

# FULL PAPER

# **Strategic Culture: The Answer of International Relations Study to Overcome Challenges in The Globalized World**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Strategic culture is an alternative perspective in International Relations that emerged because of the inability of realism and neorealism in explaining how a state actor acts against the threat from the another. Basically, this perspective believes that domestic factors such as geopolitical order, national historical experience, political culture and ideology, and military culture and its relationship with society in a country can affect the grand strategy of a state actor in defending itself and how the state actor responds to a threat. Although closely related to the military aspect, but the strategic culture perspective is not only limited to the nature of threats derived from state actors. Therefore, in this paper, the authors try to analyze how relevance is this perspective in explaining the state behavior in response to the new nature of threats that have been arisen as a result of globalization, namely non-traditional threats that are not derived from state actors, such as global terrorism. In analyzing it, the authors use the comparison method by comparing the strategic culture of several countries that confronting the same threat then see how these countries have its own uniqueness and effectivity in combating threat based on their strategic cultures.

**Keywords:** Strategic Culture, Globalization, Non-Traditional Threats, State Behavior

## **Introduction**

Strategic Culture is an alternative perspective in the field of International Relations study. Can be considered as an alternative perspective because Strategic Culture is relatively new, it emerged in 1977 by the first generation of strategic culture thinker, Jack Snyder (1997). In his essay entitled "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operation", it can be seen that the idea of a strategic culture in the study of International Relations arises when Snyder (1977) saw that there was uniqueness in the behavior of the Soviet Union in responding to US nuclear strategy, which is hardly to be explain by classic perspective in International Relations that was very popular in the Cold War era, neorealism. Snyder (1977) stated that in 1974, US Defense Minister James Schlesinger announced that the United States had begun to increase the flexibility of its strategic targeting plans by forming limited nuclear options as a supplement to the massive attack options that had existed before. The rational reason for the establishment of this strategy is to minimize the escalation if the nuclear war between the two sides really happened.

LNO works by limiting targets and scale of nuclear attacks, i.e. targets that are "allowed" to be attacked are only enemy military facilities with the aim of minimizing damage suffered by both parties and limiting the nuclear capabilities of both parties with one shot each. That is, when one party starts an attack, the enemy facilities will be destroyed and leaves one shot left to retaliate (Richelson, 1979). The United States strategist assumes that they can influence the Soviet Union to respond this LNO strategy with the same response (Snyder, 1977).

Snyder (1977) states that the United States prediction of the Soviet Union's response is based on game theory with a scenario if one country attacks with limited strike, there are only two choices left for the attacked country, responding with the same attack or doing nothing. The authors see that the United States strategist uses neorealism logic to predict the behavior of the Soviet Union. Like the neorealism thesis that the international system is anarchy, which means

there is no sovereignty above the state. in this thesis, the state behaviors are highly illuminated by international system. The game theory used by the United States strategist was the US effort to lure the Soviet Union to balance with US strategy as an effort to defend itself in an anarchy system.

The thesis comes from Stephen Walt (1987), he said that if there are two forces that relatively equal in international system, they will try to balance each other, so that it is called balance of power. In the case of the Soviet Union, the prediction of the United States was wrong. Apparently, the Soviet Union did not play in the same way as the United States. Even the United States strategy was criticized by the Soviet Union which sees this strategy is a harm to SALT (Richelson, 1979). The criticism comes because in this strategy there is an element of pre-emptive strike which can actually change the escalation of war into collateral damage for both countries (Snyder, 1977). The wrong strategic prediction of the United States has proven that the behavior of a country is not always only influenced by the existing international system, but there are other factors that determine it.

Based from these conditions, Snyder (1977) stated that state behavior can come from the unique culture found in the country, so that a strategic culture is formed. Snyder (1977) explained that the United States failed to predict the Soviet Union because it overlooked the cultural aspects possessed by Soviet policy makers. He added that things like thinking culture and emotional prejudices also influenced the Soviet Union's policies regarding nuclear strategy.

Snyder (1977) added that the uniqueness of situation, historical heritage, and military culture as well as the role of the military in the policy-making process are also cultural aspects that must be considered in analyzing a state's behavior through a strategic cultural perspective. Then to find out the strategic culture of a country, it can be done by looking at the written military doctrine, as well as the speech of the president and military commander. Although in the context of the Soviet Union such things have the potential to be used as propaganda, Snyder (1977) assures that this is not the main objective, but that there is always a strategic value that reflects what the country wants to achieve stated in such speeches or written doctrine.

Based on Snyder's (1977) explanation, it can be understood that strategic culture is a perspective to analyze how a state behaves in the face of a threat. In this case the internal factors of a country such as the culture of thinking, past experience, the uniqueness of the situation, and military culture are the determinants of a state's actions. Snyder (1977) describes strategic culture in the context of the Cold War where the nuclear situation is a major issue in this strategic cultural discourse. Snyder's (1977) thinking about strategic culture that is closely related to state policy on the nuclear issue is known as the first of the three generation of strategic culture thinking according to Iain Johnston (1995). According to Johnston (1995), the core of the first generation of strategic culture is related to a set of ideas, emotional responses, and patterns of behavior of the country's strategic thinkers related to nuclear issues.

The second wave of strategic cultural thinking was pioneered by Yitzhak Klein (1991) in his article entitled "A Theory of Strategic Culture". Klein (1991) began his explanation by criticizing that there were no more strategic thinkers who initiated a reliable war strategy in achieving national interests after Clausewitz era. Klein (1991) added that in formulating strategies, strategic planners only pay attention to principles that look sufficient and consistent, by identifying various facts that must be considered in strategic planning and which form a logical framework in which the strategy makes sense. However, that is not enough to make a strategy that is reliable enough. Klein (1991) states that to understand a strategy, it is not

enough to just look at a country's national policies, but also to look at the country's strategic cultural factors.

Strategic culture in Klein's (1991) explanation is defined as "the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it" in other words strategic culture in Klein's conception (1991) focuses on establishing military power, where military power is used to achieve political goals in a war, where war is a continuation of politics. In this case it can also be understood that beliefs and attitudes that develop in a country's military play an important role in the formation of the country's strategic culture. Like Snyder (1977), Klein (1991) also states that each country has its own uniqueness that is different from other countries related to strategic culture, where the strategic culture of each country is certainly formed from their internal uniqueness in terms of history, geography, culture national politics, economics, technology, etc. (Klein, 1991). Based on Klein's (1991) explanation, it can be seen that the main focus of the strategic culture discourse is strongly related to military issues and how the military is used to achieve a political goal in war.

Iain Johnston (1995) states that the third generation tends to be more rigorous and eclectic in conceptualizing independent ideational variables, and more narrowly focuses on certain strategic decisions as dependent variables. While Johnston (1995) himself defines strategic culture as an integrated "system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long- term strategic preferences by formulating concepts of role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs ". it means that the strategic culture of a country is influenced by the symbols that develop internally in the country. The series of symbols referred to by Johnston (1995) as mentioned earlier, is closely related to the national culture of thinking, so as stated by some previous scholars such as Snyder (1977) and Klein (1991) that the culture of thinking is a unique aspect of a nation have a major influence on the formulation of a country's strategy.

In his writing entitled *Thinking about Strategic Culture*, Johnston (1995) also explained that there are two methods that can be used to analyze a state's strategic culture, namely cognitive mapping and symbol analysis. Cognitive mapping is designed to capture the structure of a person's causal assertion in relation to a particular policy domain and describe the consequences of the structure. To see this cognitive map, the scholar needs to see official documents released by the authorities related to policy making, or official speeches from the government concerned, then map the causes and effects of the statements contained in the documents and speeches to the policies made.

While symbol analysis becomes important in the study of strategic culture because in this study, cultural aspects of a country are one of the main factors that influence the country's strategy and policy. Johnston (1995) explains that symbols are a representation of culture itself, in other words the culture that develops in a country is communicated through these symbols. So that the culture in question can be studied further.

Based on the previous explanation, it can be seen that there is a different understanding of strategic culture by the three generations. In the first generation it can be seen that the strategic culture is fixated on the nuclear situation where the strategic decisions of a country (in this case the Soviet Union) are based on a culture of thinking and emotional prejudice (Snyder, 1977). In the second generation, based on what was described by Klein (1991) it can be seen that the situation faced by this generation is a military situation or can be said to be conventional war,

where strategic decisions are based on the attitudes and beliefs that develops in military institutions. Whereas the third generation, referring to Johnston (1995) tends to base strategic decisions on the system of symbols that develop in a state. Then the author sees that Johnston (1995) tends to see strategic culture not only applicable in the military realm, but includes the issue of national security, foreign policy, threats, and the use of force.

### **Strategic Culture and Non-traditional Threat: Case Study of Germany and Russia**

Based on the explanation of some scholars such as Snyder (1977), Klein (1991), and Johnston (1995) it can be concluded that strategic culture is a very state-centric perspective. This happened because the scholars explained that strategic culture was only owned by the state and related to how a state response to a threat. Therefore, the relevance of strategic culture began to be questioned in this era of globalization where international relations were no longer dominated only by the state actors.

However, the author sees that this perspective is still very relevant. This happens because the increasingly complex actors in international relations actually present new “problems” for state actors. The “problems” refers to non-traditional threat. The concept of non-traditional threats is understood as a threat that does not come from military power of a state (Caballero, 2006). In other words, traditional threats can mean any threat that is outside the military realm of a country. These threats include terrorism, trans-national crime, insurgency, piracy, humanitarian issues, and even disease outbreaks.

In this paper, the authors take Germany and Russia as case studies to see how strategic culture influences the actions of Germany and Russia in responding to non-traditional threats. In this case, the two countries face the same two problems, but respond differently. The problems are the issue of refugees and terrorism. In responding to the issue of refugees, both Germany and Russia response in completely different way.

Germany implemented an open-door policy in dealing with refugee problems. The policy allows Germany to accept large numbers of refugees. Dempsey (2016) explained that the German policy was based on the German view that the Syrian crisis was a crisis that had a catastrophic impact on a global scale. Russia, on the other hand, has since refused to help refugees from Syria (telegraph, 2015). Even based on the data posted on the UNHCR website (2017), Russia did receive many refugees, which were 126,000. It's just that more than 123,000 of them are Ukrainian refugees, while Syrian refugees have only a few places in Russia.

In dealing with the issue of terrorism, Germany in its White Paper (2016) stated that terrorism is a global threat and tried to contribute to eradicating the threat by deploying 1200 military personnel to Syria in 2015 (The Guardian, 2015). Meanwhile, Russia also took similar steps to deploy its troops in Syria, but Russia has a different view from Germany regarding terrorism. Russia sees terrorism as a real threat, but Russia in its Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) in 2016 views terrorism that emerges in the Middle East and North Africa as a "result" of foreign intervention.

German and Russian policies related to these two issues are certainly related to aspects of the strategic culture of the two countries. The current strategic culture cannot be separated from the historical experience of Germany in World War II. The shadow of what was done by the Hitler regime in World War II helped shape Germany's strategic culture to this day. The fact that Germany started two World Wars made the previous German strategic culture that relied heavily on military and unilateralism originating from the culture of the Prussian Empire then

shifted to a militarism or refused to use the military again (Becker, 2013). Therefore, the norm which later developed into Germany's strategic culture is *Nie wieder Sonderweg* (Never again alone), in the sense that Germany will no longer act unilaterally and views its identity more superior than other nations, but will be more open to acting multilaterally with other European countries (Becker, 2013). Then the next norm is *Nie Wieder Krieg* (Never again war), meaning that the war will never again start from German soil, and Germany itself will never use its military instruments to fight (Becker, 2013).

Despite the slight shift in the Kosovo incident in 1999, Germany finally deployed its military in the war. The policy was a response to the genocide carried out by the Milosevic regime. The military breakdown was carried out on the basis of Germany's sense of responsibility so that an event similar to Auschwitz did not recur, so that a new norm emerged that was Never Again Auschwitz (Schax, 2012). This sense of responsibility arises from the guilt that emerged collectively in German society due to the actions of the Hitler regime during World War II (Becker, 2013). The guilt later turned into a sense of responsibility for Germany to maintain world peace and humanity. Therefore, German foreign policy has always been related to these narratives.

This explains German policy regarding refugees where Germany decided to accept large numbers of refugees when various other countries saw refugees as a threat to national security. This policy relates to the German strategic culture of never again Auschwitz, where Germany does not want a humanitarian crisis on a large scale to occur again. While the sense of responsibility of Germany to maintain peace and protect humanity is a driving force for counter-terrorism. Military instruments have to be deployed because this case concerns the security of the wider community which is part of Germany's responsibility for world peace.

Turning to Russia, Russia's strategic culture largely based on Russian historical experience on both Tsardom and the Soviet's Era. In the Tsardom era, Russia was geopolitically located in the heartland region, and geographically bordering many countries often faced invasions from surrounding countries. Russia's experience makes Russia not easy to trust with other countries, so it relies more on self-reliance. The same event was repeated in the era of World War II in which the Soviet Union which signed the agreement to not attack each other with Germany, instead became the target of Nazi forces' operations, the impact of this event, the Soviet Union suffering such a huge damage. Therefore, in the Cold War, as Snyder explained (1977) earlier, the Soviet Union did not respond to the strategy of the US LNO, because the Soviet Union considered that it was not necessarily the United States actually limiting its nuclear power in accordance with the stated in the LNO. So, if the Soviet Union agrees and has already reduced its nuclear power based on what is desired by the United States, then it is very dangerous for the Soviet Union if it turns out that the United States does not really restrict its nuclear power. It was this experience that made Russia distrust other countries especially in security matters.

In addition, the fact that Russia succeeded in thwarting all invasions faced, also formed the Russian identity as a "European savior". This was also stated by Lavrov (2016), where he said that Russia was the one who saved the International System by thwarting Napoleon's invasion which was seen as destroying the system because he tried to dominate all European land. Therefore, a narrative emerges that Russia views itself as "the great savior". On that basis, according to Lavrov (2016) Russia also identified itself as part of Europe, and deserved to be recognized as part of Europe, but apparently the Europe actually rejected Russia as part of them because Europe itself was afraid of the growth of Russia as a great power from the east (Lavrov , 2016).

This made Russia build its own identity as "The Great Russia" because it was not recognized by Europeans but felt its identity was too high for Asian nations and other Slavic races, even Ukraine which has very close cultural relation in some extends. As stated by Onuch (2015) that Russian and Ukrainian people look at each other negatively towards each other's countries. Russian identity which is not recognized by Europe or the United States forms Russia's negative view of the West as an enemy. Basically, Lavrov (2016) states that Russia regards the West as a Partner, but the overthrow of the Ukrainian president makes Russia see that the West itself is considered to violate the principle of equal security between Russia and NATO. Therefore, Russia's view of the West has also strengthened.

This strategic culture also explains Russia's policies regarding refugees and terrorism at once. First, in the FPC (2016) Russia states that terrorism and civil war in Syria are the work of foreign intervention, if you look at the dynamics that exist, then the foreign party is the West or the United States specifically. This was evidenced by the actions of the United States who wanted to overthrow the regime of Bashar Al Ashad. Russia is suspicious of this action, therefore Russia deployed troops in the purpose of counter- terrorism, while protecting the Ashad regime from the United States at the same time. This statement is based in the Russian FPC (2016) that Russia considers that only the current government regime is capable of stopping the civil war in Syria. In the case of refugees, Russia's suspicion of other parties was also a driving force, Russia suspected that Syrian refugees could be members of terrorist networks.

### **Conclusion**

Strategic culture is an alternative perspective of international relations arising from the failure of neorealism in explaining state behavior in the Cold War era. In its development, there are three generations of strategic culture that have different views regarding what is a strategic culture. The point is that strategic culture is an internal factor that explains a country's behavior regarding security policy, foreign policy, and threats.

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# **Social Science Research in Southeast Asia: Challenges in Studying Parliamentary Institutions**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper introduces challenges in studying parliamentary institutions in Southeast Asia. My focus of research is in three countries' institutions: national parliaments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. In Southeast Asia, it was widely known that studying issues of politics and institutions would have faced more challenges, rather than on cultural issues. This view is arguably no longer valid, however with certain qualification. The comparison of parliamentary tradition between 3 countries – based on observation of the plenary session - reveals that the effectiveness of the parliamentary works are related to the parliamentary procedure, even to culture of work in the countries. Parliamentary structure, procedure and their political culture matters. Therefore, acknowledging these factors will give more research opportunities, if a researcher plans to study the political institution at other countries in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords:** Social Science Research, Southeast Asia, Parliament, Procedure, Political Culture, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore

## **Introduction**

With the coming of democratization wave to Southeast Asian countries in the mid-1980s, researches on political institutions increase (Rüland, 2006, p. 92). Accordingly, study on parliamentary institutions is blooming recently. As known widely, in Southeast Asia, studying issues that considered politically sensitive including the political institution would have been faced more challenges, rather studying cultural issues. During the 1990s, the political studies of Southeast Asian region were usually descriptive and event-chronological (Rüland, 2006, p. 86), implicitly agreeing to what the highly-censored government dictated. The government preferred the publication about development and modernisation in the country (Halib and Huxley, 1996, p. 6). In Southeast Asia, usually before entering the year of 2000, the parliaments were notoriously known as rubber-stamp bodies, following the government in the region that was attributed to authoritarianism, compared to the Western-style liberal democracy. After the Asian financial crisis in 1997-1998, studies about democratization and parliament started to rise. Ziegenhain (2008) had found out that the role of (Indonesian) parliament actually was greater during democratic transition. However, Aspinall (2014) viewed that patronage politics still marked the parliaments, especially during election time. Such contrasting views are interesting to explore. Whether or not the role of parliaments in Southeast has indeed progressing or regressing, the role of other actors or agents apart from executive government, such as parliament and civil society are worth to study in Southeast Asia region too.

Furthermore, with the increasing discussion of global governance and international organization imposes the importance of global agenda, which emphasizing the involvement as many actors as possible, the parliament's participation is required even more by the constituents and public. My research topic which studying the role of (Southeast Asian) parliaments in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is related to this new trend, at least in Europe where I am affiliated with. Thus, in Summer (June-August) 2018, I conducted a research visit and went to the parliaments of three countries in Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, to observe their plenary sessions and to find out more about parliamentary legislations on SDG. While this research on parliament and SDG are still ongoing, I find it interesting to share challenges of researching these institutions, as the main purpose of this book volume. Networking and affiliation indeed influence the researcher's

access to these bureaucratic offices. But knowledge of parliamentary working organs will be helpful for smooth arrangement. Acknowledging these factors will give more research opportunities – and not only challenges -, if a researcher plans to study similar parliaments in Southeast Asia, apart from these countries. Moreover, based on my observation, I find out that the institutional structure and procedure of these parliaments shape their works heavily, which is influenced by the country's political culture. The general view that the Southeast Asian politics are shaped heavily by their executive governments (elites and leaders) are confirmed too, endorsing the view of William Case (2002, 2009) and Rüländ (2012) on the role of elite constellation in the region.

This paper thus introduces challenges in studying parliamentary institutions and typology of parliaments in Southeast Asia, based on observation in collecting data in these three national parliaments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. To present this, this paper is organized into, first, discussing the literature research on the background of social research challenges over time, and how I managed to research on parliamentary institutions (my research topic). Secondly, I introduce the method that I use for my social research: parliamentary ethnography, and how it helps me to observe and pay attention to parliaments that I study. The third part will explain in detail of the works of three parliaments and how the parliaments' structure and procedure explain the lack or sufficient arrangement of the institutions, and analyse these arrangements in comparison. This will show the argument on the influence of institutional structure and procedure with the parliamentary work and tradition, and highlighting the elite's role in parliament, as stated above. The last part is the conclusion of the study.

### **Southeast Asian parliaments are weak?**

During 1990s, parliaments in Southeast Asia was considered weak as the executive government had more spotlight. The emphasis on the countries' leaders and Asian Values were likely to be the cause. The names of Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), Norodom Sihanouk (Cambodia), Ferdinand Marcos (the Philippines), Ne Win (Myanmar), Sukarno and Suharto (Indonesia) and Mahathir Muhamad (Malaysia) are well-known leaders in the region and famous for the citizens even until today. The Asian Values apparently also contributed due to the executive hegemony. The importance of communitarianism and collectivism, compared to individual freedom, entail of respects and loyalties to the leaders of authority are known in this region. No wonder, "clientelistic" system and "patronage" politics were, and somewhat still are, common in Southeast Asia. The parliament during "authoritarian regime" then served as legitimation of the executive's policy. Today, apart from the parliamentary government system, like Malaysia and Singapore, where the executive is part and elected as parliamentary members, usually parliaments are periphery to their executive counterparts.

Furthermore, democratization came a bit late to the regions. It started only when the Asian Financial crisis 1997/1998 reached Southeast Asia, at least Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand needed to adjust their political arrangement. Malaysia's Prime Minister, Mahathir Muhammad survived his seat after the adjustment of the Malaysian economic policy. However, the fall of Indonesia's President Suharto after three decades in reign and the rise of Thailand populist leader Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra – even only for a short time - offered the hope that democracy had finally arrived in Southeast Asia, but not for rich countries as Brunei and Singapore. During this time, parliament also influenced the democratization, like in the case of Indonesian parliament. Nevertheless, the executive government – usually the president or prime minister –has always have central spot in Southeast Asian's politics.

