STAIR

AND THE FUTURES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FROM INDONESIA

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Introduction

In a quiet corner of Yogyakarta, a conversation began—a conversation about what International Relations (IR) could become if it dared to embrace the unexpected. This was not a typical academic exchange filled with theories and terminologies confined to textbooks. Instead, it was a spirited dialogue that wove together the sciences, technology, and the arts, challenging conventional boundaries and reimagining what it means to study global politics. From this spark, the STAIR Course was born, offered for the first time at the Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM).

These STAIR Monographs, authored by Suci Lestari Yuana, Okky Madasari, and Tane Andrea Hadiyantono, are a reflection of that journey. They capture not only the classroom discussions and theoretical explorations but also the spirit of innovation and audacity that the course inspired. This collection represents more than a curriculum—it is a manifesto for a new way of thinking about IR, rooted in the lived realities of the Global South.

At its heart, the monographs recognize that the Global South cannot simply replicate models of IR developed in the West. The challenges faced by communities in this part of the world—climate change, digital transformations, and social inequalities—demand creative, context-sensitive approaches. Through its six chapters, the monographs weave a narrative of transformation:

- Chapter 1 tells the story of the awakening of the STAIR community in Indonesia, where scholars and students alike dared to think differently, infusing IR with local knowledge and interdisciplinary methods.
- Chapter 2 wrestles with the need to decolonize IR studies, addressing the ways in which colonial legacies have shaped—and constrained— how we understand global politics.

- Chapter 3 invites readers to rethink the global order through phenomenology, asking how the lived experiences of individuals and communities might offer new insights into power and politics.
- Chapter 4 spotlights the politics of technology, exploring its role in both empowering and marginalizing voices in the Global South.
- Chapter 5 delves into world-making through aesthetics, showing how art, stories, and sensory experiences shape not only identities but also global political realities.
- Chapter 6 lays the groundwork for future research, envisioning STAIR as a vibrant, interdisciplinary space for collaboration within the Global South and beyond.

The STAIR Monographs invite you into this unfolding story. They are a call to action for scholars, practitioners, and students everywhere to join the conversation, to push boundaries, and to embrace the discomfort of thinking differently. Most importantly, they remind us that IR, as a discipline, is not just about observing the world but about creating new ones. In the Global South, where the stakes are often highest, this work is not optional—it is essential.

STAIR Community
Institute of International Studies
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Chapter 1: The Awakening of the STAIR Community in Indonesia

A Quiet Beginning

The journey of the STAIR (Science, Technology, and Arts in International Relations) Community in Indonesia wasn't a grand, intentional project. It was born quietly, almost hesitantly, amidst feelings of self-doubt and estrangement. I often felt like I was walking in the shadows of dominant voices, overlooked by those who commanded the attention of academic and professional circles. In a world where certain intellectual ideas are often amplified while others go unheard, it felt at times as though my vision of intertwining science, technology, and arts within the field of international relations was too unconventional, too niche to gain traction. But in that quiet space of uncertainty, I found something reassuring: a small but committed group of individuals who shared a passion for connecting these fields in ways that hadn't been explored in mainstream IR.

These early allies, who might not have been the loudest in the room, shared the same vision—a desire to explore international relations through a new and different lens. Some of them were students curious about how science and technology impacted global politics. Others were practitioners in the field of arts or technology who saw the relevance of their work in shaping global narratives. Together, we nurtured this community from the ground up, unsure of where it would lead but determined to continue, no matter how modest our beginnings were.

What started as a small group has now grown into a community of 131 people connected through a WhatsApp group. This digital space became a place where ideas were exchanged, resources were shared, and collaboration was nurtured. Within the Department of International Relations,

Universitas Gadjah Mada (IR UGM), the STAIR course has become a platform for students to explore these interdisciplinary connections in more formal ways. More than 80 students have either participated in the STAIR course or are writing their theses on STAIR topics. These students bring their own passion and perspectives to the table. They have taken up topics as diverse as the politics of novel and literature, cinema, video games, QRIS, and even the role of AI in shaping global conflicts. What started as a small, hesitant step has now become a space where students feel empowered to question, to experiment, and to push the boundaries of what is considered "acceptable" within IR studies.

The Conceptual Roots of STAIR

Our journey has been significantly inspired by the growth of the STAIR Section within the International Studies Association (ISA) convention since 2015. The emergence of this section Our journey has been significantly inspired by the growth of the STAIR Section within the International Studies Association (ISA) convention since 2015. The emergence of this section has provided a vibrant platform for scholars and practitioners to explore the intersections of science, technology, and the arts within the field of international relations. This community of scholars has not only highlighted the importance of these domains in shaping global politics but has also fostered an inclusive dialogue that resonates with our own aspirations for the STAIR community in Indonesia.

At the heart of STAIR lies the convergence of three broad intellectual currents that shape the way we think about international relations today. First, there's the question of how science and technology influence global affairs. Historically, technology was seen as something external to the political and economic systems—an instrument that could be used or constrained by states or markets (Singh, 2002). Early frameworks often treated technological advancements as exogenous variables, viewed primarily through an instrumental lens. However, over time, scholars began to recognize that technology is not just a tool; it is something

embedded within social contexts and power structures (Romer, 1994; Barro & Sala-i-Martin, 1992). The digital revolution, in particular, has made this relationship more evident, reshaping not only diplomacy and conflict but also fundamentally altering our understanding of sovereignty and governance in a globalized world. For instance, scholars like Cowhey (1990) and Der Derian (1990) have explored how digital technologies can re-inscribe the ideological and discursive bounds of diplomacy and warfare.

The second thread comes from Science and Technology Studies (STS), a field that has long questioned the assumption that science and technology are inherently progressive forces. STS scholars, including Kleinman and Moore (2014), argue that these fields are socially constructed, shaped by human and non-human actors, and deeply political. This perspective challenges the notion that advancements in technology always lead to societal progress, highlighting instead how such advancements can perpetuate existing inequalities and power dynamics. This is where STAIR draws its inspiration, prompting us to question how technological assemblages—collaborations between humans, machines, and systems—affect global politics. Actor-Network Theory (Latour & Woolgar, 1979) serves as a crucial theoretical framework in this context, emphasizing the interconnections between actors and technologies in shaping political outcomes.

Finally, the third intellectual root is the increasing recognition of cultural identity and art as critical to understanding global affairs. Art and culture have always played a role in international relations, though they were often overlooked in traditional discourse (Bleiker, 2001; Singh, 2011b). The last decade has seen a surge in scholarship that examines the interplay between cultural practices and international relations, reinforcing the idea that cultural symbols, artistic movements, and digital arts are essential in shaping diplomatic relations, conflict resolution, and global identities (Bleiker, 2009; Houghton, 2018). Today, as we witness the rise of transnational art movements and cultural diplomacy, the importance

of cultural understandings in global affairs cannot be overstated. Organizations like UNESCO embody the confluence of arts, science, and technology in their initiatives, reminding us that cultural narratives are as crucial as political or economic considerations.

The intersection of these three streams—science, technology, and art—forms the intellectual foundation of STAIR. This framework encourages us to explore not only how these elements interact but also how they can collectively shape our understanding of international relations. By integrating diverse methodologies and perspectives, STAIR seeks to illuminate the complexities of our contemporary world, advocating for a more holistic approach to studying global affairs that resonates with the realities of today's interconnected society. Through this lens, we can better appreciate the myriad ways in which science, technology, and art inform our understanding of diplomacy, conflict, and cooperation on the global stage.

The First Steps: STAIR Webinars and Independent Studies

The idea for STAIR first emerged through a series of webinars where we ventured into unconventional topics within the field of international relations (IR). As I prepared for these sessions, I felt a mix of excitement and apprehension, questioning how niche subjects would resonate with our audience. We explored themes such as the politics of the metaverse, the role of artificial intelligence in colonial contexts, and the social stigma surrounding pop culture phenomena like Taylor Swift's fandom. These discussions were invigorating, and it was heartening to witness participants—many of whom were students—engaging passionately with these ideas.

Following the webinars, we launched independent studies with undergraduate students at IR UGM. This initiative guided them in preparing their theses around STAIR-related topics, fostering collaboration and creativity. Each study became a shared journey where students

actively engaged in exploring the significance of non-human actors, like technologies and cultural artifacts, in global affairs. More than 20 students embraced this challenge, each contributing their unique perspectives and curiosities.

This journey allowed students to bridge concepts from science, technology, and the arts with their understanding of international relations. For instance, one student analyzed the film "The Sea Beast" to explore how narratives construct enemies in international conflicts, while another investigated the implications of postcolonialism in the film "The Battleship Island," examining its impact on Japan-South Korea relations. Additionally, students examined the role of jazz ambassadors and hip-hop diplomats in cultural diplomacy and critically assessed the aesthetics of the New Caledonia referendum through a decolonial lens. These efforts laid the groundwork for a vibrant STAIR community in Indonesia, inviting participation and celebrating diverse thought.

Complementing the webinars, the STAIR program supported the students in their research, leading to several book projects currently in development, including Transnationalism and Digital Technology in the Global Era, Ethics in Digital Innovation, and Technology and Arts in IR. These publications aim to document and explore the connections between digital technology, global politics, and ethical practices, ensuring that STAIR's impact extends beyond academia into real-world applications. Each step of this journey has demonstrated the resilience and creativity of our community, proving that the desire to explore and connect can indeed spark meaningful change.

The Launch of the STAIR Course in 2024

In 2024, we embarked on a pivotal journey by officially launching the STAIR course at Universitas Gadjah Mada. The path was fraught with uncertainty; I often found myself wrestling with self-doubt, questioning whether students would embrace this novel approach and if the academic

community would view it as legitimate. Yet, despite these fears, we pressed on, determined to create a course that would intertwine the traditional with the experimental, breathing new life into the study of international relations.

