

# The Joint Commitment of Malukan Nationalists: The Revolutionary Axis Against the Dutch (NICA) Police Actions

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**Abstract:** This article examines the involvement of Malukan nationalists in the Indonesian National Revolution, particularly in confronting the attempted re-colonisation by the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) during the 1945–1947 period. The research employs historical methods—including archival research, primary and secondary literature studies, and narrative and social historiographical approaches—to trace the dynamics of local resistance, reflecting ideological, political, and diplomatic strategies in defending independence. The findings show that Malukan nationalists—through organisations such as PIM, PRIMA, KRIM, and PARPIM—succeeded in forming networks of struggle that transcended regional, religious, and social class boundaries, rejected colonial co-optation, and voiced the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in both national and international forums. This resistance was not only military-based but also emphasized dimensions of identity, national solidarity, and the influence of local intellectual elites. Within the theoretical framework of postcolonial nationalism and political settlement, this study demonstrates that various active and strategic local actors and contexts shaped Indonesian nationalism. Thus, this article challenges the dominant Java-centric historiography and offers an academic contribution to the global discourse on decolonisation, national integration, and the agency of local communities in building the postcolonial state.

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini menelaah keterlibatan kaum nasionalis Maluku dalam Revolusi Nasional Indonesia, khususnya dalam menghadapi upaya rekolonisasi oleh Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) pada periode 1945–1947. Dengan menggunakan metode sejarah—meliputi penelitian arsip, kajian literatur primer dan sekunder, serta pendekatan historiografi naratif dan sosial—penelitian ini menelusuri dinamika perlawanan lokal yang mencerminkan strategi ideologis, politik, dan diplomatik dalam mempertahankan kemerdekaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nasionalis Maluku, melalui organisasi seperti PIM, PRIMA, KRIM, dan PARPIM, berhasil membangun jaringan perjuangan lintas daerah, agama, dan kelas sosial, menolak kooptasi kolonial, serta menyuarakan kedaulatan Republik Indonesia di forum nasional maupun internasional. Perlawanan ini tidak hanya bersifat militer, tetapi juga menekankan dimensi identitas, solidaritas kebangsaan, dan pengaruh kaum intelektual lokal. Dalam kerangka teori nasionalisme pascakolonial dan penyelesaian politik, studi ini membuktikan bahwa berbagai aktor dan konteks lokal yang aktif serta strategis turut membentuk nasionalisme Indonesia. Dengan demikian, artikel ini menantang historiografi dominan yang berpusat pada Jawa serta memberikan kontribusi akademis terhadap diskursus global mengenai dekolonisasi, integrasi nasional, dan agensi komunitas lokal dalam membangun negara pascakolonial.

## INTRODUCTION

The proclamation of Indonesia's independence on August 17, 1945, marked the birth of a sovereign republic after centuries of colonization and became a pivotal historical milestone in Southeast Asia. This independence was not merely symbolic but was the result of consolidated nationalist forces from various regions of the archipelago, including Maluku, which played an active role in resisting Dutch colonial domination through NICA (Iryana, 2022; Wardhana & Samsiyah, 2019). The con-



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sensus of nationalist elites such as Soekarno and Hatta and the people affirmed the right to national self-determination (Anjani, 2023; Emilia, 2022; Iswari, 2020; Moeliono, 2020). The resistance was not centred only in Java but also involved organisations and youth in Ambon, Ternate, and Tual (Maruapey, 1970; Lundry, 2009; Pattikayhatu, 1993). Organisations such as PIM and PRIMA demonstrated regional political and physical strength in defending independence. Thus, reconstructing the history of the struggle for freedom is essential to highlight the significant roles of regions outside Java as an integral part of the national revolution.

The literature review regarding resistance against NICA still tends to focus on the regions of Java and Sumatra, with primary attention given to armed resistance and the diplomacy carried out by national figures such as Sukarno, Hatta, and Sjahrir (Amir & Saleh, 2013; Sudarmanto, 2007). Meanwhile, the struggle in Eastern Indonesia, particularly the contributions of Maluku nationalists, has rarely received in-depth attention and is often only briefly mentioned in mainstream historiography (Nanulaitta, 2009; Nursiwi, 2011). The Maluku region experienced intense political tension due to the return of the Dutch alongside the Allies after 1945, which led to organised popular resistance through local diplomacy and physical actions (Maruapey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993). Several organisations, such as the Partai Indonesia Merdeka (PIM) and PRIMA, actively opposed NICA in various areas (Lundry, 2009). This imbalance in the literature highlights the importance of exploring and publishing regional resistance so that the national historical narrative becomes more inclusive and representative.

As part of a critical approach to national historiography, this study emphasises the importance of the theoretical framework of regional nationalism and postcolonial studies in understanding the characteristics of resistance against colonial powers. Political settlements in postcolonial countries are often influenced by local actors who shape resistance and identity through elite consensus and collaboration with the people (Di John & Putzel, 2009; Gutierrez, 2011; Khan, 2010). In the context of the Moluccas, the role of nationalists, together with revolutionary power centres, actively contributed to defending independence through strategies of diplomacy and physical resistance, demonstrating the synergy between elites and the people in expelling the colonisers (Emillia, 2022; Iryana, 2022; Moeliono, 2020; Wardhana & Samsiyah, 2019). The

process of local identity formation also reinforced the dynamics of nationalism at the regional level, making the Malukan struggle an essential example in the global discourse on decolonisation (Anjani, 2023; Iswari, 2020). Thus, local struggles enrich the national narrative while broadening international understanding of nationalism and decolonisation.

