

The changing perspective of international relations in Indonesia

I Gede Wahyu Wicaksana ✉

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Abstract

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The changing perspective of international relations in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article explores the development of international relations (IR) in Indonesia with special focus on the changing trends in its theoretical perspectives. It argues that the academic works examined reflect the ways in which Indonesia's IR scholars perceive and theorize the nature of the dynamics of external political environments and their connections to the state's foreign relations. The argument is elaborated in two related parts. The first section discusses the theoretical perspectives that developed during the Cold War period, which focuses on the propensity toward historical realism and regionalism. The second part of the discussion examines recent developments in which Cold War perspectives have been reconsidered, and in many respects modified into three new categories of theoretical thinking, namely reform, resistance, and eclecticism. The changing theoretical trends reveal that Indonesia's IR scholarship is open and innovative. The conclusion comments on the development of the Indonesia's IR.

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1 Introduction

This article explores the development of international relations (IR) in Indonesia with special focus on the changing trends in its theoretical perspectives. Particularly, it seeks to respond to Hadiwinata's (2009) paper published in this journal, providing details on how the discipline of IR in Indonesia has been hampered by non-academic factors, such as government policy. The government's cooptation of university management, including the curriculum, staff development, research projects, and financial matters, has confined the space for lecturers to expand the scope, quality, and quantity of their academic output through conducting serious scientific inquiries in the specialized field of study. Besides this, as a consequence of an educational policy which encourages universities to be financially autonomous, higher education is becoming a more and more commercialized service. Students are treated as an essential source of revenue, so that the number of new students admitted to the programs offered by universities continues to increase. In order to meet the learning targets, lecturers are obliged both to spend more time teaching and supervising their students so the learning process is quicker, and to allow them to graduate with grades which are merely satisfactory. Over the long run, this unfavorable academic atmosphere has led to a lowering of productivity among Indonesian IR academics with respect to the production of quality research and publications deserving international recognition. Hence, they cannot contribute significantly to the advancement of the IR discipline, either at a domestic or an international level (Hadiwinata, 2009, pp. 56–81).

Hadiwinata's paper clearly shows that there was an influence of the political and economic context on Indonesia's IR academic spheres. However, it fails to recognize other intriguing points, such as the fact that, despite the influence of politics IR scholars are able to develop theoretical perspectives which are worthy of attention and appreciation. This article intends to move away from the issue of the links between knowledge and politics and their effect on IR. Rather it looks at the development of IR scholarship in Indonesian universities. The focus is on the historical evolution of the scholars' theoretical perspectives since the mid-1950s when IR began to be taught at tertiary institutions, and further highlights the recent tendencies of theoretical discourses.

The exploration is divided into two categories; Cold War perspectives and post-Cold War perspectives.

The above mentioned theoretical typologies are constructed through a survey of existing literature representative of the field of IR which is written by Indonesian scholars. The survey was limited to those published scholarly works which are available at the library collections of five universities where the IR program was established before 1990 (before the Cold War ended), such as Universitas Gadjah Mada, Universitas Indonesia, Universitas Padjajaran, Universitas Parahyangan, and Universitas Airlangga. The IR graduates from these universities later contributed to founding IR programs in other universities in the post-Cold War period. Thus, these five universities can be assumed to be the pioneering institutions where Indonesia's IR scholarship originated. The materials examined are ones which are usually used as references, alongside the literature written by foreign scholars, to teach IR core units, such as introduction to world politics, theories of IR, diplomacy and conflict, dynamics of regional relations, contemporary global issues, and Indonesia's foreign policy. These selection criteria of locations and publications were made in order to trace the record of continuity and change in the production of theoretical ideas disseminated in the Indonesia's IR programs.¹

The survey demonstrates that Indonesia's IR lecturers, researchers, and practitioners are certainly productive. They publish textbooks and articles, undertake research, and participate in various academic conferences. This article argues that the academic works examined reflect the ways in which Indonesia's IR scholars perceive and theorize the nature of the dynamics of external political environments and their connections to the state's foreign relations. The argument is elaborated in two related parts. The first section discusses the theoretical perspectives that developed during the Cold War period, which focuses on the propensity toward historical realism and regionalism. The second part of

1 The survey was undertaken between March and September 2015. It could collect 243 relevant Indonesia's IR academic works, including books, journal articles, and conference proceedings; 57 teaching materials such as handouts, as well as 18 IR curriculum guidebooks. In addition to the survey, personal communications were conducted to consult with IR scholars affiliated to non-university institutions, such as research centers, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. This is to enrich the understanding of the topic of study.

the discussion examines recent developments in which Cold War perspectives have been reconsidered, and in many respects modified into three new categories of theoretical thinking, namely reform, resistance, and eclecticism. The changing theoretical trends reveal that Indonesia's IR scholarship is open and innovative. As Popper (2002) asserts, the willingness to bestow and further explore different paradigms will progress the field of study, and eventually augment the scholarship. The conclusion comments on the development of the Indonesia's IR.

2 The Cold War perspectives

At the outset, IR in Indonesia was not defined as an independent discipline. It was one major in the curriculum of the Department of Political Science and Administration Studies. Only after the return home of IR graduates from overseas, and their assumption of academic positions at universities, was IR established as an autonomous field of study, whereby lecturers and students could exercise their distinct scientific tradition, including their own unique theoretical perspectives. Since IR in Indonesia was born in the Cold War period, it is understandable that the early developments in theoretical discourse were much influenced by high political themes embedded in the global phenomena of proxy war extending from both the East–West bloc rivalries and the revolutionary events of Third World decolonization between the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, following the rise of regional supranational entities over the following decades, Indonesia's IR perspectives changed to shed more light on the state's behavior in the making of regional intergovernmental institutions which are effective, but at the same time have limited membership. The position of Indonesia within such dynamics was described and explained, resulting in the development of two theoretical approaches: historical realism and regionalism.

