

Research Article

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Case Studies in Indonesian Foreign Policy Teaching: Retrospective and Decision-Making Approaches

Bama Andika Putra 

Abstract

Background/purpose. Teaching Indonesian Foreign Policy (IFP) for international relations (IR) students comes with its challenges. The wide coverage of substantive topics and the use of pedagogical strategies that facilitate active learning have been largely overlooked by instructors in Indonesian and Southeast Asian higher education institutions offering IFP courses. The purpose of this study is to explore alternative means of learning IFP, which enable a more nuanced understanding of the key empirical cases, events, and policies related to Indonesia's external outlook.

Materials/methods. This study employs a qualitative empirical case study that bridges the analytical frameworks of 'retrospective' and 'decision-forcing' case studies, as proposed by Ralph G. Carter (2021), and draws upon existing studies on the benefits of case studies for IR learning processes.

Results. Through Student-Centred Learning (SCL) methods such as simulations, debates, and discussions, retrospective and decision-forcing case studies can cover a wide range of themes to enhance learning in IFP courses. Retrospective case studies, which examine past events or policies, can select cases such as the 'Bandung Conference' and the policies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Meanwhile, decision-forcing case studies, which address unresolved crises, can explore the following topics: the South China Sea dispute, foreign policy identity dilemmas, and Indonesia's challenges in the context of transnational organized crime.

Conclusion. Retrospective and decision-forcing case studies have immense potential to elevate students' learning experiences in IFP courses, enabling instructors to enhance students' critical and creative thinking throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, there remains the challenge of generalizing these methods to other empirical cases and different fields of study, which can be intriguing themes for future studies.

1. Introduction

IFP is a course offered in many Indonesian and Southeast Asian higher education institutions within IR programs. Unlike many empirically focused courses in IR, the IFP course is typically mandatory for IR students in Indonesia. This highlights the significance of the course and its relationship to learning outcomes and graduate profiles in IR programs in the state, which aims to adopt pedagogical strategies to prepare future diplomats.

Unfortunately, covering IFP is not a simple matter. Academics in the past have argued that a review of IFP courses offered in IR programs across Indonesia is necessary for two key reasons. The first ground is the study's substantive coverage. Scholars have expressed that there is a need for Indonesian scholars to introduce histories and norms beyond the traditional 'Great Debate' of IR, and look into more localized norms and values as potential explanatory variables in the study of IR (Acharya & Buzan, 2019; Hellmann & Jorgensen, 2015; Karen & Tickner, 2020; Liu, 2016; Wemheuer-Vogelaar et al., 2020). Those critics, primarily voiced by Indonesian scholars, support the broader stance of the call for a more global IR, which places greater emphasis on alternative histories and norms to be taught in classrooms.

The second is pedagogically grounded, which relates to how the IRP course is being taught. The idea is that IFP's teaching and learning processes should not be passive for the students. IR students are expected to complete their IR studies equipped with critical thinking, negotiation, public speaking, writing, and research skills (de la Puente Pacheco et al., 2025; Lamy, 2007). Therefore, a one-way teaching method of explaining realism, liberalism, and constructivism would not help to establish the ideal IR graduate profile that Indonesian higher education institutions define. Consequently, there is a call for more active learning in classrooms, with an emphasis on pedagogical strategies that foster critical thinking and build students' confidence in voicing their opinions.

With IFP, those two reflections are urgently needed to be implemented in the course. IFP is a demanding subject that covers different norms and histories that IR students need to master. Indonesian foreign policy is related to norms associated with key historical events, such as the Cold War, colonialism, and the Non-Aligned Movement (Anwar, 1994, 2024; Hatta, 1953; Piccone & Yusman, 2014). The historical Bandung Conference was the manifestation of Indonesia's foreign policy doctrine of 'free and active' foreign policy, which demands the Indonesian Government to undertake foreign policies that actively contribute towards world peace and foreign policy formulation as being independent from the dictates of great powers (Acharya, 2016; Anwar, 2012).

In a more contemporary setting, Indonesia's foreign policy will also need to be understood within the context of Southeast Asia and its position in world affairs. As a founding member of ASEAN, Indonesia has directed its foreign policy toward instilling Indonesian foreign policy values into ASEAN, which include the pacific settlement of disputes, non-interference, and respect for sovereignty (Cuyvers, 2019; Tekunan, 2015; Yukawa, 2018). Meanwhile, on the question of where Indonesia is positioned in world affairs, one needs to look at the recent Indonesian Government's stance to align with the group of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) (Ng & Santiko, 2023; Radito, 2024; Sulaiman, 2024; Umar, 2023c). There are, therefore, arguments for categorizing Indonesia as a 'middle power,' which opens up the debate over the qualities of Indonesia's development in recent years and the state's long-term foreign policy projections.

