

# ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** This study is based on the rise of Islamic perspective in International Relations (IR) in several IR study programs in Indonesia. This study aims to elaborate the achievements of the development of Islamic perspectives in IR studies in Indonesia and what the factors influence the lack of productivity of scientific publications that related to Islamic International Relations. The subject of research are the head of the International Relations program under Islamic Universities (University of Darussalam Gontor, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Islamic University of Indonesia, Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya and Muhammadiyah University of Malang) and members of Insiera (the Indonesian Islamic Studies and International Organization Relations Association) based in Yogyakarta. This study founded that the lack of quantity of Islamic International Relations-based scientific works in Indonesia is related to three conditions: first, the lack of development of the Islamic International Relations methodology in several universities; second, this temporary Islamic International Relations limited to specialization and not expertise; and the last, internal conditions on each campus, which is not related to the development of Islamic International Relations, has captured the attention of the majority of Islamic International Relations thinkers and researchers.

**Keywords:** Islamic perspective; International Relations; International Relations Study Program; Islamic University

## Introduction

This paper will explain the development of Islamic perspective on International Relations (IR) in Indonesia, the paper is based on the rise of new International Relations programs in several universities in Indonesia in recent years. The data obtained after the moratorium on the establishment of universities in 2014, at least there are five new International Relations departments established in Indonesia. Those universities are University of Darussalam Gontor (UNIDA),<sup>1</sup> Islamic University of Indonesia Yogyakarta (UII), Sunan Ampel Islamic State University of Surabaya (UINSA), Alaudin Islamic State University of Makassar<sup>2</sup> and Haleu Oleo University Kendari (UHO).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, there is at least a new International Relations programs every year from 2014-2019 and also the facts that three universities are under Islamic Universities. In spite of that, the idea of the development of Islamic perspective in International Relations is the interesting idea for research and discussion.

The immersion of those new International Relations programs-based on Islamic discourse is not adequate, the development of Islamic discourse in International Relations as alternative perspective in International also supported by the epistemic group, in this case is INSIERA (the Indonesian Islamic Studies and International Relations Association). The members of this epistemic group are Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University of Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Abdurabb University, Islamic University of Indonesia, Muhammadiyah University of Malang, and University of Darussalam Gontor.<sup>4</sup> And now the members of INSIERA is not only Islamic Universities, but also other universities that have specialization on Islamic discourse and International Relations like Padjajaran University and Mataram University. This massive development shows that the enthusiasm of Indonesian International Relations academics in forming Islamic perspective as the alternative perspective on International Relations studies.

On other words, the enthusiasm of developing Islamic views on International Relations which formed by the study program and establishing association is not in a line with the productivity of scientific works on this alternative perspective. There is not many intellectual works discovering specifically Islamic paradigm on International Relations discourse. It can be seen from the articles published for scientific national journals that focused on Islamic discourse and International Relations in Indonesia, for example “Dauliyah” journal published by UNIDA and “JISIERA” journal published

by INSIERA. Until Dauliyah issues volume 3 number 1 2018, there is only 10 articles out of 30 articles discussed on Islamic discourse or Islamic views in International Relations which means only one thirds of all articles discovering this perspective.<sup>5</sup> At the same time in JISIERA, there are only 3 of 8 articles that support the development of Islamic methodology in International Relations discourse, except special edition volume 1 number 2 2016 specifically discovering about ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

From the background research above, this research will explain furthermore about 2 things, firstly how far the achievement the development of Islamic perspective on International Relations in Indonesia? And secondly, what factors influence the lack of scientific journal publication on the Islamic views in International Relations in Indonesia?

The aim of this research is to evaluate how far the achievement the development of Islamic perspective on International Relations and the reason why the lack of scientific journal about this alternative perspective happened in the first place. And also, the aim of this paper is able to contribute in International Relations studies, more specifically on the development of International Relations theories in Indonesia.