The STAIR course has quickly evolved into a vibrant and dynamic experience, reflecting the very essence of its interdisciplinary philosophy. This year, we welcomed around 60 enthusiastic students, all eager to explore the intersections of science, technology, and the arts within the context of IR. Our class activities are designed to foster deep engagement and encourage critical thinking, pushing students to venture beyond the conventional boundaries of the field.

Each week, we come together for our reading club activities, where we immerse ourselves in one chapter at a time. This slow, deliberate process transforms our classroom into a space of shared reflection, allowing students and instructors to grapple with complex concepts as a community. It's a beautiful sight to see minds ignite with ideas, revealing the richness that lies in collective inquiry.

In our studio sessions, creativity takes the spotlight. Students are invited to express the STAIR concepts through various mediums—whether it's through artistic creations, technological experimentation, or even performance art. Here, abstract ideas are translated into tangible forms, sparking conversations that extend beyond the classroom walls.

Our mini-seminars introduce guest speakers who share their research through a STAIR lens, creating intimate gatherings where students can engage with scholars on similar themes. These interactions not only deepen their understanding but also build connections within a network of like-minded individuals.

As the semester progresses, we eagerly anticipate the STAIR Expo, an event that will mark the culmination of our collective efforts. Set to take place during the 15th Popular Culture and World Politics Conference

at UGM in November 2024, the expo is more than just an academic showcase; it's a celebration of creativity and intellectual exploration. It stands as a moment of pride for students and the broader community, illustrating what can be achieved when we step outside our comfort zones and embrace new ways of thinking.

This monograph will delve deeper into the concepts, practices, and reflections of the STAIR course, offering insights into how this innovative approach to international relations is reshaping our understanding of the world.

Discursive Allies and Future Paths

The journey of the STAIR community in Indonesia has been marked by both struggles and successes, driven by the shared determination of students and scholars. There were moments when I questioned whether anyone truly noticed our efforts, times when our initiatives felt like an afterthought in the broader academic landscape. These feelings of estrangement and being overlooked weighed heavily on my heart. However, amid these challenges, I found solace in the unwavering commitment of our community. I began to realize that while our journey may not have been loud or widely recognized, it was profoundly meaningful. The connections we forged, the ideas we nurtured, and the creativity we unleashed became our sustenance.

Through this quiet yet impactful journey, I discovered the importance of finding discursive allies—those who share a vision and spirit, even if they too are working in the margins. These allies, be they students, fellow academics, or practitioners from diverse fields, have become the backbone of the STAIR community. While we may lack the recognition and resources of larger, more established programs, we possess something equally valuable: a shared commitment to exploring the intersections of science, technology, and the arts in global politics. As we look to the future, I am hopeful that this community will continue to grow, not necessarily in

size but in depth.

The STAIR community is a humble initiative born out of a desire to reimagine international relations. It is a space where doubt and uncertainty coexist with creativity and intellectual curiosity. While our journey is still unfolding, I have learned to embrace the quiet strength that comes from working in the margins. The awakening of STAIR in Indonesia is not about recognition or success; it is about exploration, the willingness to ask new questions, and the courage to forge a path that may not always be clear. It is about finding allies in unexpected places and building something meaningful, even if it is small. This, to me, embodies the true spirit of STAIR.

As we progress, we are excited to share our research agenda through this monograph, which will be divided into six chapters. The introduction, written by me, Suci Lestari Yuana, sets the stage for our exploration. This first chapter narrated the story of the STAIR community in Indonesia, reflecting on our origins and growth. Following that, Okky Madasari share her world-making approach in rethinking IR studies in Indonesia. Next, Tane Hadiyantono guides us through the role of phenomenology in the global order, addressing why it matters, how to study it, and what we learn from it, accompanied by a review of studio sessions and student reflections. In chapter 4, I discuss emerging technologies, exploring their relevance and impact on our studies and experiences. Chapter 5, Okky Madasari and I co-author a chapter on aesthetics in international relations, examining its importance and providing reflections from our studio sessions. In the concluding chapter, I summarizes the STAIR impact, especially looking at its relevance to the Global South discourse. In this chapter, I outline potential future research agendas, emphasizing how our work can continue to shape the discourse around international relations. This monograph will not only document our journey but also invite others to join us in the exploration of new ideas and practices, reinforcing the commitment of the STAIR community to push the boundaries of academic inquiry.

Chapter 2: Revolutionising and Decolonising IR Studies in Indonesia

"In a time to come, we will be dancing to the beat played on a different drum."

~ Paul McCartney, "Tug of War"

Every Friday afternoon for the last three months in this odd semester, the approximately 40 or 50, mostly second or third-year students of International Relations at the Faculty of Social and Politics of the Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, gathered to study global politics but through the lens of science, technology and art. This course, called STAIR (Science, Technology, and Art in International Relations), is the first to be introduced in any university in Indonesia.

As a fiction writer myself – who graduated from the department, and later studied sociology and social sciences for my Masters and PhD degrees in other universities – I was really enthusiastic by this trailblazing initiative, and immediately agreed to join as a guest lecturer.

While the students seem to enjoy the course, they were still trying to make sense of why they even need to bother about science, technology and art, as what they came to learn in this department, for instance, is why Russia invaded Ukraine, or the impacts of the current war between Israel and Iran, or even about the US elections with the possibility of Donald Trump taking over as world's most powerful person.

The question, however, extends beyond why they should study STAIR; it also questions the assumptions surrounding what they're taught in traditional IR courses. Do these students understand why it is important to study conflicts like Russia-Ukraine or the latest attacks between Israel

and Iran? Or, they just followed the accepted narrative that for students of International Relations like themselves, such issues are the important international problems they need to know about. Do these issues do them any good in becoming a multinational company guy, or being a diplomat? Yes, they nodded because they are being told so. They study such issues because their successful seniors studied them. It is just the way it is.

But are they really?

These questions also apply to faculty decision-makers. Is it time to rethink IR teaching methods and curricula? A single module in a two-hour course each week is not sufficient to instigate real change. Will STAIR remain a mere gimmick, or is it the beginning of a deeper shift in IR education?

With the rapidly shifting dynamics of the modern world, perhaps it is time to rethink the IR curriculum. Are studies on Middle Eastern physical wars more beneficial than learning about the prevalence of cyberattacks against Indonesia's state institutions? Is exploring how artificial intelligence reshapes global power more relevant than, say, tracking the influence of US elections? Is it more fulfilling to understand the impact of John Lennon's "Imagine" on global peace movements than to study the US-China rivalry in Southeast Asia?

While the introduction of two key concepts of STAIR, like worldview and world making, to the students can actually enhance their proximity to issues the course wants address and their realization that science, technology and art matter in shaping reality within global interactions, lack of elaboration and concrete examples to illustrate these two concepts could alienate them from the students, resulting in them being just other abstract concepts that the students need to memorize.

These concepts actually aim at providing the students perspectives on which issues should be prioritized over the others to understand the world around them and how they help shape them (Daggett, 2019). Worldview pertains to the perspectives and beliefs that shape an individual's understanding

of the world. This includes cultural, historical, social, and psychological dimensions that influence how people interpret international events. Conversely, world-making involves the practical application of knowledge and understanding to influence and alter those conditions, shaping new realities and structures.

In the context of IR education, understanding both concepts is paramount. Students must not only recognize their perspectives shaped by cultural and societal influences but also learn to actively participate in shaping the world around them. By integrating STAIRS into the curriculum, educators can equip students to critically engage with global issues, analyse power dynamics, and develop innovative solutions that transcend traditional frameworks.

For instance, consider the role of social media in contemporary politics. Platforms like X (previously known as Twitter), Instagram, YouTube and TikTok have transformed how information is disseminated and how public opinion is formed locally and globally. Students need to understand the implications of this shift on political discourse and international relations. How do viral social movements alter the landscape of diplomacy? How do technological innovations like blockchain influence global trade and cybersecurity? Engaging with these questions prepares students to be active participants in world-making rather than passive observers.

The International Relations department at Gadjah Mada University has a unique opportunity to become a trailblazer, making STAIR an integral part of its curriculum. Instead of a peripheral addition, STAIR could be positioned at the core of every course within the IR program, transforming both content and methodology.

For example, incorporating art and culture into IR studies could lead to courses like "Art, Power, and Global Politics," exploring how cultural phenomena like K-Pop, K-Drama, and Bollywood shape global perceptions of South Korea and India, often more effectively than government

policies. Such a course could reveal the depth of "soft power" through entertainment and media, impacting international relationships more profoundly than traditional diplomatic efforts.

In the context of food security and diplomacy, Thailand and Vietnam demonstrate how smaller economies can exercise significant influence over Indonesia by supplying essential resources like rice and fruit year after year. Similarly, Indonesia's reliance on international pharmaceutical companies highlights the intersection of biotechnology and international relations, laying the groundwork for courses such as "Biotechnology, Food Security, and Healthcare in Regional and Global Politics." These could explore Indonesia's dependency on foreign medicine, the growing trend of Indonesians seeking healthcare abroad in Malaysia or Singapore, and the broader geopolitical implications.

In a proposed course on science, technology, and power, topics like the internet, smartphones, Google, artificial intelligence, and social media could be explored to emphasize their transformative influence on Indonesia's domestic and foreign policy. These discussions would not only examine the impact of global tech giants but also address how digital advancements reshape social structures and power dynamics within the country.

Each of these courses could integrate traditional concepts from political science, sociology, and IR theory—Karl Marx's alienation and false consciousness, Joseph Nye's soft power, Antonio Gramsci's hegemony, or Michel Foucault's biopolitics and governmentality. This approach would allow students to develop a thorough understanding of current global issues, connecting theoretical frameworks with tangible, contemporary realities such as AI, social media, and environmental crises.