The vast array of complex cases related to the IFP demonstrates that pedagogical strategies will need to be diverse in order to achieve the different learning outcomes adopted by IR programs nationwide. IR studies are traditionally taught in a one-way teaching system, which has served as the signature pedagogy within the study of IR (Campillo et al., 2021; Lüdert, 2016). This article aims to explore alternative pedagogies that could be adopted within IR classes, using the IFP as its case study. Specifically, this qualitative empirical case study seeks to argue for the significance of 'retrospective'

and ‘decision-forcing’ case studies in IFP courses, as means to bridge active learning processes within the course. In doing so, it draws upon the existing literature introduced by Ralph G. Carter’s 2021 book chapter ‘Teaching with Case Studies.’ It argues that these two forms of case studies can effectively teach the complex nature of IFP courses by incorporating more case studies into the teaching and learning processes, rather than adopting a one-way pedagogical strategy in which the lecturers dominate the discussions.

Perhaps the most significant advantage of incorporating retrospective and decision-forcing case studies is the reorientation of the IFP courses toward SCL, which places heavy importance on student activity. When arguing about IFP, students will encounter ideas that may conflict with their pre-existing biases. A one-way teaching method would be effective in reinforcing students’ pre-existing values (Budesheim & Lundquist, 1999; Carter, 2021). Alternatively, in a case study format, students would encounter the challenge of understanding alternative ideas, which may require them to promote ideas that contradict their own beliefs (Budesheim & Lundquist, 1999; Carter, 2021). The introduction of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies, therefore, enables students to explore histories and norms from different perspectives, fostering an SCL atmosphere.

2. Indonesian Foreign Policy Studies’ Teaching and Active Learning: A Literature Review

With the rise of IR programs across Indonesian higher education institutions, instructors need to assess the extent to which the employed teaching and learning strategies achieve the desired learning outcomes. In the context of teaching courses like IFP, the concerns are primarily substantive and pedagogical. This literature review examines studies within these two scopes, arguing that case studies can complement their limitations.

Substantively, there have been numerous debates within academia regarding which substances should be incorporated into IR programs. The bulk of the arguments can be divided into two groups. First, there is the call for a more global IR to be adopted within IR programs, which eventually leads to the introduction of alternative norms and histories to be highlighted within IR classrooms (Acharya & Buzan, 2019; Ala et al., 2021; Liu, 2016; Wemheuer-Vogelaar et al., 2020; Wicaksana & Santoso, 2022). Specifically, many studies have examined Southeast Asia and its implications for enriching IR programs in Indonesia (Dayley, 2020; B. A. Putra, 2024c, 2024a; Thalang & Eun, 2025; Umar, 2023b). Second, scholars have evaluated the IR substantive taught in Indonesia by examining the predominantly Western nature of the curriculum and have proposed that Indonesia’s IR lens be highlighted more in the programs (na Thalang et al., 2024; Wicaksana, 2015, 2019; Wicaksana & Santoso, 2022). Those studies mainly highlight that IFP cannot be based on the traditional understanding of Western histories, norms, and values, which therefore requires a deeper understanding of local and regional contexts to introduce alternative insights into the study.

In the context of how IFP courses are taught, no prior study has explored the pedagogical strategies employed in IR programs. Therefore, the discourse most relevant to the discussions in this study concerns how IR programs are generally taught. Past studies have argued that a significant problem in IR teaching is the stagnant pedagogical strategy employed in class, which typically involves an instructor delivering one-way material to their students (Bernstein, 2012; Lüdert, 2016). Such a passive method has been challenged in recent years with the introduction of more creative means of teaching, which include the use of case studies, simulations, posters, debates, discussions, and many more (Asal & Blake, 2006; Clausen, 2021; Lantis, 2021; She, 2021; Wemheuer-Vogelaar et al., 2020). In a broader context, these creative methods can be categorized within SCL, where the emphasis in teaching and learning processes within the class focuses on the learning element for students (Bhardwaj et al., 2025; O’neill & McMahon, 2005; Tang, 2023). The expectation is that students can be active learners and engage in the learning process through different means.

The developments in IR pedagogy reflect the growing importance of teaching and learning methods within the discipline of international relations (IR). The American Political Science Association, for example, recognized the importance of studies on improving political science instruction as early as 1911 (Haines, 1914). Following this are the voices of academics from the past, who have emphasized the importance of real-life experiences, critical analysis of problems, and inclusivity (Acharya, 2014; Dewey, 1959; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2010), which have fueled the discourse of SCL within the discipline of political science.