The contributions of intellectuals and local elites in the Moluccas demonstrate that nationalism in this region was no less advanced or complex than in the centre. Educated figures such as E.U. Pupela and M.Q. Maruapey founded political organisations such as the Maluku Indonesian Party (PIM) and the Defenders of Indonesia Front (BPI) and mobilised the people through informal education and print media (Muttaqin, 2015; Suleman, 2010). Their activities were also supported by networks of grassroots organisations such as PRIMA and KRIM, which became the structured bases of resistance against NICA (Maruapey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993). Mass media and public speeches were used for mobilisation and political education to spread the spirit of resistance within society (Maulany et al., 2023). These elite strategies show that resistance in the Moluccas was rooted in ideological awareness, not merely spontaneity (Lundry, 2009). Grassroots movement networks succeeded in uniting local and national political forces (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996). Through substantial consolidation, Malukan nationalists could defend independence and enrich the literature on Indonesian nationalism.

The resistance against NICA in the Moluccas demonstrated a political consolidation that was in line with the dynamics of the struggle in Aceh and West Java, where all these regions implemented strategies combining armed and diplomatic approaches to defend independence (Feith, 2006; Touwe & Pusparani, 2013). The Dutch strategy through NICA, which sought to establish a commonwealth under the Dutch Queen, was aimed at dividing power and weakening the position of the Republic of Indonesia by promoting federalism, exploiting regional differences, co-opting local elites, and undermining national unity—ultimately attempting to reassert Dutch influence and control over Indonesian territories. However, it was unsuccessful due to strong rejection from regional nationalist groups, including those in the Moluccas. National figures such as Sukarno and Hatta, as well as religious leaders like KH Hasyim Asy'ari, also provided moral and strategic support for the struggle in various regions, including the Moluccas (Iryana, 2022; Septiningsih, 2012). The role of local

leaders such as E.U. Pupela and M.Q. further supported the consolidation of nationalist forces in the Moluccas, Maruapey, and regional organisations like PIM and PRIMA (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996; Lundry, 2009; Maruapey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993). This pattern of resistance demonstrates that the struggle in the Moluccas was an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia's efforts to defend national sovereignty.

Placing the struggle of the Moluccas within the framework of the global postcolonial movement enriches our understanding of how local communities produced forms of resistance against re-colonisation, similar to patterns observed in Vietnam, the Philippines, and Myanmar, where local nationalism became the main driving force of resistance after World War II (Di John & Putzel, 2009; Paasi, 2016). The nationalist resistance of the Moluccas against NICA was not only military but also symbolic and diplomatic, as seen in various acts of rejection against Dutch administrative structures carried out by local organisations and elites (Maruapey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993). The importance of local actors in building resistance within postcolonial political settlements is evident. The involvement of organisations such as PIM and PRIMA demonstrates the synergy between elites and grassroots masses in shaping resistance (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996; Lundry, 2009). This article also seeks to fill a gap in comparative studies of nationalism in Southeast Asia, which often overlook the role of smaller regions. Thus, the case of the Moluccas broadens the perspective of nationalism studies from the centre to the periphery and from elites to ordinary people.

By focusing on the struggle of the Moluccas, this article aims to make a new contribution to the discourse of Indonesian historiography and global decolonisation studies. Through the critical reconstruction and analysis of the role of Malukan nationalists in confronting the re-colonisation attempts by the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) during the 1945–1947 period, it positions the experience of regional resistance as an integral part of the Indonesian National Revolution. Utilising a historiographical approach that combines narrative political history and the social history of resistance, this study seeks to fill a gap in Indonesian historiography, which has long been overly centred on Java, while also broadening the scope of global decolonisation studies by highlighting the contribution of the Moluccas in the context of post-colonial nationalism.

This research is also intended to highlight

local socio-political dynamics, grassroots resistance networks, and the strategies employed by local leaders as forms of resistance against Dutch colonial domination, thereby producing a historical narrative that is more inclusive and representative, both geographically and ideologically.

Through a critical and contextual literature review, this article reinforces the argument that the national struggle cannot be fully understood without recognising the role of the regions. The resistance against NICA in the Moluccas provides concrete evidence that Indonesian nationalism is a collective construction that grows from the grassroots, shaped by the diversity of local experiences. Thus, this article fills a gap in the literature on Indonesian history and offers a new analytical framework for understanding postcolonial political dynamics through the lens of marginalised regional resistance.

## METHOD

This study employs the historical method, a scientific approach to systematically and critically understand past events. The stages of the historical method include topic selection, heuristics (source collection), verification (source criticism), interpretation, and historiographical writing. The topic explored is the role of Malukan nationalists in resisting NICA between 1945 and 1947. Data were collected from relevant primary and secondary sources during the heuristics stage. Primary sources include archival colonial newspapers such as *De Indische Courant*, the *Bulan Kebangunan Timur* tabloid, *Antara* newspaper (April 16, 1946), *Mena Muria* newspaper, official NICA reports stored at the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI). Access to these documents was obtained through visits to ANRI, the National Library, and research in the Netherlands, primarily at the Dutch National Archives (Algemeen Rijksarchief/ARA) in The Hague, the library and special collections of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) in Leiden, as well as the special collections at the Leiden University Library.

Additionally, special collections on the Moluccas at the Museum Maluku Library in Utrecht and private collections of Dutch-Moluccan historians R. Habiboe and M. Manuhutu were utilised. Tracing these sources was conducted during archival studies in the Netherlands in 2012, and they later became the author's private collection. In-depth interviews in the Moluccas were also carried out with former KNIL informants to combine primary and secondary data.

Secondary literature includes academic journals, history books, and scholarly articles discussing the context of regional and national struggles in facing the return of Dutch colonial rule. The verification stage was conducted to ensure the validity and credibility of the historical data obtained. Verification consisted of two forms of source criticism: external and internal. External criticism was carried out to assess the authenticity of documents, the identity of authors, and the physical condition of sources, such as dates, archival origins, and official stamps or marks from the holding institution. For example, the authenticity of official NICA reports was checked through signatures and institutional letterheads of the Dutch military. Internal criticism was then applied to analyse the content of documents, including author bias, the writing purpose, and the narratives' correspondence with other validated historical facts. For instance, narratives from colonial newspapers were compared with resistance archives from Ambon to identify colonial distortions. Through this approach, it is expected that an objective and academically accountable historical reconstruction can be produced.