This way of studying international issues will not only allow for comprehensive, even exhaustive, take on relevant and pressing issues in world politics—just like what the traditional way of studying IR—but also

it can combine traditional IR, political and sociological theories with the latest development in the real world – what matters most to people living in today's world, such as internet, social media and AI.

While core concepts ingrained within the traditional IR studies, such as power and balance of power, are still being needed and used, its relevance lies in its integration with the new paradigm of studying world issues.

The integration of STAIR into educational curricula is as essential for preparing students in developing nations like Indonesia for a rapidly evolving global landscape as any traditional issues and methodology. However, many students and lecturers still exhibit a lack of preparedness and appreciation for the urgency of these subjects, remaining entrenched in traditional theoretical IR frameworks, such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism. This disconnects highlights vital challenges within the pedagogical approach to STAIR, raising questions about the effectiveness of current educational practices.

Perception of Urgency

Most IR programs in emerging nations emphasize classical theories such as realism, which focuses on power dynamics and state interests, liberalism, which highlights cooperation and institutions, and constructivism, which considers the role of ideas and identity. While these theories provide foundational insights into international relations, they often fail to account for the transformational impact of technology and art in shaping global dynamics. Consequently, students may view STAIR as supplementary rather than essential to their understanding of IR, leading to a lack of urgency in their engagement with these concepts.

Many students in developing nations are educated in specialized silos, lacking opportunities to engage with interdisciplinary content. While they are trained in traditional IR theories, they receive little exposure to the implications of technological advancements, creative expressions, and their roles in global governance. This limited view often restricts

their ability to appreciate the interconnectedness of STAIRS topics with established IR frameworks. Students may struggle to draw connections between contemporary issues—such as climate change, cyber warfare, and cultural diplomacy—and traditional IR theories, viewing them as separate and unrelated phenomena.

The ingrained emphasis on traditional IR theories creates a resistance to integrating new topics like STAIRS. This is further compounded by faculty and institutional inertia, where the academic establishment clings to established curricula and pedagogical methods. Students may perceive a lack of relevance in STAIRS discussions, leading to disengagement and disinterest. As a result, they remain underprepared for addressing modern challenges that require innovative and multidisciplinary approaches.

In Indonesia and similar contexts, there is a tendency for IR education to reflect colonial legacies and Western narratives, which can alienate students from appreciating local realities and complexities. The default to traditional theories may stem from a political landscape that prioritizes certain historical narratives and glosses over the importance of local knowledge and experiences, particularly in the realms of science and technology. This lack of contextual relevance may further dissuade students from recognizing the urgency of incorporating STAIR into their education.

Bridging Academic Knowledge and Real-World Application

A STAIR-centered approach also emphasizes the practical application of knowledge. While theoretical knowledge is invaluable, the real measure of IR education lies in its applicability. By examining real-life case studies, students can gain hands-on experience in addressing complex global issues, whether through simulations, debates, or collaborative projects.

To make STAIR genuinely impactful, departments could establish partnerships with organizations that specialize in these areas. Collaborations with tech firms, environmental NGOs, and art collectives

could offer students internships, research opportunities, and fieldwork experiences, grounding their academic studies in practical engagement.

Moreover, STAIR promotes interdisciplinary thinking, which is crucial in today's interconnected world. The boundaries between fields are increasingly blurred; technology impacts politics, culture shapes economics, and environmental issues transcend national borders. By breaking down academic silos, a STAIR-focused curriculum encourages students to think critically and creatively across disciplines.

As the STAIR initiative gains traction, it could inspire other institutions to follow suit. Gadjah Mada University has the potential to become a pioneer, setting a new standard in IR education that acknowledges the multidimensional nature of global issues. A reformed curriculum embracing science, technology, art, and interdisciplinary studies would not only prepare students for careers in traditional IR roles but also equip them with skills relevant to emerging fields in technology, environmental policy, and cultural diplomacy.

Encouraging Critical Engagement

Emphasizing STAIR in the IR curriculum encourages a shift in philosophy toward critical engagement rather than passive consumption of information. This approach fosters a mindset where students can question existing narratives, challenge dominant paradigms, and develop alternative perspectives. Educators can cultivate an environment of inquiry where students actively participate in debates, engage in constructive criticism, and explore diverse viewpoints.

This transformation is crucial, especially given the realities of today's geopolitical landscape, where information warfare, fake news, and sensationalized media narratives can distort perceptions of international events. A STAIR-focused curriculum encourages students to critically analyze the sources, intentions, and impacts of information, enhancing their media literacy and diplomatic skills.

An important aspect of a STAIR-oriented curriculum is its emphasis on both global issues and local contexts. While it is essential to study overarching global challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity, and international trade, equally important is the need to contextualize these issues within local narratives and experiences.

For example, Indonesia faces unique challenges related to environmental degradation, such as deforestation and the impacts of natural disasters. By incorporating local case studies and perspectives into courses, students can engage deeply with issues that intersect with their identities and communities. This dual focus helps cultivate a sense of responsibility and accountability, fostering graduates who are not only aware of global trends but are also equipped to advocate for local solutions.

Conclusion

The integration of STAIR into International Relations education represents a visionary approach to preparing students for the dynamic challenges ahead. By breaking away from the confines of traditional IR teachings and embracing a more holistic, interdisciplinary framework, we can empower a new generation of leaders equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate an increasingly complex global landscape.

The transformation of the IR curriculum at Gadjah Mada University into a STAIR-focused model holds the potential to not only impact the lives of students but also to contribute positively to the broader global community. Empowering students to think critically, embrace innovation, and engage with pressing global issues ensures that they are well-prepared to build a better, more sustainable future for all.

In the end, STAIR is not merely a curricular addition but a paradigm shifts in how we conceptualize and engage with the field of International Relations. The call to action is clear: we must embrace the convergence of science, technology, and art in shaping our world, and in doing so,

we can create a more inclusive, dynamic, and impactful educational experience for aspiring international relations professionals. By fostering this perspective within the academic landscape, we are investing in a future that values adaptability, resilience, and the power of interdisciplinary collaboration—a future where the leaders of tomorrow can rise to meet the challenges of their time.

Chapter 3: Challenging your thought process: The role of phenomenology in global order

In my academic engagement with International Relations (IR) studies—encompassing foreign treaties, influential political figures, and international institutions—I frequently encountered a niggling sense of self-doubt that I can summarise into the following question, "So, what's in it for me?" What is the practical value of reviewing agreements such as the Paris Agreement or the European Green Deal, especially when they appear distant and seemingly unachievable for a country like Indonesia over the next decade?

More troubling, how can I reconcile my academic endorsement of such treaties and environmental activism with the reality that my lifestyle—driven by fossil fuels—remains contradictory to the very principles I am studying? I recognise that this tension is a form of hypocrisy, which has often left me uncomfortable.

I believe this personal experience resonates with many IR students. The Science, Technology, and Art in International Relations (STAIR) course at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), under the guidance of Mba Nana, aims to address and unpack precisely this dissonance by observing the global order through phenomenology lenses.

Engaging with Phenomenology: A Critical Approach to IR

As a philosophical approach, phenomenology provided a useful framework for this endeavor. Rooted in the study of subjective experience, phenomenology encourages an analysis of the world not merely as an external, objective reality, but as something constructed through individual perception and interaction. Phenomenological research uses the analysis

of sensual perceptions that came from physical occurrences towards the everyday material culture–including technology, art, and the combination of technology and art– and how this interaction shapes the actions, thoughts, and emotions of embodied beings, which then affect societal outcomes (Drieschova, 2019).

In a way, the phenomenology lenses disrupt traditional IR perspectives that prioritise material power and structural analysis by focusing on how international actors—states, individuals, or institutions—perceive and assign meaning to global events.

As a brain exercise to this concept, I'd like to introduce one of my favourite quotes from renowned Japanese author Haruki Murakami, "It's like Tolstoy said. Happiness is an allegory, unhappiness a story." This sentence was penned down in the 'Kafka on the Shore' novel which follows the story of a young man who ran away from home due to the Oedipal dreams he experienced.

By observing this singular sentence, we can assume that the story is heavily influenced by Leo Tolstoy and the Russian noir fiction style where everything feels cold, dreary and inevitable. It also begs the question, are Russian and Japanese novels and people generally like this? What prompted Murakami to incorporate Russian noir fiction into his work? Is he a fan of Tolstoy, Russia or angst theme in general? Does my liking this quote mean I have a deep sadness and thus why does the story resonate deeply within me? Assuming Russians and Japanese grow up with this kind of noir literature, are they going to be mentally okay, or is this why they're often described as closed-off but deep thinkers? These lines of queries, rooted in my fascination and emotional response to Murakami's novel ala phenomenology approach, could pave my research into the contextuality that shaped Japanese and Russian literature.

To lead STAIR students into this perspective, we tasked them to reflect the mandatory readings, including the first chapters of Science, Technology,

and Art in International Relations by Singh et al (2019). The early chapters in the book introduce the phenomenological approach and its potential for branching out the conventional IR lenses.

Initially, I tempered my expectations regarding the student's ability to engage with such complex and popular culture theories, especially since I had assumed that students in more critical disciplines like media studies or communications would be better equipped to navigate these theories. However, the students' responses demonstrated a remarkable depth of engagement with the material.

One student, Fakhri Muhammad, observed: "This approach seems quite unconventional to me because it shifts the focus from structures and material power to the experiences, perceptions, and meanings that international actors assign to the situations they encounter."