Take the example of Singapore. The country is considered as semi-democratic country. It has regular election, but only one party – People's Action Party (PAP) established in 1959 - always

dominates the politics since its independence in 1965. This one-party government is strong and controls the media and freedom of speech. Yet, Singapore is the most developed country in Southeast Asia with around 320 billion USD Gross Domestic Product/GDP. With such big economic power, its citizens do not mind with authoritative government as long as people's access to basic needs are covered and fulfilled. Singaporean "competitive authoritarian" style is likely to be accepted by the people as long as the country remains stable and prosperous.

In the democratization era, amidst the executive government hegemony, research on parliaments in the Southeast Asia is increasing (Rüland, 2006, p. 93). Parliaments are not rubber-stamp institutions anymore, however, without drastic structural change in parliamentary institution like in South Korea, parliament will remain the same as in previous era. For example in Indonesia, by the continual usage of similar parliamentary procedure, the parliamentary research will report only legislative chronology (see Adiputri, 2015).

Asian Values or also called 'Asian model of democracy' (Neher, 1994) with the characteristics of superior-inferior relationship, personal characteristics, and hierarchical [which] form the basis of the political and social structure of Southeast Asia (Neher, 1994, p. 950) is obviously seen in the parliament. The three parliaments studied here – Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore – still show the tendency of appreciating the executive position better and the parliamentary positions (leaders). Leadership position is indeed prestigious, with many access and opportunity. Leaders may guide to certain agenda (bills) and to certain discussion; determine legislative priority, even determine whether the parliamentary discussion is considered close or open meeting. This then shows the existence of hierarchy, seniority over 'ordinary members' and unequal power relationship among members of parliament (MP).

What is so-called "Asian Values" and any certain pattern or procedural frameworks within the parliament are the *products* of social relationship of the country. This is what social sciences aim to address, that is the explanation of something come up from causal relationship between social phenomena. How could we explain the phenomenon that when the democratization came to the Southeast Asian region, the parliament still suffer from corruption activities (in the case of Indonesia and Malaysia) and is ruled by one hegemonic political party (Singapore)? I realize that changes do not come overnight, and require timely process, however what I found out – at least from studying the Indonesian parliament – when the parliamentary procedure remains the same as before the democratic regime started, the tendency to exercise the similar undemocratic ways persist (Adiputri, 2015).

Despite different parliamentary structure, it must share certain requirements. The parliamentary members are selected by regular election; the members are *representatives* of people from certain constituents, exercising the role of parliament: legislating, overseeing and budgeting. The MP also need to convene at certain time and period throughout the year. There also the task of *speaking* or debate – which why sometimes parliament is called as "speaking government" (Palonen, 2014); and the elected members will work based on the program of his/her political parties but still need to address the constituents' interests in legislation.

In studying the parliaments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, I use the institution theory, especially the historical institutionalism. The theory contends that 'institutions have the ability to influence and determine political strategies and political outcomes...[meaning] that institutions matter due to their ability to shape the strategies and goals of actors, mediate cooperation and conflict and structure political situations' (Allison, 2015, p. 126, quoted from Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, 1992). Specifically, for the historical institutionalism, the

focus of study is ‘the construction, maintenance, and adaptation of institutions’ (Sanders, 2006, p. 42). Therefore, in the discussion section below, I will briefly inform the historical background of the parliament and how this history evolve inside the institution, before presenting the observation of these parliaments’ plenary sessions.

Apart from the (historical) Institutional theory, the parliamentary procedure is also important. The procedure in parliamentary manner sets up and distinguishes the parliament from other institution (Adiputri, 2015, p. 37). The British Parliamentary Procedure, in which Malaysia and Singapore adopt for their parliaments as their colonial legacy, for example, derived its procedure from *A Treatise upon the Law, Privileges, Proceedings, and Usage of Parliament*, written by Thomas Erskine May in 1844, and the newest version is Blackburn and Kennon’s (2003) *Parliament: Functions, Practice and Procedures*. These procedures highlight the parliament’s main job, that is *speaking*. The “speaking” part distinguish the work of Malaysian and Singaporean parliaments, compared to Indonesia’s one. Their ritual agenda, like the questions to the minister in the first hour of plenary session, and laying out of the Plenum for speaking/debating and is divided into government and opposition sides have shown clearly the debate characteristics. This differs from the Indonesian one – which emphasize on the “legislature” work, as seen with the podium for political groups or faction (*fraksi*) to deliver overview/speeches for the bills, and the lay-out is design for listening, rather than speaking.

Thus, theoretically, in order to study the parliamentary institution, a researcher must acknowledge such background of the studied institutions, such as the history and procedure. The theories of historical institution and parliamentary procedure are useful to study the parliament’s and its ceremonial and routine activities too. The next section will discuss the method to study the parliament and the challenges that I found when observing the parliaments.

### **Parliamentary Ethnography**

To study the parliamentary institutions in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, I use parliamentary ethnography. I follow the Anthropologist Emma Crewe (2016) who used this (methodological and theoretical) approach to study the House of Lords (1998-2000) and in the House of Commons (2011-2013). According to Crewe, parliamentary ethnography is doing ethnography in parliament. Ethnography itself is a research technique to engage with people ‘to find out how they act, think, talk and relate to each other’, added with the ethnographers’ reflection as part of the research, rather than attempting to remove their influence from the research findings’ (Crewe, 2016). The reflection on social interaction between the ethnographer and informant is important on perception and interpretation in the research (*ibid*). It is useful to use in the parliament, because the politicians have different roles of representation, from the constituents, from political party, from their peers in the committees etc. thus using straightforward data (like interview, reports, minutes) are not enough. Beside, only a small portion of information can be dig out by asking. I agree with Crewe that studying ‘people’s claims and statements alongside or as part of their culture practices, rituals and conversations’ – one of ethnography’s specialties - is important. However, it is also important to include the contradiction of the politicians’ role and background – the whole process within the parliament – (by informal discussion with secretariat workers and even to MPs themselves, the parliament literature etc.) and the researcher’s observation and reflection for the study, especially the study of parliamentary institutions that I am doing. Parliamentary ethnography in the three parliamentary institutions, combined with interviews and discussion with secretariats and my own experience as former officer within the parliament secretariat provide the whole understanding why things happen as they are, and such is related to the country’s political culture in general.

In my previous study of the Indonesian parliament (Adiputri, 2015) – similar to Crewe-, I found out that politics is entangled with social and cultural life of the country. Relationship, power and culture can be seen from the ritual procedure of the parliament, and paying attention to details like this, which often seen as not important actually implies structural foundation of the institution. Before going further for the discussion, I need to explain my current research topic, working background and the process during my data collection. Altogether, these allowed me to exercise challenges (and opportunity) to study parliaments in Southeast Asia.

My current post-doctoral research is studying the role of parliamentary organization in the Sustainable Development Agenda/SDG, by focusing Southeast Asian's parliamentary institutions at the different level: *national* parliaments in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore), *regional* ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), the Asian Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP) and *global* Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). While the project is expected to discuss the role of parliament in global agreement such as SDG, it also discusses the issue of multi-parliamentary governance (globally, regionally, nationally and locally) and the Europe-Southeast Asian relations through parliament. This is an upgraded from my previous doctoral project discussing the political culture of Indonesian parliament (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* or DPR), studying the minutes of the DPR from 1999-2009.

Studying parliamentary institution has been relatively easy for me as I used to work in the secretariat of Indonesian parliament for a decade (2000-2009). I worked as a government officer in the secretariat of *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*/MPR (the People's Consultative Assembly), one of semi-parliament state body in the country. The members of MPR were (and still are) derived from DPR members. I was involved in the discussion of Constitutional Amendment 2000-2003, which resulted to the another semi-parliamentary body, a new state body called *Dewan Perwakilan Daerah*/DPD (The Regional Representative Council), and the discussion of bills and laws related to parliaments and its reform and local parliaments (e.g. UU *Susduk/MD3* and Local Governance) discussed in the DPR. Thus, I am familiar with legislative process, parliamentary procedure (standing orders, minutes storage etc.) also the compound (including the location of meeting rooms), and most importantly the connection with the members of parliament and the secretariat workers. The network and connection that I had were useful when I was looking for parliamentary minutes and arranging meetings with DPR members for my previous doctoral research. Access to meetings, interviews and data-collection was relatively quick to be arranged.

For my current post-doc research, my connection was even expanding both from academician and parliamentary networks, through e.g. conference meetings. In Indonesia, when my former working colleagues at the secretariats have reached higher bureaucrat position, usually being heads of section or bureau, my access also enlarges to these colleagues' staffs and connection. Moreover, my colleagues inside the Indonesian parliamentary secretariats also know MPs sitting at the leadership seats and colleagues sitting at the similar position from other parliaments in Southeast Asia. They are also usually comfortable to share the contacts with me, knowing that I will use such connection for academic/research purposes. It eases and simplifies the bureaucratic process, as I did not have much time to deal with lengthy arrangement. These colleagues would introduce me to the MPs and informed me a better time for interviews. When I have connected to the senior MPs, they will open easier access to meet new MPs and staffs in a specific committee that I study. Thus, contacts and network within the institution are extremely valuable.

Moreover, my affiliation with the European university (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) have added another chance for easy access. This is important to mention as MPs and secretariat personnel seem more welcomed me, instead of the researchers from domestic/local universities. My situation is also valid for foreign researchers. They tend to have easier access compared with the domestic researcher, native Indonesian who study in the Indonesian universities. The “colonial-mentality” – a term that researchers use to describe Indonesians (either MPs or secretariat personnel) who tend to appreciate highly of foreign institutions – does still exist in the Indonesia parliament, and to some extent also to the Malaysian parliament. The affiliation from Western/European university is much more appreciated. Moreover in Malaysia, having the “doctoral” title also boost the credibility. I did not realize this until a colleague whom used to work in the Malaysian university warned me to use my doctoral title in my business cards before my departure to Malaysia. As common knowledge among Southeast Asians, there is always love-hate relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia and being an Indonesian citizen and coming to Malaysia where many Indonesians serve as maids to Malaysian families, I need a credibility to be taken seriously that can be in the academic title, such as doctoral degree or professorship. When I followed this advice, adding doctoral title before my name and introducing myself using the degree, people that I met are likely to offer more respects. They called my doctoral title, instead of my name though. In Malaysia, most people indeed are called by their titles, like professor, doctor, *makcik* (auntie) *tuan* (Sir), *puan* (Ma’am) etc – and not only names - which show respects toward the called persons, but also highlight the importance of status and hierarchy in the society. Thus, when I was introduced to the Malay MPs with the use of doctoral title, the MP somehow showed more respects and formal attitude to me, and proceed with more open attitude toward my activity.

My background as a former officer at the parliament secretariat also gives me valuable knowledge to comprehend how parliament works empirically and also it offers a relatively easy access to gather data within that political institution, which would have required an excessive amount of time given I would not have had contacts who could assist me in such bureaucratic arrangement. At the same time, the experience as a parliament officer opens doors for new understanding of the workings of the (Indonesian) parliament through researcher perspective and allows me, as a native scholar, to become an emissary ‘explicate lived realities and understanding of normative social sciences concept’ (Beng-Lan, 2011, p. 15) of the (Southeast Asian) parliament to outsiders. I have double advantages as a former parliamentary worker and a researcher from Western university to boost my credibility to research in Southeast Asian parliaments. Such advantages are important to open new connection and network, at least for me when visiting the Malaysian and Singaporean parliaments.

By sharing this story, I assure that studying parliaments – or any political institutions in Southeast Asia – *connection* and *networks* are really important. Finding research connection is hard and time-consuming, but once we have it will be worth. In the meantime of building connection, equipped ourselves with current knowledge of the system and structure or organization of the studied parliaments will be helpful to understand the situation. While the affiliation and highly perception toward Western university cannot be easily changed – especially for domestic/local academic institution -, the researcher may start to build *self-credibility*, like writing popular books or opinions in the national-wide newspaper, for example. This credibility will help to being known.

Apart for challenges stated above (although served as opportunities for me), I also must admit to face the challenges of knowing the subject *too well*. People that I met and interviewed within the parliament also had high expectation. It was a bit intimidating to be seen as having a strong background with the parliament, the informants may not give full information, and allow me

to guess what was going on. During interview, for example, there was many moments of hesitation to answer. Perhaps the interviewees were to some extent reluctant to explain further, sensing that I must already know more on the subjects being discussed. Here, the observation and confirmation from the secretariat are more useful. In brief, I find that parliamentary ethnography is also suitable for my research method as I can reflect myself as a researcher and a former worker in the parliament, bringing both insider and outsider (academic) views to my research.

### **Comparison of three parliaments: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore**

With the background above, I study the three parliamentary institution. Before my research visit, I have already read the literatures about the parliaments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, their policy reports, debates and hansard papers, what have been discussed about ratifying SDG's agreement in 2016. I contacted these parliaments before my arrival, thus I am satisfied with my visits as plenary observations and discussion/interviews run according to my plans. Observing the plenary sessions and on-site visits in these parliaments certainly brought a new nuance from the literature that I read.

### ***Indonesian Parliament***

The Indonesian Parliament, the DPR after the 2014 election consists of 560 members of parliament (MP) from 10 factions/political groupings. The DPR is chaired by 1 speaker and 5 vice speakers, elected among members in the beginning of the session in 2014. While Indonesia has semi-parliamentary bodies like MPR whose members derives from members of DPR and DPD (DPD is a national high state body which tasks to submit and enact bills with the DPR related to regions) with the task related to the state constitution, the DPR stands the sole parliamentary body in the country. Thus, Indonesia has unicameral parliament, the DPR.

In order to smooth the parliamentary working, the DPR has working organs (*alat kelengkapan*) within its institution (<http://www.dpr.go.id/alatkelengkapan>). They are:

1. DPR Leadership (*Pimpinan DPR*)
2. Steering Committee (*Badan Musyawarah/Bamus*)
3. Commission (*Komisi*) that divided into 11 according to ministerial issues
4. Legislation Council (*Badan Legislasi*)
5. Budget Council (*Badan Anggaran*)
6. House Affairs Council (*Badan Urusan Rumah Tangga/BURT*)
7. Council for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation/(*Badan Kerja Sama Antar Parlemen/BKSAP*)
8. Council for State Financial Accountability (*Badan Akuntabilitas Keuangan Negara/BAKN*)
9. Council for Honorary Court (*Mahkamah Kehormatan Dewan/MKD*)
10. Special Committee (*Panitia Khusus*)

Each MP must be a member of a Commission (from 11 commissions in point 3 above) and a council/committee above (around 7 councils) from the list, and one council or committee has members around 10% from total number, which is around 55 members. Therefore, it would be a struggle for faction with limited members, as they need to come to many meetings compared to members of big factions. During Suharto's time, these work organs were filled with 3 political parties and 1 military faction. Nowadays with around 14 political parties, it is quite challenges to address view diversity ranging from different issue, especially by using the old parliamentary procedure.

It is important to list these working organs here because while it look like comprehensive structure, it actually does not change much from the DPR during the Suharto time, when the DPR was considered as a rubber-stamp institution. The main roles of parliament: legislation and budgeting (even overseeing/controlling) are "balkanized" in the forms of smaller chamber

of committee. This means that only members of these councils may contribute to the discussions, and only members of certain commission/council are updated for the works. Instead of exercising in the Plenary Session where all members can access and give their opinions on the issues, the matter brought to the Plenum – usually legislation - only for bills that are ready to be enacted. There is no more discussion as within the smaller committee/commission, all parties – factions and government – have delivered their ‘mini overview’ which basically agree that the bills are ready and can be delivered to the Plenary Session for enactment. Meanwhile the legislative-drafting in the DPR is quite tiring as MP must scrutinize every articles, including the wording usage.

With this “balkanized” arrangement, non-members outside the certain commission/council must actively seek information – if they want to - either from factions or by him/herself and it is an extra work especially when the MP could not choose his/her own interest to be a member of certain council/commission. The *faction* or political party grouping inside the DPR selects the commission/council’s membership, which mostly mismatch with the MP’s wish. All the works, of course, are delivered to the Plenary Session, but once the bill is scheduled there, it also means that there is no more discussion. The plenum only reports the result reached from the smaller committee then all members only legitimized the discussion based on yes-no questioned by the Speaker, or by voting. The Plenary Session then is seen as a ceremonial venue instead for MPs to debate or to deliver his/her opinion for public/constituents on certain issue. The core of parliament to ‘speak’ (*parler*) is not available through plenum. Speaking is more exercised in a mini venue of commission/council which is rarely aired publicly.

Thanks to easy access and personal contacts to the Indonesian parliament, I interviewed around 25 parliamentarians during my research visit. When I asked about the sustainable development topic to these MPs, I also had a chance to update about the DPR’s working mechanism today. As most MPs are new, they did not realize the problems of “balkanized” arrangement that was the legacy of the previous regime. They did not see problems of procedure. When asked about the lack of speaking time, most MPs responded lightly that they did not find any problems with it, and did not think speaking is important. Ideally it is the tasks of faction to update the MPs. For the SDG discussion, Indonesia is quite advance, even hosted two world parliamentary forums on sustainable issue, which IPU. The parliamentarization of SDG issue will be discussed at different paper.

During the research visit, I also had a chance to observe the DPR Plenum and I think that not only the old tradition did not change much, it went worse. It was on 26 July 2018 when I observed the DPR Plenary Session with the agenda of Ministry Accountability Report for the use of state budget in 2017. The official DPR website did not state that it was a plenary meeting, only looked like a regular meeting of a committee. The plenum was supposed to start at 9.00 in the morning, but – as predicted (I have been warned) - it started only two hours later. Late is a bad habit in Indonesia. During the session, I was sitting on the open balcony facing down the back of MPs’ seats. The place was packed many noisy MPs’ assistants and journalists. Financial Minister, Ms. Sri Mulyani Indrayati was scheduled to deliver a speech about previous year budget. Since it was indeed a parliamentary work – and minister was treated as a guest, she was only “allowed” to enter the Plenum only when requested. When the minister and her team went in to the room, they were flooded with applause by MPs. It was such a dramatic entrance. I found it interesting that if the minister was treated highly, does she popular? Or does the executive government have special place, like the position of the executive is considered more important than legislature? After asking confirmation about this entrance, most MPs said that for Plenum, guests- like ministers – indeed only entering the room when



allowed, but applause sometimes happened that could be interpreted differently. However, I can see that being selected as the government minister would be appreciated for most MPs, meaning that the executive position is better than the legislative one.

When finishing her accountability speech, the Financial Minister stepped down from the podium and went to the Speakers' seats, handing down the papers she read earlier to the parliamentary Speaker. The exchanging documents or shaking hands was paused for allowing time to the media and press to take their pictures. The shaking-hands moment is likely to be important to be documented in many Indonesian events and ceremonies. Then, the follow-up agenda was the factions delivered opinion regarding the accountability report. The title of agenda seems to report what factions or MPs found publicly regarding the use of state budget, or reaction to speech that the Minister just delivered. This was also the time for the MPs to speak up and questions – although through the DPR's procedure, the parliamentary speaking time is represented by the factions. Only 1 MP will read (speeches of) overview from every group, meaning around 9 factions. Then came the worst situation when the Speaker said, "In order to save time, each faction does not need to read their speeches, but give their speech documents to the Speaker." I was stunned hearing this. This is bad for two reasons: (1) the role of parliament to speak publicly in the plenary session was not exercised for the reasons of time-saving. Public and constituents did not hear how their representatives reacts to the view of executive government, (2) nobody knows what happen to the collection of speeches to the Speakers. Why do the document send to the speakers? Was then there would be follow-up meeting to discuss the speeches or the speeches were just collected? Does this confirm that the position of the Speaker is higher than the ordinary MPs? When I ask such procedure, even to the Speaker of the plenum himself, Mr. Deputy Speaker Fadhli Zon (in another occasion), he justly lightly reacted that it was indeed to save time (from "listening to boring speeches!"). I did not get my whole questions answered, but this showed that parliamentary speaking and constituents unfortunately are not the MPs' priorities. I did not get the answer for the reasons to collect factions' papers to the Speakers either, which was probably handled by the plenary team (*Bagian Sidang Paripurna*) but it is likely that there is no follow-up events afterwards, meaning that the documents will be left untouched.

To worsen this fact, after the agenda of collecting the factions' speeches – with also picture-taking in front of the Speakers' seats – the Minister was allowed to deliver another speech to react based on the factions' speeches (which was never been read). How the minister could deliver a speech when she did not even hear the factions' speeches remained puzzling. It just showed that the DPR's Plenary Session was indeed purely a ceremonial event. After the agenda with the Financial Minister was over, the Minister and her team were allowed to leave the Plenum, with another dramatic departure.

After that, the agenda continued with the inauguration of new judges and the DPR's Speaker's closing speech to end the working term of DPR 2017-2018, resulting only enacting 5 new laws within that term. The new term would be opened on 16 August 2018, a day before the country's Independence Day as a ritual in the DPR, when the President will deliver the budget overview of the upcoming year, 2019, also marking the opening of DPR official term 2018-2019. This tradition of opening DPR session a day before the Independence Day and Plenary rituals are maintained and continue to run although the patrimonial president, Suharto, had long gone.

