



Article

# Does Bilateral Meeting-related Information Reflect Foreign Policy? The Case of Indonesia under the Jokowi Administration

Ali Maksum\* 

Master of International Relations Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Mohammad Reevany Bustami 

Centre for Policy Research and International Studies (CenPRIS) Universiti Sains Malaysia

## Abstract

Bilateral meetings are often seen as indicative of a country's foreign policy direction. This study investigates whether the frequency and content of President Joko Widodo's bilateral meetings align with Indonesia's broader foreign policy agenda. Employing an information dissemination approach, the research analyses content from the State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia official website (<https://www.setneg.go.id>), a relatively understudied source, using content analysis supported by NVivo. The findings reveal a disconnect between publicised diplomatic engagements and key policy narratives. While Jokowi frequently emphasises infrastructure development in public speeches, bilateral meetings are predominantly framed around commerce and industry. Additionally, Indonesia's most frequent meeting partners, such as Australia and Vietnam, differ from its key trade partners like China, the United States, and Japan. These discrepancies suggest that the state's official communication does not fully reflect substantive foreign policy priorities. This study contributes a novel perspective to the study of Indonesian foreign policy by focusing on state-led information flows and issue mapping. It concludes with policy recommendations aimed at improving transparency and coherence in foreign policy communication.

## Keywords

Bilateral meeting, Foreign policy, Information, Indonesia, Jokowi

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### Corresponding author:

\* Email: [ali.maksum@fisisipol.umy.ac.id](mailto:ali.maksum@fisisipol.umy.ac.id)

## Introduction

In his recent research, Ben Bland characterises Jokowi as a “Man in Contradiction,” aiming to depict the seventh Indonesian president who frequently exhibits divergent factual realities across various settings. Jokowi, as the subject of extensive media coverage, has consistently been the focal point of information pertaining to a wide range of problems in Indonesia, encompassing economics, development, social security, and foreign policy matters (Bland, 2020). According to Marcus Meitzner, the term “technocratic populism” was used to characterise Jokowi as a democratically elected president who prioritised development, particularly in the area of infrastructure (Mietzner, 2015). However, Jokowi’s populism has had minimal effect on Indonesia’s foreign policy, which remains less populist than in earlier periods. The challenges of pragmatism and domestic limits pose a distinct barrier for Jokowi, as he consistently endeavours to portray himself as a pro-people and anti-oppression (Wicaksana, 2022).

Media and information dissemination play an important role in fostering populism in Indonesian politics, particularly in Jokowi’s case. Populism has become a common foundation for information governance, as seen in Jokowi’s progression from Solo’s mayor to president. In contrast, it is arguable that Jokowi’s managerial system ought to have undergone a transformation upon assuming the presidency. The governance system of the state is undoubtedly different from the governance and policies of the City of Solo (Pepinsky, 2020). The most essential aspect of leadership is the alignment between presidential election campaign promises and actual politics. According to Ergün and Karsten, media logic serves as a convenient means to ascertain the campaign promises made by candidates and their subsequent implementation in practise. Thus, the fundamental question is, why the media? Because the media, particularly the government’s official media, serves as a primary source for the public to assess the extent to which campaign pledges have been translated into public policy (Ergün & Karsten, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the media has actually been the primary tool in raising his popularity, especially Jokowi, who has been heavily supported by the national media from the very beginning (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

Several studies highlight Indonesia’s foreign policy under Jokowi as leaning more toward China and being less engaged with the United States (Grossman, 2021a). The perceived strength of Indonesia’s bilateral ties with China mostly stems from economic considerations, despite the potential opposition from local quarters due to prevailing anti-China sentiments among Indonesian (Hamilton-Hart & McRae, 2015). From its inception, President Jokowi has consistently underscored the orientation of his administration on the development of Indonesia’s infrastructure, which is perceived to have lagged behind that of neighbouring nations. The tagline “*poros maritim dunia*” (global maritime fulcrum) emerged as a significant and promising political tool for the electorate (Connelly, 2014, 2015). In addition to the issue of Indonesia’s proximity to China, a study reveals that contradictions have emerged in Jokowi’s foreign policy. On the one hand, it demonstrates an expansion of bilateral economic relations, while on the other, it focuses on domestic security issues (Karim et al., 2023). Indeed, domestic security disruptions such as terrorist attacks will have a significant impact on foreign direct investment, economic stability, and the welfare of the population (Zakaria et al., 2019).

In this context, Jokowi’s foreign policy reflects both continuity and change across his two presidential terms. During his first term, Jokowi frequently promoted the concept of the “global maritime fulcrum”, a vision introduced as early as his presidential campaign and reinforced by assertive policies under key figures like Minister Susi Pudjiastuti. This phase was marked by bold rhetoric and a maritime-oriented foreign policy that, while gaining domestic support, also drew criticism from neighbouring countries (Connelly, 2016). In contrast, Jokowi’s second term shifted

toward the slogan “*Indonesia maju*” (Indonesia forward), emphasising his ambition to elevate Indonesia’s status as a developed and globally respected nation. Despite this shift in narrative, Jokowi maintained a pragmatic and inward-looking foreign policy, heavily focused on attracting foreign policy investment, particularly from China, while continuing to balance Indonesia’s strategic relations with both China and the United States (Wicaksana, 2022). Thus, while the rhetoric and vision evolved, the underlying pragmatism of Jokowi’s foreign policy remained consistent.

This article is important because it strives to present an evaluative analysis of President Jokowi’s foreign policy using an information dissemination approach that is relatively unpopular among international relations thinkers and policymakers. Since media are vital for conveying policy information and enabling public evaluation, information and communication technology (ICT) platforms are essential. In the era of ICT, website (Web 1.0) is one of the most widely used ICT platforms by government-related foreign policy agencies such as the Secretary of State and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to disseminate information related to bilateral relations. In addition, the website provides information that can be accessed quickly, including using a mobile phone. Even in mobile phone search engines, information on websites appears faster than sources from other ICT platforms (El-Bakry & Mastorakis, 2009). Therefore, the quality and speed of delivering information are important because they can determine the perception of the state and government officials (Bickham & Francis, 2021), including those in charge of foreign policy. Evaluative research on the use of this website is relevant and important because it can be strategically useful for the government to improve the quality of information and public diplomacy, which is imperative (Lee et al., 2022).

In this context, using websites in foreign policy governance is substantial. An official government website should be responsible and play a major role in providing the public with accurate information about the policies. A state media should not only be used as a venue for self-defence (Hansson, 2017) against distorted or ineffective policies since society remains disadvantaged. The government website is a database for the public to search for information, including those related to foreign policy (Neumann et al., 2022). Therefore, the public should be informed about foreign policy, such as the nations with which the government has established bilateral relations, associated issues, and their effects on the welfare of the people. This is imperative since a number of sensitive diplomatic issues, such as those involving the initiation of bilateral relations between Indonesia and Israel (Barton & Rubenstein, 2005), continue to exist.

