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van der Eng, Pierre

Australian National University

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## **Indonesia-Australia University-Based Cooperation since the 1940s**

Pierre van der Eng  
Research School of Management  
ANU College of Business and Economics  
The Australian National University  
26 Kingsley Street  
Acton ACT 2601  
Australia

[pierre.vandereng@anu.edu.au](mailto:pierre.vandereng@anu.edu.au)

### **Abstract**

This paper analyses Indonesia-Australia university-based cooperation since the 1940s. The increasing academic research interest in Australia, the accumulation of research outcomes, and the increasing academic collaboration between both countries endured significant fluctuations in the general relations of both countries. The number of Indonesian students studying in Australia increased since the 1950s as a consequence of Australian government scholarships. The number of Indonesian students increased much more significantly after Australian universities enrolled full-fee paying Indonesian students since the 1980s. Smaller, but increasing numbers of Australian university students gained study experiences in Indonesia, especially since the 2000s. Surveys reveal the difficulties that Indonesian students experienced during their studies at Australian universities and after returning to Indonesia. They also indicate that Australian government scholarships are difficult to associate with the broad development goals of Australia's foreign aid program in Indonesia. It is also difficult to consider them conclusively as a 'soft power' tool that sustains conducive Australia-Indonesia relations.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Australia, international relations, international students

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## **Indonesia-Australia University-Based Cooperation since the 1940s**

### **1. Introduction**

Like China, Australia has had people-to-people exchanges with Indonesia that reach back centuries. In terms of university-based exchanges, Chinese Indonesians started to study at China's universities during the 1920s (Suryadinata 1972: 62-63), following the establishment of Jinan University in 1906 and Xiamen University in 1921. It took until the early 1950s before Indonesians started to study at Australian universities. When the interest of Chinese Indonesian students in studying in China waned (Godley and Coppel 1990) during the 1950s, the number of Indonesian students on Australian campuses increased. By 2000, about 17,500 Indonesians were studying in Australia, making it the largest host country for Indonesians studying overseas. That year, China hosted around 2,000 Indonesian students. However, equal numbers of Indonesians were studying in China and Australia in 2018; around 17,000.<sup>1</sup> Given the lower costs of living and tuition in China, it is likely that many more Indonesian students will prefer to study in China in coming years, rather than in Australia (Fetling 2018).

Many questions will flow from the growing number of Indonesian students on university campuses in China. For example, are all Chinese universities prepared for the educational and welfare issue associated with Indonesian students on their campuses? What specific welfare issues will Indonesian students face living away from home in China? Is it realistic for Chinese agencies to expect that scholarships to Indonesian students will facilitate conducive Indonesia-China relations? It may be relevant to analyse such issues based on Australia's experience with university-based exchanges with Indonesia since the 1940s. Because similar questions (and others) have been researched in relation to Indonesian students in the Australian context.

The next section sketches Australia-Indonesia during the past 70 years. This provides context for an analysis of the development of academic research in Australia on Indonesia. Section 4 evaluates the flows of students from Indonesia to Australia, partly as Australian government scholarships students, but largely as privately funded students. Section 5 discusses the smaller flows of students from Australia to Indonesia, largely as students of Indonesia's language and society, but also as exchange students. Section 6 analyses the potential benefits that Australia derived from encouraging Indonesians to study in Australia. Section 7 concludes.

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<sup>1</sup> Indonesian students in Australia from DET (2018), see also Figure 1. Indonesian students in China in 2018 is an extrapolation of 2017 in Jia and Fang (2018: 52).

## **2. Indonesia-Australia relations**

Although neighbouring countries, Indonesia and Australia differ tremendously in terms of history, language, culture, geography, stage of economic development, and population. For example, Indonesia had 270 million people in 2018, Australia just 25 million. These relative numbers were the same 100 years ago: in 1918 Indonesia had 53 million people and Australia just over 5 million. A key difference in 2018 was that Indonesia was a colony of The Netherlands, while Australia had close relations with the United Kingdom (UK). The end of World War I in 1918 marked the start of greater interaction between both countries. For example, the governments in Australia and Indonesia took increased responsibility for the East and West sides of the island of New Guinea. This necessitated more interaction. Bilateral shipping connections became more regular. Indonesia became an important stage in the telegraph connection between Australia and the UK. Economic relations intensified. Consequently, Australia became Indonesia's main source of wheat flour, and Indonesia became Australia's key source of imported oil and oil products.

People-to-people relations intensified following the start of World War II in 1939. Cut off from The Netherlands, the colonial government in Indonesia increased communications and cooperation with Allied neighbouring countries. The Japanese military assault on Southeast Asia in December 1941 pushed Australian troops from Malaya and Singapore into Indonesia, where they fought alongside Indonesia's colonial army. In 1942 the exiled colonial government of Indonesia based itself in Australia, and the colonial army regrouped there. Both comprised Indonesian and Dutch personnel. The colonial government even relocated most of its Indonesian political prisoners to Australia, where they were interned. The armed forces of Australia and colonial Indonesia cooperated in re-taking East Indonesia from the Japanese after mid-1944.

After the declaration of Indonesia's independence in August 1945, Australia-Indonesia relations came under a different light. In 1947 Australia was one of the first to express support for Indonesia's independence. This could have been the basis for cordial bilateral relations following Indonesia's independence. However, relations remained strained (Adil 1993). Firstly, Indonesia opposed continued Dutch colonial rule in West New Guinea, while Australia favoured Dutch rule there. Secondly, Australia was concerned about the consequences of Indonesia's President Sukarno ending parliamentary democracy through a coup in March 1957. He supported the arms build-up by Indonesia's military forces, their insurgencies into West New Guinea, and the rapid rise of the Indonesia's communist party, at a time when Indonesia's economic situation went from bad to worse.

During 1959-1962 Indonesia successfully mobilised American pressure on the Dutch to hand over West New Guinea. This buoyed Sukarno into opposing the formation of Malaysia in 1963. He vowed to 'crush' the colonial construct he believed Malaysia to be. Australia supported the formation of Malaysia and committed military forces to its

defence. During this 1964-1966 'confrontation', Australian armed forces fought a covert war against Indonesian insurgents along the Indonesia-Malaysia border in Borneo.

Despite deteriorating bilateral relations, Australia committed increasing funds to foreign aid projects in Indonesia under the Colombo Plan. Australia remained a minor bilateral aid donor to Indonesia compared to Japan and the USA. Remarkably, Indonesia and Australia did not end diplomatic relations during the 'confrontation' hostilities, and Australia did not end its aid programs in Indonesia (Van der Eng 2009). Australia provided foreign aid in the form of grants as economic aid (largely food aid to alleviate hunger), with technical assistance and the training of students from aid recipient countries in second place.

The failed coup of September 1965 in Indonesia was followed by large-scale prosecution of communists, and changes of government and President in 1966 and 1967. This did not immediately lead to improved relations with Australia. Only after Indonesia ended 'confrontation', and reached an agreement with the IMF and a consortium of foreign aid donors on economic stabilisation in 1967, did bilateral relations improve. Australia increased its foreign aid program in Indonesia. In first instance, it donated large amounts of food aid, to help alleviate Indonesia's dire food situation (Van der Eng 2015a). Since the early 1970s Australia committed to a range of aid projects in different sectors of Indonesia's economy.

Bilateral trade and investment remained relatively marginal to both Indonesia and Australia until today. The main reason is that Indonesia, like Australia was long mainly an exporter of primary commodities. Their economies are competitive rather than complementary, which limits bilateral trade options. High levels of agricultural trade protection in Indonesia also made it difficult for Australian products to enter Indonesian markets. Like Indonesia, Australia was also a net recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI), and not a source of outward FDI. In some areas bilateral trade relations were significant. Such as Australia's livestock exports to Indonesia, and Indonesia's exports of tourism services in the form of Australian tourists flocking to Bali for low-cost sun and surf experiences. Australia's strict visa regime and the fact that it is an expensive tourist destination limits the numbers of Indonesian visitors.