The historiographical approach used in this research combines narrative political history and the social history of resistance. Narrative political history describes power dynamics between the Republic of Indonesia and the Dutch through NICA and the diplomacy and military policy processes affecting resistance in the Moluccas. On the other hand, the social history approach provides space to understand the role of civil society, religious leaders, and local intellectuals in shaping grassroots resistance movements. This combination allows the author to narrate events not only from the perspective of elites or the state but also from the perspective of the people who directly experienced the impact of re-colonisation. By integrating these two approaches, this study emphasises the importance of viewing history as a complex and multi-level socio-political process.

The historiographical writing in this study aims to explain the role of Malukan nationalists in Indonesia's independence struggle in a deeper and more representative manner. This historiography is descriptive and analytical, highlighting factors that influenced the formation of revolutionary power bases in the Moluccas and strategies of resistance against NICA. The spatial focus of the research is the Maluku region, particularly the city of Ambon and its surroundings. In contrast, the temporal focus is 1945–1947, when NICA actively penetrated power and popular resistance peaked. Through a

scientific and analytical approach, this study enriches Indonesian historical narratives that are more geographically and narratively just and strengthens the understanding of the importance of regional resistance in defending national independence. The resulting narrative is expected to position the Moluccas as an important factor in the historiography of Indonesia's struggle.

## **THE JOINT COMMITMENT OF MALUKAN NATIONALISTS THE REVOLUTIONARY AXIS AGAINST THE DUTCH (NICA) POLICE ACTIONS**

### **The Involvement of Moluccan Nationalists in the National Revolution**

The involvement of Malukan nationalists in the Indonesian National Revolution reflected a collective awareness of the importance of defending independence from the threat of renewed Dutch colonialism through NICA. This resistance occurred locally in the Moluccas and nationally through the Malukan diaspora in Java, Sulawesi, and Makassar. They formed various resistance organisations, such as the Maluku Indonesian Party (PIM), the Defenders of Indonesia Front (BPI), and Pasukan Terpendam, which consolidated forces and engaged in armed actions against the return of the Dutch in Ambon and its surroundings—figures such as M.Q. Maruapey and E.U. Pupella played central roles in organising popular forces and developing political networks rooted in the spirit of nationalism. The resistance was not only physical; these nationalists also carried out political strategies, such as participation in the South Moluccas Council, and symbolically raised the red-and-white flag as an act of defiance against the colonial authorities (Maruapey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993). They built a bottom-up movement with strong grassroots support for the newly proclaimed Republic of Indonesia.

In Ternate, the dynamics of the struggle took on a distinctive character because nationalists had to confront local power structures established by the Dutch, specifically Sultan Iskandar Muhammad Djabir Sjah, who served as a Resident of North Maluku. Although the Dutch used a cultural approach by appointing local aristocrats as instruments of authority, nationalist reactions were marked by firm support for the Republic. Organisations such as Persatuan Indonesia (PI) emerged as antitheses to pro-Dutch organisations such as Pasmo, which the Sultan established. Figures like Arnold Mononutu and Dr. Hasan Boesoirie were significant in entirely steering PI's political orientation to support Indonesian independence (Amal, 2010). Even amid

pressure from NICA authorities and KNIL forces, PI successfully established branches as far as Galela, Tidore, and Bacan, demonstrating that nationalism flourished even within political environments initially dominated by colonialism through local aristocracy (Van der Wal, 1977).

Meanwhile, in Tual City, the nationalist spirit was also strong through covert actions led by Sergeant Kuning Renwarin from Pasukan Terpendam. Coming from Yogyakarta, he developed resistance networks against NICA using propaganda and sabotage. This struggle illustrates that strategies did not always rely on armed strength but also on strengthening the narrative of independence and disseminating information among communities lacking wide access to information. In the Southwest Islands, such as Kisar and Leti, nationalist youth even captured NICA officers and took control of communication centres as symbols of seizing colonial authority (Pattikayhatu, 1993). These actions showed that nationalist consciousness spread to remote regions, thanks to active communication between Republican fighters and local communities determined to defend their newly gained independence.

The role of the Malukan nationalist diaspora outside the Moluccas also cannot be ignored. In Yogyakarta, the Maluku Indonesian Political Party (PARPIM) was founded by Malukan intellectuals and youth such as A.Y. Patty, Dr. G.A. Siwabessy, and Ir. Putuhena, with a political stance, firmly declared that the Moluccas were an inseparable part of the Republic of Indonesia. Their resolution, "Mena Muria," asserted that any effort to separate the Moluccas from Indonesia was illegitimate. They actively formulated national political strategies and garnered international support through communications with the UN Security Council and foreign governments (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996). In Makassar, the organisations Kebaktian Rakyat Indonesia Maluku (KRIM) and Persatuan Wanita Maluku also mobilised Moluccan awareness in the diaspora to unite in the struggle to defend independence. These actions demonstrate that the revolutionary spirit of Malukan nationalists was not limited to one area but crossed islands and sectors.

The pinnacle of both physical and symbolic struggle by Malukan nationalists was seen in the "red-and-white expedition" sent from Java to the Moluccas. Using small vessels such as the KM Sindoro and KM Semeru, fighters transported posters, newspapers, and the spirit of struggle from Yogyakarta to the Malukan islands. In Buru Island, the seizure of Namlea and hoisting the red-and-white

flag became a monumental milestone of the revolutionary struggle. Fighters persisted through threats and counterattacks from KNIL forces, either battling openly or continuing if captured. This struggle also fostered nationalist communications and propaganda networks in remote villages, enabling widespread dissemination of information about the proclamation and existence of the Republic of Indonesia. The involvement of Malukan nationalist figures in diplomacy, political organisation, and armed struggle demonstrates that they were not mere accessories in the national battle but rather an inseparable part of the heartbeat of the Republic, built and defended with blood and sacrifice (Leirissa, 1975b; Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996).

