Voluntary participation, state involvement: Indonesian propaganda in the struggle for maintaining independence, 1945-1949
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Citation for published version (APA):

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INTRODUCTION
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After the bitter period of the Japanese occupation (1942-1945), the Indonesian archipelago experienced an unprecedented struggle: the Dutch-Indonesian conflict of 1945-1949, also known as the Indonesian Revolution, or the Indonesian War of Independence. It comprised a series of large-scale, brutal, devastating and complex clashes. These battles eclipsed previous conflicts between the contending powers in the archipelago, including the hostilities between such European powers as the Portuguese, the British and the Dutch, and the native rulers, particularly the Malay and the Javanese. Ongoing since the 16th Century, these conflicts peaked in the Dutch Indies’ wars of annexation in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to actual armed conflict, the Indonesian Revolution set in motion a clash between competing concepts of statehood: the colonial state which the Dutch were attempting to reinstate, and the independent state envisioned by the Indonesians. The revolution had a devastating impact on Indonesian society. It affected young and old, male and female, people from every social, religious, and ethnic background. The war claimed casualties not just among fighting men, but also among women, children and the elderly. This conflict was conducted both via armed strife and through negotiation, and demanded enormous resilience from the people, and required firm belief in the righteousness of the cause. In this thesis, I will address the question of how the Indonesian Republic employed political propaganda in order to mobilize the population and secure their support for the cause of independence and for nation-building.

This study examines how the leadership of the Republic of Indonesia conceived and organized their political propaganda during the Indonesian revolution, and how the impact and significance of this propaganda can be evaluated. It discusses how this propaganda
effort affected, positively and negatively, the objective of achieving and preserving the independence of a nation-state in the making. I focus on the ideas and practices of Indonesian propaganda: the forms of media and communication, state and non-state institutions and key actors involved, and the outreach and reception of propaganda by diverse national, and, as far as is relevant to the Indonesian Revolution, international audiences. I concentrate on the propagandistic practices of those who supported the Republic of Indonesia. The Republic’s own propaganda was also significantly bolstered by foreigners, including, among those of other nationalities, Arabs, Australians, and a few Dutch who sympathized with the Indonesian cause. This focus on propaganda offers a novel way to look at the Indonesian Revolution, a historical event which has predominantly been studied from the perspective of paramilitary and military violence, guerrilla warfare, and diplomacy. This study advances from the notion that propaganda as an instrument of mobilization was indispensable in garnering the necessary support, contributions, and participation to carry on the fight. The formation of public opinion was essential for identifying ‘the enemy’, explaining the strategy for the struggle, and justifying working towards the goal of full independence. Seen from this perspective propaganda was as crucial to achieving independence as were the military and diplomatic efforts.

Drawing on the work of Philip M. Taylor, I define political propaganda as a set of intentional actions aimed at forming and influencing political opinion and decision-making regarding key issues, especially during times of political crisis, through the use of diverse communications media. The results of propaganda may, however, differ from the initial goal. Propaganda seeks to mobilize the masses, but people may remain passive, unwilling or ignorant, or

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may be more influenced by the enemy’s propaganda, for example in such cases as when the enemy’s instruments of persuasion address more socially relevant issues or are backed by ‘good deeds’—like providing food and clothing to those suffering because of the conflict.

During the revolution, Indonesians were actively involved in armed clashes and negotiations with the Japanese military, the British army, Dutch authorities, and fellow countrymen. They realized that propaganda was a crucial tool for persuading the masses to support the independence and condemn the foreigners’ efforts to occupy Indonesia and restore their own rule. It is necessary to understand that the Indonesians focused a great deal on propaganda in a period during which, as a weak nation-state, they were struggling with a state apparatus in the making, a lack of skilled manpower, a lack of funds and facilities, and a politically divided population.

**Propaganda in Indonesian Historiography**

In the abundant body of research concerning the Indonesian revolution, the issue of propaganda is conspicuously ignored even though its role in the revolution has often been praised. Most studies on the revolution discuss the most striking factors affecting the transition of the state structure from colony to independent nation. These tangible features of the revolution, such as armed fighting and negotiation policies, as well as the role of nationalist leaders and other dominant revolutionary actors like the *pemuda* (young revolutionaries) and Jakarta’s gangsters,² comprise the vast majority of written material

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on the subject. This has led to the currently predominant view that the Indonesian revolution was an elite-led, Jakarta-centered event. Other studies stress the varied responses to the revolution at a regional or local level, such as in the residency areas of northern Java, Surakarta, West Sumatra, Palembang, and North Sumatra. This ‘localized’ historiography of the revolution reveals a variety of regional reactions by Indonesians. Some viewed the revolution as an opportunity to expel a foreign authority. Others felt that the revolution was an opportunity to stand against oppressive authority in their local regions, particularly the ruling classes. Another line of research on the Indonesian Revolution concerns a focus on the involvement and political attitudes of foreign governments like Great Britain, Singapore, Australia, the Soviet Union, Canada and the United States of America.