The bilateral aid and trade relations were frequently disrupted by incidents that led to disagreements, ambassadors being recalled, visa being refused, new discussions to revolve issues, and reconciliation, before yet another incident emerged. Analysts described the Australia-Indonesia relationship as one with 'fluctuations and trouble spots' (Mackie 2007: 43) or a 'rollercoaster' (Roberts and Habir 2015: 195).<sup>2</sup> But there were also high points. Such as cooperation towards the first 1989 meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Canberra and the 1994 APEC Bogor declaration, the establishment of regular Indonesia-Australia Ministerial Forums since

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<sup>2</sup> Huang (2012) and Pan and Zhang (2018) summarise the post-war development of Indonesia-Australia relations in Chinese.

1994, the 1995 Agreement on Mutual Security, Australia's support for the recovery of Aceh in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2006 Lombok Treaty, the 2012 Defence Cooperation Arrangement, and the 2018 conclusion of Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations.

The turbulent bilateral relationship has been the subject of ongoing academic study (e.g. Ball and Wilson 1991; Mar'iyah 2002; Monfries 2006; Mackie 2007; Purdey 2012; Chen *et al.* 2014). Some studies offered pessimistic assessments. Looking back, Ward (2015) concluded that Australia has to accept that its relationship with Indonesia is 'condemned to crisis' and difficult to get on a stable footing. The editors of the most recent study on the subject still characterise it with an ambiguous book title (Lindsey and McRae 2018): *Strangers Next Door?* The title signifies that both countries still regard each other as strangers. The question mark reflects the fact that the book's chapters also reveal that bilateral relations have diversified significantly. However difficult, these relations now comprise various forms cooperation in many areas of public policy, e.g. Treasury and the Ministry of Finance, Australian Federal Police and Indonesia's national police, border control and customs, Australian and Indonesian armed forces, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Badan Pusat Statistik, Australian and Indonesian Ministries responsible for agriculture and maritime affairs, *etc.* In addition, a wide variety of relations between representative social and business groups exists. Such elements of the bilateral relationship were unimaginable 50 years ago.

One element of continuity in the bilateral relations over the decades has been good human relations between Indonesians and Australians, as the next sections of this paper discuss. These were part of what former Foreign Minister of Australia, Gareth Evans, on his 1988 official visit to Indonesia identified as the 'ballast' of the bilateral relations (Evans 1988). The ballast ensures that the ship of bilateral relations rights itself after disruptions and keeps it on course. Evans could characterise bilateral relations in this way, because by 1988 Australians had over 40 years of experience with building human relations with Indonesians. An important part were the consequence of bilateral university-based cooperation.

### **3. Universities and people-to-people contact: Academic research**

Australia-Indonesia first discussed university-based exchanges in 1941 (*The Australasian*, 11 September 1943). An Australian PhD student studied tropical medicine in Indonesia (*Daily Mercury*, 7 January 1942). However, further initiatives had to wait until after World War II. During the war, Australia faced a new international reality. The 1942 fall of Singapore had demonstrated that it could no longer rely on British military forces for security purposes. Australia had to understand neighbouring Asian countries better. Already in 1944, the Australian government hedged plans to foster the study of

Asian societies through exchanges of academic staff and students at Australian universities (*The Argus*, 7 September 1944).

Indonesia and other countries in the Asia Pacific region declaring and gaining independence increased the urgency for Australia to consider its place in the Asia-Pacific region. Academic interest in the societies and countries of Asia and the Pacific gradually increased in Australia since the late-1940s. Across different disciplines scholars of Asia were appointed at Australian universities to teach and conduct research programs to help new generations of Australians understand Asian countries better.

In the 1950s, universities attracted scholars of Japan, China, Malaya, Thailand, Burma and Malaya from among the British diplomatic and colonial public services. But in the case of Indonesia, few Dutch administrators felt encouraged to work at Australian universities. The teaching of Indonesian studies remained fragmented (Bastin 1957). Building a greater group of Indonesia scholars took the form of sending graduate students to Indonesia for their studies and to learn the Indonesian language.

In addition, the National Union of Australian University Students supported the Australian Scheme for Graduate Employment in Indonesia during 1951-1965 (Viviani 1973: 118-120). It enabled university graduates to volunteer for public service employment in Indonesia under local conditions and pay. Graduates worked for one to three years in Indonesian hospitals, schools, universities, research institutes etc. The scheme aimed to increase cross-cultural understanding and provide technical assistance to benefit Indonesia's development. Young Australian participants returned with lifelong associations with Indonesia and its people, and often with a necessarily multi-disciplinary understanding of the development issues that Indonesia faced. Some continued with PhDs and later found employment at Australian universities. They were fluent in the Indonesian language, although often confounded by the political and economic turmoil in Indonesia during the early 1960s. Nevertheless, by then a group of 'Indonesia-literate' academics emerged at Australian universities.

Australia's turbulent relations with Indonesia during the 1960s encouraged a new generation of young Australian scholars to study the Indonesian language and take an interest in the issues facing Indonesia's society during the 1970s and 1980s (*e.g.* Hatley 2009; Jellinek 2012). They were supported by Australian government scholarships for the study of Indonesia in areas of culture, law, economics, demography, history, anthropology, geography and geology, and even tropical medicine. A very important aspect of their studies continued to be that they conducted fieldwork for their PhD theses in Indonesia. This honed their language skills and allowed them to develop a deeper understanding of Indonesia. Graduates found their way into Australia's public service, including Foreign Affairs and Australia's Agency for International Development (AusAID, established 1974). Others were employed at the growing number of universities in Australia, as reforms in higher education funding caused the student population to increase dramatically (Abbott and Doucouliagos 2003). Many new students

took an interest in the countries to Australia's north, and university teaching positions related to Indonesian studies were aplenty.

Research-active new academic appointees developed new Indonesia-related research interests, attracting research grants for the further study and new PhD students who went to Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s for their fieldwork. Consequently, by the 1990s there were several internationally acknowledged hubs for the study of Indonesia: the University of Melbourne (legal studies), Australian National University (history, economics, demography, anthropology, politics and international relations), Monash University (economics, politics and international relations), University of Sydney (history, labour relations), University of Adelaide (agricultural economics), University of New England (agricultural science) etc. With The Netherlands, USA and Japan, Australia had become one of the four centres of expertise for the study of Indonesia outside Indonesia. Increasing numbers of Indonesian graduate students started to seek out supervisors in Australian academia. The Indonesia-expertise of academics at universities was also sought by the Australian media.

Sustained research fieldwork in Indonesia has been of crucial importance in building this store of expertise in Australia. It forced graduate students to use the Indonesian language in order to be able to ask the questions that lead to a more profound understanding of the many aspects of Indonesia's society than what research of documented evidence from a distance allows. Fieldwork not only for PhD studies, but also for new research projects. A further advantage of using the Indonesian language is that it facilitated associations with colleagues in Indonesia for the purpose of implementing new research projects. The research projects also allowed Indonesian scholars to travel to Australia to complete research projects there, and in the process foster understanding of Australia's academia and society.

Although these forms of academic exchanges facilitated a deeper understanding among academics at Australian universities and their students, scholars with interests and/or experience in Indonesia remained a minority in Australian academia. In the field of Asian studies in Australia, there have always been more scholars of Japan and China than of Indonesia. It is also rare to find Indonesia specialists in most discipline-focused university departments.

In addition, a recent trend in Australian academia is away from interdisciplinary area studies towards disciplinary studies in which theoretical concepts often trump the national and regional contexts of the subject material. Another indication is that the number of universities in Australia offering Indonesian language programs increased from 13 in 1988 to a peak of 28 in 2001, before decreasing to 15 by 2010 (Hill 2011: 1). This decrease has since continued. The reasons for this trend are difficult to pinpoint, but decreased Australian government subsidies for Indonesian language teaching at high school may be part of it (Hill 2018: 415-418). In addition, student interest in the interdisciplinary study of Asian societies has decreased in favour of discipline-based degree programs that take minimal account of issues of national context. Either way, this



change has made it more difficult for universities to sustain interdisciplinary Asian studies. Where university departments in Asian studies continue, and where universities established Asia-focused research centres, they tend to cover the larger economies of Asia; Japan, China and increasingly India, at the expense of other societies in Asia.