## **Literature Reviews and Methods**

This paper will explain the development of Islamic perspective on International Relations (IR) in Indonesia, the paper is based on the rise of new Internasional The discourse on Islamic views as the alternative perspective in International Relations has been circulated for a long time. The collaborative scientific works conducted by Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan entitled *Non-Western International Relations: Perspective On And Beyond Asia*, become the primary source to discover about the development of the Islamic perspective in International Relations. This book discussed several perspective with a background region or country like China, India, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia and Islam, where Acharya and Buzan categorized Islamic perspective as Arabic thought. Acharya and Buzan stated that western perspective domination on International Relations caused by two major reasons, firstly the primary source of International Relations theories is based on western history and thought. Secondly, the discourse of world history formed by European-centrism.<sup>6</sup> But those major reasons does not mean that the possibility to form the alternative perspective is closed. In this

book, Acharya and Buzan assume that if a concept fulfilled one of the three following categories, therefore it can be considered as a theory in International Relations. First, the concept has been acknowledged by other International Relations academics, second, acknowledged as a theory by the creator, and last one the foundation of theory indicates a systematic effort to generalize International Relations phenomena.

If Acharya and Buzan emphasis on the general possibility non-western perspective come out as the alternative perspective, Nassef Manabilang Adiong in the article presented on ISA Conference in Hongkong more specifically emphasis on the possibility to build Islamic theory on International Relations. His article titled "*Possibility of Islamic Theory of International Relations?*", Adiong states the development of Islamic perspective on International Relations in international academic community. He revealed the facts that more and more International Relations academics studying religion. The enthusiasm is also accompanied by the opening of a focus on Religion and International Relations (REL) studies in the International Studies Association (ISA) organization. Not only in ISA, in several academic communities such as the International Political Science Association (IPSA), the American Political Science Association (APSA), the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) similar studies were also made.<sup>7</sup>

Another writing that try to elevate Islam as a new perspective in understanding IR studies are books entitled "*Islam and Modern Science; Islamic Touch Against Various Disciplines of Science*" written by Ali Anwar Yusuf. In one chapter, Ali specifically talked about the touch of Islam in IR. Starting an explanation of the basics of humanitarian relations, Ali then discussed the relationship between Islam and peace, which was then closed with the basics of human rights.<sup>8</sup> But even no one the three works above, specifically addresses the development of Islamic perspectives in IR in Indonesia. The only literature that discusses explicitly about this condition is the work of Muhammad Qobidl 'Ainul Arif, one of the initiators of the founding of INSIERA with an article entitled "*The Rise of Islamic Perspectives in the Study of Contemporary International Relations*". According to him, the perspective of Islam in International Relations is familiar in Indonesia. In the pre-independence era, the reflection of the Islamization of International Relations was seen from the correct interpretation of the concept of jihad - a term derived from the study of Siyar or the discipline of International Relations in Islam. Not stopped there, he even mentioned that the concept

of mutual cooperation which Sukarno emphasized as the essence of Pancasila was a reflection of Ibn Khuldun's Ashabiyah theory. his assertion carries the meaning that the development of this perspective in Indonesia is indeed something natural. Moreover, the momentum of the transition of the status of several Islamic tertiary institutions in Indonesia to the University at the end of the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudoyono who was demanded to hold non-religious majors made many Islamic perspectives developed as a methodological basis for general scholarship.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, Arif's thought stop only at the level of historical presentation and the initial development of this perspective in Indonesia, especially in several Islamic Universities. Researchers observe, it is very important to elaborate on the progress of the perspective of Islam in International Relations in Indonesia further and deeper. Especially when explained by Arif that there has been a euphoria of the development of this perspective in Indonesia, the question that must then be answered is the extent of the development of this perspective and how the results of the euphoria are mainly in producing scientific works. This research fills the gap left by the treatise by elaborating more deeply on the progress and results of the development of Islamic Theory in International Relations in Indonesia.

This research methodology uses two approaches; quantitative and qualitative. The data is taken from the publication of scientific journals that are online and offline, while some data not published in the online media, we get from the interview process with the authoritative institutions in the internal study programs or universities. After being verified, we analyze the data, then we describe it as reality and fact.

