabil*. Especially adjacent Pidië became the centre of resistance as it was the traditional home base of both the Sultan’s party in Keumala as well as the *ulama*-led gangs.\(^9\) Further, Panglima Polem, the Panglima Sagi and leader of the resistance of the XXII *mukim* took refuge in this area, and early 1898 Teuku Uma and his gang also crossed over from the west coast to Pidië.\(^10\) This last move definitely opened the eyes of the colonial administration with regard to the incongruence of its policy to focus on Great Aceh only. Snouck had always argued against this limitation of Dutch action as he understood that albeit Acehnese society was highly fragmented, its locales were interconnected through the mesh of relationships that existed between the various actors dominating its political structure (this is further explained in the next section of this chapter). Influenced by their shared interests, these relationships now had brought together the main resistance leaders in order to continue and coordinate their operations from the safety of their Pidië sanctuary.

The Dutch colonial authorities realized that Snouck’s opinion on this matter could no longer be ignored. Governor-General Van der Wijck therefore issued three important orders in March 1898.\(^11\) First the restriction of Dutch actions to Great Aceh was abandoned through the authorization of an expedition to Pidië on 5 March. Second, on 10 March Snouck’s title was changed into Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs, with the instruction to spend as much time in Aceh (with the authority of a Resident) as he considered necessary. This decision finally gave Snouck direct influence on the formulation and implementation of the Dutch policy in Aceh. Third and last, on 25 March Van Heutsz was appointed as Governor of Aceh. This last move had become possible by Governor Van der Vliet’s request to be relieved from his post. Van Heutsz, who the previous year left Aceh when he was promoted to chief of staff of the Dutch Colonial Army in the rank of colonel, had already stressed the importance of Dutch action against Pidië in his brochure *De onderwerping van Atjeh*.\(^12\) The exchange of ideas between himself and Snouck that followed from this publication as well as his conduct as a column commander during the 1896-1897 operations had won him Snouck’s recommendation. Due to the latter’s influence Van Heutsz’ appointment now was a fact and the two instigators of what would become known as the Aceh strategy were finally brought together in order to implement their ideas to end the Aceh War.

The principles of Snouck and Van Heutsz’s new approach were laid down in the form of an instruction for Aceh’s Governor jointly formulated by both men.\(^13\) The instruction defines the

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13 Snouck Hurgronje apparently made a first draft (17 articles) based on the instruction issued to Governor Van Vliet. Snouck and Van Heutsz discussed and adapted the instructions early April 1898 which led to the submission of a final draft (21 articles) by
system of the future’ as an effort that seeks to control the Acehnese through a combination of political and military measures. These measures were designed to obtain and consolidate the collaboration of the population through their chiefs and in the lingo of this book’s analytical framework they can be classified as a mix of coercive and persuasive methods for establishing and dominating co-optive relationships. On the coercive side it was proclaimed that the Sultan and hostile chiefs were not to be engaged politically, but should be subjected to restless military action until they submitted to the colonial administration. Gang leaders and chiefs unwilling to submit were to be ‘merciless persecuted and destroyed’ (including Uma who even was dealt with in a separate article). In case a local chief and his followers collaborated with the resistance the entire population of that specific locale could be treated as hostile if this was deemed necessary. Once the operations had ended that specific chief and population would be fined. Such measures, however, should always be in proportion to the situation and local resources, and it was explicitly forbidden to burn gampongs. Other coercive measures concerned a total ban on the possession of firearms and the carrying of other arms. Furthermore local chiefs who had submitted to the colonial administration could be fined for their failure to comply with Dutch demands concerning security and public order.

On the persuasive side the most important measures concerned incentives for collaboration for both chiefs and commoners, compensation of suffered damage, permission to possess and bear (fire)arms, and allowances for adequate co-option with the Dutch. The latter would only be granted once a local chief had proven his ability to maintain the rest and order in his locale as well as that he had demonstrated powerful collaboration with the colonial administration in order to bring prosperity to the local population. Additionally the allowance could be withheld in case of failure to comply with Dutch demands (as mentioned in the previous paragraph). After the debacle of the Teuku Uma policy the Dutch administration had become more careful with arming Acehnese allies. Therefore the instruction explicitly mentioned that only high ranking Acehnese co-optees intimately connected with the administration could be granted a permit to hold and possess firearms in order to maintain a capability for self-defense. The main responsibility for the protection of the chiefs and the population against enemy counter-collaboration efforts (such as threats and the use of force) now lay with the Dutch troops. The incentives for collaboration and compensation of damage were intended to stimulate chiefs and members of the population to provide the Dutch with the hard-needed intelligence and other clues for eliminating gang leaders and containing resistance influence in a locale.

Additional measures for enhancing Dutch control were the registration of all chiefs and members of the population, powerful intervention in case of violent contention between
ulëëbalang, and education of the sons of the chiefs in order to prepare them for future positions as Dutch co-optees or indigenous members of the colonial administration. All these facilities provided the administration in Kutaradja with a balanced mix of methods that -if implemented well- would make the Dutch the dominant as well as the preferable actor for the ulëëbalang to collaborate with. This all was to be realized with limited resources only. Although no longer exclusively centred on Great Aceh, the main effort of the Dutch policy still focused on this densely populated area. The small units of the Korps Marechaussee were to patrol and administer the three sagi of Great Aceh, while three battalions of infantry were to provide a backup capacity in Kutaradja. The Dependencies would be covered by coastal strongpoints from which mobile columns could be launched to impose Dutch rule and defeat any resistance gangs. Larger expeditions in the Dependencies could be organized by deploying the Kutaradja-based battalions, if necessary complemented with Marechaussee. Such an action, however, could only be approved by the government in Batavia. The instruction mentions one exception to this rule; Pidië. The accumulation of the resistance in that statelet made it pivotal for controlling Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies. Therefore, the new policy’s ultimate coercive measure for establishing Dutch dominance, the restless military action in order to enforce submission or destroy hostile leaders, was to be directly applied to Pidië. Thus, when Van Heutsz and Snouck (separately) arrived in Aceh in May 1898, they immediately began to craft a consistent strategy designed to achieve clear and well-thought objectives, starting with the mopping up of the Pidië sanctuary.14 We will now take a closer look at how their cooperation ushered the beginning of the end of the Aceh War.

6.3 The Pidië expedition

For the Dutch the expedition against Pidië marked the first feat of arms of the new policy designed and implemented by the duumvirate Snouck and Van Heutsz. Before we explain how this exactly materialized in the Pidië expedition, it is first required to sketch the situation in that statelet. In Chapter Four we briefly described Pidië as a well-irrigated plain that once had been an important independent kingdom due to its role as the region’s main rice provider. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century the Acehnese Sultanate had succeeded in conquering and controlling Pidië by fragmenting its power over a number of ulëëbalangships. The results of this divide and rule policy still dominated the political reality in late nineteenth century Pidië; despite its small geographical size -it roughly resembled a triangle with a 44 kilometre base (the coast line) and a 22 kilometre altitude (from coastal Sigli to inland Keumala)- there were c. 20 independent locales controlled by local chiefs.15


Historically, most of those ulëëbalangships belonged to two opposing bonds (which were internally loosely connected, comparable with Great Aceh’s sagi), the federations of the XII and VI ulëëbalang. Originally the members of the XII ulëëbalang had held a feudal tenure of the Sultan of Aceh, while the ulëëbalangships of the VI ulëëbalang were the dependencies of the statelet Keumangan. Therefore the latter chiefs were traditionally connected to the sovereign of Keumangan. The power of those federations had suffered a considerable decrease as a consequence of the decline of both supreme rulers and internal feuds, which allowed the individual ulëëbalang to pursue their self-interest and engage in political and commercial relationships with members of the opposing federation. Despite this decline, the federations were still important societal institutions in nineteenth century Pidië as they were the primary alliances for defying outside threats.

This role as collective security bodies also explains the relationships between the federations and some of the main resistance leaders. As a result of their traditional animosity both federations had sought powerful allies to support their cause. Such allies were best to be found in adjacent Great Aceh, the most influential statelet in the region. For the federation XII an alliance with the Sultan of Aceh was the obvious choice as it was historically connected to this ruler. The federation VI, on its turn, engaged in a friendly alliance with the family of the most important Panglima Sagi of Great Aceh, the Panglima Polem of the XXII mukim. As this sagi’s VII mukim Pidië lay within the territory of the old kingdom, its ruler had a strong interest in balancing Pidië’s internal affairs and certainly sought to prevent the dominance of one faction. Additionally, it should be noted that the Panglima Polem was also the most important guardian of the Sultanate (as mentioned in Chapter Four, section 4.2.1), and thereby the choice for this ally guaranteed a counterbalance against the influence of the Sultan. Although these alliances stemmed from the first half of the nineteenth century, they were still very alive at its end. The then acting Panglima Polem and his family still supported the federation VI and also mediated in internal feuds between its members. Similarly, the Sultan of Aceh had maintained his ties with the federation XII. Snouck observed that although there was a clear geographical watershed between Great Aceh and Pidië, both locales were intimately connected through their politics. This political connection as well as its proximity to Great Aceh made Pidië an ideal refuge for both the Sultan and Panglima Polem (who of course also held the benefit of his rule over the VII mukim Pidië).

In 1879 the Sultan was the first to flee to Pidië when he established his court in Keumala, at that time a tiny gampong well up the Pidië river. Although Keumala belonged to the federation VI, the Sultan and his allies of the federation XII managed to obtain the

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16 For detailed information on both federations see Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 486-494. For the federation as institutional entity and the comparison with Great Aceh’s sagi see C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, Volume I, 91-92.
17 Ibid.
18 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 16.
19 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 31 mei 1897’, 225.
20 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 204-205.
submission of its chief and thereby it came under the direct influence of the Sultan. In 1894 the federation VI succeeded in expelling the Sultan from his new capital, but in 1897 he regained control and even obtained the submission of some other members of the federation VI. Since his early days in Keumala the Sultan's symbolic power as the supreme Acehnese sovereign had attracted important resistance leaders, including the most important ulama such as Teungku Tiro. The presence of the Sultan, therefore, had hugely contributed to Pidië’s role as a centre of resistance. Other resistance leaders such as Panglima Polem took refuge in Pidië as a direct consequence of the new Dutch policy in Great Aceh after 1896. Due to the remarkable fact that the VII mukim of his sagi lay within the geographical confines of Pidië, its hilly, unruly border with the rest of the XXII mukim and his good connections with the federation VI, Polem continued to fight the Dutch in his home sagi. This continuation of his very active leading role as well as the fact that he mainly operated from his own mukim, might explain why his presence was of little support to the federation VI. After all the Sultan’s influence over several of that federation’s individual members had grown considerably by the end of 1897. Nevertheless, at that time most of the important war leaders and their gangs had gathered in Pidië. According to Snouck this accumulation offers an explanation why the last important Dutch opponent, Teuku Uma, also crossed over. As always Uma sought to secure his influence in Aceh’s political landscape and the current situation urged him to seek a modus vivendi with the leadership of the XXII mukim and the various factions and actors in Pidië. His experienced fighters who were armed with modern Dutch rifles and plenty of rounds, which by now were nicknamed ‘Deijkerhoff-pastilles’, gave Uma enough leverage to obtain a leading position. However, in order to exert this influence it was required that Uma and his gang established themselves in Pidië.

Despite the vivid animosity between different parties and resistance leaders they all seemed to realize that the biggest threat came from the Dutch who now glared at Pidië as the centre of the resistance. On the first of April 1898—the news of the Dutch decision to launch an expedition had now reached Pidië—all parties as well as Teuku Uma and some other gang leaders were invited by the Sultan to gather in Garot (an uléëbalangship that kept friendly ties with both federations) in order to discuss the Dutch threat. The outcome of this meeting was that the local chiefs and the leaders of the resistance agreed to stand united against the Dutch. All parties pledged allegiance to the Sultan and vowed to conduct a perang sabil—which again demonstrates the power of the Sultan as a symbol for unifying the Acehnese against external threats as well as the influence of the ulama who were framing the war against the

24 C. Snouck Hurgronje, ‘LIX De Pedir-Expeditie 1898’, Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje, Deel IV, Geschriften Betreffende den Islam in Nederlands-Indië, ed. Wensink, A.J. (Bonn: Kürt Schroeder, 1924), 337. This article was originally published in the Java-Bode of 17-18 October 1898 under the pseudonym Si Gam.
kafirs of the Kompeuni as a holy war. Thus, for the moment all influential actors were unified by their shared hostility towards the Dutch. The large degree of fragmentation that characterized the natural state of Pidië’s political structure, however, would play a significant role in the near future. Let us now return to the Dutch expedition and first discuss how the guidelines of the new instruction were translated in operational objectives for altering the situation in Pidië into the colonial administration’s advantage.

The expedition’s goal of mopping up the Pidië sanctuary and establishing Dutch control over this persistent centre of resistance was echoed by its three main objectives. First the main force, which would be landed at Sigli (where a small Dutch outpost was situated), was to fight itself a way into the VII mukim Pidië. Second Panglima Polem had to be attacked and defeated, and if necessary ‘restlessly persecuted’ until his submission would follow. Additionally all other chiefs and resistance leaders encountered in the VII mukim had to be treated in the same way. Third, and last, all resistance in the ulëëbalangships of the federations XII and VI had to be destroyed, while Dutch control would be established by coercing the local chiefs and the population to accept Dutch authority. These objectives clearly demonstrate the influence of the new instruction as they reflect the newly adopted measure that hostile chiefs and resistance leaders were subjected to restless military action until they submitted to the colonial administration - or face their liquidation if they remained unwilling to comply. Additionally they also indicate that the expedition’s priority was stopping the probing attacks against Great Aceh, which mostly originated from the VII mukim. The clearing of Pidië as a whole was to be achieved once this initial objective was completed.

Although only Panglima Polem is explicitly named in the expedition’s objectives and they are unclear about which other chiefs and leaders would be exactly encountered, they were formulated with a deep understanding of the political situation in Pidië and its connections with Great Aceh. Evidence of this is given by the fact that it was clearly stated that Panglima Polem was not to be killed, but should be submitted. The Dutch realized that his position as an adat chief in Great Aceh as well as in Pidië was so powerful that his co-option was a prerequisite for controlling the population under his influence. Snouck later declared that Polem was fully aware of this, which is easy to understand as he received the first letter demanding his submission in August 1896.27 Further evidence of the profound understanding of the political situation is provided by the distribution (to all the expedition’s officers) of an official publication called ‘Facts concerning the Pidië-region’, which included a detailed list of chiefs and resistance leaders residing in Pidië.28 Based on intelligence gathered

26 These were described in the colonial government’s 5 March decision that sanctioned the Pidië expedition. See Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 486, J.C. Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 5, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog, 50.
through local informers by Sigli-based colonial inspector Ch.L.J. Palmer van den Broek, the disposition and intentions of the Sultan and his entourage, all chiefs who had fled Great Aceh as a consequence of the Dutch actions since 1896, the leading ulama (including Teungku Tiro’s successor Teungku Chut Plëng), and all local chiefs were discussed. Among the Great Acehnese chiefs in exile Panglima Polem, and Teuku Uma, who by now called himself the Panglima Sagí of the XXV mukim, were the most important. Another remarkable name on the list was Teuku Chut Tungkub, who had definitely turned against the Dutch after Uma’s defection -not very surprising considering his prior treatment by Kutaradja as discussed in the previous chapter. The local chiefs, who were the legitimate rulers of Pidië’s different locales, received a letter which explained the purpose of the expedition and invited them to a meeting with the Dutch administration in Sigli. This meeting took place on May 26 with only eight of the 30 invited chiefs attending. Although the low turnout alone was not a proper indicator of the proposition of individuals chiefs, it was clear that the resistance was influential enough to prevent a massive attendance. Moreover, those attending were suspected of duplicity, which further stressed the strength of the resistance in Pidië. Thus, the expedition was well-informed about the key leaders it had to target in order to achieve its objectives. Let us now have a closer look at how this was realized during the actual undertaking itself.

The expedition’s main force was commanded by Van Heutsz, who was accompanied and advised by Snouck. Its strength was 6,000 men and its main fighting power consisted of four infantry battalions, one division (twelve brigades of eighteen ‘carbines’ each) Marechaussee, an artillery battery and a reduced cavalry squadron. The main body was supported by a smaller column (2,000 strong) consisting of an enhanced infantry battalion with artillery and cavalry support operating out of Seulimeum in Great Aceh’s sagí of the XXII mukim. This force was to screen the watershed between Pidië and Great Aceh in order to deny fleeing resistance gangs the access to the valley of the Aceh river. In case such a gang managed to break through it had to be pursued and destroyed. All in all the operation was a massive undertaking -it was one of the largest expeditions of the Aceh War- demanding the deployment of all three battalions of the Kutaradja garrison, a considerable part of the Marechaussee (its total strength at that time was five divisions) and support, as well as two additional infantry battalions and parts of the artillery and cavalry that were dispatched from Java. The enormous logistical effort to bring all these troops to their starting points in Sigli and Seulimeum was further complicated by the fact that the starting date, which initially was set for July 1, was rushed to


Chapter 6 The Course of Co-option

the 1st of June. This was the consequence of an advise by Snouck and Van Heutsz, who deemed the unification of the resistance in April as a deterioration of the political situation that called for urgent action. As a result of increased efforts, all troops were deployed to Sigli and Seulimeum and ready for action on May 30. The Dutch now were both well-informed and well-equipped for the operations that would commence on the first of June.

The latest intelligence indicated the exact whereabouts of the Sultan, Panglima Polem and Teuku Uma. Moreover, a concentration of resistance gangs had assembled in the vicinity of Garot (c. 7.5 kilometres from Sigli), where they had raised fortifications under command of Uma. In order to secure the route to the VII mukim this pocket of resistance had to be dealt with first. Therefore the expedition started on June 1 with an attack on Garot, which was taken that same day after some light skirmishes. The expected heavy fighting did not occur and conquered enemy positions showed traces of a hastily retreat as large quantities of gunpowder, ammunition and other supplies were found. This was confirmed by intelligence on June 3 when it was reported that Teuku Uma, the Sultan, and their fighters, had fled in southern direction and that the former was suffering from an illness.

Now the threat on the flank of the marching route to VII mukim Pidië was neutralized, Van Heutsz ordered an all-out attack on that district’s capital Padang Tidji, the suspected residence of Panglima Polem. In order to surprise the opposing gangs an attack from two directions was ordered, and therefore the Seulimeum column as well as the main force started their advance on Padang Tidji on June 4. Despite some resistance the main force reached the VII mukim’s capital in the afternoon of the next day (the distance between Sigli and the target was roughly 15 kilometres). Of course there was no trace of Panglima Polem, and Van Heutsz provocingly established his headquarters in this chief’s house. This prosperous advance of the main force was largely enabled by the collaboration of the gampong head of Beurabo, who complied with the instruction for local chiefs that was issued during the May 26 meeting and which called for them to welcome Dutch forces by flying a white flag. As the population of this specific village had not fled it can be suspected that their headman had a good reason to collaborate with the Dutch; its inhabitants had to be guarded from either Dutch military force or retaliation of resistance gangs. Consequently, the gampong head of Beurabo acted as a local guide and reported that Polem and 30 of his closest followers had left the VII mukim in southeastern direction three days ago, which greatly decreased the probability of heavy

31 Van ‘t Veer argues that this advance of operations was due to the fact that Snouck had advised that June was a harvest period which diminished resistance activities. However, Snouck’s own letters as well as contemporary secondary sources attribute the advance to the political situation in Pidië. See, Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 236, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 9 april 1898’, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 11 april 1898’, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 21 april 1898’, K. van der Maaten, Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog, Deel II. 33-35, J.C. Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 11-12, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjèh-oorlog, 52.


34 Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ’De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 587.
fighting. The Dutch, thus, successfully established themselves in Padang Tidji on the 5th of June.

The next day the Seulimeum column, which had encountered no opposition at all, but had to find its way through challenging terrain, also reached the district. With such a massive presence in their area many other gampong chiefs came to submit themselves. They all received personal permission to carry a pointed weapon, and a return of refugees to their villages was also granted on the condition that the total population would remain unarmed. Additionally the Dutch also announced the construction of a road between Sigli and Padang Tidji and a permanent military post. It should be noted that these gampong headmen were all local power-holders of the lowest level who bridged the gap between the villagers and the dominant local power-holders, the ulèëbalang. In normal circumstances the gampong headmen would certainly not be entitled to submit to the Dutch. This all indicated that the dominant local actors had left the area before the Dutch arrived. In order to truly control the VII mukim the submission of those latter actors was required. However, without any substantial threat in the VII mukim, Van Heutsz decided to concentrate his forces in Sigli in order to launch actions against the resistance gangs who had fled to the other parts of Pidië. Therefore both the main force as well as the Seulimeum column marched to Sigli in which place they arrived on the 9th of June.