With the increasing call to align pedagogical strategies with SCL, many IR programs have recognized the importance of incorporating case studies into classrooms. The idea has been supported by numerous studies, which have argued for different forms of case studies that can be adopted to achieve specific learning outcomes (Bennett & Elman, 2007, 2008; Holsti, 1994). These studies argue that the implementation of case studies benefits IR students by harnessing their critical thinking skills. In simulations, the use of case studies allows them to delve deeper into different roles and develop their public speaking skills.

Within a broader discourse, considerable discussion has centered on the case studies adopted in IR programs. Golich, for example, made the instructions clear for instructors by pointing out that the use of case studies in classrooms requires proper case selection, preparation before the class session, in-class conduct, and review after class (Golich, 2000). Others have argued that case studies allow students to immerse themselves in unfamiliar cases, as subjects are examined in ways students can relate to a given event (Holsti, 1994). The use of case studies enables individuals to gain a deeper understanding of the individuals involved in a policy, their perceptions, and the reasons behind specific actions taken (Boehrer & Linsky, 1990; Carter, 2021). Therefore, the emphasis in past studies has been on transitioning from passive to active learners through the use of case studies, which facilitates the development of personal skills that align with IR learning outcomes (Carter, 2021; Lynn, 1999). As Golich emphasized in the use of case studies, “[...] a case teacher generates learning by eliciting individual observations and analyses, asking key questions, and knowing what learning outcomes s/he wants students to achieve” (Golich et al., 2000, p.3).

However, there is also the challenge of determining which form of case study is best suited for IR programs. As Carter acknowledged in 2021, “[...] the first challenge is finding the cases to use. Not all cases work well” (Carter, 2021, p.68). Linked to the dilemmas of IFP teaching examined in this section, the following will explore the prospects of using retrospective and decision-forcing case studies in IFP classrooms across Indonesian and Southeast Asian higher education institutions. The main novelty is that this study will be the first to examine pedagogical strategies for IFP courses, providing instructors at different higher education institutions offering IFP courses with insights into how the use of these two forms of case studies can benefit teaching and learning. Retrospective and decision-forcing cases ask different questions. Given the complex nature of teaching IFP, which requires covering a vast range of topics, the use of these case studies across different contexts allows students to explore various themes and actively engage in the classroom.

3. Resurgence of Pedagogy: The Proposed Theoretical Framework and Research Method

Given the unique benefits of using case studies in IR courses, this study argues that teaching IFP courses can benefit from the use of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies. The analytical framework used in this study bridges the ideas presented in Carter's 2021 book chapter, which examines the distinct benefits of using these two forms of cases to enhance the learning experiences of IR students. Nevertheless, the case studies are united by the intention of active learning, which Carter examined in his words, consisting of, “[...] why events transpired as they did, what factors were most important to understanding the case and its outcomes, and what broader lessons can be learned” (Carter, 2021, p.69).

Retrospective cases are those in which the outcomes are already known. This means examining past events and policies, with the aim of students furthering their understanding of the various elements of the case (Carter, 2021). This form of case study, therefore, emphasizes the individual policymakers involved in an event, and questions who is involved, why they are involved, why specific policies are undertaken, and why the specified resolutions were adopted by the policymakers (Allison, 1971; Carter, 2021). These questions can be further elaborated upon under several sub-questions that serve as guidelines for students: Why did the case arise? What issues were involved? How did the events play out? Within the circle of decision-makers, who took what action? Why did the decision-makers or participants speak and act as they did? What were their stakes and stands? (Carter, 2021, p.71).

Meanwhile, in decision-forcing cases, the main events outlined as case studies are those without a resolution at the present/ status quo. These case studies, “[...] force students to make the decisions themselves [...] they describe a situation and put the students in the role of policymakers” (Carter, 2021, p.69). In alignment with many IR programs that aim to ignite critical and creative thinking skills, decision-forcing cases are unique in that they demand students to discuss and research with their peers how best to resolve a given crisis. Scholars pointed out that there is also the option of masking a case, in which previously resolved cases/crises are changed to use different actors and names, to ensure that students’ exercise of discussing a resolution can still be maintained (Carter, 2021; Christensen et al., 1991; Golich, 2000). Carter explained that several questions can be asked, including: What information here is essential, and what is peripheral? What’s the real problem, its context, and parameters? What are the possible solutions? How can such solutions be implemented, and might problems arise in that process? (Carter, 2021, p.72).