Another student, Gisela Atalia Early, reflected: "Phenomenology made me realize the importance of looking at the human side of politics, which is often overlooked in traditional theories. I felt challenged when the chapters questioned familiar ideas like sovereignty and borders. It was both surprising and eye-opening to see these concepts from a new perspective based on human experiences. This pushed me to rethink my own views on how we usually study international relations."

Such insights reveal that the students were not merely absorbing abstract philosophical concepts, but critically applying them to their understanding of IR. These reflections also demonstrated their growing awareness of the estrangement caused by traditional IR theories, as well as their capacity to engage with the STAIR framework in a meaningful way.

Reflexivity and the Personalization of International Relations

After the first two weeks of the course, which included foundational discussions on the course contract and reading assignments, both Mba Nana and I felt confident that the students were ready to engage with the

more personal and subjective dimensions of IR discourse. The premise of this approach is that by confronting the personal—by acknowledging one's own emotions, biases, and lived experiences—students can elevate their academic analyses into more meaningful, globally relevant discussions. This idea of reflexivity, wherein students critically engage with their own emotions and perceptions, was a cornerstone of our discussions.

During one particular class, we explored how the personal is often marginalized in traditional IR frameworks, which prioritize abstract concepts like power structures, sovereignty, and state interests. Instead, we encouraged students to engage emotionally with political events—whether feelings of awe when encountering cultural heritage or anger toward the destructive use of science in the creation of weapons of mass destruction. By examining these emotions through a phenomenological lens, students were prompted to reflect on how such human-centered experiences inform and shape global political discourse.

In our second week, for example, students were encouraged to interrogate their emotional responses to public figures allegedly exploiting political and business connections for personal gain during a period of political instability in Indonesia. The question we posed was how to use these emotional responses—not to dismiss them as irrelevant—but to enhance critical academic inquiry.

Fieldwork and the Phenomenological Approach in Practice

A particularly memorable moment in the course occurred during the first STAIR studio session, which took place outdoors in the grassy fields of Grha Sabha Pramana (GSP). The purpose of this session was to encourage students to step outside the traditional, classroom-based boundaries of IR education and engage with the environment in both a literal and metaphorical sense. Students were asked to roam freely for thirty minutes, interact with their surroundings, and engage with what we termed "non-human actors"—the natural world, in this case—without any pre-set

instructions beyond the invitation to explore.

The outcome was both surprising and enlightening. Students engaged in a variety of activities, from hugging trees to crafting social media content, playing games, observing ants, and even forming a human conga line to climb a tree. This display of uninhibited exploration was a revelation, particularly in contrast to the more reserved behavior often associated with Indonesian students. It was a reminder of the spontaneous, childlike curiosity that we often suppress in formal educational settings.

After the session, we gathered the students in a circle and asked them to reflect on their experiences. The guiding question was: "What do you think nature is telling you? Did you succeed or fail in your interaction with nature?" Students were also asked to use the newspapers and magazines they had brought to create a collage reflecting their emotions and insights.

Their responses varied widely, but many students expressed feelings of failure or disappointment in their relationship with the natural world. One student, who had observed ants, drew parallels between their industrious behaviour and the greed and laziness he saw in human society. Another student, reflecting on the landscape at GSP, expressed a sense of sadness and alienation, noting that it reminded him of the deforestation in his home region. This emotional connection to the environment mirrors my own experiences in Norway, where I learned about the cultural significance of natural landscapes and how they serve as an integral part of national identity—a concept that felt foreign and unsettling given Indonesia's relative lack of engagement with natural heritage in such terms.

These reflections, however, were not solely about personal or emotional responses. They were also a gateway to broader discussions on failure within the context of international relations. Drawing on Bruno Latour's work on the failure of international treaties and policies, we encouraged students to think critically about how global failures—such as the insufficient progress of the Paris Agreement—might be rooted in the exclusion of certain voices, whether those of marginalized communities, nature, or non-human actors. Rather than viewing failure as a defeat, we framed it as an opportunity for deeper engagement and understanding, urging students to ask, "What else have we missed?"

Conclusion: Reflexivity, Phenomenology, and Critical Engagement

The course concluded with a call to action: students were encouraged to engage deeply with issues that stirred both excitement and frustration in their inner selves. This process, framed as engaging with one's id (impulsive, instinctual desires) and ego (rational, structured thought), aimed to help students balance emotion with reason and allow space for unfiltered, honest reflection.

As the course ended, one student approached us with an invitation to join her in a campaign against deforestation in Papua, which was being

spearheaded by the "All Eyes on Papua" movement. She described the violent land seizures affecting the Awyu tribe, underscoring the immediate, real-world applicability of the course's themes. In her, I saw a student whose critical engagement with the material had already translated into concrete action, a demonstration of how the course's lessons could provoke real-world change.

Reflecting on this moment, I felt a renewed sense of hope for the future of these students. In a sense, they embodied the core of phenomenology—by engaging with the world through personal experience and emotional engagement, they were already becoming active, critical participants in global discourses.

Through the lens of phenomenology, we gain a deeper understanding of how personal experience shapes our perceptions of global events. This approach allows us to deconstruct power structures, question dominant narratives, and critically engage with global phenomena—not just as abstract theories, but as lived, felt experiences. It is this critical, reflective engagement that the STAIR course seeks to foster in its students, empowering them to become more thoughtful, active participants in the global order.

Chapter 4: Centralizing the Politics of Technology

"They won't fear it until they understand it. And they won't understand it until they've used it. Theory will take you only so far"
(Oppenheimer the Movie, 2023)

The 2023 biopic *Oppenheimer* offers a compelling entry point for examining the relationship between science, technology, and politics. Through the lens of J. Robert Oppenheimer's life and the Manhattan Project, the film reveals how scientific endeavors intersect with political power and ethical dilemmas. The movie captures the profound consequences of nuclear technology, exemplifying how technological advancements are embedded in broader political, social, and cultural contexts. This intersection aligns with the *Sciences, Technology, and Arts in International Relations* (STAIR) approach, which emphasizes the entanglement of the material and the social in shaping global dynamics.

The Manhattan Project exemplifies the politics of technological development. It was not merely a scientific breakthrough but a politically charged project that redefined global power structures. Oppenheimer's leadership in assembling a team of scientists illustrates the agency of scientific actors in shaping history. Scientists like Edward Teller, Hans Bethe, and Enrico Fermi were not just passive instruments of state policy; they were co-creators of political realities. Their calculations and debates had direct consequences for world politics, from the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the onset of the Cold War.

This narrative resonates with Daniel R. McCarthy's observation that technological objects and systems are central to both everyday life and world politics. From alarm clocks to nuclear bombs, technology structures human experience, often in ways that are inseparable from power dynamics.

The atomic bomb, a technological object of unparalleled destructive capability, epitomizes this dual role: it is both a scientific achievement and a political instrument.

Beyond Determinism: The STAIR Perspective

Traditional approaches to technology in International Relations (IR) often fall into technological determinism or social essentialism. Technological determinism posits that technological progress drives societal change in a linear, inevitable fashion. In contrast, social essentialism views technology as a mere tool shaped entirely by human intentions. Both perspectives risk oversimplifying the complex interactions between humans and non-human entities.

The STAIR approach rejects these deterministic views, instead framing technology as co-constitutive of social and political orders. For instance, the Manhattan Project was not just about scientists creating a bomb; it was also about the bomb reshaping political alliances, ethical debates, and the global order. The Trinity test, a pivotal moment in the film, underscores this co-constitution. The bomb was a material object born of scientific theories and political imperatives, yet its existence fundamentally altered human conceptions of power, security, and morality.

Oppenheimer also illuminates the scientist's role as a political actor, a theme central to STAIR analysis. Oppenheimer and his colleagues were not detached from the political implications of their work. The film portrays their ethical struggles, such as debates over the bomb's use after Germany's surrender. These tensions highlight how scientists navigate the dual identities of objective researchers and political agents.

This duality is evident in the post-war hearings that stripped Oppenheimer of his security clearance. These events illustrate how scientific authority can become entangled with political agendas. As McCarthy notes, practices in world politics are inseparable from technological systems, and scientists often become intermediaries in these practices. Oppenheimer's downfall

was not just a personal tragedy but a reflection of the fraught relationship between scientific expertise and political power.
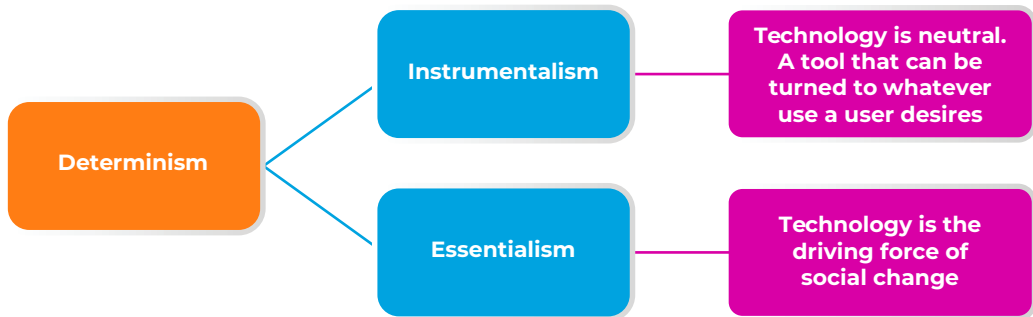
Reframing International Relations: Insights from STS-IR

The integration of Science and Technology Studies (STS) into International Relations (IR) offers fresh perspectives on the role of technology in shaping global politics. Traditional IR theories often frame technology as either a dominant force that drives societal change (technological determinism) or a passive instrument controlled entirely by human actors (social essentialism). STS-IR challenges these binary perspectives by emphasizing the co-constitutive relationship between the technical and the social, questioning how agency and causality operate within this entanglement (Jasanoff 2004; Bijker and Pinch 1987).

