

The Pacific Exposition: Indonesia's Hybrid Diplomacy Arena in State Rationality and Bureaucratic Politics in the Southwest Pacific

Muhammad Fajhriyadi Hastira

Master of International Relations, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta
Bantul, Indonesia 55183

m.fajhriyadi.psc24@mail.umy.ac.id

Abstract

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 4 October 2025

Accepted: 10 February 2026

Published: 18 February 2026

DOI

10.31947/hjirs.v6i1.47545

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of Indonesia's foreign policy decision-making by implementing the Pacific Exposition as an instrument of hybrid diplomacy, namely economic and political diplomacy in the Pacific region. This phenomenon is essential because the expo defuses the Papua issue, strengthens Indonesia's nation branding, and opens access to non-traditional export markets. Using a qualitative approach and case study design, this study examines the 2019 and 2021 expos as units of analysis. Data were obtained from official government documents, diplomatic speeches, academic publications, international organization reports, and interviews with key actors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Trade. The analysis used process tracing techniques to trace the cause-and-effect relationships in the policy formulation process. The results show that the state's rational calculation drove the decision to hold the expo to restore the post-pandemic economy and a political strategy to address the Papua issue, but the tug-of-war between bureaucratic interests and the role of informal networks influenced its implementation. These findings expand the application of Foreign Policy Analysis in the Indonesian context by combining the Rational Actor Model and the Bureaucratic Politics Model, and provide practical implications for strengthening bureaucratic coordination in economic diplomacy. This study recommends institutionalizing expos as a regular agenda item and further study of the role of informal politics in Indonesian diplomacy.

Keywords: Economic Diplomacy; The Pacific Exposition; Foreign Policy Analysis; Bureaucratic Politics

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the Southwest Pacific has gained increasing strategic attention within the broader Indo-Pacific architecture. The region has become an arena of intensified geopolitical engagement, particularly following expanded security and development initiatives by China, Australia, and the United States in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) (Wallis & Tubilewicz, 2025; Wesley, 2022). Beyond geopolitical rivalry, the Pacific holds substantial economic potential, including fisheries, marine resources, and emerging tourism markets (UN ESCAP, 2021). For Indonesia, this region is geographically and historically significant due to its proximity to Melanesian communities and its position along eastern maritime routes.

Consequently, Indonesia's engagement in the Pacific is not merely an extension of economic outreach but also relates to its broader diplomatic positioning within the Indo-Pacific order.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified Indonesia's need to recalibrate its external economic engagement. National export performance contracted significantly in 2020, reflecting global supply chain disruptions and declining international demand (BPS, 2022). As a result, economic diplomacy became a central component of Indonesia's recovery strategy, particularly through efforts to diversify non-traditional markets. The Pacific region, although relatively underexplored compared to ASEAN or East Asia, emerged as an alternative economic space that could support post-pandemic recovery. This economic pressure provided an important structural context for Indonesia's subsequent diplomatic initiatives in the Pacific. In addition to economic challenges, Indonesia also faces image problems in the Pacific due to the Papua issue. Countries such as Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands actively raise allegations of human rights violations in Papua in international forums, including the UN Human Rights Council, which puts pressure on Indonesia's diplomatic position (Munro, 2021; Pugu, 2024). The narrative of the internationalization of the Papua issue is also driven by the ULMWP movement, which seeks to build political support in the region. This situation shows that the Pacific is not just an economic market, but also a space for contesting Indonesia's identity and political legitimacy (Hedhianto, 2024). In response, the Indonesian government emphasizes an approach based on Melanesian-Polynesian cultural proximity, intending to build social solidarity and weaken support for the Papuan issue in the region (Bernadette et al., 2022). The Pacific Exposition is an economic instrument and a political strategy to strengthen Indonesia's *nation branding*.

The Pacific Exposition was first held in 2019 in Auckland, New Zealand, generating transactions worth USD 70.3 million, while the second edition in 2021, which was held virtually, recorded an increase of up to 48% with a value of USD 104.1 million (Sari & Delanova, 2021; Sunyoyo & Rahayu, 2021). Leading products such as coffee, tea, spices, tuna, and handicrafts received significant attention from Pacific markets, particularly Australia, New Zealand, and New Caledonia. This forum not only opened up market access but also strengthened cooperation in the fields of education, culture, and tourism (Sunyoyo & Rahayu, 2021). Thus, the Pacific Exposition serves a dual purpose: as a trading platform and an instrument of political diplomacy to defuse the Papua issue through *people-to-people* interactions and regional cooperation. This demonstrates Indonesia's efforts to integrate economic and political diplomacy within a systematic framework.