Bridged to this study, retrospective and decision-forcing case studies offer a unique opportunity for IR students to delve deeper into commonly taken-for-granted events related to IFP. Rather than a one-way teaching method employed by instructors, these case studies enable students to answer various questions that require active participation. In retrospective case studies, the focus is on key events in IFP, which primarily look at the struggle over decolonization, engagement in the region, and the history of its non-alignment stance. Meanwhile, for decision-forcing case studies, the focus can be on unresolved issues within the contexts of IFP, which may include the concerns in the South China Sea, Indonesian foreign policy identity, and other regional concerns.

Besides the two forms of case studies, Carter’s discussions on the preparation, during, and after the class are also bridged to this study. In preparing for class, instructors' primary concern is selecting a case study form that aligns with the learning outcome of a given course and class session, which then leads to determining questions that complement the chosen form (Carter, 2021). As mentioned previously in this section, the guiding questions depend on whether a case study is retrospective or decision-forcing. If it is retrospective, the expectation is that the guiding questions would be structured to make sense of a past event or policy. In contrast, decision-forcing case studies explore possible solutions, which then lead to guiding questions for evaluating potential solutions.

Meanwhile, during class, instructors must weigh up different pedagogical strategies to employ. As the primary focus is on covering case studies in substantial ways, instructors can opt to adopt simulations, debates, or discussion formats in IFP classes as means to achieve SCL and activate student participation. A consideration worth making is basing the form of learning activity on the class size, which, for example, would be ideal to divide into smaller groups in classes with more than 30 students (Carter, 2021; Lynn, 1999). Whether the elected approach is simulations or discussions, the conduct of the exercise needs to ensure that the guiding questions are being used, as in an SCL-based format, there should be minimal interferences made by the instructors (Asoodeh et al., 2012; Berg & Lepp, 2023; Bhardwaj et al., 2025; O’neill & McMahon, 2005).

Another approach is to use 'how' and 'why' questions to ensure that the engagement is analytical for the students (Carter, 2021; Golich, 2000; Lantis, 2021). Other challenges include some students not being actively engaged throughout the learning process, a common concern in SCL-based learning systems. One can follow Carter's suggestions by emphasizing the importance of active participation for the course grade, outlining the consequences of passivity, and possibly noting that discussions will be incorporated into the final examination if necessary (Carter, 2021).

At the end of the class session, it is expected that some form of evaluation will be undertaken. Following the recommendations of past scholars, it would be ideal to allocate several minutes for students to complete a survey that asks open-ended questions about the methods employed in the class (Bhardwaj et al., 2025; Carter, 2021; O'neill & McMahon, 2005). The aim here is to observe the rate of success in relation to the case study method, as reflected in the class's learning outcomes.

Bridged to the study of IFP, the use of case studies offers a unique approach to teaching and learning for IR students. As covered in the following sections, IFP is a complex course in IR studies that requires alternative approaches to ensure the class dynamics are not stagnant or passive. Accordingly, the use of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies offers different benefits, helping students understand the basics of IFP. This study argues the relevance of the theories and concepts examined in this section to the case of IFP. Using secondary data and existing literature on cases relevant to the studies on IFP (articles, academic texts, empirical cases, etc.), the following presents several examples of potential applications in class, recognizing the unique benefits of case study forms.

4. Discussion 1: Engaging 'Why' Questions in Retrospective Case Studies: Looking Deep into Indonesian Foreign Policy History

The study of IFP is offered in a later stage of an individual's IR studies in most Indonesian or Southeast Asian higher education institutions. Prior to that, students are exposed to several key elements of the study of IR, including the core paradigms of realism, liberalism, and constructivism, foreign policy studies, international politics, and other varied topics. One thing to note is that the offerings of these courses vary immensely among study programs, as each program has different learning outcomes. Nevertheless, it is not expected that an empirically focused course such as IFP would be offered in the first year of a student's undergraduate studies. The expectation, therefore, is that students entering the IFP course will have already been equipped with several core areas of knowledge on IR theories and concepts, which they can apply in assessing case studies (Brown & Ainsley, 2005; Burchill et al., 2009).

Several vital elements in IFP need to be substantively covered. First, this relates to the history of Indonesia's free and active foreign policy, which has continued to be the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy doctrine across different Indonesian leaders (Anwar, 2013; Ma'ruf et al., 2020; Piccone & Yusman, 2014; Rüländ, 2017; Sebastian & Nurshadrina, 2025). The doctrine primarily aims to establish the foundations of Indonesia's foreign policy, emphasizing the government's active involvement in promoting world peace and the adoption of policies that are independent of the dictates of great powers (Anwar, 2012; Rosyidin, 2017; Sukma, 2008). The history of the doctrine dates back to the mid-20th century, when it was conceptualized by one of Indonesia's prominent figures, Mohammad Hatta (Hatta, 1953).