In the meantime intelligence had singled out the newest whereabouts of the Sultan, Teuku Uma, and Panglima Polem. The Sultan was in Keumala and Uma had taken positions to the east of that city. Both men had discussed their situation in a meeting which was also attended by many ulama under the leadership of Teungku Chut Plèng. Teuku Bentara, the chief of Keumangan, announced in a personal letter to Van Heutsz that Panglima Polem had found refuge in his ulèëbalangship. It was suspected that this letter was written with Polem’s knowledge and therefore it was explained as a first sign of rapprochement. The Dutch answered that the VII mukim Pidië would remain occupied, that a road was being constructed, and that Polem would lose all chances to return to his area if he would persist in his resistance. Moreover, it was also announced that his stay in Keumangan would be denied in case of a failure to submit. Thus, the objectives for the next actions of the Pidië expeditions were clear; a force under command of Van Heutsz would target Polem in Keumangan and subsequently march on Uma’s positions (which were situated directly to the west of this ulèëbalangship). A second column would advance towards Keumala. The start of both actions was set for June 12.

Before the beginning of the new operations Snouck was struck by an accident that forced him to stay at the headquarters in Sigli. Although there is not much information on this
incident, he was apparently kicked by a horse somewhere around June 11.\textsuperscript{37} This resulted in a fractured shinbone which, of course, left Snouck immobilized. The operations of June 12 lasted until the 19\textsuperscript{th} of that month and were characterized by the same lack of resistance as experienced during the first operations.\textsuperscript{38} Albeit the Dutch suffered some losses during scarce skirmishes, they could easily advance towards their objectives. Van Heutsz’s hunt for Polem and Uma was fruitless, which led him to divert his force to Keumala in order to seize the Sultan’s capital with his total expeditionary force. Both columns arrived in Keumala on June 14\textsuperscript{th} and the capital was taken without any resistance, and of course also without any trace of the Sultan and his entourage. The next days both forces took different routes back to Sigli in order to enforce a confrontation with resistance gangs. Van Heutsz’s force, which marched via the VII mukim, as well as the smaller column did not meet any significant opposition and they both arrived in Sigli in the afternoon of the 19\textsuperscript{th}. Due to the lack of opposition Van Heutsz deemed the assistance of the forces from the Seulimeum column not longer necessary. These troops started shipping back to Kutaradja on June 20, and the main force was given a week of recuperation in which only patrols and road construction (with some assistance from the local population) would continue.\textsuperscript{39} Van Heutsz, accompanied by Snouck, also took a steamer to Kutaradja in order to deal with his responsibilities as Aceh’s Governor. On June 25 Van Heutsz returned to Sigli without Snouck, whose shinbone required extensive medical care in Kutaradja.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, the Pidië expedition was deprived from its most important adviser.

Upon his return in Sigli Van Heutsz dispatched a patrol to the VII mukim in order to investigate the possibilities for the construction of a tram track that would connect Sigli, Padang Tidji, and Seulimeum.\textsuperscript{41} This endeavor encountered considerable resistance with locals reporting the presence of enemy gangs in the area. Intelligence found out that this deterioration of the situation was caused by the return of some ulêëbalang who were directly related to Panglima Polem. In the meantime Van Heutsz led a two-battalion action against Uma in the south.\textsuperscript{42} While the latter operation realized its tactical objectives, it once again did


\textsuperscript{40} Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 728.


not succeed in initiating a direct confrontation with Uma. On the other hand, it encountered
enough enemy fighters to suffer some serious casualties. All in all the situation in Pidië was
characterized by a growing resistance. Nevertheless, the Dutch military presence had led to
the submission of a couple of the leading ulëëbalang. The active collaboration of these chiefs
with the Dutch administration, however, was reluctant and the solution to the deterioration
of the situation was to be found in stepping up this collaboration in order to gain adequate
intelligence. Assistant-Resident J.A. van Rijn van Alkemade remarked that ‘if they [the
submitted chiefs] wish so, they are totally capable of obtaining the most precise information
concerning the whereabouts of the enemy heads and their gangs, as well as about their
plans’. 43 Thus, Van Heutsz took measures to end the meek attitude of the involved ulëëbalang.
They were threatened with heavy fines for lack of collaboration, and in order to strengthen
this threat, an example was set by, among others, fining the chiefs of XII mukim Pidië and
II mukim Gigiëng -both powerful figures within respectively the federation XII and VI- for
enemy actions and presence within their influence sphere. 44

In addition to the worsening of the situation in Pidië, Van Heutsz received alarming news
of an uprising in Idi, another of Aceh’s east coast Dependencies. As a consequence of the
Pidië expedition Teungku Tapa, a religious leader who had gathered a considerable following
in Idi within a short period of time, had started to preach the perang sabil against the Kompeuni.
The matter was so urgent that Van Heutsz organized an expedition that consisted of major
elements of the Pidië expedition (including one infantry battalion and all Marechaussee) under
his own command. From July 6 until July 24 the Governor’s focus lay on this uprising. With
use of decisive force the rebellion was quelled, the local ulëëbalang were subdued and a total
fine of 150,000 guilders was imposed on Idi’s ulëëbalangships. 45 These measures sufficed for
establishing a collaborative equation in which Dutch dominance was guaranteed. Now the
situation in Idi was stable, the troops and their commander once again embarked for Pidië.

During the fighting in Idi, operations in Pidië had continued in a slower pace and the
situation remained much the same. Now the commander and all force elements had
returned it was time to implement the Governor’s instruction’s principle of restless military
action. Therefore, a massive mobile column consisting of the bulk of the expeditionary force
was established inland in Tjot Meurong (c. 18 kilometres from Sigli), in order to engage in
a relentless pursuit of enemy gangs. In the beginning of August the Tiro-region, the centre
of ulama activity was cleared, and thereafter the Dutch troops started a coordinated day and
night chase throughout Pidië from not less than five mobile posts (which communicated
through optical or wire-based means). 46 With regard to intelligence, however, the Dutch
soon discovered that their assumption about the role of submitted chiefs was wrong. The

44 Ibid., 755, 922-923, Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 33-34.
46 H.T. Damsté, ‘Drie Atjeh-Mannen, Snouck Hurgronje - Van Heutsz - Van Daalen’, Koloniaal Tijdschrift 26 (1937), 640, Pabst, Oost-
Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 35-36.
resistance leaders continuously changed their positions and it was even reported that Uma never slept for more than two hours in the same place. Dutch pressure gradually caused the Sultan, Panglima Polem, and Uma to take refuge in the upland country. In these regions the influence and knowledge of the mostly coastal ulèëbalang who collaborated with the Dutch was severely limited; they were only capable of providing proper intelligence about persons and incidents within their own influence sphere. Moreover, their spies were reluctant to gather intelligence in the hostile inner land as they feared execution upon discovery (which had already occurred a couple of times). Consequently, intelligence about the resistance leaders and their gangs was mostly of a general nature and lacked the fine-grained information needed for targeted actions. Despite this intelligence gap, the operations in Pidiè’s coastal plain were successful. Gangs were chased away and the start of road construction between the Dutch posts was the first sign of a more permanent system for the consolidation of control.

The Dutch actions revealed the first cracks in the opportunist coalition of the resistance. At the end of July, the Sultan had appointed Uma as the leader of the perang sabil, much to Panglima Polem’s discontent. When Dutch pressure increased, Polem refused to join forces with Uma and retreated to the VII mukim. Uma and the Sultan fled into the mountains wilderness of Tangsé, well behind Pidiè (60 kilometres from Sigli). On the night of August 14 a Marechausse raid was launched against Polem, but failed to arrest him. As the road between Sigli and Padang Tidji neared its completion, it was decided that the Dutch post which would be established there (at the road’s completion), would turn its attention to Polem and deny him any stay in the VII mukim. For the moment the main effort lay with Uma and the Sultan and therefore an enhanced battalion was dispatched to the Tangsé area on the 14th of August. This action failed to reach their objective as the Dutch soldiers ran into stiff resistance in a narrow gorge which was barricaded by Uma’s gang. Despite several ambushes they proceeded, but when they encountered an obstacle which could not be cleared, the patrol’s commander decided to abandon the operation without reaching Tangsé. Now the ulèëbalang of Keumala, Teuku Ben, who was well-connected to the Tangsé area and who had previously supported the resistance gangs, was summoned to the Dutch camp and forced

47 Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 36.
52 Ibid., 139.
to join a new action as Van Heutsz’s guide. On August 22 two columns, each roughly an enhanced battalion, marched against Uma and the Sultan in the second action against Tangsé. This time one column, under personal command of Van Heutsz, reached the target by circumnavigating the trapped gorge and it arrived in Tangsé on the 25th of August, just in time to surprise a part of Uma’s rear guard. Uma himself, however, had left the area for the west coast on the 24th. The local population reported that the Sultan had visited eight days before, and that he had also continued his way to the west coast. This fleeing of both leaders definitely marked the end of the resistance coalition. Moreover, as the always opportunist Uma had used the opportunity to seize some of the Sultan’s treasures (of which some even symbolically represented the Sultan’s position), it was highly unlikely that a new coalition between these actors would be formed. A new alliance between the pious Polem and the mondain Sultan was equally unlikely. Thus, the march on Tangsé had definitely broken the backbone of the united resistance.

In the strain of this operational pace the Dutch colonial apparatus also demonstrated a first sign of internal tensions. Snouck, who was still immobilized, but who had returned to Sigli half August, remarked that Van Heutsz initially planned to burn down the gampons of the Tangsé area as he considered them an ‘enemy fortress’. This was directly against his Governor’s instructions, and also contrasted with Van Heutsz his own statements. Most of the orders of the Pidië expedition, for example, explicitly urged the soldiers to respect the properties of the population in the villages. Whereas Snouck regarded the population of Tangsé as future subjects, Van Heutsz and the military staff regarded them as active enemies. Snouck argued that the villagers in the gampons were caught between the Dutch and the resistance, and that the Dutch only could win this battle by demonstrating that they were the preferable party for collaboration. Dutch domination was to be achieved not by punishing the population, but through control over the adat chiefs ruling these villages. The military staff on the other hand, wanted to demonstrate Dutch dominance through punishment of the population in the gampons. Ultimately, Van Heutsz followed Snouck’s advise in this case, nevertheless a fundamental contradiction between the military and Snouck had revealed itself for the first time.

The Acehnese resistance was -once again- divided, and its main leaders were the subject of Dutch actions throughout Aceh, but what about the local resistance in Pidië? As already mentioned the Dutch established a permanent post in the VII mukim. This left the Polem-family unable to exert their influence and brought the Dutch direct control over the

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54 Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift (1899), 56,59. H.T. Damsté, ‘Drie Atjeh-Mannen, Snouck Hurgronje - Van Heutsz - Van Daalen’, Koloniaal Tijdschrift 26 (1937), 642. Ironically, Teuku Ben was the only casualty (severely wounded) when the Dutch were fired upon at the start of their flanking of the trapped gorge.


56 C. Snouck Hurgronje, ‘LXIII De Excursie ter Noord- en Oost-Kust van Atjeh en hare Gevolgen’, Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje, Deel IV, 392. This article was originally published in the Java-Bode of 4, 9, 10, and 14 November 1899 under the pseudonym Si Gam.


58 See, for example, Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 552, 676, 733.
population. Most of the ulama-led gangs had been chased away and the Tiro-region was also under Dutch control. This brings us to the final objective of the expedition, the submission of all ulèëbalangships of the federations XII and VI. A Dutch report on the political situation in Pidië at the end of August informed that all important heads of the federation VI now were subjected to Dutch authority. Moreover, under pressure of the Dutch the ulèëbalang had reconciled themselves. Snouck even managed to force the most extremist chief to accept the situation by ordering the kidnapping of his wife and children on the 28th of August (after a tip from a local informer). As a token of trust, the federation VI now was allowed to guard some important locations with its own men. Simultaneously the chiefs also were threatened with a 25,000 guilders fine for the continuation of enemy activities within their influence sphere (the sum of the fine was the same as the original gift received by the head of the federation VI for flying the Dutch flag in 1874).

The federation XII, as well as all remaining chiefs, were definitely submitted during September. Snouck, who had declared himself fit for action, played an important role in this final part of the expedition. On September 5 an Acehnese who wanted to complain about a night raid on his gampong was received by Snouck and his Acehnese assistant. By use of his knowledge on local affairs and Islam Snouck cleverly managed to obtain precise information on the whereabouts of some of the most defiant local chiefs, which happened to be the village of Beureunun. This was exactly the kind of fine-grained intelligence the Dutch had been continuously looking for. As the information was promptly turned into action, the prominent defiant chiefs could be arrested, which triggered the submission of other chiefs during the days following this event. Panglima Polem and his family were the only local power-holders of the Pidië region who did not submit to the Dutch. The Dutch occupation of the VII mukim Pidië, however, forced Polem to seek refuge in other parts of Aceh such as the east coast Dependency of Samalanga. Moreover, as soon as November 1 the first member of his family submitted to the Dutch and was subsequently fully restored in his position as an ulèëbalang. During October the troops from Java had already returned to their home bases and as the network of roads was completed the Dutch disbanded most of their posts.

One battalion of the Kutaradja garrison manned the post in the VII mukim, while another remained present for the rest of Pidië. Furthermore, -and as aforementioned- ulèëbalang
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militias started to fill the gap left by the withdrawn Dutch troops as they started to operate as local auxiliaries capable of maintaining peace and order in their specific ulëëbalangship. The resistance sanctuary had been cleared and the expedition was successfully completed. The expedition’s last report on the political situation captured the situation as follows:

‘In a country that for years fell victim to anarchy and where our influence five months ago was contained to a limited number of ulëëbalangships along the coast, order and peace was obtained on such a basis that with the fullest confidence in the future the consolidation can be established on this moment. It is a matter of logic that, for the time coming, the strong arm will dominate this process, while once a higher degree of order is obtained, a gradual reduction of troops will take place, which, as it seems now, will be the case in the near future.’

Overall, the expedition had succeeded in mopping up the Pidië sanctuary and dealt a severe blow to the Acehnese resistance. It demonstrated that firm military action could win the Dutch superiority in order to turn the situation at the local level to their advantage. This, however, was neither revolutionary, nor was it new to the Acehnese. In the past the Dutch had repeatedly succeeded in dominating the local level (particularly in Great Aceh under Van der Heijden). The consolidation and preservation of this control was the true problem as it repeatedly fell victim to the lack of resources and policy changes of the Dutch administration. Therefore, the most important issue raised by the Pidië expedition was the consolidation of its results with the limited resources available in Aceh. In this regard the above quoted report presents a positive outlook by suggesting that the military present could be reduced in the near future. The best reason for this optimism lay in the fact that under the new policy—as codified in the Governor’s instruction— the Dutch troops had treated the local population as future subjects, whose properties and livelihood had to be spared as much as possible. Simultaneously Dutch dominance was projected through the adat chiefs who, although they were treated with respect, were seriously punished for a lack of collaboration. Thereby the Dutch had created conditions in which they became the preferable as well as dominant partner to collaborate with. This provided an underpinning for the consolidation of Dutch control and meant a clean break with the past. The question now was how to maintain this advantage in the collaborative equation without a massive deployment of military resources at the grassroots level. Moreover, although the backbone of the united resistance had been broken in Pidië, this region represented only a small part of Aceh as a whole. Pacification of Aceh and all its Dependencies required the Dutch to establish and maintain dominance at the grassroots level without the abundance of troops that were available for the Pidië


expedition. How could this all be achieved, and what, in this regard, was the significance of the success in Pidië? To answer these questions we have to submerge in the political system that evolved in the wake of the Pidië expedition.

**6.4 The Korte Verklaring**

Since 1874 the Dutch policy on Aceh and its Dependencies had been characterized by an administrative distinction between Great Aceh and the Dependencies. Based on the wrong assumption of the Sultanate as a strong central state, Van Swieten had adopted this policy in order to bring the Sultan's heartland under direct colonial rule, while the Dependencies were to be ruled indirectly (as it was assumed that they would follow the centre, see Chapter Four). This policy had caused the Dutch to focus on Great Aceh; Dutch resources were concentrated in the Kutaradja area and most large actions took place in the valley of Great Aceh. The Dependencies, on their turn, were submitted through so-called long declarations of eighteen articles which arranged a co-optive relationship between local uléébalang and the Dutch colonial administration. Additionally the Dutch kept small outposts in some of the Dependencies and incidentally launched limited military actions or imposed naval blockades to enforce Dutch rule. As we have seen in Chapter Four this system principally brought the Dutch nominal control; in reality the chiefs of the Dependencies enjoyed complete autonomy as they mostly could ignore the Dutch. Moreover, despite the distinction between Great Aceh and the Dependencies, Dutch rule in the former region was also bothered by a lack of control. Due to the lack of resources and frequent policy changes, Dutch rule in Great Aceh was essentially indirect in nature. As typically for colonial states the *de facto* situation in directly ruled and indirectly ruled entities was much the same, despite the formal dichotomy.

In chapters two and three it was already mentioned that both systems of indirect and direct rule heavily relied on co-option of local power-holders. The difference between the two systems was that the latter system directly incorporated local rulers in the structure of the colonial government, while indirect rule considered such power-holders as sovereigns, who had pledged allegiance to the colonial state. Obviously a system of direct rule offered the colonial administration more latitude to control its co-optees, but here also reality was more blurred than the official denominations suggested. In some of Aceh's Dependencies, for instance, the situation had shifted towards direct rule as a cause of the introduction of systematic naval blockades. In general, however, the situation in the Dependencies was characterized by a lack of Dutch control, despite formal declarations of submission. Snouck illustrated the uselessness of this system of long declarations by pointing at Pidië, which due to its proximity to Great Aceh had regularly encountered Dutch interference (especially

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69 Ibid.
by 1898 all uléëbalang (including the members of both federations) who had signed the long declaration had succeeded, and their successors had never insisted on a renewal of the treaty. Not one of the c. twenty uléëbalang of Pidië did attribute any value to the formal contract with the Dutch.

On the other side, the Dutch themselves were bound by the long declarations which encompassed a respect of the suzerainty of the uléëbalangships and imposed severe restrictions on Dutch interference. Measures such as the levying of toll, jurisdiction, agriculture and mining concessions et cetera could only be introduced with the approval of the local chief. Of course, war measures such as naval blockades and military intervention could be employed by the Dutch to enforce compliance without regard for official contracts. However, now the Dutch had adopted an active policy for controlling and permanently pacifying Aceh as a whole, all these measures should become part of the colonial administration’s ‘peace measures’. Snouck and Van Heutsz, therefore, envisioned the introduction of a uniform administrative system in Aceh and its Dependencies. This system was to unite whole Aceh under direct rule of the Dutch colonial administration with all local adat chiefs signing a simple declaration in which they stated that their followers and themselves were totally subjected to the colonial government and that they would comply with all governmental instructions.

The origins of this idea take us back to the Pidië expedition. It was during the first month of this undertaking that Van Heutsz raised the idea of the new administrative system and its adjoining short declaration to Governor-General Van der Wijck. Although Snouck is considered as its main architect, both men of the duumvirate agreed that the new offensive policy in the Dependencies, which currently was being practiced in Pidië, could only be fully exploited through the introduction of a system that would definitely arrange the political relationships between local chiefs and the Dutch administration. Whereas the new Governor’s instruction had referred to the ‘system of the future’, the short declaration and the adoption of direct rule for Aceh as a whole encompassed the ultimate contours of this system. The Dutch, however, lacked the resources to enforce the total submission of all local power-holders of the more than 100 independent statelets of the Dependencies; what was needed to introduce this new extensive system, therefore, was a decisive and exemplary demonstration of Dutch dominance. Success in notoriously defiant Pidië would set such a deterrent example as it would show the capabilities that would be unleashed in case local power-holders failed to accept total submission to the Dutch. As we have seen this success indeed was obtained

70 'Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aanz Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898', J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 262.
72 'Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898', J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 261.
in Pidië where the resistance was defeated while the ulëëbalang were treated with dignity and respect, but also fined for anti-Dutch activities. This clearly illustrated that it was in the Acehnese adat chiefs’ personal interest to co-opt with the Dutch. Thereby the expedition brought the colonial administration the necessary leverage for bringing the Dependencies under Dutch control. This was the true merit of the Pidië expedition, or as Somer put it:

‘Breaking the resistance in Pidië has been the morally and politically starting sign of an extensive vigorous political system ... the fortunate outcome of this act of war [the Pidië expedition] has become the key to further measures; measures that will lead to the total submission of the Acehnese to our will; not only on the terrain of military operations, but also in a politico-administrative manner.’

Before we will deal with the actual implementation of this new administrative system in Aceh as a whole, we will first discuss how it took its definite form. As aforementioned Van Heutsz had first coined the idea in a June 1898 letter to Van der Wijck in which he also announced that Snouck, Assistant-Resident Van Rijn van Alkemade, and himself would further develop the proposal during the Pidië expedition in Sigli, if time permitted so. Van der Wijck passed the idea to his General Chancery for advise. Whereas the duumvirate in Aceh considered their plan as a practical measure, the Governor-General’s advisory body reflected upon it from a more theoretic point of view and raised judicial objections. According to Article 43 of the 1855 Governor-General’s Instruction indigenous rulers were granted the right of self-government. This right could only be violated if ‘repeated persuasion’ to comply with the Dutch colonial government had been fruitless and even then the measures taken should be in proportion to the situation. The General Chancery was not convinced of the necessity to bring the chiefs of Aceh’s Dependencies under direct rule under the condition of total submission. Further, it was argued that measures such as the levying of toll could be implemented without a change of the old system, and that such a change would only cause rebellion against these measures. The true reason for Batavia’s objections, however, lay in a fear of a British reaction as the introduction of direct rule in the Dependencies could be explained as a violation of Article III of the 1824 London Treaty (this view was also shared by officials in The Hague). This was the exact reason why earlier attempts to introduce one administrative system for the whole of Aceh had failed. Both in

75 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 278.
76 J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 249.
77 Ibid., 252-253.
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1881 and in 1891 Aceh’s Governors had been overruled when they proposed to impose direct rule in the Dependencies in order to exploit the effects of naval blockades.