For me this is interesting and puzzling at the same time. Interesting that the tradition of an old regime is kept running although many civil society organizations also some MPs have stated that the DPR procedure is ineffective, at least as seen in the low number of enacted laws, no

one cares to change the situation. The journalists also do not see that such particular plenary session was a problem. The session must be a public view of representatives' people to say something regarding policy and the MPs did not have a chance to speak up. Newspaper on the following day – or online news after the Plenary was reported only the closing speech of the DPR Speaker, the calculation number of how many MPs attended the plenum and how low the number of laws enacted on this official term. None reported on the proceeding. It is puzzling that when the ineffective exercise – that MPs know the ceremonial status of plenary session is and how the laws that DPR enacts annually has always been low – continues, there is no efforts to amend the situation, or no one point out the ineffective of the parliamentary procedure for DPR. Only (democratic) leaders may have an opportunity to change this situation, but it is likely to take longer time.

### ***Malaysian Parliament***

Differ from Indonesia, Malaysia exercised Westminster parliamentary system, the executive government is also members of parliament (MPs). The parliament thus is more updated with both the works of executive and legislative, especially when the executive government presents the bill or answer MPs' questions during plenary session. The Malaysian Parliament, *Parlimen Malaysia*, has two institution: the Senate or *Dewan Negara* and the House of Representatives or *Dewan Rakyat*. The Senate consists of 70 senators, whom are elected (26) and appointed (44) by the King, *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*; while the House consists of 222 members of parliaments elected every five years. My research focuses on the work of *Dewan Rakyat* or Lower House, thus, Malaysian parliament here refers to *Dewan Rakyat*.

Malaysia just has a new government this year after the May 2018 election. For more than four decades, Malaysia had groomed only one single-party dominant system, United Malays National Organization/UMNO, and had an electoral authoritarian regime, a legacy of racialized government from the British colonialism. Populations has been divided over ethnicity – Chinese, Indian, and Malays, with Malay always enjoys the privilege of hegemony. However, in the parliament, UMNO successfully received the majority seats with supports from the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and Malaysian Chinese Associations (MCA) grouping in the coalition of *Barisan Nasional*/BN or National Alliance. This coalition brought the sense that all ethnic group in the country were represented in BN during elections and within parliament. Despite contesting with other parties, like the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PMIP, later become PAS), a group that broke from the UMNO in 1951 (Case, 2002, p. 104) and the Democratic Action Party (DAP), successor to the Singaporean Party, People's Action Party after seceding from Malaysia in 1965, the BN coalition were successfully maintained the hegemony in the government. Being in UMNO apparatus means grounding the elite statutes, similar to top position in the state bureaucracy and business conglomerates, which will ensure access to state position and business opportunities too. The hierarchy of Malaysian government has always been paralleled with the country business and economy (Case, 2002, p. 112) thus associated with UMNO, one would have opportunities of the patronage network. The hegemony of one party and patronage, added with gerrymandering during election and controlling civil liberty through many acts, labelled the Malaysia's political system as semi-democracy.

When the Asian crises of 1998 came and succeeded in toppling the Indonesian president, Suharto, Malaysia successfully maneuvered from the political crisis too but with strain inside the UMNO. Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister (1981-2003) at that time did not need to ask for help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – like Indonesia and Thailand – other than adjusted its economic policy. This was not supported by Mahathir's protégé, his Deputy,

Anwar Ibrahim, whom had his own charisma among youngster and Islamic groups whose connection ranged throughout Southeast Asia. Mahathir then imposed public humiliation towards Anwar Ibrahim, ousted Anwar from elite circle, first from government position then also from UMNO party. Anwar mobilized crowds of protesters claiming for *reformasi* – a term borrowed from Indonesian movement – claiming the step-down of Prime Minister, which the government responded by jailing Anwar for 6 years for charging against misconduct and corruption, starting in April 1999 (Case, 2002, p. 134). With the sense of injustice against Anwar by, public grew resentment toward the government, claiming for more civil liberty and good governance. This momentum also allowed Anwar’s wife to establish a social movement, *Adil* (social justice), claiming good governance in Malaysia, together with PAS and largely Chinese DAP parties. This *Adil* movement and other NGOs became the *Parti Keadilan Nasional/PKR* (National Justice Party), led by Wan Azizah (Anwar’s wife). Unfortunately, this party did not attract many supporters, and UMNO/*Barisan* won again in the 1999 election, ensuring its hegemony in the parliament. However, PKR became an opposition amidst the small numbers of MPs.

During 2009-2018, Malaysia was led by the Prime Minister Najib Razak, whom was Mahathir protégé. At that time, Mahathir supported Najib, when the position of his successor Abdullah Badawi (2003-2008) was weakened. However, Prime Minister Najib Razak had been suspected with corruption since 2015 and his power enabled him to escape from further investigation. Finally, when the country’s investment fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) was alleged to transfer billions of money to Najib’s personal account and his associates, Mahathir claimed to be fed up by Najib’s “kleptocracy” and needed to “restore democracy”.

Since 2016, Mahathir resigned from UMNO and together with former UMNO members established their own party Malaysian United Indigenous Party (*Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia*) and later with aligned with the *reformasi* parties PKR, the Chinese DAP, and *Parti Amanah*. a break-up faction of Islamic party PAS. They gathered to topple down UMNO/BN by establishing a coalition *Pakatan Harapan* or PH (Alliance of Hope). The PH Alliance agreed in July 2017 for the collation Mahathir Mohamad stood as the chairman (and Prime Minister candidate), and Wan Azizah – Anwar’s wife as the deputy president. Later after 2 years the prime ministership will be transferred to Anwar Ibrahim. The declaration of Mahathir Mohamad as prime ministerial candidate offered a direct challenge towards the UMNO’s Najib. The 2008 election had shaken a bit the hegemonic UMNO with the increasing numbers for opposition. But only this year, May 2018 with the winning of the coalition PH, has successfully toppled down the six-decade rule of the UMNO/BN coalition. With the winning of his alliance, in the 14<sup>th</sup> election, May 2018, Mahathir is successfully claimed his former seat as prime minister in his 93 years of age, making him the oldest leader in the world. It was a historic moment for Malaysia to move from semi-authoritarian rule, although many still suspected Mahathir for being democratic, especially after tension with Anwar years ago.

With this background, I came to observe the very first day parliamentary plenary session after the inauguration of the new parliamentary speaker in July 2018. It was so exciting to see the spirited new MPs and the new hope atmosphere inside the parliament. Most MPs were ready to work for the new democracy. These new young MPs relatively do not have experience from their senior counterparts of UMNO, which now become opposition. During the Minister’s Question Time, when PH MPs stated about the corrupt former government, the senior experienced MPs from UMNO tried to obstruct the discussion by stating about speaking time, basically quoting the articles of Standing Order. This was considered as “bullying” the plenum, including the former deputy speaker – Ismail Mohamed Said from Kuala-Krau-Pahang

constituency -, whom claimed that plenary procedure was not exercised well enough, by referring to inexperience Speaker and several articles stated in standing order about speaking order and time. It was a clever movement, as the Speaker in charge has not yet comprehend the standing order. Therefore, it is important for the new 14<sup>th</sup> Malaysian parliament MPs to acknowledge themselves with the parliamentary procedure, or better amend to procedure to a more democratic one, cutting away from the old procedure practiced by the previous regime.

The newness of parliament then understandably does not yet focus on SDG issue. The parliamentary secretariat officers during my one-week-visit even said that they are now preparing to establish better parliamentary committee (even asked me to share the committee divisions from the Indonesian and Finnish parliaments). Therefore, the working organs in the House - Committee of Selection, Public Accounts Committee, Standing Orders Committee, House Committee, and Committee of Privileges (<http://www.parlimen.gov.my/jawatankuasa-dr.html?uweb=dr&&view=51>) – will probably be updated soon.

### ***Singaporean Parliament***

Similar to Malaysia, Singapore continued the legacy of the British colonialism, forming the parliamentary government with the Westminster style. This means that the government ministers are members of parliaments elected through election and representing certain region of constituency. Singapore was part of Malaysia before and seceded in 1965. This country is also stated to be a semi-democratic country, having regular election but limiting the voice of civil society. With only 1 significant party, People's Action Party (PAP) that has always won majority votes, Singapore needs to appoint members from the opposition in the parliament to boost the credibility for including all people from different background. The PAP which establishes the country's elites is also known to be disciplined and successfully creates entrepreneurial bureaucracy and with only 5 million citizens, the city state island, Singapore tends to have easier shape of socioeconomic development (Case, 2002, p. 166). Probably due to its small size country, Singapore's elites are able to blur 'the lines between their ruling party, the state bureaucracy, and the commanding heights of the financial sector' which make the country efficient (Case, 2002, p. 168).

Thus, with the semi-democratic style and the Westminster parliament type, the parliament makes the law, and the government (which is also MPs) executes the tasks according to the laws. In Singapore, Prime Minister leads the government and the President is the head of state. The members of parliament today (the 13<sup>th</sup> parliament) after 2015 election has 100 MPs, consisting 88 elected MPs, 3 Non-Constituency MPs appointed from the opposition parties which did not have votes from the election, and 9 Nominated MPs appointed by the President from the wider community to contribute independent and non-partisan views within parliament. These appointed members indeed show the semi-democratic of one-party government, which wants more legitimacy among people or perhaps from the world.

In the Westminster-type of parliament, the parliamentary procedure is quite simple. This type refers to both Malaysia and Singapore. The parliament usually has three steps of legislative Readings (see Adiputri, 2015). First Reading is the first legislative stage after the bill is introduced. In this stage, a summary of the bill is provided and MPs might debate the general principle of the bill. If it is agreed that the bill will be accepted for further discussion, the bill will be moved to the Second Reading, usually to a committee related to the issue of the bill. The bill will be thoroughly debated in this stage and the wording of article might be amended. As the general principle had been agreed on, the focus at this stage is the contents of the bill. Amendments are possible. After the Second Reading, the bill will be sent to one or several committees. Experts can be invited to be heard and questioned in the committee, but the

members of the committee are the ones who are responsible for the political decisions. If the committees revise the bill, it is sent back to the plenary in the Report Stage of the bill. To avoid the debate at this stage being a repetition of the second reading, it is advised that proposed motions should be in written format and members of parliaments/MPs are encouraged to work with colleagues to bring similar views together. Other MPs who are not members of the committee might have an opportunity to review the bill in this Report Stage of the bill. If there are no significant changes from the Report Stage, the bill is proposed for a Third Reading, the final stage of legislation usually in the Plenary Chamber, the (lower) chamber of parliament, attended by all MPs. There is debate again at this stage if necessary, but the debate will be limited to the passing of the bill, to a yes or no vote. The deliberation process and the report stage are acknowledged by all parliamentary members, and if the government is the majority, as the Singaporean case (and to some extent to the Malaysian in the previous section), the bill is usually passed in this final Reading (or sent to the upper house). The committee in Singaporean parliament consists of 7 Standing Select Committee (<https://www.parliament.gov.sg/about-us/structure/select-committees>)

1. Committee of Selection
2. Committee of Privileges
3. Estimates Committee
4. House Committee
5. Public Accounts Committee
6. Public Petitions Committee
7. Standing Orders Committee

Parliament is also allowed to established a new ad hoc select committee if needed. When I observed the Singaporean Parliament in July 2018. I attended the Plenary Sessions for the straight 3 days of that week: 9-11 July. I was impressed how effective the parliament was. The secretariat person that I contacted was really helpful. She showed me around the tiny room of public visitors and informed me how to stay connected with the parliament. All the documents that I need for my research – like contacts of MPs, policy Hansard papers, and public announcement regarding bills and date of plenary are available through the updated website of the Singaporean parliament. This effectiveness was also shown with handling the visitors who wanted to see the parliamentary sitting. The requirement for attending – like preparing identity cards or passport, and keeping the bags and mobile phones in the lockers – are easily spotted in the wall and in the website, so I was able to prepare coins for locker storage. I only brought a small book of note to the viewer balcony, and left my belongings in the locker before entering the door. The viewers were sitting in the quiet upper part of the Plenary Room, so we looked down the MPs and the scenery of the Plenum down below. No wonder there was no mobile phone or camera allowed, even a small tiny click sound was heard in the balcony. There were also some people attended, and students sat in public visitors.

Another effectiveness was also shown from the plenary. The meeting started at 12, and indeed it convened on time, opening with small ceremonial session, with the mace was brought in together with the entering of Speakers, followed with half-an-hour dedicated for Oral Questions. Then, there was a ceremony of passing the bills, with the mace was changing back and forth. There were 6 bills to be passed on that day and also a debate about the bills to be introduced. There was a half-an-hour break between 15.15 to 16.45 during this meeting in which the Speaker remained sitting in his chair for the whole time. When the plenum re-adjourned at 16.45, chaired by the deputy, the meeting last until 19.00. Thus, with such an extensive long hours of meeting, it was no wonder that so much can be accomplished within the parliament. I also heard that working hours in Singapore informally last for 10 hour per day. Such long hours meeting last for the consecutive 3 days, only the last day, the plenum

ended at 17.00. I can find most of the parliamentary documents from the website, but visiting the parliamentary plenum gave different experience and knowledge, knowing the atmosphere of how the bill is pass and recognized the MPs' faces in real situation.

### **Challenges to study political institutions in Southeast Asia**

From studying these three parliaments, the institutions indeed reflect heavily on the country's political culture, and confirming more the role of leaders: the key position holders and decision makers (Case, 2002, p. 20). In fact in Malaysia's case, "the personalization of the political scene" between three figures: Mahathir, Najib and Anwar, is so obvious (Lemière, 2018, p. 115) and I think in Southeast Asian in general, the political events with their continuities and changes depend on these leaders and elites. From the proceeding in the parliamentary discussion above, the procedure, structure and tradition, which derived from the historical legacies and cultural orientations are clearly seen in the public views. It depends on the role of national leaders and elites who may lead their regime to be more democratic or not, a view that already been discussed by William Case (2002, p. ix). The (in)efficient practices were also seen from leaders.

As stated above, networking and connection matters for researching the parliamentary institutions. It is relevant to Indonesia and Malaysia, which appreciate "clientelist" relations, and known to have long bureaucratic arrangement for visiting the parliament or observing the plenary. People appreciate more if you have connections. It is not happen in Singapore, due to its effectiveness and more ready to receive (public) guests to visit the parliament. Singapore has series of security process before entering the plenum, processing the identity card and that kind of process. I needed to pass at least four check-up points before I reached my seat in the plenum balcony, but at least I could enter and see the plenum. I was not sure if I could visit the plenary of Indonesia and Malaysian parliaments without the help of insiders. Such lack or efficient arrangement is a reflection of society.

Once inside the plenum, all the institutions' structure, procedure and ceremony are seen alive, and this is when the institutional theory and parliamentary ethnography are suitable. During the break or in formal chat, I can see how higher position is always appreciated. In these three countries, certain attention will be given to senior MPs: speakers or leaders of committee. The journalists will run to follow these elites to ask for statements. In Malaysia, even the elites UMNO MPs still had a place, even when they are now sitting in the opposition seats. In Indonesia, the speaker can decide on certain matter, including to omit the speaking time of MPs. The important role of the elites is probably one of features in Asian model of democracy.

The adoption of Westminster parliamentary style of government, in both Malaysia and Singapore, also show that these parliaments are "speaking government". From the Speaker's seat, the government party (including the ministries) is sitting on the right side, while the Opposition sits on the left side. The lay-out of their Plenary Rooms are design to speak and debate. In Malaysia, the room is surrounded by camera so anyone who speaks can be seen on the screen up front before the public. Besides, they are known from their constituent names. In Singapore, the balcony viewers where public seat can see everything down below the MPs, so the MPs who speak are seen clearly, and the map will show who is sitting on such particular seat (and from which constituent stated in the Hansard paper). This is different from Indonesia, whose parliamentary plenum is set to listen to speeches, with the podium in the front, next to the speakers' seats. It is not designed for debating at all. When there is a question from an MP, it is not clear who is speaking (from which faction nor constituent). Only the Speaker will know who is talking from the light of the microphone. It is likely referring to many numbers of MPs

too, but it is clear that from the Indonesia's plenary meeting, constituents and speaking are the least priority. It emphasizes more on the ritual series of events (for example, the minister's speech and inauguration) and passing the legislation (if any), but not accountability before the public.

This section summarizes that as a researcher studying the political institutions as parliament in Southeast Asia, one needs to have credible affiliation and good connection or network from the inside the institution. This likely to happen in other parliaments too in Southeast Asia. This study also confirms the importance of elites (leaders and decision makers) and the importance of parliamentary structure (and procedure), such as the emphasize on "legislative" work (Indonesia) or "representative" or speaking institutions (as Malaysia and Singapore show).

## Conclusion

This paper shows challenges in studying the parliamentary institutions in Southeast Asia. Using the Institutionalism theory and applying parliamentary ethnography research method, I enlist how connection and our research profile also affiliation are needed to help get through the layers of bureaucracies, which usually consume time. Once such bureaucratic preparation are overcome, the art of observing of events are needed to get data that we need for our research. Based on the three national parliaments that I study: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, the institution's structure and procedure explain the lack or good arrangement of the institutions. Leaders or key position of decision makers play a great role in guiding the outcome or legislative results. It is important that these leaders as parliamentary members – people's representatives – realize their roles as the channel of people's voice and sound the grievance of people publicly, rather than re-iterate the works on the executive government solely. Understanding the role as parliamentarians, including the game of procedure within the institution, is a state of art that needs to be comprehended by most parliaments. Hopefully this will also applicable for other parliaments in Southeast Asia.

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**Acknowledgement** This post-doc research is funded by Kone Foundation.

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# Empowering Social Science Research in the Big-Data Era: Addressing Quantyphobia in IR Researches

Farizal Mohd Razalli<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This paper tries to explore the employment of quantitative approach in political researches focusing on international relations (IR) or international politics. A debate emerged in the 90s on whether IR or the field of international politics should be driven by quantitative (positivistic) approach at the expense of qualitative (interpretivist) approach. The debate then expanded to explicitly argue for an increased use of formal methods that are mathematically-based to study IR phenomena. It triggered then a quick reaction from hardcore IR specialists who warned against *mathematizing* IR for fear of turning the field into a mechanical field that crunches numbers. Such a fear is further substantiated by the observation that many quantitative works in IR have moved farther away from developing theory to testing hypotheses. Some scholars have even suggested that it is epistemologically *realism vs. instrumentalism*; something that is unsurprising given the dominance of realism in IR for many years. This paper does not suggest that heavy emphasis on qualitative approach leads to a inferior research output. However, it does suggest an transformative incapability among IR scholars to accommodate to contemporary global changes. The big-data analytics have affected the intellectual community of late with the influx of data. These data are both qualitative and quantitative. Nonetheless, analyzing them requires one to be familiar with quantitative methods lest one risks not being able to offer a research outcome that is not only sound in its argumentation but also robust in its analytical logic. Furthermore, with so much data on the social media, it is almost unthinkable for meaningful interpretation to be made without even the simplest descriptive statistical methods. The paper argues that in ensuring its relevance, international political researches have to start adapting to the contemporary changes by building new capability apart from upscaling existing capacity.

**Keywords:** qualitative; quantitative; quantyphobia; big-data analytics; IR methodology; social science research

## Introduction

“In academic [qualitative] research, you cannot forecast things [research phenomena] but [you] must explain [analytically describe] things”. It is a typical commentary heard among political science academics, at least in Malaysia, when assessing academic works that attempt at employing advanced quantitative approach e.g., regression analysis. The author makes the following two conclusions from such a commentary.

Firstly, political scientists remain skeptical of the contemporary global changes that they are supposed to deal with in their day-to-day work routine. The realist paradigm that recognizes change as the only constant in the contemporary system is still strongly dominating the field especially international politics. Rather than trying to analyze change, one is better off analyzing causes and effects of the change. Secondly, forecasting is regarded as a risky activity to uncovering reasons behind a research phenomenon. There is always the question of how reliable one's data are or whether or not one has sufficient or the relevant data to forecast. As a result, one is better off keeping his analysis to confirmed data. Often these confirmed data refer to post-phenomenon data namely reports, interview transcripts with subjects involved and expert opinions or views formed post-phenomenon.

The aforementioned conclusions share a common denominator- certainty. It appears that political scientists value highly certainty in their research work. When posed with uncertain features be they methodologically or analytically, their level of skepticism rises and such rising skepticism explains their refusal to employ sophisticated quantitative methods or approaches in their researches. Such a hypothetical statement forms an important point in this paper.

This paper does not suggest that the current emphasis on qualitative approach in international political researches, in Malaysia and in the region, yields inferior research outcomes. Rather, it tries to understand the underlying reason why qualitative approach is more preferred to its quantitative approach. This research objective distinguishes the paper from the debate between realists and instrumentalists whose aim skews toward arguing for one another's superiority in international political research.