2.1 *Historical Realism*

Historical realism is the oldest theoretical approach of IR taught at Indonesia's universities. It was adopted by Indonesian IR scholars from Asian political leaders and social thinkers who established the basic tenets of knowledge regarding decolonization and state building in newly independent Third World countries. Therefore, history and

philosophy become important tools of explanation in studying political events. It requires an understanding of the background of the nation or community; what the origins of a particular social and political order are and how it is initiated in a society clarifies the conditions under which the values and systems of modern civilization would be accepted, or otherwise (Negoro, 1952). This way of thinking about politics and political systems gave birth to the idea of Indonesia as a unique country whose ethnically diverse communities were willing to be united in the struggle against the colonial masters. One of the reasons was because they had the historical stories of being governed by local kingdoms that were successful in generating the feeling of oneness in the Nusantara archipelago (Sumantri, 1963). On this notion, Abdulgani (1957a) compared Indonesia and other Asian polities, such as India, China, and Turkey, as having similarities in their historical nature i.e. of having been great nations in the past. Dimiyati (1952a) suggested that such Asian nationalist political thinking was the platform of politics for the modern Asian societies, especially Indonesia.

Historical realism stressed the relationship between the external environment and the decision-making characteristics of the foreign policy of postcolonial states. However, unlike in the social sciences, historical realism did not elucidate cause-effect relationships between outside and inside influences. It tended to be descriptive, concentrating on chronology and the details of foreign policy affairs. This made the perspective rich in specific historical information, but poorly constructed as a theoretical model. IR was taught as if it were the study of world history. The IR Program at Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta played a leading role in elaborating historical realism in the IR curriculum. IR lecturers at this university perceived international political thought as a by-product of the history of world society. The interaction constantly taking place between historical factors and international actors constructed the way foreign policy was formulated and carried out. An interesting example of historical realist work which gives an insight into this point of view focuses on the crisis in the Middle East region during the 1950s. It contains plenty of historical accounts of the actors' relationships which depict conflicting situations. However, the perception is rather simplistic. In an international system characterized by conflicting states, the authors believe that each state will build alliances based on their ideological affiliations alone (Fakultas Sosial Dan

Politik Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1956). Historical realists considered the importance of ideology as a factor in international politics.

Indonesian scholars' penchant for historical realism resembled a consideration of thinking of national history as a crucial element in the reading of the country's external affairs. Historical realism emerged as a form of intellectual resistance to Western colonialism. [Abdulgani \(1957b\)](#) regarded the advent of the state's foreign policy doctrine, known as *politik luar negeri bebas aktif* (independent and active foreign policy), the result of contemplating empirical cases in the past, which signified the learning of lessons from the history of international peace and conflicts. In line with this view, Sukarno's policy of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism – which was promoted to expand Asian-African solidarity – was celebrated as the optimal strategic option for managing Jakarta's relations with the Cold War powers ([Notosutardjo, 1962](#)). However, such an example of the historical realists' assessment of Sukarno's preferences engendered sharp criticism from the positivists/behaviorists. For instance, [Moestafa \(1961\)](#) was concerned about the historical realists' ignorance of the elementary principles of science, especially the value-free position, despite the lack of awareness of the standard epistemology of social science which emphasized the clarity of research procedures and valid analytical instruments.

Regardless of the positivist/behaviorist critique, the historical realists were steadfast, following a perspective of realism which in essence displayed universal features. They conducted research and published by referring strictly to the classic realist concept of the struggle for national interests in anarchical world politics. Inspired by Hans Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations*, the focus of analysis of Indonesia's IRs was on the pursuance of national interests in a world of perpetual conflict and contradictions. As a postcolonial state, Indonesia's foreign policy interest was defined as safeguarding territorial sovereignty and achieving economic progress amidst the persistent threat of external powers ([Notowidigdo, 1958](#), pp. 43–48). For this reason, Jakarta stridently defended its claim of authority against the Dutch over West New Guinea, and endorsed what was thought of as the postcolonial cause of revolutionary struggle in other countries, such as Algeria, Cambodia, and Vietnam ([Hidajat, 1964](#)). There was, however, no inclination toward the application of class analysis as exposed in the Marxist/Leninist

perspective. At that time, the best-recognized achievement of Indonesia's historical realists was their description and reinterpretation of world conflict theory.

2.2 Regionalism

The second stage of the evolution of Indonesia's IR perspectives during the Cold War period is called regionalism. From the early 1970s, theories of regionalism and regional security started to take strong hold on the literature of Indonesian IR. The upsurge of regionalism saw the decline of historical realism as the prevailing paradigm. There was a swing away from referring to literature on nationalist political ideas, Third World revolution and decolonization to one focused on functionalism – functionalist political thought, international, and regional organizations. In universities, IR lecturers and students became accustomed to reading the work of scholars such as David Mitrany's *A Working Peace System* (1943) and *The Functional Theory of Politics* (1975), Ernst B. Haas' *Beyond the Nation-state: Functionalism and International Organization* (1964), and Michael J. Brenner's *Technocratic Politics and the Functionalist Theory of European Integration* (1969). Academic interest in studying functionalism and regionalism was induced by the growing importance of the role and presence of regional organizations in world politics, particularly displayed by the progressive institutionalization of the Western European states under the European Economic Community. The belief in regionalism was strengthened following the successful formation of the Southeast Asian regional intergovernmental institution known as Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, in which Indonesia was one of the founding members alongside Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Philippines.

The perspective of regionalism in Indonesia's IR consisted of two related elements; the definition of a region and the country's position in and contribution to establishing and maintaining regional order. A region was understood as a grouping of states in a certain geographical area of the world. The region's members were arranged based on the interplay of various factors which might lead to the pursuance of some shared objectives. These factors include geographic proximity, demographic affinities, historical background, economic potentials, and

political ideology (Mas'ood, 1989, chapter 5). This kind of approach was used to explain why the five original members of ASEAN are regarded as being in the same region of Southeast Asia, because they are neighbors, are members of the Malay ethnic group, experienced colonialism, are forging policies to counter Communist expansion, as well as possessing similar economic resources. It was expected that due to such favorable circumstances the ASEAN members would readily become involved in the regional organization underpinned by common interests (Amal, 1974).