A thorough answer to these objections was formulated by Snouck in Sigli on August 24 (while Van Heutsz was on his way to Tangsé).\(^80\) It was here that the true genius behind the proposal revealed itself as Snouck wrote a meticulous answer to the General Chancery’s report which he considered ‘to be too much inspired by the wish to search for objections, and to be largely based on theory, which goes around the local facts’.\(^81\) First he argued that the *ulèëbalang* of the Dependencies could not be regarded as indigenous rulers in the sense of Article 43 of the Governor-General’s Instruction as those chiefs were in the ‘first place heads of popular plantations, culture undertakings, or complexes of enterprises and merchants’.\(^82\) This is remarkable as Snouck commonly depicted the *ulèëbalang* as hereditary feudal lords, who were tied to their followers through their right to land (as discussed in Chapter Four). *Ulèëbalang* rule indeed shared many characteristics of such a feudal system as it was based on heritage, *adat* and the Sultan’s *sarakata*, but in essence those chiefs remained economic entrepreneurs. In this writing Snouck demonstrates clearly that he was fully aware of this economical basis of *ulèëbalang* legitimacy, while in his advises he had always emphasized the ‘in the Acehnese national consciousness deeply rooted hereditary [feudal] principle’.\(^83\)

We will elaborate on the consequences of this hiatus in the latter part of this chapter. In addition to this clarification on the true nature of *ulèëbalang* rule, Snouck’s answer also contained a description of the *de facto* relationships between the administration in Kutaradja and the chiefs of the Dependencies. He explained that *ulèëbalang* in their behaviour totally disregarded the long declarations, and that in practice the Dutch employed war measures to enforce compliance. Now the effectiveness of those measures had dramatically increased, more and more chiefs stated that they were obeying, because ‘soedah taloeq sama Kompenie [sic]’ (they had already submitted to the Kompeuni).\(^84\) Thus, the chiefs had already started to accept total submission to the Dutch, and Snouck further developed this point by stating that the ongoing Pidië expedition and the success in Idi had left the chiefs of the north and east coast prepared to sign a declaration of total submission. He also expected the *ulèëbalang* of the west coast to follow as the new active policy would soon start to affect them.

All in all Snouck argued that in the current situation the balance of power had been restored in favour of the Dutch. Moreover, compliance with new tolls and additional measures under the new system would not cause any disturbance as the chiefs’ revenues would remain untouched; they even would profit from the socio-economic development of their *ulèëbalangships* (which would benefit the population and thereby raise production, yielding more tax income for the colonial administration as well as the chiefs). It was also

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\(^80\) Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898, 260-264.

\(^81\) Ibid., 261.

\(^82\) Ibid., see also Karel E.M. Bongenaar, *De ontwikkeling van het zelfbesturend landschap in Nederlands-Indië*, 302.


\(^84\) Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898, 262.
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subtly mentioned that Minister of Colonial Affairs and former Deli tobacco magnate J.Th. Cremer was an advocate of such a policy. Snouck’s request to ‘put an official seal on the current situation in order to provide a better foundation for our authority in the future’ was well-received by Van der Wijck, who replied on October 14 with the request to file an official proposal for the introduction of a new, shorter declaration. This was accomplished in a letter of 12 November 1898 that expounded Snouck’s and Van Heutsz’s plan for the new politico-administrative system for Aceh and its Dependencies based on either the establishment of direct rule, with self-government by the ulëëbalang, or the introduction of a simplified short declaration of total submission. A model of this Korte Verklaring (KV) was included in the letter and consisted of two articles in which an ulëëbalang declared that his ulëëbalangship was part of the Netherlands-Indies and that he was totally subjected to Dutch rule as embodied by the Governor-General (Article 1), and in which he vowed to comply with all regulations issued by Aceh’s Governor (Article 2).

It is remarkable that the 12 November letter presented two alternatives for Aceh, the establishment of direct rule with self-government, or the introduction of the KV (while maintaining the official indirect status of the Dependencies). Both options, however, would lead to the same result as they gave Kutaradja more ‘direct’ control of the Dependencies and thereby mirrored the actual situation. This again demonstrates that in the reality of colonial practice the difference between indirect and direct rule was highly hypothetical. Although there is no clear supporting evidence available, there can be little doubt that the introduction of the KV with preservation of the indirect status, was considered less provoking to the British. Although Van der Wijck officially rejected the first alternative on the ground of a lack of administrative resources, it seems that fear of a British reaction was a huge factor in the decision not to implement direct rule in Aceh as a whole. Nevertheless, de facto Van Swieten’s 1874 distinction ceased to exist as the politico-administrative system of the KV brought the Dependencies effectively under direct control of Kutaradja, with self-government being conducted by the ulëëbalang. Furthermore Minister Cremer as an old Deli hand knew that the British, and especially the Straits Settlements, were more concerned with the reality of Dutch rule, than with its form. As there had been no complaints from the Straits with regard to the naval blockades as practiced since 1893 which also opposed the 1824 Treaty, Cremer anticipated that there would be no danger in implementing the KV. Thus The Hague fully supported the new politico-administrative system that would bring the Dutch direct influence in Aceh as a whole. On March 19 1899 Cremer telegraphed his definite

85 Ibid., 264, on Cremer’s background see Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 280.
89 Ibid., 276, Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 279-280.
approval on the condition that the contract of the KV would be amended with one article that explicitly prohibited submitted local power-holders from engaging in relationships with foreign powers (this would become Article 2 of the KV). 91

Meanwhile, the first KV had already been signed by Teuku Imam, the Raja of Teunom, on December 13 1898. 92 Ironically, it was precisely the protagonist of the Nisero affair (see Chapter Five), who now was the first to offer his total submission. Even more ironic was the fact that Uma was instrumental in this matter. When Uma fled Tangsé for the west coast he had picked up his earlier existence as leader of a roving gang. Uma’s 800-strong, well-armed, and highly experienced gang made him a formidable rival to the chiefs of the west coast’s Dependencies. Uma’s old nemesis, Teuku Imam, felt so endangered that he applied to the Dutch colonial administration for assistance against Uma. This provided the Dutch not only with a chance to end the exceptional status of the Raja of Teunom (in the deal ending the Nisero affair the Dutch had agreed to severely limit their interference in Teunom, Snouck, therefore, anticipated serious resistance from this actor against the KV), but also an opportunity for definitely dealing with Uma. Therefore, Van der Wijck had approved Snouck and Van Heutsz (in his October 14 letter) to continue with the introduction of the KV in case Teuku Imam would offer his submission. The Dutch had already deployed a battalion of infantry and six Marechaussee brigades to the west coast in order to find Uma. 93 These forces now started to co-operate with the Raja of Teunom in order to protect his ulèëbalangship and with help of local informers the chase for Uma fully developed. The ensuing relentless pursuit ended in the night of 10-11 February 1899 when Uma was killed in an ambush at the beach north of Meulaboh. 94 Uma succumbed to what once had been his own method for dealing with competitors; collaboration with the Dutch colonial administration in Kutaradja. 95

Thus, the politico-administrative system of the KV was first introduced in Aceh. Its simple contract brought local power-holders self-government at the price of total submission, and thereby it brought the Dutch control as the colonial government’s dominance was assured under this contract. The administration was entitled to freely interfere in local rule and could even limit its extent if the insights of local colonial officials deemed this necessary. 96 The KV, therefore, constituted the framework for co-optive relationships with local power-holders in which the Dutch lawfully where the dominant party. As we have seen this theoretical dominance matched the actual situation after dominance was achieved as a consequence of the Pidië expedition. We should not forget, however, that this expedition was enabled by

94 See also Departement van Oorlog, Aanhangsel van het Voorschrift voor de Uitoefening van de Politiek-Politionele Taak van het Leger (Weltevreden: Reproductiebedrijf Top. Dienst, 1929), 433-434.
96 See also Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, Sumatraans sultanaat en koloniale staat, 217.
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a temporary surge of forces through allocation of extra troops from Java, while Kutaradja had strictly limited resources for controlling Aceh, and that most of those resources remained concentrated in Great Aceh. The question, therefore, is how the Dutch secured the introduction as well as the consolidation of the KV system in Aceh as a whole, without a substantial presence in the Dependencies; how exactly did the Dutch establish and maintain stable co-optive relationships in which they were the dominant actor?

The case of the Raja of Teunom demonstrates that Snouck and Van Heutsz cleverly exploited the new Dutch reputation gained during the Pidië expedition by dispatching a small force to the west coast in order to continue the hunt for Uma. This not only showed the resoluteness to aggressively pursue the resistance, but coincidentally also acted to assist local power-holders against rivals who collaborated with the resistance. The Dutch reputation was further boosted by this demonstration of will and capability to offer protection or assistance in local feuds with parties associated with the resistance. Thereby the Dutch not only proved to be the dominant party for local power-holders to co-opt with, but also the preferable as they would offer co-optees protection and assistance. This reputation of the Kutaradja administration as the dominant as well as the preferable partner for ulëëbalang to collaborate with was further established during the remainder years of Van Heutsz’s governorship through the introduction of coercive as well as persuasive measures for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships with the local chiefs. It was predominantly the use of force or the threat of punishment, however, that enabled the Dutch to control Aceh at an acceptable level. A series of expeditions and smaller excursions (all without the deployment of additional troops from outside Aceh) functioned to uninterruptedly project Dutch dominance. The 1901 Samalanga expedition was the last large expedition (two infantry battalions with support arms) of the Aceh War. During this action Van Heutsz celebrated his 50th birthday with the destruction of the ulama fortress of Batëë Iliq, which was instrumental in breaking the organized resistance in Aceh as a whole.97 Even more important, the examples provided by the repeated expeditions had convinced most ulëëbalang that, in contrast to the past, the new Dutch active policy would not fade away and that Kutaradja would maintain its dominance at all costs. Therefore by January 1903 most Acehnese chiefs had opted to submit to the Dutch and signed the KV.98

Now the colonial administration’s strength had become commonly accepted among the Acehnese, the Dutch focused on the splintered remains of the resistance and the defiant adat chiefs of the Gajo and Alas tribes of Aceh’s uplands. Thus far these remote peoples had been relatively untouched and unexplored by the Dutch colonial administration. After 1901, however, the resistance gangs started to use the various Gajo and Alas tribal micro states in the inaccessible interior surrounding Laut Tawar as their sanctuary (due to the Dutch

pressure in the remainder of Aceh). This provoked Kutaradja to launch a total of seven excursions between 1901 and 1905, among which the most infamous excursion of lieutenant-colonel G.C.E. Van Daalen in 1904. This undertaking which involved some 198 Marechaussee who roved the Gajo and Alas statelets for 163 days was characterized by brutalities against the local population. An estimated 25-33% of the inhabitants of the area were killed (2902 people), among whom 1159 women and children. This was exactly the kind of alienating violence Snouck had wanted to avoid at all costs. Whereas Van Heutsz during the early days of his governorship had followed Snouck’s advises to strictly confine the use of force against the population as the indigenous people were to be considered as future subjects, the reality on the ground had gradually become more and more dominated by military hardliners like Van Daalen. The firm but selective violence against resistance leaders as envisioned by Snouck, thus, had turned into the use of massive force against the complete population of areas in which the resistance was active. In Snouck’s vision the inhumane practices of officers like Van Daalen, who according to Snouck possessed ‘a deeply-rooted disdain for all what is indigenous’ had spoilt the gains of the new policy. This was one of the reasons why Snouck had resigned his position as an advisor in Aceh a year earlier, in October 1903. This resignation urges us to take a short detour in which we clarify the circumstances of the schism of the Aceh duumvirate, before we will continue our discussion on how exactly the Dutch colonial administration established and maintained co-optive relationships with the limited available resources.

Another important -probably the most important- reason for Snouck’s resignation was a profound difference in insight on the political course in Aceh between Van Heutsz and Snouck. By 1903 the tactic of the relentless pursuit was so effective that the Sultan and Polem submitted themselves on respectively 10 January and 6 September. As mentioned before the latter was destined to be restored as Panglima Sagi of the XXII mukim if he accepted total submission to the Dutch. On January 1 1904 Polem was definitely installed in this function, and he remained a trusted co-optee of the colonial administration until his death in 1940. The way forward after the Sultan’s submission was less clear and caused the definite schism in Aceh’s duumvirate. The 1898 Governor’s instruction had explicitly stated not to engage the Sultan actively. The rationale underlying this restraint was Snouck’s correct point that although the Sultan was a rather powerless figure at that moment, his symbolic power, however, would prove difficult to handle by the Dutch in the future.

99 C. Snouck Hurgronje, Het Gajōland en Zijne Bewoners (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1903), XII-XIII, see also C. Snouck Hurgronje, Nota van Wenken die bij de Aanraking met Hoofden en bevolking van het Gajōland te behartigen zullen zijn (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1902).
100 G.D.E.J. Horz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjèh-oorlog, 61-64, Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 267-282
101 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Rooseboom, 2 October 1903’, 344.
102 G.D.E.J. Horz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjèh-oorlog, 60-61, Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 245. Interestingly both men were captured in an indirect way. The Sultan surrendered after a Marechaussee patrol arrested his wife, while Polem submitted because his mother was caught by a similar patrol.
On new year’s eve of 1902 the Sultan approached the colonial administration to find out whether or not he would be exiled upon his submission. While Snouck was absent, Van Heutsz opened negotiations -against his own Governor’s instruction- that resulted in a permission to reside in Aceh and also an allowance from the Dutch administration. Albeit seemingly innocent obligations, Snouck was afraid that this would be explained by the Acehnese as a restoration of the Sultanate. This would encompass an additional layer of indigenous administration in Aceh and thereby would endanger the newly-won direct influence of the colonial administration. Snouck pointed at the fact that many ulèëbalang had already paid tributes of hundreds of dollars upon the Sultan’s submission. Van Heutsz, who in his brochure De Onderwerping van Atjeh had advocated the restoration of the Sultanate under Dutch supervision, saw in the Sultan’s submission an opportunity to definitely pacify Aceh and its Dependencies. When the Sultan attempted to influence ulèëbalang, however, he was met with mockery, and Van Heutsz’s plan soon turned out to be unworkable. Moreover, ultimately Snouck’s opinion prevailed when the Sultan was exiled in 1907 -ironically by then Governor Van Daalen- exactly because of the fact that his presence was a continuous source of unrest. Back in 1903 this dispute with van Heutsz on the role of the Sultan was the trigger for Snouck to definitely give up his advisory role in Aceh.

Thus the cooperation of the duumvirate ended. Although Snouck’s objections were very serious and his ideas had not always been executed properly, it could not be denied that for the first time the Dutch colonial administration had obtained an acceptable level of control in Aceh as a whole. As aforementioned the exemplary utility of military force had been instrumental in achieving this situation. The system of the KV was the politico-administrative reflection of this new situation, and was the most important merit of Snouck’s involvement in the field as it ‘gave the secular élite a vested interest in stability under Dutch authority, and so drove deeper the wedge between them and the ulama [resistance]’. Whereas the continuous expeditions and excursions convinced or coerced most ulèëbalang to submit, the other measures of the KV system acted to consolidate and maintain the newly established co-optive relationships and thereby provided the underpinning for further pacification efforts. The ulèëbalang were treated with respect, but also punished for anti-Dutch activities in their area of interest. What had gradually evolved from 1898 until 1903 was a system that focused on co-option of the legitimate local power-holders ruling the various local communities (down to the mukim level) through a mix of methods that varied from sanctions to incentives.

108 Officially the Sultan was expelled for seeking the support of the Emperor of Japan against the Dutch. The importance as well as the authenticity of the intercepted correspondence, however, was doubtful. Nevertheless they gave the Dutch a good reason to get rid of the Sultan, who remained in exile until his death on Java in 1927. See Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 281. ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Heemskerk, 4 Mei 1908’, ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 376-378.
109 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 278.
We will now discuss the various methods that were used to consolidate and maintain these co-optive relationships as well as the Dutch colonial administration’s organization for controlling all 150 co-opted local power-holders in Great Aceh and the more than 100 micro states of the Dependencies.\footnote{A.J. Piekaar, \textit{Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan}, 7.}

First the matter of administration. The need to supervise co-optees at the local level as part of the new policy in Aceh had first been acknowledged in the 1898 Governor’s instruction. The ameliorated situation in Great Aceh prompted the attribution of grass-root level daily administration to captains and lieutenants of the \textit{Marechaussee}, who were ordered to ‘continuously control the to our [Dutch] authority submitted heads and population’.\footnote{K. van der Maaten, \textit{Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog}, Deel II, bijlage LXXIV, 162-163.}

When the introduction of the KV after the Pidië expedition brought the Dutch a similar level of control in the Dependencies, the demand for officials to exert this control greatly increased. Under the mandate of the Governor’s instruction the officers of the \textit{Marechaussee} were also to be appointed as the military and civil authorities in the newly controlled locales. The choice for these officers can be explained by the fact that the \textit{Korps Marechaussee} since its foundation had required its officers to obtain a full insight in local political and social affairs in addition to at least some command of the Acehnese language and knowledge of the local \textit{adat}.\footnote{L. Voogt, ‘Een politionele eend in de Indische militaire bijt. Voorgeschiedenis, oprichting en formatieve fase van het Korps Marechaussee te Atjeh (1890-1896)’, 24-25.} Although the situation in Great Aceh had become so stable that more and more members of this corps could be relieved from pure military tasks in order to conduct administrative tasks in the micro states of the Dependencies, this was not enough, and additionally officers from other Dutch Colonial Army units were also installed in the function of ‘officer-civil authority’.\footnote{H. Van den Doel, ‘De ontwikkeling van het militaire bestuur in Nederlands-Indië’, 36-37; G. D.E.J. Hottz, \textit{Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog}, 58-59.}

Hardliner Van Daalen, later Prime Minister of the Netherlands H. Colijn, and K. van der Maaten, whose book about Snouck is used in this chapter, were among those officers.\footnote{For a thorough oversight of Colijn’s involvement in Aceh see Herman Langeveld, H., \textit{Dit leven van krachtig handelen}, 65-115.} All these local agents were centrally supervised and directed by the Assistant-Resident in Kutaradja. This organization with military officers embodying civilian authority would be kept up until pacification was fully accomplished.

It were these officer-civil authorities who represented the Dutch colonial government with which local power-holders had sealed the contract of the KV. The officers were engaged on a daily basis in the bargaining with the \textit{ulëébalang} in order to maintain and exploit the newly established co-optive relationships. It was to their insight that the mix of coercive and persuasive methods of the new politico-administrative system was to be deployed as they were instructed to ‘make the chiefs oblige to take those measures the colonial administration deems necessary in order to guarantee peace, order, and security etc. through efficient instructions and a \textit{tactful} use of the available coercive means’.

\footnote{J.M. Somer, \textit{De Korte Verklaring}, 305, italics by author.}
the coercive side the ultimate method, of course, was a military action in the form of an expedition or excursion. This method, however, was only called upon in areas in which the resistance still had considerable influence and was not intended to enforce compliance in case a local chief had already submitted himself. This also applied to the (tightening of) naval blockades which were primarily designed to establish control by limiting trade and arms smuggling. Nevertheless, these measures were regularly applied throughout Aceh during Van Heutsz’s governorship, and their exemplary working provided the officers-civil authorities with a potent stick to threaten unwilling co-optees.\textsuperscript{116} Although the military administrators were accompanied by a small military detachment (which did not suffice to control a locale by occupation), the coercive methods that allowed them to tactfully enforce compliance with the KV typically encompassed non-military measures such as fines and the application of indigenous jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{117}

To start with the latter, the indigenous jurisdiction was to be executed by the adat chiefs under supervision of the local military administrator. It was envisioned that ultimately Aceh would be completely ruled through the ulèëbalang, and that Dutch interference with their administration would be minimal only. For the moment, however, ‘the low state of development of many chiefs’, required the local colonial administrators to pass sentences with the acquiescence of the local power-holder(s) responsible for maintaining the indigenous law.\textsuperscript{118} This position of the colonial administrators could be used to exert pressure on co-optees in order to comply to Dutch demands. For instance, an ulèëbalang or his followers could be convicted for crimes related to supporting the resistance, or resistance activities within the chief’s influence sphere. As such a conviction would be officially passed through an adat-sanctioned court, this was considered a very subtle way to enforce compliance of muttering co-optees. Nevertheless, the sentences imposed could be very heavy and less tactful, especially if the local civil-military official was a hardliner like Van Daalen. Snouck has pointed at this officer’s inhumane and cruel verdicts during his spell as officer-civil authority of Pidië. Local chiefs and complete segments of the population were sent in exile or received as much as twenty years of penal servitude.\textsuperscript{119} Even Van Heutsz agreed that this had been too much, but he argued that Van Daalen had learned from this experience.\textsuperscript{120} During Van Daalen’s later governorship, however, he did not demonstrate any advanced insight in the matter. He even went as far as converting an adat-court’s verdict from expulsion into the death penalty when a Marechaussee patrol was completely destroyed in the


\textsuperscript{118} ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Rooseboom, 2 October 1903’, 344.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 344-345.