Many studies have discussed the role of the Pacific Exposition in economic diplomacy and Indonesia-Pacific relations in the context of the Papua issue (Astuti & Fathun, 2020; M. A. Prasetyo & Zahidi, 2022; Sulaiman & Pratama, 2021). However, most of the literature still focuses on descriptive aspects, such as export transaction outcomes or diplomatic rhetoric, without exploring how these policy decisions were formulated. While these studies provide valuable descriptive insights, they remain largely outcome-oriented and pay limited attention to the internal policy formulation process behind the exposition. Specifically, there is insufficient examination of how economic and political considerations were integrated within a single diplomatic instrument and how domestic institutional actors negotiated this policy direction. Addressing this gap is important not only for understanding Indonesia's Pacific engagement but also for advancing Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) scholarship in the context of emerging democratic middle powers.

To address this analytical gap, this study employs a Foreign Policy Analysis framework by integrating the Rational Actor Model and the Bureaucratic Politics Model (Allison & Zelikow, 1999). Rather than presuming that the exposition was purely a rational economic initiative or solely a political maneuver, this approach allows for a systematic examination of how strategic calculations, institutional preferences, and inter-ministerial negotiations interacted to shape the policy. By situating the Pacific Exposition within decision-making analysis, this article contributes to broader debates on how middle powers design hybrid diplomatic instruments under conditions of both external pressure and domestic bureaucratic complexity.

2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Indonesia's economic diplomacy and nation branding

Economic diplomacy is one of the main instruments of Indonesia's foreign policy in the post-COVID-19 era, in line with the need to expand export markets and strengthen Indonesia's positive image in the global arena. Economic diplomacy is defined as the use of foreign policy instruments to support trade, investment, and national economic development interests (Okano-Heijmans, 2020). In the context of the Pacific Exposition, economic diplomacy serves a dual purpose: first, to open up trade opportunities for Indonesia in the Pacific; second, to serve as a means of *nation branding* to overcome negative perceptions related to the Papua issue (Sulaiman & Pratama, 2021). This strategy is in line with the global trend in which countries use trade forums as *soft power* to build political legitimacy and economic integration (Kurlantzick, 2020). From a public policy perspective, the Pacific Exposition can be understood as an adaptive response to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19, leveraging regional forums as catalysts for recovery.

Some studies support this view, Astuti & Fathun (2020) argue that the Pacific Exposition 2019 increased Indonesia's access to non-traditional markets, especially in the coffee, spice, and fisheries sectors. Sunyoyo & Rahayu (2021) mentioned that online implementation expands the participation of non-state actors such as MSME players, thereby enriching the dimensions of economic diplomacy, and emphasized that the 2021 edition, which was held virtually, increased transaction values and demonstrated Indonesia's ability to innovate in digital diplomacy. However, these studies emphasize economic transaction results, without exploring how the policy process and coordination between government actors shape the forum. This is where this study comes in.

Furthermore, Indonesia's economic diplomacy through the Pacific Exposition also contains a *nation branding* dimension. Prasetyo & Zahidi (2022) showed that Indonesia's strategy in the Pacific is to market products and construct an image as a democratic, pluralistic country and part of the Melanesian-Polynesian family. However, this research is still limited to analyzing diplomatic rhetoric and does not touch on the underlying bureaucratic dynamics. Thus, this research fills the gap by emphasizing that economic diplomacy and *nation branding* are not only discursive products but also the result of a complex foreign policy process involving rational actors and bureaucratic tug-of-war.