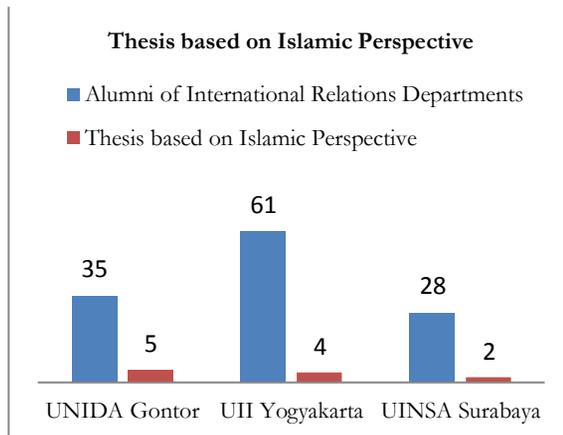
### **Research Findings and Analysis**

Although the Islamic perspective is not a new perspective in the International Relations studies, but in reality, the large number of people who study and pursue this study, is apparently not directly proportional to the International Relations journals. Darussalam University of Gontor, for example, with the slogan "Islamization of science" as the vision and mission of the university, if we examine more deeply, in the internal UNIDA IR Study Program itself, it has not produced significant writings based on Islamic International Relations; Either from student lecturers. The data shows, all graduates of the International Relations study program from

UNIDA since it was inaugurated in 2014 to August 2019, of the 35 thesis titles it turns out that only 5 thesis titles of students writing on Islamic International Relations. It means that only 14.29% of the thesis titles of UNIDA Gontor IR study program students are directly related to the development of IR in an Islamic perspective.

Moreover, it does not happen only to UNIDA. If we look at the profile of alumni of the International Relations study program at Sunan Ampel University (UINSA) Surabaya, according to the head of UINSA International Relations department, to this day, from all graduates and undergraduate thesis titles tested, there was only 2 theses specifically discussing HI from the point of view Islamic point of view. This means that to the date, the title of the thesis with the theme of HI Islam is only 7,1%, whereas according to the Head of Study Program, UINSA itself has taught a number of courses that can encourage students to be interested in raising Islamic discourse in the title of the thesis they are going to compile. Like courses: Al-Qur'an Study, Hadith Study and the integrative International Relations methodology.

**Table 1. Total Alumni of International Relations Departments and Journals/Thesis from 3 Islamic Universities since 2014**



Meanwhile, if we take a look at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII), from the sixty one graduates, only four theses wrote about IR in

Islamic perspectives. It means that only 6.56% of the students' thesis titles use Islamic approach in their thesis.

From the data above we can conclude that many new International Relations study programs under Islamic University, apparently have not been able to boost the tendency of students to use the Islamic perspective as an alternative approach in assessing the reality of inter-state relations in their research.

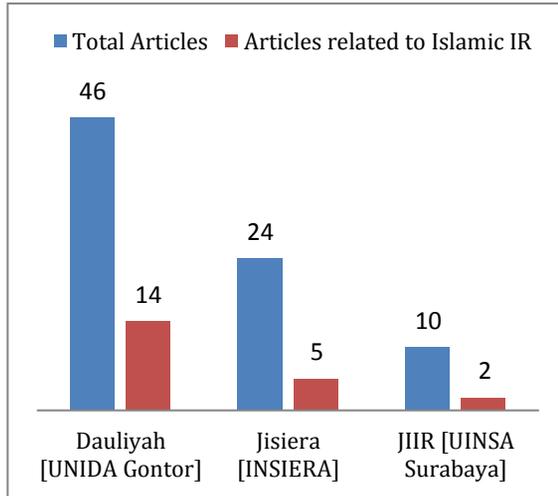
Whereas in the scope of publications outside of the thesis, journals published by national journals. Facts show the same thing. Of the three national journals that focus on International Relations and Islamic studies, namely *Jisiera* (Journal managed by the INSIERA epistemic community), *Dauliyah* (Journal of UNIDA Gontor IR Study Program), and *Journal of Integrative International Relations [JIIR]* (Journal of IR Study Program) also does not publish significant results.

From what we observed, in the journal *Jisiera* until August 2019, there are 24 articles published there were only 5 articles that actually related to Islamic views, meaning that there are only 20.8% of the writings with Islamic background. This research also found out an increase in the percentage related to the publication of Islamic International Relations articles in the *Dauliyah* journal, which was 30.4%, with the following details: overall articles published until August 2019 were 46 articles, and from those articles, there were at least 10 writings with the Islamic theme.

While in the *JIIR* journal published by UINSA, from the 10 journals published online, there are only 2 articles that focus on the study of Islamic perspective, meaning that only 20% of writings with Islamic background. From the data above, therefore the conclusion that can be taken, that the publication of journal related to the alternative perspective on International Relations in national publicity media is still below the expectation, it has not even reached the 50% level and only stopped at the highest level of 30%.