\textsuperscript{120} ‘Beoordeling van Van Daalen door Van Heutsz, 29 April 1904’, J.W. Naarding, Het Conflict Van Heutsz–Snouck Hurgronje–Van Daalen, Bijlage XVIII, 63.
ulèëbalangship Keureutoë.  

The Course of Co-option  

Chapter 6  

The Course of Co-option Chapter 6  

Keureutoë. Ulèëbalang  

Teuku Tjhi Tunong was executed on the allegation of high treason - despite the local colonial administrator stating his innocence - for failing to prevent the resistance’s ambush in his area of influence. Thus, it is clear that the supervision over the indigenous jurisdiction provided the colonial administration a powerful tool for enforcing compliance with the KV. The abuse of this tool by military hardliners, on the other hand, was a constant sorrow that actually required close monitoring by experienced and dedicated civil colonial officials such as Snouck or the Assistant-Resident in Kutara. As this could not be achieved throughout Aceh as a whole, excesses occurred as long as Aceh was not fully pacified and civil authority transferred to the civil colonial administrators.

The most widely used coercive measure was imposing fines. This method was very effective as it directly affected the main source of ulèëbalang power, their economic position. Both Snouck and Van Heutsz realized this. Snouck stated that ‘the Acehnese are too sensitive in their purse and too precise calculators not to feel any increase in financial pressure in its full power’. Van Heutsz argued that besides (the threat of) military force ‘skimming the purse is the mighty running engine that drives the machine the way we want’. The truth of these statements was reflected in the outcome of the introduction of the fining of ulèëbalang in order to enforce compliance with the KV; the stability of the indigenous administration in the ulèëbalangships increased as the gap between the ulama-led resistance and the adat chiefs widened now the latter stepped up their collaboration with the Dutch in order to protect their own interest. The importance of this economically focused interest was also exploited by the Dutch as part of the persuasive methods for maintaining co-optive relationships through the allocation of allowances. Albeit we will discuss this below, it should be mentioned here that withholding such allowances was considered a powerful tool for exerting pressure. This negative use of allowances was also part of a colonial administrator’s daily toolkit for controlling co-optees at the grassroots level.

The persuasive measures all aimed at the ulèëbalang’s self-interest, and therefore were highly attractive for these economically-driven local power-holders. Allowances provided a strong incentive for a loyal attitude towards the colonial administration and ultimately could range from 10,200 guilders a year for strategic important dominant chiefs and 240 guilders annually for lower-level local power-holders. Initially, however, the Dutch intended to be very careful with such fees. The 1898 Governor’s instruction ordained that allowances could only be authorized with the explicit permission of the Government of the Netherlands-

121 H.T. Damsté, ‘De Executie van Teukoe Tjhi’ Toenong te Lhō Seumawè in 1905’, Koloniaal Tijdschrift 27 (1938), 490-492, see also M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh, 95.
122 Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898’, 263.
Indies—without doubt a consequence of the Teuku Uma debacle. 127 In order to qualify for a governmental salary submitted chiefs should have demonstrated their will and capability to maintain peace and order within their influence sphere as well as their strong support for the local colonial administration (this was already mentioned in section 6.2). Snouck also argued that the ulêëbalang should not become fully dependent of a fixed income of the colonial administration. In order to give local power-holders a permanent interest in the further development of their ulêëbalangship their traditional source of income, the levying of toll, was maintained under Dutch supervision. 128 The rationale of this decision was that more development meant a higher production rate which would augment the chiefs’ tax incomes. The naval blockades that affected large parts of Acehnese commerce could be used to support this measure as Dutch administration of all trade would deny local cheapskates and smugglers their part of the profit. 129 Other financial benefits available to ulêëbalang under the KV system were royalties paid for mining or plantation concessions (particularly along the east coast). 130 All together this combination of a fixed allowance and variable income through traditional tolls under Dutch supervision or additional royalties, was highly attractive for the entrepreneurial ulêëbalang. The Dutch thereby succeeded in also becoming a preferred partner for collaboration (in addition to their dominance) and thus they became capable of maintaining stable co-optive relationships with submitted chiefs. Moreover, these financial measures greatly enhanced institutionalization of the ulêëbalang; although the signing of the KV contract had formally turned them in Kutaradja’s co-optees, the Dutch salaries as well as the supervision of toll levying visibly identified the chiefs as agents of the colonial administration.

In addition to these economic incentives the persuasive methods of the KV system also encompassed measures for empowering local power-holders. As we have seen in the case of the Raja of Teunom the Dutch were capable of providing protection and assistance against rivals related to the resistance. Later, when the co-optive relationships had grown more stable, the Dutch started to exert their colonial control through the ulêëbalang; those local power-holders became adat chiefs as well as colonial administrators working under the supervision of Dutch officials at the grassroots level. 131 In practice this duality of the ulêëbalang as co-optees within the politico-administrative framework of the KV encompassed a strengthening of the ulêëbalang as adat chiefs vis-à-vis the other Acehnese societal groups, i.e. peasants and ulama in their locales as well as the Sultan and his group. It was felt that the adat was the basis for peace in Aceh and that maintaining this peace as well as further development could not be established through transformation or modernization. Whereas Dutch administrators were capable of interfering with ulêëbalang rule, they opted to support the adat chiefs and minimize

127 ‘Ontwerp “Instructie voor den Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden” (Kolonel Van Heutsz)’, 163.
128 ‘Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898’, 264.
130 Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 13, see also A.J. Piekaar, Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan, 7.
such interference as long as the situation was peaceful and the co-optive relationship stable. Consequently the ulèëbalang primarily remained adat chiefs, and their dual role as agents of the Dutch colonial administration took the form of an empowerment of the former role. Whereas the economically oriented ulèëbalang traditionally were capable of exerting some influence in law and religion, the Dutch support concentrated the administration of these fields in their hands exclusively at the expense of the local villagers and ulama.  

Furthermore the afore mentioned allowances and extra income allowed the ulèëbalang to tighten the dyadic ties with their rakan, who now became salaried administrative officers. These persuasive methods for maintaining the co-optive relationships as part of the KV hugely contributed to an individual ulèëbalang’s power position and therefore they not only provided an incentive to engage in a co-optive relationship with Kutaratja, but also to maintain this relationship in order to guarantee Dutch support.

Thus, the politico-administrative system of the KV finally succeeded to establish and maintain stable co-optive relationships with local power-holders in Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies. The Pidie expedition, the many other military actions that took place between 1898 and 1903, and the naval blockades constituted a credible threat to coerce defiant or unwilling ulèëbalang into submission. Backed up by this potent stick Dutch colonial officials at the grassroots level could practically enforce compliance by fines and judicial punishments for a lack of collaboration. Despite their scarcity of resources the Dutch had created a system in which their dominance was evident. This not only required the (exemplary) use of force, but also the establishment of an administrative apparatus capable of exerting influence over local power-holders in the over 100 locales of the Dependencies as well as Great Aceh. Such an apparatus was realized through the introduction of the new function of officer-civil administrator which allowed military officers to act as local administrators until a locale was stable enough to be handed over to a Dutch civilian official. On the other side the Dutch implemented persuasive methods designed to serve an ulèëbalang’s self-interest. This turned out to be highly successful as co-option with the Dutch not only enhanced the economic position of these chiefs, but also served to empower them vis-à-vis rivals and other societal groups. Consequently it was not only highly attractive for the ulèëbalang to sign the KV’s contract and engage in a co-optive relationship with the colonial administration, but also to maintain this relationship in order to secure Dutch support. Consequently, the coercive and persuasive measures as part of the KV made the Dutch the dominant and the preferable actor to collaborate with, for that moment as well as in the future. This was a clean break with the past in which the Dutch had only managed to obtain such a position temporarily. Moreover, it should be noted that the permanent character of the new politico-administrative system received additional substance through the implementation of Snouck’s idea to educate

the sons of the co-optees under supervision of the colonial administration. In sum, the coercive and persuasive measures of the KV created the condition which for the *ulèëbalang* excluded any option but co-option with the Dutch in order to serve their self-interest. To paraphrase Reid, the politico-administrative system of the KV gave the *ulèëbalang* a ‘vested interest’ in accepting and maintaining a co-optive relationship with the Dutch colonial administration.

6.5 The road to pacification: 1904-c. 1912

The Aceh strategy thus was a combination of the exemplary use of force with the politico-administrative system of the KV that allowed the Dutch colonial state to obtain control with limited resources only. Its genesis under the duumvirate Snouck and Van Heutsz had indeed brought the Dutch an acceptable level of control over the various locales of Aceh and its Dependencies. Moreover, in the years to come the Aceh strategy would provide the underpinning for definitely pacifying Aceh and it would also become instrumental in establishing the colonial state of the Netherlands-Indies into the utmost corners of the Indonesian archipelago. For the moment, however, the end of Van Heutsz’s governorship in June 1904 marked the beginning of a setback in the pacification of Aceh and its Dependencies. When Van Heutsz was appointed Governor-General of the Netherlands-Indies he was succeeded in Aceh by major-general J.C. van der Wijck. Van der Wijck continued the policy of his predecessor and emphasized economic development, but his governorship turned out to be a brief *intermezzo* as he was promoted to Commander of the Dutch colonial army in 1905. This opened the way for a new Governor in Aceh, and on May 6 1905 colonel Van Daalen, the infamous military hardliner, was installed as Governor of Aceh and its Dependencies.

Whereas Van der Wijck had continued Van Heutsz’s policy exactly the way it was intended, Van Daalen followed his own interpretation. The core of the policy that was originally designed by Snouck and Van Heutsz was the combination of exemplary force, tactful coercive measures, and persuasive incentives for collaboration. Van Daalen emphasized the use of force and coercive measures. He believed this was the only way forward to full Dutch control over the Acehnese - and hence it was instrumental in finally achieving pacification. Although his reputation as a military hardliner and his ideas on the pacification of Aceh were widely known and even mentioned in an earlier assessment, Van Heutsz had always considered Van

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135 Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 278.
Daalen the best candidate for the position of Governor of Aceh. Snouck, on the other hand, had always warned against Van Daalen’s appointment as he feared that this hardliner would alienate the local population with a policy of ‘rough submission’, which would completely ‘disorganize the health of the patient [Aceh]’. Snouck’s warning became truth during the governorship of Van Daalen. As already illustrated afore, Governor Van Daalen’s brutal policy imposed hardship on the Acehnese. This not only affected the resistance and its supporters, but also the common villagers and the ulèëbalang. Van Daalen’s distrust of the indigenous chiefs was so profound that despite the continuation of the politico-administrative system of the KV, he effectively attempted to govern without them.

The results of this policy were disastrous. The years 1905 and 1906 were characterized by an increased level of resistance in the Dependencies and a deterioration of the political situation in Great Aceh. This provoked Van Daalen to step up his campaign of fierce military action in order to quell any renewed uprising with brutal force. It might be remembered that the Dutch lacked the resources to implement such an approach in Aceh and its Dependencies as a whole (now there were even less resources as due to the stable situation at the start of Van Daalen’s governorship an infantry battalion had redeployed to Java). Whereas the Aceh strategy compensated this lack of resources by exploiting the exemplary use of military force through political deals with local power-holders, Van Daalen’s distrust of the ulèëbalang deactivated this mechanism. This resulted in a return of the organized resistance. Again it were the ulama who were leading the reorganization of the resistance, but they also engaged the Sultan, whose symbolic authority was exploited in order to mobilize the Acehnese against the Kompeuni (exactly what Snouck warned for in 1903, see section 6.4). By 1907 ulama-led gangs once again systematically harassed the Dutch throughout Aceh and its Dependencies, and even the suburbs of Kutaradja came under attack. This time Van Daalen’s reaction not only encompassed fierce military action, but also the arrest of the Sultan, who now was correctly identified as a pivotal agent of the resistance and consequently exiled to the Malukan islands (and later to Java). Despite these measures the situation worsened and the ulama-led resistance gradually established a firm foothold in the Dependencies.

As we have seen in Chapter Three (section 3.3) of this book, domestic resentment on atrocities committed overseas was not uncommon in the colonial époque. Van Daalen’s policy and the resulting hardship suffered by the Acehnese triggered a powerful reaction back home in the Netherlands. A series of seventeen articles written by a retired Marechaussee officer (lieutenant W.A. van Oorschot) under the pseudonym Wekker (whistleblower) discussed gruesome details of atrocities in Aceh and held Governor Van Daalen personally
The consecutive political debate led to an official investigation into the situation in Aceh, which was to be conducted under the personal command of Governor-General Van Heutsz. The inquiry took place from 25 November until 24 December 1907 and the report (which was published in the first months of 1908) concluded that Van Daalen had failed to administer Aceh according to the guidelines provided by the Governor-General. Van Daalen was disgraced by this conclusion and resigned as Governor of Aceh and its Dependencies on May 4, 1908.

During Van Daalen’s governorship the Dutch had drifted away from their new Aceh strategy and its goal of definitely pacifying Aceh. It was Van Daalen’s successor, lieutenant-colonel (later general) H.N.A. Swart who had to repair the damage caused by his predecessor and was tasked to achieve the pacification of Aceh and its Dependencies. Swart was an experienced officer who had fought in Aceh, earned a Militaire Willemsorde, served as officer-civil authority in the Dependencies and had acted as military and civil Resident in Borneo and military and civil Governor of Celebes (current Sulawesi). Upon his arrival in Aceh he immediately broke with Van Daalen’s policy and adopted a combination of politico-administrative measures and military action. Although Van Heutsz had his new Governor initially placed under the supervision of special government commissioner Liefrinck, it soon became evident that Swart fully subscribed to both the politico-administrative and military principles of the Aceh strategy.

Swart’s willingness to embrace the components of the Aceh strategy was clearly illustrated by his actions. One of his first actions upon arrival was to travel to the resistance-infested east coast and organize a meeting in order to reach out to the local ulëëbalang in Lhô Seumawè. When Swart pointed at the presence of the resistance in their ulëëbalangships, the chiefs replied that this was indeed the case, and more important, that they themselves also had become supporters of the resistance. The main reason for their defection was Van Daalen’s disastrous abuse of the system of fining ulëëbalang. Throughout Aceh and its dependencies chiefs had been fined on unlawful grounds and in some cases allowances had been withheld for two and a half years (also without any lawful basis). Swart promptly undid such illegal measures, and he returned the money to the ulëëbalang (which he often did in person) which typically sufficed for changing a chief’s attitude towards the Dutch colonial.

145 Ibid.
147 For a complete biography see M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh (Maastricht: Leiner-Nijpels, 1943).
149 M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh, 90-91.
administration. On the other hand Swart maintained fines that were founded justly. The latter, however, could be remitted if the concerning chiefs would demonstrate their good behaviour towards the colonial administration and would clear their uléëbalangship from resistance influence for a year and longer. Such matters were implemented throughout Aceh and its Dependencies and thereby Swart repaired the in the KV system essential sanction capability that could be used by local administrators for their daily bargaining with local power-holders at the grassroots level.

When the situation ameliorated as a consequence of Swart’s initial measures, additional incentives were added to the administrators’ toolkit for establishing, augmenting, and maintaining co-optive relationships with uléëbalang. Next to the stimulation of an uléëbalangship’s economy – which would generate more tax income for both uléëbalang and colonial administration – also the issuing of interest-free loans, and the introduction of silver and golden honorary badges for loyalty and merit, were used as persuasive measures for tying the local chiefs to the colonial administration. Swart even reintroduced the allocation of firearms for maintaining order and peace in an uléëbalangship in case co-optees had become intimately related to the colonial administration and the political situation within their area of influence was sufficiently stable. The flexible employment of such inducements restored the colonial administration’s dominant position vis-à-vis local power-holders as it once more created a vested interest for the uléëbalang; the Dutch had again become the preferable partner to collaborate with. Whereas Van Daalen had attempted to rule without the uléëbalang, Swart, thus, successfully re-embraced co-option of those chiefs as the centre of gravity of his politico-administrative efforts and thereby he correctly followed the path of the KV system.

As we have seen the KV system thrived on the premise of a credible capability for enforcing submission to – and if necessary further compliance with – the Dutch colonial administration. This military component of the Aceh strategy was characterized by the exemplary use of force against notoriously defiant chiefs in order to demonstrate Dutch dominance, and intensive patrolling for giving a relentless pursuit to resistance elements. Although Swart did not organize an expedition or excursion, his first military decision was to dispatch a large Marechaussee action against the Keureutöë and Pasè region (at Aceh’s east coast) of which the uléëbalang and their subjects openly collaborated with the resistance. The Marechaussee aggressively targeted the resistance, and simultaneously reached out to the chiefs. The latter move was inspired by an analysis of the local political situation. This analysis had spawned the insight that uléëbalang defection and collaboration with the resistance

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153 See also Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 12.
was a direct consequence of the neglect of these local power-holders during Van Daalen's governorship which had resulted in power-struggles for the shrinking resources of the region. The Marechaussee cleared the ulëëbalangships from resistance influence and reconciled the ulëëbalang of the region under the auspices of the colonial administration. Consequently the Dutch regained control over the local population of the region.

In addition to Keureutòë and Pasè five other regions were singled out as focal points for Marechaussee action (Pidië, Bireuën and Lhô Seumawè, the region surrounding Laut Tawar and Döröt, the west coast, and the Gajo-lands). In some cases the renewed appearance of Dutch colonial soldiers sufficed to enforce submission of defiant ulëëbalang. On Aceh's west coast, for example, Teuku Banta and Teuku Bén Blang Pidië submitted themselves within two months. In other cases the combination of political and military engagement brought the Dutch control, with the former element bringing aboard the chiefs and their population, while the Marechaussee prevented retaliation from predatory resistance gangs (this, for instance, was the case in Keureutòë and Pasè). In the Gajo-lands, however, the Marechaussee only accomplished their mission after fighting a tough counter-guerrilla against a tribal rebellion under command of the local chiefs.

By 1912 all these regions were firmly under Dutch control and the organized resistance had collapsed as a consequence of intensive patrolling by the Marechaussee. Remarkably the use of military force mostly focused at the ulama-led gangs who harassed local chiefs and their populations with counter-collaboration measures and predatory actions. Apparently the ulëëbalang of the focal areas either remembered what the Dutch military was capable of, or they were truly aggrieved by Van Daalen's policy, for they often submitted without being the direct subject of military action and seemed appeased by the new political measures (including the payment of their allowances). Similarly, Swart did not need to refer to massive demonstrations of Dutch military might for stabilizing Dutch control over populations in the other parts of Aceh and its Dependencies. The restoration of the link between the use of force and engagement of the ulëëbalang according the politico-administrative system of the KV sufficed for tipping the balance of the collaborative equation in Dutch advantage. Dutch dominance was so complete that Swart even allowed exiled Acehnese (except for the Sultan and his son), among whom many chiefs, to return to their homelands. It was said, therefore, that Swart re-established Dutch control over the Acehnese 'with an iron hand in a velvet glove'. The iron hand, however, effectively dealt with the resistance which virtually ceased to exist as the last leading ulama of the Tiro-family succumbed to the hand of the Marechaussee. With the end of the resistance, and the Acehnese under stable Dutch control

155 M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh, 103-115.
156 See also J. Jongejans, Land en Volk van Atjeh, Vroeger en Nu, 345, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjèh-oorlog, 68.
157 J. Langhout, Economische Staatkunde in Atjeh, 98.
through the co-opted ulëëbalang the pacification of Aceh was finally achieved after almost 40 years.

In the remaining years of Swart’s governorship the pacification was consolidated through the stimulation of socio-economical development and the enhancing of the colonial administration. With regard to the former it has to be mentioned that an impulse was given to education, and even the first girls’ schools were introduced in Aceh.160 The administration of Aceh and its Dependencies was administratively divided in six departments (Great Aceh, North Coast, East Coast, West Coast, and the Gajo- and Alas-lands), each under the authority of either an Assistant-Resident or an officer-civil authority for the more problematic Gajo- and Alas-departments.161 These departments were on their turn divided in a great number of sub-departments which hugely enhanced supervision over the co-opted ulëëbalang who effectively administered the population at the grassroots level. This stretched administrative apparatus allowed for the full implementation of adat justice monitored by the colonial administration (with limited interference only), and also included specialized agricultural advisors as well as Dutch-controlled municipal treasuries for every ulëëbalangship.162 Although military officers still made up the bulk of the colonial administrative apparatus, civil administrators gradually started to take over sub-departments which were deemed sufficiently stable. In 1918 the consolidation of the pacification was considered complete and Swart handed over the governorship to A.G.H. van Sluys, the first civil Governor of Aceh and its Dependencies since Laging Tobias in 1884. Although Aceh would remain an exceptional part of the Netherlands-Indies, it was finally incorporated in the colonial state’s regular administrative structure.