It seems not the case that greater discipline-focus in Australian academia is a basis for increased cooperation with Indonesian colleagues. In terms of Indonesian academics cooperating in international publications, cooperation with Australian colleagues ranked 4<sup>th</sup> behind Japan, Malaysia and USA in 2010. But in terms of Australian academics co-publishing internationally, Indonesian colleagues did not rank among the top 30 research collaborators (Brennan 2013: 14). The reasons for restricted research collaboration relate to limited experience among Indonesian colleagues with the high expectations that need to be met to publish in international journals, their limited grounding in methodology and theory, and funding arrangements that effectively discourage cooperation with Indonesia. Consequently, the marginalisation of the study of the language and society of its near neighbour at Australian universities is not compensated though increased discipline-based collaboration with Indonesian universities.

There are exceptions to this trend. At the Australian National University (ANU), the Indonesia Project continues to focus on the study of Indonesia's economy and publish the well-regarded *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* (BIES), as it has done for more than 50 years since 1964 (Brown 2015; Van der Eng 2015b). The University of Melbourne established the Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society in 2013, focusing on the study of legal aspects of Indonesia's society. In 2014, the Australian government supported the establishment of the Australia Indonesia Centre, in which 5 Australian and 7 Indonesian universities cooperate to encourage Australia-Indonesia shared research initiatives, particularly in applied sciences. Apart from BIES, the journal *Inside Indonesia* also continues to be published since 1983, thanks to the significant involvement of largely Melbourne-based academics who offer critical appraisals of issues in Indonesian politics and society (Purdey 2018).

#### **4. Universities and people-to-people contact: Indonesian students in Australia**

By the late-1940s, Indonesia had several institutions for higher education established during the colonial years, particularly in engineering and architecture, law and arts, medical science and agricultural science. Many Indonesian and ethnic Chinese students had graduated from universities in The Netherlands. Many Dutch graduates had also found employment in Indonesia. This changed when Dutch expatriates and many ethnic Chinese left the country in the 1950s. There were insufficient experienced Indonesian graduates to take their place.

The Indonesian government supported the expansion of the number of institutions for mid-level vocational and higher education. However, without a concomitant supply

of qualified teaching staff, the quality of teaching and learning in Indonesia deteriorated. The option of studying in The Netherlands decreased due to the high costs of travel and living there. When Indonesia banned Dutch as a language of instruction, deteriorating Dutch language capabilities also made studying in The Netherlands more difficult.

In those circumstances, privately funded Indonesian students with English language capabilities viewed Australia as a less expensive option. The ‘White Australia’ immigration policy discriminated against migrants from Asia, but students from Asia could study at Australian public universities and private schools. In 1940, there were 225 Asian students (Meadows 2011: 54, 60), increasing to 300 in 1947 (Megarrity 2007: 90). It was up to schools and universities to establish whether candidates met the entry requirements. Students from Asian countries were expected to return to home country after graduating. Universities decided whether to waive tuition fees or charge foreign students the same subsidised fee as local students. On average, universities subsidised private students from Asia by almost 80% (Oakman 2002: 90). It was up to students and their parents to pay travel and living costs.

Most private students from Asian countries were ethnic Chinese from Malaya and Hong Kong. Some also studied at high schools in Australia before starting university studies. Several ethnic Chinese students from Indonesia followed them, especially when in the course of the 1950s the Indonesian government restricted and then effectively banned ethnic Chinese from public universities in Indonesia.

*Figure 1: Indonesian Colombo Plan Students Arrive in Melbourne, 1957*



*Source:* National Archives of Australia NAA A1501, A708/1, item ID 8909183.

The first Indonesian student to study with an Australian government scholarship arrived in October 1949 under the UNESCO program (*The Age*, 31 October 1949; Purdey 2015: 115). Indonesia participated in the Colombo Plan scholarship program before it became a Plan member in 1953. Its first Colombo Plan student arrived in Australia in 1951. Since then, many more Indonesian Colombo Plan students arrived, although most scholarship holders were from Ceylon and Malaya. Australia's intention with the Colombo Plan education program was to (a) demonstrate Australia's readiness to assist less-developed countries in Asia, and (b) generate goodwill among the Asian students through a positive experience in Australia and encourage them to adopt 'Western liberal-democratic values' that they would share with family and colleagues in their home countries (Oakman 2002: 90; Oakman 2010: 182-183).

*Figure 2: Entol Soeparman, the 1,000th Colombo Plan Student in Australia Graduates with A Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Sydney, 1960*



*Source:* National Archives of Australia NAA A1501, A2236/1, item ID 8896006.

Not all Indonesian students who arrived with Australian government scholarships came to complete three-year undergraduate degrees or multi-year postgraduate degrees. Many came for shorter periods to study vocational subjects or English language courses. Little is known about the numbers of Indonesian students and their diversification in terms of areas of study areas or regions of origin in Indonesia. Probably around 250 students from Indonesia were studying at Australian universities by the mid-1950s. Their numbers increased since. During the 'confrontation' years 1964-1966, when they

numbered around 500, Indonesian students were allowed to continue their studies in Australia. Numbers increased to 750 by the mid-1970s and 1,500 by the mid-1980s. Until the mid-1980s most Indonesian students were males and most of them studied undergraduate degrees in engineering, science and architecture. About 250 to 300 of them had Australian government scholarships.

*Figure 3: Indonesian Colombo Plan Students Perform at the Indonesian Students' Association of WA at University of Western Australia, 1964*



*Note:* The group includes economics student Boediono from Blitar (later the 11th Vice President of Indonesia), commerce student Abdillah Toha from Solo, engineering student Roesenosoe Samdi from Palembang; science student Zaid Afiff from Cirebon. Photographer Richard Woldendorp.

*Source:* National Archives of Australia (NAA), A1501, A5251/3, item ID 8158834

By the late-1950s the number of Indonesian university students in Australia was sufficient for them to organise themselves by host city and establish a national federation. Since 1958, the federation organised an annual conference in Canberra with the support of the Indonesian embassy to debate current issues, including Australia-Indonesia relations (Hutabarat 1959). The federation became the Indonesian Students Association of Australia (*Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia Australia*, PPIA) in 1981.

*Figure 4: Indonesian Colombo Plan Students Arrive in Sydney, 1965*



*Source:* National Archives of Australia (NAA) A1501, A6095/5, item ID 7572407.

The 1970s and 1980s saw significant changes to the presence of international students in Australia. In 1974 the government abolished university tuition fees but capped the total of international private students at 10,000. For five years international students at Australian universities paid no tuition fees, until the government introduced an 'Overseas Student Charge'. This was initially set at about one-third of the average cost of university enrolment. By 1986 the Australian government still subsidised the cost of tuition of international students by between 45% and 68%, depending on the degree (DEET 1991: 379). That year the Australian government allowed universities to enrol full-fee paying students. Government subsidies for current international students were phased out until in 1992 universities charged international students full-cost tuition fees.