As a retrospective case study, several analyses can be made regarding the adoption of a free and active foreign policy as the basis of the state's foreign policy doctrine. The core question that can be asked is why did Indonesian state policymakers, specifically Hatta, need to conceptualize IFP as based on the principles of free and active participation? Was there any connection to the dilemma of alignment due to great powers dominating international politics during the Cold War? (Ciorciari, 2009; Holst, 1985; Mearsheimer, 2003). By examining the past, students can also engage with the

question of geopolitics that was a concern for Indonesian policymakers during the first president's period of leadership, which may have prompted policymakers to adopt a neutral stance to some extent. Similarly, one can inquire into the policymaking elites who played a significant role in the construction of Indonesian foreign policy in the early years of the state's independence. Perhaps the underlying question for students to explore is why Indonesia chose the free and active foreign policy doctrine, despite the opportunity to align with the East or West during the Cold War.

Another case study to explore is Indonesia's non-alignment stance and the Bandung Conference. In April 1955, world leaders from 29 countries gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, to declare the importance of decolonization and the call for a non-aligned movement amid the Cold War (Acharya, 2016; Kardelj, 1976; Lyon, 1969). For Indonesia, this was a historic event that marked Indonesia's foreign policy as one of non-alignment, aiming to champion decolonization efforts among state actors. The conference itself lasted from April 18 to 24, 1955, and can be explored in detail as a retrospective case study.

Several questions can be raised regarding the Bandung Conference itself, suitable for simulation or debate. First, one question worthy of exploration is why there was a need for Asian and African states to gather and declare the importance of non-alignment. What were the main issues highlighted by the participants of the Bandung Conference at that time, and how significant were they during that period? If simulations were to be conducted, instructors could also direct the class to represent the different state interests of the participating states at the Bandung Conference, allowing students to grasp the divergent and converging national interests among the states. Perhaps another question worthy of exploration is the impact of the Bandung Conference's output and its role as the basis for non-alignment movements in the years and decades following the conference (Appadorai, 1955; Assie-Lumumba, 2015; Phillips, 2016).

In alignment with Indonesia's foreign policy doctrine and its non-alignment stance amid great power wars, there is also the case of Indonesia's founding five-point position in ASEAN. In 1967, Indonesia was among the five Southeast Asian countries that called for the establishment of the regional intergovernmental organization ASEAN (CFR, 2023). Interestingly, the main norms of ASEAN do not differ significantly from the core features of IFP, which include the importance of states respecting sovereignty, non-interference, and the peaceful settlement of disputes (Yukawa, 2018).

The establishment of ASEAN can be raised as another retrospective case study assessed in IFP courses. To make sense of the establishment, instructors can ask why the case for establishing ASEAN arose in the first place. How did Indonesia's role during the early years of ASEAN's establishment differ from that of the other four member nations: Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand? What defined the concerns of the other founding members of ASEAN, and did they differ in their opinions from those of Indonesia? As explained in Carter's 2021 study, one could also explore the question of success or failure by asking whether the establishment of ASEAN can be considered a success or failure in the short and long term (Carter, 2021). On the last question, students would benefit from the vast literature on criticisms and support for ASEAN over the years, which points to concerns expressed by media, state actors, and academics (Bae, 2024; Beeson, 2009; Fifield, 1979; Leifer, 1996; Shoji, 2012; Storey, 2018).

The last retrospective case study that can be raised concerns more contemporary developments, which are no longer a matter of debate (the event or policy took place in the past). These include Indonesia's introduced norms in ASEAN, which have led to the establishment of several ASEAN institutions in the fields of human rights and political-security. On the former, Indonesia's successful transition to democratic rule in the early 21st century has led the Indonesian Government to be vocal about the need for regional approaches to establish common stances on human rights (Inayati, 2016). Consequently, Indonesia's role was pivotal in the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental

Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in 2009, which serves as a human rights promotion and protection platform for ASEAN (Olivia, 2014; Ryu & Ortuoste, 2014). Similarly, given the importance of regional integration in politics and security, Indonesia's role was pivotal to the establishment of the political-security element of the ASEAN Community 2015 (Emmers, 2014; Roberts & Widyaningsih, 2015).

