

Book review: Jürgen Rüländ: The Indonesian Way - ASEAN, Europeanization, and Foreign Policy Debates in a New Democracy. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-5036-0285-4

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Jaqueline Aquino Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh*. London: Routledge, 2002; Jesse Hession Grayman et al., Conflict Nightmares and Trauma in Aceh. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 33 (2009), pp. 290-312). A more pronounced theoretical framework and definition of such currently popular key words – prominent even in the title of the book – as “resilience”, “collective resilience” (p. 25) and “transgenerational resilience” (p. 26) would have added further value to the book. The author uses the terms mostly in reference to the continuous narratives of past and present bravery of the Acehnese population. However, one could have critically examined the extent to which these narratives can be regarded as a solid and enduring foundation for resilience. The still strong normative restriction of feelings of bereavement hints towards the (survival) practice of suppressing feelings, evident in statements such as the following: “[...] but if a person cries and says [...] ‘Why did my husband have to die?!’ [...] that is very bad. If a person mourns in that way we become dizzy” (p. 111). This example shows that regardless of the many “survival strategies”, pain and suffering remain a challenge, particularly as they risk undoing the precarious balance a person has managed to build up for herself.

This highly relevant ethnography adds to our still fragmentary knowledge about trauma, its somatic dimensions and the potential cultural and moral implications it holds for survivors. The multidimensional reception of trauma on the side of the affected population shows quite clearly the necessity of a more cross-culturally oriented psychiatry. Smith’s findings also underline the importance of more interdisciplinary research, in which the perspectives of anthropology, sociology, history, political sciences, psychology, medicine and neurosciences are combined to approach the complexity of the reality that one encounters not only on a macro but also on a local micro-level.

Beatrice Schlee

JÜRGEN RÜLAND, *The Indonesian Way: ASEAN, Europeanization, and Foreign Policy Debates in a New Democracy*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017. 312 pages, \$65.00. ISBN 978-1-5036-0285-4

The Indonesian Way is first and foremost an empirically dense interrogation of the beliefs, worldviews and historical narratives that inform and shape the policy preferences and responses of Indonesian foreign policy makers with regard to regional integration processes in Southeast Asia. But it is also an attempt to refine the theoretical field of comparative regionalism, especially of the dominant constructivist concepts of norm transfer and norm diffusion that have been heavily shaped by Eurocentric ideas and experiences of regional

integration. The interplay of an in-depth analysis of how Indonesians perceive and make sense of regional integration on the one hand, and a critical discussion of the many Western-centrist biases and related blind spots on which contemporary theories of regionalism still rest, on the other hand, makes this book distinct. The author argues that while Indonesian foreign policy actors at various times did adopt what one could refer to as “EU speak”, and that similarities in the terminology used seemed to imply the adoption of “the design, norms, and the ‘spirit’ of the EU, the opposite was the case: they sought inspiration from Europe precisely to retain the core components of their cognitive prior” (p. 230).

The author, Jürgen Rüländ, is Professor for International Relations at the Department of Political Science and head of the Southeast Asia programme at the University of Freiburg. He is renowned for his works on Indonesian foreign policy and regional integration processes in Southeast Asia. Hence, the book under review fits neatly into his research trajectory. Drawing on a close examination of the history of political thought on Indonesian foreign policy, Jürgen Rüländ identifies many traces of age-old political ideas and political culture, “highlighting the polyvalence of seemingly liberal-cosmopolitan concepts of European origin and their local interpretations” (p. 231). Essentially, Rüländ argues that there is no top-down, hierarchical transfer of ideas, norms or practices from Europe to Southeast Asia. Instead, it is through local prisms and seemingly ancient ideas and concepts that external ideas, norms and practices are first translated and localised, and in the process more often than not become transformed, as well.

The study uses interpretive research methods to address the research question on the extent to which the European model of regional integration changed the thinking of Indonesian foreign policy stakeholders regarding their own Southeast Asian regionalism. Is there something akin to an Indonesian way of making sense of, and subsequently practicing, regionalism? Or is there structural convergence in regional integration, in the sense that the EU model as the yardstick of regional integration is essentially emulated by others? The empirical material used to conduct such analysis includes a wide range of primary and secondary sources related to six stakeholder groups (government, NGOs, parliament, academia, media and business). While presenting what is essentially a single case study, the author, in order to explore ideational change and continuity over time, engages in diachronic comparison. Hence, while predominantly dealing with post-Suharto Indonesia, the part of the analysis that seeks to establish Indonesia’s “cognitive prior” on regionalism uses historical sources predating the post-New Order period, as well.

The book’s greatest strength lies in showcasing the importance of local knowledge and value systems when enquiring about non-Western conceptualisations of regionalism and regional integration. Through its detailed analysis

of six different Indonesian stakeholder groups and their respective framing, grafting and pruning of European ideas on regionalism, it reveals the extent to which these ideas have been fused with existing Indonesian concepts of regionalism and foreign policy. Rüländ thus demonstrates compellingly why research on norm diffusion and regionalism is often mistaken in its (often indirect) assumption that local actors act as mere recipients of ideas and norms originating from Europe. The book is insightful in that it shows that the contestation of liberal ideas is not merely a defensive act against certain “Western” ideas, but exposes Indonesia’s diverging normative core.

The book’s strength is also, to a certain extent, one of its weaknesses: it tends to juxtapose, especially in the conclusion, the concepts “Western” and “local”. In doing so it actually reproduces, to some degree, the binary conceptualisations of regionalism it set out to challenge in the first place. Not only is there a plethora of ideas on regionalism in Indonesia, let alone Southeast Asia, but the same can also be said for the EU. Brexit and the rise of EU-sceptic right-wing governments in various EU member states are just two factors that illustrate the rise and prevalence of diverging ideas on regionalism in Europe, as well. While the black box of the Indonesian foreign policy making apparatus is partly unlocked, the reader learns little about how and to what extent the different foreign policy stakeholders in Indonesia actually contribute to the foreign policy debates on ASEAN. Established theories of Indonesia’s foreign policy portray the country as rather top-heavy in terms of its foreign policy making, with the president’s office setting the tone and making the key decisions. It remains unclear after reading the book whether this rather general assumption needs to be questioned or not. Nor is it explained when and why Indonesian stakeholders resort to Western norms and ideas, and when and why to local ones.

To conclude, this book makes a strong contribution to the often Euro-centric debates on norm transfer and regionalism. It does so by challenging core assumptions, such as the depiction of local actors as “passive receivers for norms originating from the West”, via a close analysis of the foreign policy debates on ASEAN and regional integration in Indonesia across two administrations. The book’s core argument – that there is no so-called global script of regionalism, but instead local scripts that coexist side by side, sometimes harmoniously and sometimes in a conflicting manner with Western scripts – is compellingly presented by the author. However, it offers less to readers whose main interest lies in gaining a better understanding of Indonesia’s foreign policy-making process, for its main argument is directed against the dominant, “Western-centrist” theories of regionalism.

Felix Heiduk