Seeing the statistics above, at least there are several reason can elaborate why this idea is “stagnant” in Indonesia, following the lack of journal publications on the idea of Islamic perspective on the inter-states dynamics.

**Table 2. Journals related to Islamic Perspective and International Relations until August 2019**



Based on the interviews, including with Dr. Surwandono, S. Sos, M.Sc as the chairman of INSIERA who is also the head of the UMY Yogyakarta Politics & International Relations Graduate School, Muhammad Qobidl ‘Ainul Arif, S.IP., M.A. as INSIERA Secretary and Lecturer at UINSA Surabaya IR Study Program, Irawan Jati, S.IP., M.Hum., M.S. The Chairperson of Insiera Yogyakarta Chapter who is also the head of the Yogyakarta UII International Relations Department, and Syaprin Zahidi S.IP, MA., As the head of the UMM IR Department and Moh. Fathoni Hakim, M.Sc. as Head of the UINSA IR Study Program in Surabaya.

At least there are three major factors underlying the phenomenon of 'stagnation' of the development of Islamic International Relations in Indonesia, among them: first, to the date, the methodology of Islamic international in Indonesia has not been developed as an alternative approach in studying International Relations. Secondly, while the Islamic perspective, by the majority of its reviewers, is still in the level of intial/notions and has not yet been transformed into advance. Third, the internal conditions of the study program carried out by the majority of IR Muslim enthusiasts and thinkers, more or less have an effect on their productivity in producing

scientific works based on International Relations thinking in Islamic perspectives.

If the main factor of this problem is the level of success, then we begin this issue with a deep discussion related to the evolution of Islamic view in International Relations. But before we explain what is agreed with Islam, it is interesting to be together, we need to first of the HI Islam itself. In a paper published by Manabilong, there are three HI Islamic resolutions added, first is Islamic International Relations is an attempt to be approved by IR based on Siyar science (international law), secondly, Islamic International Relations is all about philosophical and methodological endeavors related to the discourse of Islamization of International Relations, quickly Islamic international is an attempt to develop a normative study of IR within the framework of Islamic norms carried out by ibn Khaldun in the work "Muqaddimah" which he wrote.

From all the things have been said, it means that Islamic International Relations, aside from being a legal product, Islamic International Relations also includes methodological studies. Then what is a methodology; in the book *"International Relations Methodology, Paradigmatic Debate and Alternative Approaches"* written by Alexander Wendt et al, described at least three definitions of methodology, first: the procedure used to achieve the goal, which is to achieve these objectives the methods or tools used tools (Huang Jianping), the second understanding is the method that must be taken to obtain a theory in science (Toeti Heraty Noerhadi) and the third is the procedure used in describing and predicting phenomena (Mohtar Mas'ood), although different sentence formulations are used, but in fact, from these three definitions one can draw conclusions that what is meant by methodology is procedure.<sup>10</sup> And therefore, a scientist needs a procedure in achieving a 'new' knowledge. Without a clear procedure explanation, a scientist will have difficulty in producing knowledge in his research.

While the Islamic methodology is still very diverse, Moh. Fathoni Hakim explained, today the Islamic International Relations practitioners were presented with several variations of the Islamic International Relations methodology that could be used, such as: Kuntowijoyo with *"Islam as Science"*, or Abu Sulaiman in the book *"Toward an Islamic Theory of International Relations"*, Naquib al-Attas with *"Islam and Philosophy of Science"* and many other Islamic International Relations methodology choices. The variety of methodological choices that can be used contributes to positive and negative

things. The positive thing is that Islamic International Relations researchers or International Relations students who will examine International Relations in Islamic perspectives can freely choose the methodology to be used, which is considered the most easy to apply, while the negative effect of the diversity of methodologies results in some students or Islamic HI reviewers confused about which methodology is considered the most likely to be used. At the level of undergraduate students, for example, this condition might lead them to 'turn away' and choose the 'Western' methodology approach which is considered more familiar to them. This is where the position of DPA (Academic Supervisor) plays a vital role in directing students while giving them an understanding on using the Islamic perspective on International Relations.