With this conception of region, Indonesia's regionalists, such as Mochtar Kusumaatmadja (1983), perceived Jakarta's relations with regional and global powers in a model of concentric circles which signaled foreign policy priorities. At the core were the ASEAN countries. Indonesia placed ties with ASEAN as its most important foreign policy agenda. The Southeast Asian organization was imagined to be the cornerstone of the state's strategic external activities. Outside the circle of ASEAN were the Asia-Pacific countries, especially Japan and the United States, which were Jakarta's key economic and trading partners. The outermost circle was designated for the links with developing countries gathered in the organization of the Non-Aligned Movement as well as countries in the Western European region. The importance of the third circle to Indonesia was explained in terms of economic, social, and cultural relations. The concentric conception, however, did not make any mention of the position of the bloc of socialist states of the Soviet Union. Perhaps, this was because the regionalists were aware of the trend in Jakarta to lean toward the Western capitalist bloc.

Notwithstanding the fact that the regionalist discourse of building interstate institutions was becoming pervasive in Indonesia's IR literature of the 1970s and 1980s, the overtones of realism continued to affect the IR modules, specifically those offered at universities located in the eastern areas of the country such as that Universitas Airlangga. IR lecturers at this university defended the relevance of realism. In the references used to teach IR's major lecture topics units, such as introduction to international politics, theories of IR, and Indonesia's foreign policy, it is noticeable that they remained faithful, standing by the doctrine of state sovereignty and its centrality in international politics. It was assumed that the state-faced security threats arising from an unpredictable external situation. The fundamental objective of

diplomacy was said to be to pursue the national interest of assuming a high profile position in Southeast Asia, contrary to the regionalist's view i.e. supporting the establishment of regional institutions (which would only hinder the achievement of Indonesia's critical national interests) ([International Relations Department Universitas Airlangga, 1984](#)). In this context, from the new tendencies of regional politics there arose contending IR perspectives in Indonesia's IR programs. Their contentiousness revolved around the necessity for Jakarta to enlist regional institutions for the purposes of foreign policy.

It is worth noting, however, that Indonesia's regionalists do not aspire to emulate the success of regional integration as practiced in Western Europe. They even contend that the foundation of regional intergovernmental organizations should be followed by a relinquishing of a functional part of state sovereignty to the supranational entity, which will act as a manager of regional economic, political, technical, military, and security collaboration. Therefore, a scheme of alliance such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is not prescribed in the Indonesia's regionalist works. Different from the Western idea of collective security in the form of military alliances, Indonesia's regionalists introduced the concept of national and regional resilience. Although this conception was not introduced by scholars working as formal and permanent lecturers at Indonesia's universities, but affiliated to research and think-tank institutions such as the Jakarta-based Center for Strategic and International Studies as well as Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional (Institute of National Resilience), it was accepted and taught on a university IR program. Universitas Gadjah Mada offers a master's program in national resilience which is staffed by IR scholars.

National and regional resilience stemmed from Indonesia's strategic thinkers, who considered that the security of the ASEAN states was highly dependent on their ability to accomplish domestic tasks ([Wanandi, 1984](#), p. 305). It appears to be more inward-looking in orientation. Through the concept of national and regional resilience, Jakarta declined to collaborate in any external powers' involvement in Southeast Asian affairs. A military alliance was regarded as posing a bigger risk to regional stability than any potential benefit, because of the counterproductive effect of an alignment policy with a great power which risked straining relations with the other great powers. The strategic vision did not mean prioritizing the military aspect in international

politics. Rather, the condition would be attained through the mobilization of the state's overall national capacities including economic development, political order, and the spirit of nationalism (*Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional, 1983*). The originator of the concept of national and regional resilience, *Moertopo (1976)*, emphasized the imperative of maintaining national resilience in order to achieve regional stability. Moertopo further asserted that all nations in Southeast Asia had the potential to cope with their own internal economic, social, political, and security issues. Thus, there was no need to ask external parties for protection. Moertopo argued that the essence of national and regional resilience was a project of building self-confidence to be the core instrument of the state's foreign security policy.

3. The Post-Cold War perspectives

The question, then, is: in what ways are these two Indonesian IR perspectives still relevant to today's academic context and analytical research frameworks? This section seeks to address this question by exploring recent developments in theorization within Indonesian IR scholarship. It is argued that changes in international politics have promulgated three new tendencies in scholarship: reform, resistance, and eclecticism. The tendency toward reform refers to academic activities which demonstrate a willingness to adjust their long standing paradigm of study to the development of the latest empirical situation. Resistance is visible in the objections to the demand of perspective change and revision of methodological principles to deal with the current developments. The third tendency, eclecticism, is perhaps the most flexible academic stance, whereby scholars are able to integrate their views, activities, and to some extent institutional values, with contemporary issues to maintain their relevance. It is important to note that the 1997–98 East Asian Financial Crisis which led to the downfall of Suharto's New Order regime, and gave birth to the democratic consolidation in Indonesia, has opened up larger intellectual space for IR specialists in the country to articulate their ideas.

Indonesia's IR scholars argue that the end of the Cold War has set out a new and more complex world of IRs. In this context, the discipline of IR faces an unprecedented surge in global scale phenomena with their respective implications to the international system of states

(Sudarsono 1996; Pareira 1999). In the process of learning, Indonesia's IR academics are acclimating themselves to the emergence of three interrelated trends in the study of post-Cold War politics.