Despite this increasing cost to privately funded international students at universities in Australia since 1986, their number doubled from 16,000 in 1987 to 33,000 in 1992. Their enrolments continued to grow to 382,000 in 2018. Including vocational, high school and English-language students, the total number of international students in



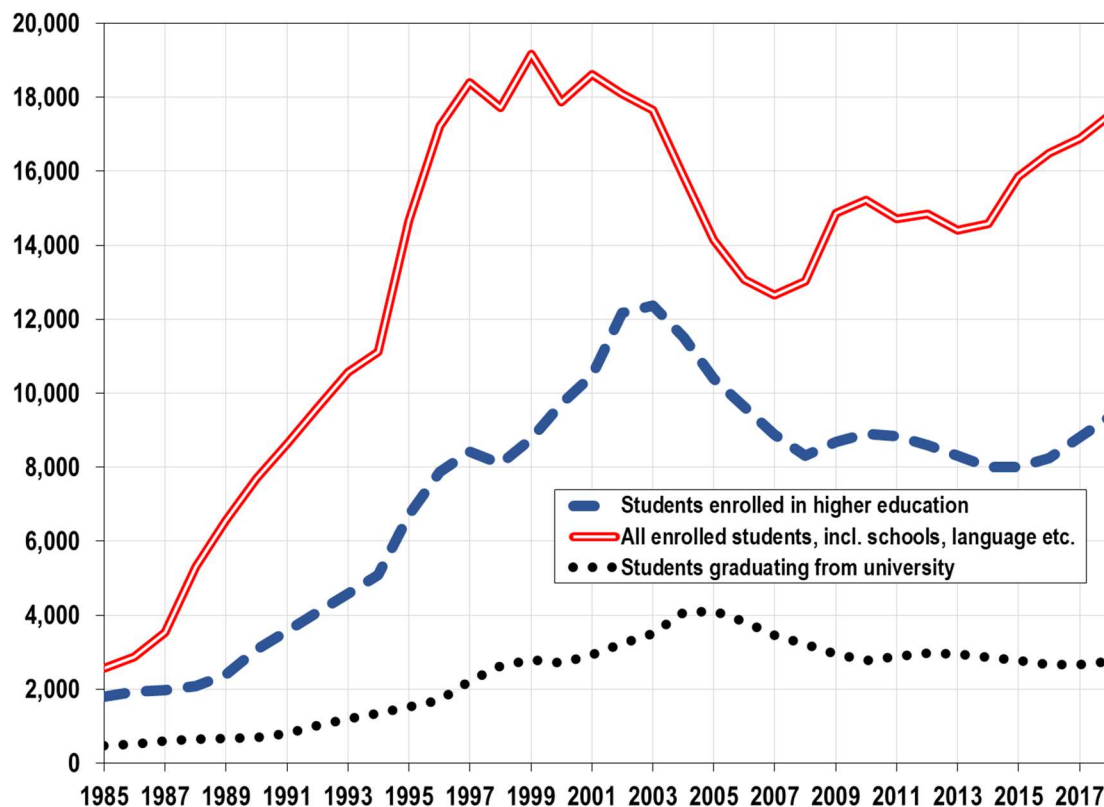
Australia increased from 21,000 in 1987 to 710,000 in 2018. The growth fluctuated over time, depending on (a) changes in Australia's migration policies favouring students who graduated from Australian universities, and (b) fluctuations in the exchange rate of the Australian dollar relative to currencies of other countries attracting international students, such as the UK, Canada and USA.

Australian universities became increasingly interested in having more fee-paying international students on their campuses. Already in 1969, several Australian universities had established the Australian-Asian Universities Cooperation Scheme (renamed the International Development Program, IDP) to coordinate cooperation with universities in Southeast Asia (Meadows 2011: 59, 73). It initially arranged dispatches of Australian academics to universities and research institutes in Asian countries for research purposes. But from 1986 it maintained offices in Jakarta, Manila, Singapore and later a range of other Asian cities to counsel prospective students about studying in Australia. IDP became the key organisation that organised student recruitment activities and student applications on behalf of Australian universities.

As the number of international students in Australia increased, the size and professionalization of these services increased. The Department of Education established Australian Education Centres (AECs) in key cities in the main home countries of Asian students. In addition to IDP, it accredited private agents to assist students with applications. Within the department, the specialised Australian Education International (AEI) section facilitates international contacts and contacts with relevant foreign government services. It also surveys graduates about their study experiences in Australia. For the legal protection of the interests of international students, the Australian government in 1991 passed the Education Services for Overseas Students Act and implemented the 'National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students'. The Act sets minimum standards, provides financial assurance, and protects the quality of education services in Australia to overseas students. In addition, universities anticipated greater numbers of international students by re-organising and expanding student facilities on campuses, particularly student accommodation, and by making arrangements such as welcoming and settling-in services.

Figure 5 shows that the total number of Indonesian students in Australia also grew significantly since 1985, until peaking at 19,000 in 1999. The number of university students peaked at 12,000 in 2003, a time when the Australian dollar was relatively weak. The 2003-2008 appreciation of the dollar is the main explanation for the decrease during these years. Indonesian students remained a relatively small group. They were 17% of all international students in Australia in 1964 (Oakman 2002: 90), decreasing to 11% by 2000 and 2.5% in 2018. Their absolute numbers remained constant. The decrease in the share indicates that more international students in Australia came from other countries, particularly China and India.

Figure 5: Indonesian Students in Australia, 1985-2018



Notes: 1985-1998 Indonesian students estimated, using 1999-2003 average shares of Indonesian students in the total population of international students 1985-1998. Graduations are estimated on the basis of new enrolments 3 years prior. All enrolled students includes high school and English language students, but excludes ‘non-award’ students such as exchange students.

Sources: 1985-1993 *Year Book Australia*; 1994-2018 DET (2018b).

Indonesian students at Australian universities were also a small group relative to the total number of university students in Indonesia, peaking at just 0.7% in 2003, before decreasing to 0.2% in 2018. The main reason for the recent decrease was the expansion of undergraduate university teaching in Indonesia (Hill and Thee 2012), followed by only a hesitant improvement of the quality of teaching and research (Rosser 2018: 9-12). The first change explains why the share of Indonesian graduate students studying in Australia with Australian government scholarships for Masters and PhD degrees increased to 100% in 2018. The second factor explains why Indonesian applicants for study in Australia stagnated, as most applicants have difficulties meeting the entry requirements of Australian universities. Difficulties raising funds for international study is an additional issue. It is the reason why the Indonesian government in 2013 started its Indonesia Education Scholarships (*Beasiswa Pendidikan Indonesia, BPI*) program for graduate studies overseas. In 2017, 829 BPI scholarship holders pursued graduate studies in

Australia, more than the about 800 Australian government scholarship holders from Indonesia. Together, these scholarship holders comprised 18% of the population of Indonesian students in Australia in 2017.

In the case of Indonesia, universities generally focused their recruitment in the main urban regions on Indonesia, particularly in Java. A 2007 survey found that about 75% of Indonesian students in Australia were from Java. It also found that Australian universities experienced challenges from a growing number of lower-cost international competitors in Malaysia, Singapore and China, which focused on recruiting students in regional Indonesia (AEI 2007: 11-12). The population of Indonesian students in Australia diversified over time: a greater share of women, more students studying social sciences, and more graduate students.

As Australia's relations with Indonesia diversified, Indonesian students with Australian government scholarships became a minority. Most Indonesian students in Australia were privately funded students. But the Australian government continued to extend scholarships to Indonesian students. In 1975 most of the scholarships became the responsibility the new development assistance agency, eventually best known as AusAID. The balance in the motivation for Australian government support for the student scholarships program shifted from 'soft power' to 'development', *i.e.* the expectation that graduates who returned to their home countries would assist in the development of their countries, reducing poverty and enhancing sustainable development in the process.

The scholarships were long the single most important component of Australia's foreign aid program in Indonesia, which in the 1980s and 1990s focused on human resource development. Apart from scholarships, the aid program also supported school and education developments in Indonesia. The total share of education and training in Australia's aid budget for Indonesia increased from an average of 6 percent in the 1970s to 21 percent in the early 1980s and 40 percent in the late 1980s and 37 percent in the early 1990s. The main reason for this expansion was that increasing numbers of Indonesian students were able to pursue postgraduate studies in Australia through the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges (IDP) and other schemes. Most of the assistance provided in this category indeed concerned such scholarships (AusAID 1995: 51-58).

Other Australian government departments also sponsored Indonesian students, although not all for university study. For example, the Department of Defence had its own Defence Cooperation Program under which Indonesians came to Australia for training. In 1978 the program saw its 1,000<sup>th</sup> student in Australia, some of whom took courses at Australian Defence Colleges. Government departments also exchanged staff with counterparts in Indonesia. For example, the Treasury had staff exchanges with the Department of Finance in Indonesia. While such exchanges did not necessarily involve formal university education, some involved interactions with universities in Australia and in Indonesia.