6.6 Pacification to last? The revenge of the ulama

Since its pacification in c. 1912 Aceh has repeatedly suffered from the recurrence of violent conflict. Although the Dutch controlled Aceh until the arrival of the Japanese in 1942, they were harassed by several smaller uprising in the twenties, of which the communist-influenced Bakongan Revolt led to some larger skirmishes between 1924 and 1926.163 Generally, however, such organized resistance was atypical and most violent incidents concerned sporadic individual actions, typically knifings, which were known as Atjeh moorden (Aceh murders). Due to the occasional character of such incidents the Dutch considered Aceh secure enough. During the latter days of their rule the colonial administration even adopted a more relax

161 M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh, 136. Initially the Gajo-and Alas lands formed one department together with the Dependency Singkel. See also Langhout, Economische Staatkunde in Atjeh, 99.
attitude towards the ulama and allowed them to organize themselves in the Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (All-Aceh Ulama Association), better known under the acronym PUSA.\footnote{A.J. Piekaar, 
*Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan*, 18-24, Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 25-27.} However, on the eve of the Japanese invasion in 1942 PUSA turned against the Dutch and proved instrumental in the organization of a full blown insurgency leading to the collapse of Dutch colonial rule in Aceh and its Dependencies. This uprising was inspired, prepared, and supported by the Japanese organization for fifth-colum work, *F-kikan* (F-organization) and lasted for four days until the Japanese Imperial troops landed in Aceh.\footnote{A.J. Piekaar, *Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan*, 175-184, Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 85-90, Paul van ’t Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 300.} Despite their aid, the Japanese also encountered Acehnese resistance during the wartime occupation of the region. And after the Japanese surrender a bloody civil war between PUSA and the ulëébalang dominated the scene during 1945 and 1946. It is tale telling that the Dutch never returned to Aceh after the end of the Second World War. But even when the Dutch colonial era in the Indonesian archipelago ended Aceh remained a conflict-harassed part of the new Indonesian state.\footnote{See, for instance, Shane Joshua Barter, *Resources, religion, rebellion: the sources and lessons of Acehnese separatism*, 40-42, Theodore Friend, *Indonesian Destinies*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 56, Patrick Ziegenhain, *The Aceh Conflict During The New Order And The Following Democratization Process*, *Aceh, History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Graf, A., Schröter, S., Wieringa, E. (Singapore: Insitute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 123-134.} In 1953 the Acehnese massively joined the Darul Islam rebellion (see Chapter One, section 1.3.1) against Sukarno’s modern, secular government. Later, in 1976, a separatist uprising under the leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (commonly known as GAM, from *Geraka Aceh Merdaka*) initiated a protracted insurgency against the Indonesian state. This latter conflict only ended as a consequence of the massive destruction and casualties suffered by the Acehnese after the December 2004 Tsunami, and currently it appears that violent contention in Aceh has faded away -at least for the moment.

Taking into account this track record of violence since c. 1912, the durability of Dutch control over the Acehnese as achieved by the pacification can be questioned. Snouck once stated that the pacification of Aceh would only be complete when patrolling by Dutch colonial troops could be ceased.\footnote{‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Rooseboom, 2 October 1905’, 335-336.} If we take this as the standard for thorough pacification, Aceh has never been pacified under the Dutch. Patrols and other demonstrations of force were needed to quell the intermittent uprisings and occasional spikes of violence that were considered an inherent feature of Acehnese society; it was the ‘fatum of the country’.\footnote{M.H. Du Croo, *Marechausse in Atjeh*, 187-188, J. Jongejans, *Land en Volk van Atjeh*, Vroeger en Nu, 349-352, A.J. Piekaar, *Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan*, 3-5.} The *Atjeh moorden*, in this regard, were treated like an epidemic mental disease typical for the Acehnese.\footnote{J. Jongejans, *Land en Volk van Atjeh*, Vroeger en Nu, 320-321, Paul van ’t Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 296.} The Dutch, thus, considered violence endemically to Acehnese society, and therefore violence could never be fully eliminated from Aceh. In the eyes of the colonial administrators Dutch control over the Acehnese after c. 1912 was sufficiently stable to prevent the re-emergence of massive organized resistance. After forty years of war this level of pacification was acceptable and the sporadic violence was considered nothing more than an uncomfortable nuisance.
As was mentioned in Chapter Three (particularly in section 3.3) pacification in colonial warfare exactly aimed at achieving such an *acceptable* level of control sufficient to function as an underpinning for further steps; pacification was only the first stage in a process of establishing, consolidating, and augmenting the colonial state's control over a local society. If we take this typical pattern of colonial state development into account, the first step was indeed achieved by the pacification. The durability of the during the pacification obtained level of control, however, is related to the next steps of this pattern. Although the topic of wider state building after the establishment of an acceptable level of control is outside the scope of this study, we will briefly touch upon the matter of how the Dutch consolidated and augmented their control over the Acehnese after the pacification. This will further add to our insights on the use of co-option as a tool for controlling fragmented societies.

In the first half of the twentieth century the colonial state of the Netherlands-Indies successfully augmented its control over the peoples of the archipelago through administrative reforms that greatly enhanced state penetration down to the lowest levels of societal organization. Whereas a locale's dominant local power-holders were instrumental in achieving pacification, the colonial administration now also directly approached legitimate power-holders and their followers at the village level (see section 3.3). Albeit co-opted dominant local power-holders remained pivotal agents for the colonial state's control over local societies, the reach out to the lower levels greatly enhanced the connection between the colonial administration and the bulk of the population living in gampongs. In Aceh, however, this was not the case. It was felt that the after forty years of war pacification was too valuable to be risked for the implementation of administrative reforms. As co-option of the *ulëëbalang* was the cornerstone of Dutch control in Aceh, successive Dutch Governors argued that 'nothing could be done either to alienate them or to undermine their authority'. To all costs the status quo had to be defended against administrative reforms initiated by the central government in Batavia. For instance, measures aimed at enhanced popular representation, the institution of an indigenous bureaucracy and the reorganization of the 103 *ulëëbalang*-ruled statelets into better manageable units were all rejected by the administration in Kutaradja. Co-option of *ulëëbalang*, thus, became a dogma for maintaining Dutch control over the Acehnese.

The dogmatic embrace of the *ulëëbalang* by the Dutch colonial administration, however, would become the main cause for the recurrence of violence in Aceh. The reason for this lay in the Dutch misconception of *ulëëbalang* legitimacy. Whereas those chiefs in essence were economical entrepreneurs who derived their political power from their power over the market in a specific locale, the Dutch empowered them if they were feudal lords. Snouck's works and advices on the Acehnese had thoroughly embedded this idea of the *ulëëbalang* as hereditary feudal lords in the policies and practices of the colonial administration in Aceh

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Chapter 6 The Course of Co-option

and its Dependencies. This remains somewhat of a riddle—and might only be solved by further research in Snouck’s personal documents—as we have seen in section 6.4 of this chapter that Snouck was fully aware of the economical basis of uléëbalang power.172 With the full support of the colonial administration the uléëbalang started to use their newly gained position in order to maximize their personal economical benefits. They received extraordinary salaries from the colonial administration and were allowed to levy duties and taxes.173 In addition to these lawful revenues, the uléëbalang as ‘feudal lords’ could easily enrich themselves through less lawful practices such as levying corvée for private purposes, seizing land and exploiting control over irrigation to their own advance.174 As the Dutch entrusted the uléëbalang with the administration of both adat and religious affairs, such predatory behaviour often remained unpunished. Nevertheless the chiefs did not enjoy complete impunity as the Dutch also removed uléëbalang whose predatory behaviour exceeded every standard such as for example Teuku Uma of Keumangan who abused his position to obtain the ownership of half of the rice fields in his area of influence.175 All in all, however, uléëbalang rule was characterized by the pursuit of self-interest at the cost of the population living in the villages within their influence spheres.

The hardship encountered by the local villagers as a result of the colonial administration’s empowerment of the uléëbalang as feudal lords not only widened the gap between the chiefs and the gampong dwellers, it also affected the people’s attitude towards the Dutch. Moreover, the colonial administration received the blame for this situation.176 Illustrative in this regard is a 1921 report on the Atjeh moorden by the colonial government’s advisor on native affairs, R.A. Kern.177 Kern revealed that these violent incidents were triggered by grievances caused by uléëbalang power abuse and oppression. Not only had the Dutch empowered those chiefs tremendously, they had also successfully eliminated the ulama, the societal agents traditionally capable of checking the power of the secular chiefs, and thus the villagers were completely left to the uléëbalang’s discretion. As most victims of the Atjeh moorden were either Dutch officials or other Europeans it was clear that in the eyes of the Acehnese the colonial administration was the true culprit of their desperate situation. The Dutch government, however, only subscribed to this warning in 1939 when it was already too late. For the remainder years of Dutch rule the Acehnese were allowed to openly air their criticism of uléëbalang rule. Although the colonial administration did little to change the system itself, it

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172 See in this regard also Siegel who draws a similar conclusion as he argues that Snouck thought of Aceh as a feudal-like society, while Snouck’s own observations simultaneously refuted this vision. James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 70-71.

173 In some cases the salaries rendered the chiefs almost completely dependent on the Dutch colonial administration as in Pidië, for example, the allowances exceeded more than half of the total income of this statelet. Although the uléëbalang had initially engaged in co-optive relationships with the Dutch because of both personal benefits and a credible threat of military force, they now became so dependent of such allowances that critical colonial officials sometimes considered them beggars sponsored by the colonial administration. See, Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 13, J. Jongejans, Land en Volk van Atjeh, Vroeger en Nu, 345.


177 See also Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 296-297.
facilitated the re-appearance of the ulama party as a political actor when it gave permission for the foundation of PUSA in 1939.\footnote{Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 26.} Thereby the uléëbalang’s traditional counterbalances once again entered Aceh’s political marketplace.

Uléëbalang legitimacy had always been weakly developed due to their mainly economical powerbase and tendency to self-enrichment, it now completely stalled as a consequence of their predatory and oppressive behaviour in the decades following the 1912 pacification. The most important source of uléëbalang political authority now was their exclusive access and use of the Dutch colonial administration’s power and resources. Of course some chiefs tried to exploit this new security for the benefits of the villagers of their uléëbalangship. Teuku Thji Peusangan, for example, put a lot of effort into the socio-economic development of his area of influence.\footnote{A.J. Piekaar, Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan, 18-19, James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 88-89.} Most chiefs, however, increasingly had to rely on Dutch assistance for enforcing their authority. In Pidië in 1933, for example, uléëbalang were even pleading for colonial troops in order to make the villagers work harder in their fields.\footnote{Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 15.} While such a dependency might be wishful from the perspective of dominating co-optive ties with local power-holders in order to control the local population, it worked contrarily as this dependency caused a shift in the nature of uléëbalang authority. Whereas the uléëbalang were originally weak legitimate authorities, they now had become coercive authorities who were increasingly losing the connection with the villagers under their influence. The Dutch, thus, had created a paradox by their dogmatic embrace of uléëbalang co-option; any co-option strategy seeks to obtain and maintain control through the legitimate agents in a specific target society, but through the colonial administration’s rigid preservation of the position of the uléëbalang as feudal lords -based on a wrong conception of the nature of these chiefs’ legitimacy- it had gradually delegitimized its own co-optees. Dutch colonial rule in Aceh, therefore, unintentionally obtained an oppressive character towards the local population.

The results of all this revealed themselves at the end of Dutch colonial époque and beyond. With the collapse of the colonial administration the uléëbalang lost their main source of political power. As the Sultanate had been abolished by the Dutch, the chiefs could not fall back on their traditional method for strengthening their authority through the Sultan’s sarakata. Consequently the uléëbalang rapidly lost control over the villagers living in their uléëbalangships. This all occurred to the advantage of the ulama assembled in PUSA. Since its foundation in 1939 this movement increasingly succeeded in connecting the ulama with the aggrieved Acehnese villagers. Traditionally the connection between those two distinctive societal groups was very weak as the ulama’s message of a new society in which men would abandon their identity and unite as Muslims did not appeal to the villagers (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.1). After years of uléëbalang oppression, however, the ulama’s message ‘was conceived of in terms of transition’ promising progress under the banner of Islam.\footnote{James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 130-131.}
PUSA had enough supporters to organize -with Japanese aid- the 1942 insurgency against the Dutch, and later it continued its fight for a new society during the bloody civil war with the ulèëbalang, as well as the rebellion against Sukarno’s secular Indonesian state. What has emerged from this is an Acehnese ethnic identity strongly intertwined with Islam.182 And while GAM’s later separatist struggle cannot be regarded as a religious fight, it thoroughly exploited this distinctive Acehnese ethnic identity rooted in Islam as a vehicle for mobilizing Acehnese villagers for its cause.183 Although even today ulama remain Islamic scholars with a strict interpretation, their forefathers, thus have created an Acehnese national identity which for the first time since the demise of the Sultan gave the Acehnese a powerful tool for unifying against outside threats. Strikingly this new weapon was first used by an Acehnese Western-style businessman and veteran of the 1953 rebellion named Teungku Hasan Mohammed di Tiro, indeed a direct descendant of Teungku Chik di Tiro, the first leader of the ulama-resistance against the Dutch.

6.7 Conclusion

Despite the poor long-term effects of ulèëbalang co-option, it is without doubt that this co-option was instrumental in pacifying Aceh after nearly forty years of war. Dominance over the ulèëbalang provided the Dutch control over the Acehnese within the influence spheres of these agents. Around 1912 the degree of control spawned by this co-option strategy was sufficiently stable to consider the whole of Aceh and its Dependencies pacified; the next steps would be the consolidation and augmentation of this control through further development of Aceh as a part of the Netherlands-Indies. Whereas the Dutch colonial state successfully deployed this development process for penetrating and connecting to the lower societal levels in other parts of the archipelago, this was not the case in Aceh. The pacification was deemed too precious to risk and therefore the colonial administration convulsively retained to the ulèëbalang as their exclusive connection to the Acehnese. Contradictory, it was the combination of this dogmatic embrace with a poor understanding of the true nature of ulèëbalang legitimacy that caused the loss of control on the long term. Nevertheless, as aforementioned, the initial approach had finally won the Dutch control over the Acehnese living in the multiple locales constituting Great Aceh and the Dependencies. As this analysis is about obtaining control over the population in colonial wars in fragmented societies, and it was the objective of such wars to establish an initially acceptable level of control, this conclusion focuses on the successful pacification of Aceh by use of co-option. Notwithstanding this emphasis on achieving acceptable control as part of a military campaign, we will regularly refer to the

long-term ramifications experienced in Aceh as a warning that the consolidation of control requires a proper follow-up that enhances the connection between state and target society.

The Aceh strategy’s combination of exemplary military force against notoriously defiant societal segments and the politico-administrative system of the KV finally succeeded in establishing Dutch control over the Acehnese. The former element of this strategy reminds of Kalyvas’ approach of selective violence (see Chapter One, section 1.2.2). Just like selective violence, exemplary force seeks to enhance or ‘generate collaboration via deterrence’.184 However, it should be stressed that the Aceh strategy was of a fundamentally different character than Kalyvas’ selective violence. Whereas selective violence aims at delivering targeted sanctions to identified individual defectors within a specific locale, exemplary force in Aceh took the form of large military actions in locales in which the resistance was vividly represented. Thereby other communities and their power-holders were indirectly warned that collaboration with the ulama-led resistance was an invitation for Dutch military action within their own locales. A more important and the most fundamental difference concerns the ideas underlying both approaches. Selective violence is a variant of physical control over a territory. This approach seeks control over the population by first establishing physical control -in this case through selective violence-, which is consecutively augmented through collaboration. Due to the limited resources available in Aceh, physical control -even through selective violence- over the total of Aceh and its Dependencies was simply unachievable and at best a locale could be physically occupied for a limited amount of time (see for example the Pidië expedition and its aftermath). Consequently control had to flow from collaboration and not vice versa. Exemplary force, therefore, was not so much used to achieve physical control over selected locales, but intended to demonstrate Dutch dominance, and thus set the collaborative equation to the colonial administration’s benefit. It was this conditional collaboration that brought the Dutch a sustainable level of control over the Acehnese.

The emphasis on collaboration is further illustrated by the pivotal role of the KV within the Aceh strategy. The use of force was subordinated to this politico-administrative system; as aforementioned, military actions served to demonstrate Dutch dominance and thereby local power-holders were brought to accept total submission by signing the KV. Especially the 1898 Pidië expedition, which preceded the introduction of the KV, won the Dutch a reputation of resoluteness and aggressiveness against the resistance and its collaborators. The series of military actions against a limited number of defiant statelets of the Dependencies that took place from 1898 to 1901 definitively convinced local power-holders in the whole of Aceh that this time the Dutch would maintain their dominance and by 1903 most uléébalang had signed the KV. When Swart in 1908 had to repair the damage inflicted to the KV system by Van Daalen, he also opted for exemplary use of force against selected regions. This quickly re-established Dutch dominance in the collaborative relationships and was instrumental in achieving the 1912 pacification. Now we have stressed that the Aceh strategy was truly a collaboration strategy and that force was used in support of the politico-administrative

184 Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 142.
element of this strategy -and not to obtain physical control over a territory-, it is time to draw some conclusions on the use of co-option within this successful strategy. Therefore we will now analyze the Aceh strategy with use of this book’s analytical framework for understanding co-option.

The Aceh strategy fully subscribed to the idea of cultural legitimation. Moreover, in contradiction to the past, it also successfully practiced this elementary principle of co-option. Albeit the ulëëbalang were wrongly conceived as feudal lords, they were correctly identified as the legitimate local power-holders dominating the various locales of Aceh and its Dependencies. This comes as no surprise as Snouck’s conception of Acehnese society, as first presented in his famous 1892 study, was of great influence on the new strategy. The Governor’s instruction jointly formulated by Van Heutsz and Snouck in 1898 already emphasized the need to obtain the people’s collaboration through their legitimate chiefs, and during the next years the ulëëbalang clearly became the centre of gravity of Dutch attention. We will further discuss this below when dealing with the methods of co-option used by the Dutch.

Despite the emphasis on the ulëëbalang as the key legitimate agents for obtaining control over the Acehnese, the old obsession with the Sultan and the Sultanate again revealed itself when Van Heutsz unilaterally -and against the instruction issued by Snouck and himself- accepted the submission of the Sultan in 1903. Although this definitely caused a schism in the duumvirate that had successfully initiated the Aceh strategy, the Sultan’s submission did not interfere with the newly established politico-administrative system of the KV in which the ulëëbalang were the pivotal agents of co-option. The Dutch did not need the Sultan to spoil the gains of the new KV system. Governor Van Daalen, who succeeded Van Heutsz in 1905 did not trust the ulëëbalang and he effectively tried to rule without them, relying on the use of force and physical control instead. As he lacked the resources for such an approach and rapidly lost the collaboration of the legitimate chiefs, Dutch control plunged and the situation in Aceh quickly deteriorated. This setback opened the way for an even stricter application of cultural legitimation under Governor Swart. To start with, Van Daalen had exiled the Sultan because of his ties with the resistance, and thereby this political agent, whose symbolic power had preoccupied the minds of many Dutch commanders, definitely disappeared from the scene -perhaps this might be considered as Van Daalen’s key contribution to the pacification of Aceh. Even more important, the Dutch now fully realized that Aceh could only be controlled through co-option of the ulëëbalang. This offers an explanation for the focus on these local power-holders that dominated Dutch policy in Aceh since that time. The restoration and sustainment of co-optive relationships with the various chiefs of Aceh and its Dependencies quickly re-established Dutch control on a sufficient level to declare Aceh pacified by c. 1912. As was aforementioned, on the long term, however, the Dutch lost control as their dogmatic embrace of ulëëbalang co-option combined with their wrong understanding of the exact nature of those chiefs’ legitimacy led to a decline of ulëëbalang legitimacy. Unwittingly,
this lack of proper follow-up after the pacification transformed the Dutch adherence to the principle of cultural legitimation into a practice of cultural delegitimation.

After the debacle of the Teuku Uma policy the Dutch adopted a reserved attitude towards the mobilization of local militias. Van Heutsz’s instruction in this regard explicitly mentioned that only high ranking co-optees intimately connected to the colonial administration could be granted a permit to hold and possess firearms for self-defense. The reality of obtaining control over a highly fragmented society with limited resources only, however, often necessitated the use of local auxiliaries. Even during the well-equipped Pidië expedition well-disposed local chiefs were permitted to deploy their own men for self-protection. The ulëëbalang of the federation VI, for instance, were allowed to guard some of their important sites with their own fighters. This was cleverly presented as a token of trust by the colonial administration, but also carefully checked by simultaneously threatening the involved chiefs with a fine for any enemy activity within their influence sphere. In the case of the Raja of Teunom, the first local power-holder to sign the KV, the Dutch deployed their own forces in conjunction with this ulëëbalang’s limited self-defense capability; an indisputable and necessary measure as both parties were committed to the fight against their mutual enemy, Teuku Uma. Thus, despite the official policy, Dutch colonial forces still operated along local militias in the practical reality of the Aceh War after 1896.