Inevitably, the State Secretary plays a crucial role here in distributing information on foreign policy (Moses & Knutsen, 2001). With this, the main question should be “How Indonesia’s foreign policy information distributed through the website of State Secretary during President Jokowi’s administration?”. This question thus serves as critical evaluative material for the following question, namely “Does bilateral meeting-related information reflect Indonesian foreign policy during the Jokowi administration?”. This study argues that the information disseminated does not accurately reflect the actual problems during Jokowi administration. The discrepancy is seen in the disparity between data, public debate and discourse about Jokowi’s foreign policy and information supplied through the Indonesian Secretary of State’s website. Given that the information distribution approach to foreign policy has arguably been understudied, the theoretical building of information and foreign policy is regarded as pivotal. This theoretical construction is projected to contribute to the advancement of foreign policy analysis from the standpoint of information distribution, with Indonesia as a case study. Thus, the theorising of information and Indonesian foreign policy needs to be investigated in the subsequent paragraphs.

## Theorising Information and Indonesian Foreign Policy

### *Information and International Relations*

The post-Cold War era has transformed global politics and society following the rapid development of ICT. Ideological rivalries between communism and capitalism have been replaced by global competition on high technology. Internet, electronic and manufacturing industries were major issues across the world. Instead of the US monopoly on high technology industries, a new industrialized countries emerged especially in Asia including China which economically began to rise (Ganley, 1993). Although the development of ICT began during the Cold War, it was not exploited commercially until after the Cold War, which sparked remarkable breakthroughs in the transmission of information flows, including its application in the military field (Naughton, 2016). After the end of the Cold War, information flows were progressively managed by highly developed information and communication technologies. For instance, in the early 1990s, the internet carried only 1% of all worldwide data. However, by the year 2000, that figure had risen dramatically to 51% of all global information delivery. After seven years, specifically in 2007, the internet has become the primary means by which 97% of the world's information is delivered (Hilbert & López, 2011).

Indeed, information plays a pivotal role in the post-Cold War international relations. Following the demise of traditional security discourse and replaced by non-traditional issues such as national security, human security, social security, human rights, democracy, etc., information was arguably deceived. A study revealed that information influences regime changes where the dispersed news makes a leader of the government aware on the uncertainty political situation (Helland et al., 2021). During the Cold War era, information was controlled by the government authority and state actors. In Indonesian case, for instance, media freedom was absent during Suharto's administration where all public information should be filtered and monitored by the government. However, after the Cold War followed by political transformation in 1998, the demand on the freedom of expression become one of the main challenges for Suharto's leadership which led to his collapse from the office (Maksum et al., 2019). In the following development, coupled with the growth of social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, information that was distributed through these platforms really caused a wave of protests when the Arab Spring hit several countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, and others (Blagojević & Šćekić, 2022; Wilson & Corey, 2012).

In the context of foreign policy, several world leaders have effectively utilised social media to advance public diplomacy. Leaders such as Barack Obama (Losh, 2012) and Donald Trump actively engaged with the public through platforms especially Twitter (X) to shape narrative, influence opinion, and extend diplomatic messaging (Ott, 2017). Similarly, global figure like Pope Francis have used social media, particularly Twitter, to disseminate message of peace and humanitarian concern (Narbona, 2016). President Jokowi has also emerged as one of the most active social media users among world leaders, particularly given Indonesia's large and digitally connected population. However, unlike the more institutionalised and strategically coordinated digital diplomacy efforts seen in countries like the United States or the Vatican, Jokowi's engagement remains largely localised and personal (Tassenaar, 2021). His social media presence, while influential domestically, has yet to produce significant public diplomacy outcomes at the international level.

In various conflicts and wars, information can be used pragmatically as a propaganda instrument. Then came the so-called information war, where the objective is to influence the contending parties, as well as the public, regarding the current dynamics. In addition, the

information campaign is meant to be a type of psywar that affects both the state and its citizens (Alborova et al., 2020). The Kosovo War is often cited as the first conflict since the end of the Cold War to make extensive use of information and communication technologies for propaganda purposes (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001). Furthermore, e-diplomacy has emerged in the context of diplomacy and foreign policy, and its development is speeding up along with the sophistication of ICT. Afterwards, a number of international relations field research emerged that were significantly influenced by ICT developments, such as twitter diplomacy (Madu, 2021), cyber diplomacy (Attatfa et al., 2020), cyber war (Ashraf, 2021), cyber terrorism (Heickerö, 2014), and others.

### ***Information Delivery and Foreign Policy***

Given the vital role of information in international relations, the distribution of information becomes a crucial factor. In addition to serving as a propaganda instrument, the information that is disseminated essentially determines the image and perception of international relations actors toward an event (Seo, 2014). Information mastery determines the trajectory of government policy, including the formation of societal perceptions. Information can be viewed as a battlefield where actors engage in political conflict. The quantity, comprehensiveness, and structured information obtained, the simpler and more effective the identification of problems and the ensuing policy solutions and political actions (Sin, 2016). Then, the concept of “information politics” evolved as a means of exercising authority over the production and diffusion of data (Blom & Vanhoonacker, 2014). In this case, the government, as the primary actor in international relations with all its political resources, is extremely interested in information sources. As basic assumptions of two-level games theory (Putnam, 1988), government leaders also advantage from mastery of information sources for survival interests in local politics.

Since information becomes a significant tool for policymakers and political actors, framing becomes an effective approach for influencing public opinion and perceptions, as well as building policymakers’ image. Furthermore, framing has a significant impact on public diplomacy, which is employed by many governments to improve their image amid foreign policy controversy, as the United States did after the September 11 attacks (Schatz & Levine, 2010). Information is crucial for the success of two significant foreign policy elements, namely, public diplomacy and framing (Marschlich, 2023). In addition to variations in diplomacy and foreign policy agendas, framing and public diplomacy are intertwined with political interests that frequently result in the dissemination of false information (Schatz & Levine, 2010). With the development of ICT, various sources of information, including from policymakers and other influential actors (influencers) in cyberspace, contribute to the spread of disinformation (Hedling, 2021). The existence of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and others makes information increasingly diverse, and this is where false news is prevalent. Nevertheless, the risk of fake news productions persists whether they are manufactured by the state or by other actors (Dame Adjintettey, 2022).

For this reason, at the highest level of the state, information could be employed at two levels: domestic (internal) and foreign (external). For external purposes, the government uses information to promote its international image, for example, promoting the country’s positive values through print and electronic media. State actors are also attempting to engage with the global world through social media platforms in order to promote a positive image (Fu, 2023; Zhu, 2022). Then came digital leadership, which is defined as world leaders exploiting information and expanding influence digitally (Narbona, 2016). However, information is sometimes utilised for propaganda against other countries, such as through unfavourable reporting on sensitive matters. The growth of negative framing in cyberspace against other countries, such as terrorists, radicals,

and so on, is nothing more than a type of foreign political propaganda (Politzer & Alcaraz, 2023). The presence of the “CNN effect” is a clear example of how information has become a vital tool in foreign policy. This means that state leaders use information pragmatically to further their foreign policy objectives (Gilboa, 2005).