Technological determinism, for instance, permeates popular discourse, presenting technological change as inevitable and linear. Narratives about digital disruption often assume that society must adapt to the inexorable progress of innovation. This view, which portrays digital technologies as the culmination of an unstoppable evolutionary process, obscures the political, social, and economic contexts in which these technologies are developed. For example, arguments linking automation to job losses often ignore the deliberate policy choices and economic strategies that drive the adoption of automated systems (Herrera 2002; DeNardis 2009). This deterministic framing marginalizes the role of human agency and overlooks the contingent and contested nature of technological development.

In contrast, social essentialism focuses exclusively on human agency, treating technology as neutral and devoid of intrinsic influence on society. This perspective views technologies as tools whose effects depend solely on their use by humans. However, the political implications of nuclear weapons challenge this assumption. The existence of nuclear weapons has not only served as instruments of state power but has also reshaped global security dynamics, fostering a distinct logic of deterrence and vulnerability.

Their material and symbolic properties actively influence the behavior of states and the architecture of international security, demonstrating that technology is far from neutral (Jackson 2011; Shapin and Schaffer 1985).

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Determinism ──┬── Instrumentalism ── Technology is neutral. A tool that can be turned to whatever use a user desires
              └── Essentialism ── Technology is the driving force of social change
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Both deterministic perspectives face significant challenges. Technological determinism's linear narrative is undermined by historical evidence showing that technological progress is neither inevitable nor cumulative. Historians such as Hacking (1983) and Headrick (2009) highlight cases where knowledge and technologies have been lost, forgotten, or deliberately abandoned, such as the decline of Roman concrete or the disappearance of artisanal skills in industrialized societies. This fragility demonstrates that technological development is shaped by cultural, political, and economic forces, rather than following a predetermined trajectory.

STS-IR offers an alternative by framing technology and society as mutually constitutive. Sheila Jasanoff's concept of "co-production" illustrates how technological systems and social orders evolve together, shaped by intertwined processes of negotiation and contestation (Jasanoff 2004). For instance, the development of the internet was not solely a technical achievement but was deeply influenced by Cold War politics, military investments, and cultural aspirations for open communication. These dynamics reveal how technologies emerge within specific social and historical contexts, simultaneously shaping and being shaped by them.

This perspective also encourages IR scholars to reconsider the ontology of global politics. STS-IR blurs the boundaries between human and non-human actors, recognizing that technologies are not passive artifacts but active participants in shaping social realities. Maps, for example, have historically influenced geopolitical understandings of sovereignty, embedding territorial logics into international relations. Stuart Elden's (2013) analysis of cartography demonstrates how these artifacts, while seemingly mundane, carry profound political implications, shaping how states understand and assert control over territory.

By rejecting deterministic frameworks, STS-IR not only redefines the relationship between technology and society but also fosters critical reflections on power and agency. This perspective is especially relevant in addressing contemporary challenges like climate change and artificial intelligence, where technological choices have profound ethical and political implications. STS-IR invites us to question not only what technologies do but also how they are embedded within and transform broader social systems.

Through its emphasis on co-production, contingency, and relationality, STS-IR equips scholars with the tools to analyze the complexities of global politics. It challenges conventional narratives and opens pathways to imagine alternative, more equitable futures. As we confront increasingly entangled technological and social challenges, the insights of STS-IR provide a vital framework for understanding and navigating the world.

Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology in STS-IR

In Science and Technology Studies in International Relations (STS-IR), ontology is about understanding what the world is made of. Traditionally, in International Relations, we focus mostly on human beings and their actions. However, STS-IR challenges this by saying that non-human objects (like technologies, artefacts, and infrastructures) also play an important role in shaping the world around us.

For example, think about nuclear weapons. These aren't just tools used by humans; they have their own material properties that shape global security. The power of nuclear weapons affects how countries make decisions about war, peace, and diplomacy. The same can be said about digital technologies—like the internet or satellites—which affect how countries interact with each other and manage global systems like trade or communication. In short, STS-IR teaches us to look at the relationship between humans and non-humans, where both play a part in creating social and political outcomes.

Epistemology is about how we know things. In STS-IR, we take a constructivist approach, meaning that we believe knowledge isn't just about discovering "truth" but is shaped by society, culture, and history. This is different from seeing technological development as a straight, inevitable path. Instead, we focus on how technologies are shaped by human decisions, and how those decisions are influenced by culture, politics, and values.

For example, the development of the internet wasn't just a technical process—it was influenced by ideas about freedom, privacy, and democracy. Different countries have shaped the internet in different ways based on their own political needs and values. In some countries, the internet is a space for free expression, while in others, it is heavily monitored and controlled. So, STS-IR scholars ask: *How did certain technologies become dominant, and what were the social, political, and economic contexts that shaped them? They also ask, "Who benefits from this knowledge and technology, and who doesn't?"*

Methodology in STS-IR refers to the ways in which researchers study the world. Because STS-IR combines ideas from sociology, anthropology, and political science, it uses a variety of methods to understand how technologies shape international relations.

1. Interpretivist Approaches:

Interpretivist methods are about understanding the meanings that people give to technology and how they make sense of it in their lives. These methods often include: (a) Ethnography: This is where researchers immerse themselves in a

specific setting (like a tech company, a laboratory, or a protest) to understand how people use and think about technologies. For instance, studying the Silicon Valley tech culture can give us insights into how the people who create new technologies see the world and their role in shaping global society. (b) Discourse Analysis: This involves studying how technology is talked about in media, politics, or academic research. For example, we could analyze how the language around artificial intelligence (AI) shapes public perceptions and policy decisions. (c) Participant Observation: In this method, the researcher actively takes part in the social setting they are studying. For example, attending a conference on sustainability technologies and observing how participants discuss the potential and risks of new green technologies. (d) "Following the Actors": This method involves tracing the networks of both human and non-human actors involved in technological development. A good example is following the development of smart cities—this involves not only people like city planners and tech companies but also technologies like sensors, algorithms, and data systems that shape how cities function.

2. Historical Approach:

Another important approach in STS-IR is the historical approach, which involves studying how technologies have been designed, developed, and used over time. By understanding the history of technology, we can see how past decisions still influence current global politics and international relations. For example, the history of the internet is essential for understanding current debates around privacy, surveillance, and online freedom. In the 1990s, the internet was built on ideals of openness and decentralization, but over time, corporate interests and government surveillance have shaped its current form. Another example is how nuclear power was initially developed during the Cold War for military purposes but has since evolved to be part of the global conversation about energy and climate change. Studying its development helps us understand the political and technological forces that have shaped its use and its controversial place in global energy discussions today.

Conclusion

For STAIR students, STS-IR offers a critical framework to understand the complex relationships between science, technology, and global politics. Unlike traditional approaches in International Relations, STS-IR expands perspectives by recognizing the role of both human and non-human actors, such as technologies and infrastructures, in shaping political outcomes. This holistic view enables students to engage with global challenges—like climate change and digital governance—through a more interconnected lens, offering a deeper understanding of the forces at play.

Learning STS-IR also promotes critical thinking and reflexivity. By examining the power dynamics behind technological developments, students are encouraged to question who controls technology, how it's used, and who benefits. This approach challenges deterministic narratives and equips students with tools to assess the broader implications of technological innovation. Moreover, the practical methodologies of STS-IR, including discourse analysis, ethnography, and historical approaches, allow students to apply these critical skills to real-world issues, making them more informed and capable problem-solvers.

In everyday practice, STAIR students can use STS-IR to evaluate how technologies shape their lives and global systems. Whether analyzing the influence of social media algorithms or studying the impact of new technologies on policy, students can apply STS-IR methods to understand the intersection of technology and politics in their own contexts. This ability to critically assess technological and political interactions empowers students to contribute to more sustainable, equitable solutions in their personal and professional lives. Ultimately, STS-IR helps students think beyond traditional IR frameworks and engage with the world in a more informed and impactful way.

Chapter 5: World-Making Through Aesthetic Practices in IR

"The arts are neglected because they are based on perception, and perception is disdained because it is not assumed to involve thought"
(Bleiker, 2001).

Discovering the Aesthetic Turn

Teaching International Relations (IR) often comes with an underlying tension—the sense that something crucial remains unspoken in traditional analyses. The field typically frames politics in structured terms: interests, treaties, conflicts, and economic alliances (Wendt, 1999; Waltz, 1979). Yet, each year, as we delve into these themes, a recurring feeling surfaces: there is more to international or inter human relations than just calculated interests and formal institutions. The deeper forces shaping the world – culture, art, emotions, and symbols – remained largely invisible within the established boundaries of IR (Bleiker, 2001). Could we make space for these forces in our study of IR?

Our shared realization came to us in different ways but resonated similarly. One of us was profoundly affected by a student's reflection on Roland Bleiker's work on the aesthetic turn in IR, where Bleiker (2009) describes how this approach shifts focus from conventional, objective representations of political phenomena to perspectives that recognize the interpretative and subjective nature of representation. As the student noted, the aesthetic turn invites us to look beyond the surface, understanding that every representation is influenced by cultural, emotional, and sensory dimensions, rather than presenting "objective" images of reality. These representations offer interpretations coloured by underlying biases and power dynamics that traditional approaches often overlook.

For other students, the aesthetic turn felt like an invitation to reconsider how representation influences the framing of conflict. One student pointed to the media portrayals of the October 7th, 2023, events in Israel and Palestine, observing how, depending on the narrative, these events were framed either as "terrorism" or as an act of "self-determination." Through these competing portrayals, we glimpse how aesthetic framing can shape global perspectives and align with certain power structures, giving weight to particular narratives while obscuring others (Bleiker, 2009; Campbell, 2007).