Firstly, the United States is the only political and military superpower. Indonesian IR scholars accept this as a fact. However, they differ from one another in respect to how Washington can shape and control the transformed post-Cold War order. This in turn generates two contending views. On the one hand, the United States will continue to rely on its global military forces to affect strategic dynamics in the world. This is expressed, for example, by Bhakti (1995) who is convinced that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the presence of the American armed forces in vital regions such as East Asia and the Pacific has been the leading factor in the process of power balancing and rebalancing, albeit that regional states, especially China, are on the rise. Over the next decade, however, the American influence will diminish due to the undermining effects of the costly war on terrorism brought about by the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. The cost of the war is exacerbated by the burden imposed by domestic economic stagnancy. The impact of these events has weakened the United States' national power. Meanwhile, American grand strategy to revitalize its dominance will adversely disturb the stability of the current international system (Yuliantoro, 2005). On the other hand, Jailani (2005) argues that the United States uses mechanisms of global governance which rising powers, such as China, find hard to accept. American soft power is the significant factor preserving the global *status quo*. From a theoretical perspective, these two arguments represent the debate between power politics and liberal institutionalism.

Secondly, concomitant with the shift in global structure, Indonesia's IR scholars also hold the view that the state (usually a sovereign state) is no longer the predominant international player exerting control over world politics. Rudy (2003a) and Winarno (2011) posit that a pluralization of international actors has come about as a result of the growing importance of the role of non-state actors in influencing and setting out global agendas beyond the classic realm of foreign policy issues, namely, global justice, human security, environmental protection, cosmopolitan identity, and popular democracy. Subsequently, the contents of IR teachings, demonstrated by the post-Cold War lecture unit guides of the five universities collected in this study, were upgraded to

encompass the so-called 'low political phenomena'. One interesting outcome that follows from this is the broadening of IR studies at Indonesia's universities. There is a growing interest in IR research and publications referring to non-mainstream theoretical perspectives, such as the English School, constructivism, feminism, postmodernism, and critical theory of the Frankfurt school of thought. In particular, this brings the structure of the 'third debate' in IR, i.e. the disagreement between the rationalists (neorealists and neoliberals) and the postpositivists, into the evolution of IR in Indonesia.

Thirdly, Indonesia's IR scholars, for instance [Yani \(2010\)](#), realize that as a consequence of the changing contours of world politics, borders between domestic and international milieus are blurring. The topic of the interrelationship between the domestic and the international turns out to be a fascinating area of study, and accordingly it is receiving greater attention from academics and practitioners. This nurtures a new practice for Indonesia's IR scholars; to consider the interrelatedness of aspects of local and global issues as a crucial variable of inquiry, such as on regional security issues in Southeast Asia ([Sungkar, 2008](#)), local conflict analysis and resolution ([Hadi, 2007](#)). These authors conclude that globalization accelerates the process of localizing international affairs and the internationalizing of local affairs which can take place in any case that is being examined. These views on the contemporary epistemological issues in IR provide the basis for the shaping of the recently elaborated perspectives.

3.1 Reform

The call for reform is developing into two strands of theoretical perspective; global governance and power politics. The focus is on themes of what the major trends of world politics are, and the place of Indonesia as a sovereign state in the dynamic post-Cold War international politics. [Novianto \(2010\)](#) and [Wibisono \(2006\)](#) see the increasingly important agenda of regime construction to ensure a viable order among states. The states choose to participate in intergovernmental institutions and cooperation because they want to cope with common problems. For Indonesia, according to [Irsan \(2010\)](#), international organization is a useful tool to negotiate interstate issues. Jakarta urges ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the Group of 20 (G20) to

talk about economic, political, and security issues among major players in the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN allows for a normative framework by which Indonesia can establish itself as a 'building block' of the Asia-Pacific community.

The nuance of regionalist rationale continues to characterize the project of scholarship reform, but is revised with weight strongly accorded to global governance instead of national and regional resilience. It even expands to cover the issues highlighted in rival perspectives of power politics, such as state and regional defense configuration. [Laksmiana \(2012\)](#) notes that the rise of defense diplomacy in Southeast Asia (either in bilateral or multilateral schemes) with nearly all important regional powers is evidence of the strategic value of the institutionalization of security and defense cooperation, even though regional ideological tensions have been confined to history. Bearing this tendency in mind, the vision has shifted to become more outward-looking, compared to the stance of the 1980s.

Amidst the rise of the new extra-regional institutions in East Asia and the Pacific, Indonesian regionalist thinkers, however, maintain the relevance and centrality of ASEAN in Jakarta's regional and global relations. [Anwar \(1994, 2010b\)](#) stresses the existence of a mutual relationship between Indonesia and ASEAN. Indonesia's persistent and positive contributions to establishing intraregional cooperation and stability in Southeast Asia make it recognized by other member countries as the ASEAN leader. Through ASEAN, Indonesia can develop various constructive forums to expand its political values, regulate interstate relations, and manage international crises affecting smaller states in the region.

In terms of policy, [Jabali \(2001\)](#) argues that the resurgence of various global governance practices has impacted on the inclusion and application of liberal thinking into the conduct of individual state governments. The discourse of liberal reform intensifies the act of good governance, advocating ideals, and principles based on the premise that the state is required to provide sufficient public goods to meet the needs of the entire society it governs, comprised of primary necessities such as security, prosperity, democracy, and the rule of law. As a result, IR scholarship comes up with two different areas of analysis that in essence stand in contrast. The first theme reveals the enthusiasm of scholars to exploit a neoliberal perspective to study and research

Indonesia's roles in a number of international organizations, with their specific interest in diplomatic fora. Inquiries are focused on assessing the extent to which Jakarta is able to play significant roles in developing a particular set of international regulations as well as commitments, and more importantly how it can pursue the goals of state diplomacy within the organization (see for example, [Hermawan *et al.*, 2013](#)). The second theme is represented by scholarly work on the effect of the socialization of international norms on Indonesia's domestic structure and public policy. The objective of this kind of study is to examine the process of norm localization, the response of the government, and the prospect of internal empowerment. Some popular issues like trade, business, information, health, transportation, labor, technology, and education have been highlighted as components of the study ([Silalahi, 2010](#)).