Meanwhile at the domestic level, information about foreign policy issues has the potential to be used to divert issues or cover up issues. In the context of formulating foreign policy, it is known as diversionary foreign policy, which is a government action using foreign policy issues to divert public attention from domestic problems (Haynes, 2015). In order to survive in national politics, state leaders are frequently motivated to conceal domestic political problems or issues through diversionary tactics. This is what Bill Clinton did when he opted to get engaged in the wars in Yugoslavia and Iraq despite the fact that he was facing the fallout from a sexual scandal (Blomdahl, 2016). Also, President Saddam Hussein tried to divert attention away from Iraq’s economic, social, and political crises by attacking Kuwait and Israel during the Gulf War (Kanat, 2013). Foreign policy issues have been used by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to deflect public anger over his administration’s policy of steadily rising oil prices (Maksum & Bustami, 2014). The Chinese government, meantime, has leveraged international concerns—specifically the fight against terrorism that has intensified since the September 11 attacks—to cement the Han majority’s hold on power at the national level (Kanat, 2012). All of the aforementioned diversionary foreign policy dynamics employ information politics as their primary tactic, leveraging all media spaces, both mainstream and social media (Barberá et al., 2022).

### ***Indonesian foreign policy in the information age***

Syaifani and Qubba (2018) suggest that Indonesia has not fully leveraged its position as one of the world’s largest internet user bases to advance digital diplomacy. Although various government institutions have adopted digital technologies to disseminate policy-related information, their effectiveness remains uneven. For instance, Madu (2018) notes that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers its website to be among the most developed within the Indonesian government. However, despite these efforts, the ministry continues to face challenges in establishing itself as a leading actor in digital diplomacy (Syaifani & Qubba, 2018). Social media platforms such as Twitter are actively utilised, yet limitations persist, including relatively low posting frequency and limited follower engagement (Madu, 2021). Consequently, public visibility and appreciation of the ministry’s digital diplomacy initiatives remain modest (Kurniawati et al., 2020). In contrast, President Jokowi has demonstrated greater success in positioning himself as a prominent “digital diplomat” through active engagement across platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and You Tube (Syaifani & Qubba, 2018). This is partly due to his strong presence and influence in the digital sphere (Narbona, 2016). Overall, these developments reflect broader government efforts to implement e-government policies amid rapid technological change (Misran et al., 2021).

Scholarly research on information dissemination about Indonesian foreign policy, specifically on websites, is comparatively underrepresented. Few research attempted to examine these issues, and for instance, Hartati (2018) investigated the effectiveness and challenges of website management in the context of digital diplomacy. However, it is considered preliminary research that did not adequately provide primary data regarding quality or quantity. Surwandono et al. (2021) reported the same result by researching web pages about foreign policy and focused more on the paradiplomacy practiced by the local governments. The research was essential since it showed that local governments face website management problems, such as inadequate digital infrastructure and weak human resource support. In addition to social media, websites require

serious research regarding the transmission of foreign policy information. It provides access to more comprehensive information than social media platforms such as Twitter, which have character limits (Ahmed et al., 2020; Boot et al., 2019).

The research on Instagram by Sari (2021) is relevant to digital diplomacy in Indonesian foreign policy, particularly concerning the function, and has not uncovered information dissemination (Sari, 2021). In fact, Instagram reaches youth groups and not the larger community successfully (Suharyanti et al., 2018) because it is only for photo and video sharing (Jiang & Ngien, 2020). Researching Instagram is also rare and important, but this research focuses more on the website to fill the gap in the previous literature. Specifically, it examines relatively understudied Indonesian information dissemination on foreign policy websites. Indeed, this research would be hugely advantageous to foreign policy studies, particularly those concerned with the dissemination of foreign policy information. It offers an alternative viewpoint on foreign policy from an information distribution standpoint that scholars of international relations largely neglect. This discovery is also expected to provide recommendations to academics and relevant agencies on issues about Indonesian foreign policy.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

This research conformed to the content analysis and focused on foreign policy material released on the website of the Indonesian State Secretary. To understand foreign policy, it is highly crucial to examine the trajectory of bilateral interactions between a nation and various international players. Bilateral relations involving meetings garner significant attention from scholars and practitioners in the field of international relations since they are closely linked to political dynamics and other crucial issues pertaining to the global community. For instance, bilateral relations related topics encompassing the study of international relations include war and peace, the dynamics of conflict and cooperation, the establishment and maintenance of global order, matters pertaining to regional integration, the role of international organisations, and the intricacies of foreign policy (Ludwig, 2021). Bilateral meetings serve as a platform for countries to engage in negotiations and establish agreements with other parties. The significance of this bilateral encounter is well acknowledged as it plays a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of a nation (Kaarbo, 2001; Qin et al., 2022; Solomon, 1999). Hence, it is highly pertinent to examine the phenomenon of bilateral meets as a potential gauge for assessing the intricacies of a nation's foreign policy. Indeed, the methodology of this research adopted and modified the Fidler (2006) and Spohr and da Silva's (2017) previous works. These researches provided a thorough framework for evaluating the nation's foreign policy agenda and priorities. Thus, the term "bilateral" serves as the primary keyword for retrieving material pertaining to Indonesian foreign policy on the official website of the Indonesian State Secretary.

### *Data Resource*

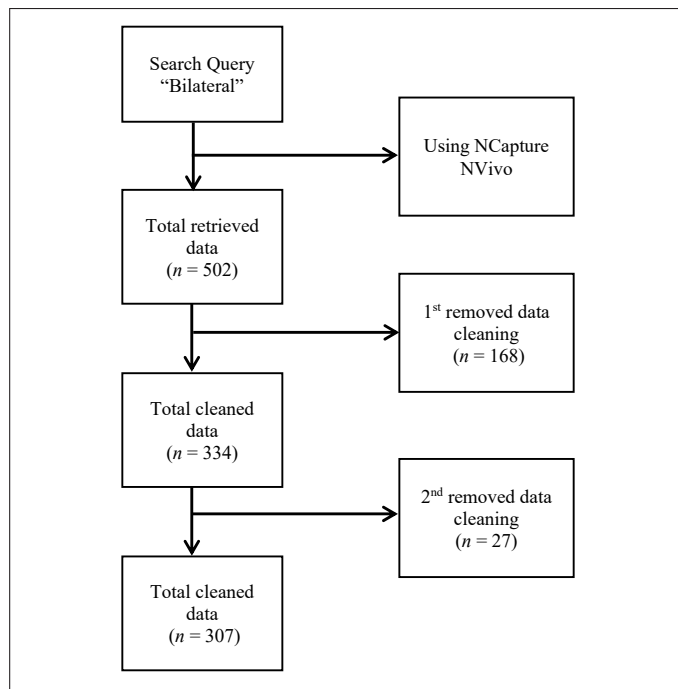
Using the keyword "bilateral", data of this research were gathered from foreign policy-related news published on the website of the State Secretary of Indonesia (<https://www.setneg.go.id>). This study uses news on Indonesia's bilateral meetings during Jokowi's presidency (2014–August 2022) to examine foreign policy priorities.