### **Local Political Consolidation and Collaboration**

The formation of various local resistance organisations such as PRIMA, PIM, and KRIM demonstrated the existence of solid and organised political consolidation at the regional level, closely connected to national forces. In Ambon, nationalist leaders like E.U. Pupella, M.Q. Maruapey and Abdul Kadir Tuakia established platforms of struggle that reflected an awareness of the importance of collective strategy against NICA. PRIMA, as a representation of nationalist youth power on Haruku Island, carried out concrete acts of resistance, including raising the red-and-white flag and disseminating information about the independence (Pattikayhatu, 1993). This consolidation of forces was tactical and ideological, uniting diverse groups, including former Heiho soldiers, romusha, and sympathisers from different religious backgrounds. Even when facing pressure from NICA and KNIL forces, these organisations could persist, strengthen inter-regional networks, and unite the revolutionary spirit into a single front for the Republic of Indonesia's struggle (Maruapey, 1970). This achievement became a strong foundation for the broader, more coordinated national resistance.

The Partai Indonesia Merdeka (PIM), initiated by E.U. Pupella, embodied a local political strategy to bridge the strength of the people and the central government. Through a parliamentary approach, PIM became a channel for articulating nationalist aspirations in the Moluccas, even under pressure from the South Moluccas Council, which was dominated by pro-Dutch figures. Nationalist leaders succeeded in forming two critical factions in the council—the Progressive Faction and the National Faction—led by Pupella and Abdullah Souliissa (Lundry, 2009). At the same time, this organisational structure was connected to various re-

sistance bodies, such as the Defenders of Indonesia Front (BPI), the Indonesian Youth Union (PPI), and Pasukan Terpendam, which continued the struggle on the front lines. The synergy between the parliamentary and local military forces reflected a well-developed pattern of strategic collaboration. PIM and its supporting organisations adopted a “dual approach,” combining diplomacy and mass mobilisation, to defend the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the Moluccas, a key target for NICA due to its rich spice resources.

A similar collaboration emerged in Ternate, where Persatuan Indonesia (PI) became a counter-political force against Pasmu, an organisation created by Sultan Djabir Sjah in cooperation with the Dutch. Although PI was initially pro-colonial in principle, pressure from the people and nationalist leaders such as Arnold Mononutu and Hasan Boesoirie succeeded in shifting the organisation’s orientation toward the Republic (Amal, 2010). This consolidation extended outside Ternate, with PI branches established in Tobelo, Galela, Tidore, and Bacan. With membership reaching 10,000, PI became concrete evidence of the success of local political collaboration based on nationalist ideology. Mass meetings and educational activities about Indonesian independence became the main agenda of PI to mobilise public support for the Republic. In this context, political organisations served not only as tools for struggle but also as instruments of political education, encouraging people to understand the meaning of independence and to reject colonialism with collective consciousness.

Outside the Moluccas, nationalist consolidation was also prominent in establishing the Maluku Indonesian Political Party (PARPIM) in Yogyakarta. This party was led by A.Y. Patty and Dr. G.A. Siwabessy, who had considerable influence among Malukan intellectuals. Through media outlets such as Mena Muria magazine, they voiced a commitment to maintain the Moluccas as an inseparable part of the Republic of Indonesia (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996). Their resolutions, sent to the Indonesian and Dutch governments and the UN Security Council, reflected a well-planned and targeted diplomatic strategy. In this case, the collaboration involved inter-regional connections and reached the international arena. PARPIM showed that Malukan nationalist resistance was not limited to the local or physical realm but extended to global political dynamics. They leveraged diaspora connections to reinforce the narrative that the Moluccas are an integral part of the Republic and that any attempts at separation constitute a betrayal of the spirit of the

proclamation of independence.

Kebaktian Rakyat Indonesia Maluku (KRIM) in Makassar added to the list of resistance organisations demonstrating cross-regional and intergenerational collaboration in supporting the Republic. Despite suffering violence during the “de Ambon moord” incident, Moluccans in Makassar did not waver in their support for independence. Led by figures such as Abdul Muluk Makatita and Bing Latumahina, KRIM focused on strengthening national identity through political education and establishing auxiliary organisations such as the Moluccan Women’s Union (Luhukay, 1982). They recognised the importance of broad public support, including women and students, in the long-term struggle. When NICA imposed political bans through the S.O.B., KRIM continued its struggle clandestinely, demonstrating that the nationalist spirit could not easily be extinguished by repression.

All these organisations—from PRIMA in Haruku, PIM in Ambon, PI in Ternate, PARPIM in Yogyakarta, and KRIM in Makassar—were part of a network of local political consolidation intimately connected to the pulse of the national revolution and provided the foundation for the strength of the Republic of Indonesia as we know it today.

### **Resistance Strategies Based on Identity and National Solidarity**

The resistance strategies employed by Malukan nationalists during the Indonesian National Revolution were not solely reliant on military strength. However, they were rooted in deeply held ideological principles anchored in national identity and interregional solidarity. In facing aggression and renewed attempts at domination by the Dutch through NICA, Malukan nationalists designed strategies that included armed actions, propaganda, and local diplomacy grounded in the spirit of the Republic. Their struggle was undertaken with full political awareness that independence was not a final result but a process that had to be consistently protected and maintained. The organisation of militias such as Pasukan Terpendam, PRIMA, and PIM (Partai Indonesia Merdeka) symbolised the ideological commitment of Malukan nationalists to the spirit of 17 August 1945 (Maruapey, 1970; Patikayhatu, 1993). Their resistance was driven by a collective determination to assert Maluku’s existence as an inseparable part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia while rejecting NICA’s attempts to co-opt local sovereignty under the guise of political stability.

As part of the Indonesian nation, identity became Maluku's primary foundation for resistance. Youth from Haruku, Seram, Tual, and Kisar showed that the struggle against colonialism was not merely a spontaneous response but part of a national agenda understood and internalised as a collective responsibility. The raising of the red-and-white flag in Namlea and the holding of proclamation ceremonies in Ori village were symbolic manifestations that Indonesian sovereignty lived in the people's consciousness even in the most remote islands (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996). Propaganda strategies also included disseminating information about the proclamation, displaying images of Bung Karno and Bung Hatta, and distributing newspapers and leaflets containing news of the Republic's struggle from Java. All of this created an ideological communication space between the centre and the regions, strengthening a revolutionary network based on the values of nationalism and anti-colonial spirit drawn from the collective experience of being an oppressed people.