Given the above objective, the paper will be organized in the following manner. The next section will briefly survey the current state of the literature on methods and approaches in the field of international politics. It will revisit some early debates on prevailing and forthcoming methods together with analytical arguments for and against them. The section will bring in brief discussion on attitudes of political science scholars, especially in Malaysia and generally in the Southeast Asian region, toward quantitative methods and assessment of how sustainable such attitudes are moving forward.

The following section will introduce a simple game theoretical model that represents the current quantyphobia reality among the qualitative IR scholarship. It will explicate some of the fundamental assumptions and perimeters governing the analytical model. Readers will be guided through simple step-by-step explanation on the model presented.

Next is the discussion of the outcome of the analysis. Key points will be highlighted and further elaborated. This elaboration will provide readers with better grasp of the entire discussion of the topic. Finally, the conclusion section will propose a paradigm-shift model to address the quantyphobia phenomenon among the qualitative IR scholarship particularly in Malaysia and the immediate region.

### **Literature Review**

To be fair, IR field is no short of sound empirical works. Names like Karl W. Deutsch, John Vasquez, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and James Fearon to name a few have done excellent empirical analyses on IR phenomena. These works range from hypothesis testing to inferential statistical analyses to complex mathematical modelling.

In fact, over the last decades, the field has seen influx of quantitative works done as evidenced by the number of journal articles published in some of the field's leading journals. Nonetheless, this phenomenon is regionally restrictive. The United States of America has singly seen a dramatic rise in IR quantitative works. On the contrary, other parts of the world has been lagged behind with some regions experiencing a complete absence of quantitative works in IR.

Such phenomenon outside the United States of America is however understandable. The IR field, just like many other academic fields, is strongly rooted in the American tradition. IR as a field was practically nurtured on the American soil with its rise tracking in parallel the rise of the American hegemony as the global superpower. As the U.S. government found itself engaged in myriad foreign policy tasks across the globe, the demand for data-driven policy analysis grew significantly.

Merritt (1985) attributed the growth of quantitative research in America to the advent in technology. The technological advancement has equally advanced scientific analysis in at least three ways: the availability of databases; the methodologies for analyzing data; and the high speed electronic computers to enable the treatment of complex data (in today's term this is equivalent to the big data).

The mushrooming of quantitative works in IR especially in the late 1970s coincided with the increasing criticism against IR's predominant paradigm- Realism. Many of the realist grand propositions like balance of power, occurrence of war and peace, and alliances came under huge intellectual scrutiny. Miller (1978) provided a much broader understanding of international systems. His living systems examine attributes and interaction patterns across seven levels from the cell through the nation-state to global society. Miller's work could have well been inspired by much earlier works on systems and actors namely that of Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan (1950), and Morton Kaplan (1957).

The former contends individuals [who make up the nation-state system) are multivalent in that they pursue variety of goals namely power, wealth, enlightenment, well-being, skill, affection, rectitude and respect. These individuals vary from person to person in terms of the priorities of these goals. By extension then nation-states as actors in the international system also pursue multivalent policies with different weightings. While some may be preoccupied with amassing power over others, others may be more concerned with improving domestic economy, enhancing their respective technological development or propagating a particular moral or ethical code.

The latter, on the other hand, having observed the variability patterns of interaction across systems, sees the possibility of alternative [other than the one offered by the realist paradigm] structuring of the international system. The Western world once enjoyed both balance-of-power and bipolar arrangement; hence it is plausible to imagine other arrangement types like pure hierarchy or unit-veto systems.

And for better or worse, these insights from a system analysis of international politics have expanded the conceptualization of international political processes. Even hard-core realist scholars like Robert Keohane (1984) through his work, *Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond*, modifies the traditional realist paradigm to incorporate the recognition that systemic structure (rather than domestic politics) imposes constraints on actors' behavior or better known as structural Realism.

Realism is not the only one being criticized. Its counterpart Liberalism is also under close scrutiny by the growing quantitative fraternity. The idea of peace as being advanced by the liberal camp has triggered some fundamental quantitative works to confirm some of the appealing yet controversial hypotheses. The democratic peace argument, in this case, is one case in point. This article however is concerned with the developments that made such quantitative works possible.

The data development has flourished since the late 1960s. The Yale Data program, that assembled data on 75 variables for 133 states, facilitated quantitative works like that of Arthur Banks and Robert Textor (1983) on cross-polity survey. The New York Times and Keesing's Archive, which serves as databases on the occurrence of both domestic and international events like coup d'état, riots, regime change, armed interventions and wars, have facilitated the quantitative examination of events nation states participated.

Of more robust database development of all times is the Correlates of War project that was founded by J. David Singer at the University of Michigan in 1964. This database rigorously categorizes every international war since 1816. Not only has the database served as an excellent source for quantitative works on understanding wars (e.g., Geller and Singer, 1998), it has also facilitated more pioneering paradigmatic works like Color It Morgenthau thesis by John A. Vasquez et.al (1973) that attempts at advocating paradigm change in IR.<sup>1</sup>

The quantitative vs. qualitative debate in IR is incomplete without bringing in the discussion on methodology. In fact all of the aforementioned quantitative works (as well as the following ones) use one or a combination of quantitative methods in arriving at their findings. Generally, quantitative methods employed in the IR field are divided into two main categories namely statistical and mathematical models. The statistical category can be further divided into descriptive and inferential methods. These methods employ arithmetic central tendency measures (see works by Muhammet A. Bas, 2012; Brian Rathbun, 2012; Peter D. Hoff and Michael D. Ward, 2004) as well as forecasting tools like regression analysis to explain causal-effect relationships (see works by Peter M. Aronow and Cyrus Samii, 2016; Gary King and Langche Zeng, 2001).

Meanwhile, the mathematical models include formal modelling of IR phenomena using mathematics. Mathematical models are often abstract and force researchers to be precise in the use of language and logic. These models consists of equations that can get very complex that people who are not cognoscenti may find them scary (see for example one of the classics in mathematical modelling on arms races by Lewis Frye Richardson, 1960).

The game-theoretic models range from simple one-level game-theoretic models that either represent one-off encounter (see Joanne Gowa and Edward D. Mansfield, 1993; David R. Mares, 1988) or repeated encounters (see for example Pierpaolo Battigalli, 1997; David M. Kreps and Robert Wilson, 1982) to more complex two- or multi-level game-theoretic models (see for example Robert Putnam, 1988).

Still, there exists other modelling techniques like the Kolmogorov's model of stochastic processes (see for example Peter J. Hammond, 2007), ecological modelling (see for example Ian Bellany, 1999) and computer-algorithmic models (see discussions on formal computer-based models in Peter G. Bennett, 1991; Michael Nicholson, 1989). The computer-algorithmic models leverage upon the high speed and efficient modern computers to deal with more complex real-world IR phenomena modelling.

There is no denying that quantitative IR flourishes in America. Other regions like Southeast Asia clearly lags behind in producing quantitative works on IR. This can be verified by a quick survey on authors of those quantitative works who are by majority of American (with some European) institutions. To put things into perspective, there are equally small number of authors from, say, Asian institutions even when one takes into account collaborative authorship. In recent years, Southeast Asian IR scholarship does appear in a handful of leading IR journals. Nonetheless, almost 70-80% of these works are qualitative in nature (see for example Ngeow

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<sup>1</sup> This work has attracted many criticisms of which beyond the scope of this present article. What is worth noting, however, some of these critiques also employ equally extensive quantitative approach in their counter-article, which cements further quantitative methodology's position in the field. See for example William B. Moul, (1982), Colouring by Numbers: Comments on a Quantitative Study of Quantitative Studies of International Politics, *Review of International Studies*, 8:2, 129-133.

Chow Bing, 2017) with the remaining 20-30% are problematically fused in nature (see for example Ravichandran Moorthy and Guido Benny, 2012). Mainly works on international political economy employ a mixture of statistical and qualitative content analysis (see for example Jaechun Kim and Pablo Andres Ramirez, 2014).

In view of the American context discussed above, the strong preference for qualitative approach should worth an investigation. Several hypotheses can be posited: 1) the pool of IR indigenous scholars in the region is small hence a relatively small portion or a total absence of quantitative works is expected; 2) most of these indigenous IR scholars are trained in qualitative approach hence they are more capable in qualitative rather than quantitative research; and 3) there exists systemic fear for quantitative research as it requires highly numerical skill and mathematical logic, often thought as unlearnable. This article is more interested in the third hypothesis.

It is the fear for quantitative approach hence the application of its methods that requires a further investigation. Justin Buchler (2009) admits that many political science students [in the U.S.A) struggle in quantitative methods courses. There seems to be a stigma that qualitative approach is the mantra framework to best study IR phenomena, regardless of the particular research questions at hand.

In one of Malaysia's leading IR departments, for instance, there are only countable theses that employ quantitative approach. Almost all new postgraduate recruits will make qualitative approach as their preferred choice for addressing their research problem regardless of its feasibility. This has led to a methodology abuse where the choice of methods is a function of personal preference rather than objective functionality. It is not surprising then to see how some theses overstretch the limits and functions of certain (qualitative) methods in order to prove their arguments.

Such exercise is dangerous as it dilutes the values of academic research that rest upon sound scientific logic and integrity. Also worrying is when these claimed qualitative theses do not even adhere to strict methodological standards of good qualitative research. Never mind the no-preference for quantitative approach, the strong preference for qualitative does not augur well for a more superior research outcome. Mearsheimer and Walt (2013), when raising their concern on the theory neglect in IR research [an omen of inferior research outcome], recognizes that it is not only the tragedy in quantitative IR but equally in qualitative IR scholarship.

It all boils down to one fact; that while a researcher may have his own methodological preference, it is imperative for him to be cognizant of all the other methodological options. Nonetheless, given the influx of data today compared to before, this article sees it crucial for researchers to be fluent in both qualitative and quantitative methodology. Appropriate strategies will be required to achieve this and the following section will devote itself toward this end. Qualitative IR scholarship must increase its strategic intellectual interaction with quantitative IR scholarship. Failing this, IR as a field will quickly find itself unsustainable hence risk itself being irrelevant in explaining the ever increasing complexities in world affairs.

### **Game-Theoretic Model: Explaining the Status Quo**

This article develops a game-theoretic model of the interaction between the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship. For reasons of parsimony, suffice to say such choice is more illustrative than conclusive of the main objective of this article to demonstrate the argument for change in the current status quo. The present article acknowledges the shortcomings

resulting from such choice; nonetheless this does not in significant manner (the article believes) affect the overall generality of the argument posited in the article.

The following game-theoretic model does not count itself as an application of game theory in modelling international political phenomena. Nor does it represent an application of game theory in research methodology. What it does is to try to represent a current state of affairs in a particular academic fraternity [Malaysian IR scholarship in particular] whose domineering paradigm has long been qualitative [descriptive].

The model assumes a likely interaction between the qualitative scholarship and the academic universe. For reasons of practicality, the model further assumes the qualitative scholarship is interacting with the quantitative scholarship. While the membership of the former has been clearly defined, the membership of the latter represents not necessarily the IR fraternity.

The field of IR has always been interdisciplinary in nature with many of its theoretical and empirical works cut across various disciplines namely sociology, mathematics, economics, engineering, information technology, and environmental studies. Thus it is plausible to believe that in ensuring its own relevancy and long-term survival, the most sustainable way is to reach out to partners [scholars] outside the field. This partnership endeavor will trigger reactions from these sought-after partners. This present model shows that these reactions can be diverse, which in turn result in further diverse (counter)-reactions that culminate into different outcomes. This reaction chain and outcomes are what that gives the interaction between the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship its strategic notion.

In game theory, games or game theoretic models can either be static or dynamic. The former refers to games in which players (actors) move simultaneously and independently that is without knowing the move of the other player. The latter, on the other hand, refers to games where players take turn in making their move; moving upon knowing the choice of moves made by the other players. The game-theoretic model proposed in this article represents this latter category.

It is also essential to identify the game-theoretic model with the information type. A game of complete information means players know all his (as well as the players') actions, strategies, outcomes and preference over these outcomes throughout the game. This also holds true vice versa. Also of importance, all players know that this a common knowledge to each and every player.

Meanwhile, a game of incomplete information is one in which players have some idea about the actions, strategies, and outcomes of the other players. However, players do not know about the other players' preferences over these outcomes. In other words, while the payoffs (outcomes) resulted from the actions (and strategies) taken are common knowledge to players, the payoff function (preference) of each players are not known. Thus, games of incomplete information refer to games with unknown types of players.

All the above assumptions effectively make all players in a game to be intelligent. And being intelligent has implication on another key feature of the game theory- rationality. The rationality principle assures that players will only choose the best move [action] that yields the best outcome. Best outcome in this case refers to the best payoff defined either in terms of material (e.g., profits) or non-material (e.g., satisfaction or pleasure). And this knowledge on rationality is available to all players.

The present model assumes the game between the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship to be a dynamic game of complete information. And because this game does not involve random act of movement by players throughout the game, it is also a perfect information game. It is imperative then at this point to develop both players' utility function or preference over outcome.

The model identifies three factors that are key to defining both players' utility function. They are survival, epistemology and cost. Survival is the most critical factor for both players but especially for qualitative scholarship. As the academic world is changing dramatically as a result of the big-data phenomenon, qualitative scholarship is under huge pressure to maintain its survival. Doing things under the business-as-usual scenario will no longer work. Qualitative scholars have no choice but to upscale themselves or in some extreme cases convert themselves into hybrid scholars who demonstrate high eloquence and competence for both qualitative and quantitative approach. In language, these scholars are considered highly bilingual- one who masters two languages equally well that switching between the two codes is flawless.

Second factor is epistemology. Both qualitative and quantitative scholarship strive to defend its respective mode of knowledge inquiry. It is the core of their identity- one that defines their respective existence and distinguishes their respective traditions in deliberating knowledge. Both the qualitative and quantitative scholarship will attach a sentimental value to the epistemology factor hence it is a factor for which both players will have little incentive to trade off.

Third factor concerns the cost. Here cost is defined as a composite factor that aggregates different outlays that are involved as a result of maintaining survival and keeping epistemology intact. When a qualitative scholar embarks on his decision to upskill himself with the new quantitative methods, there are costs involved namely the time, the effort and possibly monetary expenditures in order to acquire the new skills. As a result, cost is the only variable that can vary indefinitely in the model.

The model assumes the cost factor to be uniquely assigned to the qualitative scholarship given the fact that 1) the need for change is dawn upon the qualitative scholarship more than the quantitative scholarship; 2) should there be a need to undertake upskilling, such endeavor is to be pursued by qualitative scholars independently without quantitative scholars' direct sponsorship.

The utility functions of the two players are given below:

$$U_{\text{qualy}} = S + D + Ee^x - C \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

$$U_{\text{quanty}} = S + D + Ee^x \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

- where S: survival
- D: extinct
- E: epistemology
- C: cost

One's survival is a function of probability ( $\Omega$ ). Nobody can be of 100% sure that he will survive be it in life, a competition, a conflict or war, or a simple task like exam (where survival is equal to passing the exam). Hence, each player's survival occurs with certain possibility that ranges between 0 and 1. In this model, the probability value interacts directly with the epistemology factor. For all  $\Omega=0$ , the epistemology is assumed to be completely non-existent or  $E=0$ . When  $\Omega>0$ , the epistemology will assume the value of 1,  $E=1$ . The Euler constant suggests the



compounding effect whereby a positive probability of survival will boost the sentimental value exponentially.

Hence, by incorporating the probability into the existing equations, one derives:

$$U_{\text{qualy}} = S(\Omega) + D(1-\Omega) + Ee^x - C \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

$$U_{\text{quanty}} = S(\Omega) + D(1-\Omega) + Ee^x \dots\dots\dots (4)$$

By simplifying (3) and (4) and arranging the terms, one derives the following:

$$U_{\text{qualy}} = D + (S-D)\Omega + Ee^x - C \dots\dots\dots (5)$$

$$U_{\text{quanty}} = D + (S-D)\Omega + Ee^x \dots\dots\dots (6)$$

The extensive form of the game is given in figure 1 below:

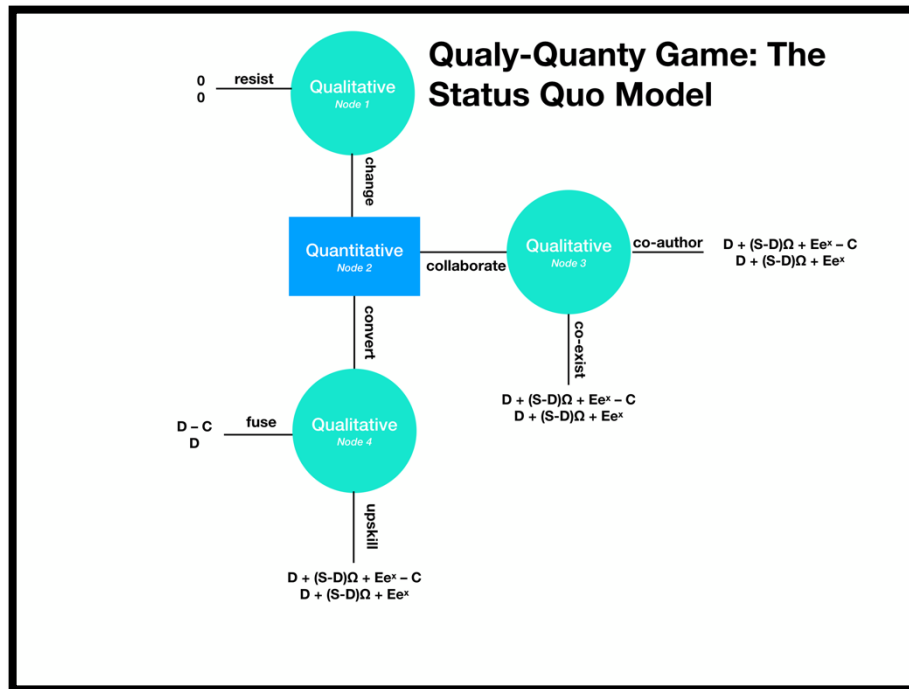


Figure 1. The status quo model

The game begins with the qualitative making his<sup>2</sup> first move at *node 1*. The choice of actions available are change and resist. At *node 2*, it is the quantitative’s turn to make her move. She will have two choices of actions: collaborate and convert. The game continues with the qualitative making his move at either *node 3* or *node 4*. At both the nodes, the qualitative have two choices of actions respectively. At *node 3* he can opt between *co-author* and *co-exist*. Meanwhile at *node 4*, he can opt for either *upskill* or *fuse*. The game ends upon the qualitative deciding his course of actions. At this point, each of the players’ final payoffs are given where the first row represents the qualitative’s final payoff and the second row represents the quantitative’s final payoff.

**Analysis and Outcome of the Game-Theoretic Model**

The game’s basic assumption is that the qualitative scholarship is strongly inclined to change the status quo. This assumption is important lest the game will not take place. Resistance (*resist*) will result in the maintenance of the status quo.

<sup>2</sup> The use of the male and female third person singular pronoun is to distinguish between player 1 and player 2. This practice is common in the game theory literature. See Steven Tadelis (2013).

The quantitative scholarship, upon learning the desire for change on the part of the qualitative scholarship, decides to choose *collaborate*. The reason for this lies in the past decision of player 1 [qualitative scholarship] at *node 1*.<sup>3</sup> Sharing the same rationality, player 2 [quantitative scholarship] believes that player 1 could have resisted from the very beginning should he [player 1] believe that player 2 is going to choose *convert* at *node 2*. In similar vein, being rational, player 1 believes that it is also not in the best interest of player 2 to choose *collaborate* rather than *convert* at *node 2* given the more profitable payoffs from choosing *collaborate*.

Given *collaborate* is the best action at *node 2*, it is plausible to assume that player 1 rationally believes that player 2 is expecting the highest payoff at *node 3*. The concept of completeness<sup>4</sup> induces player 1 to be confident that one of the actions between *co-author* and *co-exist* must yield the highest payoff for player 2. To simplify things at this point (*co-author* and *co-exist* will be further defined later in this section) we assume player 2 to put higher preference for *co-author* than for *co-exist*. Such an assumption is not so far-fetched from the reality as many scholarships in the natural sciences [the quantitative] have had long tradition with co-authorship (in terms of joint publication) as opposed to scholarships in the social sciences. Hence, the action *co-author* potentially yields the highest payoff for player 2 but not for player 1. The rationality concept then assumes player 1, who is the player moving at *node 3*, will play *co-exist*, for this action yields the best payoff for him.

The question then arises as to why player 2, despite knowing (in line with the rationality concept) that player 1 will prevent her from realizing her best possible payoff at *node 3*, still chooses *collaborate*. To answer this question, one needs to look at the possible payoffs at *node 4*. *Fuse* seems to possibly yield the worst payoff in the game. The expected lower value of  $\Omega$  and potentially very high value of  $C$  might render the final payoff for *upskill* inferior than those potential payoffs at *node 3*. Furthermore, player 2 rationally believes that player 1 would have been better off resisting to play the game in the first place had he known the game would have ended at *node 4*.