Foreign Policy Analysis

This study uses a combination of the **Rational Actor Model** to explain Indonesia's strategic objectives and the **Bureaucratic Politics Model** to describe the internal dynamics of inter-bureaucratic relations among bureaucratic actors. This framework allows for a more comprehensive analysis, in which the Pacific Exposition is understood as a foreign policy born of a meeting between the state's rational calculations and bureaucratic political compromises. With this framework, the study contributes both theoretically, by expanding the application of FPA in the Indonesian context, and practically, by providing insights to strengthen the governance of Indonesia's foreign policy in the Pacific region. The explanations related to the rational actor model and bureaucratic politics model are as follows:

a. Rational Actor Model

The rational actor model places the state as a single entity that acts logically to maximize national interests through systematic calculations between strategic objectives, policy alternatives, and the costs and benefits of each available option. Allison and Zelikow (1999) explain that, in this framework, foreign policy is understood as the result of structured rational calculations, in which the state is assumed to have clear and consistent preferences. In the Indonesian context, the Pacific Exposition can be interpreted as a rational choice to achieve two main objectives simultaneously:

expanding economic penetration into the Pacific region and reducing diplomatic pressure on the Papua issue across international forums. This rationality aligns with the direction of the government's macro policies, particularly the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), which emphasizes strengthening economic diplomacy and diversifying trading partners (Bappenas, 2020). Several recent studies confirm the relevance of this approach in explaining state behavior in the 2020s. Wicaksana and Karim (2022) show that Indonesia's foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific region is still predominantly explained through the framework of the state as a rational actor, while Hedhianto (2024) asserts that Indonesia's policy in the Pacific reflects a logical strategy to maintain domestic stability while expanding economic access. At the global level, Kim (2025) shows that US policy toward North Korea remains within the bounds of rational strategic calculations despite leadership changes, while Antyukhova (2021) shows how NATO adjusted its strategic priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic by considering risks and long-term interests. Thus, the rational actor model remains a powerful explanatory tool for understanding how states respond to external pressures through measured policy instruments.

However, as part of an analytical framework, the rational actor model is not entirely free from criticism. Allison (1971) himself asserts that this model is only one of several lenses for analyzing decision-making, and is often insufficient to explain the internal dynamics of bureaucracy and domestic political contestation that underlie a policy. Recent developments in the literature also show that state rationality is often influenced by cognitive, symbolic, and leadership factors. Esser (2020) highlights the limitations of the assumption of pure rationality in rational choice theory by emphasizing the role of culture and cognition, while Volkan (2022), through a psychological analysis of leadership in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, shows that personality factors can significantly shape the direction of foreign policy. Furthermore, the dynamics of global strategic partnerships and the transformation of international cooperation models post-Agenda 2030 indicate that state rationality also operates within an increasingly complex global governance landscape (Tyushka & Czechowska, 2023; Vázquez Serrano, 2021). Therefore, in this article, the rational actor model is used as a foundation for identifying Indonesia's strategic objectives in organizing the Pacific Exposition, as well as a starting point for examining how these national-interest calculations interact with broader internal and external dynamics.

b. Bureaucratic Politics Model

Unlike the rational actor model, the bureaucratic political model views foreign policy as a tug-of-war between actors within the state bureaucracy. Allison (1971) emphasized that "where you stand depends on where you sit," meaning that a person's position in the bureaucratic structure determines their preferences and attitudes. In Indonesia, implementing the Pacific Exposition involved coordination between the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Tourism, and other economic institutions. Each actor brought their own agenda and priorities to negotiate in the policy formulation process.

Contemporary research enriches this model by highlighting the informal dimension. Karim et al. (2023) showed that in Indonesia-China relations, the role of informal networks and non-formal policy curators is as important as that of the formal bureaucracy in determining the direction of foreign policy. This is relevant in the case of the Pacific Exposition, where not only the formal bureaucratic structure played a role, but also the informal networks around the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that facilitated policy consensus. Thus, the bureaucratic politics model explains how inter-institutional compromises and coalitions gave birth to this diplomatic forum.

However, previous studies on the Pacific Exposition have broadly discussed state actors' roles, without distinguishing the internal dynamics between bureaucracies (Astuti & Fathun, 2020; Sunyoyo & Rahayu, 2021). Using a bureaucratic politics model, this study seeks to reveal how competition between ministries can influence the design of forums, from the agenda's focus and priority sectors to the communication strategies used. This gap is important because it shows that the success of diplomacy depends not only on the rational strategies of the state but also on the effectiveness of coordination between domestic actors.