To systematically archive the news dataset, NVivo 12 Plus was employed, complemented

by NCapture web browser extension. This can capture website news files in the form of .ncvx files and store them in folders prepared neatly and securely. Therefore, the total number of news articles collected ( $n = 502$ ) directly connected to bilateral talks between the Indonesian government and other nations. After sorting ( $n = 502$ ) gathered news articles, only ( $n = 334$ ) files fit the subject of Indonesian foreign policy. The number ( $n = 307$ ) remained after re-clearing due to duplicate or similar content, missing or irrelevant information, and failure to download during the subsequent phase. Furthermore, these articles were coded using the NVivo 12 Plus program to determine foreign policy agenda and priorities as depicted in the following figure.

### Research Instruments

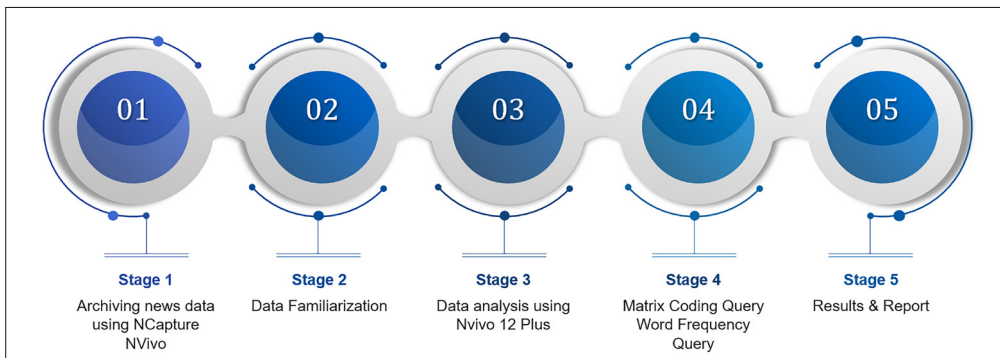
The instrument of this research is codebook or coding scheme which may improve during coding process (Neuendorf, 2017) of foreign policy news released on the website of the Indonesia State Secretary (Table 1). The instrument was constructed based on previous research namely Fidler (2006) and Spohr and da Silva (2017) on categorising the foreign policy agenda during bilateral diplomacy with other parties. Therefore, this research investigated six features or categories, which served as a guide for the NVivo 12 Plus software coding procedure. The six categories were (1) the number of bilateral meeting-related news articles by year, (2) the bilateral meetings by country, (3) the topics of bilateral meeting-related news articles, (4) pre- and post-event news, (5) the type of news, and (6) the frequency of terms.



**Figure 1.** Data extraction process

**Table 1.** Categories used for content analysis and coding procedure using NVivo 12 Plus

| Aspect                       | Categories  |
|------------------------------|---|
| Year of publication          | 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022                          |
| Topic of a bilateral meeting | Global Economy<br>Global Issues<br>Politics and Defence<br>Social and Culture |
| Period of publication        | Pre-event<br>Post-event   |
| Type of news                 | Flash news<br>General news<br>Policy socialization<br>Press release           |



**Figure 2.** Data extraction process

**Data Analysis**

This research adhered to the protocol and data coding using the program NVivo 12 Plus. Data were obtained, cleared, and coded from the website of the Indonesian State Secretary. Once the news files data set (.ncvx file) had been collected, familiarised, organised, and stored in the NVivo 12 Plus software, coding is performed according to the predetermined categories (Table 1). NVivo 12 Plus features were utilised to generate data, namely matrix coding query, and word frequency query. The final data were given in graphs, charts, and word clouds as the result of data analysis. The following graph shows a summary of the entire data analysis process.

**Results**

**Evaluating Indonesian foreign policy through bilateral meeting information**

This section presents the outcomes of data analysis pertaining to the evaluation of information

regarding the bilateral talks held between President Jokowi and foreign counterparts. The NVivo application is employed to process the data derived from news stories that have been published on the official website of the State Secretary of Indonesia, which can be accessed at <https://www.setneg.go.id>.

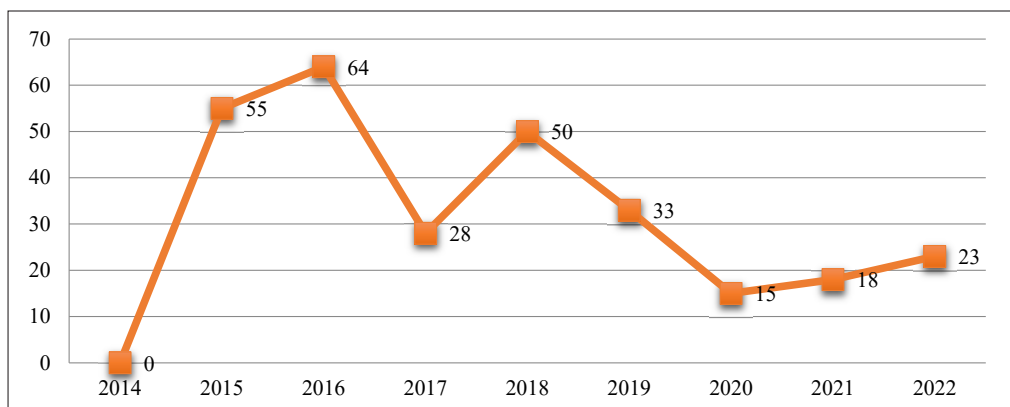
### *Number of Bilateral Meeting-related News*

Figure 3 shows an interesting trend that the news published by the State Secretary regarding the bilateral meetings has fluctuated. Since being sworn in as president of Indonesia, the State Secretary has also directly covered President Jokowi. However, those related to bilateral meetings experienced differences. Figure 3 shows that in 2014, there was no news related to Indonesia's meetings with other countries. The highest intensity occurred in 2016, where the frequency of news reached 64 pieces a year. Meanwhile, the lowest was in 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit all countries worldwide. During this period, there were 15 meetings with international partners, and this trend continued to increase in the following two years as the Covid-19 pandemic decreased.