Therefore, the game's equilibrium (solution) is reached at *node 3* with the strategy *change – collaborate – co-exist*. This indeed represents the current reality of the real-world situation. It is imperative to further define *co-author* and *co-exist* as their use in this article may be different from their conventional use or existing common understanding.

*Co-author* refers to collaboration between qualitative and quantitative scholars in which both make conscious effort at learning and understanding each other's technical knowledge to a reasonable degree. By reasonable degree means both authors can describe and justify the use of approaches and methods by one another. *Co-exist* refers to collaboration in which authors are concerned only with their own expertise without making conscious effort at learning and understanding one another's expertise to a reasonable degree. In a nutshell, while *co-author* assumes new learning to have taken place as a result of intense intellectual exchange between qualitative and quantitative scholarship, *co-exist* assumes no (minimal if any) learning has taken place as a result of both qualitative and quantitative scholarship maintaining their respective expertise or technical knowledge.

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<sup>3</sup> This solution concept is also known as forward induction in the game theory literature. See Andreas Perea (2010) for more interesting read on forward (versus backward) induction reasoning in game theory.

<sup>4</sup> Players can rank all outcomes; objective preference over outcomes can be established.

Thus it is not difficult to identify *co-exist* in the current situation. Authors jointly write an article; each (assuming authors represent the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship) takes care of his own part or substantive portion of the article. The idea is to produce a joint article without necessarily putting deliberate effort to learn about each other's expertise. Perhaps there is some discussion but such a discussion is merely to better coordinate the joint publication. No substantial learning is to take place as no change in behavior is expected of authors.

Scholars are not to be blamed as the need for joint articles has become necessary these days. In Malaysia's IR academic, joint articles have grown in numbers over the years, although some 75% of these joint articles are still intra-field (within the IR field) rather than inter-field (between or among different fields). And because there are very limited number of scholars with quantitative inclination, such intra-field has mainly been qualitative on different subject areas. Even then many of these intra-field joint articles are hardly of *co-author* attribute as authors remain compartmentalized within their respective subject matters.

The situation gets even more daunting when one speaks of upskilling and forming a hybrid (fusion) within the qualitative scholarship. From the model, both *upskill* and *fuse* are the two least preferred options for the qualitative scholarship. Again, this is not surprising given the cost involved in choosing these two options. *Upskill* requires the qualitative scholars to undertake learning new sets of skills [quantitative]. Depending upon the career level of the qualitative scholars, learning these new skills may incur many outlays. More senior ones may find it difficult to find the time and courage (energy) to subscribe for specific courses regardless of their intensity. There are also emotional and psychological cost namely loosing face (failure to acquire the skills can lead to personal embarrassment) or peer pressure (the inability to grasp new concepts can lead to the inability to catch up with the rest who will in turn put more pressure on one's speed and performance).

*Fuse* presents the biggest dilemma to both the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship. Here *fuse* entails an emergence of an entirely new breed of scholars who can be regarded as the offsprings of the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship bonded together. The result is a new scholarship that displays eloquence and competence in both qualitative and quantitative tradition. Both their ontological as well as epistemological attributes are different from their parents hence they view the world in an entirely different perspectives, of course depending upon their personal and professional motivations.

Here is where the paradox is. Although by virtue of its ideal character, *fuse* should be a welcome product hence yields the highest payoff among all the other actions. Nonetheless, as reflected in the utility function of both players, maintaining epistemology is sentimental to both scholarships. This model assumes the qualitative to be suffering costlier costs than the quantitative do. Although, generally, both scholarships do not benefit from such *fuse* option. This analysis also shares the view that *fuse* is not a practical option as there is a common interest to maintain intellectual varieties and traditions to arrive at multi-perspective worldview. A fusion or a hybrid scholarship may sound chic or fashionable but may lack strong and distinctive intellectual roots.

Nonetheless, the new disruptive era we are currently living in is obliging us to adapt to transformative way of doing things. For one thing, it is about surviving the promotional exercise in the academia that is of an issue here. Qualitative academics in Malaysia (and in many other Southeast Asian countries, even the world over) have been pressured to collaborate with their quantitative counterparts (especially those with data and numerical skill) in order to

get their work published in highly reputable journal. More and more of these highly sought-after journals are explicit in their demand and preference for quantitative rather than qualitative submissions. As publishing in these high-ranking journals count significantly toward promotion, joint and collaborative publications seem to be the most pragmatic solution. Though, in some desperate cases, qualitative scholars' role in such joint publications are reduced to editorial role- copyediting the grammar and structures.

The preceding paragraph is just a small part of the much bigger picture that concerns this article. It pertains to the epistemological issue, which largely determines the survival of, not scholars per se, but more importantly the approach's existentiality. Imagine the Arab Spring phenomenon. Many would agree that it was a phenomenon whose fate was defined by the virtual reality. The communication technology fundamentally drove and shaped the phenomenon to the very minimal control of the states' authority and political forces.

Of course the details of the Arab Spring phenomenon is beyond the scope of this article. However, what interests the article the most is the fact that the phenomenon produced obscene amount of data- virtual data that accumulated over the evolving years of the Arab Spring on social media and the Internet. One then asks the question, "what do IR scholars [qualitative] make of these data?" It is almost unthinkable that the qualitative scholarship will be able to succinctly account for all these data purely in an interpretivist way. Even if one were to employ a case-study approach, a good use of quantitative methods is necessary if not obligatory to ensure that the case study (single case or multiple cases) captures the real essence of the case(s) in question. A sophisticated methodological software like phyton maybe useful to extract the massive amount of virtual chat sessions, postings, images, videos and narratives on various social media and the Internet platforms. Count in those digital content on the millions mobile devices, one will be immediately overwhelmed by the rich and extensive data to be analyzed.

There is no denying that the Arab Spring phenomenon may not be of prime interest to IR scholars in Malaysia or the region generally. Nonetheless, there are simply many similar phenomena that produce rich digital data. The fateful May 9, 2018 in the Malaysian politics is of these phenomena. IR scholars interested in the role of domestic politics e.g., domestic institutional reforms; partisan political leadership, may be forced to gather the tremendous amount of digital data and content of events before, during and immediately after the elections. Although the IR scholars may focus on the macro aspect of things, such macro analysis must adequately account the essential of the micro aspects which are derived from those zillions of digital data on the events.

The trend of political leaders, domestic or international, using social media applications e.g., facebook, twitter and instagram demonstrates how, in recent years, political leadership hence policymaking have been occurring in the virtual space. These technology platforms allow for observations, once not categorically possible in the old analog days, on leaders' and policymakers' motives and preferences conveniently possible. Messages and postings on these social media applications open up the private side of these leaders and policymakers, especially when one can access to personal accounts of these leaders and policymakers.

Hence, for game theorists, Trump's tweets on his personal twitter account are as equally, if not more, valuable as his official statements issued by the institutional sources. Contradictions between personal and official statements that many mull over are indeed some of the best indicators of what to ensue in reality. Many times, these personal tweets or instagram images precede the long-awaited official statement that go through so many risk-evaluation procedures.

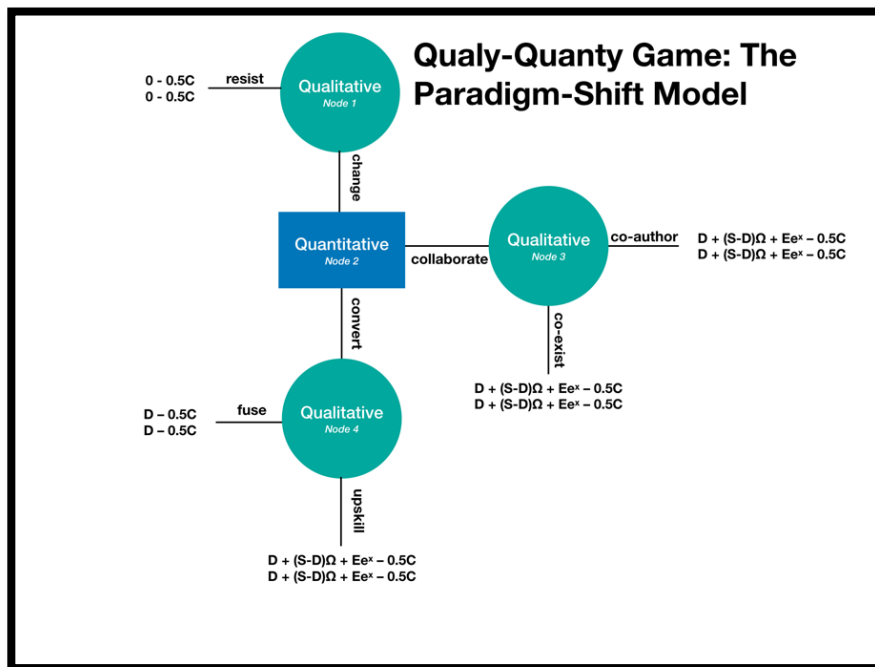
Ironically, public perceptions are formed around these personally released cues that then transform themselves into national discourse. Putting aside the fake-truth debate, it would be ignorant not to take these digital data and incorporate them into one's research analysis.

### Conclusion

It is the effect of the big data phenomenon. No research on any subject matter can escape this influx of data for analysis. It is in this context this article concludes with a propositional game theoretic model, the paradigm-shift model, that tries to improve on the current status quo model. Still maintaining the essential features of the status quo game model, the proposed model aims at modifying some of the perimeters of the game to result in much better equilibria available for both the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship.

The proposed game theoretic model, the *Qualy-Quanty Game: The Paradigm-Shift Model*, is presented in figure 2 below:

Figure 2. The paradigm-shift model



From the status quo model, we saw there exists a unique equilibrium or solution to the game. The *co-exist* strategy becomes the best response to the *collaborate* strategy player 2 plays. Neither player sees the utility of playing at *node 4* despite the potential benefits of upskilling among the qualitative scholarship as discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

Further analysis of the status quo model also clearly reveals that while *co-exist* is being preferred, its utility is not necessarily greater than *co-author*. What this means is that such *co-exist* equilibrium is not stable as a small change in the payoffs can alter altogether the game's outcome. Qualitatively, one can also argue that opting for *co-exist* is not a sustainable strategy moving forward for the qualitative scholarship.

The payoff situation in the status quo game model can also be attributed to the rather passive role of the quantitative scholarship. The status quo model does not make explicit assumptions on the nature of player 2. Imagine a mathematical scholar who is seeking for an IR scholar to study the probability of the South China Sea territorial claims producing a catastrophic armed

conflict. The theoretically sophisticated IR scholar is likely to brief the number-crunching mathematician on the long-established threat narrative (assuming the dominant realist paradigm in IR). The former will repeatedly inform the latter that his pool of experts' opinion and field- observation data can convincingly confirm how, if the situation remains unchecked, physical conflict is highly likely.

Then the dull but curious mathematician asks a basic yet fundamental question, "does the dynamics of the phenomenon remain unchanged?" To this, the IR scholar puzzlingly shaking his head while wondering hard what could be the real question instead. Having anticipated such an answer from an expert IR academic, the mathematician began to introduce to the IR scholar the Bayesian probability. If the phenomenon follows a dynamic pattern, the probabilities must also dynamically change. States just like people learn and update themselves with newer information to make sense of a phenomenon. Knowledge about leader's ever-changing policy environment is crucial in determining the equilibrium of the conflict in question. Yesterday one might predict a war was ripe; today a peace dividend presents itself on the table. A sound scholarship must not fail to identify and do the necessary assessment of such change.

To be fair, the above anecdotal illustration does not in any way mean to offend the many qualitative IR scholars (even in Malaysia) who are familiar with the Bayesian theorem. What it simply tries to highlight is the fact that small interaction like the one depicted between the IR scholar [qualitative] and the mathematician [quantitative] can result in a significant intellectual transformation.

The desire for change may be higher among the qualitative scholarship whose existence is being seriously threatened by the big-data phenomenon. However, the quantitative scholarship does not necessarily have to play audience to such change. The change indicates new opportunities for the quantitative scholarship as there are potentially many new areas of research can be harnessed. A strategic intellectual partnership between the two scholarships will only guarantee more value-adds to the quantitative scholarship. Hence, the cost for such change must not be unique to one party [the qualitative] but must be equally shared by both parties [the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship]. This then leads to the proposed paradigm-shift model to infuse the  $0.5C$  to represent the equally shared cost between the two scholarships.

Using the proposed paradigm-shift model, collaboration and conversion are pursued in partnership. This partnership reflects mutual support and shared risks (in terms of the cost). As a result the sub-game at *node 3*, for instance, can lead players to prefer co-authorship rather than merely co-existence.

Consistent interaction between and among the qualitative and the quantitative scholarship can pave the way for qualitative scholarship to prefer upskilling themselves. The article discusses earlier how conversion may be a painful experience especially for hard-core senior IR scholars. Nonetheless, as much as peers can be a source of stress and tension, peers can also be a source of strong support. It is at this juncture the paradigm-shift model modifies the quantitative scholarship's attitude toward supportively converting their qualitative counterparts. The outlays [cost] associated with upskilling are being shared- as demonstrated by the  $0.5C$  in the utility functions of both players. By changing the payoff matrix for upskill, the proposed model effectively changes the game's preferences hence the overall game dynamics.

By modifying the utility function of the quantitative scholarship to reflect more rewarding benefits from *co-author* and *upskill*, the quantitative scholarship finds it more morally responsible to help transform their fellow qualitative counterparts to arrive at better research quality and standards. Over time, with good consistency and positive support, the paradigm-shift game model predicts more qualitative scholars will be determined to initiate change as resist becomes dearly costlier. It is at this point that the article argues that the qualitative scholarship has successfully addressed its quantyphobia!

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# Truth Tampering through Social Media Malaysia's Approach in Fighting Disinformation & Misinformation

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## ABSTRACT

Though poorly defined and highly politicised, the term 'Fake News' has been popularised by the Trump administration in recent years. Scholars prefer to use terms such as Information Disorder, in particular Disinformation and Misinformation, to discuss this global concern. The dissemination of disinformation and misinformation is not new. However, the penetration of social media and messaging applications today enable such information to spread much faster, deeper and wider. Further, social media and messaging applications have become the public's source of primary information. These platforms are fast-becoming a birthplace of the manipulation of truth and the influencing of public opinion. The advancement of technology has also been manipulated to create false information and add to the severity of the problem. The impact of disinformation and misinformation varies: from financial difficulties faced by businesses to influencing the outcome of elections to physical violence triggered by racial and religious tensions. This paper aims to explore: 1) How information disorder, in particular, disinformation and misinformation, are being disseminated through social media and instant messaging platforms to influence public opinion; 2) How states respond to disinformation and misinformation; 3) Malaysia's disinformation and misinformation landscape and 4) Key areas for Malaysia to improve on, namely enhancing its current legal responses, developing digital literacy, heightening the accountability of social media platforms and strengthening the fact-checking mechanism.

**Keywords:** Disinformation, Misinformation, Social Media, Content Regulation, Fake News

## Introduction

The term "Fake News", has been gaining the attention from societies all over the world since the end of 2016. For instance, There has been a spike in the usage of the term by leaders around the world (Gabbatt, 2018). A search on Google of the term in November 2018 showed 702,000,000 results. However, the catch-all term is not only poorly defined, but also highly politicised by the Trump administration against journalists and news organisations who disagree with their perspective (Lind, 2018; Morin, 2018; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017; Wendling, 2018). It does not stop there - over the past year more than 20 global leaders have also used the term to accuse journalists of spreading lies (Lees, 2018).

Although the colloquial term is widely used, it is only a fraction of a larger phenomenon called Disinformation and Misinformation, which are under the umbrella of 'Information Disorder'. The three types of Information Disorder are described below (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), according to First Draft News, the truth-seeking non-profit based at Harvard's Shorenstein Centre.

- **Misinformation:** Information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm
- **Disinformation:** Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country
- **Mal-information:** Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country

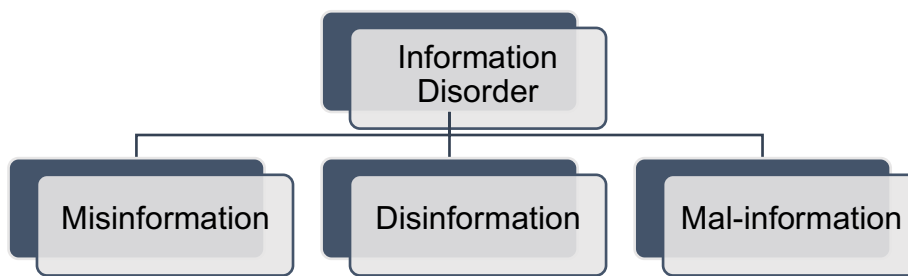


Figure 1. Types of Information Disorder  
(Source: Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017, p. 20)

Further, there are several ways to categorise disinformation and misinformation (Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang, & Liu, 2017; Tandoc Jr, Lim, & Ling, 2018; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). One that is defined by eavi Media Literacy for Citizenship (Steinberg, 2017), a non-profit organisation that guides citizens in this challenging media environment, has also been adopted by Malaysia’s Cyber Defense Operations Centre (Centre, 2018). This model describes the 10 categories of misleading news as 1) Propaganda 2) Clickbait 3) Sponsored Content 4) Satire and Hoax 5) Error 6) Partisan 7) Conspiracy Theory 8) Pseudoscience 9) Misinformation and 10) Bogus. eavi also describes the motivation behind those misleading news either due to money, politics or power, humour, passion and (mis)inform. Further, the organisation also categorised the level of impact, from neutral to high, for those ten categories. Four categories fall under “high impact”, they are conspiracy theory, pseudoscience, misinformation and bogus. The details of the categorisation are described in Figure 2.

<b>propaganda</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopted by governments, corporations and non-profits to manage attitudes, values and knowledge</li> <li>appeals to emotions</li> <li>can be beneficial or harmful</li> </ul>	<b>partisan</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideological and includes interpretation of facts but may claim to be impartial</li> <li>privileges facts that conform to the narrative whilst forgoing others</li> <li>emotional and passionate language</li> </ul>	<b>IMPACT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neutral</li> <li>low</li> <li>medium</li> <li>high</li> </ul> <b>MOTIVATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>money</li> <li>politics/power</li> <li>humour/fun</li> <li>passion</li> <li>(mis)inform</li> </ul>
<b>clickbait</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eye catching, sensational headlines designed to distract</li> <li>often misleading and content may not reflect headline</li> <li>drives ad revenue</li> </ul>	<b>conspiracy theory</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tries to explain simply complex realities as response to fear or uncertainty</li> <li>not falsifiable and evidence that refutes the conspiracy is regarded as further proof of the conspiracy</li> <li>rejects experts and authority</li> </ul>	
<b>sponsored content</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advertising made to look like editorial</li> <li>potential conflict of interest for genuine news organisations</li> <li>consumers might not identify content as advertising if it is not clearly labeled</li> </ul>	<b>pseudoscience</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>purveyors of greenwashing, miracle cures, anti-vaccination and climate change denial</li> <li>misrepresents real scientific studies with exaggerated or false claims</li> <li>often contradicts experts</li> </ul>	
<b>satire and hoax</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>social commentary or humour</li> <li>varies widely in quality and intended meaning may not be apparent</li> <li>can embarrass people who confuse the content as true</li> </ul>	<b>misinformation</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes a mix of factual, false or partly-false content</li> <li>intention can be to inform but author may not be aware the content is false</li> <li>false attributions, doctored content and misleading headlines</li> </ul>	
<b>error</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established news organisations sometimes make mistakes</li> <li>mistakes can hurt the brand, offend or result in litigation</li> <li>reputable orgs publish apologies</li> </ul>	<b>bogus</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entirely fabricated content spread intentionally to disinform</li> <li>guerrilla marketing tactics; bots, comments and counterfeit branding</li> <li>motivated by ad revenue, political influence or both</li> </ul>	

Figure 2. Categories of Disinformation and Misinformation  
(Source: Steinberg, 2017)

This paper aims to answer 3 main research questions, thus they will be presented and discussed in three sections. Section 1 focuses on Information Disorder on Social Media. Section 2 focuses on States Responses in Countering Disinformation and Misinformation and lastly Section 3 focuses on Malaysia's Perspectives: Digital Landscape, Misinformation Trend and current Approaches as well as the way forward for Malaysia.

### **Information Disorder on Social Media**

In this section, the paper will provide discussion based on three sub-sections. First is on the rise of social media, followed by the breadth and speed of false information and lastly on the implications of online false information.

#### **Rise of Social Media**

According to the Global Digital Report (GDR) 2018, while the world's population today is at 7.593 billion people, more than half of the population, which is about 4.021 billion people, are internet users (WeAreSocial & Hootsuite, 2018). The growth in internet users is largely due to affordable smartphones and mobile data plans. In 2017, more than 200 million people own their first mobile device, making about 5.135 billion people now possess a mobile phone and the global mobile internet users is about 49% of the total population. In India for instance, while only 60% of all households have access to basic sanitation, 88% of India's households own mobile phones, according to the 'Household Survey on India's Citizen Environment & Consumer Economy' (ICE 360° survey) conducted in 2016 (Economy, 2016).