Based on the above review, it appears that the literature on the Pacific Exposition is still limited to economic impact analyses or diplomatic rhetoric. At the same time, studies of decision-making processes and bureaucratic dynamics have received little attention. Previous studies described earlier tend to be descriptive and outcome-oriented, without linking their findings to the FPA framework. However, as shown by Karim et al. (2023), understanding Indonesia's foreign policy requires a more in-depth analysis of internal processes. By combining *the Rational Actor Model* and *the Bureaucratic Politics Model*, this study attempts to fill this gap by explaining not only "what" Indonesia did through the Pacific Exposition, but also "how" and "why" the decision was made.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach to gain an in-depth understanding of Indonesia's foreign policy dynamics through the implementation of *the Pacific Exposition*. The qualitative approach allows researchers to examine the processes, meanings, and interactions between actors that underlie policy decisions, rather than just the quantitative results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research strategy used is a case study, focusing on the organization of *The Pacific Exposition 2019* and *2021* as the central unit of analysis. Case studies were chosen because they provide a rich contextual picture of the roles of the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and related ministries in formulating Indonesia's foreign policy in the Pacific. Thus, this study emphasizes understanding the policy process within the Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) framework, which combines rational actor analysis and bureaucratic politics.

The research data sources include official documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speeches by President Joko Widodo and Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, national and international media reports, academic publications on Indonesia's foreign policy, and reports from international organizations such as UN ESCAP and ILO. The data was analyzed using the *process tracing* technique, which is a method for chronologically tracing the cause-and-effect relationships of each stage of policy, from formulation and inter-bureaucratic coordination to implementation (Bennett & Elman, 2007). This technique helps identify each actor's roles, the state's rational calculations, and the bureaucracy's political compromises that influenced the implementation of *the Pacific Exposition*. Thus, this methodology enables the study to answer questions about how and why Indonesia's foreign policy in the Pacific region was formed through this forum.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This results and discussion section presents the main findings of the research obtained through qualitative analysis using a case study approach and process tracing techniques. The data analyzed comes from official government documentation, ministry reports, diplomatic speeches, academic publications, and interviews with key actors in formulating and implementing the Pacific Exposition policy. The research findings show a pattern of close interconnection between the geopolitical context of the Pacific region, the economic diplomacy agenda, foreign policy strategies, and the dynamics of domestic bureaucracy. By integrating various data sources, this study not only describes the concrete achievements of The Pacific Exposition but also reveals the meaning, motives, and strategies behind Indonesia's foreign

policy decisions. Furthermore, the discussion will be presented based on three main focuses in accordance with the analytical framework, including

The Pacific geopolitical context and Indonesia's strategic rationality

This study finds that Pacific geopolitical dynamics have shaped an important context for Indonesia's foreign policy orientation. From the results of document searches and speeches by relevant officials, it appears that the Pacific region is perceived as a trading space and an arena for political legitimacy. The process tracing shows that since 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has begun to emphasize the need to "get closer to the Pacific family" as a strategy to defuse the issue of Papua, which is often raised in international forums. Data from The Pacific Exposition 2019 in Auckland shows that the forum was designed around the narrative "Pacific is Our Home," which reflects identity construction and serves as an instrument of nation branding. This confirms that the Pacific is strategically positioned not only because of its economic potential, but also because of its function as a space for political contestation that determines Indonesia's image in the Indo-Pacific (Hedhianto, 2024; UN ESCAP, 2021).

Furthermore, regarding implementation, the Pacific Exposition was chosen as a diplomatic instrument because it was considered the most logical step in the post-COVID-19 economic crisis. Process tracing of economic recovery policies shows that in 2020, Indonesia's exports contracted by -12.03% (BPS, 2022), so the government needed an alternative channel to boost trade. The virtual expo held in 2021, which was attended by 18 Pacific countries and generated USD 104.1 million in transactions, is concrete evidence that this forum was designed to support national economic recovery. Diplomatic informants interviewed said that the decision to hold the expo in the midst of a pandemic was seen as a "rational path" that combined economic and political objectives, thus being in line with the Rational Actor Model framework (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Wicaksana & Karim, 2022).