AusAID varied the names of these scholarships and introduced different types over time. By 2010, the most common scholarships were the Australia Development Scholarships. There were special scholarships for students that AusAID had identified for their leadership capabilities as future leaders in their countries of origin, and also scholarships for university staff. Similar differentiation continued to exist after AusAID was abolished in 2013, and its functions were absorbed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The whole scholarship program is today called the Australia Award Leadership Program (AALP), and the most common scholarship that Indonesian students receive is the Australia Award scholarship.

## **5. Universities and people-to-people contact: Australian students in Indonesia**

Section 3 noted that some research students started to travel to Indonesia in the 1950s, most returning with a life-long affection for the country. Student interest in Asian languages and societies increased in Australia 1960s-1970s. With Indonesia being the easier language to acquire, and a neighbouring country, there was a surge of student interest in studying Indonesian language and society at Australian universities during the 1980s-1990s. To facilitate language learning, most universities made their own arrangements to allow Australian students to hone their language skills in Indonesia as an optional part of their studies.

In 1994 Australian universities cooperated to establish the Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies (ACICIS) program, in order to combine their effort of facilitating university students to study in Indonesia for credit towards their degree in Australia (Hadiwinata 2015: 143-147). A key aspect of the program was the field study component, which students completed with an Indonesian university supervisor. 25 Australian universities now cooperate in the program. It now facilitates a variety of study experiences for students in Indonesia, especially at universities in Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta. Initially focused on Indonesian language students, ACICIS diversified its offerings to include non-Indonesian speaking students from Australia.

ACICIS was very important in sustaining the flow of students and human interactions after the 1997-98 economic crisis resulted in mass demonstrations, violent riots and brutal killings of Chinese Indonesians. This was followed by the 2002 and 2005 Bali, the 2003 Marriott, 2004 Australian embassy, and 2009 Jakarta hotel suicide bombings and other atrocities associated with radicalisation of Muslim fringe groups. Parents and university administrators were rightly concerned about the security of Australian students in Indonesia. ACICIS mitigated such concerns through preventative actions that increased student security in Indonesia. During 1996-2009 ACICIS facilitated mostly one-year study experiences for on average 83 Australian students per year in Indonesia (Hanson 2010: 10). This increased to on average 105 students per year during 2010-2017.

During the 1990s, Australian universities increasingly established reciprocal university-to-university student exchange agreements to allow their undergraduate students to study for half a year overseas with credit towards degree in Australia (Olsen 2008: 365). Agreements were generally with North American and European universities that taught courses in English equivalent to those in Australia. It took longer to establish such agreements with universities in Asia, as few taught courses in English that would allow Australian students to share learning experiences with host country students.

In the course of the 2000s, more Australian universities concluded exchange agreements with Indonesian universities, but only with universities that employ English-speaking Indonesian academic staff, often postgraduates from foreign universities. This meant that exchange agreements tended to be limited to prominent national universities (*e.g.* University of Indonesia in Jakarta, Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, and Padjadjaran University in Bandung) and entrepreneurial private universities (*e.g.* Binus University in Jakarta), excluding many regional universities.

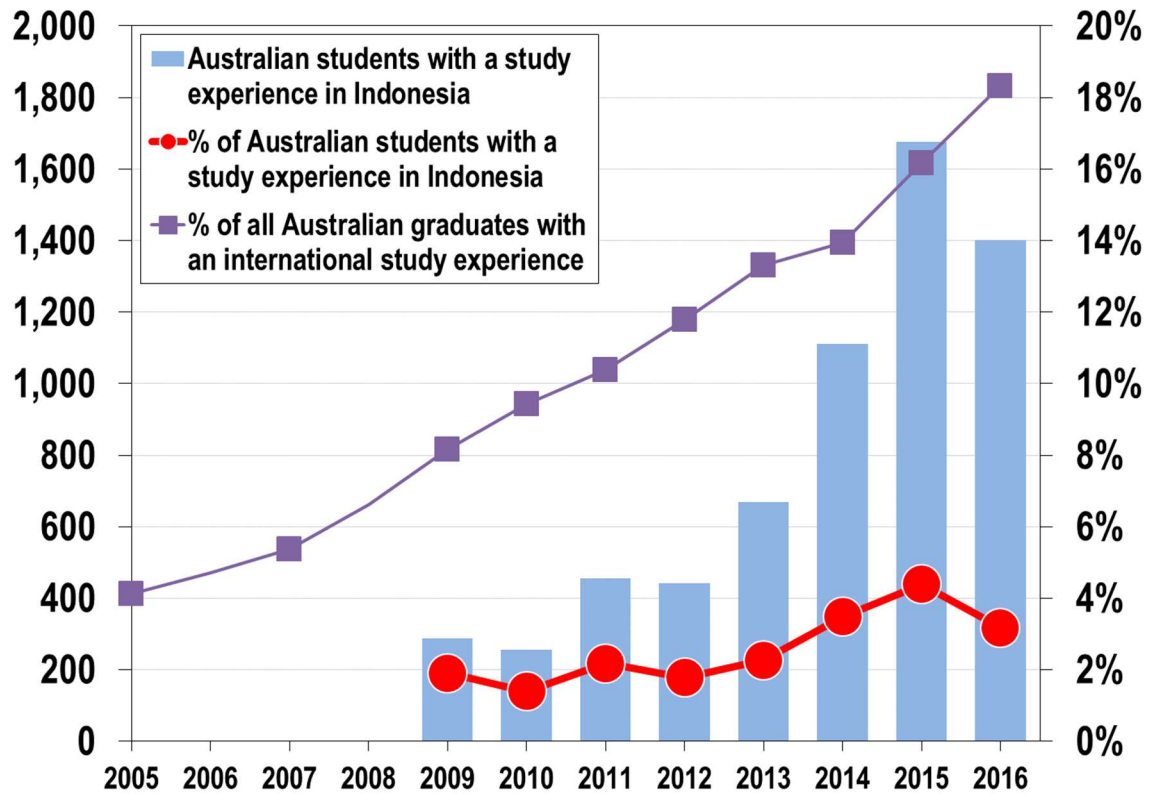
These arrangements allowed Australian students to become increasingly internationally mobile (Olsen 2008). Since the 2000s an optional international experience of up to a year - but generally one semester - became a standard feature of the study programs that Australian universities offer. The number of students with an international study experience increased from 7,000 in 2005 to 15,000 in 2009 and 44,000 in 2016 (DET 2014-2018). Figure 6 shows that the share of students graduating with an international study experience increased from around 4% in 2005 to 18% in 2016. Clearly, the majority of students has other commitments that prevent them from participating (Jones *et al.* 2016). On average during 2009-2016, 30% went to key Anglophone countries (USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa), 25% to the rest of Europe and 9% to China. Figure 6 shows that the share of students going to Indonesia was just 2 to 3% and has not changed much, even though their number increased from 300 in 2009 to 1,400 in 2016.

A major explanation for the increase since 2013 is the 'New Colombo Plan' scholarship program that the Australian government put in place in 2014. The plan's aim is to get more Australian students to study temporally in 40 'host locations' in the Asia-Pacific regions, including Indonesia. The program offered 120 scholarships and 13,000 short-term 'mobility projects' in 2018. It includes study at local universities and internships at Australian companies in host locations, but it largely consists of relatively short visits to host countries. By the end of 2018 about 5,300 Australian undergraduates have been in Indonesia under this program during 2014-2018 (DFAT 2018).

While this increase is very significant, it is unclear to what extent the experience of studying English-taught courses for half a year or shorter periods in Indonesia and conducting internships with Australian companies in Indonesia advances the purposes of these programs. In particular, critics of the short-term study experiences have argued that only language study advances the cross-cultural understanding that is likely to support inter-personal relationships between Australians and Indonesians. While most

Indonesian students absorb this during their studies in Australia, few Australian students have an opportunity to do this during their stay in Indonesia (Welsh 2015: 168-169).