The GDR 2018 also found that active social media users are about 3.196 billion people, which is a 13% increase (362 million people) since January 2017 (WeAreSocial & Hootsuite, 2018). Further, both WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger also grew twice as fast as the core Facebook platform, with the number of people using each of the messaging application up by 30% year on year (WeAreSocial & Hootsuite, 2018). Today, not only is the penetration of social media much larger than any states, its function too has transformed to be more powerful in influencing the people. While the intent of social media and instant messaging platforms initially was to socialise with friends and family, these platforms have revolutionised their function to become a primary source of information (Nic Newman with Richard Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018; WeAreSocial & Hootsuite, 2018).

#### **Breadth and Speed**

Disinformation and misinformation is a problem happening in both social media and instant messaging platforms, and the ways they are being disseminated differ. In open networks such as Facebook and Twitter, it could be observed that people rely on public opinion to avoid social isolation. According to the "Spiral of Silence" Theory, people do not share about policy issues and moral components if they think their point of view is not widely shared (Gearhart & Zhang, 2014; Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Thus, popularity cues such as likes, comments, and retweets could be deciphered as endorsements of opinions, thus encouraging the public to share their opinions on these platforms. Further, the existence of Bots, which is software that imitates human behaviour by posting, liking or retweeting automatically, also triggers the sharing of public opinions. Bots are, however, being used to pump out information that is typically false and misleading. In closed and private networks, such as WhatsApp, encryption makes the public feel like it is a "safer place" for them to engage in discussions involving sensitive issues within their community and without attracting attention of the authorities, especially in authoritarian countries. Further, according to The Illusory Truth Effect, which is a mental strategy involving our implicit memory or memory of the past – every time a reader encounters false stories, the story will grow more familiar and casts the illusion of truth (Hasher, Goldstein, Toppino, & behavior, 1977).

Human biases also play a role for misinformation to tap into society's minds. This is because, humans react to content that knocks on the grievances and beliefs that we currently possess, thus seditious posts will generate quick engagement (Meserole, 2018). In an analysis on US presidential campaign, it was revealed that top fake election news stories initiated more total engagement on Facebook than top election stories from 19 major news outlets combined (Silverman, 2016).

Technology advancement could also be manipulated to support the dissemination of misinformation, although unintentionally. "Algorithmic Curation" involves automated selection of what content should be displayed to users, what should be hidden, and how it should be presented. This is especially dangerous when social media filter bubbles rank a fake story on top. One situation is through the algorithms on social media platforms where posts are displayed based on "relevance" instead of reverse chronological order. This means that the algorithm will prioritise posts with contents that are of greater prior engagement – further disseminating online falsehood. This algorithm is practiced by Twitter, but also Facebook and YouTube. Ultimately, when human bias is combined with these algorithms, social media platforms emerge as confirmation bias machine (Meserole, 2018). A study found that it took the truth about six times as long as falsehood to reach the same amount of people (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). The truth, do not gain the same amount of attention as the false.

Besides the influence of algorithms, the manipulation of technology contributing to disinformation could be observed by Deep Fakes, which involves photos and videos that realistically replace one person's face with another. The danger of this is that anyone can be made to appear as doing or saying anything (Baker & Capetany, 2018). Anyone can also deny their actions to this kind of fakery. Another technology that plays a role in creating and spreading disinformation are Bots and "Algorithmic Curation". The former involves software that could imitate human behaviour – it is capable to post, like or retweet automatically. Most of the time, bots are used to pump out information, many of which are false and misleading. A study has also found that it is hard for users - ordinary users or experts - to detect texts written by bots (Oliver, 2018). Eventhough it is easier to deceive users when the subjects of false information are non-factual, such as entertainment, and factual topics like science, also manage to deceive a high number of users: 30-40% of automated texts deceive ordinary users while 15-25% deceive experts. The research also found that information disliked by the crowd has a higher deception rate of 10-15% for both ordinary users and experts.

It also does not help that publishers of false information are driven by a strong financial motive. During the US Election Campaign period, an enormous amount of websites publishing false information were traced to a small city in Macedonia, where its teenagers were vigorously creating false controversial stories to gain massive income through advertising (Subramanian, 2017).

### **Implications of Online False Information**

In recent years especially, online information almost always involves factors tampering with the truth. Content regulation is a way to manage the impacts of misinformation. While some countries uphold "Freedom of Speech" to protect the voice of its people, some prefer to opt for the content regulation model. Content regulation could either be controlled by states or guided by states. While many argue that content regulation suppress the freedom of expression, it is vital to manage and ensure that the information ecosystem remains harmonised and society is not under threat due to the mismanaged information shared online.

Disinformation and misinformation influence the opinion of the public and bring various threats to society. False information could ruin the reputation of people and organisations, influence election outcomes, financially impact businesses, and create or further intensify racial and religious tensions, which could escalate into violence. False information that leads to violence could be observed in several countries including India, Myanmar and Indonesia – mostly amplifying people’ fear of made-up crimes or intertwined with Hate Speech (Azali, 2017; Head, 2017; Lamb, 2018c; PTI, 2018; Safi, 2018; Sanghvi, 2018).

In India, for instance, many of its people are first-time Internet users. Many have fallen prey to disinformation, mostly through the WhatsApp instant messaging platform. The false information spread online are mostly crime-related, especially on child lifting rumours (Saldanha, Rajput, & Hazare, 2018) and others include rumours on gang robbery and organ trafficking. All of which have disastrously prompted fearful mobs to kill numerous innocent people and stoking ethnic and religious hatred an ill-informed public (PTI, 2018; Sanghvi, 2018). In one mob, 9 men were attacked with wooden sticks by more than 1,500 villagers on mere suspicion after false stories circulated online(PTI, 2018). According to IndiaSpend analysis, 33 persons have been killed and at least 99 injured in 69 reported cases, between 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2017 until 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2018 (Saldanha et al., 2018). The growing number of people being killed and mob attacks have shaken the Indian government: in some areas, the internet was briefly shut down to stop disinformation from spreading further and deeper(Burgess, 2018). Police also tried to warn people in the villages not to believe the rumours(Bengali, 2018), but their speed was no match for WhatsApp.

### States Responses in Countering Disinformation and Misinformation

There are at least 35 countries where their governments are taking actions against disinformation and misinformation, directly or indirectly(Funke, 2018). However, the focus of the intervention may differ – foreign disinformation campaign, election interference, hate speech, political bots, Deep Fakes and advertising, media literacy or just misinformation in general. Table 1 describes the different country approaches.

*Table 1: States Approaches in Combatting Disinformation and Misinformation*

State	Action	Focus
Australia	Government task force	Election interference
Bangladesh	Bill and arrests	Propaganda and misinformation
Belarus	Law	Misinformation
Belgium	Expert group and informational website	Misinformation
Brazil	Proposed government task force, 20 draft bills and platform agreements	Election-related misinformation
Cambodia	Law	Misinformation
China	Laws and reporting portal	Misinformation
Croatia	Draft Bill	Hate Speech and misinformation
Denmark	Task force, brochures and government action plan	Misinformation and media literacy
Egypt	Law and arrests	Misinformation
France	Bill	Election misinformation
Germany	Law	Hate Speech
India	Database and proposed state law	Misinformation

Indonesia	Government task forces, arrests, site tracking and press briefings	Misinformation
Ireland	Bill	Political bots and advertising
Italy	Online reporting portal and arrest	Misinformation and fake reviews
Kenya	Law	Misinformation
Malaysia	Law	Misinformation
Myanmar	Law and arrests	Misinformation
Nigeria	Media literacy campaign	Media literacy
Pakistan	Government Twitter account	Misinformation
The Philippines	Dismissed Bill	Misinformation
Russia	Bill	Misinformation
Saudi Arabia	Government threats	Misinformation
Singapore	Parliamentary report	Misinformation
South Korea	Government task force and proposed amendments	Misinformation
Spain	Committee recommendation	Misinformation
Sweden	Proposed government authority	Foreign disinformation campaigns
Taiwan	Bill	Misinformation
Tanzania	Blog licensing	Media regulation
Turkey	Investigation	Misinformation
Uganda	Social media tax	Internet regulation
United Arab Emirates	Government threats	Misinformation
United Kingdom	Parliamentary report and task force	Misinformation and foreign disinformation campaigns
United States of America	Proposed federal law, platform testimonies, failed state advisory group, state law and threat assessment	Political ads, foreign disinformation, general misinformation, media literacy and deep fake videos

(Source: Funke, 2018)

Among the role model countries that serve as an interesting case study is Germany, where its NetzDG law, passed in June 2017, focuses on putting accountability on online platforms (BBC, 2018; Thomasson, 2018). The law underlines that “obviously illegal” posts need to be removed within 24 hours or risk fines of up to €50 million. The challenge of this law is that too much content was being blocked, resulting in curtailing free speech. In order to overcome this issue, officials considered revisiting the law, which includes recovering contents that are being deleted incorrectly, as well as having a third party organisation to review ambiguous posts (Thomasson, 2018). Germany makes the focus of its law to combat against Hate Speech.

In South East Asia, 5 countries are actively seeking for solutions to misinformation. Besides Malaysia, the other 4 countries are Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia and the Philippines. Making no call for an urgent law, Singapore opted to thoroughly understand the ins and outs of disinformation, or what they call “deliberate online falsehood”. They recently published a 300-pages parliamentary report where 22 approaches were proposed, gathering

ideas from journalists, advocacy groups and several others as well as forming a committee (Koutsoukis, 2018). Singapore stresses the need to understand its scope, intent and powers (Idris, 2018).

Indonesia's approach involves multi-prong strategies. It recently formed a government agency called the National Cyber and Encryption Agency which actively implement site-tracking through blocking and removing fake content as well as utilising tools to automatically track and report sites with fake content (Batu, 2018a, 2018b; Kapoor, 2018). Its communications ministry has recently also announced the plans to hold weekly briefings on "fake news" fake news, in order to increase public awareness and educate them on the issue(Lamb, 2018b). Indonesia is also vigorously arresting alleged perpetrators, for instance, the Muslim Cyber Army(Lamb, 2018c). Further, ground-up independent efforts in Indonesia, through its civil society group *Masyarakat Anti Fitnah Indonesia* (Mafindo) for example, have also met great success. The group is consistently active in combatting false information online via its fact-checking Facebook group, offline public outreach, inclusive digital literacy as well as a variety of collaborations with journalists(Chua, 2018). Although consisting of only seven full-timers, the group successfully gained the cooperation of the public, reaching out to hundreds of volunteers across 17 Indonesian cities(Chua, 2018).

Cambodia has recently introduced a new law to regulate media coverage that threatens national security. Under the law, someone who is found guilty of sharing false information could face imprisonment for up to two years with fines up to \$1,000(Lamb, 2018a). Three ministries have been assigned to monitor media posts for potential violations. However, there are heightened concerns about the threats to personal freedoms in the lead up to the general elections (Lamb, 2018a).

Interestingly, an attempt by the Philippines to regulate against misinformation has resulted in a dismissed bill. The bill, which was filed by the Chair of the Senate's Committee, stated that government officials would be accountable for spreading false information, due to several politicians who have been accused of spreading disinformation for their own benefits(Elemia, 2018; Yap, 2018). The measure was, however, challenged as unconstitutional, disproportionately targeting on government officials and that traditionally, such a law could have never been passed (Philippines, 2017).

### **Malaysia's Perspectives**

In this third section, discussions will be focused on Malaysia's perspectives. There are 4 sub-sections that will be discussed, namely on its digital landscape, the trend of misinformation, the current approaches being carried out in combatting the issue and lastly, on the way forward for Malaysia.

#### **Digital Landscape**

According to Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) Internet Users Survey 2017, 89% of Malaysian users access the Internet via smart phone, which indicates that most Malaysians could access the Internet anytime and anywhere (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2017). The survey also found that the Top 3 activities for Malaysians on the Internet is to text, visit social media sites as well as look for information. Unfortunately, many users who find information online blindly believe what they read – the study found that 82.7% of users trusted health-related information found online, regardless of the source. Echoing global statistics, most Malaysians (89%) obtain news online, and 72% Malaysians obtain their news from social media. The survey also revealed that

Malaysians actively engage on online platforms; 57% would share news to others via social media and email, and 30% would comment on the news they read on social media or websites. Reuters’ study showed that the top social media and messaging platforms in Malaysia are Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube, as shown in Figure 3 (Nic Newman with Richard Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). Unfortunately, as revealed in another study, Malaysians are also increasingly confused and unable to differentiate real news from fake news (Ries, Bersoff, Armstrong, Adkins, & Bruening, 2018).

Rank	Brand	For news	All
1	Facebook	64% (+6)	82%
2	WhatsApp	54% (+3)	82%
3	YouTube	33% (+7)	72%
4	Instagram	17% (+4)	45%
5	Twitter	13% (+3)	25%
6	Facebook Messenger	12% (+1)	36%

Figure 3. Top Social Media and Messaging Platforms  
(Source: Newman et.al, 2018, p.133)

### Misinformation Trend

Many of the disinformation and misinformation in Malaysia are related to politics, religious, health and crime (Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission; "MCMC moves to curb fake news," 2017). For instance, leading up to and during the 2013 Malaysian General Election (GE), disinformation spread about how 40,000 Bangladeshi nationals who were brought to Malaysia to vote to help swing the votes to the benefit of the then ruling coalition. The impact of that disinformation was felt by those who looked like foreigners; they were confronted and manhandled at polling stations all over Malaysia (Szu, 2018).

In another example, a company was impacted financially when religious concerns were manipulated to jeopardise one’s business. The shoe company Bata lost more than RM500,000 within a month, and forced to withdraw 70,000 pairs of shoes from 230 stores after false information about selling shoes with the Arabic word "Allah" on the soles of its shoes went viral ("Fake news leads to Bata losing \$158k in a month," 2017).

In terms of health-related “fake news”, various information about the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD), allegedly spreading all across Malaysia, had caused panic among the public in recent months (Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission). Crime-related “fake news” also typically go viral, for instance, on a syndicate kidnapping hundreds of people and selling their organs in Sarawak (Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission).

Further, bots were identified as interfering in the recent GE in May 2018, where automated accounts flooded Twitter with tens of thousands of pro-government and anti-opposition messages. Two of the anti-opposition hashtags - ‘#SayNoToPH’ and ‘#KalahkanPakatan’ - were used around 44,100 times by 17,600 users in just the span of nine days to influence public opinion (Ananthalakshmi, 2018). It was also revealed that 98% of the users appear to be bots, according to a researcher from the Digital Forensic Research (DFR) Lab of the Atlantic Council think tank. Following the discovery, Twitter suspended hundreds of these accounts, where they



were considered spam or malicious automation. The impact of this disinformation was considered minimal, as quoted by a new Minister of Pakatan Harapan, as the then ruling party had failed to win the 14<sup>th</sup> GE.

At present, Malaysia may face relatively minimal impacts of misinformation compared to other countries. However, due to the widening divide and deteriorating tolerance on religious, racial and sexual orientation issues, Malaysia may face bigger threats in the future if left unchecked.

### **Approaches**

In terms of fighting misinformation and disinformation, Malaysia has carried out several strategies such as a new law, a fact-checking website and efforts to increase digital literacy, with the MCMC as one of the backbone agencies. In 2017 alone, there were 91 cases of false information were recorded. MCMC also took action against 3,721 fake accounts, out of which, more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them were deleted from the various social media platforms(FMT, 2018).

MCMC is also in charge of establishing and maintaining a fact checking website called *Sebenarnya.my*, where it acts with ministries, government departments and agencies required to either verify or debunk any news involving them. However, there are concerns that this government-run approach might not be able to verify political issues, although these are one of the main trends of misinformation in Malaysia. This initiative should collaborate with various parties including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and journalists to increase the trust level of society. It is important for fact-checking websites to reach out to the same audience as well as ensuring the society understands the truth. Several improvements could be a two-way communication website to further communicate with the public as well as usage of several languages to verify the news, especially when Malaysia is a multi-racial society. In another effort, MCMC has also held digital literacy programmes to increase awareness level for Malaysians. It was reported that in 2017, the programmes had reached about 1.5 million Malaysians (AHMAD, YI, SHAH, TAN, & CHUNG, 2018).

Besides the fact-checking website and digital literacy enhancement programmes, Malaysia has also passed the controversial *Anti-Fake News Act*, a law to deal with “fake news” and related matters. *The Anti-Fake News Act*, which was rushed through Parliament just in time for the GE, was criticised as a tool to stifle free speech, in particular on the 1MDB scandal (Beech, 2018). The law stated ‘fake news’ that include “any news, information, data and reports, which is or are wholly or partly false, whether in the form of features, visuals or audio recordings or in any other form capable of suggesting words or ideas“. It also stated an offence to “maliciously create, offer, publish, print, distribute, circulate or disseminate any fake news, or publication containing fake news”. The law also involves an extra-territorial application, which means that someone could be charged under the law regardless of his or her nationality and whether they are inside or outside Malaysia, so long as the ‘fake news’ are concerning Malaysia or Malaysians. While Germany’s NetzDG puts the liability on social networks, Malaysia’s Anti-Fake News Law puts the liability on individuals who are creator of the ‘fake news’. The law’s official justifications are to curb the creation and dissemination of fake news, protecting fake news victims as well as to maintain national security. Carrying stiff punishments, those who are found guilty serve up to six years in prison and a maximum fine of RM500,000 (“Anti Fake News Act 2018,” 2018 ).

The first case under the law involves a Danish man disseminating disinformation about the Malaysian police through a Youtube video (Domonoske, 2018 ). Even the current Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed, was charged under the Anti-Fake News Act, regarding

his claims of sabotage by the then ruling government towards him during the election period (Sidek, 2018). After the change of government in May 2018, the Parliament passed the bill to repeal the Act on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug 2018 (Sivanandam, Carvalho, Rahim, & Shagar, 2018), which is one on of the things promised in the Pakatan Harapan Manifesto if the won the Malaysian election. However, the upper house of Parliament, the Senate, rejected the Anti-Fake News Act Repeal soon after, on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 ("Dewan Negara rejects Bill to repeal Anti-Fake News Act," 2018).

However, besides The Anti-Fake News Act, there are other existing legislative acts that could serve as promoting a safe cyber environment. Thus, many critiques argue whether the *Anti-Fake News Act* is necessary, given Malaysia has been using the other laws such as *Printing Press and Publication Act 1984*, *Communications and Multimedia Act 1998*, *Sedition Act 1948*, *Defamation Act 1957* and *Penal Code*. However, due to the potential of bigger threats caused by disinformation and misinformation, Malaysia does need to review its existing laws and focus on the main intention the law is carried out and to manage a more specific impacts and understanding the motives behind those disinformation being spread. On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018, Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh said the government must press ahead to introduce hate speech laws, after a blogger allegedly racist remarks about a police of Sikh descent have gone viral and offended the Sikh community (AR, 2018).

### **Way Forward**

The impact of “fake news” on Malaysia could still be considered as relatively “mild”, although the country may face a bigger threat in the future if the problem is not addressed accordingly. Moving forward, the paper identifies four areas of improvements for Malaysia to further strengthen its approach combatting disinformation and misinformation.

### **Enhancing Legal Responses**

As described earlier, Malaysia’s Parliament decision to repeal the Anti-Fake News Act has recently been rejected by the Malaysian Senate ("Dewan Negara rejects Bill to repeal Anti-Fake News Act," 2018). Thus the debate of whether this Act is beneficiary for the country is still on-going. Many believes that the Act is politically motivated, established by the then ruling government to suppress public opinion (Beech, 2018). Arguments also linger around its necessity, given that there is a string of existing Acts that could arguably support the justification of the *Anti-Fake News Act*’s establishment. The stiff punitive measures, as well as the loose definition of “fake news” have also created public concerns. This Act has also reinforced Malaysia’s image as an authoritarian country. A study by local open technology initiative Sinar Project and global censorship monitor Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) in 2016 revealed that 35 percent of Internet censorship was on pornography, 25 percent on gambling 12.5% on news sites and 10 percent on political criticism(Xynou, Filastò, Yusof, & Ming, 2016).

In revising the Anti-Fake News Act, the Pakatan Harapan-led “New Malaysia” should look closely into the function of this law, the definition of “fake news”, the degree of the impact, the motive of creating and spreading false information and lastly, the responsible parties. Understanding all these elements would enable Malaysia to either revise the *Anti-Fake News Act*, or come up with a totally new Act. The Pakatan Harapan Government also needs to eliminate the negative perception the public has towards laws that regulate content, by eradicating elements of politics and focus solely on combatting the problem.

### **Developing digital literacy**

In 2017, Malaysia's MCMC reached out to 1.5 million Malaysians for its awareness programmes in combatting false information online. Ideally, this awareness programme should be reached out to all layers of society. More discussions and talks should be carried out to ensure society is not only aware of the danger and impact of disinformation, but also to make them realise the importance of checking facts before spreading information online. Critical thinking and the desire for truth is key. Readers should learn how to carry out investigative research on their own through fact-checking websites and background check of sources. Further, Malaysian media should embrace the principles of professionalism and integrity to produce high quality news. They should avoid sensationalised, harmful stories or irresponsibly republishing news from other sources. Nurturing a society that is critical of information will create a demand for quality information to be produced by the media.