Meanwhile in a broader scope and higher level, such as in the INSIERA organization for example, it is deemed necessary as soon as possible to gather enthusiasts, researchers and Islamic IR thinkers to discuss in a symposium or a special workshop that discusses IR methodology in the Islamic perspective, the objectives of These activities are sharing experiences and sharing knowledge related to Islamic IR methodology, which can then be implemented or recommended at universities where they serve or are implemented directly in researches that are currently or will be carried out. Meanwhile in a broader scope and higher level, such as in the INSIERA organization for example, it is deemed necessary as soon as possible to gather enthusiasts, researchers and Islamic IR thinkers to discuss in a symposium or a special workshop that discusses IR methodology in the Islamic perspective, the objectives of These activities are sharing experiences and sharing knowledge related to Islamic IR methodology, which can then be implemented or recommended at universities where they serve or are implemented directly in researches that are currently or will be carried out.

Islamic IR methodology workshop actually planned by INSIERA management, Dr. Surwandono, S. Sos, M.Si as the chairman of INSIERA explained that the planned activities were included in the INSIERA agenda even though as of August 2019 it had not yet been implemented, it was most likely to be implemented in 2020.<sup>11</sup>



**Picture 1. The Development of Islamic Perspective in International Relations, Roadmap by Insiera 2016-2020**

The results of the workshop can also be compiled into books and then recommended within the scope of the IR Study Program especially if it can be adopted for the development of teaching and research curriculum for lecturers and students. This systematics is expected to introduce Islamic International Relations as a methodology or just a discussion discourse.

Another problem underlying the stagnation of Islamic IR thought followed by the lack of journals or thesis using the Islamic approach is due to HI in the Islamic perspective itself, at the student level even in some INSIERA members themselves are still in the initiation level and have not yet entered the realm of advance. As what explained by Irawan Jati, S.IP., M.Hum., M.S. The Chairperson of Yogyakarta's INSIERA Chapter and head of the HI UII Study Program that most INSIERA members today still make the study of Islam in IR still at the level of initiation rather than advance, so there are difficulties in having to write articles that purely discuss Islamic International Relations.<sup>12</sup>

This condition felt the same way by the chairman of INSIERA, Dr Surwandono for example one of his graduate student eventually used the development perspective by Samuel Huntington, although the subject discourse was mawardi's thought. It happened since several supervisors maybe was not familiar of using some Islamic methodology approaches on International Relations. As just this research emphasis many times that, since the idea of Islamic approach toward International Relations was just kicked

off, looking for someone who has expertise on this approach in Indonesia still become a big issue for everyone who wants to conduct a research based on Islamic perspective. Furthermore, the head of International Relations department from UMM said clearly that he is still struggle in recruiting a lecturer with expertise in Islamic International Relations, “so, now we are recruiting lecturers who have expertise in Islam and International Relations. Which it is our goal seeing Islamic views in International Relations. What I meant here was Islamic methodologies.”<sup>13</sup>

And the solution upon this obstacle is to upgrade the knowledge itself, it can be done through seminars related to Islamic approach in International Relations or even more serious action like taking specialisation on Islamic perspective in doctoral degree (PhD). And the last reason why the discourse on Islamic perspective on International Relations is the internal of IR department. Often times the condition in the university/institution does not provide the researchers or lecturers develop this alternative approach.

In term of department level, developing theory or the western methodology is still dominant upon the curriculum that taught to the students. Indeed, some subjects can encourage the students to having interest on Islamic approach for instance, Qur’anic studies, Hadist studies, International Relations in Islamic perspective. And yet, if all subjects combine with the Islamic discourse, it even does not reach over 50%. In other words, the domination western thought on International Relations holds the pivotal role forming the interest and mindsets of the students.

International Relations department from UINSA for instance, although taught several subjects related to Islamic discourse until this august, having no students who publish using Islamic methodology. This issue is in a line with what Muhammad Qobidl ‘Ainul Arif, S.IP., M.A. as the lecturer as well as the secretary of INSIERA stated in interview “*Even though we have the introduction of Islamic studies, Qur’anic studies, Ulumul Qur’an methodology, as a religious tool. It should have done! Moreover we have subject on international integratif, mix methode, Islamic International Relations worhview, International Relations in Islamic perspective, I think the students can discuss those approaches so they can apply on their thesis. But, it does not work.*”<sup>14</sup>

And of course, other things that obstruct the development of Islamic approach productivity the IR academics in conducting the research. They have massive tasks that bureaucratic and administrative for the continuity of the education at university level. For example, 3 universites where develop the idea of Islamisation on International Relations, UNIDA, UII