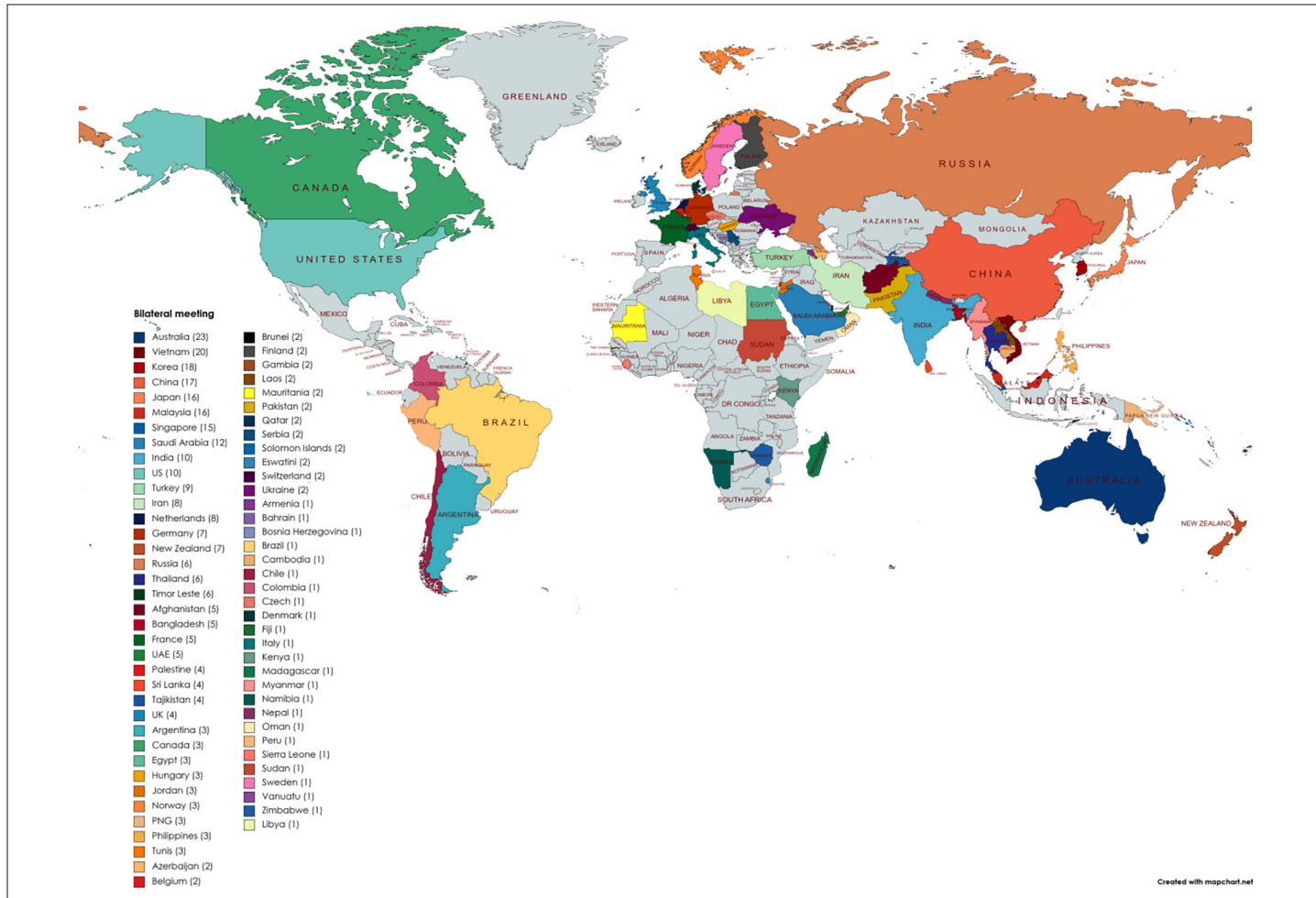
### *Number of Bilateral Meetings by Country*

Based on the news obtained, partner countries' foreign policy trends are interesting. During Jokowi administration, Australia ( $n = 23$ ) and Vietnam ( $n = 20$ ) intensely held bilateral meetings with Indonesia. Interestingly, countries with a history of closeness, specifically in the region, actually have fewer meetings compared to Malaysia ( $n = 16$ ), Singapore ( $n = 15$ ), Thailand ( $n = 6$ ), Timor Leste ( $n = 6$ ), Philippines ( $n = 3$ ), Laos ( $n = 2$ ), Brunei Darussalam ( $n = 2$ ), Myanmar ( $n = 1$ ), and Cambodia ( $n = 1$ ). Papua New Guinea (PNG), although not a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), had 3 meetings or higher than Laos, Brunei Darussalam, and Cambodia.

There are also countries outside the Southeast Asia region with a history of close bilateral relations, specifically trade and investment, which intensively held more than 10 meetings during President Jokowi leadership. These countries include Korea ( $n = 18$ ), China ( $n = 17$ ), Japan ( $n = 16$ ), Saudi Arabia ( $n = 12$ ), India ( $n = 10$ ), and the US ( $n = 10$ ). Meanwhile, countries known as the main contributors to investment and development had a small number of bilateral meetings.



**Figure 3.** Number of bilateral meeting-related news by year



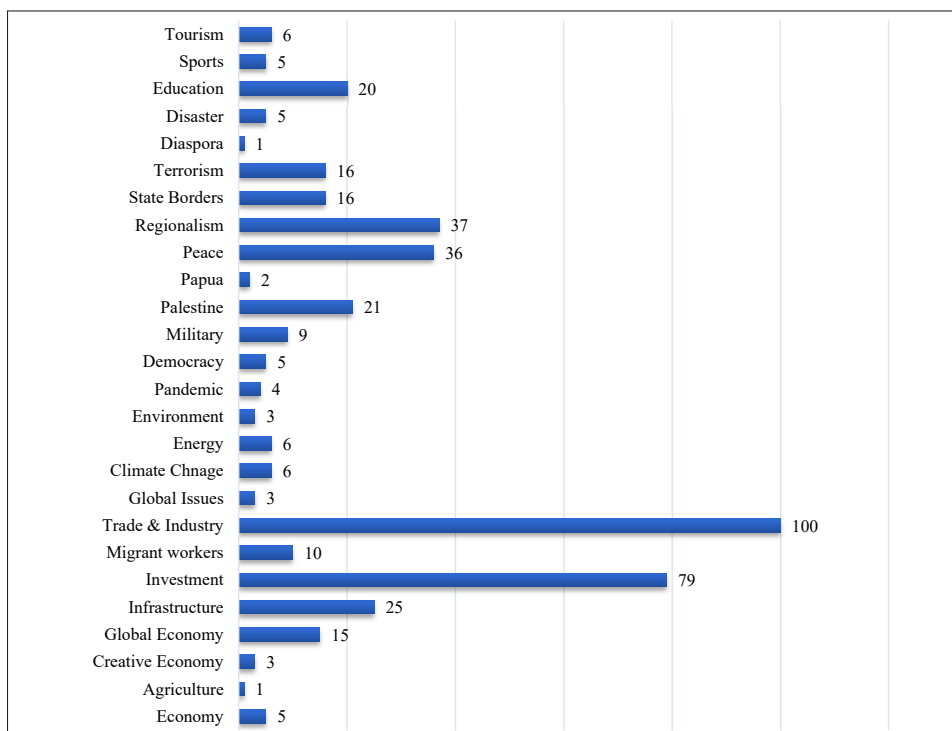
**Figure 4.** Number of bilateral meetings by country (software Mapchart) (<https://www.mapchart.net/world.html>, accessed on September 28, 2022)

These include the Netherlands ( $n = 7$ ), Germany ( $n = 7$ ), New Zealand ( $n = 7$ ), Russia ( $n = 6$ ), France ( $n = 5$ ), the UK ( $n = 4$ ), Norway ( $n = 3$ ), UAE ( $n = 3$ ), Canada ( $n = 3$ ), Qatar ( $n = 2$ ), and Switzerland ( $n = 2$ ). Some countries are important contributors to investment but are not recorded as holding bilateral meetings with the Jokowi government, such as Mauritius and Hong Kong.