This was a watershed moment for us in IR education. We began asking a question that would come to redefine our teaching: *What if we approached IR with the openness and interpretive depth of the arts?* This question invited us to consider emotions and sensibilities as essential elements in understanding international politics. The aesthetic turn suggested that the realities of political life are inseparable from how they are mediated and perceived and that these perceptions are infused with effective power (Edkins, 2013; Shapiro, 2013).

In bringing these ideas into the classroom, we found that our students were deeply connected with them. For some, aesthetic analysis unearthed frustrations with the limits of conventional IR, while also inspiring hope at the possibility of bringing in richer insights from culture and art. One student's experience with Isaac Israel's painting of a Dutch army highlighted this complexity. They noted how Israel captured the vulnerability and humanity of the soldiers—their expressions of bravery, uncertainty, and longing. Yet, as the student pointed out, these same soldiers were part of a colonial mission, a system of oppression that stripped others of their autonomy (Edkins, 2013). The aesthetic representation evoked sympathy for the soldiers but, in doing so, risked glossing over the larger context of colonial violence. This dissonance mirrored the challenges of the aesthetic turn in IR, where representations can simultaneously reveal and obscure political realities (Bleiker, 2009).

These classroom reflections brought us to a deeper appreciation for the potential of aesthetics in IR. They underscored how artistic representations evoke emotional truths, but also the responsibility to balance these truths with

critical awareness of their political and ethical contexts. In the case of Israels' painting, the aesthetic appreciation of vulnerability had to be tempered with the uncomfortable knowledge of the colonial agenda these soldiers served. This tension reflects a broader challenge in the aesthetic turn: how do we engage with the emotional depth of aesthetic expressions while remaining critically attuned to the power dynamics they may mask (Campbell & Shapiro, 2007)

Why Does Aesthetics Matter in International Relations?

"Why does aesthetics matter in IR?" we asked, letting the question hang for a moment. A student raised their hand, tentatively. "Is it because aesthetics challenges who gets to decide what things mean?" they ventured.

Exactly. Traditional International Relations often presents politics as a series of objective facts, formulas, and calculations. But aesthetics challenges this view. It disrupts the idea of politics as purely rational, showing us that political interpretations are never fully objective; they're shaped by our own emotions, experiences, and even the stories we've been told.

We explained how thinking about IR through aesthetics could let us see international relations less as a collection of "hard facts" and more as a series of narratives and interpretations. In his book *Aesthetics and World Politics*, Roland Bleiker suggests that by using an aesthetic approach, we can understand the emotional and symbolic aspects of politics—the way power is conveyed through symbols, images, and feelings, often without us realizing it (Bleiker, 2009).

Think of a powerful image in today's media, like photos of climate change protests. A photo of a young activist holding a sign that reads, "There's No Planet B," stirs emotions and communicates urgency. But is it simply a fact? Not entirely. It's a visual narrative that communicates fear, responsibility, and unity—all through an image rather than a traditional political analysis. By exploring such images, we can see how they shape our understanding of global issues and the feelings attached to them. The aesthetic turn in IR isn't

about saying objective truths don't matter but about acknowledging that the stories, images, and emotions tied to political issues play a big role in shaping our views.

In fact, thinkers like Heidegger have argued that technological reason—the idea that everything can be measured, quantified, and rationalized—has actually limited our understanding of issues that are more complex and human. Many of the challenges we face in world politics today, from rising inequality to climate change, are problems we can't just "solve" through calculations and spreadsheets. They're issues that require creativity, empathy, and a willingness to engage with things that don't always fit neatly into facts and figures. As Heidegger put it, we need "a realm that is...fundamentally different" from pure technological reason to truly address these complex challenges.

So, what does this mean for IR students? It means recognizing that global politics isn't neutral; it's filled with representations that shape how we think and feel about the world. For instance, compare the "heroic" images of soldiers in news stories about war with images of civilians affected by the conflict. Both are part of the same reality, but they tell very different stories. Aesthetic approaches to IR encourage us to consider who is represented, who is left out, and what emotions these images evoke. This way, we start to see politics not as a collection of facts but as a landscape of images and stories, each with its own message and purpose.

By understanding this, we can approach IR with a more critical eye. Who benefits from these representations? What stories are we accepting as "fact," and what are we ignoring? It's a call for us, as future IR scholars, to look beyond surface-level narratives and ask, "Whose story is being told, and what does that mean for the rest of us?"

In this way, aesthetics in IR isn't just about art or images; it's a tool for understanding and questioning the deeper stories that shape world politics.

How to Study Aesthetics in IR

Next, we asked an intriguing question: *How can we study aesthetics in International Relations (IR), a field often grounded in quantifiable data, rigid structures, and state actors?*

We explained that studying aesthetics in IR is less about formulas and more about open exploration. It requires questioning what we see, hear, and read. This mindset encourages us to consider how emotions are constructed, how images provoke certain responses, and whose voices are often left out. For example, mimetic representation—studying how portrayals reflect ideals we wish to see rather than reality—highlights these aspects. When we analyze, say, media images of migrants, we often find depictions of helplessness, danger, or chaos. But what if these images showed resilience, community, or hope? This shift in narrative can profoundly impact our understanding of global issues.

To further illustrate, we introduced *grievability*, a concept by Judith Butler, which challenges us to consider how certain lives are represented as worthy of empathy and remembrance while others are overlooked (Butler, 2009). When some groups are consistently depicted as "other," their lives become less "grievable," shaping public perception and policy in ways we might not even notice.

Postmodern scholars in the 1980s, like David Campbell and Roland Bleiker, began questioning the very foundations of IR, especially its reliance on positivist and state-centric methods. They argued that the world isn't merely a rational, calculable chessboard but more like a complex gallery where representation itself affects our perception of reality. As Campbell noted, "choosing one mode of representation over another" can have far-reaching consequences, revealing hidden biases in how knowledge is produced and framed (Campbell, 1998).

In this course, we encouraged students not to look for "right" answers but to engage with IR through methods like visual and narrative analysis. These tools

reveal the messages embedded in political speeches, media portrayals, and policy texts, reminding us that facts and representation are intertwined. The aim wasn't just to critique but to reimagine, helping students see IR as a space to explore diverse perspectives. As postmodernists argued, understanding world politics often means stepping outside traditional academic frameworks to reveal stories that conventional approaches might miss.

What Do We Study About?

The aesthetic turn in International Relations (IR) offers a transformative approach, moving beyond traditional political concepts and methods to examine how aesthetics—through art, symbols, and sensory experiences— shapes our understanding of global politics. This approach lets us explore underrepresented dimensions: the colonial aesthetics in media portrayals, symbolism in protests, political messages in music and film, and the visual politics of spaces like roads, monuments, and buildings, which silently convey authority, resistance, and identity.

Consider, for example, the Apartheid Museum in South Africa. This museum transcends mere historical documentation, inviting visitors to confront the legacies of apartheid through architecture and immersive displays that evoke an emotional, sensory experience of racial injustice. Each room, corridor, and exhibit are meticulously designed to mirror the oppression of apartheid, forcing visitors to grapple with the tangible impact of segregation and racial violence (Marschall, 2010). Through its spatial aesthetics, the museum transforms history into a lived experience that actively questions the legacies of inequality and power.

In Indonesia, the artwork and slogans at the Bandung Conference Museum reflect anti-colonial aspirations and solidarity among newly independent states across Africa and Asia. The Bandung Conference in 1955 was pivotal in shaping postcolonial solidarity, and the visual choices in the museum—such as photographs and posters of leaders like Sukarno, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, etc.—reveal the aesthetics of unity and anti-imperialism. By

using aesthetics, the museum captures the aspirational politics of the time, highlighting how symbols and shared imagery can create bonds across diverse cultural and political contexts (Lee, 2010).

The aesthetic turn also illuminates how crises are represented, particularly in the Global South. Media portrayals of disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa or Southeast Asia, for example, often reinforce stereotypes of instability and poverty. Such portrayals do more than just inform; they shape international aid responses and perpetuate narratives of helplessness or dependency, as seen in the coverage of the 2020 Beirut explosion. Many media outlets focused on Beirut's history of conflict while neglecting the political negligence and local resilience that shaped the crisis (Latif, 2022). Here, the aesthetic turn invites us to scrutinize how visual narratives are crafted and the political agendas they support, encouraging a critical eye toward the power dynamics embedded in media representations.

The aesthetic turn emphasizes the gap between representation and reality, as every depiction is inherently interpretative. Rather than striving for an objective portrayal, this approach values the subjectivity in representation, where meanings are constructed, contested, and redefined. For example, in examining film as a vehicle of political expression, the Nigerian film *October 1* (2014) uses aesthetics to explore postcolonial tensions, embedding subtle critiques of colonial legacies through narrative and visual choices. By exploring cinema as an interpretative medium, IR scholars uncover how films like this construct national identity and resistance narratives that resonate with local audiences (Irele, 2001).

The aesthetic turn also brings emotional engagement into IR, challenging the rational actor model that has traditionally dominated the field. Emotions are integral to political behavior and collective identities, as evidenced by the powerful role of protest music in movements worldwide. In Hong Kong's 2019 pro-democracy protests, songs like *Glory to Hong Kong* became symbols of resistance, unifying demonstrators and conveying the values of the movement (Fung and Chik, 2020). By examining the emotional and sensory aspects of

aesthetics, the aesthetic turn highlights how political engagement is motivated by more than just rational choices; it is also deeply influenced by collective feelings and affective bonds.