National solidarity became a strengthening element for local resistance, yet it was closely connected to the national revolutionary project. The roles of organisations such as PARPIM in Yogyakarta and KRIM in Makassar were vital bridges in building interregional connectivity, expanding the movement's reach, and ensuring that Maluku's struggle was not isolated (Luhukay, 1982). The diplomatic strategies employed by Malukan leaders such as A.Y. Patty and Dr. G.A. Siwabessy in presenting the "Mena Muria" resolution to the United Nations, the Dutch government, and other international forums were proof that Malukan nationalists understood the importance of the global stage in their struggle. This diplomacy broadened the arena of resistance and strengthened Indonesia's position in the eyes of the world as an independent state supported by all its regions, including the eastern areas that were often marginalised.

Identity-based resistance strategies also responded to NICA's attempts to create rival power structures through local figures such as Sultan Ternate Iskandar Djabir Sjah, who was appointed a resident of North Maluku (Amal, 2010). In confronting these maneuvers, nationalists formed rival organisations such as Persatuan Indonesia (PI), shifting the party's orientation from initially pro-Dutch to pro-Republic. Figures like Arnold Mononutu and Hasan Boesoirie played key roles in redirecting the local political ideology to align with the ideals of independence. PI even developed into a mass organisation with thousands of members and

branches across North Maluku, becoming an effective socio-political force against the hegemony of NICA and the remnants of feudalism. This strategy showed that ideological resistance was not only the domain of the centre but was alive and active through the efforts of fighters in the regions.

All the strategies employed by Malukan nationalists—military, propaganda, and diplomacy—prove that their struggle was always driven by an awareness of the importance of safeguarding national identity. They understood that independence was a historical mandate that had to be realised and defended by all means. The struggle in Maluku was not separate from the primary current of the national revolution but was instead an integral part of the heartbeat of Indonesia's fight for independence. With the courage to confront colonial pressure, form resistance organisations, and build inter-island solidarity, Malukan nationalists proved their struggle was based on sincere and unwavering nationalism. They have set an example that effective resistance strategies rely on military strength and the power of ideas, solidarity, and an unwavering commitment to the independence of a free, united, and fully sovereign nation.

### **The Role of Elites and Intellectuals in Political Mobilisation of the People**

The role of elites and intellectuals in the political mobilisation of the people in the Moluccas during Indonesia's independence revolution was both central and strategic. They not only acted as the driving force behind organisations but also as formulators of the vision of the struggle and disseminators of nationalist values across different layers of society. In Ambon, figures such as E.U. Pupella established the Partai Indonesia Merdeka (PIM) as a political vehicle to consolidate nationalist forces from various backgrounds, both Muslim and Christian, even including anti-Dutch extremist groups such as those led by Wim Reawaru (Pattikayhatu, 1993). This strategy demonstrated how local elites could bridge sectarian differences for the collective goal of defending independence. In addition to their political activities, these figures were active in diplomacy and physical resistance, making the struggle more integrated. These efforts helped to create widespread political awareness, as messages of struggle came from the centre and were conveyed directly by respected local leaders within their communities.

In Ternate, intellectuals such as Arnold Mononutu and Dr. Hasan Boesoirie played important roles in transforming local political orientation, which initially tended to be pro-colonial, into sup-

port for the Republic of Indonesia. They were able to influence the direction of Persatuan Indonesia (PI), which initially had the “rijksverband” principle, to adopt a pro-independence stance (Amal, 2010). Their intervention showed the strong influence of progressive thought in shaping the direction of the struggle. Not only through speeches, they also utilised media, such as the tabloid *Bulan Kebangunan Timur*, to spread narratives of independence and counter the information hegemony of NICA. This shift in PI’s orientation subsequently led to the resignation of aristocratic figures who disagreed, further emphasizing that the people’s struggle was now led by those committed to complete independence, not compromise. The role of these intellectuals succeeded in uniting the mass base and political elite into a single line of struggle, making PI the most significant pro-Republic political force in North Maluku at the time.

In Yogyakarta, Malukan diaspora intellectuals and elites such as A.Y. Patty and Dr. G.A. Siwabessy founded the Maluku Indonesian Political Party (PARPIM) with the clear mission of defending Maluku as an inseparable part of the Republic of Indonesia. Through the “Mena Muria” resolution, they made a political statement to the Indonesian government and the international community, including the United Nations Security Council (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996). They used intelligent, diplomatic approaches to amplify the Malukan people’s voice, who rejected Dutch colonialism’s return. These elites leveraged their education, networks, and communication skills to defend the Republic’s existence in global forums. It shows that intellectual contributions were not limited to academic discussion but had a real impact on forming international opinion and national consolidation. Their strategy transcended geographic boundaries and made Yogyakarta the diplomatic centre of the Malukan struggle.

The role of elites and intellectuals was also strongly evident in Makassar with the establishment of *Kebaktian Rakyat Indonesia Maluku* (KRIM), led by Abdul Muluk Makatita and Bing Latumahina. They fostered collective awareness among Moluccans traumatised by the “de Ambon moord” tragedy by emphasising that the struggle of the Malukan people could not be separated from the Republic of Indonesia (Luhukay, 1982). The organisation then formed a women’s wing, *Persatuan Wanita Maluku*, led by Mrs O. Pattileuw, to reach out to Malukan women and students, proving that intellectuals understood the importance of social inclusion in political mobilisation. KRIM continued to operate when

NICA banned political activity through S.O.B., but the network they had built remained active in spreading the nationalist spirit. In this context, intellectual leaders served as ideological guides and field organisers, ensuring the continuity of the struggle amid political repression.