The implication of the changing perspective toward global governance is discernible in two sets of interrelated conceptions about the existence of the state and its foreign policy implementation. On the state, [Wuryandari *et al.* \(2009\)](#) argues that a sovereign state actor renews its national vision and identity. Aspects of globalization are responded to by reforming state agencies, allowing for more societal involvement in the policy-making process, and incorporating global agreements into the state's governmental affairs. In this context, the state is envisioned as becoming an entity with a cosmopolitan identity. The Indonesian government designates this discourse as a feature of the state's national identity. For instance, when speaking at the forum of the Indonesian Council on World Affairs in 2005, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono stated his view on Indonesian identity as '...the country with the fourth largest population in the world; the home of the world's biggest Muslim society; and the world's third-largest democracy'. With these markers of identity, the president further revealed that Indonesia is '...the country where democracy, Islam, and modernity can go hand-in-hand'. Yudhoyono's concept is interpreted as the expression of a reconciliatory and accommodationist stance toward elements of globalized development in the form of democracy and modernity, as well as the socially constructed identity of being a Muslim society ([Anwar, 2010a](#), pp. 34–35).

On the changing politics of foreign policy, [Rudy \(2003b\)](#) and [Sudarsono \(1995\)](#) argue against the importance of global governance.

They refer to Kenneth Waltz's neorealism, according to which power distribution in international systems forces states to manage their external policy in order to respond properly to the behavior of the superpower (albeit that the Cold War is over). By definition, the international system is assumed to be both dangerous and exploitative, by virtue of the contradictory attitudes and interests of the great powers, difficult to control even by international laws, norms, and institutions. Furthermore, great power politics – manifested in competition and conflict – will continue to characterize regional and global politics. [Catley and Keliat \(1997\)](#) verify the power politics argument by analyzing the impact of the anarchic nature of the relationships between regional powers in the unresolved dispute in the South China Sea. The claimant states' attitudes toward each other are driven by the nature of the great power interaction, primarily between China and the United States.

Contrasting the neorealist view, [Djalal \(1997\)](#), in his work on the transformation of strategic affairs in Indonesia's foreign policy during the 1990s, argues that theory of systemic power politics does not provide an explanatory basis for understanding why, in a continuously anarchic world, a regime's foreign policy can change; which circumstances lead to the alteration of the state's international standing, despite its external environments being continually hostile and unsafe. The 'black box' of the state must be opened up and investigated to observe what is happening inside alongside the influences exerted from the outside world. Hence, the theory should combine at least two kinds of foreign policy actors; domestic and global actors that affect the decision-making process. [He \(2008\)](#) calls the analytical method which uses more than one level 'neoclassical realism'. [Sukma \(1999\)](#) applies this neoclassical realist approach to explain Suharto's changing China policy from suspending Indonesia–China bilateral relationships in the end of the 1960s, to engaging in the processes of normalization during the 1980s. Sukma's study illuminates both domestic and international factors which shaped the preconditions in which the steps toward policy change could take place.

Interestingly, neoclassical realism appears to be an academic fashion with Indonesian IR scholars whose studies focus on contemporary foreign policy analysis, in particular with the increasing role and power of non-state actors in domestic and international contexts, which has put more pressure on decision makers. The studies are grounded in various

issues. Some focus on the implication of the surge in Islamic political groups who enjoy more room to take part in the politics of policy making, while others concentrate on the roles of business associations, media, and parliament. Regarding the academic work on Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy, the question is, given Indonesia is a Muslim majority nation, whether Islam should become an important consideration in Jakarta's IRs with Muslim countries; whether Indonesia uses its Islamic identity to engage the Muslim world for political, economic, and strategic affairs. The inquiries elucidate the possibility of making connections between ideational creation seen in the attributes of Islamic symbolism, such as Muslim solidarity, and the material political orientation and policy preference of the ruling regime. To address the question, the neoclassical realists make connections which are built through the systemic, the state, and the societal levels of analysis by employing three variables including elite interest, domestic political structure, and external situation. They serve as the explanatory units of whether, and how, Islam is present in the state's international actions. The arguments are summarized below.

[Sihbudi \(1997\)](#) recognizes that state identity, which is shaped by the existing culture or religion of the society, determines the role of Islam in foreign policy. As most elements of Indonesian society profess the Islamic religion, regardless of the pluralistic nature of the Indonesian Muslims, the country is assumed to have an Islamic identity. State identity defines who we are and who the 'others' are, thus determining national interests. To fulfill that, state identity leads the conduct of foreign policy. With this in mind, [Sihbudi \(1995\)](#) presents a view that states – which are founded on the grounds of Islam or which are constitutionally accorded on Islam, as commonly encountered in the Gulf region – are highly likely to pursue Islamic-related interests in their IRs. On the other hand, [Sukma \(2003\)](#) emphasizes that in a state with a Muslim majority like Indonesia, the role of Islam has to adapt to formal constraints in influencing foreign policy, even though there are some points where leaders with Islamic vision or the power of Islamic political movements have been able to challenge the state's secular identity and foreign policy. It has something to do with the foundation of the state, as a result of a compromise between Islam and secular nationalism, which creates a dual identity dilemma.

Commenting on the contending views on the position of Islam in Indonesia's external policy, [Azra \(2006\)](#) agrees with Sihbudi, by saying that for a particular reason Islam is an influential factor to Jakarta's foreign relations, despite the fact that the state is founded on a secular identity. For instance, due to the fact that long-established intersociety and intercultural relations between Indonesian Muslims and the Middle Eastern Muslims contribute to constructing cordial relationships between the government in Jakarta and its Muslim counterparts; the Indonesian government is always cautious in responding to developments pertinent to the Muslim world. This is clearly demonstrated by the government's policy on formalizing bilateral links with Israel which is objected to by the Indonesian Muslims.