Incorporating aesthetics into IR allows us to critique positivist methodologies, which often prioritize objectivity and data over interpretation. The aesthetic turn challenges this view by embracing interpretative complexities and foregrounding subjective experiences. For instance, the protests of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 not only demanded justice but also used murals, banners, and performative street protests to challenge the visual and symbolic representations of race in public spaces (Taylor, 2021). These creative forms of resistance are rich with political meaning, revealing the limitations of traditional, data-centric approaches in capturing the emotional and symbolic depth of social movements.

Furthermore, the aesthetic turn promotes interdisciplinary engagement, drawing from fields such as art history, cultural studies, and philosophy to provide a nuanced understanding of global issues. This broader perspective allows IR to move beyond rigid geopolitical frameworks, integrating methodologies that illuminate the lived experiences of people affected by international politics. For instance, *The Square* (2013), a documentary about the Egyptian revolution, provides an aestheticized portrayal of collective resistance in Tahrir Square, capturing the political energy and aspirations of protesters far beyond what conventional accounts of the Arab Spring might convey (Abdelrahman, 2015). Such representations push us to consider the ethical and affective dimensions of political action that data alone cannot capture.

How Do We Feel?

In the familiar hallways of Universitas Gadjah Mada, a group of STAIR course students in International Relations (IR) found themselves on a meaningful journey. As they explored the role of aesthetics in global politics, their reflections captured not only their intellectual challenges but also their

emotional growth. This process illuminated how incorporating art into their studies helped them rethink their perspectives on the world around them.

Nisrina's heartfelt admission struck a chord; she articulated a profound sense of exclusion from the traditional IR discourse. For her, the conventional narratives felt devoid of emotional depth, leaving her to grapple with her place in a field that often seemed to sideline the very feelings that define human experience. Yet, she found hope in the realization that there was room for emotion within IR, suggesting that perhaps the discipline could embrace a broader spectrum of human experience rather than dismiss it.

> *"Since I feel like I'm not supposed to be part of IR, I don't understand how traditional IR can shape the world without the emotional part. I do understand the logical thinking, but personally this chapter opens a hope for me to not hate IR."* - Nisrina

Paramasatya expressed the discomfort of confronting the unfamiliar, the aesthetic lens that challenged his positivist inclinations. He described a "fight or flight" instinct triggered by the newness of these ideas. Yet, this discomfort was intertwined with curiosity, illuminating the delicate balance between resistance and the desire to explore new realms of thought. He recognized that while he might not immediately integrate these concepts into his future, the seed of interest had been planted, hinting at the transformative potential of embracing the unfamiliar.

> *"Though I consider myself a positivist to some extent, these readings opened my eyes to a unique way of learning International Relations, a way that I've never even imagined to delve into. Will I use this in the near future, most likely not, but will I one day will be brave enough and try to understand IR theory while also considering aesthetics? absolute yes."* - Paramasatya

Alek's reflection brought a critical perspective, as he interrogated the political underpinnings of knowledge acquisition. He pondered the narratives surrounding significant historical events like the 1965 PKI mass killings and contemporary global issues such as climate change, questioning the often sanitized representations of these crises. His realization that knowledge is not neutral, but rather a product of political context, underscored the need for a critical approach to the information consumed in academia.

Alivia's introspection illuminated a personal connection to representation. She drew parallels between her self-representation through selfies and the broader representation of political realities. Her insights on the gap between representation and reality echoed the struggles faced by marginalized voices in IR, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the limitations of our perspectives and the complexity of truth.

Chiara's response encapsulated the emotional resonance of art. She spoke of the power of creative expression to reveal the intricacies of human experience, noting how it can evoke empathy and inspire action. Her desire to amplify the voices of the unheard highlighted the ethical responsibility that comes with studying politics—an acknowledgment that behind every statistic lies a story deserving of attention.

Emira articulated a more challenging emotional journey, expressing frustration with her inability to grasp the aesthetic approach. Her struggle was a reminder that discomfort in learning can often lead to growth. She recognized that this challenge might compel her to revisit aesthetics, suggesting that the act of grappling with complex ideas is a crucial part of the learning process, particularly in a field as nuanced as IR.

Filolita echoed the sentiment of irritation toward traditional theories while expressing a newfound inspiration from aesthetic approaches. She recognized that emphasizing emotional and subjective components in political representation could foster a deeper, more empathetic engagement

with global issues, advocating for a richer understanding of the human experiences that underlie political conflicts.

Galih, drawing from his background in music, found resonance in the notion that interpretation shapes understanding. He likened the nuances of musical performance to the interpretation of political phenomena, highlighting the artistry involved in representation. His reflection reinforced the idea that a purely mimetic approach to IR is insufficient, advocating for a holistic understanding that embraces the full spectrum of human perception.

Hanny's testimony intertwined personal experiences with artistic discovery, illustrating how exposure to aesthetic approaches rekindled her passion for art within the realm of IR. She connected her understanding of Dadaism and its critique of war with contemporary global politics, revealing the transformative potential of integrating artistic perspectives into the study of IR.

Isabella's reflection mirrored a journey of self-discovery, where she embraced her artistic background as a valid lens through which to engage with IR. Her realization that aesthetics could enrich her understanding of global politics reinvigorated her passion, illustrating the profound impact of merging personal interests with academic pursuits.

Nia celebrated the aesthetic approach as a means of transcending traditional boundaries within IR. She recognized its potential to illuminate marginalized perspectives and complex political realities, asserting that the manipulation of representation is an intrinsic part of politics. Her reflection signified a call to action, urging fellow students to recognize the significance of aesthetics in their studies.

Through these diverse reflections, the students revealed a variant of emotions—hope, frustration, curiosity, and empowerment. They illuminated the complexities of grappling with traditional narratives while seeking to redefine their understanding of International Relations from a global South

perspective. In embracing aesthetics, they not only challenged conventional thought but also opened pathways to deeper connections with the multifaceted realities of the world around them. This journey is not just about understanding IR; it is about reclaiming their voices, reshaping narratives, and recognizing the power of emotion in the ever-evolving landscape of global politics. The aesthetic turn, in that sense, calls us to see "feeling" not as irrelevant noise but as an essential element of politics. It reminds us that IR is a deeply human field, suffused with emotions that can't be quantified but which drive people to act.

Studio Session Review

Perhaps, no art form is more universal than song and music. Or, we should just say that nothing is more universal than music. Almost everybody from any walks of life—from farmers to businesspeople, from uneducated persons to intellectuals, from ordinary people to those who command immense political power and from Africans, Europeans to Asians—can feel and appreciate the beauty of music and can be emotionally touched by songs.

Because music and songs have such a universal appeal and influence, following philosopher Friedrich Nietzche, who believes that "without music, life would be a mistake", it would be also a mistake to not include the impacts of music in the studies of globalization and international affairs.

But how to include music and songs in International Relations studies? First, there should be a subject that explains, not the history of music per se, but the history of music as a political and anti-war tool, and analyze its message and influence as well as its uniting power. How can people from different races, genders and religions, for instance, gather in a concert performed by Irish rock band U2 in Singapore?

Also, it would be necessary, for instance, to study how massive the fans and social media followers of a musician are compared to a politician. Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, for example, has more than a billion fans. It means that a billion people across the world listen to her. If this kind of global influence

is ignored, then what is there to be studied in International Relations?

The historic Live Aid benefit concert to gather funds to help Ethiopia's hunger in 1985 was watched via television by 1.5 billion people from across the globe. If this is not an impactful international event to raise global decency, peace and care, then what event can we call influential?

To directly feel the emotion and impacts of the songs, this course provides the students with a studio session.

During the studio session, the student listened to songs and music that have helped shape reality and the world. We listened to Bob Dylan's "Blowin' the Wind" that was very impactful in raising awareness of the anti-Vietnam War. They listened to Bob Marley's "One Love" and John Lennon's Imagine, both of which stressed the importance of peace, or Lady Gaga's "Born This Way" which spread the message of the need to respect differences.

Also, in an attempt to move beyond a mere spectator and viewer, outsider (worldviewing) and become the shaper and creator of reality (worldmaking), the students were assigned to create their own song with the help of AI. This way, the students were actively involved in making music and songs, creating the emotion that can move the world they only have heard and studied until that point.

However, the students can also feel the limitation of music solely created by AI in terms of touching people's emotions. The music made by AI certainly cannot be compared to Lennon's "Imagine" or Dylan's "Blowin' the Wind" because it lacks originality and ingenuity. Realizing this limitation seems to compel the students to to be more creative and innovative, showing their own true colors to help shape the world.

My Journey Through Representation and Aesthetics
By: Hanny Nurfiani

As I immersed myself in my studies, I began to question the dominant approaches in International Relations (IR). While reading a chapter on mimetic representation, a thought struck me: *What "products" of IR have I accepted as factual, yet may actually carry bias or be politically motivated?* I realized that the narratives presented by dominant media often obscure the complex relationship between reality and representation, which is inherently subjective. Each political event holds layers of complexity that cannot be captured from a single viewpoint.

In reflecting on my journey, I remembered my first encounter with Dadaism, an art movement born out of the chaos of World War I. During the pandemic, I stumbled upon the band Talking Heads on Spotify and found myself diving deep into their music. One particular track, "I Zimbra," intrigued me; its gibberish lyrics seemed meaningless at first. My curiosity drove me to dig deeper, and I discovered that the song was inspired by a poem by Hugo Ball, a Dadaist artist, titled "Gadji Beri Bimba" from 1916.

When I watched a performance video featuring David Byrne, the lead singer, I was captivated by his explanation. He revealed that the nonsensical lyrics were meant to "make sense" of an absurd world. In quoting Hugo Ball, he emphasized that art serves to remind us of the existence of individuals who think independently beyond the confines of war and nationalism, embodying ideals that challenge the status quo.

Through this exploration of aesthetics and representation, my understanding of IR transformed. I began to see the world through a more nuanced lens, appreciating the layers and complexities that shape our political reality.