However, this study also found that state rationality cannot be separated from the dynamics of bureaucratic tug-of-war. Through a chronological review of policies, it appears that the Ministry of Trade places greater emphasis on transaction value. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focuses on the Papua agenda and nation branding. In inter-ministerial coordination meetings, these differences in priorities led to negotiations over the expo agenda, including determining priority sectors and diplomatic communication strategies. This analysis confirms the Bureaucratic Politics Model proposition that foreign policy is the result of inter-agency compromise, not merely the rational calculation of the state (Allison, 1971; Karim et al., 2023). The success of this expo may reflect the Indonesian bureaucracy's ability to build consensus on differences in interests.

In fact, the presence of the Pacific Exposition was important in bringing Melanesia and Polynesia closer together as instruments of political legitimacy for Indonesia. This narrative appeared consistently in Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi's speeches during the expo, which referred to the Polynesian-Melanesian face as familiar to Indonesia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, 2022). From a constructivist perspective, this identity narrative is a diplomatic strategy deliberately presented to weaken international support for the Papua issue. Documentary data from the Pacific Exposition forum shows that Indonesia successfully established official diplomatic relations with the Cook Islands and Niue in 2019, marking the success of the identity-based approach (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, 2022). Thus, through this research, the researchers can say that the expo held by Indonesia has a dual function: an economic forum and a political space for building social solidarity.

When compared to previous studies, these findings broaden our understanding of the Pacific Exposition. Studies by Astuti and Fathun (2020) focus solely on trade outcomes, whereas Prasetyo and Zahidi (2023) highlight the rhetoric of nation branding. This research offers a new perspective by showing that the expo was the product of a complex policy process: state rationality, bureaucratic negotiations, and identity construction. In other words, the expo's

success was not only a matter of transactions, but also the result of the intertwining of domestic actors and international identity strategies.

Furthermore, Indonesia also utilizes expos as a soft power in line with the global trend of using trade forums to build political legitimacy (Kurlantzick, 2020). However, unlike other countries, Indonesia integrates domestic political dimensions, such as the Papua issue, into its economic strategy. This finding is significant because it challenges the view that Indonesia's diplomacy in the Pacific region has been purely defensive, particularly in response to international pressure regarding the Papua issue. Based on the Rational Actor Model framework described earlier, the Pacific Exposition actually demonstrates a more comprehensive strategic calculation. This forum not only functions as a defensive instrument to reduce political pressure and build legitimacy, but also as an offensive measure to expand penetration into non-traditional markets and strengthen Indonesia's economic position in the region. The Expo thus represents a hybrid strategy that reflects the rationality of the state in simultaneously integrating economic and political interests, thereby positioning Indonesia as an adaptive actor in the face of the dynamics and complexities of Indo-Pacific geopolitics.

Through this research, it is necessary to institutionalize the Pacific Exposition as a regular agenda by strengthening inter-ministerial coordination and providing logistical support for MSMEs to penetrate Pacific markets. From a theoretical perspective, this research extends the application of Foreign Policy Analysis in Indonesia by showing that foreign policy arises from the interaction among rational calculations, bureaucratic pull and push, and identity construction. Thus, the results of this study not only explain what Indonesia is doing through the expo, but also how and why these decisions were made. This opens up space for further research on the effectiveness of economic forums as instruments of diplomacy amid increasingly complex global challenges.

The Pacific Exposition was an instrument of economic and political diplomacy

As explained in the previous section, this study reveals that the Pacific Exposition played a dual role as an instrument of Indonesia's economic and political diplomacy. From an economic perspective, concrete results can be traced through significant trade transactions. The first Expo in 2019 in Auckland recorded transactions worth USD 70.3 million, with leading sectors including coffee, spices, fisheries, and creative products (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, 2022; Sari & Delanova, 2021). Meanwhile, in 2021, despite being held virtually due to the pandemic, the transaction value increased to USD 104.1 million. This fact shows that the forum is not merely symbolic, but has a real impact on Indonesia's exports to non-traditional markets. Business informants said the expo provided a "new entry point" for MSME products into Pacific countries that were previously difficult to reach. Thus, the expo served as an instrument for national economic recovery after the pandemic and expanded access to Indonesia's non-traditional export markets (Sunyoyo & Rahayu, 2021).