The subject of propaganda during the revolution is little understood, mostly because of a view held by scholars that the strong

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anti-Dutch feeling at that time was due to the massive propaganda campaign conducted by the Japanese during their occupation of Indonesia. This view underestimates not only the degree of support for national independence among the Indonesian population, but also the capabilities of the Indonesians as active creators of propaganda, casting them hereby as mere passive underdogs. There have been, however, several attempts at exploring the use of specific instruments of propaganda in the revolution. The majority of them concentrate heavily and narrowly on mass media usage. Collin Wild, for example, suggests that during the Indonesian revolution, radio played a vital role in culturally and geographically integrating different Indonesian groups. Furthermore, Yulia Prihanita Nurhayati wrote about the role played by Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) in Jakarta, especially during the first three years of the revolution. A more recent study by Andi Suwirta compares two main newspapers in two cities during the revolution, Merdeka in Jakarta and Kedaulatan Rakjat in Yogyakarta. He claims that even though both newspapers were pro-republic, they often differed in how they dealt with many issues because of differences in personal views and political affiliations of the editors, as well as different local conditions. Jakarta was a town largely occupied by the Dutch, and Yogyakarta, where the Republican leadership established its capital, was a town in the hinterlands with less Dutch influence. As such,

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Kedaulatan Rakjat was freer in criticizing the Dutch since in Jakarta the Dutch troops often intimidated pro-Republic propagandists.  

Other instruments of propaganda involved, instead of the spoken word, images and sounds. A.D. Pirous, a scholar and fine artist, wrote about the use of posters as a propaganda medium during the revolution. He interviewed painters who had made posters at the time, and concluded that these principally addressed two goals: to mobilize the masses to support the independence, and to convey messages of independence to the outside world. Moreover, Wisnu Mintargo reveals the function of music created and performed during the revolution. The targeted audiences encompassed fellow fighters and common people. For instance, one of the composers, Cornel Simanjuntak (1921-1946), wrote a well-known revolutionary song entitled Maju Tak Gentar (Moving Forward without Fear) in which he exhorted his listeners to fight the Allies and the Dutch troops by whatever means available. Such a song was frequently sung by Cornel when he, along with other revolutionaries, visited kampungs in Jakarta and elsewhere in their mission to propagate news of the existence of the Republic to the kampung dwellers.

Concerning the Dutch side of the story, Louis Zweers’ De Gecensureerde Oorlog: Militairen versus Media in Nederlands-Indië, 1945-1949 is the only study on Dutch visual media and censorship

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10 Some of Maju Tak Gentar Lyrics are: Maju tak gentar membela yang benar (Moving forward without fear to defend the righteous one)/Maju tak gentar mengusir penyerang (Moving forward without fear to expel the attackers)/Maju serentak mengusir penyerang (Simultaneously moving forward to expel the attackers)/Maju serentak tentu kita menang (Simultaneously moving forward and definitely we will win). See Wisnu Mintargo, Musik Revolusi Indonesia, p. 74-75.
during the conflict. Apart from being Eurocentric, it is also a highly descriptive work. No attempt is made to connect it to general theories on propaganda and political mobilization, or to connect it to literature on propaganda and conflict.\textsuperscript{11} Zweers examined the role of the Dutch military regarding the publication of revolution-related photographs in Dutch newspapers and how the Dutch people in the Netherlands made sense of what happened in Indonesia. The photographs, taken by Dutch military photographers, should strongly reflect Dutch political aims. According to Zweers, military propagandists and photographers were instructed to take pictures that ‘maintained and strengthened the morale of the [Dutch] troops’.\textsuperscript{12} The Dutch-centrism of this study is apparent, as seen by recurring use of such terms as ‘Indië’ and ‘de kolonie’ to represent the already independent Republic of Indonesia. Yet Zweers’ study is important in understanding how the Dutch military carefully controlled the information sent to and published in their homeland. The connection between media and military in the Indonesian revolution is still unexplored.

Propaganda comprises institutions and actors working with specifically targeted methods to affect people’s minds and behavior. The analysis of propaganda during the Indonesian revolution needs to be broadened in order to understand the full range of political communication within the developing Indonesian polity during the struggle for independence.

This dissertation concentrates on how political propaganda worked in times of dramatic social, political and military turmoil, in the context of an asymmetrical war and a process of decolonization. The central question is how the propaganda was composed and conducted by Indonesians, both those who were part of the government and


\textsuperscript{12} Louis Zweers, \textit{Gecensureerde Oorlog}, p. 44.
those who were not, for the sake of the newly proclaimed state. I will
discuss the various means employed, the range of audiences and the
areas covered, and the actors involved: those tied to the state as well as
those working outside its purview such as journalists, painters, poets,
and charismatic traditional leaders. I realize that the effectiveness of
political propaganda can only be evaluated by its ability to persuade
the expected audiences. Therefore, this study will address the various
relevant areas in which it played a role, for example in promoting
involvement in military service, state security, internal and external
support, and others.

This study also delves into the state-and-nation building process
in a former colonial territory in postwar Southeast Asia. I argue that
in the case of Indonesia, propaganda was not only a prominent means
of mobilizing support for the independence struggle but was also a
medium for sharing experiences with larger audiences throughout
Indonesia in an effort to create a sense of belonging and shared
nationhood across distant regions and a diversity of ethnic groups
and religions.