### **Heightening the accountability of social media platforms**

The fight against disinformation and misinformation is a fight by all, including social media platforms. As the Indian Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad puts it, "Social Media could not continue being a mute spectator anymore" ("Govt says WhatsApp cannot be a mute spectator," 2018). Recently, increasing efforts by social media platforms could be observed including overhauls of platforms and introducing new functions to fight against dis/misinformation. For instance, one of Facebook's initiatives involved automated systems identifying duplicates of misinformation flagged previously (Drozdiak, 2018). Facebook has also launched and shared what they call "Understanding the Facebook Community Standards Enforcement Report" (Schultz & VP, 2018) for more transparency between them and the public in terms of their initiatives and efforts. Recently WhatsApp has introduced its 'Forward' function, to increase public awareness on the possibility of those forwarded messages being false information. The function also limits the number of recipients and in countries such as India, where disinformation via WhatsApp is rampant, the limit is much lower ("WhatsApp to limit forwarding messages in India after mob lynchings," 2018). WhatsApp even offers monetary incentives for ideas on how to fight false information on its platform, where the solutions could be different from open network such as Facebook and YouTube ("WhatsApp Launches Research Grants To Fight Fake News - Offering Up To \$50,000 Per Proposal," 2018). Although just a plan, Youtube has recently also joined the bandwagon, announcing its plans involving recommendation engine to push news-related videos from reputable outlets and "link-shame" videos containing false information (Vega, 2018).

The questions remain however, if these efforts are enough? And while initiatives might differ according to requirements and cooperation by countries, Malaysia should look into what other ways and how social media and instant messaging platforms should be a role in supporting its government. Some believe that these platforms need to step up their role of news publishers, as self-regulation and accountability are needed. Else, countries might need to follow the footsteps of Germany, putting liability on these platforms as they are the gateway of the false information being rampantly spread.

### **Strengthening the fact-checking mechanism**

Malaysia already established a fact-checking mechanism through its website 'Sebenarnya.my' with its tagline "Tak Pasti Jangan Kongsi", which translates into "when in doubt, do not share". Fact-checkers are great to level the informational field but the impact of their contributions will be dependent on the integrity of the institution. The task is not easy as it also involves correcting worldviews which is highly correlated with thinking patterns and pulling individuals out of echo chambers. Benchmarking with fact-checking mechanism in other countries, Malaysia

may enhance its approach by considering these following points: 1) Two-way communication between fact-checkers and the public 2) Expanding its reach via multiple language as the medium of communication 3) Involving of independent bodies, journalists and volunteers from the public, beyond government agencies in debunking false information 4) Encourage other organisations to establish its own fact-checking mechanism 5) Rather than being reactive towards reports, proactively identify “fake news” through flagging with the help of artificial intelligence.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the spread of false information, described academically as disinformation and misinformation, is not a new phenomenon. However, social media facilitates the proliferation of false information, thereby affecting how societies view the world. The impact of false information is alarming and becoming a global concern. Many countries are taking actions against it by proposing new laws, forming taskforces and enhancing digital literacy.

Malaysia’s efforts in combatting the problem of online falsehood include a series of laws to promote a safe cyber environment, the newly introduced *Anti-Fake News Act*, awareness programmes and a fact-checking website to debunk false information. However, there is room for improvement to address the problems in protecting and stabilising the information ecosystem. There are four proposed areas of improvement: 1) enhancing current legal responses 2) developing digital literacy 3) heightening the accountability of social media platforms, 4) strengthening the fact-checking mechanism.

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## “TIMPEDAN” and “JEJANGKITAN” in Balinese Society

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### ABSTRACT

Balinese so far actually has two types of traditional riddle genre. Those are *timpedan* which is commonly known as ‘riddle’ and *jejangkitan* that does not have any equivalent Indonesian and English term. These two genres have many kinds of communicative functions in Balinese society, and both of them are confused one to another, whereas they have very different linguistic characteristics even though these two traditional formulas extensively exploit various kinds play on words. This paper intends to reveal the linguistic structure differences of these traditional expressions, play on words, and their implicative communicative functions.

**Keywords:** riddle, traditional, and linguistic formula

### Introduction

Riddling is an important activity enjoyed by traditional as well as modern community members. Riddle as one genre of verbal contests has many functions and roles in human life. In spite of delivering humour for achieving many kinds of amusements, the existence of humour can also function to show intellectual capability either of the addresser or the addressee. In societies of having diverse community members, riddling activities have central role in ritual and cultural transformation processes. For example, Gonds community, in Central India, Men gathered in the village side when one of its community member died and riddled accompanied by drum beat (Cook, 2000, 79). Handelman (1996, 49) notes societies in Africa, Caribbean, and South East Asia use riddles in conducting ceremonies, such as wedding, burial, night vigil, and worshiping. In East Toraja, riddles are played when they stay all night watching a corpse before burial ceremony while in West Toraja, riddling is performed during the rice grains are coming out.

Balinese traditional and modern society, has various kinds of traditional formula, and two of them, i.e. *Timpedan* and *Tejanita* are simply called “teke-teki” in Indonesian terminology. Although, both of these traditional formulas exploit very extensive play on words (pun), they actually has internal linguistic characteristics which are different one from another. This paper will try to reveal those linguistic characteristic differences, the consequent play on words, and their communicative function consisted between them. These problems have not been so far seriously discussed by the folklorists. This research accordingly has very important benefit in order to explore one of Balinese local wisdom concealed in its oral tradition heritages.

### Literature Review

Even though, a lot riddle materials has been found either concerning Indonesian or local languages in Indonesia (Bengkulu, Lampung, Basemah, Aceh, Batak, Nias, Toraja, etc.) and even more collections recorded in the digital era, only a few serious studies deeply discuss such materials. This condition might be caused by its little formula, and it constitutes a product of non-literate society, and modern western society members tend to regard that everything associated with play on words is trivial, childish, and funny (Cook, 2000, 78) regardless the fact that this little formula gives a significant influence in ritual, art, religion, and magic as well. Stokhof (1981) analysed 100 of Woisika Riddles with regard of their communicative function, formula, and its themes. Meanwhile, Wijana (2014a) analyses structure, play on words, themes, and functions of modern Indonesian riddle found in a riddle collection book. Wijana (2013, 26-30) discusses riddle discourse in relation with linguistic pride. In that paper he clearly shows that modern Indonesian riddles exploiting various type of play on words which indicate that

Indonesians are very proud of foreign cultures, but disrespectful of their own culture. Meanwhile Wijana (2014b) discusses the exploitation metalinguistic function in riddling found among literate Indonesian community members. This rareness is the main reasons of choosing one of local language riddles as a discussion topic of this paper. The discussion will cover three crucial problems concerning linguistic characteristics, play on words, and communicative functions of the two types Balinese riddle, *Timpedan* and *Jejangkitan*. The discussion is expected to reveal the differences existed between them.

### **Theoretical Frame Work**

Human beings, because of their various abilities, have many calls. One of them is “homo luden” for their ability to play (Huizinga, 1949, 2-8). Playing is a part of their learning process for enhancing their life quality (Daeng, 1982, 212). They can play with many kinds of thing, including the language they use to communicate. As far as the play with language is concerned, various genres of pun appear in the use of language, and more importantly they able to exploit the pun for achieving various kinds of communicative purposes in spite of its main functions to create humour, such as for criticizing social conditions, testing intelligence, chatting, advertising, etc. As such, it is obviously unreasonable to argue that play on words found in any kind of discourse are funny, unimportant, and trivial because high literary texts are also full of such kinds of play. Shakespeare’s master pieces are interesting because of his dedicated punster (Cook, 2000, 81). Huizinga further states that cultural organization developed as an extension of play, arises as a secondary effect. Societies are created and held together by institutionalised activities which are essentially play-like, such as found in art, religion, education, warfare, philosophy, law, etc. (see also Cook, 2000, 111). So, civilization arises and unfolds in play. From this theoretical starting point, extensive word plays found in Balinese riddle are not different from other kinds of play which certainly have very central role in maintaining social cohesion of the Balinese community.

### **Research Method**

Most data presented in this paper are riddle collection from my childhood time in Singaraja, Northern part of Bali. Some of them I got from bed time riddling with my parents and grandmother. The others are collection with play mates. These data are added with ones found in: [www.aryaokawordpress.com/PojokBali-script/ceCimpedan/](http://www.aryaokawordpress.com/PojokBali-script/ceCimpedan/).

Firstly, the data are classified based on their linguistic structure, types of word play, and finally the communicative functions they possibly perform in varieties of speech act. The data are transcribed orthographically through two stage glossing, i.e. word to word, and free translation.

### **Results and Discussion**

Based on linguistic characteristics, the riddling formulas of Balinese society can simply be differentiate into two types, i.e. *timpedan* and *jejangkitan*. These two genres will respectively be described more profoundly in the following sections.

#### ***Timpedan***

*Timpedan* is essentially traditional “questions” expressed by the language speakers for joking activities or intelligent testings to the addressee. The complete formula of *timpedan* discourses should be consisted of “question” and “answer”. The question constitutes the “problem” (P), and the answer is the “solution” (S). See (1) and (2) below:

- (1) + Apa cenik makamen, gede malalung? (P)  
what little wearing sarong, big naked

‘When s(he) is small wearing sarong, but naked when (s)he is grown up, What is it?’

- Embung (S)  
'Bamboo shoot'
- (2) + Apa gong malu, lelontek duri? (P)  
What gong precedes, banner behind  
'What is gong coming first, and banner follows behind?'
  - Kuluk (S)  
'dog'

Bamboo shoot is commonly cooked by the Balinese for vegetable. In (1) the Balinese people analogically perceive, the bamboo seedling is like a wearing sarong person, and the coverage will release when it getting tall, and this condition is perceived like a naked person. Meanwhile, Balinese ceremony procession generally begins with a group of people bringing banners followed by another group beating gong, and never the other way around, like the riddle problem in (2). This cultural phenomenon inspires Balinese people to create this riddle by analogically comparing the banner with the dog wiggling tale and the sound of gong with dog's bark.

Balinese community members have at least 3 types of *timpedan*. Those are *timpedan* based on analogy, sound similarity, and play on words.

### ***Timpedan* Based on Analogy**

Analogy based *timpedan* is any riddle created by physical or state similarity perception that hold between the question and the answer, such as (1) and (2) above, and (3) and (4) below are the other examples:

- (3) + Apa cenik mepusungan, gede megambahan? (P)  
What little wearing hair bun, big long haired  
'When (s)he is small wearing hair bun, but when (s)he is grown up, has long hair.'
  - Paku (S)  
'edible fern'
- (4) + Apa cekuk kejengitin? (P)  
What choke, grin at it  
'You choke it, and grin at it. What is it?'
  - Caratan (S)  
'earthenware flask with neck and spout for drinking water'

Like a bamboo shoot, fern is also cooked by The Balinese for vegetable. The plant shape from small to mature are perceived conversely like a person. Wearing hair bun when it is small, and the leaves are freely spread when the plant is grown up (3). Meanwhile, human being is the other way around. Balinese traditional people used to drink water sprayed directly from the spout of the earthenware. They choked the earthenware, and grinned at it to gulp the water (4). Analogy based *timpedan* has various of topics, such as human body part (5), plant (6), animal (7), house utensil (8), sky objects (9), etc.

- (5) + Apa sampi mapalu selat pundukan? (P)  
What bull fight border on bund  
'Two bulls fight bordering on bund. What is that?'"
  - Alis (S)  
'eyebrow'
- (6) + Apa ngudane putih, di wayahne gadang? (P)  
What when young white, in old green  
'When young it is white, when old it is green. What is it? (S)
  - Busung (S)  
'Coconut leaf'

- (7) + Apa mara majujuk endep, mara nyongkok tegeh? (P)  
 What when stand short, when squat high  
 ‘It is short when stand, but high when it squat. What is it?’  
 - Cicing (S)  
 ‘dog’
- (8) + Apa anak cerik maid cacing? (P)  
 What child little drag worm  
 ‘A Little child drags worm. What is it?’  
 - Jaum (S)  
 ‘needle (and thread)’
- (9) - Apa menek bajang, tuun tua? (P)  
 What rises young, goes down old  
 ‘It is young when it rises, but old when it falls. What is it?’  
 - Surya (S)  
 ‘sun’

In (5) the human body parts, two eye brows, is compared with fighting cows, and the space separated them is perceived like a bund. In (6) coconut leaves is compared with other entities that are usually green when young, and turn to white or other colors (red, brown, black, etc.) when they are getting old, but not the other way around. In (7) an animal. dog is compared to other animals which are commonly taller when they are standing than squatting. In (8) sewing devices, needle and its thread, are compared with a little child. In (9) the sky object, the sun, is metaphorically compared with human age.

### ***Timpedan Based on Play on Word***

Play on words which are created by various kinds of ambiguity constitute the most important source of Balinese *timpedan*. For more clearly, see (10) and (11) below:

- (10) + Anake makokohan apane sakitange? (P)  
 The People coughing, what fell hurt  
 ‘The people who got cough, what the body part was hurt?’  
 - kolongane (S)  
 ‘the throat’  
 + Salah, limane (Correction)  
 ‘It is wrong, the hand’

- (11) + Ken Johan Tihingane ajak Timune? (P)  
 Which is farther Tiingan than Timun  
 ‘Which is farther between Tihingan and Timun?’  
 Johan Timune  
 ‘Timun is farther’  
 + Salah, Johan Tihingane. (S)  
 ‘It is wrong, Tihingan is farther’

Example (10) played on the ambiguity of *makokohan*. This word can mean ‘coughing’ from [ma- + kokoh(an)], in which *kokoh* is an onomatopoeic sound of cough. This meaning is intended to be grasped by the addressee. The other meaning is ‘digging with hand’ from [ma-/an + kokoh], in which *kokoh* mean ‘to dig’. This meaning is not aware of by the addressee because it does not relate with illness. Meanwhile (11) has more complicated explanation. Because of its deictical character, this riddle must be uttered in a place where Timun ‘place name’ is farther than Tihingan ‘place name’ for deception. This is possible because in spite of to mean ‘farther’ from [joh ‘far’ + -an], *johan* can also mean ‘bamboo pole’ which is commonly made

of tihing ‘bamboo’. This metonymic relation between johan ‘bamboo pole’ and tihing ‘bamboo’ of which it is made are not usually aware of by the addressee.

### ***Timpedan Based on Sound Similarity***

*Timpedan* based on sound similarity constitutes the simplest of all types of Balinese riddle. This riddle genre is created on the basis of phonological resemblance that hold between the problem and the its solution. The problem is the acronymic form of the answer or solution. There will certainly be more than one possible answer available for the addresser that make the addressee will never be able giving the correct solution. For example see (12) and (13) below:

(12) + Apa cing dag? (P)

What cing dag

‘What is cing dag?’

- Cicing mageledag (S)

Dog bump sounds dag

‘Dog is bumping, it sounds “Dag”’

+ Salah, Cicing mawadah bodag’ (correction)

Wrong, dog placed in big woven bamboo container’

‘Wrong, it is a dog in big woven bamboo container’

(13) + Apa cing lem? (P)

What cing lem

‘What is cing lem’

- Cicing gelem

Dog sick

‘a sick dog’

+ Salah, cicing selem (correction)

Wrong, dog black

‘Wrong, it is a black dog’

### ***Timpedan Based on the Balinese Spelling System***

In a very rare case, there is also a riddle created on the basis of the complicated Balinese spelling system. Balinese spelling has a close relation with Javanese spelling. It is a syllabary system in which the vowel sounds are marked by certain markers. The /i/ vowel and its allophone [I] is marked by “wolu” over the character, /u/ and its allophone [U] is marked by suku under the character, and /e/ and its allophone [E] is marked by taleng in the left side of the character, and the vowel /o/ and its allophone [O] are marked by “taleng and tedong” hemming the character. In riddling activity, for disguising purpose taleng and tedong spelling markers are shortened into leng and dong. See the following (14), in which ga and da with taleng and tedong will become godo, and adds with [h] will become godoh ‘fried banana’.

(14) +Apa ga leng dong da leng dong h? (P)

What ga leng dong da leng dong h

‘What is ga leng dong da leng dong h?’

-Godoh

‘fried banana’

### ***Jejangkitan***

Different from *Timpedan*, *Jejangkitan* is syntactically constructed by declarative sentence. This type of sentence pragmatically functions for delivering sensational news, and the sensation is actually fake after the play on words of *Jejangkitan* are discovered. For example, consider (15) s.d. (17) below:

- (15) Pan            Dasi   Mati   magantung.  
 Father of Dasi   died   hang  
 ‘Dasi’s father died of hang oneself’
- (16) Pan Carik            Mati   matumbeg  
 Father of Carik   died   hoed  
 ‘Carik’s father died of being hoed’
- (17) Nang    Kebrek   mati   magantung  
 Father   Kebrek   died   hang  
 ‘Kebrek’s Father   died of hanging himself’

In (15) to (17) the proper names, more precisely personal names that do not contain meaning (Allan, 1986, 70-72), are combined with generic words and generic phrases, such as *dasi* ‘tie’, *carik* ‘rice field’, and *nangka berek* ‘rotten jack fruit’. *Dasi* ‘tie’ is hung in the neck, *carik* ‘rice field’ is hoed in the land preparation, and *nangka berek* ‘rotten jack fruit’ is hung on its branch.

Further, *jejangkitan* can be differentiated into two types, namely *jejangkitan* based on play on word, and *jejangkitan* based on pragmatic use of language.

### ***Jejangkitan* Based on Play on Word**

This type of *jejangkitan* is created by various kind of complicated pun that are causing lexical, phonological, or grammatical ambiguities, such as ones shown in (9), (10), and (11). The other examples are (18) to (21) below:

- (18) *Dagdag* basangne    Baang celeng  
 Slit    the stomach give    pig  
 ‘Slit the stomach for pig feeder’
- (19) *Tusing dadi*            meli    panci nane    putih  
 it is not    allowed    to buy cooking pan    white  
 ‘It is not allowed to buy a white cooking pan’
- (20) *Dini*    sebilang semengan            ada    film pejuang  
 Here every    early morning    be    film hero  
 ‘Here every early in the morning, there was hero film’
- (21) *Ada*    anak            suud    madahar layahne ilang.  
 There person    after eat    tongue disappear  
 ‘There is a person who loosed his/her tongue after having meal’

*Dagdag* (18) in Balinese can mean two things, i.e. ‘to slit’ and ‘taro, calladium leaves for pig feeder’. This *jejangkitan* has a performative function to threaten ‘a naughty child’. The child will think that the older person will seriously slit his/her stomach. *Panci nane putih* ‘the white cooking pan’ in (119) is grammatically ambiguous with *paan cinane putih* ‘the white Chinese tiger’. In (20) *pejuang* is an Indonesian word that means ‘hero’ from [pe- +juang] ‘a person who is struggling’. This word accidentally homonymous with Balinese *pejuang* [peju- + -ang] ‘to defecate’. *Dini* ‘here’ in (20) refers to a large land where the Balinese people used to defecate in the time before the home toilet has not been socialized. In (21), Balinese word *layah* ‘tongue’ is lexically ambiguous with another *layah* that means ‘hungry’. So, it is not surprising that after having meal, any person will vanish his/her hunger.

However, sometimes the play on words are not easy to solve as they are combined with metonymy (22), topic deletion (23), and intonational change (24).

- (22) *Anake*    ditu    nak            beluluk            jakana.  
 People    there    particle    palm seed            be cooked rice  
 ‘People in that place cook palm seeds (for substituting rice)’
- (23) *Tain*    kuluk    magula ganting,    dendeng            goreng jaan.  
 ‘shit    dog    have sugar thick, dried in the sun    fried delicious’

‘Dog shit with thick sugar dries in the sun, and fry will be delicious’.  
 (24) Tiang meli tumbak, kamen, piring, ental, ajine tuah satus  
 rupiah.

I bought spear, sarong, plate, palm leaves the price only one hundred rupiah

‘I bought spear, sarong, plate, and palm leaves just one hundred rupiahs’

In (22) *jakana* ‘be cooked’ in relation of rice, from [jakan + -a] is by chance partially homonymous, and metonymically related with *jaka* ‘palm’ where *beluluk* ‘palm seed’ comes from. The sensation news is caused by the impossibility people cooking palm seed for staple food. In (23) it is certainly impossible to prepare dog shit becoming a delicious food. What is delicious in this case is *dendeng goreng* that can be interpreted into ‘dries in the sun and fry’ and ‘fried jerk meat’. So, what is delicious is the fried jerk meat, and the dog shit is left without consideration. In (24) the sensational fact is related to the cheap price of spear, sarong, plate, and palm leaves which is about one hundred rupiahs. This is made possible because of pause deletion. By this technique, *tumbak, kamen* ‘spear and sarong’ will become *tumbak kamen* ‘the spear of sarong’, and *piring, ental* ‘plate and palm’ leaves will become *piring ental* ‘plate made of palm leaves’. Metaphorically, *tumbak kamen* ‘the spear of sarong’ refers to *jaum* ‘needle’ and *piring ental* refers to *tamas* ‘plate made of palm leaves’. Through such complicated analysis, the cheap price sensation can be understood.