Political mobilisation by elites also took place in Tual and the Southwest Islands, led by figures such as Sergeant Kuning Renwarin, who arrived from Java as part of *Pasukan Terpendam*. He formed resistance organisations that emphasised propaganda and the dissemination of information about the independence of the Republic of Indonesia through informal networks (Pattikayhatu, 1993). It demonstrates that the role of elites was not limited to official structures but extended to grassroots movements targeting the broader population. Renwarin and similar figures united the people’s aspirations with national strategies, conveying the message of nationhood in ways adapted to local contexts. They could also read social and political dynamics, choosing paths of guerrilla warfare, diplomacy, or agitation as appropriate. Their role was to educate the people and strengthen their sense of belonging to the Republic. Thus, political mobilisation by elites and intellectuals served as the primary link between the ideals of independence and the turbulent local political realities.

### **Responses to NICA’s Colonial Tactics**

The response of Malukan nationalists to NICA’s colonial tactics of appointing local figures as instruments of Dutch legitimacy demonstrated a very high level of political awareness in the post-independence society. One of the most striking examples of NICA’s strategy was the appointment of Sultan Ternate Iskandar Mohammad Djabir Sjah as Resident of North Maluku by the Dutch, aimed at reinforcing colonial power through traditional structures deemed easy to control. The strong reaction of nationalist figures such as Arnold Mononutu and Dr. Hasan Boesoirie to this move signified their rejection of co-optation politics and their allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia (Amal, 2010). These leaders firmly rejected “rijksverband” cooperation. Instead, they organised the people’s strength by forming rival organisations such as *Persatuan Indonesia* (PI), which grew into a significant political organisation with thousands of members and an extensive network. It proved that the people and local political elites could systematically understand and counter NICA’s colonial strategies.

Rejection of NICA’s colonial tactics was not limited to Ternate but also occurred in Ambon



through organised political and military movements. The appointment of local figures deemed controllable by NICA was answered by nationalists with the formation of resistance organisations such as Partai Indonesia Merdeka (PIM), Barisan Pembela Indonesia (BPI), and Persatuan Pemuda Indonesia (PPI), which rallied the people's strength to oppose colonial rule. This strategy showed that resistance was reactive and proactive, prioritising structural approaches to consolidate popular power (Maruahey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993). In some cases, such as in Ambon and Haruku Island, local figures such as Abdul Kadir Tuakia even succeeded in leading people's militias to directly attack NICA posts, demonstrating that resistance to political co-optation was conducted comprehensively, from the political to the military field.

In Tual and the Southwest Islands, NICA's strategy of using colonial power symbolism to reestablish Dutch authority also received strong responses from nationalists. Sergeant Kuning Renwarin, who was part of the fighters' expedition from Java, successfully organised resistance in the name of Pasukan Terpendam. He used propaganda and sabotage as resistance against CONICA officials in Tual and the surrounding areas (Pattikayhatu, 1993). This movement emphasised that NICA's civilian façade did not fool nationalists; instead, they used propaganda to raise public awareness of the Republic of Indonesia as the only legitimate government. This strategy showed that local political awareness had developed even in the most remote areas and had become an organised force to resist colonialism.

NICA's attempts to legitimise its rule by establishing local parties such as Pasmo (Partai Sedjarah Maluku Utara) were also met with innovative political strategies by the nationalists. After PI succeeded in steering its political direction to become pro-Republic, the leadership was handed over to nationalist figures such as Dr. Hasan Boesoirie and Arnold Mononutu, who brought the struggle into a broader arena (Amal, 2010). The organisation then conducted extensive propaganda, including distributing leaflets, organising mass meetings, and developing networks in remote regions. According to Van der Wal (1977), PI formed branches in Tobelo, Tidore, Galela, and Makian, with active membership reaching 10,000 people. It showed that NICA's tactics failed to dominate local political structures and triggered more substantial consolidation among nationalists to rally popular support for the Republic of Indonesia.

The response to NICA's colonial tactics illustrates how Malukan nationalists possessed a high

political consciousness and mature struggle strategies. They could read colonial political maneuvers and respond with movements involving the masses, whether in organisational form, armed action, or propaganda. These reactions were not spontaneous but part of a long-term strategy to defend independence and realise national ideals. As recorded in *Komitmen Kaum Nasionalis Maluku Bersama*, the struggle of Malukan nationalists was an inseparable part of the national revolutionary axis that moved simultaneously against Dutch colonialism (Touwe & Pusparani, 2013). They defended the Republic not only physically but also ideologically by fighting colonial narratives seeking to justify the return of the Dutch East Indies government under the guise of cultural and local politics. It was a form of resistance politics that was local, national, and even global in its spirit.

### **Contribution to the Discourse of Postcolonial Nationalism**

The contribution of Malukan nationalists to the discourse on Indonesian postcolonial nationalism is evident not only in the form of physical resistance to colonialism but also in the form of complex ideological resistance. Their movement showed that the struggle for independence was not limited to expelling the colonisers militarily but also included the formation of political consciousness that rejected all forms of colonial hegemony, including NICA's tactics of political co-optation. This study affirms that the forms of resistance pursued by Malukan nationalist groups, such as the formation of organisations like PIM, PRIMA, and PI, demonstrated ideological maturity rooted in the principles of popular sovereignty and national solidarity (Touwe & Pusparani, 2013). It contributes to the national historiographical narrative, emphasising that the struggle for independence resulted from consolidated awareness and well-directed political strategy, not just sporadic resistance. In this context, Malukan nationalists present nationalism as a movement rooted in the people, crossing sectors, and united within the national framework.

Figures such as E.U. Pupella, M.Q. Maruahey and A.Y. Patty displayed intellectual and strategic courage by organising political forces through local parties such as PIM and PARPIM, demonstrating that Malukan nationalism operated on a regional, national, and even international level. The "Mena Muria" resolution crafted by PARPIM, for example, was not only addressed to the Indonesian government but also to the United Nations Security Council and other major countries such as Britain and the Netherlands (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996). It

proves that the Malukan nationalist struggle entered the discourse of global decolonisation, on par with similar movements in Asia and Africa. Thus, this study offers significant intellectual contributions to decolonisation studies by highlighting the importance of local actors in shaping the global dynamics of anti-colonial resistance. Malukan nationalism proves that local struggles can become integral to global emancipation discourse.