There are also Muslim-majority countries with historical ties but without intensive meetings. These include Turkey ( $n = 9$ ), Iran ( $n = 8$ ), Afghanistan ( $n = 5$ ), Palestine ( $n = 4$ ), Tajikistan ( $n = 4$ ), Egypt ( $n = 3$ ), Jordan ( $n = 3$ ), Azerbaijan ( $n = 2$ ), Pakistan ( $n = 2$ ), Bahrain ( $n = 1$ ), Oman ( $n = 1$ ), Sudan ( $n = 1$ ), Bosnia and Herzegovina ( $n = 1$ ), and Libya ( $n = 1$ ).

### *Topics of bilateral meeting-related news articles*

During President Jokowi administration, various bilateral meetings with foreign partners focused on issues of national interest. However, according to Figure 5, the news archive shows an interesting trend regarding the issues discussed in bilateral meetings. Trade and industry ( $n = 100$ ) are the most important issue and often appears in publications related to bilateral meetings. Some issues are linear in this field, namely investment ( $n = 79$ ), the second most important discussion issue during Jokowi administration. In addition to the two issues, the intensity of the government's bilateral meetings was coloured by various topics of discussion spread over several important issues. This is less in number than the topics of "trade & industry and "investment". Additional issues that are quite significant are related to regionalism ( $n = 37$ ), peace ( $n = 36$ ), and infrastructure ( $n = 25$ ). Interestingly, several issues are discussed but are not the main preference in bilateral meetings with foreign partners compared to investment and trade issues. These



**Figure 5.** Issues of bilateral meeting-related news

include the issues of Palestine ( $n = 21$ ), terrorism ( $n = 16$ ), migrant workers ( $n = 10$ ), pandemic ( $n = 4$ ), and Papua issues ( $n = 2$ ). Other issues are insignificant and varied, such as energy ( $n = 6$ ), climate change ( $n = 6$ ), democracy ( $n = 5$ ), disaster ( $n = 5$ ), and agriculture ( $n = 1$ ). Specifically, the economic sector seems to be a priority for foreign policy during Jokowi era. The order of preference for the top six bilateral meetings of the government in the economic field is 1<sup>st</sup> trade and industry ( $n = 100$ ), 2<sup>nd</sup> investment ( $n = 79$ ), 3<sup>rd</sup> infrastructure ( $n = 25$ ), 4<sup>th</sup> global economy ( $n = 15$ ), 5<sup>th</sup> creative economy ( $n = 3$ ), and 6<sup>th</sup> economy ( $n = 5$ ) when ranking is made.

In addition to mapping issue frequency, this topic distribution also reveals key foreign policy tendencies during President Jokowi's administration. The dominance of trade and industry ( $n = 100$ ) and investment ( $n = 79$ ) underscore the administration's economic-centric approach, indicating that bilateral diplomacy primarily served as a vehicle to achieve domestic goals. These patterns affirm earlier studies that Jokowi prioritised tangible development outcomes, particularly infrastructure and industrialisation, over traditional ideological or geopolitical alignments. While issues like Palestine, terrorism, and migrant workers were present, their lower frequency suggests that symbolic, humanitarian, or diaspora-related issues were less central in bilateral engagements. Furthermore, the prominence of regionalism and peace demonstrates Indonesia's continued commitment to ASEAN diplomacy and conflict resolution in Southeast Asia. Thus, beyond simply listing topics, this content analysis reflects a broader shift in Indonesian foreign policy under Jokowi, one that emphasised pragmatic, development diplomacy over normative concerns. This analytical layer complements the NVivo-based findings and situates the observed topic preferences within the larger foreign policy trajectory.

### ***Period of Publication***

Understanding this publishing phase is crucial because it shows that foreign policy serves as an agenda setting, fosters community engagement, or performs solely as information dissemination. Figure 6 shows that of the 251 news articles about bilateral meetings held by the Indonesian government, the majority were published after the meeting. However, only 31 articles were published before the bilateral meetings between the Indonesian government and foreign partners. As visualised in Figure 6, the post-event news dissemination related to bilateral meetings is large and conspicuous. A news graphic for the bilateral meeting was made before the event was available, and it was underwhelming.

The dominance of post-event news coverage suggests that government's communication strategy is more reactive than anticipatory. Rather than using pre-event news announcements to build public awareness, engagement, or diplomatic expectations, the State Secretariat appears to prioritise documenting outcomes after meetings have taken place. This pattern may reflect a bureaucratic preference for reporting achievements rather than fostering participatory diplomacy or transparency. From a foreign policy communication standpoint, such practices may limit public understanding of Indonesia's negotiation positions or diplomatic priorities before key bilateral engagement occur.

### ***Type of News***

The articles about bilateral meetings between the Indonesian government and foreign partners posted showed an intriguing pattern. Most of them are general news ( $n = 222$ ), which the audience may easily understand. Some of the news contains brief information or "flash news" ( $n = 50$ ), given as short messages. Meanwhile, the formal news in press releases only makes up a small number, and those described as "policy socialisation" is either absent or zero. The data