Figure 6: Australian Students with a Study Experience in Indonesia, 2005-2016



Notes: 2005-2016 graduates estimated as one-third of domestic undergraduate students.  
Sources: 2005, 2007 and 2009-2016 DET (2014-2018); total domestic students 2009-2016 DET (2018b).

## 6. Impact and consequences of Indonesia-Australia university cooperation

Available studies allow us to gauge the impact and consequences of the increased Australia-Indonesia university-based interactions in broad terms. The available literature focuses on three aspects: (a) the impact on Indonesian students during their stay in Australia and afterwards, (b) the impact on Australian society, particularly the question whether Australia's general understanding of Indonesia improved, (c) the impact on Indonesian society and on bilateral relations.

### **6.1. Impact on Indonesian students**

It is difficult to gauge the impact of the study experiences of Indonesian students in Australia consistently across more than 50 years. There is limited information until interest in the welfare of foreign students emerged, which resulted in various surveys-based research projects.

A 2014 retrospective project interviewed a large number of Indonesian students who had studied in Australia with Australian government scholarships since the 1950s (Purdey 2015, 2017). In general terms the recollections were very positive. This outcome is perhaps not surprising for two reasons. (a) Anyone would identify early adulthood as their most formative period, whether in Indonesia or elsewhere, particularly at university. (b) The interviews were conducted at a time when accumulated positive experiences may have drowned out negative ones, and after age had worn down strong feelings. Nevertheless, the experience of studying in Australia was different for Indonesian students, particularly before the internet-based communication revolution of the 1990s. Many interviewees articulated a sense of having been between two worlds, being able to identify the limitations and advantages of their home and host countries and becoming aware of cultural relativity, while at the same time indulging in their academic interests and learning how to advance them.

Apart from this retrospective survey, there is limited information about the experiences of past Asian students in Australia. In the 1950s Australian newspapers interviewed students, who generally expressed appreciation for the hospitality they received. Further probing yielded polite indications that not all was well. For example, in 1954 Asian students mentioned finding abrupt Australian manners, ignorance of Asia and Asian cultures, difficulties of finding suitable accommodation, and particularly racial prejudice disconcerting (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 January 1954). Some students initially experienced significant difficulties with accommodation, Australian food, English language, general orientation, loneliness, meeting exam expectations and the high cost of living in Australia.

In a few extreme cases in the early 1950s foreign students experienced mental breakdowns or suicided (Oakman 2002: 92-93; Oakman 2010: 183-184). Such experiences spurred authorities and universities to take preventative measures as much as possible. During the 1950s, the solutions were sporadic and *ad-hoc* (Oakman 2002: 92-95; Oakman 2010: 184, 187-190). For example, welcoming committees to help with settling in and making contacts, Colombo Plan liaison officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs supervising scholarship holders, mobilisation of social organisations in Australian cities to engage students in functions and events to familiarise them more with Australian life, compulsory English classes, encouragement of country-based associations of students etc. The University of Melbourne constructed International House in 1957 in order to facilitate greater contact among international and Australian students on campus. This was the first of many residences constructed for international

students, especially since the 1990s. This learning-by-doing process by which universities and others helped Asian students familiarise themselves with Australia was beneficial for student welfare, as very few cases of alienation and personal hardship were reported by the early-1960s.

The self-organisation of Asian students also served the purpose of articulating the gripes of Asian students to authorities in home countries. For example, Indonesian graduates from Australian universities drew attention to the difficulties they experienced of getting their qualifications recognised in Indonesia (*Canberra Times*, 3 January 1962).

Since the late-1960s the results of an increasing number of surveys of students became available. Most are non-official surveys conducted by academic researchers and graduate students among Asian international students in Australia. Some focused on just Indonesian students. In addition, questionnaire-based surveys sponsored by Australian official agencies such as AEI became available that tended to indicate that international students were satisfied with their study experience. However, Arkoudis *et al.* (2019) showed that there are significant discrepancies between the outcomes of such official surveys and focus group discussions. The latter revealed degrees of dissatisfaction in terms of the lack of social integration due to limited interactions with Australian peers, and concomitant feelings of a lack of belonging, which echo the gripes of Colombo Plan students in the early 1950s.

Other non-official surveys revealed that students struggled with issues such as Australian food, cultural differences, difficulties with assimilation into the wider student body on campus and making friendships with Australian students. Unlike their Colombo Plan predecessors, there were increasingly more international students on Australian university campuses. And due to the greater numbers, Asian students tended to associate more with each other than with social organisations that are part of the fabric of Australian society. On the one hand this facilitated peer-support, but on the other hand it compounded the assimilation-related issues that students faced.

Kiley (1999) interviewed 33 Indonesian PhD students every 3 months throughout their studies and after their return to Indonesia. This descriptive study documents the many difficulties that students encountered and the solutions they found. It generalised students experiencing three phases: (a) during the first 3-6 months after arrival of anxiety and challenges with adjustments to the language, culture and academic demands, (b) a phase of living and studying during the next 18-30 months, and (c) a phase with considerable stress about preparing to return and the initial experiences after return. In terms of their responses to the issues they faced, Kiley identified three typologies of students: (a) 'transformers', who entirely changed the ways they viewed the world and themselves and are typically 'deep learners', (b) 'strategists', who spent time working out what supervisor and university expect of them in order to then focus on completing their degree, and (c) 'conservers', who do not change in social, emotional or academic ways and are typically 'surface learners'.

Novera (2004) investigated cultural differences between Australia and Indonesia with a sample of 25 Indonesian graduate students to identify the causes for the difficulties that students experienced in Australia. The study found the main problems to be the use of written and spoken academic English, Australian academic requirements (in particular, the amount of reading required in English), and the lack of specific facilities for Muslim students, particularly prayer rooms.

Gonzales (2005) studied the causes of stress experienced by 277 newly arrived Indonesian students compared to samples of Chinese and Australian students in Australia and also 161 Indonesian students in Indonesia. Indonesian students experienced increased levels of stress soon after arriving in Australia, related to accommodation difficulties, communication with locals, homesickness and required preparations for lecture attendance. Particularly better English language capabilities, willingness to seek support from friends, lecturers or university counselling services, and establishing and maintaining friendships with other Indonesians moderated this.

Sawir *et al.* (2008) focused their survey on loneliness and coping strategies of international students in Australia, including 49 Indonesians. They concluded that same-culture networks are crucial, but not sufficient solutions. Adequate pastoral care facilities organised by universities are important, as are institutionalised ways at universities to foster cross-cultural bonding; to minimise loneliness, and to encourage study motivation.

Boveington (2008) surveyed 24 Indonesian students, who confirmed that most of them were interested in associating with Australian students, but that they actually mostly associated with other Indonesian students or other international students. Interviewees also expressed views that most Australians did not understand Indonesian culture.

Medica (2016) investigated cultural adjustment difficulties among 41 Indonesian PhD students in Australia, both in terms of acculturation in Australia and re-acculturation after return to Indonesia for 26 interviewees. She concluded that prior studies in foreign countries created realistic expectations of life and PhD study in Australia. Availability of academic and cultural learning programs on campus, and the settling in of accompanying family members all facilitated the acculturation process. Re-adjustment back in Indonesia generally proved much harder than expected, particularly for accompanying children. This 'reverse culture shock' suggests that guidance in preparing for repatriation and reintegration could be very relevant. Returnees found that associating with other returnees was helpful. Professionally, returnees experienced that their colleagues resisted suggestions for change based on their experiences and research results from Australia.

## ***6.2. Impact on Australian society***

It is also difficult to assess the impact of university-based exchanges on Australian society in a consistent fashion. Maybe it was most profound in the 1950s and 1960s, when greater numbers of Asian students on university campuses were a novelty for Australia. The general association of increased numbers of Asian students with the

Colombo Plan contributed to a significant decrease of public support in Australia for the 'White Australia' immigration policy and increasing support for greater immigration flows by the late-1960s (Oakman 2002: 95-96; Oakman 2010: 211). The policy was largely dismantled in 1966 and abolished in 1973 (Megarrity 2007: 101-104).