Students can explore several questions. The most significant discourse that instructors should aim to explain is the agency of Indonesia's leadership role in the regional organization of ASEAN (Rattanasevee, 2014; Roberts & Widyaningsih, 2015). By actively introducing new norms, Indonesian policymakers have helped shape the development of new ASEAN norms that align with Indonesia's national interests (Drajat, 2018; Emmers, 2014). The first level of question should address why Indonesia is interested in displaying such agency in the construction of AICHR and the Political-Security Community of ASEAN. Or in Carter's words, "Were there clear winners/ losers in the case, or was the output some form of compromise solution?" (Carter, 2021, p.71). Students can also examine the cases by tracing the debates prior to the establishment of the AICHR and the adoption of the political-security element of the ASEAN Community, by researching how the events played out for Indonesian diplomats, and who were the circle of decision-makers that contributed to the active agency of Indonesia in both of ASEAN's introduced norms/institutions.

As seen in the vast array of electable topics as a retrospective case study, there are other ways to address the unique dynamics associated with the IFP. Rather than adopting a one-way teaching system in which instructors explain the history of IFP, instructors can opt to use more creative means to describe how unique processes and histories constructed contemporary IFP. The topics of Indonesia's free and active foreign policy doctrines, regional engagement, and agency in Southeast Asia can be explored through engaging guiding questions that prompt IR students to learn about the processes and reasons why the shaping of IFP took certain forms in the past.

5. Discussion 2: How Should a Crisis be Resolved? Decision-Forcing Case Studies to Develop Creative and Critical Thinking

The highlight of decision-forcing cases is the lack of resolution of a case study. Therefore, the case itself remains an ongoing issue for state policymakers, which ultimately requires more of the students' critical and creative thinking to resolve a given issue. This section shows three examples of implementing decision-forcing case studies for IFP: The South China Sea, Indonesia's foreign policy identity, and the issue of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF).

In the case of the South China Sea, technically, Indonesia is a non-claimant state. The South China Sea has become a regional hotspot for decades, as China's Nine-Dash Line claims overlap with the maritime borders of the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei Darussalam, and Malaysia (Collin, 2016; Fravel, 2011; Yahuda, 2013). However, there is a slight overlap between China's claims and Indonesia's North Natuna Sea, which has also attracted considerable tensions in recent years (Majumdar, 2021; Supriyanto, 2016; Tiola, 2020; Tiola & Dinarto, 2020). For Indonesia, the developments in the Natuna are a concern, as not only does the presence of Chinese vessels in the Natuna undermine the state's sovereignty, but it also risks hindering Indonesian officials' ability to utilize its sea-based resources effectively.

As a decision-forcing case study, instructors can use Indonesia's South China Sea dilemmas for students to examine. In doing so, perhaps the correct starting point to ask is what the problem is, along with its contexts and parameters (Carter, 2021). After gaining an overview of the issue, one can then discuss potential solutions to the crisis. Given that Indonesia is a non-claimant state, students are expected to explore ideas for resolving tensions in gray-zone areas, which the IR literature has begun to examine more closely (Azad et al., 2022; McLaughlin, 2022a, 2022b; Ormsbee, 2022). There is also an expectation that students will explore the use of what the maritime diplomacy literature

calls maritime constabulary forces, such as coast guards and fisheries surveillance vessels (Kelly, 2014; Le Mière, 2014; Parameswaran, 2019; Tarriela, 2022). A decision-forcing case study would also look into each potential solution and analyze how they would be implemented, and “[...] might problems arise in that process” (Carter, 2021, p.72). Consequently, the research that students are required to do encourages them to explore various solutions, enabling them to develop their critical thinking skills.

Within the context of IFP, another dilemma encountered in the state’s foreign policy is its identity. Scholars in the past have been divided as to what Indonesia’s primary foreign policy identity should be. A considerable number of studies have linked Indonesia’s recent rise in international politics to the concept of ‘middle power,’ suggesting that Indonesia has elevated its status due to the advancement of the state across various fields (Nanda, 2023; Teo, 2022; Thies & Sari, 2018; Umar, 2023a). Within the context of ASEAN, as briefly discussed in the previous section, there has also been considerable discourse on the connection between Indonesia’s role in ASEAN and its regional leadership role in enhancing the organization (Emmers, 2014; Rattanasevee, 2014; Roberts & Widyaningsih, 2015; Smith, 1999). More recently, Prabowo Subianto’s leadership since 2024 has redirected IFP to one that aligns with the interests of the BRICS, which has been associated with the image of being an anti-Western bloc (Cooper, 2016; H. R. Putra, 2024; Sarkar, 2014; Thakur, 2014).