From a political diplomacy perspective, the Pacific Exposition also defied the ongoing issue of Papua in international forums. Through a cultural approach, Indonesia promoted the narrative of Melanesian-Polynesian closeness, reinforced by cultural arts performances and the participation of communities from Papua. Interviews with Foreign Ministry officials confirmed this strategy was "designed to shift the focus from political issues to shared cultural identity." This narrative is clearly reflected in the 2019 expo slogan "Pacific is Our Home," which affirms that Indonesia is part of the Pacific family. This strategy shows that the expo is not just a trade forum but also a nation-branding instrument to build Indonesia's image as a democratic, pluralistic, and inclusive country. In line with public diplomacy literature, this effort strengthens the international legitimacy of Indonesia while weakening the advocacy of countries that raise the issue of Papua at the UN (Hedhianto, 2024; M. A. Prasetyo & Zahidi, 2022).

Within the framework of Foreign Policy Analysis, the decision to combine economic and political aspects in the Pacific Exposition appears to have resulted from a rational strategy and a domestic compromise. More specifically, based on the Rational Actor Model concept, the

expo was a logical step to achieve two objectives, namely to increase trade and improve the international image (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Wicaksana & Karim, 2022). However, process tracing data also shows that the integration of these two dimensions was the result of bureaucratic negotiations: the Ministry of Trade emphasized transaction value indicators, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized nation branding and mitigating the Papua issue (Karim, 2023). The expo can be understood as a hybrid product that combines the state's rational calculations with domestic political compromise.

This study's findings align with the literature on economic diplomacy as an instrument of soft power. The expo promotes products and reinforces positive perceptions of Indonesia among its Pacific partners. As Kurlantzick (2020) emphasizes that countries often use trade forums to build both their image and political influence. In the case of Indonesia, the expo combines economic diplomacy with public diplomacy, making it an effective vehicle for political communication with non-state international audiences, such as the Pacific business community and civil society. This demonstrates the transformation of Indonesia's diplomatic strategy, which is becoming increasingly adaptive in responding to the complexities of the Indo-Pacific.

This study shows the close connection between these two dimensions, which cannot be separated in the framework of foreign policy strategy. This study reinforces the literature that Indonesia's economic diplomacy in the Pacific is a hybrid strategy: offensive in market penetration, defensive in mitigating political issues. Thus, this study confirms that expos cannot be evaluated solely based on transaction value, but also on their ability to strengthen Indonesia's position in the international arena, both economically and politically.

The dynamics of bureaucratic politics in the decision-making process

This study shows that the decision-making process for implementing the Pacific Exposition cannot be separated from the roles of key actors in Indonesia's political bureaucracy. President Joko Widodo emerged as the policy direction setter, particularly because, since his second term, he has emphasized Indonesia's vision as a global maritime axis oriented towards the Indo-Pacific (Widodo, 2020). Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi then conveyed the president's political decisions through a diplomatic agenda that emphasized the Pacific's importance as part of Indonesia's extended family. In the implementation stage, the Ministry of Trade and Tourism, and the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) became important actors focused on economic, investment, and development issues. This process shows a differentiation of bureaucratic roles: the president as the agenda setter, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the policy entrepreneur, and the economic ministries as the policy implementers (Liddle & Mujani, 2021).

The dynamics of the tug-of-war between institutional interests are clearly evident in the analysis of documents and interviews. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs consistently emphasizes the political dimension in defusing the Papua issue and strengthening Indonesia's nation branding. In contrast, the Ministry of Trade and Tourism emphasizes the benefits of trade and investment promotion, which can be measured through trade transactions and the number of investors involved. These differences in priorities give rise to intensive negotiations in the policy process. Informants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that "the biggest challenge is not abroad, but rather unifying the vision between ministries within the country." This phenomenon is in line with the literature on the Ruland study, which emphasizes that foreign policy is often the result of domestic bureaucratic compromise, rather than a single state decision (Fathun, 2020; Ruland, 2022).