Follow-up studies among Asian graduates in the late-1960s and early-1970s revealed that most of them kept in regular contact with their Australian acquaintances. Oakman (2002: 96; 2010: 203-204) concludes that retaining 'personal relationships was a more enduring and meaningful basis for continued contact with Australia'.

While initiatives of Australian universities, social groups and individuals helped Colombo Plan students in the 1950s and 1960s to relate to Australian society and people, such an approach became logistically difficult when the international student population in Australia increased massively since the 1980s. On the other hand, communications between *e.g.* Australia and Indonesia had by then improved significantly, as had the standard of living in Indonesia. Consequently, later generations of Indonesian students were much better informed about life in Australia than their predecessors.

In addition, during the 1990s and 2000s Australian society was transforming rapidly as a consequence of more diversified immigration. Asian communities in Australian cities grew in size, offering Asian students opportunities to mitigate consequences of being homesick. There were also many more students from their home countries to associate with for the same purpose. However, that could have meant that international students increasingly forewent opportunities to establish meaningful relations and friendships in wider sections of Australian society. As mentioned, several surveys among international students identified this limited interaction with Australian society as an issue, but possibly without realising that cultural diversity increasingly identifies Australian society, especially in urban areas where universities are located.

It is likely that this aspect did not apply to the population of scholarship-holding Indonesian students in Australia, as most increasingly were more mature graduate students who established contacts based on their research interests. In addition, many came with their families (Purdey 2015: 126). This added elements to their integration in Australian society. For example, because their children attended Australian schools that required students to interact with other parents and with teachers. Such additional interactions offered opportunities for other exchanges about Indonesia with Australians, but it should be obvious that the numbers of students are too small to expect significant changes in public opinion about Indonesia in Australia (see below).

### ***6.3. Impact on Indonesian society***

The Australian governments articulated the motivations for the Colombo Plan student scholarships program in terms of development in recipient countries and possibilities for Australian soft power, although the balance fluctuated over time.

In terms of development, its expectation was long that graduates who returned to their home countries would assist in the development of these countries. Particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, Australia's foreign aid program emphasised reducing poverty and enhancing sustainable development. Surveying the scholarship program, the Australian National Audit Office noted 'the difficulty of relating individual efforts to broader economic and other developmental outcomes' in the home countries of scholarship recipients, as AusAID was not using any relevant performance indicators for the scholarship program (ANAO 1999: 16-17).

Nilan (2005) put this issue to the test based on a sample of 46 Indonesian returned university graduates to find that the scholarship program had not met such broad development goals, and therefore that the benefits of the scholarship program needed to be understood in terms of the personal advancement of recipients. Purdey (2015: 120-128) reported the results of a large retrospective survey among Indonesians who studied in Australia with Australian government scholarships since the 1950s. In essence her results support Nilan's findings, captured with the conclusion 'the scholarships programs bring real outcomes for personal development and real change in lives'. Hence, while of great value to individual Indonesian scholarship recipients, the programs did not contribute directly to expected broader development outcomes.

During the 1990s and 2000s, the emphasis in Australia's foreign aid program shifted to issues of governance. In the case of Indonesia, there has been little evidence to suggest that the scholarship program made any difference where it facilitated postgraduate education to civil servants. The effectiveness of Indonesia's civil service remained low by international standards, due to 'the antiquated structures and personnel policies of Indonesia's civil service, including lack of mobility across the service and the crucial role of seniority in determining promotion' (Forrester 2005: 24-25). There often were few opportunities for returning graduates to put into practice what they learned. Cannon (2000: 358-359) summarised other surveys among Indonesian returnees with Australian degrees working in Indonesia's public service, academia and research institutes and published during 1969-1997 which confirmed this. On the basis of his own survey among 89 professionals with Australian degrees in Jakarta, Cannon concluded: 'Respondents place more importance on outcomes such as changes in intellectual abilities, attitudes and cultural perspectives than on narrower career advantages such as salary and promotion, which may actually suffer as a consequence of an international education.' Kiley (1999: 278-282, 291-296) and Medica (2016: 278-300) arrived at similar conclusions based on surveys of returnees with Australian PhD degrees working in Indonesian academia.

During the 1950-1970s, Indonesian candidates for Australian scholarships were selected by the Department of Education in Indonesia, largely on the basis of their academic abilities and the requirements of Indonesian society. Increasingly, however, the selection of candidates became a reflection of the priorities that Australian government agencies allocated to building contacts with their counterparts in Indonesia by plying



future leaders in Indonesia's bureaucracy with prestigious scholarships to study in Australia (Purdey 2015: 119). The institutional limitations in Indonesia on having graduates implement what they learned in Australia obviously dampened Australia's soft power intentions with the scholarship program.

However, that may be the perspective in Jakarta, where there were relatively far fewer Indonesian graduates from Australian universities in senior government positions than the Australian government may have liked. In addition, they competed against a greater number of graduates from prestigious Indonesian universities and from other overseas universities in public institutions. A retired AusAID officer noted the situation away from Jakarta: 'In the regions, however, one tends to meet them [graduates from Australian universities] surprisingly often. They speak proudly of their ties with Australia and are particularly well-disposed toward the idea of other forms of engagement with Australia through whatever their current institutions might be.' (Davies 2018: 463).

#### ***6.4. Impact on bilateral relations***

From the outset, Australia's participation in the Colombo Plan was also intended to serve as a soft power option serving Australia's foreign policy objectives (Megarrity 2007: 94, 96). The idea was that it demonstrated Australia's commitment to scholarship recipient countries. After AusAID's predecessors took over scholarship administration in 1975, the balance between the aid and soft power motivations for the scholarships may have shifted to the first, before in 2013 the scholarship program again became closely aligned with Australia's foreign policy objectives.

In light of the bilateral vicissitudes in section 2, it seems that this soft-power option did not secure consistently good relations with Indonesia since the 1950s. Although it should be noted that other factors also defined the Indonesia-Australia relationship. For example, the fact that bilateral trade and investment relations long remained marginal meant that there was no requirement for extensive people-to-people contact and the close cross-cultural understanding it may result in.

This is where the university-based exchanges reveal a limitation. Despite the success of the research focus, the scholarship program and the student exchanges, the actual numbers of people involved are very limited, even in a cumulative sense. For example, Purdey (2015: 111) estimated that there were about 18,000 former Australian government scholarship holders in Indonesia in 2014. By contrast, including privately funded students, by 2018 altogether about 125,000 Indonesians had graduated from Australian vocational schools and universities. But that is just 0.06% of Indonesia's population aged over 24 years. A similar calculation can be applied to the numbers of 'Indonesia-literate' academics at Australian universities and the numbers of Australian exchange students who conducted part of their studies in Indonesia. The conclusion is the same: the relative numbers involved in the university-based people-to-people interactions have been small.

Consequently, the mutual understanding on both sides of the Arafura Sea separating Indonesia and Australia is unlikely to have changed much over time as a consequence of just university-based interactions. Public opinion polls in Australia have long contained questions about Australia's relations with Indonesia. Analysing the Gallup polls since the 1940s and the Lowy Institute polls since 2005, Sobocinska (2015: 5) identified one consistent element: 'many Australians expressing a desire for closer relations with Indonesia while simultaneously nurturing a deep suspicion and anxiety that Indonesia poses a threat to Australian security ... compounded by widespread ignorance about Indonesian society and the widespread (false) assumption that Indonesia is militaristic and possibly expansionist'. A deep Australia-Indonesia Centre opinion poll confirmed these views; 47% of respondents had an 'unfavourable' opinion of Indonesia (Purdey 2016). The 2018 Lowy poll still found that 'only 24% of Australians agree that Indonesia is a democracy'. It noted: 'attitudes have illustrated a lack of awareness about aspects of Indonesian culture and politics' (Oliver 2018).