Elite interest affects how Islam exists in the state's foreign policy. For example, in the case of Indonesia's attitude toward the Bosnian massacre, [Suryadinata \(1996\)](#) argues that the internal environment provided tangible and intangible circumstances for shaping national interests. This internal environment consists of national ideology, domestic politics, geographical condition, economic development, and military capability. The need to embrace Islamic political forces to buttress the regime's legitimacy against a disloyal military made President Suharto take a sympathetic stance on the Bosnian Muslims, but was not expressed in terms of the pursuance of Islamic solidarity with the Bosnians. [Perwita \(2007\)](#) indicates that there is a domination of the ruling elite in the construction of national interest in the context of Indonesia's involvement in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, thus it is closely associated with the regime's interests – mainly political legitimacy and survival – and pushes the general public away from it. Therefore, the policy makers' interests and preferences determine Islam's presence in foreign policy. The elite determine whether Islam will be accommodated or marginalized in foreign policy due to how they see its importance to the national interest. Perwita and Sukma argue that after Suharto's regime ended, non-governmental organizations had an important place in the decision-making process through public opinion as the practice of democracy took place. However, these Islamic groups have not been able to play their role due to the restriction from the interest and power of the domestic political structures. This limits Islam's influence on foreign policy, and leaves it only as the force of public pressure on the ruling elite.

Sihbudi (1998) notes the fact that a complexity of international outcomes creates the dynamics of external circumstances which affect the use of Islam in foreign policy by a regime. The outcomes consist of the behavior of regional or global powers, transnational non-state actors, international norms and global issues, and crisis situations. The changes in the patterns of regional and global politics will influence the way decision makers conduct foreign relations (Basyar 2001). Even though external circumstances are realities, it is the decision-makers' perception and preference that generate foreign policy choices (Panggabean, 2004). Therefore, only when Islam is regarded as important in international realities, whether as an ideological threat, social movement, conflict, or international regimes, will it then be present in Indonesia's foreign policy (Mashad, 2000).

3.2 Resistance

Regardless of how reformism is progressing across Indonesia's IR programs, a tiny minority of scholars refuses to follow the path of perspective change, especially regarding global governance. They continue to assert the significance of the paradigmatic discipline reflected in the discursive practices of historical realism and regionalism. Although their way of thinking is not as popular as it was during the period of Cold War, the old perspectives are continually being refreshed. Mugasejati and Martanto (2008) criticize the features of global governance and liberal institutionalism which are considered as lacking sensitivity to local social, cultural, and historical bases. Instead, indigenous political thought and agencies may become significant ingredients in the creation of a general IR theory. This criticism, according to Nguitrugool (2012, pp. 723–724), lies in the academics' pessimism about the universal applicability of so-called mainstream theories which originate intellectually in particular Euro-American cultures and histories, demeaned 'Western-centrism', and which have traditionally dominated IR theorization.

In the Indonesian context, Sebastian and Lanti (2010, p. 152) state that there is a lack of any academic enterprise among Indonesia's IR scholars to discover local sources of knowledge to create an Indonesian IRs theory, despite the fact that there are two potential grounds upon which analytical research and theory can be built. One is

the behavior of political leaders as the basis for conceptual formulation, and the second is the account of a specific ethnic group's worldview, influenced by religious and cultural traditions, which could become the foundation of theoretical constructs. They exemplify the concept of power in Javanese political ideas and practices of the state's rulers especially Sukarno and Suharto who reflected the dominance of the Javanese political values and attitudes.

With regard to the ground of theorization, Sebastian's and Lanti's claim is favorable. However, they ignore the evolving trends in Indonesian IR scholarship concerned with significant changes in the world political order. IR scholars in Indonesia are aware of the importance of academic work in contributing to the advancement of indigenous theoretical thought amidst the growing intellectual attention and interests in the innovation of theories beyond the Western traditions. Although this activity is still limited to the project of revitalizing the relevance of the concept and methodology of the older Indonesian perspectives, mainly that of regionalism, [Amal and Armawi \(1998\)](#), [Habib \(1997\)](#), and [Pranowo \(2010\)](#) write that the concept of national and regional resilience in the state's foreign relations has multidimensional aspects which are highly likely to become a source of middle-range theories on Indonesia's foreign policy. The concept contains both local political and cultural values, including Javanese ones, which render an appropriate understanding about the image of Indonesia's national security and its policy implications to the Southeast Asia region. Unlike Sebastian and Lanti, who refuse to look at the connection between the past and the present experiences, Amal, Armawi, Habib, and Pranowo believe that histories of the country's international politics do matter even though world politics continually changes.

3.3 *Eclecticism*

The third response by Indonesian IR academics to the changing landscape of global politics is evident in the pragmatic or eclectic view on the utility of the theory and methodology of research and analysis. [Kosandi \(2013, p. 187\)](#) argues for eclecticism as an appropriate approach to recent IR developments. IR paradigms, confined by strict rules, have only shaped academic studies and research toward one particular way of thinking and doing research. However, it is evident that

IRs phenomena are too complex to be understood from within a single paradigm. IR's metatheory prevents analysts and researchers from undertaking interdisciplinary activities useful to explain the complicated relationships between the different factors behind world affairs. Theorization based on fanatical adherence to any one perspective will tend to marginalize intellectual work, reducing it to abstract explanations of, and in many respects, less feasible solutions to the social events being studied. That is why, according to Kosandi (2013, p. 188), an eclectic approach must be taken to enable an effective juxtaposition of helpful concepts, theories, and methods – even though they stem from contending paradigms – to resolve given problems. Thus, the objective of eclectic theoretical and methodological approach is to advance problem-solving as well as practical uses of theory, which in the end can generate workable policy options.