Yogyakarta, and UINSA, in 2018 were in the proses of accreditation assessment. So, all energy and thought are devoted to succeed the assessment. Despite of in the reality, the development of Islamic International Relations thought feels like “stagnant”, but actually, if the whole picture were captured. The improvement has made some outstanding results either as discourse or institution/organization. INSIERA which just established in 2016, now it has been recognised as epistemic organization which has structural coordination under AIHI (*Asosiasi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional Indonesia*), it became even the most productive in term of publishing journals. As what Irawan jati S.IP., M.Hum., M.S *“the advantage of INSIERA compares to other communities, INSIERA is the only one that has journal and alhamdulillah has website also”*.

Furthermore the members of INSIERA are not inclusive only for any specific religion, as a fact that this epistemic group are open for everyone. Muhammad Qobidl ‘Ainul Arif, S.IP., M.A. explained *“Now the facts that a lot of religious high education open the International Relations program and the members of INSIERA is not muslim only”*.

## **Conclusion**

International Relations in Islam is not something new, moreover it happened since the age of Hegira or the journey of the prophet Muhammad PBUH moved from Mecca to Yathrib (later renamed to Medinah) to the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, the Islamic International Relations has been conducted. Yet, if it seen as theory and methodology the Islamic perspective on International Relations is a new alternative worldview, as a response to the “western” International Relations that more or less is not in a line with Islamic values.

Eventually this circumstance encourages some individuals from different Islamic universities in Indonesia, established the association of Islamic International Relations thinkers that later known as INSIERA. The establishment of this organization for sure supported by enthusiasm of Islamic high education’s interest on International Relations. Therefore, initiated the idea of Islamisation of International Relations or in other terms, ”Integrative International Relations”. It is a new term that wants to combine between International Relations and Islamic discourse into a new scientific discipline.

Unfortunately, the euphoria of establishing Islamic International Relations at several universities, actually not followed by the journals or any scientific writings themed on Islamic International Relations. Either at the student's level or the researcher's level. Of course, there is something that we must understand that the progress is on the way, and the Indonesian International Relations thinker should be positive and proud of that.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Gontor, U. D., 2019. PROGRAM STUDI HUBUNGAN INTERNASIONAL UNIVERSITAS DARUSSALAM GONTOR. [Online] Available at: <http://hi.unida.gontor.ac.id/history/> [27 August 2019].

<sup>2</sup> EDUNEWS, 2018. Tahun Ini UIN Alauddin Makassar Buka Prodi Hubungan Internasional. [Online] Available at: <http://www.edunews.id/edunews/tahun-ini-uin-alauddin-makassar-buka-prodi-hubungan-internasional> [27 August 2019].

<sup>3</sup> Rahman, L. O. A., 2018. Fisip UHO Buka Program Studi Hubungan Internasional. [Online] Available at: <https://sultra.antarane.ws.com/berita/276071/fisip-uho-buka-program-studi-hubungan-internasional> [27 August 2019].

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<sup>5</sup> Dauliyah. [Online] Available at: <https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/dauliyah/issue/archive> [27 August 2019].

<sup>6</sup> Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan and , 2019. Non-western international relations theory: perspectives on and beyond asia.. New York: Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> Adiong, N. M., 2017. Possibility of Islamic Theory of International Relations. International Studies Association and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Department of Politics and Public Administration, 5 January, p. 4.

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<sup>9</sup> Arif, M. Q. A, 2016. Kebangkitan Perspektif Islam dalam Studi Hubungan Internasional. Dauliyah, 1(2), pp. 189-208.

<sup>10</sup> Wendt, A., 1995. Constructing International Politics. *International Security*, 20(1), pp. 71-81.

<sup>11</sup> Surwandono, 2019. Strategi Pengembangan HI Islam dalam organisasi INSIERA [Wawancara] (5 Maret 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Jati, I., 2019. Pengembangan HI Islam di HI UII Yogyakarta [Interview] (20 May 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Zahidi, S., 2019. Penguatan Perspektif Islam di internal Prodi HI UMM [Interview] (4 May 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Arif, M. Q. A., 2019. Mendongkrak minat mahasiswa HI UINSA [Interview] (14 June 2019).

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