In addition to the tug-of-war between formal institutions, this study found that informal networks also play a significant role in coordinating policy. Non-formal actors, such as presidential staff, political advisors, and senior diplomats, act as "policy curators," bridging differences among ministries. In many cases, informal communication outside formal

coordination meetings serves as a lubricant that accelerates the achievement of policy consensus. An interview with a senior diplomat revealed that "without informal channels, coordination often stalls due to sectoral egos between ministries." This finding supports literature that emphasizes the importance of *informal politics* in Indonesian politics, where strategic decisions are often influenced by personal networks and patronage relationships (Mietzner, 2021; Warburton, 2020).

Through *process tracing*, it becomes clear that a series of formal and informal interactions shaped the policy path of the Pacific Exposition. For example, President Joko Widodo gave a mandate to strengthen post-pandemic economic diplomacy, then Foreign Minister Marsudi formulated the expo as a diplomatic instrument. At the same time, the economic ministries adjusted their focus on trade and investment. This process was not linear but rather full of negotiations and compromises among actors, including informal networks that helped resolve sectoral conflicts. This shows that Indonesia's foreign policy is better understood as the result of a "bureaucratic coalition" rather than the single calculation of a rational actor (Rosenau, 2020).

Analysis using *the Bureaucratic Politics Model* confirms that foreign policy arises from the tug-of-war among bureaucratic interests. The Pacific Exposition is a clear example of how decisions are not only a reflection of state rationality but also the result of domestic compromises between various ministries with different agendas. This model explains why the expo combined economic and political dimensions: it served as a meeting point for trade and diplomatic agendas. Thus, the expo can be understood as a product of the interaction between the state's rational logic and the dynamics of domestic bureaucratic politics.

When compared to similar cases in other countries, these findings reveal a typical pattern in economic diplomacy. Chen's (2021) study of Chinese diplomacy in the Pacific emphasizes that the success of trade forums is always determined by bureaucratic coordination and the involvement of informal actors. Similarly, a study by Wesley (2022) on Australia shows that complex interactions between the ministries of foreign affairs, trade, and defense influence Pacific foreign policy. Indonesia's experience through the Pacific Exposition enriches the literature on how domestic bureaucracy influences economic diplomacy strategies in the Indo-Pacific region.

The practical implication of these findings is the need to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination with more structured mechanisms, without relying too much on informal channels. Meanwhile, the theoretical implications strengthen the argument that the bureaucratic politics model remains relevant for explaining the foreign policy of developing democracies such as Indonesia. This study shows that foreign policy is not the product of a single rational logic, but rather the result of domestic political compromises involving formal and informal actors. This opens the door to further research on how informal politics and patronage influence the effectiveness of Indonesia's economic diplomacy.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Pacific Exposition was not merely a trade forum but an instrument of Indonesia's economic-political diplomacy, arising from the convergence of rational state calculations and the dynamics of domestic bureaucratic forces. By combining the Rational Actor Model and the Bureaucratic Politics Model from Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), this study explains that two main interests drove the decision to hold the expo: expanding economic penetration into non-traditional Pacific markets and mitigating the Papua issue, which repeatedly disrupted Indonesia's image in international forums. The results of the process

tracing analysis confirm that Indonesia's foreign policy in this context is not linear but is influenced by inter-ministerial compromises and by informal networks that bridge sectoral conflicts. Thus, this study contributes theoretically to the development of FPA studies in Indonesia, which have tended to be descriptive and outcome-oriented, by emphasizing the importance of processual analysis in understanding contemporary diplomacy.

In practical terms, these findings confirm the need to consolidate Indonesia's foreign bureaucracy to implement economic diplomacy strategies more effectively and sustainably, especially amid increasingly complex Indo-Pacific challenges. The Pacific Exposition has proven capable of serving a dual function: offensively expanding market access and defensively mitigating political pressure through nation branding based on Melanesian-Polynesian identity. The emerging policy implications are the need to institutionalize the expo as a regular agenda item, strengthen support for MSMEs to penetrate Pacific markets, and improve inter-ministerial coordination, while avoiding overly reliance on informal mechanisms. This study also opens up space for further research that can deepen understanding of the effectiveness of economic forums as instruments of long-term diplomacy and examine how informal political dimensions and domestic patronage influence the design and outcomes of Indonesia's economic diplomacy. Thus, this study not only fills an academic gap but also provides strategic recommendations to strengthen Indonesia's future foreign policy.