These sociological approaches and analyses are interesting and are heavily oriented to academic discourses. Nevertheless, the same terms and explanations have often been used by Indonesian state policymakers to explain the state’s foreign policy orientation. Consequently, students could benefit from discussing these ideas in IFP classrooms to gain a better understanding of the common images associated with the IFP. The questions that could be asked in a decision-forcing case study thus vary. As a middle power, one could begin by exploring what it means to be a middle power and the consequences of holding such a status. As Carter explained, one question to ask at the outset is how important such a case study is (Carter, 2021). For the IFP course, one point that should be addressed earlier is the significance of middle-power status for Indonesian policymakers. Meanwhile, the same question could also be asked about Indonesia’s unique agency in ASEAN. Is becoming a regional leader a correct pathway in the context of Indonesia’s role in Southeast Asia and ASEAN? Should Indonesia, looking to the future, increase or decrease its influence in the region? As these are future-oriented questions without a correct answer, it would be an interesting topic for students to debate.

Meanwhile, as a case study in decision-making, Indonesia’s membership in BRICS is also an intriguing topic. Students should explore the consequences of the current IFP being directed to align with the interests of BRICS through Indonesia’s membership in the bloc. Students can also consider potential problems that could arise with membership, given that existing studies have been critical of the image of states that align with the BRICS (Bond, 2018; Ng, 2024; Stuenkel, 2015; Wardhana & Dharmaputra, 2025).

Another case study to explore is Indonesia’s efforts to counter IUUF. IUUF can be classified as falling within the realm of IFP, as the countering of transnational crime involves coordinating with neighboring states. For Indonesia, concerns over IUUF originally stemmed from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. With Vietnam, for example, a 2023 agreement was reached to delineate the EEZ boundaries, aiming to resolve the numerous cases of Vietnamese fishing vessels intruding into Indonesian waters (Stranjo, 2022; Tran, 2023).

As a decision-forcing case study, this case study can help identify a potential solution to the crisis. In the case of Vietnam, for example, students should examine the agreed-upon resolutions and agreements closely and debate whether these are sufficient. As the reality shows, despite the implementation of the EEZ delimitation agreement, IUUF remains present in Indonesian waters, with Vietnam still posing the main threat (B. A. Putra, 2024b; Shofa, 2023). Students could explore

alternative means of resolving IUUF issues, including potential diplomatic or coercive actions that Indonesian policymakers should consider.

6. Discussion 3: Other Considerations for Retrospective and Decision-Forcing Case Studies: Before, During, and After Class

The use of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies not only involves considering guiding questions during classroom implementation but also requires other accompanying processes. These considerations can be divided into the actions before, during, and after the class. Before the class, instructors should determine whether the learning outcomes of the IFP course require a retrospective or decision-forcing case study at the center of the class's teaching and learning. After that, instructors are expected to formulate guiding questions that align with the case study format. Retrospective case studies aim to make sense of a past event/policy, while decision-forcing case studies examine unresolved cases.

Another concern that instructors need to consider before conducting the class is the learning method to be used. This pedagogical strategy is essential, as the focus is to ensure that a system that adheres to SCL is adopted to maximize the potential benefits for students. Within existing studies, multiple conclusions have been drawn regarding the benefits of alternative pedagogical strategies adopted in IR classes, including simulation methods, debates, and discussions (Acharya & Stubbs, 2016; Asal & Blake, 2006; She, 2021; Wemheuer-Vogelaar et al., 2020). These methods ensure that IR students actively engage in the learning process, rather than passively receiving it. Therefore, in both retrospective and decision-forcing case studies, it would be ideal to explore these alternative pedagogical strategies and consider ways to adapt them to enhance students' understanding of an IFP topic.

The technicalities of adopting simulations, debates, or discussions are also pivotal to consider before conducting the exercise. As academics have argued, implementing case studies in classes with more than 30 students or in a seminar setting can pose challenges (Carter, 2021; Lynn, 1999). Meanwhile, in smaller classes, students can naturally engage with a case study presented in various formats. Therefore, in larger classes, the best option is to divide the class into groups and assign each group a specific guiding question to explore and research together. In addition to determining the learning method, instructors should emphasize the need for students and student groups to thoroughly examine the case study, since active learning can only be achieved once students are adequately prepared to discuss a given topic.

During the class session, instructors must consider several key factors. First, instructors in IFP courses should structure the guiding questions so that they naturally simulate the unboxing of the case. In both retrospective and decision-forcing case studies, the first step, therefore, is for all students to express their basic views on the background of the issue and the key events that all students need to know (Golich, 2000). Despite this format championing the logic of increasing students' role in classrooms, instructors need to maintain a role in managing the class by suggesting which questions to discuss or directing the discussion towards a particular path to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved.

Lastly, it is always ideal to solicit feedback from students regarding the case study method used in the IFP course. Given that the implementation of the retrospective and decision-forcing case study is new, instructors should solicit students' opinions on their experience with case studies in the IFP course. Ideally, students are given an open-ended question, and their identities are kept anonymous so they can be honest in providing feedback to the instructor.