Eclecticism as explicated by Kosandi contradicts the long held methodological tenets of IR research in Indonesia especially those introduced by Mochtar Mas'oe'd who teaches at Universitas Gadjah Mada. In his 1990 book titled *Ilmu Hubungan Internasional: Disiplin dan Metodologi* (in English translation *The Science of International Relations: Discipline and Methodology*), Mas'oe'd delineates the importance of research tools, such as level of analysis which consists of a unit of analysis and a unit of explanation both of which can vary from individual to systemic levels, concept, theory, and model. IR research is undertaken through the combination of both deductive and inductive logic, hence making and verifying a hypothesis becomes the essential process whereby students and researchers can test their theoretical framework. Regarding the use of theory, Mas'oe'd stands firmly on certain paradigmatic principles. Realism and liberalism are the two most favored paradigms through which general theories, namely balance of power, economic interdependence, and regional cooperation, are applicable. In the 1990s, Mas'oe'd's positivist framework was widely referred to by IR students and lecturers at Indonesian universities as a source of methodological insights in conducting research. Recently, however, Mas'oe'd's positivism is no longer the only favored research paradigm on account of the emergence of postpositivism.

Postpositivist scholars for example Soetjipto and Trimayuni (2013), who are located within a feminist methodology, continue to defend the saliency of working within an exclusive paradigm, and question the

merit of eclecticism. This position insists on the importance of adhering faithfully to the paradigm guidelines. Eclecticism is rejected for an important reason. It pertains to the practice of pragmatism in research, which will tend to obscure firm boundaries between scientific inquiry and commonsense as a human quality. Every field of science is framed through standard procedures, through which the quality of good and bad research is appraised. When anomalies occur in relation to the cogency of the field's specific theories concerning the object of observation, then what needs to be done is to explore other alternatives within the same paradigm, and not to blend peculiar instruments of analysis into a framework that will be used. Given this argument, a cross-paradigm approach to research is regarded as having no basis in epistemological truth (Wicaksana, 2013, pp. 275–290). In response, however, the apologists for eclecticism like Jemadu (2008) point out that the most beneficial aspect for research activity is not only its theoretical assessment but also its empirical affirmation. IR theorists should help policy makers reap these benefits, through their methodological flexibility and inclusiveness.

Kosandi (2013, p. 188) implies that in the interest of policy research the eclectic way is more effective. This is because researchers do not have to focus on one particular paradigm or get involved in any unfinished 'paradigmatic war' in IR. Furthermore, in a practical sense the recommendation of policy options can be more concrete. The inclination toward the adoption of eclecticism for research and analysis is discernible in the scholarly works about post 9/11 topics of strategic, security, and economic issues. The structure of the argument is complex. For example, Djelantik (2015) who focuses on the developments of the Asia-Pacific region, includes overarching investigations into social, economic, cultural, and political factors motivating the regional states' relations and interregional arrangements. Wardoyo (2015) covers the development of security concepts, theories, and their relevance for Indonesia. On the debate regarding the characteristics of East Asian order following the post-Cold War power transition generated by the rise of China's military and economic power, Japan's reorientation of defense policy, and diminishing American strategic dominance, Bandoro (2014) goes beyond the divide between realist balancing and liberal institutionalization

arguments to explain why the region remains relatively peaceful. Order in East Asia is retained through security practices which combine three substantial elements: multilateralism, balance of power, and soft hegemony. In the economic sector, Elisabeth *et al.* (2009) employ multiple approaches to comprehend the prospects of Indonesia's engagement with the ASEAN Economic Community.

4. Conclusion

What can be inferred about the evolving trends of Indonesia's IR scholarship is two-fold. First, scholarship has progressed through a spirit of academic dialogue. At every stage of perspective change, there arises debate between the older and the newer ways of thinking. This is evident in the fact of historical realism's contention against the regionalist argument for the importance of regional intergovernmental institutions to the state's foreign policy goals. At a later stage, disagreement arose between post-Cold War theories, between global governance and power politics, and the resistance to these theoretical streams, which insisted on the relevance of the older perspective of regionalism. On methodological issues, eclecticism is employed by some scholars who carry out mainly policy research and analysis, but receives criticism from others who still believe in the reliability of IR metatheories.

Second, Indonesian scholars in general produce valuable intellectual work which contributes to advancing understanding about the discipline of IR, but they do not intend to explicitly endorse the promotion of a distinct kind of Indonesian IR theory. They prefer to learn and borrow from the established perspectives of IR, and then combine them with their views on the country's external conduct. This with the exception of some regionalists, who have still to grasp the significant contribution of the concept of national and regional resilience which is consonant with local knowledge and perception as an Indonesian response to the trend of perspective reform. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Indonesian scholarship is not original, because the findings of the academic studies are innovative and creative, which can be the prospective ground on which an endeavor to build the Indonesian IR theory will be feasible.