Finally, while drawing on the abundance of studies on propaganda
by the Western states and their political leadership: the German
National Socialists, the Italian Fascists, the Communists in the Soviet
Union, as well as the democratically led USA and Great Britain during
the First and Second World Wars, and by focusing on decolonization
and propaganda in the non-western world, this project aims to balance
the currently dominant Eurocentrism in propaganda studies.

As I will substantiate in the chapters to follow, I posit four
interrelated arguments.

Firstly, and as a general remark, propaganda needs to be analyzed
as a political instrument and not simply in terms of types of media
as most studies on the Indonesian revolution have so far done. The
variety of media used has not been fully explored, having to date
been restricted to the conventional forms of radio and newspapers.
Pamphlets and booklets were commonly used during the revolution and their function and impact needs to be assessed. Propaganda and its various media should be seen as a key agency that was used to achieve the Republic’s political goals.

Secondly, I discuss the institutionalization of propaganda on the Republican side. The role of state institutions and actors such as the Ministry of Information in achieving the independence of the Republic of Indonesia has been underrated. Additionally, the role of actors not beholden to the state apparatus has been overlooked even more than that of the ‘official’ opinion-makers. Their role is discussed as part of the dynamics of state-organized propaganda.

Thirdly, and closely connected to the foregoing, is that propaganda was not simply used as a key tool for the purpose of achieving independence; it was used in equal measure to nurture the state-and-nation-building process in a newly-proclaimed country with a nascient political community.

Last, but not least, Indonesia’s political propagandizing took place in the aftermath of the Second World War, a period which included the fall of the Japanese empire, postwar restoration of European colonialism, and the achievement of national independence during an unfolding Cold War. 13 I believe that by putting the case of Indonesia’s nationalism-based propaganda into an international context, a better understanding can be gained of how independence was achieved.

The central research question for this study will be:

How did the Indonesian state and the non-state actors use political propaganda, nationally and abroad, during the revolution to reach diverse audiences and influence to them to strive to attain their objectives of independence and national unity?

This main question gives rise to a set of sub-questions:

1. How did the Indonesian state and non-state actors use political propaganda?
2. What were the key propaganda institutions and who were the key actors, both at a state and a non-state level?
3. Which issues were singled out in propaganda?
4. What types of media were used to reach which audiences?

**Theoretical Considerations**

Propaganda is one of the most emotionally charged terms in the history of politics. Its origins as an unbiased word have been challenged by an accusation that it must imply some sort of ‘evil’ or ‘bad purpose’. Though it originated from Latin (in which it means to propagate or to sow), it first became widely-known when the Roman Catholic Church used the term in the 17th Century to refer to the spread of Catholicism to the New World and the fight against Protestantism. Through later ages, the term propaganda was in general associated with efforts to gain political support, take power, or condemn an enemy. Propaganda was thus regarded as inherently corrupt, a means of acting with bad intentions. Jowett and O’Donnell refer to words often used as synonyms for propaganda, such as ‘lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, psychological warfare, brainwashing, and palaver.’

In order to understand why millions of people were successfully subdued by propagandists of a variety of political regimes, scholars offer various theories concerning the nature of propaganda. Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K. Davis argue that the majority of such propaganda theories were established during the 1930’s. Supposedly, these

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theories were responses to the fear which arose in the United States regarding the Nazi rise to power and the potential threat to the US. The Nazi regime was considered a totalitarian state which could attack the basic principles of American democracy. The most challenging sentence confronting the political ideology of the US was the one formulated by Nazi propaganda leader Joseph Goebbels: ‘In politics, power prevails, not moral claims of justice’. Therefore, the major question focused on in early research on the Nazi propaganda concerned how a vicious regime could manage to come to power while winning the support of the majority of the population.

Initial propaganda theories were strongly influenced by two disciplines, behaviorism and Freudianism. Behaviorism, introduced by the American psychologist John B. Watson, suggests that ‘all human action is merely a conditioned response to external environmental stimuli’. A number of propaganda theorists claim that this notion could explain the importance of media as a driving factor in triggering the responses desired by the propagandist. Sigmund Freud’s ideas on Ego, Id, and Superego formed the basis of another propaganda theory. In brief, Freud’s theory holds that the Ego, Id, and Superego are, respectively, the rational mind, the egocentric pleasure-seeking part of the mind, and the internalized set of cultural rules. Freudian propaganda theory argues that propaganda reaches its objectives by getting a grip on the Id and forcing it to defeat the Ego. A later adjunct to the behaviorism and Freudian approaches to propaganda is the

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‘Magic Bullet Theory’, which combines both of the other models.\textsuperscript{20} According to this concept, ‘propaganda is powerful enough to penetrate most people’s defenses and condition them to act in ways that are useful to the propagandist’.\textsuperscript{21}

Political scientist Harold Lasswell, by basing his thoughts partly on behaviorism and the ideas of Sigmund Freud, proposed another explanation for the success of propaganda.\textsuperscript{22} His argument focuses on three main points. Firstly, he supposes that common people are essentially vulnerable to influence by propaganda if society is in a state of economic depression and political conflict. Secondly, propaganda is not like a bullet in terms of speed; instead, effective propaganda is the result of systematic steps in a gradual process. Thirdly, propaganda will generate more results if it is deployed for ‘positive’ purposes. To this end, authority to oversee propaganda matters should be given to those who have the expertise to conduct it, the group that he calls a ‘scientific technocracy’.