The demand for auxiliaries further increased when the additional ‘surge’ troops started to redeploy to their home bases in other parts of the archipelago after the Pidië expedition. Consequently, the mobilization of local militias gradually became re-accepted as a part of the policy. This time, however, the KV system arranged the institutionalization of these fighters as it allowed for a proper system of checks and balances. Local militias were to be deployed by the ulëëbalang for enhancing order and peace within an ulëëbalangship. If a chief proved capable to establish and maintain the rest in his area of influence, this hugely added to his prestige in the eyes of the colonial administration, which would win the ulëëbalang favours such as allowances and other benefits. This heavily contrasts with the Teuku Uma policy that allowed local power-holders to deploy their fighters against rival ulëëbalangships and which gave those chiefs a tremendous latitude for chasing their own interests even when this contradicted the Dutch interest. After Van Daalen’s intermezzo, Swart quickly reintroduced the KV system’s use of local militias for maintaining order. Moreover, even the allocation of firearms to these militias was reinstated on the condition that a specific ulëëbalang had demonstrated a sufficient degree of loyalty to Kutaradja. Thus, ultimately the mobilization of local militia once again became a fully integrated part of the Dutch policy which was institutionalized through the KV-system.

The answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt was an expression of the Aceh strategy’s adherence to the principle of cultural legitimation. The ulëëbalang were clearly identified as the most important adat chiefs, the pivotal legitimate authorities in Aceh’s fragmented society, and consequently intelligence focused on the exact position and role of individual ulëëbalang and the relationships between those chiefs. Undoubtedly, Snouck’s
personal involvement in Aceh hugely contributed to the gathering and analysis of such information, as he, for instance, observed the intimate connection between political actors in Great Aceh and Pidië that explained why this latter statelet was the most importance sanctuary for the former area’s defiant local power-holders and their resistance gangs. The Pidië expedition itself offers many examples of the importance of the ulêëbalang in the new Dutch strategy. First the expedition’s order clearly stated that the most important chief and resistance leader, Panglima Polem was not to be killed, but submitted in order to exploit his power and influence as an ulêëbalang in both Pidië and Great Aceh. Next the order mentions the different federations in Pidië, and summons the colonial troops to submit the individual chiefs united in these alliances. Furthermore the information booklet with facts concerning the Pidië-region contained detailed information on both local ulêëbalang as well as on Great Acehnese chiefs in exile who could possibly be encountered during the expedition. What was also demonstrated during this expedition is the Dutch practice to engage lower-level local power-holders if necessary as happened in the VII mukim Pidië, where all dominant power-holders had fled the scene. The colonial soldiers, however, were fully aware of the limited use of such connections, as ultimately the dominant ulêëbalang were needed for definitely establishing control over the different communities represented by lower-level chiefs.

Thus the new strategy in Aceh definitely focused on the ulêëbalang as the key societal agents to co-opt. This not only echoed in intelligence and daily operations, but was also firmly embedded in the official policy as presented by the politico-administrative system of the KV; the colonial administration was to gain control over the Acehnese through the ulêëbalang ruling over the more than 100 different ulêëbalangs. Although the proper application of the KV system was interrupted during Van Daalen’s governorship, its foundation had been thoroughly constructed by the Snouck-Van Heutsz duumvirate which allowed Swart to restore the system and pacify Aceh within four years. The ulêëbalang, therefore, were the ultimate Dutch answer to the question of whom to co-opt to gain control over Aceh’s highly fragmented society. Let us now draw some conclusions on the methods that were used to establish and maintain Dutch-dominated co-optive relationships with these local power-holders.

The methods of co-option employed under the new Aceh strategy varied from massive military force to subtle persuasive measures. As aforementioned the former was of an exemplary character; the utility of force was to demonstrate Dutch dominance. The series of expeditions and excursions initiated by the 1898 Pidië expedition and concluded with the 1901 Samalanga expedition not only effectively terminated the organized resistance, more important, they also convinced the various ulêëbalang throughout Aceh that if necessary the Dutch were capable of achieving and maintaining dominance at the local level. This was further enhanced by the systematic application of naval blockades that also had an exemplary working. Consequently most Acehnese chiefs submitted to the Dutch by signing the contract of the KV. In modern military parlance we might call these military actions ‘shaping operations’ for they created the conditions that allowed the swift implementation of
The politico-administrative system of the KV. Additionally the military capabilities provided a stick for enforcing compliance of co-optees. The KV system itself, however, did not prefer military measures in order to dominate co-optive relationships with the ulèëbalang. Although the credible threat of force provided a potent capability for co-option domination, more tactful non-military measures aimed at a local power-holder’s personal interest were the preferred tool for enforcing compliance with the colonial administration.

To a huge extent this was made possible by the installation of the function of ‘officer-civil authority’, that allowed Dutch military officers at the grassroots level to act as independent government officials with both civil and military authority. Their civil and military powers combined with their knowledge of local affairs enabled those officers to supervise the local chiefs and -if necessary- to deploy tactful coercion through local jurisdiction and effective economical sanctions such as fines and the withholding of allowances. Although the system established a credible and independent -i.e. free of local influences- Dutch administrative capacity at the local level, its proper working was highly dependent of individual officers. In the case of military hardliners operating as civil-military officers, the local population was often subjected to less tactful coercion resulting in many hardships for the local population. Overall, however, it was the proper application of the KV-system through the grassroots administration embodied by the civil-military officers under Van Heutsz and Swart that won the Dutch colonial state control over the Acehnese. Thus we can conclude that the coercive side of the Aceh strategy’s co-option continuum consisted of a credible stick for co-option domination created by the exemplary use of military force and more tactful coercive measures aimed at economical resources for enforcing compliance of co-optees. Lammers stresses this conclusion as he has described the Pax Neerlandica established in the Indonesian archipelago during the early twentieth century as a consequence of the application of the Aceh strategy’s combination of soft coercion, or perintah alus, vis à vis indigenous local power-holders backed up by the use of military force (as aforementioned in Chapter Two, section 2.3.2).185

The persuasive methods of the Aceh strategy’s co-option continuum mirror the tactful coercive measures as they were also designed to have a direct impact on a local power-holder’s self-interest. Given the economical basis of ulèëbalang political power, the allocation of allowances, permits for levying tolls, and royalties for mining or plantation concessions, were highly attractive methods for securing and ensuring ulèëbalang co-option. Albeit the Dutch initially were very careful with such economic measures, their appeal to the local chiefs quickly turned financial incentives into a key element of the KV system; in addition to the coercive measures that guaranteed Dutch dominance, the economic persuasive methods offered the Dutch a rather easy and relatively cheap way for also becoming the preferred partner for local power-holders to collaborate with. The Dutch ability to establish and consolidate co-optive relationships with Acehnese chiefs was further augmented as the colonial administration demonstrated its willingness and capability to provide collaborating

185 Cor J. Lammers, Vreemde Overheersing, 253.
ulèëbalang effective assistance and protection against rivals related to the resistance (as was the case with the Raja of Teunom). Long-term co-optive relationships were forged through the appointment of co-opted chiefs as colonial administrators. This effectively encompassed an empowerment of the ulèëbalang in their role as adat chiefs. Whereas those entrepreneurial chiefs traditionally were attributed some influence in law and religion, the Dutch gave the ulèëbalang nearly absolute powers in those fields. Albeit this hugely added to those chiefs’ power positions and strengthened the ties with their closest followers, ulèëbalang empowerment came at the cost of local villagers and ulama. The Dutch failure to acknowledge and address the resulting grievances would ultimately lead to a re-emergence of ulama-led resistance and the collapse of ulèëbalang rule when those agents lost the protection of their Dutch patrons in the wake of the 1942 Japanese invasion.

Ultimately, we can conclude that Aceh was finally pacified as a result of the introduction of a strategy that combined the exemplary use of force with the engagement of the ulèëbalang through the politico-administrative system of the KV. The former provided the colonial administration with a credible capability for co-option domination and succeeded in winning the Dutch a position as the dominant partner in any co-optive relationship. This dominance gave Dutch colonial administrators at the grassroots level (initially military officers combining civil and military authorities) sufficient leverage for successful application of the more tactful coercive methods and persuasive measures of the KV. As those provisions were designed to directly affect a local power-holder’s self-interest, the Dutch also succeeded to become the preferable partner for the local chiefs to collaborate with. Thus, the colonial administration succeeded in definitely setting the collaborative equation in its advantage, and thereby it finally managed to establish and maintain stable co-optive relationships with local power-holders throughout Aceh as a whole. This sufficed for establishing an acceptable level of control over the Acehnese living in a total of 103 ulèëbalangships. However, a key insight that can be obtained from the period following Aceh’s pacification is that a co-option strategy requires a proper follow-up in order to enhance the connection between state and target society and thereby transform the initially acceptable level of control into durable control over the population. As this was not the case in Aceh it can be said that after nearly forty years of war Aceh’s pacification was achieved at last, but not to last.
Chapter 7
Chapter 7: The Aceh War as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in colonial warfare

7.1 Introduction

In the previous three chapters we have scrutinized Dutch experiences with co-option during the nearly four decades of the Aceh War. The purpose of this detailed account was to obtain a profound understanding of the exact role and utility of co-option in the grim reality of colonial warfare. This chapter discusses the resulting insights in the light of the analytical framework for understanding co-option as provided by the first part of this book. Moreover, in combination with that framework’s underlying theoretical and historical analyses’ more general findings on co-option in colonial warfare this chapter’s discussion will allow us to draw conclusions on the application of co-option in colonial warfare for answering this book’s main question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. Although a full answer to this question can only be given after incorporating the insights on co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns, this chapter provides a robust understanding of co-option in the practical reality of colonial warfare by use of the Dutch experiences during the Aceh War.

In Chapter Three we have already concluded that colonial warfare fully subscribed to the idea of cultural legitimation as this approach allowed a colonial state to seize control over vast populations without too much costs. The colonial state’s typical lack of resources necessitated this approach and focused on establishing an acceptable level of control, which was to be augmented during the further development of the colonial state. Similarly, the mobilization of resources at the grassroots level greatly added to the colonial state’s limited capacities for establishing and maintaining control over the population. Consequently, the mobilization of auxiliary militias was a key feature of colonial warfare. Typically this would take the form of co-optive agreements with preferably dominant local power-holders which formalized these agents and their militias as part of the local administrative structure. Colonial warfare, thus, embraced the fundamental principles of co-option -i.e. cultural legitimation and mobilization- in order to compensate the ever-present lack of resources colonial states were suffering from.

This rationale also echoes in the practical application of co-option in colonial warfare. Dominant local power-holders were the preferred partners for co-option as they not only had the most resources to offer, but also could be effectively controlled with the limited resources of the colonial state -which did not suffice for an extensive program of co-option down to the lowest societal levels. However, in case the pacification of a locale by use of dominant local power-holders failed, (additional) co-option of lower-level local power-holders was a valid strategy, as this still required fewer resources than a full military occupation. Despite this preference to minimize the need to engage in costly military campaigns, the use of
military force was never far away in colonial pacification campaigns. The predominant (and less expensive) methods for establishing and controlling co-optive relationships, however, were soft coercion and persuasive measures that could be effectively employed by colonial administrators at the grassroots level. Through this combination of a credible stick for enforcing compliance and an effective capability to dominate the bargaining process at the local level colonial warfare adopted a co-option continuum that included an effective mechanism of co-option domination. Thus, colonial warfare incorporated co-option as a strategy for winning without too much fighting.

As we have seen, the Aceh War drew a lot—if not too much—of the Dutch colonial state’s resources for a protracted period of time. Although eventually the conflict was settled by co-option of the uléëbalang with limited resources only, it took the Dutch more than twenty years to develop a strategy that facilitated effective co-option of those legitimate local power-holders through a combination of exemplary force, soft coercion and persuasive incentives. Moreover, it took the colonial administration another ten years to effectively implement this Aceh strategy, and ultimately control was lost due to a lack of proper long-term follow-up. With regard to the latter it can be said that the Dutch colonial government failed to establish a durable connection with Acehnese society. Yet, the focus of this book lies on the pacification effort that seeks to establish an initially acceptable level of control, and therefore we will only briefly touch upon this matter. More relevant to our central question is the fact that, despite the Aceh strategy’s similarities with the mentioned general findings on co-option in colonial warfare, the actual application of co-option in the grim reality of colonial warfare was apparently difficult to realize. In order to fully grasp these difficulties in the way colonial soldiers and administrators sought to obtain control over the population through co-option of local power-holders this chapter analyzes the evolution of co-option throughout the Aceh War. In order to draw a definite conclusion we will study the fundamental issues of cultural legitimation and mobilization as well as the way these were operationalized by addressing the practical questions of whom exactly and how to co-opt.

7.2 Cultural legitimation

Collaboration with legitimate local power-holders was a key feature of the colonial campaigns of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Despite this universal acceptance of cultural legitimation, the actual implementation of this principle could be quite cumbersome as was illustrated by the example of the French pacification of Tonkin-Annam (Chapter Three, section 3.3.1). The French, who preferred co-option of local power-holders prone to ‘benevolent assimilation’, initially deemed the legitimate local power-holders, the traditionalist mandarins and the royal court, unsuitable for co-option. As a result the French lost the opportunity to practice cultural legitimation, and were forced to adopt a violent and costly military approach. In 1891, after nine years of fighting without satisfactory result, the
French switched to a strategy that aimed at co-opting the legitimate local power-holders, which finally facilitated the application of cultural legitimation. The mandarins and the court were successfully co-opted with a balanced mix of violent and non-violent methods, and the pacification was achieved in 1896.

This example of a late nineteenth century French pacification campaign demonstrates that the French preference for local power-holders susceptible to cultural assimilation troubled the application of cultural legitimation. Albeit the Dutch (and also the British) did not share such a preference and generally tended to maintain the existing societal (power) structure of a target society, it cannot be denied that in Aceh the Dutch only succeeded in successfully implementing effective cultural legitimation with the introduction of the Aceh strategy after almost 25 years of war. This is even more remarkable if we take into account that since their earliest presence in the Indonesian archipelago the Dutch had relied on co-option of local power-holders for obtaining control over the population in a whole variety of locales. Moreover, the Dutch colonial army spent the better part of the nineteenth century fighting campaigns to (re-)establish collaborative relationships with local power holders in order to restore and extend Dutch control in the wake of the effective end of the British intermezzo in 1816. What then did cause the troubled implementation of cultural legitimation during the Aceh War?

Certainly it was not a lack of willingness to practice cultural legitimation that hampered the Dutch quest for control over the Acehnese. From the onset of the war in 1873 the Dutch colonial administration demonstrated its readiness to co-opt local power-holders in its frequently changing war policies. As we have seen in Chapter Four, the common ground shared by all these different policies was their misinterpretation of Acehnese society. Despite an awareness of the limited authority of the Acehnese Sultan and the administrative structure of the Sultanate pre-dating the Aceh War, Dutch war authorities attributed great importance and even held a preference for collaboration with the Sultanate and its institutions for more than thirty years (more exactly from 1873 until the banishment of the Sultan in 1907). A possible explanation for this preference can be found in the fact that it was a time-honored practice of Dutch colonialism to obtain control through co-option of dominant indigenous power-holders such as Javanese Princes or Sumatran Sultans, and that nominally the Sultan was the dominant local power-holder in control of all Acehnese.1 In Aceh, however, this assumption wrongfully made the Sultan the center of gravity of any Dutch policy until the emergence of the Aceh strategy. Whether these policies were designed to co-opt or outmaneuver this symbolic authority and his entourage, they all were based on a misunderstanding of Aceh’s societal landscape. This lack of knowledge also revealed itself in the treatment of the ulèêbalang, who were deemed subjects of the Sultan and therefore considered as pawns in the battle for influence over this local power-holder. Dutch measures often undermined the fragile legitimacy of these local power-holders, and weakened the

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ties between *ulëbalang* and the local population. Additionally the lack of understanding of societal relationships and positions also revealed itself in co-option of minor actors, while simultaneously ignoring more pivotal power-holders. Consequently, the Dutch were unable to effectively implement cultural legitimation and their frequently changing policies only strengthened the resistance against the colonial administration.

Thus, the failure to acknowledge the exact pattern of legitimacy of Acehnese society was the main reason for the poor implementation of cultural legitimation. Albeit the colonial administration had gradually obtained an understanding that Acehnese society was both physically and socially fragmented as it consisted of various autonomous-but interdependent- locales and four different identity groups (*ulëbalang*, *ulama*, *gampong* dwellers, and the Sultan and his entourage), it failed to grasp the connectedness of those groups. Therefore the Dutch lacked an insight in the crucial relationships and interactions that shaped the structure of Acehnese society within the boundaries of each distinctive locale as well as in its completeness. This only changed with Snouck’s 1892 report on religious-politico circumstances in Aceh. After scrutinizing the dynamics of interaction between Aceh’s four distinctive identity groups Snouck rightly concluded that the *ulëbalang were* the predominant legitimate authorities who ruled over the various local segments of Acehnese society. Although Snouck rightly described the decline of those chiefs’ legitimacy as a consequence of the Dutch war policies and the *ulama*’s quest for political power, his view contained a misconception as he considered *ulëbalang* legitimacy of a hierarchical, feudal nature; Snouck conceived the way *ulëbalang* ruled their locale as similar to (medieval) European feudal rule. The Acehnese chiefs, however, drew their legitimacy as political authorities from their economic power, and above all this legitimacy was only weakly developed. As we have seen in Chapter Six, this misconception would ultimately inform a poor long-term follow-up strategy (after Aceh’s pacification), which even de-legitimized the *ulëbalang*. Despite this misunderstanding on the exact nature of *ulëbalang* legitimacy itself, Snouck’s report correctly depicted the pattern of legitimacy of Acehnese society. Therefore this analysis was instrumental in implementing cultural legitimation as part of the Dutch war strategy.

Before Snouck’s view of Acehnese society became definitely accepted as the underpinning of the successful Aceh strategy, the colonial administration made one last attempt to submit the Sultan. Based on their flawed conception of Acehnese society and its division of power, the Dutch aimed at influencing the Sultan through the *ulëbalang*, and particularly by use of their most important ally, Teuku Uma. This seemingly was in concurrence with Snouck’s political advice to seek the support of those local chiefs (Snouck had also acknowledged the potential of Uma for controlling the Acehnese of the west coast), but the plan’s ultimate goal contradicted the insights on the true nature of the Sultan’s power and therefore its failure was inevitable. Moreover, the colonial administration’s shortage of resources and lack of will to establish a capability for offensive actions made the Dutch heavily dependent on Uma’s militia. As it became clear that the Sultan would not submit, Uma himself became
the main agent of Dutch control and the colonial administration employed its ally and his powerful militia to seize control over the Sagi of Great Aceh. This so-called Teuku Uma policy subscribed to the idea of cultural legitimation as it intended to win the consent of the population through their legitimate local chiefs. In reality, however, Uma abused his position to enhance his status in Aceh’s political landscape at the expense of the ulèëbalang, which of course prevented effective co-option of those local power-holders (we will deal further with this in section 7.4 when dealing with the matter of whom to co-opt). The Teuku Uma policy, thus, unintentionally aimed at practicing cultural legitimation after its initial goal of submitting the Sultan had failed. Yet, its rationale was still based on a lack of understanding of the pattern of legitimacy in Acehnese society, and therefore it also failed to implement cultural legitimation.

The debacle of the Teuku Uma policy not only cleared the way for the acceptance of Snouck’s vision of Acehnese society, it also led to the direct involvement of Snouck in Aceh. Together with newly appointed Governor Van Heutsz, Snouck was to give the Dutch war effort a new impetus in order to finally settle the conflict. As of 1898 the duumvirate implemented their new policy that would evolve into the Aceh strategy. This strategy fully adhered to the notion of cultural legitimation as it was designed to win control over the Acehnese by co-opting the ulèëbalang. The introduction of the politico-administrative KV system, which arranged accommodations between those local power-holders and the colonial administration, clearly illustrates that this time cultural legitimation was actually being practiced. As a result most ulèëbalang had become Dutch co-optees by 1903. In that year however, the old preference for the Sultan revealed itself once again as Van Heutsz, much to Snouck’s discontent, decided to accept his submission. Although this did not directly harm the relationships between the co-opted chiefs and the colonial administration, Van Heutsz’s unilateral action caused a definitive schism in the duumvirate. The departure of Snouck, followed by Van Heutsz in 1905, caused a relapse in the consequent application of cultural legitimation. Governor Van Daalen did not trust the ulèëbalang and drifted away from the official policy as he preferred a strategy of physical control (for which he lacked the means). Consequently Dutch control plunged during his three-year governorship, and it became clear that Aceh could not be controlled without the local chiefs. Consequently, Governor Swart in 1908 re-embraced cultural legitimation and immediately began restoring and consolidating the co-optive relationships with the ulèëbalang. As aforementioned, it was this new impulse to the consequent application of the Aceh strategy’s principle of cultural legitimation that provided the Dutch a sufficient degree of control over the Acehnese to declare Aceh pacified by c. 1912.