Equally important, the experience of the Malukan people in confronting NICA's co-optation policies, such as appointing local figures like Sultan Djabir Sjah in Ternate or administrative rulers in Ambon, shows the ability of the people and local elites to deconstruct colonial power from within. Malukan nationalists actively demonstrated that nationalism is not merely a reaction to oppression but also a tool to redefine power in the postcolonial context by employing strategies such as shifting Persatuan Indonesia's political orientation from pro-Dutch to pro-Republic (Amal, 2010; Pattikayhatu, 1993). Resistance in this form is essential to postcolonial theory discourse, in which liberation is about formal independence and taking over representation and power structures. It demonstrates that Malukan nationalism has moved beyond the identity phase toward a phase of active and progressive political agency.

This contribution is even more relevant when linked to the communication and propaganda strategies used by resistance groups in the Moluccas. The use of print media such as *Mena Muria*, the distribution of pamphlets, and the use of national symbols such as the red-and-white flag and photos of President Soekarno at mass rallies illustrate how nationalism was constructed visually and narratively (Leirissa, 1975b). It strengthens the position of nationalism as a cultural practice, not merely a political project. In the context of decolonisation, such forms of resistance are essential capital for constructing counter-narratives to colonial hegemony. Therefore, this research enriches decolonisation studies by showing that the Malukan people were not merely objects of history but active subjects shaping the discourse of nationhood, identity, and independence.

In conclusion, it can be said that the forms of resistance carried out by Malukan nationalists made a significant contribution to the national historiography of Indonesia and became part of the global decolonisation discourse. They fought to defend independence and built a postcolonial framework of thought that asserted political autonomy, popular sovereignty, and inclusive national consciousness. This study shows that Indonesian nationalism

is not monolithic but formed from various regional contributions, each with its own dynamics and context. Malukan nationalists represent how local struggles can shape global discourse, enriching our perspective on the history of Indonesia's struggle as part of a bold, collective, and ideologically conscious Third World decolonisation movement.

## DISCUSSION

The involvement of Malukan nationalists in the National Revolution can be analysed through the lens of postcolonial nationalism theory and political settlement, where local identity plays a crucial role in shaping a decentralised and dynamic nationalism (Maruapey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993; Keane, 1997; Setiawan, 2020). Resistance to colonial co-optation, such as the appointment of the Sultan of Ternate, the Ambonsche Studiefonds, and the Sarekat Ambon, served as key platforms for Malukan elites and society to articulate resistance to colonial domination and the elevation of local elites by the Dutch, reinforcing nationalism as an emancipatory project (Amal, 2010; Di John & Putzel, 2009; Khan, 2010; Touwe et al., 2024). The rejection of colonial power structures is also reflected in the courage to build coalitions across religious and class lines, as seen in the narrative of Malukan solidarity (Sholeh, 2008; Tutuarima & Nindatu, 2023). Contemporary studies emphasise that local Malukan nationalism, in both military and symbolic forms, represents a marginalised voice that broadens the framework of national history (Guha, 1983; Spivak, 2023; Turner, 2003; Yusuf, 2006). Unlike Aceh, which relied on networks of religious scholars (Amir & Saleh, 2013), and West Java with its military strength (Sudarmanto, 2007), in the case of Maluku, the role of elites and community-based organisations such as PIM and PRIMA, as well as maritime diaspora movements, highlights the plurality and strength of local nationalism in the Moluccas (Luhukay, 1982; Muttaqin, 2015; Nanulaitta, 2009; Nursiwi, 2011; Maswekan, 2020).

The local political consolidation and collaboration of Malukan nationalists in facing NICA's dominance reflects the dynamics of political settlement, where elites and the people create a balance of power within the context of the postcolonial state (Di John & Putzel, 2009; Khan, 2010; Dardias Kurniadi, 2020; Iwamony, 2023). Recent studies show the success of organisations and figures such as E.U. Pupella and M.Q. Maruapey, building PIM, PRIMA, and BPI, strengthened the foundations of local nationalism through networks that cut across social groups and communities (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996; Maruapey, 1970; Pattikayhatu, 1993; Bräuch-

ler, 2009; Steijlen, 1992). The fragmentation of traditional powers, such as the Sultan of Ternate, also shaped political support bases rooted in land and identity (Dardias Kurniadi, 2020). The two nationalist factions in the South Maluku Council illustrate a form of local nationalism that is ideological and organised, as theorised by Chatterjee (1993). In comparison, while Aceh relied on networks of religious scholars (Amir & Saleh, 2013) and West Java on the guerrilla strength of the Siliwangi Division (Sudarmanto, 2007), Maluku placed greater emphasis on civil-political coalitions through PARPIM and KRIM (Luhukay, 1982; Steijlen, 1992). The subaltern approach helps to explain how marginalised local figures formed alternative power structures (Guha, 1983; Spivak, 2023 Bräuchler, 2009 Kershaw, 1999; Stutje, 2018). The “Mena Muria” resolution and the Mena Muria media further underscore their active role in constructing postcolonial nationalism (Amal, 2010; Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996).

Identity-based resistance strategies and national solidarity by Malukan nationalists reflect an articulate and structured form of postcolonial nationalism. Referring to Chatterjee (1993), Malukan nationalism emerged as a local expression that confronted colonial power both symbolically and ideologically, as seen in the raising of the red-and-white flag in Negeri Ori and the visual propaganda of Bung Karno and Bung Hatta (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996; Pattikayhatu, 1993). Within the political settlement framework, organisations such as PRIMA and Pasukan Terpendam are formed as forms of power negotiation between local elites and the people (Khan, 2010; Maruapey, 1970; Van der Wal, 1977). In contrast to Aceh, which was based on Islamic clerical networks (Amir & Saleh, 2013), and West Java, which relied on the Siliwangi Division’s guerrilla military (Sudarmanto, 2007), Maluku demonstrated diaspora-based strategies such as PARPIM and diplomacy through the “Mena Muria” resolution. This approach aligns with subaltern studies (Guha, 1983; Spivak, 2023), emphasising that peripheral resistance can shape a more inclusive and plural nationalistic discourse (Nanulaitta, 2009; Nursiwi, 2011; Suleman, 2010).