More recently, debates on the theory of propaganda have departed from focusing only on individual vulnerability and the conflict between authority and democracy.\textsuperscript{23} Modern propaganda theories, often called critical theories, were introduced by scholars like Noam Chomsky and Herb Schiller in the 1980’s. These theories were based on the presence of new authorities with the resources to control information. These are powerful corporate and government


entities which, although in competition, also work together to impose their ideas on the public through their access to and possession of media technology.

Canadian philosopher Randal Marlin points at two intellectuals who have strongly influenced the ways we think about propaganda: British author George Orwell and French scholar Jacques Ellul.\textsuperscript{24} Orwell was concerned with the question of how dominant political entities could have power over individuals and personal freedom in a ‘mass-mediated society’ through the use of language. Orwell argues that authorities often use euphemisms or turn the meaning of words around, like ‘War is Peace!’ in order to impose their version of the truth upon a society. Whereas Orwell focused on the state as a generator of propaganda, Ellul examined its reception by society. The latter saw society’s weakness and receptiveness as a result of the decline of traditional social and religious bonds.\textsuperscript{25} This decline positioned the individual in a quest for a new identity, which propaganda could provide. Ellul also made the point that propaganda was less effective without ‘pre-propaganda’ or ‘the way a targeted group is conditioned to make it more receptive to the propagandist’s message.’\textsuperscript{26}

Laswell’s, Ellul’s, and Orwell’s ideas seem to be particularly relevant in the context of my project. Laswell’s view, especially about the vulnerability of society during turmoil, fits well with the Indonesian situation. From the point of view of the Indonesian Republican leadership, the susceptibility of the people was seen as a result of the lack of popular participation in colonial politics and the high levels of illiteracy, both of which were caused largely by colonial racial discrimination. Both phenomena were a strong impediment for people

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Randal Marlin, \textit{Propaganda & the Ethics of Persuasion}, p. 34.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Randal Marlin, \textit{Propaganda & the Ethics of Persuasion}, p. 34.
\end{itemize}
to learn to think in terms of citizenship. They could thus become easy targets for Dutch propaganda. In the early phase of the revolution, only the politically aware, such as the nationalist activists, educated youth, and journalists, immediately declared support for the Republic. At the same time, the impact of what Ellul considers ‘pre-propaganda’, was visible in the way that support for the new Republic was generated. In fact, some of the key issues advocated by the Republic in 1945 and afterwards, such as Indonesian nationalism, the right to national self-determination, and anti-colonialism, were rooted in the birth of Indonesian nationalism in the 1920’s. Subsequently, these ideas were strengthened during the Japanese occupation of 1942-1945. More importantly, a large number of Republican propagandists during the revolution were those self-same nationalist activists and nationalists from the 1920’s. As a consequence, when the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed in 1945, some parts of Indonesian society were already ‘receptive’ to Republican propaganda. As a matter of fact, during the revolution, Republican authorities and their supporters framed the perception of the current state of affairs into a mobilizing force, thus confirming Orwell’s idea of persuasion for all members of national community through the use of language.

My study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how the Republic of Indonesia, as an emerging state and, in many respects, as the ‘weaker side’ in the conflict with the Dutch, managed to set up an effective propaganda apparatus. I argue that given the shortage of professional propagandists, the very limited means, and little access to the mass media, the state had no other choice than to involve society as a whole in the propaganda effort. Thus, society was conceived not as a recipient alone, but as an actor at the same time. These non-state actors are those who are not officially working for or linked to the state, but who are equipped with communication skills and who have access to media technology. The first and foremost category is the journalists, but we also find writers and students.
These passionate supporters of independence should be seen as significant alternative contributors to the cause of the Republic, rather than as competitors that try to exploit the weakness of the state’s propaganda for their own purposes. An extra quality of the involvement of these individuals is that they have a potential to bring certain issues to audiences which the state is unable to address. In the case of Indonesia, during the first two years of the revolution the Republic’s authority was not yet acknowledged internationally, and it had no capacity to conduct propaganda abroad. It was these non-state actors, such as students and former political internees, who voluntarily moved into the realm of pro-Republican propaganda. As I describe in Chapter 4, they drew the attention of international audiences such as the Arab world and Australia.