Chapter 6: Potential Research Agenda for STAIR in the Global South

In imagining the possibilities for the STAIR Community within International Relations (IR), I find myself drawn to what Stuart Hall (1996) termed the wrestling with modernity. It is not a simple wrestling but a layered one, shaped by histories of colonization, resistance, and an ongoing attempt to articulate a worldview from the Global South. What does it mean to "do" International Relations when your view of the international community has been shaped as much by Bandung as by Bretton Woods? When the enduring legacies of colonialism linger not just in politics but also in the very structures of how we theorize?

The idea of STAIR—Science, Technology, and Arts in International Relations—emerged not as a challenge to the discipline, but as a re-centering of questions long relegated to its margins. Its genesis is rooted in a frustration with traditional IR's privileging of state-centric, Eurocentric, and militarized narratives. Yet, the pushback was almost immediate. "Is this really IR?" a colleague once asked, their voice tinged with skepticism. "Where is the 'international' in music, in rivers, or in the metaverse?" This critique is not new; it mirrors longstanding dismissals of Global South perspectives as "not theoretical enough" (Tickner & Wæver, 2009). But the question, for me, was never whether STAIR is IR enough. The more vital question is: *What would IR look like if it were unsettled?*

A Discipline at the Crossroads

IR, as a discipline, was born in the wake of the empire. Its foundational texts are steeped in the logic of power projection, often masking its complicity in colonial violence. The field's early focus on diplomatic history and great power politics sidelined other ways of knowing the world. From the vantage point of the Global South, the international was never just about

statecraft; it was lived, contested, and reimagined in the quotidian acts of resistance and survival.

Consider the legacies of Bandung in 1955, where representatives of newly independent nations gathered to chart a non-aligned path amidst Cold War polarities. The Bandung Conference was not merely a political event but a profound exercise in world-making. It articulated a vision of the international community that prioritized solidarity, cultural exchange, and economic justice over militarized alliances. Yet, within mainstream IR, Bandung is often relegated to a footnote, overshadowed by the high diplomacy of the superpowers.

This erasure speaks to the power dynamics within the discipline itself. Much like the Smithsonian's aborted exhibition on Hiroshima and the atomic bomb (Ross, 2002), certain histories and perspectives are deemed too disruptive to the status quo. STAIR, with its focus on the intersections of science, technology, and art, seeks to reclaim these overlooked narratives. It insists that the international is not just negotiated in summits but also shaped in laboratories, classrooms, and cultural spaces.

The Global South and the Mundane

One of the central tenets of STAIR is its attention to the mundane—the everyday practices that sustain and transform the international. In this, it aligns with what Achille Mbembe (2001) calls the "politics of the ordinary." In the Global South, the ordinary is often the site where global forces collide with local realities. Consider the ride-sharing industry in Indonesia, a focus of my earlier research. Here, global technological platforms like Uber and Grab encounter informal economies, cultural norms, and regulatory gaps. The result is not merely a replication of Silicon Valley's model but a contested space where new forms of urban mobility and labor emerge.

The critique that STAIR is not "IR enough" often stems from its refusal to privilege the spectacular over the mundane. But this refusal is deliberate.

By centering the everyday, STAIR challenges IR's obsession with power as something exercised only by states or elites. It asks instead: What forms of agency emerge in the Global South, where technology, art, and science intersect with histories of colonial extraction?

Take, for instance, the Mundane Circular Economy Project (MCEP) in Indonesia, which I co-developed with school principals. At first glance, the project—focused on waste management in schools—might seem far removed from IR. But a closer look reveals its entanglements with global discourses on sustainability, local traditions of reuse and repair, and the geopolitics of waste trade. The mundane becomes a lens through which we can see the Global South not as a passive recipient of global forces but as an active site of innovation and resistance.

World-Making as Discomfort

World-making, as an approach, challenges the distant, disembodied practices of knowledge production that dominate traditional International Relations (IR). Drawing from technofeminism and ecopolitics, it emphasizes the situated, relational, and co-creative processes through which realities are composed. Unlike the detached "worldviewing" that strives for objectivity, world-making involves a direct engagement with the entangled agencies of humans, nonhumans, and materialities. Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledge (1988) and Karen Barad's notion of intra-action (2007) are central here, urging us to rethink how power and knowledge are always already embedded within specific contexts and relations.

This approach rejects binary thinking, such as the separation of human and nonhuman, nature and technology, or local and global. Instead, it aligns with techno-feminist perspectives, which highlight how technologies and ecologies co-constitute one another and are instrumental in shaping social worlds (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). For example, the mundane practices of circular economy initiatives in schools reimagine sustainability not as

a top-down imposition but as an everyday, co-produced reality. Similarly, artificial islands in geopolitics illustrate how material interventions can both reinforce power structures and provoke new questions about sovereignty, ecology, and technology.

Ecopolitics complements this view by foregrounding the more-than-human agencies that participate in the making of worlds. It sees climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecological degradation not merely as problems to solve but as provocations for creating alternative futures that are inclusive and just. The act of world-making in this sense is both political and ethical, asking whose worlds are being centered and whose are excluded. It demands an acknowledgment of care, responsibility, and the co-production of knowledge and action across diverse actors, from local communities to global networks.

By reframing global politics as a process of world-making, we move beyond the static boundaries of IR and open space for transformative possibilities. This perspective invites us to question not only how the world is viewed but also how it is actively shaped, contested, and reimagined. It calls for an IR that embraces discomfort, humility, and relationality—a discipline less concerned with asserting mastery over the world and more invested in co-creating sustainable and inclusive futures.

If there is a unifying thread in STAIR, it is its commitment to what Edward Said (1978) termed worldliness—a refusal to view the international as abstract or detached from lived realities. This commitment is inherently uncomfortable, especially within a discipline that thrives on neat categories and hierarchies.

STAIR disrupts these categories by centralizing the role of non-human actors—rivers, algorithms, and artifacts—in the making of the international. It invites students to see the world not as a static given but as a space constantly being made and remade. This is not without its challenges. In one STAIR seminar, a student remarked, "This feels more

like anthropology than IR." The comment, while intended as a critique, captured precisely the discomfort STAIR aims to evoke.

For IR to be relevant in the 21st century, it must move beyond its comfort zones. It must grapple with the ways in which science, technology, and art shape global politics—not as isolated domains but as interconnected forces. This requires a willingness to engage with disciplines outside of IR, to embrace methodologies that are interpretive, speculative, and creative.

Toward a Plural IR

The goal of STAIR is not to replace traditional IR but to pluralize it. It seeks to create spaces where alternative worldviews can flourish, especially those from the Global South. These worldviews are not monolithic; they are as diverse as the contexts from which they emerge. Yet, they share a common thread: a recognition of the entanglements between the local and the global, the human and the non-human, the material and the symbolic.

The resistance to superpower worldviews, as Biswas (2001) noted, has long been a feature of Global South politics. Movements for nuclear disarmament, the New International Economic Order, and climate justice all reflect a desire to imagine a different international—one that is not predicated on domination or extraction. STAIR aligns with these movements by foregrounding the role of creativity and collaboration in world-making.

At its core, STAIR is an invitation to rethink the boundaries of IR. It is an acknowledgment that the international is not just about war and peace but also about the rhythms of daily life, the ethics of technological innovation, and the aesthetics of cultural production. It is a call to discomfort—not for its own sake, but as a means of expanding what is possible within the discipline.

A Future Unwritten

As I reflect on the journey of STAIR, I am reminded of the words of Mother Teresa: "*I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.*" It is a vision that feels both utopian and urgent, especially in a time when the international stage is marked by deepening inequalities, violences, and ecological crises. STAIR does not claim to have the answers, but it does insist on the importance of asking new questions.

Can IR become a space for world-making, rather than merely world-ordering? Can it embrace the plurality of perspectives and practices that define the Global South? These questions remain open, as does the future of STAIR. But perhaps it is in this openness, this refusal to settle, that its greatest potential lies.

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Suci Lestari Yuana is a lecturer at the Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Indonesia. Her research focuses on sustainability transitions, circular economy, and the intersections of science, technology, and arts in global politics. She is the founder of the STAIR (Sciences, Technology, and Arts in International Relations) community, which fosters interdisciplinary dialogue to challenge conventional perspectives in International Relations. Yuana is passionate about making knowledge accessible and regularly shares her ideas through teaching, writing, and her YouTube channel, @geknanaa. Her work bridges academic scholarship and community engagement, aiming to inspire inclusive and transformative approaches to global challenges.

Okky Madasari is an award-winning Indonesian novelist, essayist, and advocate for social justice. Known for her bold exploration of themes like freedom, human rights, and resistance to oppression, her works resonate deeply with the struggles and aspirations of marginalized communities. Okky's novels, including The Years of the Voiceless, The Outcast, and Bound, have garnered critical acclaim for their profound narratives and compelling characters. A recipient of the prestigious Khatulistiwa Literary Award, Okky uses her platform to address pressing social and political issues in Indonesia and beyond. She is also a STAIR Research Fellow, contributing to interdisciplinary dialogues on science, technology, and the arts in shaping global narratives. Beyond her writing, she actively promotes literary culture, serving as a mentor and speaker in various forums, fostering awareness and dialogue about societal transformation.

Tane Andrea Hadiyantono is the STAIR Course Tutor, facilitating first-ever STAIR (Sciences, Technology, and Arts in International Relations) class at Universitas Gadjah Mada's International Relations Department. The course explores interdisciplinary approaches to global challenges, centralizing the role of science, technology, and the arts in rethinking

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This monograph is a reflective series of the Science, Technology and Arts in International Relations courses at the Department of International Relations in Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta that the three authors are heavily involved in.

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