The role of Malukan elites and intellectuals in mobilising the people politically during the National Revolution demonstrates the dynamics of political settlement, in which local elites created alternative power structures through ideological consolidation and grassroots organisation (Di John & Putzel, 2009; Khan, 2010). E.U. Pupella (PIM), Dr. G.A. Siwabessy, A.Y. Patty (PARPIM), and M.Q. Maruapey played a pivotal and active role in the strug-

gle for Indonesian independence. They mobilised local resistance in Maluku, coordinated these efforts with broader national strategies, and actively championed Maluku’s interests in international diplomatic forums. Through their leadership, they not only united diverse local groups but also ensured that the voice of Maluku was represented within the national independence movement and recognised by the global community (Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996; Pattikayhatu, 1993). Within the framework of postcolonial nationalism, they created an articulative space from the periphery that rejected central domination (Chatterjee, 1993) while simultaneously acting as subaltern actors who amplified the voices of marginalised people (Guha, 1983; Spivak, 2023). Unlike Aceh, which was based on religious clerics (Amir & Saleh, 2013), and West Java, which relied on the Siliwangi military (Sudarmanto, 2007), Malukan elites such as Mononutu and Boesoirie combined propaganda and mass organisation through media such as Bulan Kebangunan Timur (Amal, 2010; Van der Wal, 1977). It aligns with Gramsci’s (1971) concept of “organic intellectuals,” who bridge the people and power through progressive political consciousness.

The response of Malukan nationalists to NICA’s colonial tactics, primarily through the co-optation of local elites such as the appointment of the Sultan of Ternate as Resident of North Maluku, can be understood through the theories of political settlement and postcolonial nationalism (Di John & Putzel, 2009; Khan, 2010). Counter-cooptation strategies such as the formation of PI and PIM illustrate efforts to build alternative power structures rooted in popular sovereignty (Amal, 2010; Pattikayhatu, 1993). Within the framework of postcolonial nationalism, this represents a form of political articulation from the periphery as put forth by Chatterjee (1993), reinforced by subaltern concepts from Guha (1983) and Spivak (2023), as well as “counter-politics” in the style of Gramsci (1971) and Nanulaitta (2009). Compared to Aceh, with its religious and day roots (Amir & Saleh, 2013), or West Java with the military strength of Siliwangi (Sudarmanto, 2007), Malukan resistance combined ideological, armed, and diplomatic power, as seen in the activities of PARPIM and KRIM (Luhukay, 1982). Rejecting “rijksverband” and taking the Namlea office became structurally and symbolically effective forms of postcolonial nationalism (Leirissa, 1975a; Van der Wal, 1977).

The contribution of Malukan nationalists to the discourse of postcolonial nationalism represents a significant shift from the dominance of decolonisation narratives centred on Java to peripheral re-

gions such as Maluku. Using Chatterjee's (1993) this approach, Maluku's struggle through organisations like PIM, PRIMA, KRIM, and PARPIM shows how local political structures were formed autonomously to reject colonial co-optation and assert Republican identity (Amal, 2010; Luhukay & Touwe S, 1996). Within the political settlement framework, the power of the people and local elites combined to form a counter-hegemonic coalition against NICA's dominance (Di John & Putzel, 2009; Khan, 2010). It affirms that Indonesian nationalism emerged from the collective articulation of subaltern communities (Guha, 1983; Spivak, 2023). In contrast to Aceh, rooted in religious scholars and political Islamism (Amir & Saleh, 2013), or West Java with a military base (Sudarmanto, 2007), Malukan nationalism was cross-community and diaspora-based, uniting media, diplomacy, and local mobilisation (Gramsci, 1971; Suleman, 2010). This contribution forms a new epistemic basis for Indonesian decolonisation on a global scale (Nanulaitta, 2009; Nurbantoro et al., 2022).

This article makes a valuable contribution to enriching academic understanding of the decolonisation process and the formation of Indonesian national identity by highlighting the role of Malukan nationalists, who have long been relatively marginalised in the dominant historiography focused on Java. Through a theoretical approach rooted in postcolonial nationalism, political settlement, and subaltern studies, this study presents a more diverse and in-depth perspective on how local political forces actively participated in formulating and advocating the idea of nationhood from geographic and social positions outside the centres of power. By exploring the roles of organisations such as PIM, PRIMA, KRIM, and PARPIM, this article reveals that the struggle for independence and national integration was not only driven by forces from the centre but was also sustained by local dynamics rich in values of solidarity, political agency, and ideological consciousness. Thus, this article not only broadens the horizons of Indonesian nationalism studies but also offers an essential contribution to the global discourse on decolonisation by placing the Malukan experience as an integral part of a more inclusive and dialogical national narrative.

## CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the involvement of Malukan nationalists in the National Revolution was an integral part of the inclusive and multi-centred construction of Indonesian nationalism. Through the lens of postcolonial nationalism theory and political

settlement, it is evident that their struggle was not limited to physical resistance against NICA but also included ideological resistance through the formation of local organisations such as PIM, PRIMA, KRIM, and PARPIM. Malukan nationalists, both in their homeland and the diaspora, succeeded in building solidarity networks across islands, religions, and social classes to reject colonial co-optation and assert the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. These efforts show that Indonesian nationalism was not a single narrative originating from the centre but a collective product of various politically conscious subaltern communities actively constructing alternative power structures. This research enriches Indonesian historiography by placing Maluku in the mainstream of national struggle history and global decolonisation discourse. It demonstrates the importance of rereading history through local, maritime, and non-Java perspectives to create a national narrative that is more geographically and ideologically representative and just.

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