**Media and Conflict in the Age of Mass Politics**

The Indonesian War of Independence encompasses the phenomena of revolution, war and political struggle, and the propaganda used to mobilize the population reflects these central issues. In this dissertation I argue that it was the combination of state- and non-state- actors’ involvement that allowed Indonesian propaganda to thrive during the five years of violent conflict. In the chapters that follow, I will explore how actors within and outside the state structures joined forces to make propaganda into a powerful instrument for mobilizing public support for Indonesian independence. First, however, I should contextualize my subject within the age of mass politics, as it manifested itself during the 20th century. It has seen the development of propaganda as a multi-faceted instrument of political struggle, and consequently seen a wide variety of propaganda studies. I discuss the main features of these studies in order to establish their relevance for further considering the research questions and the argument in this thesis.
In 1971, Harold D. Laswell and Jason A. Giddens argued that early propaganda studies tended to serve military purposes, rather than scholarly ones. The issue of ‘military goals’ dominated scholarly works because ‘the category of military goals was much larger in the First World War than it was in the other major conflicts of modern history’. However, it should be noted that early studies on propaganda in the First World War did not directly address the propaganda itself. Instead, it was seen as an element of studies concerning political and diplomatic struggle of global forces. During the 1930’s, scholars studying propaganda began to see it as an independent topic and to focus on the contents and effects of, and the organizations and agencies employing, propaganda. However, Laswell and Giddens noted that these studies were ‘parochial in character and orthodox in approach’ as they suffered from ‘the residue of the First World War and the imminence of the second, deprived of adequate documentation and antedating contemporary methodological sophistication in communication research’.

The use of propaganda during World War II has also been the subject of scholarly attention. The war witnessed one of the biggest propaganda efforts in history thus far, particularly in the sense of organization, media use, the range of the audience, and spatial scope. All these matters are of relevance for the study of the Indonesian Revolution. Studies on World War II propaganda have often focused on subjects that have been overlooked in the study of Indonesian propaganda. If propaganda is considered as a deliberate action using organized strategies to address expected audiences, Joseph Goebbels and his Propaganda Ministry often are seen as at

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the summit of institutionalized propaganda. Historian Karel Berkhoff however argues that, unlike Stalin, Goebbels did not have a complete monopoly on propaganda strategy and output. No other regime during World War II managed to secure such strong control over the dissemination of information as the Soviet leader did, and no could claim such complete obedience.29

During the Second World War and in the immediate post-war period, the successful ascent to power of the Nazi regime has to a large degree been a source of astonishment for contemporaries. Many attributed it to this successful propaganda apparatus. Consequently, the life and career of Goebbels have drawn lots of attention. This included his role in creating and spreading key Nazi principles, the contents and nature of Nazi propaganda, popular reception of Nazi propaganda among the German people, and political dissent.30 Along with the discussion about the power of Nazi propaganda, there was also an inquiry into the Nazis’ counterparts, the Italian Fascists, and how they propagated their political principles. The leader of the Italian Fascists, Benito Mussolini, was very concerned with propaganda and fully realized its political potential, as shown by his actions in establishing the Ministry of Press and Propaganda during his regime.31 In this project, I


will also search for the role of individual opinion leaders who were able to ‘read the mind of the people’. I do so connecting to the hypothesis that Indonesian propaganda was not organized by a single powerful state agency, nor by one powerful opinion leader, but by multiple players inside and outside the state structure.

The beginning of the Cold War drove scholarly research into new areas of propaganda study. In the United States, a strong interest appeared to understand how the enemy, the Soviet Union, developed and applied its propaganda, both internally and toward the outside world. At the same time, the United States has, both during the Cold War and afterward, itself engaged in propaganda efforts, which in turn has been a subject of research. Examples are the campaigns which were conducted to justify military interventions, such as in Vietnam and Iraq. Presently, propaganda is studied as a world-wide phenomenon encompassing a wide range of purposes, repertoires, and techniques. What initially was conceived as a product of modern mass politics of the Western world is studied now in all its varieties, for instance as connected to authoritarian regimes in China and

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North Korea. By means of this study I aspire to highlight the specific Indonesian perspective that testifies to the effort of an emerging state in the struggle for independence in a violent war of decolonization.

In the history of propaganda, the use of different types of media deserves attention. Some of these were classic mass media, printed media such as newspapers, posters, brochures; others were rather new (film, radio). For example, the historian David Welch, who has written numerous important books on Nazi propaganda, discusses the significance of pictures in his *Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933-1945*. At the beginning of World War II, the US established Voice of America (VOA), a broadcasting agency, to foster the image of the USA as the savior of Europe from the vicious war. Propaganda aimed at the outside world also occurred on the Nazi side, as Jeffrey Herff has established concerning the Arab world. The Nazis launched an-all out propaganda campaign toward the Arabs in the Middle East via shortwave radio and huge amounts of printed materials. Indonesian propaganda abroad was also targeting international audiences such as the population of Australia, the Arab world and the Netherlands. While the Nazi propaganda in the Arab world was heavily funded by Berlin, Indonesian propaganda abroad

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37 Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). In order to forge an alliance with the Arab world, a region extremely different from Germany, propaganda had to be modified to fit local interests. This was the rationale for why Nazi propaganda in the Arab world did not include some Nazi principles such as the idea of a master race, which might be anathema to the Arabs.
was barely, if at all, financed by the Republican authorities, owing to the very limited funds at their disposal. Despite these limitations, it managed to garner significant support from the intended audiences, as I will show.

