

Globalization and Labour Relations in Indonesia

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There are alternative conceptualizations of the phenomenon of globalization which as yet remain theoretically weak. Further, whether globalization is a tendency towards one global economy or whether it is just another stage in the internationalization of capital remains contested. This paper overviews the context of globalization and labor relations in the countries of the Asia-Pacific region before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of globalization and labor relations in Indonesia. One reason for attention to the Asia-pacific countries is that the the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (ASEAN and APEC) have become highly significant regional and supra-regional forces in world trade in the 1990s. The rapid industrialization of many Asia-Pacific countries has sensitised them to the global effects of their economies and to their need to be responsive to global and regional developments in trading relationships. Not least in importance here is the determination of the character of labor relations in each of the countries. In particular, labor relations in Indonesia are of global interest because of a number of factors: the stage of Indonesia's industrialization; the linking of trade preferences with the reform of human and worker rights; the role of labour in the socio-political control of the country; the need for Indonesia to decide where to position itself viz-a-viz globalization; the link between the struggle for independent trade unionism and democratization. Emphasizing the regional dimension, the paper concludes that it might be suggested that the future of labor relations in Indonesia may be looked for more in the agendas of ASEAN and APEC than in the historical stages of any one of the Asian industrialized countries.