The most shaking sensation caused by *jejangkitan* happened in the 1970s when drama gong (Balinese play accompanied by gong, traditional music instruments) was booming around the island. The most famous drama gong group at that time, *Kacang Dawa* from Klungkung. This group is considered the best because of its male main character is skilful of playing flute, and all the characters master conversing in high Balinese speech level style which is no more well mastered by the Balinese younger generation. In the *jejangkitan* formula, drama gong group was reported suffering defeat from Banjar Pekambangan, a place name in Denpasar that did not seem to have drama gong group. Example (25) is the *jejangkitan*:

(25) Drama gong Kacang Dawane kalahange teken Banjar Pekambangane.

Play gong Kacang Dawa was defeated by village Pekambangan

‘Kacang Dawa’s drama gong group was defeated by Banjar Pekambangan group’

This *jejangkitan* is made possible because the place name *Kacang Dawa* in the generic phrase means ‘long bean’ [*kacang* ‘bean’ plus *dawa* ‘long’], meanwhile *Pekambangan* from [*kambing* ‘goat’ plus *pe-an* ‘place of’]. In This case long bean is the goat food stuff.

Finally *jejangkitan* (26) below is based on hyponimic relation of a puppet character and the puppet performance itself.

(26) Buin mani peteng di Bli Malene lakar ada wayang.

Again tomorrow night in Bli Malen (house) will be shadow puppet

‘Tomorrow night there will be a shadow puppet in Bli Malen’s house’

Actually there is no shadow puppet to be performed because (20) is intended to deceive the addressee by playing the proper name Malen and Malen, the character of Balinese *punakawan malen* or *Tuwalen* which is equivalent to *Semar* in Javanese puppet.

### ***Jejangkitan* Based on Pragmatic Use of Language**

The intention of speaker in expressing linguistic utterances is strongly determined by the contextual use of them in speech situation. The various possibilities of intention the utterance may perform are often exploited by the speakers in order to deceive the addressee’s pragmatic assumption. No matter how many assumptions an utterance may have, in certain contextual use of a language, there is usually only one assumption intended by the speaker. Accordingly,

in informing the passing people who will go acrossing a bridge, the *jejangkitan* (27) is intended to give a warning for them for not continuing their travel because the bridge was fallen down.

(27) Keretege ditu        nak        matektek.  
Bridge there        particle        chopped down.  
'The bridge there was fallen down'

This *jejangkitan* is uttered to lie the passing people, because what the speaker want to say that the bridge is made of chopped bamboo. It is certainly not possible constructing a bridge from bamboos that have not been chopped before. But, this common sense script is not the one assumed by the addressee.

### Conclusion

Although both *timpedan* and *jejangkitan* extensively exploit play on words, these two Balinese riddle genres have very different linguistic characteristics. *Timpedan* is constructed by interrogative sentence and consists of two structural elements, i.e. problem and solution. Meanwhile, *jejangkitan* is expressed in declarative sentence. This linguistic characteristic implies the communicative functional differences of both riddle formulas. Besides, their main function to create humor and amusement for the addressee, *timpedan* is used to test the addressee's riddling ability by uttering problematic question, while *jejangkitan* is used to test the addressee's ability by uttering fake sensational news. The problem and the fake sensational news of both formulas are hidden in various types of unique word play. This finding hopefully inspires other researcher to deepen this genre or to investigate other types of Balinese traditional formulas, such as *wangsalan* (bladbadan), *sesenggakan* (proverb), traditional songs, humorous discourses, etc. The researches on them constitute an effort for preserving Balinese invaluable traditional cultural heritage.

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# **Islamizing Social Science**

## **The Politics of Islamization of Science on Several Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia**

Budi Kurniawan<sup>1</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

The epistemology of sciences in the academic world is experiencing the challenges and dynamics of today. The dynamics of sciences in the disruptive era experienced significant movement. There are various paradigm shifts within the scope of a particular study. One of them is the development of islamization of science at universities in Indonesia. Islamization of the epistemology of conventional sciences that is considered secular not only in natural science, but also in social science. This is a distinct challenge for social sciences in responding to the islamization of science. Some universities in Indonesia make islamization of science as a new policy in academic even a new vision in the institution. This needs further study, to find out the future epistemological studies of social sciences in response to the islamization of science. In addition, this study is also needed in order to know the dynamics of the study of the social sciences in Indonesia in responding to the islamization of sciences through various policies and institutional vision of higher education. This study will explain the analytical descriptive of the islamization of sciences at several universities in Indonesia. Based on literature studies, this study attempts to explain the dynamics of social sciences especially in respond the islamization. Politics of islamization policy of sciences exist in Indonesia have complex implication to related institution and also academics who are involved in social sciences field.

**Keywords:** epistemology, islamization of science, university policy

### **Introduction**

The rise of the religious spirit in the contemporary era had a significant impact on the dynamics of science development. The discourse of religious values integration into science appears to respond to the absent of metaphysical recognition in the epistemology of modern science (Armas & Kania, 2013). In addition, the discourse of globalization and post-colonialism has participated in inspiring the movement of integration of religious values towards science, especially in the movement of Islamization of science. Orientalism's discourse and the colonialization of knowledge by the West towards the eastern countries encouraged the emergence of alternative scientific paradigms that were not loaded with western or eurocentric interests.

Conventional science, both natural sciences and social sciences are considered loaded with western interests and culture because of the hegemony and universalize western values into global values. An attempt to apply Islamic principles to conventional science was explored by several Muslim scientists. They are Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, Sayyed Hosein Nasr, and Syed Naquib Al Attas who at least theoretically formulated plans and actions for the Islamization of science itself. But until now the debate was still limited to theoretical debates and had not yet reached a realistic level to be easily implemented. Although some educational institutions try to carry out the mandate of the Islamization of science optimistically, there is little criticism of the movement of Islamization of science which is seen as utopian and too normative.

The discourse of Islamization of science developed from America to Asia. Such as Faruqi, who is domiciled in America, started the idea of Islamization of knowledge. Then emerged from Iran who also studied in America, namely Sayyed Hosein Nasr. In Malaysia, there is Syed

Naquib Al-Attas. Each of them has a perspective on the Islamization of knowledge that seeks to be applied through institutions affiliated with them. These institutions are like IIIT (International Institute of Islamic Thought) in America and at IIUM (International Islamic University Malaysia) in Malaysia. Institutions engaged in the field of education have tried to make the Islamization of science into a vision and mission that must be achieved. These institutions are trying to apply the act of Islamization of knowledge through sharing strategies.

Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world has several universities that have applied the principles of Islamization of science. In the process of interaction between Islam and science, most tertiary institutions are mainly Islamic religious colleges that adhere to two major schools in relation to Islam and science. The two major schools are scientification of Islam and the Islamization of science. The scientification of Islam has a very large influence on Islamic state higher education institutions, where historically it can be traced that many lecturers who teach in these universities are graduates from Islamic studies degree from western countries. Whereas the second flow is the Islamization of science which will be discussed further in this paper. In contrast to scientification of Islam which seeks to apply scientific principles when studying religious phenomena, the Islamization of science seeks to apply Islamic principles and adapt scientific principles to fit the Islamic spirit. Universities that adhere to the flow of Islamization of knowledge in Indonesia are like the University of Darussalam in Gontor, Ibn Khaldun University in Bogor, and other universities which will be discussed further in this paper.

This paper will discuss the dynamics of Islamization of science in several universities in Indonesia at an applicative level and the implications that are manifested in the strategies of Islamization of science within the campus made by the university. Using the study of the latest literature related to the Islamization of science activities in various universities, this paper seeks to trace the strategy and goes further into the broader epistemological implications and political implications of the higher education climate in Indonesia.

### **Literature review**

Regarding the role of a scientific production context that has to do with an interest such as in the context of the Islamization of science, Yusof (2012) has discussed the relationship between power and academic representation in the context of religious and state or political discourse. Academic space becomes a space that is not neutral and becomes a space filled with contestation of political discourse and the legitimacy of power. Academic space legitimates knowledge and produces knowledge that is loaded with interests, especially in the context of western and Islamic concepts. He took examples such as in Malaysia and Turkey. If it is associated with the Islamization of science, the Yusof study can be relevance with the relation of knowledge and power and representation, where institutions that embrace the Islamization of science can be a mirror or representation of certain interest groups (Yusof, 2012).

In this context, Gramsci discusses the role of certain ideologies in the production and reproduction of knowledge. Ideology seeks to produce institutions that are hegemonic in a society that has a latent function in maintaining the political stability of the community. Not only in the context of maintaining the status quo, but the ideology referred to here can also be interpreted as an alternative ideology that appears to be a hegemonic preference in that society. Like conservative Islam or political Islam which is an inseparable part of a certain group of Muslim communities. If it is linked in the context of the Islamization of science with the political concept, a common thread can be drawn in which institutions that have the power to try to produce and reproduce legitimate knowledge such as the Islamization of science. The

effort is perpetuated so that mutual relations occur, where institutions or political groups have strong legitimacy by producing knowledge, namely knowledge that has been "Islamized" and the Islamization of knowledge has institutions that can guarantee the continuity of its vision in Islamizing science (Yusof, 2012).

Islamization of science can be seen in the context of feelings of marginality. Davies (1991) explains that the sentiment of the marginality of Muslim societies can be understood in that context. It is not only in reality that Muslim societies experience fragmentation, destabilization, and colonization, but psychologically such sentiments take root. Marginality, in this case, cannot be separated from the reality of Muslim communities who experience social problems such as poverty, environmental issues, the economy, political instability, and others. Modernity is seen as a regression or setback, which from Islam as the principle of the totality of life becomes back to the era before modernity. Western-style modernity is full of secularism and makes it a single solution to all existing problems.

Knowledge is not present in empty space but is bound by the context of civilization in the Islamization of science. Islamization of science has a vision in building a more civilized civilization. This new intellectual discipline can be seen as an alternative effort in responding to various problems that he considers to be resolved with principles and values that can create a new reality of civilization (al-Attas, 1995). Therefore, the Islamization of science encompasses all aspects of disciplines that build elements of civilization, such as technological developments. The discipline of the natural sciences and the social sciences is the main object of the Islamization of science itself. An example is the institution of Islamic banks that emerged from Islamic economics. The Islamic economy cannot be separated from the process of Islamization of science itself.

Al-Attas views that the Islamization of science is an attempt to assert humans from mythological traditions that are contrary to Islam and from secular understandings (Daud, 1998). Islamization of knowledge for al-attas arises because science is not free of value, but is loaded with certain values. Conventional knowledge is considered a hegemony from the west. This certainly has implications for western values which are full of animating current knowledge production. Al-Attas views that western civilization is not feasible to be consumed before being selected first (Taufik & Yasir, 2017).

Many criticisms were existed against the Islamization of science. Rahman explained that science is actually neutral and cannot be Islamized. Science is something that is pure and free of elements of error. That is, errors are the responsibility of the user, not the knowledge. For Rahman, the Islamization of science itself is an unnecessary effort. For Abdul Karim Soroush, the Islamization of science is impossible and illogical. Science is determined by scientific truth propositions and not in terms of Islam or not Islam (Salafudin, 2013)

Tibi (1995) in his study saw the Islamization of knowledge as a project of the politics of fundamentalist knowledge. Using claims of de-modernization, this project takes refuge behind the postmodern narrative. By trying to elaborate on the Gellner approach, he saw this project based on postcolonial and postmodern arguments such as Orientalism and western hegemony. Islamization of knowledge manifests resistance to the west or infidel. According to Tibi, this is an indigenization process which is a response from third world countries. Islamic world conflict cannot be separated from the reality of "the rise of the west".

Tibi (1995) also describes the dilemma of Muslim fundamentalists who simultaneously adapt the instruments of modernity but reject the cultural dimensions that are generated such as their

values. Another dilemma in which Muslim fundamentalists schedule Islamic Islamization is not traditionalists, but modernists. Sardar (1985) explains that the west has done epistemological imperialism and Islamic epistemology is an alternative to that. Tibi (1995) sees this as a rejection of the Cartesian methodology considered as a threat to religious beliefs. Al-attas responded to this by de-dewatering knowledge.

Stenmark conducted a comparative study of the perspective of science that uses religious labels, which he called partisan science. He made a comparison of Islamic science, Christianity, femininity, and others. he criticized the concepts of particularization of science as in that context (Stenmark, 2005). Usep fahrudin criticized the Islamization of science. Islamization of science is considered piracy. Modern scholarship develops science while the Islamization of science is just about doing the recognition of the work. This means that it can be said in the perspective of Islamization of knowledge, Fahrudin considered that this kind of captured the work of others and Islamized it. Abdul Salam and Pervez Hoodhboy who once received a Nobel Prize doubted the indigenous results of science such as Islamic science, Christianity, Jewish science, etc. Abdul Karim Soroush also claims that the reality of the object of science is not about islami or not(Salafudin, 2013).

The emergence of a neutral science debate or partisan science is at the point of integration of values that exist in the scientific discipline. Modern sciences are considered secular and claim against them lack of spirituality. Western modern science is considered Weber as being used as a division of the world, for Elliot such as empty load, and Markuzel as being sub-human. This problem raises a discourse on science whether it is seen as value-free or value-added (Sajjadi & Barkhordari, 2008).

Kartanegara agrees with the Islamization of science, with a few notes. First, the element of Islam in the word Islamization does not have to be understood strictly as a teaching that must be found literally in al-Quran and hadith but should be seen from its spirit which must not conflict with fundamental Islamic teachings. Secondly, the Islamization of science is not merely labeling science with verses of the Qur'an or hadith which are deemed suitable for scientific discoveries but operate at the epistemological level. Third, the Islamization of science is based on the assumption that science is never totally free of value (Kartanegara, 2005).

## **Methods**

This paper seeks to analyze the Islamization of science and its reality in several universities in Indonesia and its impact on the academic climate and the contestation of scientific discourse and Islam in Indonesia. By using a qualitative analytical approach, this paper elaborates secondary data such as the latest literature related to the Islamization of science and the various current activities of activities which tend to apply to the Islamization of science in higher education. Secondary data such as magazines or journals produced from institutions or higher education that adhere to the principle of Islamization of science are examined further in this paper. The literature study of the academic debate on the Islamization of science is elaborated with the reality of Islamization of science in several universities in Indonesia.

Purposively, this paper focuses on the discussion of Islamic private universities, especially those that have the vision to internalize the principles of Islamization of science in the campus academic climate. Symptoms of the application of Islamic values in science reflected in various policies and applicative steps in several universities related to the Islamization of science need a more in-depth discussion regarding the impacts that have significance to the existing academic climate by conducting this study.

## **Results and discussion**

### **Islamization of science in several higher education institutions in Indonesia: Strategies and Dynamics**

Some universities in Indonesia began to make Islamization of science the main agenda applied in the campus academic climate. Some of these universities are Ibn Khaldun University in Bogor, Darussalam Gontor University in Ponorogo, Sultan Agung Islamic University in Semarang, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, and several other universities. The campuses that apply Islamization of science are mostly private universities affiliated with foundations that are engaged in Islamic fields. Whereas the Islamic higher education of the country is more inclined towards the flow of Islamic scientification because it seeks to integrate Islam and science by expanding the method of Islamic study so that it can be touched by the western scientific method. Whereas Islamization of science aims to Islamize scientific methods claimed conventionally from the west.

The development of the Islamization of science in Indonesia cannot be separated from the emergence of important figures. The important figures are Adian Husaini, Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, Anis Matta, and other figures. The term of *ulama yang intelek dan intelek yang ulama* is an important terminology to be understood by these figures. The new movement of the Islamization of science has become an alternative scientific movement born of a background of anxiety towards western science which is considered to be empty of the values of civilization (Husaini, 2010). The discourse on the Islamization of science in Indonesia was initiated by scholars who had Islamic boarding school backgrounds. Like Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi who is the caregiver of the modern Gontor Islamic boarding school and several other figures.

Modern boarding schools have a university whose main goal is to develop the Islamization of science. One of the leaders from there was Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi who was an important figure who contributed to the development of Islamization of knowledge at the University of Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo, East Java. Zarkasyi was very active in propagating the Islamization of knowledge through various print media (initiating Islamic thought journals in the *Republika* newspaper and Islamic magazine) and through studies. In the University of Darussalam, there is the Center for Occidental Studies as the center of Western studies. Besides that, there is also a center for Islamization of sciences. These study centers have produced products such as college books from an Islamic perspective. In addition to through study centers, the university applies courses that must be taken by each department, namely Islamic worldview courses. This course is the basis for forming the mindset of how to integrate Islam in science while still making Islam the main guideline. The university has general and religious study programs.

In addition, the Ibnu Khaldun University also applied the perspective of Islamization of science in its academic climate. Islamization of science became the main vision in scientific development at the university (Hafidhuddin, 2013). The figure who plays an important role in this matter is Adian Husaini and Didin hafidhuddin. Adian Husaini served as chairman of the Islamic education master program at the university. While Didin Hafidhuddin was a postgraduate director at the university. The thought of Husaini is seen in his contribution to integrating worldview courses in his curriculum as a compulsory subject. Adian Husaini is a figure who is aggressively propagating the importance of *adab* in science. He was influenced by al-Attas' thinking about *adab* in education.

On the campuses of the Muhammadiyah Foundation, such as the Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta and Muhammadiyah of Surakarta University that carry out Islamic integration in the social sciences humanities which gave birth to Islamic economic disciplines and Islamic education. Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta collaborated with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) to develop the Islamization of science, especially in the economic field. While the postgraduate of the Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta began to carry out Islamic scientific integration in the form of Islamic worldview courses in its Islamic education master's program.

And there are still several universities in Indonesia that make the Islamization of science their main vision. Generally, the strategy used to internalize the Islamization of science in the curriculum is to integrate Islamic worldview courses, Islamization of lecture textbooks, lecturers' training on Islamization of science in collaboration with the center of the study of Islamization of science such as with IIIT, and others.

### **Negotiating social sciences with Islamization of science paradigm: a case on political science context**

Universities that apply the Islamization of knowledge can be seen as a tendency for preference and political affiliation in a liquid manner. Islamization of knowledge in the role of reproducing vital knowledge of knowledge, for example, is related to Islamic politics. In this context, Islamic politics in the question is studied not only scientifically hegemony with a secular approach but also based on the revelation of God because the Islamization of knowledge recognizes the revelation of God as a source of knowledge. The discourse contestation that takes place is when the interpretation of religious doctrines which are the main principles in academic studies is an understanding that can be understood as a particular political representation, especially Islamic conservatives. Many concepts are often debated in academic spaces and public spaces, such as non-Muslim leadership, religious and political relations, and other concepts which tend to be Islamization of science trying to apply value-added in its academic studies. Conventional political science is considered to be created in a secular space in the west and is irrelevant to its application to the Indonesian Muslim majority. Of course, higher education which embraces the Islamization of science produces political discourse that seeks to fight the western secular political discourse.

As an exemplar, in an article in *Islamia* magazine (Muammar, 2009), the topic is dewesternization and desecularization. *Islamia* magazine is a weekly magazine published by INSISTS (Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization). INSISTS was affiliated with the pioneers of Islamization of science project. The analysis of Tibi (1995) becomes very relevant to be applied in this context. In the article, a discussion about conventional political models was criticized based on Islamic perspectives. This article criticizes the failure of democracy which creates various problems such as money politics and criticism of political secularism. Furthermore, the call to de-modernize and desecularize conventional political models by applying Islamic principles in politics. Political Islamization is a necessity for the Islamization of science. This discourse will often clash with secular conventional political discourse. For example, in non-Muslim leadership. Using theological legitimacy elaborated with criticisms of secularism, leadership in politics is also based on religious principle.

Not only in this article, but other articles as a result of the process of Islamization of knowledge are also in the *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Republika*. There also touches on contemporary issues that are relevance to the principles of Islam. For example in reviewing things that are morally often justified, such as LGBT, Communism, and others. Not only that, many sensitive themes tend to be politicized by certain interests with theological propositions. The politicization of

religion in various discourses of knowledge about public space is actually a major tendency in the project of Islamization of science.

Contestation of discourse in matters of religious and political relations is complicated. Neutral academic space can be a wet space for certain political interests especially as the legitimacy of Islamic conservative groups in the Islamization of this knowledge. Higher education can be the main political base negotiated by a certain group with the legitimacy of the interpretation of Islamic doctrine that is more conservative than the other groups. The Islamization perspective of science seeks to develop the spirit of religious revivalism so that religious values can live in every aspect of life including aspects of education. The principle of totalism which is accompanied by traditional religious interpretation makes a sharp criticism made by liberal Islamic circles. Liberal Islamic groups do not know the term Islamization of science. Science is a neutral space that cannot be immediately Islamized.

### Conclusion

Islamization of science is a new alternative to the scientific paradigm that integrates Islamic values into the epistemological structure of modern social sciences that are considered to be loaded with western values. By using a unique strategy, the Islamization of science has a warm place to develop in universities that are affiliated with Islamic education foundations such as Muhammadiyah and Gontor. Its nature that is in favor of certain values has the potential to become the legitimacy of certain Islamic groups in terms of the politicization of religion. The politicization of religion with the legitimacy of science has far more complex implications to be further deepened in social science discourse.

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