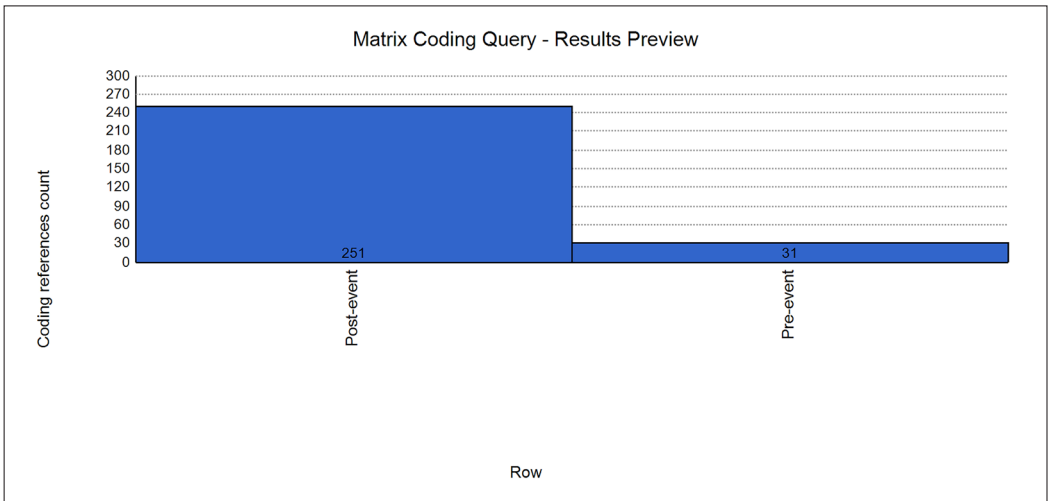


Figure 6. Pre and post-event news

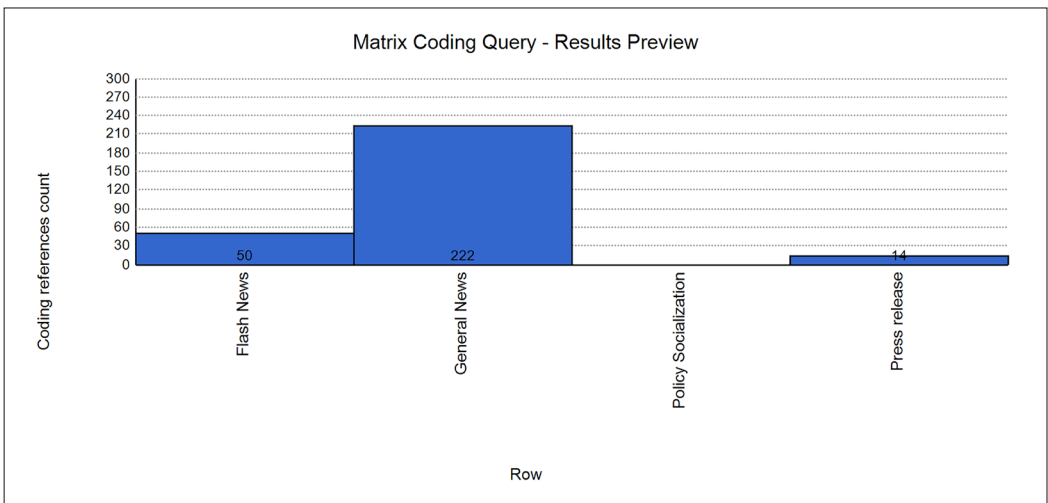


Figure 7. Type of news

also depicted foreign policy news patterns reported by the State Secretary, largely comprised of standard journalism storylines.

This pattern suggests that the State Secretary prioritises accessible and straightforward news formats over in-depth or technical policy communication. The dominance of general news and flash news implies a tendency to inform rather than engage or educate the public about the complexity of foreign policy. The absence of policy socialisation and the minimal use of press releases may indicate limited efforts to frame bilateral diplomacy within broader strategic narratives or long-term foreign policy goals. This also reflects the reactive rather than proactive nature of foreign policy communication under the Jokowi administration.



in bilateral meetings organised by the Indonesian government. The findings of this study provide various analyses pertaining to the data derived from the processing of information distribution regarding Indonesian foreign policy as posted on the official website of the Indonesian Secretary of State.

The dissemination of foreign policy information by President Jokowi highly intensified during the first presidency. This information trend aligns with President Jokowi's populist policy. The deliberate utilisation of extensive news creation appears to be a strategic decision aimed at familiarising the general public with the foreign policy initiatives undertaken by the president. This aligns with Jokowi's consistent portrayal as a popular figure in the media, garnering extensive attention from mainstream mass media outlets, particularly those with a pro-Jokowi stance. Regrettably, high-quality reporting adhering to rigorous and ethical journalistic norms remains frequently exists. This assertion is substantiated by the presence of numerous narratives characterised by inadequate structural elements, alongside a substantial amount of news information that appears to lack meticulous preparation. It is imperative to underscore the significance of the presidential palace's endeavour to engage news writers possessing proficient journalistic aptitude.

In contrast, in the second term, foreign policy-related information declined significantly. The Covid-19 pandemic likely contributed to the frequency of bilateral meetings and news coverage, and online meetings were also common. The limited presence of 15 news stories on the website suggests suboptimal performance on the part of the government communication team. During the subsequent phase, Jokowi, who had secured his election, was deemed by the information team as not requiring significant public support. This information holds significance for people seeking to remain informed about the foreign policy initiatives implemented by the Jokowi administration. However, it is worth noting that notable advancements have taken place in terms of Jokowi's adeptness in utilising social media platforms for disseminating information. This empirical evidence supports the assertion that Jokowi has emerged as a prominent global leader in the realm of social media (Narbona, 2016). Nevertheless, the efficacy of the information team, particularly in relation to the official government website of the Secretary of State's Department, was unsatisfactory. This assertion aligns with the argument given by Madu (2021) and Syaifani and Qubba (2018) that the website of the Indonesian foreign ministry is the most superior website compared to other agencies.

Indonesia's Jokowi also devotes its thoughts and ideas to economic problems and increasing state revenues through trade and industry with partner countries. The available data presents a contradictory finding. The prominence of the infrastructure issue, frequently emphasised by President Jokowi, seems to be downplayed in the press coverage provided by the Secretary of State of Indonesia. Jokowi seeks to underscore the significance of inclusive infrastructure as a pivotal factor for achieving economic prosperity, with the terminology of "maritime fulcrum". Nevertheless, Jokowi's acumen in business always manifests itself in every account of bilateral encounters, owing to his previous experience as a trader. Consequently, the content displayed on the website primarily revolves around trade and investment matters involving multiple stakeholders. Consequently, a discrepancy arises in the transmission of information regarding the concept of the "maritime fulcrum," which has been promoted since President Jokowi's nomination (Connelly, 2014), and its implementation in practical settings, which primarily revolves around business discourse.

Australia and Vietnam are the two main countries that frequently become the main partner in bilateral relations related to economic affairs. Furthermore, countries close to Indonesia, such as Malaysia and Singapore, are left behind. This observation challenges the general view in society that China plays a crucial role in the implementation of the "maritime fulcrum" initiative,

despite facing opposition due to prevailing anti-Chinese attitude in Indonesia (Hamilton-Hart & McRae, 2015). The aforementioned trend of information can also be construed as an indication of President Jokowi's commitment to adhering to the fundamental ideals of Indonesia's "free-active" foreign policy. President Jokowi maintains his desire for Indonesia to keep in a position of neutrality between the two dominant global powers, namely the United States and China. Jokowi's prioritisation of enhancing bilateral relations with China can be attributed to economic pragmatism, as it offers potential benefits for Indonesia through its alignment with the Chinese government's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) initiative (Grossman, 2021b; Hamilton-Hart & McRae, 2015).