There are no indications that this has been significantly different in Indonesia. For example, during a 2003 selection process of aspiring young diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Indonesian ambassador to Australia discovered to his dismay that 95% of 6,000 applicants had anti-Australian views, because 'they saw that Australians are all so arrogant, trying to impose values upon us in the region' (Reeve 2006: 77). A 2012 poll suggested that such views have since tempered (Hanson 2012). Nevertheless, it also identified a tenacious anti-Australian undercurrent in Indonesian public opinion that could become virulent if bilateral relations deteriorate. By contrast, a 2016 poll found that just 10% of Indonesians had an 'unfavourable' opinion of Australia (Purdey 2016).

Together, these impressions suggest that Indonesians and Australians continue to be largely strangers to each other, despite the university-based cooperation of almost 70 years. McRae and Zhang (2018: 77-78) concluded that it will be very difficult to directly change mutual perceptions, except through increased bilateral economic and personal relations that may encourage more nuanced and reality-based mutual perceptions.

While it would have been difficult for students and academics involved in university-based interactions to generate significant changes in public opinion, such exchanges may still have had this effect in the margins. Particularly in cases where Indonesians with educational experiences in Australia rose to positions of influence in Indonesian society later in life. It is very difficult to substantiate this beyond the personal success of scholarship alumni in advancing their careers and their general indications of positive attitudes to Australia and its people. There is no direct evidence to suggest that such Indonesian alumni supported Australian government viewpoints on crucial issues of policy, whether publicly or by stealth.

If that were the case, there should be a long record, because Australia's scholarship program involving Indonesians reaches back to 1949. In addition, Australian universities have a long record of inviting Indonesian academics for fellowships, which they sometimes took up while bringing their young families. The fellowships for

academics are relevant, because government ministers in Indonesia are not necessarily politicians and appointed because of political allegiances. Many ministers have been selected to high office because of their academic credentials and integrity, while ministers also consulted leading academics for policy advice.

Consequently, there has since the 1960s been a steady flow of young Indonesian academics who later became professors and some also government ministers, and who spent time in Australia during formative years, often with their young families. Examples are Mohammad Sadli, Emil Salim, Widjojo Nitisastro, Ali Wardhana, Barli Halim, Bachtiar Rifad, and later *e.g.* Sri Mulyani and Bambang Brodjonegoro all spent time at Australian universities. Jusuf Pangestu (Pang Laykim) effectively exiled himself to Australia in the mid-1960s with his family, where his daughter Mari Pangestu (Pang Huilan) later studied at the ANU.

Maybe the potential benefits of the Indonesian graduations from Australian universities reached a peak when during 2004-2014 there were at times 4 Indonesians with the rank of government minister that had such Australian connections: Professor Boediono (University of Western Australia BEc 1967, Monash University MEc 1972), Professor Mari Pangestu (ANU BEc 1979, MEc 1981), Dr Marty Natalegawa (ANU PhD 1994) and Dr Muhammad Chatib Basri (ANU MEcDev 1996 and PhD 2002), while a fifth Indonesian minister, Professor Armida Alisjahbana, has also had a long association with the ANU Indonesia Project. All were selected for government positions on the basis of their academic credentials, rather than political allegiances. With reference to section 2, it is difficult to conclude that this advantaged Australia-Indonesia relations. It is possible that in the context of Indonesia's party politics, these ministers opted to downplay their Australian connections. At times they may have prevented incidents from causing bilateral relations to go from bad to worse, or they possibly were instrumental in identifying resolutions faster than would otherwise have been the case.

Another way in which the limited number of people involved in Australia-Indonesia university-based contacts may have impacted on bilateral relations is through public media. On the Australian side, the media have long given both Australian and Indonesian academics opportunities to express opinions that put contentious bilateral issues in context, thus contributing to solutions and mitigating disagreement. This includes Indonesian academics who in the past were recipients of Australian government scholarships. Academics also drew attention to their views through the publication of opinion pieces in media in Australia and Indonesia. It is difficult to pinpoint instances, but in principle this may on occasion have had a mitigating influence on public opinion and decision-making processes. Nevertheless, in light of section 2, it was obviously insufficient to prevent the 'rollercoaster' impression of bilateral relations.

The limitations of the soft power of the foreign aid and scholarships programs did not escape the Australian government's attention. Both were brought in much closer alignment with the government's foreign policy objectives when AusAID's functions were absorbed by DFAT in 2013. DFAT no longer refers to the scholarship program as

aid. The program is now generally associated with opportunities to benefit Australia's relations with recipient countries. Indicative is the fact that considerable effort and funding is allocated to a 2016-2020 strategy for 'alumni engagement' (DFAT 2016). As part of the strategy AALP organises frequent alumni events, also in Indonesia (*e.g.* DFAT 2017: 8). An explicit goal is 'strengthening our diplomatic access and influence', which identifies its purpose as serving soft power. But such strengthening is likely to take much more time to eventuate as alumni take time to rise to positions of influence. If the earlier expectations of the scholarships being a vehicle for development in recipient countries are a guide, this effect may remain elusive.

To conclude this section, the Australia-Indonesia case indicates that there is no straightforward relationship between building good university-based human relations and maintaining good bilateral relations. The degree of academic cooperation, and the numbers of Indonesian students in Australia and Australian students in Indonesia are simply not sufficient for that purpose. In addition, building conducive human relations among young people as students or young academics takes time. Such relations take the form of shared experiences that necessarily need opportunities for academic exchanges of students and academics, and for constructive new academic research based on fieldwork and immersion. Then such professional relations need renewal and nurturing, to avoid risking dissipating. And even when conducive human relations exist, there is no guarantee that they are sufficient to safeguard cordial bilateral relations.

## **7. Conclusion**

In China, academic interest in Indonesia is accelerating beyond the universities that traditionally focused on studying Southeast Asia. The increase in Indonesians studying in China has also been very fast, faster than Australia experienced during 1985-2000. Indonesian students are attracted to Chinese universities (Gunawan 2018; Theo 2018). Indonesian universities now offer Chinese language classes that prepare for further study in China, and the cost of tuition and living in China is lower than Australia. There has also been a resurgence of Chinese identity in Indonesia that made young Chinese Indonesians curious about the country of their ancestors. Importantly, Chinese companies in Indonesia are keen to hire Chinese-speaking Indonesian graduates. Chinese government scholarships are also a lure, although in 2017 there were just 197 such scholarships for Indonesians wanting to study in China (Llewellyn 2018).

How does Australia's experience with building university-based human relations with neighbouring country Indonesia inform China's experience? Section 2 indicated that Australia-Indonesia bilateral relations have fluctuated to the extent that Ward (2015) concluded that the Australia-Indonesia is 'condemned to crisis', without ever getting on a stable footing. Sections 3-5 have indicated that this seems too pessimistic. Despite

fluctuations in bilateral relations, the university-based Australia-Indonesia relations have grown. The growth in Australia of academic research on Indonesia in principle contributed to a better mutual understanding since the 1950s. An important prerequisite was the considerable time and effort that researchers put into learning the Indonesian language for the purpose of conducting fieldwork in Indonesia for their studies. The increased two-way flows of Indonesian and Australian students for study at respectively Australian and Indonesian universities also in principle contributed to a better mutual understanding.

However, section 6 explained that expectations of the impact of good bilateral relations with Australia in terms of Indonesia's development are difficult to substantiate. There is only limited evidence that Australia has been able to deploy the bilateral relations as a soft power option to mitigate overt conflict or exert political influence in Indonesia. The only consensus focuses on the fact that the Indonesians that benefited from Australia's scholarship program brought advanced their personal experiences and experienced significant personal rewards.

The paper discussed several studies into the experiences of Indonesian graduate students in Australia. Each raised issues that in the very near future will become relevant to Indonesian students in China and also to stakeholders in China's state-owned enterprises. Only Sandy (2018) and Gunawan (2018) surveyed the issues that Indonesian students faced in China and the factors that determine student satisfaction with universities in China. Deeper studies are necessary to corroborate their results, and to contribute to further discussion about the ways in which China may want to maximise the outcomes of its university-based interactions with Indonesia.

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