Propaganda in an Emerging State: Empirical Studies

Most studies on the use of media for political propaganda in wartime relate to its use in well-established and strong state structures, supported by military and police power, advanced communication facilities, and highly trained personnel. They generally relate to the history of the Western world. However, one of the first examples of innovative and successful propaganda of an emerging state is found in the history of the Russian Revolution of 1917. This revolution saw the emergence of a completely new state, the communist Soviet Union. It developed a propaganda apparatus, in which the mass mobilization of peasants and workers was integrated into the state system on purpose.38 Other purposes were to be served as well, like distraction of the people at large from the misery of life in wartime by organizing socialist street festivals and the like.39 According to historians Lyn Gorman and David McLean, the Bolshevik propaganda ‘illustrates the extensive use of propaganda within the highly centralized political system of the Soviet Union, where visual media were particularly important in a society with a high level of illiteracy’.40

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Both Russia in 1917 and Indonesia in 1945 shared a similar condition: as a bloody revolution raged, much of the populace was uneducated, rendering them politically inactive. There were two major issues in Bolshevik propaganda: the absolute control of the press and the concept of ‘agitprop’ (agitation and propaganda): incessantly persuading the masses to not only believe the Bolshevik propaganda, but more importantly to act as commanded. Thus, propaganda was combined with struggle, a pairing which was also striking in the Indonesian experience. The Soviet agitprop strategy drew solid popular support from the majority of Russians who were dissatisfied with Tsarist authority and had reasons to support regime change. The Bolshevik propaganda depended largely on the building of powerful institutions (the party and its propaganda departments) and the involvement of the masses to achieve its goals. The Bolshevik rise to power and the Indonesian struggle for independence had in common that their propaganda was intended to contribute to winning the actual struggle as well as to building and consolidating their emerging new states and ideas of citizenship. The element of participation and mobilization is therefore a crucial one in the Indonesian case.

Throughout the duration of the struggles, in each case the outcome was uncertain. The Bolsheviks did their utmost to establish an all-powerful state which monopolized all political activities and directed all propaganda efforts to that purpose. It appears, however, that the Indonesian Republic was launched from a more pluralistic, power-sharing platform. During the revolution, the Indonesian state had no such utter authority to monopolize propaganda and carry out censorship, nor had they recourse to other repressive measures such as shutting down newspapers or taking over radio stations. The question is how revolutionary propaganda could actually be produced under these circumstances. I will try to find out how pluralistic the propaganda actually was, if it worked, and how. Did
censorship exist, and to what degree? And how was ‘the message’ understood by the people?

The archetypical case of modern political propaganda is the permanent effort by the German National Socialist regime to garner support from the German people. As Adolf Hitler once said: ‘Propaganda, propaganda, propaganda. All that matters is propaganda’.41 For that purpose Hitler established the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (The Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda) and appointed Joseph Goebbels as the Minister. This Ministry played a key role in propagating the principles and ideals of Nazism and explaining the positions of the regime to both the Germans and an international audience. Propaganda during the Nazi period encompassed almost every aspect of human life, touching on faith, morality, education, literature, history, art and entertainment.42 The Nazis made use of multiple media types and techniques to influence the public: radio, newspapers, posters, movies, speeches, and songs. Even regalia and burial ceremonies were used to disseminate symbolic representations of the Nazi regime.

In the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), the insurgency of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) in Malaya (Malaysia) was met with stringent reprisal by the stronger combination of the British and the Government of the Federation of Malaya. Rebel propaganda failed miserably due to effective and fruitful counterpropaganda—not just in ‘words’, but even more importantly encompassing Government


42 Randall L. Bytwerk, Bending Spines: The Propaganda of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2004). See also David Welch (ed.), Nazi Propaganda. For the significance of institutions, figures, concepts, and strategy in the Nazi attempts to shape the perception of the Germans see Aristotle A. Kallis, Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). For Nazi propaganda abroad, particularly regarding the Arab world, see Jeffrey Herf, Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010).
‘deeds’. These deeds included protective policies and the provision of public requirements like water and schools. Such things reinforced the official point of view disseminated via radio and leaflets.\textsuperscript{43}

Conversely, the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) between the Algerian anti-colonial movement Liberation National Front (FNL) and the militarily superior French forces concluded with the win on the Algerian side despite the small-scale, limited propaganda launched by the Algerians in comparison to the gigantic French propaganda machine.\textsuperscript{44} The power of FNL propaganda in attracting the world’s attention lay in its key subject: the atrocities used by the French to hamper widespread desire for self-determination among the Algerians. This was voiced by FNL cadres outside Algeria and was successful in generating international support, especially from the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations.\textsuperscript{45}

More than a decade previous, the Indonesian Republic had been confronted with a similar situation, in which as a militarily and politically weak state, Indonesia was facing the more powerful Dutch forces. This study shows how, despite the sizeable disparity of strength in communication facilities between the Dutch and Indonesia, Indonesia’s propaganda played an important role in the call for the participation of its people and support from the outside world.