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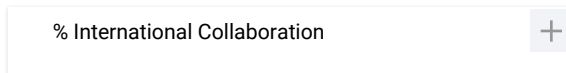
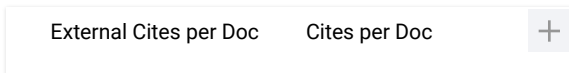
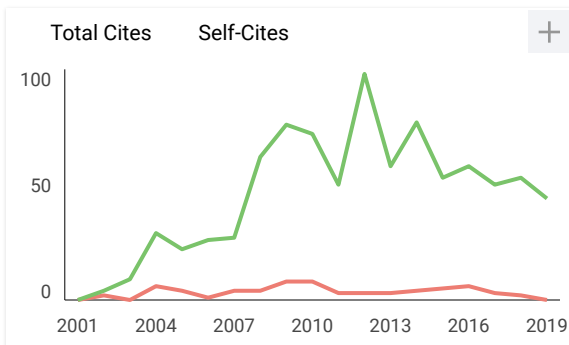
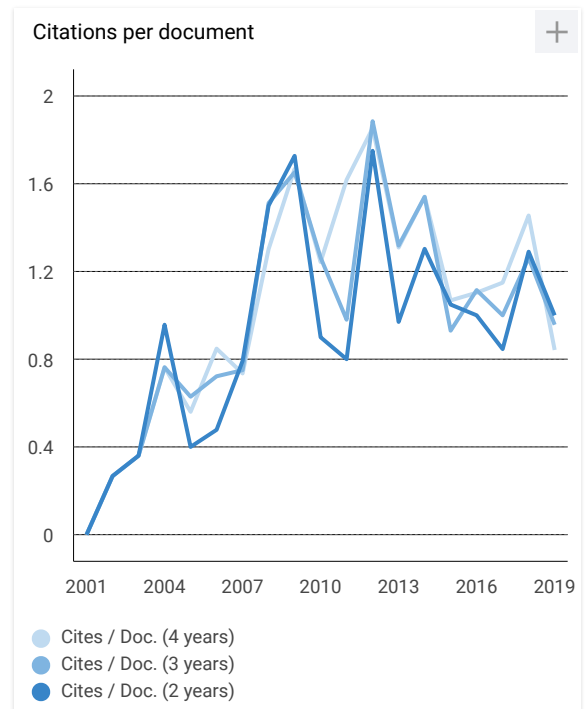
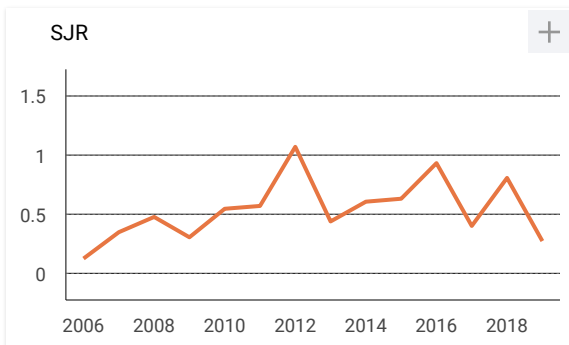
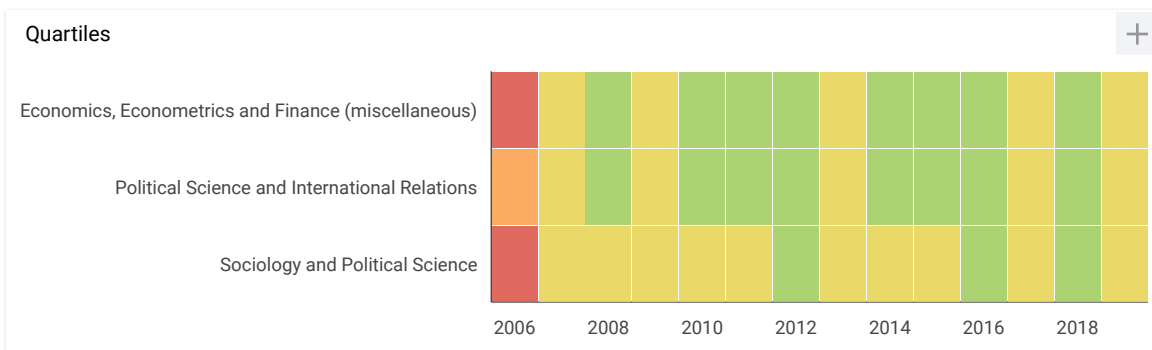
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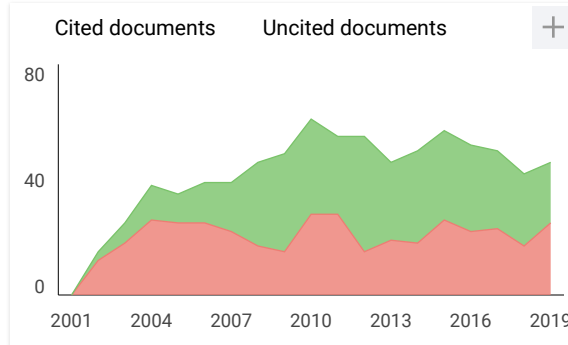
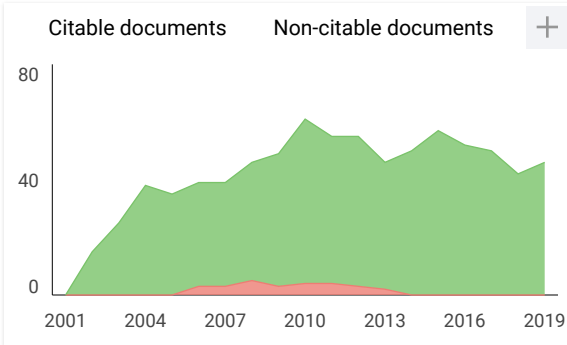
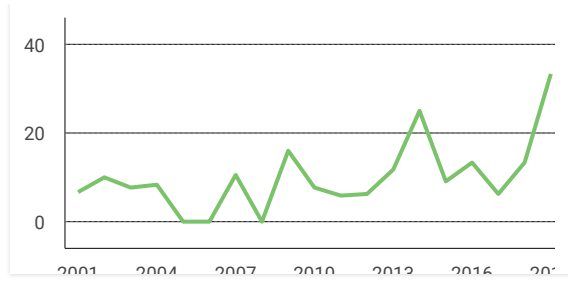
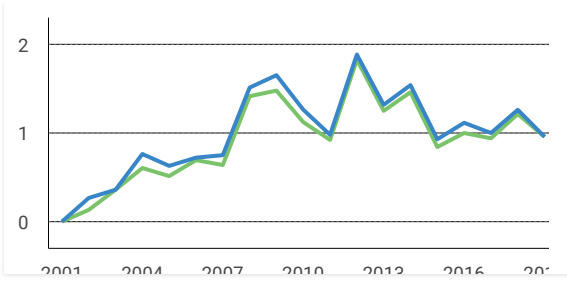
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