The key insight on cultural legitimation to be derived from the Aceh War is that the actual application of this principle of co-option requires an awareness of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy. Albeit this seems an open door, the reality of the Aceh War reveals that the Dutch colonial administration, despite its willingness and experience with cultural legitimation -although this experience offers also a possible explanation for the Dutch obsession with the
Sultan-, failed to implement cultural legitimation as a result of its faltering understanding of Acehnese society and its division of power. Only when Snouck’s conception of the *ulëëbalang* as the legitimate local power-holders dominating the various locales was accepted, the Dutch succeeded in implementing cultural legitimation. A second insight provided by the case of the Aceh War is the troublesome adoption and consequent application of an actual strategy based on the principle of cultural legitimation. Snouck’s report on Acehnese society was presented some twenty years into the war, yet it took the Dutch another five years and a huge national debacle to accept the report’s insights on Acehnese society and adopt a strategy that followed these insights. Moreover, Van Heutsz acceptance of the Sultan’s submission as well as military hardliner Van Daalen’s total disregard for the *ulëëbalang* clearly demonstrate the difficulties in consequent application. Aceh was only pacified when Swart fell back to the application of cultural legitimation as originally intended by Snouck and Van Heutsz. The Aceh War, therefore, illustrates that it is not only pivotal to obtain a thorough understanding of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy, but that these ideas should also be accepted and transformed into concrete actions by subsequent authorities in charge of the war effort.

A last point that should be addressed with regard to cultural legitimation is the fact that Snouck’s analysis effectively revealed the pattern of legitimate authority in Acehnese society, but failed to grasp the true nature of *ulëëbalang* legitimacy. Although this did not hamper the pacification, it did cause de-legitimation on the long term. This produces the insight that acceptable control over a society might be acquired by co-opting the legitimate authorities, but that further consolidation and augmentation of control requires a profound insight in the exact nature of those authorities’ power. If such an understanding can be acquired and incorporated in the beginning of the campaign, of course, this will greatly enhance the application of co-option. Typically, however, the fragmented weblike societies that are the subject of this book are highly complicated and therefore it is almost impossible to obtain such an insight at the onset of the struggle for control. Therefore the pattern of legitimacy as accepted as underpinning for cultural legitimation should be subjected to continuous evaluation with use of the population centric intelligence that is gathered for answering the question of whom exactly to co-opt. We will discuss this further in section 7.4.

To sum up, the Aceh War has demonstrated that the proper application of cultural legitimation not only requires an awareness of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy, but also an acceptance of this awareness and a commitment from subsequent commanders to transform it into policy and concrete action. Furthermore, albeit a general awareness on the legitimate authorities might suffice for obtaining initial control (and thus pacification), this awareness should be further developed in order to maintain a more robust underpinning for augmentation and consolidation of control through the proper application of cultural legitimation. The Aceh War case study has revealed that these seemingly obvious conclusions even caused problems with the effective implementation and practicing of cultural legitimation in the époque of colonial warfare when the necessity to practice...
cultural legitimation in the struggle for control over fragmented indigenous societies was universally accepted.

7.3 Mobilization

Grassroots mobilization of local militias was of vital importance to the colonial states that were always short of resources. These militias provided the colonial administration with cheap additional means in order to establish or underpin control over the local population. Therefore, the raising of indigenous auxiliaries through local power-holders was an essential feature of imperialism and practiced by all colonial powers. Typically, such local defense forces remained under command of local power-holders and institutionalization within the larger framework of the colonial security apparatus was arranged through the agreement that formalized the co-optive relationship between a specific local power-holder and the local colonial authorities. Thus, local militias essentially remained a localized tool of statecraft, despite their institutionalization within the colonial state’s governmental structure. Dutch experience with mobilization during the Aceh War is dominated by the Teuku Uma debacle that demonstrated that even when institutionalized, the deployment of local forces requires tight control by local governmental authorities. Despite the universally accepted importance of mobilization for protracted colonial pacification campaigns, the application of this principle during the Aceh War -again- reveals that implementation into the practical reality could be quite cumbersome. Of course, ultimately the Aceh strategy included mobilization of local self-defense forces, as the ulëëbalang were held responsible for the security and order of their ulëëbalangships. As a consequence of the Teuku Uma debacle, however, the Aceh strategy was initially very reluctant with regard to the use of indigenous auxiliaries. Moreover, during the first half of the Aceh War the Dutch failed to effectively mobilize local militias. Let us now discuss the previous chapters’ findings on mobilization in order to shed a light on the exact nature and causes of the troublesome application of mobilization in the reality of colonial pacification as experienced during the Aceh War.

The first two decades of the Aceh War were dominated by frequent Dutch policy changes that prevented the emergence of stable co-optive relationships with local power-holders. The main reason for this oscillation was the combination of a poor understanding of Acehnese society with an ubiquitous lack of resources. Both the Sultan and Great Aceh’s ulëëbalang were intermittently subjected to a strategy of rapprochement or expulsion, and every time success seemed within reach the shortage of resources forced the Dutch to abandon their current approach and fall back on their positions surrounding Kutaradja. It was in this bridgehead that the colonial administration succeeded in establishing some of its more durable co-optive relationships with local power-holders, but even in these cases this did not result in the much-needed mobilization of local militias. The resistance effectively employed counter-collaboration measures -which the Dutch were unable to mitigate- that
prevented the efficient deployment of fighters, and consequently local militias became more a liability than an asset. Thus, the frequent policy changes that were informed by a lack of understanding of Acehnese society and a shortage of resources prevented the successful introduction of mobilization during the first two decades of the Aceh War.

The restrictions of the concentration policy, which banned all offensive actions by colonial troops and imposed a further restraint on the available resources, prompted a necessity to mobilize local militias for any new impetus to end the Aceh War. Although the co-option of Acehnese warlord Teuku Uma started as an attempt to definitely submit the sultan, it soon transformed in a policy aimed at grassroots mobilization of local militias for the defence of Dutch positions and to act as a lever for augmenting Dutch control over Great Aceh. Whereas the first two decades of the war were characterized by a lack of mobilization, the Dutch now put mobilization at the centre of their strategy. Co-optive relationships with local power-holders were intended to raise local militias for chasing away the ulama-led gangs and protecting the population at the grassroots level. The champion of this strategy was Uma, whose militia became fully institutionalized as the local government’s Acehnese legion. The co-optive treaty installed Uma as the colonial state’s supreme Acehnese field commander, who was obliged to follow Dutch orders, and who would also receive massive financial, material, and logistic support. Uma’s legion thus became the mainstay of the Dutch Aceh policy as it provided the local colonial administration with the means to embark on a new series of offensive actions in order to establish control over the Acehnese. This approach aimed at co-option of the ulèëbalang and the use of those chiefs’ self-defense forces for clearing their areas of resistance influence. Uma’s legion was instrumental in this approach, as it not only provided a follow-up capability for consolidation – that allowed local fighters to return to their livelihood as soon as possible –, but also offered protection against the resistance’s counter-collaboration efforts.

Despite this clear rationale, the outcome of the Teuku Uma policy was disastrous as Uma abandoned the Dutch side at the moment Kutaradja had become totally dependent on him. The failure of this mobilization policy can be attributed to a lack of control over the mobilized militia which is directly linked to a lack of control over its commander. Despite the formal institutionalization Uma enjoyed a large degree of freedom, which he used to pursue his own interest. The poor understanding of Acehnese society caused the Dutch to oversee much of this as they allowed Uma to expand his personal influence to other parts of Great Aceh under the denominator of establishing Dutch colonial control. Likewise many reports on duplicity or Uma’s intimidating attitude vis-à-vis local chiefs went unchecked. Consequently, the promising mobilization approach of the Teuku Uma strategy did not render success and even brought the Dutch on the verge of defeat. The lack of control that caused this failed mobilization will be discussed in section 7.5 when we will analyze the methods of co-option used to maintain the co-optive relationship with Uma. At this place, it is important to acknowledge once more that a poor understanding of Acehnese society was a major factor
contributing to the debacle and thus seriously hampering the effective implementation of mobilization in the Aceh War.

This obstacle to mobilization remained with the official Dutch policy in the years following Uma’s treason, and clearly echoed in, for instance, the instructions for the new Governor as formulated by Snouck and Van Heutsz; it was explicitly mentioned that only high ranking co-optees who were intimately connected to the colonial administration could be granted permission to possess firearms. Despite this official reluctance, the grim reality of colonial pacification -establishing control over fragmented societies with limited resources only- often necessitated the use of local militias. This time, however, the use of local auxiliaries was linked to tight control over the local power-holders in command of such militias. The Pidië expedition as well as the military actions in its wake saw Dutch colonial forces operating with local militias. This further increased when the additional troops deployed to Aceh after the Teuku Uma debacle started to redeploy and consequently mobilization was again accepted as part of the official Dutch war policy in Aceh. The Aceh strategy’s KV system allowed for the institutionalization of local defense forces as well as that it guaranteed an effective system of checks and balances for controlling indigenous allies. Militias were to be deployed by the ulëëbalang for enhancing order and peace within an ulëëbalangship. When a chief proved capable of achieving this objective, this would secure him additional favours from the colonial administration. Thereby, the Dutch not only restricted the use of militias to the own influence sphere of specific ulëëbalang -in contrast to the Teuku Uma policy-, but they also created incentives for the proper deployment of auxiliary fighters. Swart took this approach even one step further in his final drive towards pacification; the allocation of firearms to co-optees who had proven themselves sufficiently trustworthy was restored as official policy. Thus mobilization again became part of the official policy in Aceh; this time, however, it was both successfully implemented as well as an effective contribution to the pacification effort as it established security at the grassroots level.

The successful use of mobilization as part of the Aceh strategy was enabled by the combination of an enhanced insight in Acehnese society and a proper system for controlling co-optees. The latter we will discuss later (in section 7.5) when dealing with the methods of co-option, the former (negatively) correlates with the cause for failure of previous attempts to introduce mobilization, in which the lack of societal understanding fulfilled a huge role. While mobilization and cultural legitimation are fundamental underpinnings for any co-option strategy, and were universal traits of colonial warfare, the actual application of those principles could be quite cumbersome. The lack of understanding of the target society renders the practicing of cultural legitimation and mobilization diffuse. The first point where this diffusion reveals itself is in the elementary question any practitioner of co-option should answer at the outset of his campaign; the question of the center of gravity, or whom exactly to co-opt in order to establish control over the target society?
7.4 Whom to co-opt?

The discussion of the fundamental matters of cultural legitimation and mobilization has already revealed that the question of whom exactly to co-opt was answered differently during the course of the Aceh War. Whereas initially the emphasis lay on the Sultan - albeit ulêëbalang were also co-opted to influence the Sultan-, the Teuku Uma policy focused on a single dominant chief, while the Aceh strategy ultimately aimed at co-opting individual ulêëbalang as rulers of Aceh’s various locales. The driving forces behind these actual choices of co-optees were both the need to co-opt legitimate local power-holders as well as the demand to mobilize additional resources from Acehnese society, with a change in choice occurring as a consequence of an enhanced insight in the local conditions. This coincides with the general image of the actual selection of co-optees in colonial pacification campaigns as discussed in Chapter Three (section 3.3.3). Preferably dominant local power-holders positioned at the upper end of the co-option spectrum were engaged in order to establish an acceptable degree of control over the local population. When this approach did not suffice, co-option of other, lower-level, local leaders would be included in the co-option strategy as was for instance the case with the British in Sudan during the combined Neo-Mahdist rebellion and ‘White Flag’ mutiny.

In Aceh, the Dutch wrongly conceived the Sultan as being the dominant authority capable of exerting control and mobilizing additional forces. When results failed to come, the colonial administration engaged another dominant local power-holder, Teuku Uma. As this approach ended in disaster, the Dutch were forced to radically adjust their co-option strategy in order to engage the true legitimate authorities, the ulêëbalang, who were situated at a lower societal level - i.e. a local segment, the ulêëbalangship. In order to contribute to our general understanding of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare it is of particular interest to analyze the way in which the Dutch colonial administration identified and selected its co-optees as well as the influence of the driving principles of cultural legitimation and mobilization on this process. Therefore we will now discuss the various answers given to the question of whom to co-opt during the Aceh War.

During the first two decades of the war the emphasis lay on the Sultan. Although the preference for the Sultan as an agent of co-option would remain with the Dutch until his banishment in 1907, the initial period of the war is characterized by an active policy seeking the submission of the Sultan either directly or indirectly. The former translated into attempts to capture the Sultan or engage him politically, while the latter approach sought to obtain influence over the Sultan through the ulêëbalang, who were perceived to be his subjects. The rationale underlying this focus on the Sultan was that he was considered the dominant legitimate authority in Aceh, and qualitate qua not only the most influential societal agent capable of exerting control over the Acehnese, but also capable of mobilizing additional resources from within Acehnese society. As aforementioned this image of the Sultan as supreme authority coincided with Dutch experiences in other parts of the archipelago,
notably on Java and Sumatra, but did not concur with the actual power structure in nineteenth century Acehnese society in which the Sultan was merely a symbolic authority. Obviously, the Dutch were ill-informed on the constitution of the target society in Aceh. Albeit a weak intelligence position in the initial phase of a campaign was not uncommon in colonial warfare, the start of the Aceh War was even to contemporaries like C.E. Callwell a case of extreme poor intelligence. To make matters worse, the Dutch did not succeed in developing a comprehensive understanding of Acehnese society until the acceptation of Snouck’s report as the underpinning of the Aceh policy in 1898. Yet, during the first period of the war colonial officials did gain information on local politics and power structures, which concurs with the general pattern of colonial pacification (see 3.3.3). The colonial administration, however, was unable to transform this information into a thorough understanding as it was captured by its bias in favour of the Sultanate. This not only confirmed the false proposition that Aceh could be pacified through the Sultan, it also influenced the choice of co-optees at the lower societal levels. The lack of insight into the local political landscape and the exact role of the ulëébalang caused the Dutch to focus on Great Aceh, co-opt minor actors, while alienating or ignoring more major players. Moreover, attempts to submit the Sultan through the chiefs often weakened the position of the latter vis-à-vis their subjects. It should also be mentioned here that the colonial administration additionally engaged in co-optive relationship with various chiefs of the Dependencies. These relationships, which were arranged through long declarations, however, were ineffective and did not add to Dutch control. Furthermore, they were considered of subordinate importance to the Sultan. Thus, the first two decades of the war the answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt was dominated by the idea of the Sultan as key to colonial control over the Acehnese. Therefore, the Sultan had to be co-opted either directly or indirectly through the ulëébalang of Great Aceh. In the latter case the lack of knowledge of Acehnese society not only informed the false assumption of control through the Sultan—who was to be influenced through the chiefs—but also led to a poor choice of co-optees and even weakened the ulëébalang’s position.

The Teuku Uma policy was a direct derivative of the strategy to submit the Sultan through the ulëébalang. Uma’s presumed influence over the Sultan was the primary reason for his co-option by the colonial administration. When the Sultan’s submission failed to occur, the Dutch administration started to exploit Uma as its main co-optee, as his personal influence had increased stability and Dutch influence in Great Aceh and along the west coast. At that moment Uma indeed was one of the most influential and powerful local power-holders in Aceh, and even Snouck agreed that he was a potentially valuable ally for the Dutch. The choice to co-opt Uma, therefore, is perfectly understandable. Snouck, however, also pointed at the limits of Uma’s influence as he argued that this chief could only be effectively co-
opted in his position as dominant local power-holder of the west coast and the XXV mukim of Great Aceh. The answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt, therefore, required a more extensive answer. Although Kutraradja did not share Snouck’s point of view, Governor Deijkerhoff seemed to realize that control over Aceh’s fragmented society could only be obtained through the ulëëbalang in command of the various locales. Therefore a ‘locals-first’ approach was adopted which sought to co-opt local power-holders with Uma and his militia in a supporting role as enablers of security. Due to the unsatisfactory results of this policy (predominantly the failure of the 1893 operation in the XXVI mukim), soon Uma’s role was augmented from a facilitator of the co-option process to the supervisor of this process. Uma now acted as a mediator for building and maintaining co-optive relationships between the Dutch colonial administration and local ulëëbalang. This had been an effective strategy for establishing control in Uma’s own area of influence, but proved disastrous when applied to other parts of Great Aceh. Whereas the Dutch previously had identified and selected potential co-optees themselves, they now out-sourced this process to their main ally. Uma, however, followed his personal interest in answering the question of whom to co-opt. Consequently he created a network of local power-holders dependent on him (with use of his main perang tactics), while he alienated others -especially major actors capable of withstanding or even competing with him. Together with the double-dealing of all involved local power-holders, this created a highly superficial level of control, which collapsed as soon as Uma abandoned the Dutch side. Therefore the colonial administration’s decision to co-opt a single dominant local power-holder did not obtain its desired effect. Although the ‘local-first’ approach fitted the structure of Acehnese society, the leading role of Uma prevented the effective implementation of this policy. Despite warnings to limit Uma’s influence to the west coast and XXV mukim, the Dutch allowed him to expand his role in other parts of Great Aceh. The fact that many signs indicating the duplicity of their main co-optee were ignored by the administrators in Kutraradja, illustrates that the Dutch completely failed to monitor and evaluate their agent of control. Thus, it went unnoticed that the answer formulated to the question of whom to co-opt had gradually drifted away from the underpinning of the co-option strategy, which initially aimed at establishing co-optive ties with the various local ulëëbalang throughout Aceh.

The Aceh strategy provided a more solid link between the pattern of legitimate authority in Acehnese society and the identification and selection of co-optees. Snouck’s analysis of Acehnese society was now accepted as the underpinning of the Dutch war policy and thus the ulëëbalang were clearly identified as the pivotal legitimate authorities in Aceh’s highly fragmented society. The adoption of this premise shaped the intelligence process which increasingly focused on the exact position and role of individual ulëëbalang as well as the connections between those chiefs. The example of the Pidië expedition demonstrates that Dutch colonial officers were fully aware of the necessity to co-opt the ulëëbalang in command of a locale and the availability of good quality fine-grained intelligence about local power-holders marks a contrast with the past. In absence of the dominant legitimate local power-
holders of a locale (of whom many had fled the scene) the colonial officers even engaged lower-level chiefs such as village leaders in order to establish a temporarily connection with the local population. It was clear to everyone, however, that ultimately only a co-optive relationship with a particular locale’s dominant uléëbalang would suffice to establish control over that specific segment of Acehnese society. The uléëbalang, thus, were the Aceh’s strategy definite answer to the question of whom to co-opt in order to establish control over the various fragmented segments of Acehnese society.

The Aceh strategy greatly added to the improvement of population centric intelligence and the implementation of the idea of the uléëbalang as key to Dutch colonial control, yet the ultimate testimony of this strategy’s adherence to the principle of uléëbalang co-option was its political-administrative system of the KV. This system allowed ‘officers-civil authorities’ to establish and exploit co-optive relationships with the uléëbalang at the local level in Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies. The proximity of these colonial officials to the (potential) co-optees enabled them to identify, select, and monitor those agents with knowledge of local affairs. Although we will discuss this in more detail in this chapter’s next section, it is important to mention this system here because its officials were capable of checking a co-optee’s role as a legitimate authority of a specific societal segment. Consequently the question of whom exactly to co-opt could be properly answered for the more than 100 different locales constituting Acehnese society. Albeit this system’s strength was highly dependent on the quality of individual colonial officials, and its gains were spoilt during hardliner Van Daalen’s governorship, it was the proper application of the KV system under Swart that finally won the Dutch control over the Acehnese through the uléëbalang. Thus it can be concluded that Snouck’s analysis of Acehnese society -as well as his personal involvement- was instrumental in identifying the uléëbalang as the centre of gravity of the Dutch co-option strategy, but that the exact answer to the question of whom to co-opt could be formulated and checked with use of the KV system’s administrative body that reached down to the various locales of Acehnese society.

In sum, the Dutch learned the hard lesson that co-option can only be practiced successfully if its subjects are truly the legitimate political authorities of a target society. Albeit this seems rather obvious, it should not be forgotten that both the Sultan and Teuku Uma enjoyed legitimacy to a certain extent. The former, however, was merely a symbolic authority and his political influence was rather limited. The latter was a legitimate political authority and a dominant local power-holder of Aceh’s west coast and Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim. Yet, his political authority was limited outside those areas and he certainly was not perceived as a legitimate political authority in other parts of Aceh. In both cases the colonial administrator failed to acknowledge that its intended co-optee was not a dominant local power-holder capable of gaining control over Aceh as a whole. Ultimately Aceh could only be pacified by co-opting the various uléëbalang ruling over Acehnese society’s more than 100 localized segments. The KV system and its executives finally allowed Kutaradja to formulate the right answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt. Despite this anomaly
from colonial warfare’s preference for the less-extensive co-option of (a limited number of) dominant local power-holders for establishing control over a target society, such a highly localized co-option strategy was not uncommon in colonial pacification campaigns seeking control over complicated fragmented societies (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.3).

7.5 The methods of co-option

Aceh’s ulëëbalang were ultimately co-opted through exemplary force as well as the complementary use of predominantly soft coercion and persuasion by ‘officers civil authorities’ at the grassroots level. This concurs with the findings on the methods of co-option in colonial warfare as presented in Chapter Three (section 3.3.4). In colonial pacification campaigns exemplary force was key to establishing a credible threat of force, and thereby achieving co-option domination. Colonial officials (either military or civilian) at the grassroots level provided the colonial state with an administrative apparatus independent of local influences, while their positioning also allowed them to deploy a balanced mix of preferably soft coercion and persuasive methods for bargaining with local power-holders in order to establish and maintain co-optive relationships. Albeit the Aceh strategy and its KV system clearly mirror this general trend, it took the Dutch almost three decades to implement this approach. As we have seen afore the Dutch initially made wrong assumptions on Acehnese society and failed to identify the ulëëbalang as the pivotal legitimate authorities. Even in cases they focused on these chiefs in order to influence the Sultan (in the vicinity of Kutaradja, as rulers of the Dependencies, or as part of the Teuku Uma policy), the Dutch failed to establish co-option domination or to conclude effective bargains with the ulëëbalang. In order to enhance our insight in the application of co-option in the reality of colonial warfare, we will first analyze those failures with regard to the methods used for co-option. Subsequently we will obtain an insight in the way the Aceh strategy and its KV-system ultimately obtained co-option domination and effectively established and maintained co-optive relationships through complementary use of the co-option continuum’s methods.