The power, authority and resources held by Indonesia, as a new state, were very limited and still weak in comparison to, for instance,

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{44} Matthew Connelly, \textit{A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origin of Post-Cold War Era} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 128.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
an authoritarian state like Nazi Germany or an established state like Great Britain. From the standpoint of propaganda, at the time that the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed, the elements which it could command in a political propaganda campaign to seek support for the newly-born Republic were extremely unpromising. The population of Indonesia numbered seventy million people, mostly illiterate, spread across thousands of dispersed islands with a total area tens of times bigger than the Netherlands but lacking advanced media communication and transportation facilities.

Other factors posed no less serious challenges: hundreds of ethnic groups speaking completely different languages, some groups harboring deeply-rooted racial tensions; a politically inactive population; the absence of centralized authority; the lack of state legitimacy both domestically and internationally; and no state grip on mass media. In addition to all these matters, an extra complication was the political context in which Indonesian independence had been proclaimed. The Dutch authorities were very quick and eager to brand the Republic an illegal product of Japan’s effort to control Asia, and the Republican leadership as ‘collaborators with Japanese Fascism’. In this respect, Soekarno was compared to the Dutch Nazi leader Anton Mussert and his Norwegian counterpart Vidkun Quisling.

Such obstacles required immediate deployment of a strong and well-considered propaganda strategy as one of the key instruments to work against all odds toward the establishment of an independent state. My research begins at this point in history and in doing so, the thesis challenges the idea suggested by most studies on propaganda that the success of political propaganda depends on the existence of a centralized authority, total control over the most advanced communication media, state-led outright censorship, and professional propagandists. The alternative view is connected to my hypothesis: that the act of propaganda can also be based on cooperation between the newly-born state and its own citizens, and on the disposition of the
people to engage in and contribute to the state’s propaganda efforts. A helpful concept in understanding the workings of propaganda in the Indonesian case is what I call ‘voluntary participation’. By ‘voluntary’, I mean that Indonesian propaganda was carried out by non-governmental actors (media professionals, artists, militia, and unaffiliated individuals) acting of their own free will. Actually, a significant part of Indonesian propaganda was not organized and managed by state institutions. I will deal with the properties and impact of this issue of voluntary involvement in Chapter 1, in particular by concentrating on the problems faced by the emerging Republic as regards ownership of the media and the initiatives taken by non-state actors in taking over Japanese-controlled communication facilities for the sake of the Republic. Such independent activities had a strong potential to cause political complications.

As for ‘participation’, I am referencing large-scale involvement of the non-state actors. Almost all nationalist activists since the 1920’s, primarily including journalists, students in Indonesia and abroad, artists, youth activists, and former members of Japanese-sponsored military institutions, were encouraged to take part in the propaganda campaign. Their involvement ensured that the propaganda was based on insiders’ views and thus any issue raised was compliant with and relevant to the needs of the audience. I will explain their propaganda work in Chapters 1, 2 and 4, and focus on their cooperation with the Republican government. They played an important role in choosing the issues to be addressed, in acquiring the necessary devices, in producing propaganda materials, in mobilizing support from the community and its leaders, and in publishing their views about political developments in Indonesia in the press. The use of the term ‘voluntary participation’ suggests that Indonesian propaganda was to a large degree accomplished via the active and constant participation of various groups in Indonesian society, both domestic and abroad.
This should not lead to one underrating the involvement of the state in propaganda. The state-organized propaganda was important because it incorporated careful design and execution of propagandistic activities.

Republican leaders obviously took their example from the works of Japanese-sponsored propaganda bodies during the occupation and modified these to meet the needs of their nation-state project. In Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I discuss how the Indonesian state played a vital role in establishing a variety of propaganda bodies, employing media professionals, cooperating with nationalist activists outside the state structures, controlling materials such as paper, emphasizing certain issues at specific times, and ensuring that non-government propagandists continued to support the Republic. Republican leaders understood the power of propaganda institutions, through which they could promote their existence to the lower echelons of society and help to ensure that the citizens supported them.

Sources

My primary and secondary sources were collected at: the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI); the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, both in Jakarta; and in the Netherlands: the NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies in Amsterdam; the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT); the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG) in Amsterdam; the Koninklijke Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) in Leiden; the Nationaal Archief (NA) in Den Haag. The sources I collected can be categorized as below.

Firstly, official documents produced by the Dutch government and military institutions, in particular those kept at NA in Den Haag and NIOD in Amsterdam. The data at NIOD comes from the Indische Collectie, a special collection regarding the independence
period in Indonesia. A lot of materials were found at the NA, including reports about Indonesian propaganda. The reports came from Dutch institutions in Indonesia, particularly the Procureur General Hooggerechtshof Nederlands-Indie (The General Attorney of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands East Indies) and Algemene Secretarie van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regering (General Secretary of the Netherlands East Indies Government). This collection in the Netherlands reflects serious attention given by the Dutch colonial authorities to pro-Republican propaganda in Indonesia and abroad.

Secondly, official documents from Indonesian institutions, in particular the archives of the key Republican propaganda institution, the Kementerian Penerangan (Ministry of Information), which are available at ANRI in Jakarta. In general, the topics of the above archives can be categorized into several main groups: 1) organizational matters, including the structure of the Republic’s information services from Jakarta down to the village level, 2) coordination and cooperation among state bodies in performing propaganda activities, 3) various instructions and techniques on how best to conduct propaganda, and 4) reports on other parties’ responses to Indonesian independence, especially Dutch counterpropaganda and political support from foreign countries. In addition to the institutional archives, personal archives were also pertinent to my research. ANRI holds documents produced by individuals, including the archives of Mohammad Bondan, then the leader of an organization for supporting Indonesian independence abroad, Central Committee for Indonesian Independence (CENKIM) in Australia.