7. Conclusion

Delivering IFP courses in Indonesian and Southeast Asian higher education institutions presents its own challenges. Substantively, the empirically focused course offers a range of topics that interrelate with foreign policy, international politics, and peace and security themes. Besides the empirically rich substance, instructors are challenged to properly deliver this wide range of topics. This study argues against the traditional one-way teaching method in IFP courses and discusses the importance of alternative pedagogical strategies to foster active learning in classrooms.

The call for a more diverse pedagogical strategy in IR courses leads this study to highlight the importance of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies, as two forms of case studies that can be utilized in IFP courses. Through these forms of case studies, the teaching of IFP can offer a dual-pronged pedagogical model that enables students to both grasp historical norms and develop creative solutions to current crises. As a qualitative empirical study, this article aims to argue for the most effective use of these two forms of case studies within the context of IFP to ensure a greater understanding for students taking the course. Retrospective case studies involve events and policies that occurred in the past. Therefore, the focus of inquiry is to understand why specific actions or policies were taken, who the actors involved were, and the justifications that led to the implementation of particular policies. Meanwhile, decision-forcing case studies examine future-oriented case studies that have yet to be resolved in the real world. The primary objective is to challenge students to consider the best possible outcome of a crisis, enabling them to develop their creative and critical thinking skills by weighing the pros and cons of different options.

Bridged to the study of IFP, retrospective and decision-forcing case studies offer a different approach to learning the country's foreign policy dynamics. For retrospective case studies, several examples of themes that could be selected include the tracing of Indonesia's free and active foreign policy doctrine during the Cold War, making sense of the non-alignment stance of Indonesia during the Bandung Conference, the promotion of Indonesian values into ASEAN since its establishment in 1967, and the processes leading to the Indonesian-inspired establishment of AICHR and the ASEAN political-security community. These case studies should be explored to understand why those policies and events emerged in the past, which, in turn, involves formulating guiding questions to clarify the cases further.

In another context, instructors of IFP courses could also opt to implement decision-forcing case studies. This includes several selectable themes, such as Indonesia's non-claimant status in the South China Sea, dilemmas of Indonesia's foreign policy identity, and the lingering issue of IUUF. These cases are united by the fact that they remain unresolved by Indonesian policymakers. Therefore, the exercise for students is to explore different potential solutions to the cases and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of various solutions offered.

As scholars in the past pointed out, the implementation of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies will also need to be accompanied by other considerations before, during, and after the class. Before the class, instructors need to determine the most relevant case study format that aligns with the IFP's learning outcomes and the active-learning method for delivering the case study. This study suggests that exploring creative and alternative pedagogical strategies, such as simulations, debates, and discussions, facilitates a deeper understanding of the topic by engaging students in active learning. The conduct of the case study should also be a concern to counter potential overactivity by the students, or the opposite. These concerns can be addressed by making it clear from the outset that students' actions and voices will be graded, along with the expectations of activeness, as set by the instructors. Lastly, it is expected that an evaluation will be conducted to understand how students perceive the conduct of the case studies used in classrooms. These mechanisms to support the retrospective or decision-forcing case studies enable a more nuanced approach to teaching and learning IR subjects, placing students' engagement at the center of the class's concerns.

8. Limitations and Recommendations

As a potential method for IFP teaching and learning, this section explores several of the limitations. During the class, several concerns may arise. Scholars have noted that the issue may be related to students not engaging in discussions, disruptive students, and those who seek to dominate discussions (Carter, 2021; Golich et al., 2000; Lantis, 2021). These issues vary, but they can be addressed before conducting the case studies used in the classroom. Instructors could opt to explain the expectations during the first class session of the IFP course, which may include requiring students to voice their opinions, as this will count toward their overall grade in the course. Additionally, instructors should explain that disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

Meanwhile, this study also encounters the limitation of generalizability. Considering the focus on the Indonesian context, the transferability of the results to other countries requires an independent assessment of the relevant contexts and themes associated with foreign policies in different states. Furthermore, despite making a theoretical contribution, this study still lacks practical application of the proposed methods, which limits its scope to suggestions and a logical assessment of the potential use of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies in the teaching of IFP.

Therefore, this study recommends that future studies explore different themes associated with the teaching of a nation's foreign policy, framed within the context of retrospective and decision-forcing case studies. These forms of case studies offer unique experiences for students, given their focus on why questions and their orientation towards problem-solving skills. For IR students, the questions and themes explored have immense potential to elevate their understanding of the topic and align more closely with the SCL methods of teaching and learning.

Declarations

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