Information dissemination related to foreign policy seems like more publicity per se and not as agenda setting since the news of the Indonesia website is mostly published after the bilateral meetings (Mintz & DeRouen, 2012). Policy information composed of comprehensive information such as press releases and socialisation is marginalised and even absent. Therefore, foreign policy is an elite business in Indonesia portrayed by the dominant information, in which the state is the main actor. This pattern demonstrates that the Indonesian government has failed to use information to advance national objectives through foreign policy. Information on Indonesian foreign policy can be used for propaganda, branding, and influencing and moulding public perceptions both at home and abroad (Seo, 2014). In addition, the State Secretary of Indonesia's website has not been able to function as an instrument for public diplomacy (Schatz & Levine, 2010). The aforementioned findings indicate the website of the State Secretary of Indonesia lacks the capacity to serve as the primary source of information on Indonesian foreign policy (Bickham & Francis 2021; Neumann et al., 2022). The implication is that the website of the State Secretary of Indonesia cannot become the primary reference for Indonesian foreign policy. Consequently, people tend to rely on mainstream media or social media platforms, which are progressively exerting influence on society (Barberá et al., 2022), notwithstanding the potential for disseminating misinformation (Dame Adjin-Tetty, 2022).

All in all, the information provided on the website does not precisely reflect the fundamental problems. For instance, President Jokowi consistently mentions infrastructure development in policy speeches. However, all bilateral meetings are dominated by themes related to commerce and industry, and this is increasingly irrelevant to the intensity of the resulting meetings. According to the stats, Australia and Vietnam are the countries that most frequently hold meetings with Indonesia. Conversely, Indonesia's key trade partners are China, the United States, Japan, Singapore, and India (World Bank, 2022). Almost all the development of high-speed trains, toll roads, airports, ports, and other facilities were funded by China. However, Australia and Vietnam are rarely discussed in Indonesian policy discussions, particularly regarding infrastructure and investment. Hence, it is essential to acknowledge that the populism strategy employed by Jokowi, which primarily relies on extensive dissemination of information across diverse media platforms, has not significantly influenced Jokowi's foreign policy achievements (Wicaksana, 2022). The study's findings provide additional evidence supporting the notion that Jokowi possesses a complex and enigmatic personality in his leadership role within Indonesia (Bland, 2020). This trend also reflects Jokowi's use of a "two-level games" strategy to navigate both domestic and international politics (Putnam, 1988).

This research, indeed, benefited from previous findings, such as Fidler (2006) and Spohr and da Silva (2017), during the data analysis process, specifically on issue mapping typology. It is slightly different from previous research, which contributed significantly to foreign policy information dissemination. As preliminary research, this finding would complete and enrich previous analyses that attempt to unpack specifically Indonesian foreign policy from an information-sharing or technology perspective (Hartati, 2018; Kurniawati et al., 2020; Madu,

2021, 2018; Surwandono et al., 2021; Syaifani & Qubba, 2018). Furthermore, it would bolster the previous research that focused more on the role of various ICT tools and did not present information dissemination or issue mapping. This topic may be unpopular among international relations scholars, yet it is crucial for policymakers. It offers fundamental information on issue mapping and trends related to the foreign policy formulation of the government.

## Conclusion, future research, and policy implication

Examining how information on Indonesian foreign policy is disseminated, particularly on the website of the Indonesian State Secretary, allows for the consideration of various viewpoints. Many international relations scholars have approached foreign policy from a purely theoretical perspective. However, efforts to highlight significant points, such as mapping concerns, agendas, and countries involved, are often overlooked. Research that attempted to employ an information-centric viewpoint regarding policy governance has been mostly underrepresented in the previous literature. This article presents an analysis indicating that the information intensity of bilateral meets does not accurately reflect President Jokowi's actual Indonesian foreign policy. The aforementioned disparity is evident when examining the data, particularly in relation to the frequency of bilateral meetings with certain countries and the specific subjects addressed during these discussions. Furthermore, it is regrettable that non-standardised news content, which fails to adhere to the principles of journalism, is featured on the official website of the Secretary of State, a position of high authority within the government. This implies that despite Jokowi's overall populist approach, the internal management of information remains a subject of concern, primarily due to the exceptional dissemination of information facilitated by media proprietors. The Jokowi's administration appears to face challenges in effectively harnessing and implementing official government information management systems to advance public policy objectives. Regrettably, the dissemination of Jokowi's government policy information has been overshadowed by the prevalence of social media platforms, which are highly susceptible to the propagation of misinformation.

Despite the paucity, this research is considered to have several flaws, even though it offers chances for scientific advancement and policy consequences. Therefore, to promote and orient future research, recommendations are offered. First, since this research focused on disseminating information related to trend and issue mapping of Indonesian foreign policy, specifically on the website, other prospective platforms remain open, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. The strategy could also be applied to the foreign policy dissemination of information in other countries. Second, sentiment analysis on foreign policy concerns needs to be addressed, given the increased global use of social media. This perspective could also complement the research derived from governmental perspectives. Social media sentiment analysis could show public conversation on issues. Third, despite social media's growing popularity, website-based research is still important. Future research should focus on official press releases, particularly those issued by the presidential office and the foreign affairs ministry.

Even though not all foreign affairs garner public attention, the government should disseminate information about related issues. According to this empirical research, foreign policy is an elite business, but the public continues to observe government actions and their dynamics at the grassroots level. Information management, particularly on the website, is essential for maintaining performance regarding information transmission and public trust. Generally, e-government in developing nations is characterised by formality due to bureaucratic and regulatory obstacles. A complete regulation on the administration should be implemented to establish legal clarity for the

apparatus. In addition, an attractively created website design page should be provided to increase the number of visitors. A professional journalism report is essential to ensure that the published news is credible, legible, and comprehensive. The public requires frequent and exhaustive news reports for transparency, and as one of the most reliable sources of information, official press statements are vital for the website's content. The suggestions are meant to avoid the publication of incomplete news articles, which have led to the production of fake news, specifically on foreign policy. The discovered issue appears to be a classical governance challenge in nations undergoing economic and democratic development, such as Indonesia. Nonetheless, it is imperative for stakeholders to make even the most minimal enhancements in order to ensure that the resultant policies may effectively influence the welfare of the people.

Otherwise, it is important to acknowledge that other government bodies such as the Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also publish information on presidential and bilateral activities. However, this research intentionally focused on the State Secretary's website due to its function as the primary administrative and protocol hub for presidential affairs. The coding and analysis were strictly limited to this official data source to maintain methodological consistency and ensure focused exploration of one institutional communication channel. Future research should consider a comparative approach using these sources to better understand narrative consistency, inter-agency communication, and Indonesia's foreign policy messaging system. Finally, this evaluation of foreign policy information dissemination throughout the Jokowi era provides an opportunity for a more comprehensive review of Indonesian foreign policy. Foreign policy information is more than just public relations entwined with the issue of actor populism. Foreign policy, however, represents a public policy domain that must be transparently communicated and remain accountable to the wider society.

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### **Data Availability Statement**

The data supporting the findings of this study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The dataset is derived from publicly available materials on the official website of the Indonesian State Secretariat (<https://www.setneg.go.id>). These data were systematically collected, archived, and analysed using NVivo software. Due to limitations related to data size and formatting, the dataset is not deposited in a public repository, but it can be shared in accordance with ethical standards and appropriate usage guidelines.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in relation to this publication.

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