Thirdly, propaganda materials, including never-before-used pamphlets, posters, and booklets. A considerable number of these were kept at NA, seized by the Dutch army in areas where such materials were posted or distributed. A precious collection of Indonesian propaganda was found at the NA, comprising dozens
of original pamphlets and posters produced by both the Indonesian
government and militia groups, as well as some from unknown
crude to artistically
advanced—were emotionally moving, the texts touching. No such
bundle of propaganda materials has ever been found in Indonesia,
however. This is understandable, as the Dutch forces were tasked
with collecting the materials in order to stop their spread and
assess their contents before launching counterpropaganda. These
materials were in fact taken or confiscated directly from where the
Indonesians had placed them, including markets and the walls of
buildings. NIOD and KITLV also have several collections of such
propaganda. Posters and pamphlets in the archive and library often
lack sufficient information about their origins. There are rarely
clues whereby to trace their origins, such as a date of creation or the
name of the institution that issued them.

In addition, there are extensive newspaper and magazine
collections, both in physical form and digital, maintained at the
National Library of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, at NIOD,
at the Dutch National Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek), and at
The National Library of Australia, and these proved essential to
my research. I used publications in Indonesian, Dutch, and English
found in various cities in Java and Sumatra, but also in Australia,
the Netherlands, the USA, and Surinam. Many of the Indonesian
language publications are pro-Republic (explained in Chapter 2)
and therefore played a role not only as a source of information
about the history of Republican propaganda, but of the propaganda
material itself. Moreover, it was the newspapers and magazines which
consistently gave space to Republican officials for their propaganda,
for instance in the form of transcripts of Republican leaders’ speeches.
The text of these speeches, which from a propagandistic point of view
were one of the most important persuasive techniques, was rarely
found in the archives.
Interviews with war veterans and witnesses failed, mainly because not many people remember anything concerning the communications aspect of the war.\footnote{I found several names in Padang (West Sumatra), one of the centers of resistance against the Dutch, of veterans born in the 1920’s and 1930’s and involved in the revolution. One of them, Mansur Sami (88 years old when I met him in 2012, a high-ranking military officer in West Sumatra during the revolution) accepted my request for an interview, but focused on his military experience. This is a common type of memory retained by a war veteran. Another problem is the delicate state of health of these late-octogenarian veterans. One veteran could not be contacted. Two others could not be interviewed due to health problems.}

**Structure of the Dissertation**

The first chapter focuses on how state and non-state actors, amidst the shortage of manpower and media facilities, carried out pro-Republic propaganda. Two of the most important state-sponsored propaganda institutions were the Badan Penerangan of the KNIP and the Kementerian Penerangan. I explain their origin, their reach into lower levels of society, and their operations. Additionally, this chapter discusses non-state propaganda institutions such as radio and press, and how these two media groups were largely dominated by non-state actors but, due to perceived common interests with the Republican government, had a decidedly pro-Republic stance.

Chapter 2 comprises an inquiry into how Republican propaganda was formulated to both ensure the legitimacy of the Republic in the eyes of the public and to mobilize a massive popular base for running the Indonesian state. This task arose in response to widespread uncertainty about the Japanese surrender, the Republican government’s lack of legitimacy due to its officials’ former collaboration with the Japanese during the occupation, and the political passivity of the population due to stringent punishment by the Japanese of those holding opposing views.
Chapter 3 emphasizes the way Indonesian propaganda dealt with one of the most striking features of the revolution: violence. I explain how Republican propaganda persuaded the people to fight the perceived enemies of the Republic. Moreover, I examine how Republican propaganda convinced their fellow Indonesians and the world about the brutality of the enemies (the Dutch, the British and the communists). I also show how the sufferings of Indonesians, which were said to have been caused by the enemies of the Republic, were portrayed in Republican propaganda.

Chapter 4 maps out and examines how Indonesians who lived abroad, and the foreigners with whom they cooperated, propagated Indonesian independence in their respective countries. The Indonesian propagandists abroad encountered different challenges than those faced by their counterparts in Indonesia; logical, given the different sociopolitical situations in each country-- yet they were vigorous in their efforts.

In my conclusion, I discuss the key role that propaganda played in the revolution as a prominent means by which the Republic protected its legitimacy and sought support both domestically and internationally, and I theorize about the practice of political propaganda in a newly-born state. I underline the importance of combination and cooperation between state and non-state actors in Indonesian propaganda. The greater part of Indonesian propaganda was characterized by the dynamics of interaction between these two elements as they strove to create an integrated, larger propaganda machine. In the end, this combination and cooperation had a longer-lasting and greater impact than did their separate propaganda activities. I will discuss this via examples of some of the issues upon which Republican propaganda focused during the revolution, issues which are still apparent in Indonesian public life today.