In the first two decades of the Aceh War the frequent Dutch policy changes prevented the realization of effective co-optive relationships with either the Sultan or the ulëëbalang of Great Aceh. Those local power-holders, who at that time were perceived as key to Dutch control in Aceh as a whole, were intermittently subject of rapprochement (also by use of coercion) or forceful expulsion. This ambiguity not only rendered the colonial administration an unreliable partner to collaborate with, the inconsistent use of force also failed to win the Dutch a reputation as the dominant partner for co-option. The colonial officials only managed to establish more durable co-optive relationships in the ‘side-show’ in the surroundings of their Kutaradja bridgehead and the Dependencies. Even in those cases, however, Dutch dominance was nominal only and therefore the durability of those co-optive relationships was highly hypothetical.
The lack of resources was the main reason for the colonial administration's inability to establish effective co-optive relationships. Dutch dominance in the Dependencies, for instance, depended on a poor system of naval coercion which did not suffice for this purpose. When it became increasingly evident that many of the 'co-opted' ulêêbalang were supporting the resistance, the Dutch were in no position to interfere. Moreover, Dutch influence in the Dependencies was also severely limited by the nature of the long declarations which encompassed a respect for the suzerainty of allied ulêêbalangships. In the Kutaradja bridgehead the continuous military presence assured Dutch dominance, but was insufficient for protecting co-optees against the resistance's highly effective counter-collaboration. Consequently the Dutch were the dominant actor as they held enough means to coerce local power-holders into co-option, but were not the preferred agents as this would expose local chiefs to resistance violence. The ulêêbalang in the vicinity of Kutaradja reacted by adopting an attitude of duplicity towards the Dutch, which served their personal survival best, but of course rendered the co-optive relationships ineffective. Thus, even when the Dutch were capable of establishing dominance, they did not succeed in positioning themselves as the dominant as well as the preferable partner for local power-holders to collaborate with.

A last observation from this period concerns the limited utility of money as reward-base persuasive method for co-option. Governor Pel in 1875 already emphasized that money as an incentive for co-option was useless without an adjoining capability to enforce compliance or protect co-optees. Contradictory to the lack of other resources, money was available to the Kutaradja administration in sufficient quantities, yet in particular the lack of military forces rendered this tool ineffective.

The Dutch dependence on Teuku Uma was also a consequence of the lack of resources -especially troops- as well as the self-imposed limitations of the concentration policy. The colonial administration ‘outsourced’ the task of co-opting legitimate local power-holders to Teuku Uma and thereby created its own monster of Frankenstein as this greatly enhanced the latter’s power, while simultaneously decreasing the options to control this agent with the limited available resources and methods. Additionally, Kutaradja lost its independent position vis-à-vis the Acehnese chiefs by becoming totally dependent on Uma. This put a further restraint on the use of coercive methods as the Dutch could not risk to alienate or lose their pivotal ally. Consequently Kutaradja was unable to employ a balanced co-option strategy that included coercive as well as persuasive methods, and Uma quickly grew out of control.

On the coercive side of the co-option continuum the only available option for establishing dominance over Uma was a systematic naval blockade of his ports along the west coast. In the past this method had been highly successful in forcing Uma to comply with Dutch demands or urging him to seek rapprochement. Yet this method was never used during the co-optive relationship, as it was suggested by the local colonial administration that such coercive measures would lead to the deflection of this pivotal co-optee. Despite this fear the colonial officials in Kutaradja as well as in Batavia realized that they needed some sort of
stick to control Uma, but this repeatedly echoed insight never took a tangible form. Instead the co-optive relationship with the dominant Uma was entirely based on reward-based incentives that belong to the persuasive side of the co-option continuum. Political support, money -here we should again take notice of Pel’s 1875 remark-, weapons, and other goods were the means used to bind Uma to the Dutch and to keep him aligned with the Dutch war policy. While (temporarily) deprivation of such incentives might be an effective coercive method for influencing co-optees, Uma’s power position made him practically invulnerable. Uma used the Dutch support to enhance his own position and left the Dutch side when he felt that the benefits of the incentives no longer outweighed the negative consequences of his alliance with Kutaradja. Uma’s behaviour as a co-optee, thus, was never inspired by Dutch dominance, but purely the consequence of a calculation of self-interest.

It has to be mentioned here that during the period of the Teuku Uma policy the Dutch did effectively deploy coercive measures against the lower-level ulèèbalang of Great Aceh as for instance they did not refrain from detaining or fining unwilling chiefs or their relatives. Ultimately, however, this did not matter as the exploitation of the co-optive relationships with such local power-holders was also left to Uma. The impotence to control this dominant local power-holder was far more important as co-option of dominant local power-holders for controlling a target society was not only a general preference in colonial warfare, but also a key trait of Dutch colonial rule in the archipelago. Consequently the overall collaboration equation of the colonial state was at risk and this was only settled through the exemplary working of the brutal 1894 Lombok expedition. This, however, did not affect the situation in Aceh or Uma’s behaviour in particular. The Dutch only managed to deploy a credible coercive capability -in the form of troop reinforcements and the abolition of the caveats of the concentration policy- when it was too late; at that point Uma had already abandoned Kutaradja’s side while taking with him a tremendous amount of received support.

Uma had collaborated with the colonial administration as long as he had felt that this served his personal interest. The persuasive methods of the Dutch rendered them the preferred partner for collaboration until Uma considered an alliance with the resistance essential for maintaining his influential position within the Acehnese political landscape. Without a Dutch capability for co-option domination there was no check to prevent this switch of sides; in other words, Uma did not need to worry about Dutch-inflicted damage to his personal interest as a consequence of his turncoat behaviour. The Aceh strategy initiated by Snouck and Van Heutsz sought to prevent such ‘treason’ by creating a vested interest for the ulèèbalang to accept and maintain co-optive relationships with the colonial administration. Collaboration with the Dutch would benefit their personal interest, while any other option would be punished and result in damage to that interest. The Aceh strategy thus was designed to render the colonial administration the dominant as well as the preferred partner to collaborate with.

The methods used for this purpose varied from massive military force to subtle persuasive measures that covered the full range of the co-option continuum. On the coercive side co-
option domination was established through a series of expeditions and smaller excursions that demonstrated the Dutch will and capability to use force against a defiant or non-complying locale and its rulers. This exemplary force was augmented through the systematic application of naval blockades, which were a powerful method for striking unwilling *uléëbalang* in their essential economical activities. In essence these demonstrations of force were ‘shaping operations’ as they established Dutch dominance and thereby created the conditions for also becoming the preferred partner for collaboration. The politico-administrative system of the KV backed up by the credible threat of force facilitated the institutionalization of a balanced co-option strategy that succeeded in setting a favourable co-optive equation that was predominantly based on tactful (non-military) coercion and persuasive measures aimed at an individual *uléëbalang*’s personal interest.

Instrumental in implementing the KV system were the ‘officers-civil authorities’ who provided Kuturadja with a capability for establishing an independent administration at the grassroots level. As mentioned in section 7.4 it was the proximity of those officials to the local people that allowed them to identify and monitor legitimate local power-holders and establish durable co-optive relationships. Despite the official distinction between directly ruled Great Aceh and the indirectly ruled Dependencies the KV system was consistently implemented in Aceh as a whole through the use of the short declaration that gave the Dutch almost unlimited freedom to interfere in local affairs. Thereby the Dutch for the first time succeeded in connecting to the more than 100 localized segments of Acehnese society (the *uléëbalangships*). Due to their knowledge of local affairs the ‘officers-civil authorities’ were capable of deploying a tailored mix of tactful coercion and persuasive incentives to control local co-optees. If necessary they could also call upon the use of military force, although this was considered a last resort. The preferable methods for punishing non-compliance were the use of local jurisdiction and effective economical sanctions such as fines and the withdrawal of allowances. The persuasive methods used by the colonial administration’s local agents predominantly mirror the latter as they were also designed to have a direct impact on the *uléëbalang*’s source of political authority, their economical power. The attribution of allowances, permits for levying tolls, and concessions were highly attractive incentives for the Acehnese chiefs. Albeit the colonial administration was initially very careful with such economical measures, their strong appeal to the *uléëbalang*’s personal interest quickly turned financial rewards into a key element of the KV system. If we again take note of Pel’s 1875 remark with regard to the use of money, it is clear that the Aceh strategy and its KV system for the first time succeeded in linking financial incentives with an accompanying stick for effectively enforcing compliance. Other persuasive elements of the Dutch co-option strategy were assistance and protection against rivals related to the resistance, and on the long term the appointment of co-optees as colonial administrators. The latter mainly encompassed empowerment of the *uléëbalang* as *adat* chiefs under supervision of Dutch colonial administrators. As aforementioned this was a highly controversial measure as it was based on a poor understanding of the precise nature of *uléëbalang* legitimacy, and therefore
ultimately contributed to the delegitimation of these chiefs and a re-emergence of the ulama-led resistance. Yet, this method was not employed for pacifying Aceh and therefore we will not consider this in our final conclusion about the Aceh strategy.

Aceh was ultimately pacified by use of a strategy that succeeded to win the colonial administration a position as the dominant as well as the preferred partner for local power-holders to collaborate with. A series of military operations sufficed for establishing a credible stick for co-option domination, while more subtle methods of coercion and persuasive incentives at the grassroots level sufficed for definitely setting the equation in favour of the colonial administration. A last word here should be dedicated to the availability and use of resources. Despite a surge in troop levels immediately after the Uma debacle, the Aceh strategy and its KV system finally managed to pacify Aceh with 4,000 troops, which is 700 less than the Kutaradja garrison during the concentration policy. The sequencing of methods and clever use of available resources were pivotal in achieving this. First the additional surge troops were deployed against notorious defiant locales and their chiefs in order to set an example. Once this was established the Dutch could deploy smaller detachments to other parts of Aceh in order to establish co-optive relationships with use of tactful coercion and persuasive incentives. Swart even succeeded in implementing this without additional troops, as he had to repair the Aceh strategy and its KV-system after Van Daalen’s governorship. Military operations against five selected resistance-dominated locales sufficed for establishing co-option domination as it once again became clear that the Dutch were capable and willing to use effective force. Backed up by this exemplary force the more subtle methods of the KV-system sufficed for pacifying Aceh within the next four years. Thus, a final insight that can be obtained from the Aceh strategy is that not only the balanced use of the methods of the co-option matters, but also the sequencing as in this case co-option domination was obtained first. This created the conditions for the introduction of the KV-system and its methods and thereby it was instrumental in establishing a highly effective system for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships in which the Dutch colonial administration, despite its limited available resources, was the dominant party.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed this book’s findings on co-option during the Aceh War in the light of the more general findings on co-option in colonial warfare. The resulting analysis allows us to draw a final conclusion on the Aceh War as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in the reality of colonial warfare and thereby adds to our understanding of the utility and applicability of co-option for establishing control over highly fragmented societies. The insights gained here will be used to answer this study’s central question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the
population in a weblike society. This, however, will only take place in this book’s conclusion. At this place we will focus on the definite conclusions of the Aceh case.

Cultural legitimation and mobilization of resources from within the target society were key features of colonial pacification campaigns. The scarcity of resources available to colonial states typically necessitated the use of local power-holders and their militias for establishing control over the population of a target society. Although the Dutch had gained considerable experience in practicing these underlying principles of co-option from the early days of their presence in the Indonesian archipelago onwards, they encountered severe difficulties in putting these principles into practice during the Aceh War. Only after more than two decades the Dutch started to implement the first elements of what would become a successful co-option strategy. The key reason for this flaw lies in a poor understanding of Acehnese society, which prevented the formulation of an effective co-option strategy with the limited resources available. Albeit seemingly obvious, subsequent Dutch commanders either failed to develop or accept an appropriate awareness on Aceh’s highly fragmented society and its pattern of legitimacy as the underpinning of their approach to the war. This lack of understanding rendered the practicing of cultural legitimation and mobilization diffuse, if not impossible.

The failure to practice co-option during this first period of the war is evident in the various answers formulated to the practical questions of whom exactly to co-opt and how to co-opt those local power-holders. Consistent with the general trend in colonial warfare the Dutch initially aimed at co-option of a dominant local power-holder. The political structure of Acehnese society, however, was dominated by the ulèëbalang who were the legitimate authorities in command of the various locales constituting the overall societal network. The Sultan, who was initially the centre of gravity of the Dutch co-option strategy, was merely a symbolic authority, while Teuku Uma, who became the pivotal co-optee when Dutch options were severely limited due to a scarce of resources and the self-imposed restraints of the concentration policy, was essentially the dominant local power-holder of the west coast and its adjacent part of Great Aceh. Thus, both these local power-holders enjoyed a certain extent of legitimacy, but neither of them was a key legitimate agent capable of controlling Acehnese society as a whole. Moreover, the lack of knowledge of local affairs prevented the Dutch to effectively employ their limited resources and triggered a series of policy changes which rendered the colonial administration an unreliable agent to collaborate with. During this period the Dutch never managed to become the preferred as well as the dominant partner for collaboration. At best the colonial administration managed to become either the dominant partner as was the case in the vicinity of the Kutaradja bridgehead or a temporarily preferred partner as was the case with Teuku Uma. The latter case illustrates the further ramifications of practicing co-option without fine-grained knowledge of local affairs and without a proper capability for co-option domination as the administrators in Kutaradja were highly ignorant of Uma’s duplicity and convinced that they controlled Uma through the allocation or withdrawal of rewards only. This of course turned out be an illusion and
clarified that not only the true legitimate authorities had to be engaged, but also that the colonial administration had to create a vested interest which made them the preferable as well as the dominant agent for co-option.

Ultimately Aceh was pacified through a well-thought co-option strategy that established Dutch control over the population through the *uléëbalang* ruling over the more than 100 localized segments of Acehnese society. Instrumental in designing and implementing this approach was the 1898 acceptance of Snouck’s 1892 report on Acehnese society. Thus the question of whom exactly to co-opt was finally answered by use of a proper analysis of the pattern of legitimacy of the target society, and thereby the principle of cultural legitimation became embedded in the Dutch war policy. Although mobilization was initially reluctantly practiced as a consequence of the Uma debacle, the use of self-defense forces for securing the population under *uléëbalang* control gradually became a key feature of the so-called Aceh strategy. This all was possible due to the introduction of a system that allowed for the balanced application of co-option at the grassroots level. First, however, the colonial administration had gained itself a reputation as the dominant partner to collaborate with through the use of exemplary force. The notorious defiant statelets of Aceh’s Dependencies were singled out for military actions and the consecutive series of operations sufficed to demonstrate Dutch willingness and capability to deploy force at the local level. Once this credible stick for co-option domination was created, the colonial administration sought to establish co-optive relationships with the various *uléëbalang* ruling over the locales of Acehnese society. The KV-system and its ‘officers-civil authorities’ provided Kutaradja with a capability to engage the leading *uléëbalang* of a locale with a tailored package of co-optive methods based on local knowledge. The methods employed as part of this approach were directly aimed at an *uléëbalang*’s personal interest and typically encompassed economical rewards as well as fines and the withdrawal or withholding of the economical incentives. Backed up by exemplary force these local colonial officials managed to establish and maintain a system of co-option in which the Dutch created a vested interest for the *uléëbalang* to co-opt; non-compliance was severely punished, while compliance was generously rewarded. The Aceh strategy, thus, finally established the colonial administration as both the dominant as well as the preferred partner for Aceh’s legitimate local power-holders to collaborate with.

In terms of this book’s framework for understanding co-option the Aceh strategy addressed the dominant local power-holders at the local level through a balanced use of the coercive and persuasive methods of the co-option continuum (see figure 5). The *uléëbalang* are positioned in the middle of the spectrum of co-option as they were dominant power-holders of a societal segment at the local level, but enjoyed only limited influence over larger segments of the target society. With regard to the co-option continuum it can be stated that the Aceh strategy employed a balanced mix of coercive and persuasive methods for establishing and maintaining effective co-optive relationships. Although tactful coercion and incentives dominated the daily practice of co-option by the ‘officers-civil authorities’, the exemplary force of the military expeditions was pivotal for establishing a credible stick
for co-option domination. As usual in colonial warfare the threat of force was never far away, and therefore the Aceh strategy also represents a balanced mix. Although the total of Acehnese casualties in the years after the introduction of the Aceh strategy (1898-1914) mounted a tremendous 23,807 (more than four percent of the population), it should be noted here that to the standards of that time the Aceh strategy might have been a genuine example of limited force in colonial warfare. Of these casualties 11,187 occurred during Van Daalen’s governorship, which still leaves some 12,620 casualties attributed to the exemplary force of the Aceh strategy. A recent analysis suggests that a total of as many as 100,000 Acehnese must have perished during the Aceh War, of whom most died as a consequence of the inconsistent Dutch strategies in the 1870s and 1880s, while the indigenous casualties of the five-year Java War (1825-1830) must have exceeded 200,000. All these numbers are totally unacceptable by today’s standards, yet they indicate that the Aceh strategy’s exemplary force inflicted significantly less casualties than usual in colonial warfare. However, it goes without doubt that brutal force was a reality of colonial pacification as even exemplary force included massive casualties in order to create a credible capability for co-option domination. Therefore, we have to conclude that such lethal force was a key trait of co-option in colonial warfare as it fulfilled a pivotal role in setting the collaborative equation to the advantage of the colonial state.

Figure 5: The Aceh strategy depicted in the analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies

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4 See Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 296, Petra Groen, ‘Colonial warfare and military ethics in the Netherlands East Indies, 1816-1941’, 289, P. van ’t Veeer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 260. Reid’s table on the statistics of the Dutch occupation of Aceh from 1873 until 1914 includes detailed numbers for the period 1898-1914. He differentiates between 1898-1903 (9,300, roughly corresponding the Van Heutsz/Snouck era), 1904-1907 (11,187, the Van Daalen intermezzo), and 1908-1914 (3,320, Swart’s pacification). Petra Groen and Paul van ’t Veeer provide a number of 21,685 casualties for the whole 1899-1909 period.

Compared to the general trend in colonial warfare the successful Aceh strategy deviates in its choice of co-optees (depicted as Δ in figure 5). Whereas colonial pacification preferably aimed at co-opting dominant local power-holders in the upper part of the spectrum of co-option-agents capable of dominating various fragments or even complete societies, the Aceh strategy co-opted the dominant power-holders at the local level. This is indeed an exception from the standard, but as was explained before, this was a not uncommon exception in the colonial époque as the need to address a complicated target society’s pattern of legitimacy would often demand co-option of lower-level local power-holders. Typically a colonial campaign would first aim to co-opt a dominant local power-holder as such an agent not only could rally most resources, but also could be controlled with limited resources. If this approach did not suffice, the more intensive co-option of lower-level local power-holders was an option. Clearly this is what happened during the Aceh War. Aceh’s highly fragmented society could not be controlled with use of dominant local power-holders, but only through co-option of the ulëëbalang, the legitimate authorities in charge of the various locales of that specific society. Whilst this observation concurs with the principle that any co-option strategy should be based on cultural legitimation, we should keep in mind that it took the Dutch colonial administration more than twenty years to come to this conclusion. With regard to this book’s specific subject of counterinsurgency in weblike societies it is important to develop a proper understanding of the target society in order to formulate a proper strategy for identifying and controlling co-optees. However, especially in highly fragmented and complicated weblike societies such an awareness on the structure of local society might not be available from the onset of the campaign. Therefore it is of pivotal importance to develop a clear picture of the societal landscape as soon as possible and to accept this analysis as an underpinning for adjusting the campaign’s design. As we have seen in the case of the Aceh War, it took the Dutch almost twenty years to develop such an understanding in the form of Snouck’s report, while it took war authorities another six years to accept this report as the basis of the Dutch strategy in Aceh. When this strategy was ultimately implemented, the colonial administration managed to control the Acehnenese by co-opting the legitimate local power-holders in command of the more than 100 various locales through a combination of exemplary -yet brutal- force and a locally applied mix of tactful coercion and persuasive methods. Additionally, however, it should be mentioned that this result was not to last as in the period following Aceh’s pacification the Dutch failed to adopt a proper follow-up strategy that enhanced the connection between state and target society and thus could transform the acceptable level of control into durable control over the population. Instead the ulëëbalang were wrongly empowered, as they were attributed almost absolute powers in the fields of law and religion at the cost of villagers and ulama. In the long run this delegitimized Aceh’s chiefs and inspired a renewed uprising of the ulama-led resistance. Thus, our last key insight of the Aceh War stresses the importance of an appropriate follow-up strategy that consolidates and exploits the gains of the pacification campaign. Let us now continue this book with an analysis of the application of co-option in the reality of modern counterinsurgency warfare by studying Dutch experiences in Afghanistan’s Uruzgan province.