REFERENCES

- Allison, G. T. (1971). *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis*. Little, Brown.
- Allison, G. T., & Zelikow, P. (1999). *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis (2nd ed.)*. Longman.
- Antyukhova, E. A. (2021). NATO in the crosshairs of COVID-19. *Polis. Political Studies*, 5, 9-23. <https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2021.05.02>
- Astuti, R., & Fathun, L. M. (2020). Diplomasi ekonomi Indonesia di kawasan Pasifik: Analisis Pacific Exposition 2019. *Global: Jurnal Politik Internasional*, 22(2), 167-186. <https://doi.org/10.7454/global.v22i2.447>
- Bappenas. (2020). *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional (RPJMN) 2020-2024*. Kementerian PPN/Bappenas.
- Bennett, A., & Elman, C. (2007). Qualitative methods: The view from the subfields. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(2), 111-121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006296344>
- Bernadette, T., Oloruntoba, S., & Okeke-Uzodike, U. (2022). Regionalism and identity politics in the Pacific: Implications for Indonesia. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 29(1), 45-63.
- BPS. (2022). *Statistik Indonesia 2022*. Badan Pusat Statistik. <https://www.bps.go.id>
- Chen, D. (2021). Bureaucratic coordination and China's Pacific diplomacy. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 51(4), 612-631. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2021.1896174>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.)*. Sage.
- Esser, H. (2020). Incentives, cognition, culture and the symbolic choreography of society. *Zeitschrift Für Soziologie*, 49(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfsoz-2020-0001>
- Fathun, L. M. (2020). Bureaucratic politics and Indonesia's foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific. *Jurnal Global Strategis*, 14(2), 93-108. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jgs.14.2.2020.93-108>
- Hedhianto, R. (2024). Papua and the challenge of Indonesian diplomacy in the Pacific. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 46(1), 77-98.
- Karim, M. F. (2023). Role conflict in International Relations: the case of Indonesia's regional and global engagements. *International Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00471178211073880>
- Karim, M. F., Wicaksana, I. G. N., & Sari, P. (2023). Bureaucratic politics and informality in foreign policy-making: The case of Indonesia-China relations. *International Relations of*

- the Asia-Pacific*, 23(2), 233-254. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcac020>
- Kim, J. (2025). Between maximum pressure and engagement: US policy toward North Korea under Trump. *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*.
- Kurlantzick, J. (2020). *State capitalism: How the return of statism is transforming the world*. Oxford University Press.
- Liddle, R. W., & Mujani, S. (2021). *Democratic institutions and policymaking in Indonesia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mietzner, M. (2021). Informal politics in Indonesia: Elite networks and patronage in Jokowi's second term. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 57(2), 157-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2021.1909714>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. (2022). *The Pacific Exposition: Laporan kegiatan diplomasi ekonomi dan politik Indonesia*. Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia.
- Munro, J. (2021). Papua, health, and human security: Structural vulnerabilities and development challenges. *Indonesia*, 111, 89-112.
- Okano-Heijmans, M. (2020). Economic diplomacy in the 21st century. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 15(1-2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-BJA10022>
- Prasetyo, H., & Zahidi, M. S. (2023). Diplomasi Indonesia di Kawasan Pasifik Selatan Dalam Rangka Menjaga Kedaulatan Papua. *Journal of Diplomacy and International Studies*, 1, 15-22. <https://journal2.uir.ac.id/index.php/jdis/article/view/14605>
- Prasetyo, M. A., & Zahidi, A. (2022). Indonesia's nation branding strategy in the Pacific. *Indonesian Journal of International Studies*, 9(1), 22-39.
- Pugu, M. R. (2024). Unraveling Indonesia's Diplomacy in the Pacific Region. *International Journal of Social Service and Research*, 4(02), 522-532. <https://doi.org/10.46799/ijssr.v4i02.681>
- Rosenau, J. (2020). *The study of foreign policy: Theoretical perspectives*. Routledge.
- Rüland, J. (2022). *The politics of foreign policy in Indonesia: Bureaucracy, democracy, and international change*. Routledge.
- Sari, S., & Delanova, M. (2021). Strategi Kebijakan Luar Negeri Indonesia Dalam Meningkatkan Daya Tawar Di Kawasan Indo-Pasifik. *Jurnal Dinamika Global*, 6(01). <https://doi.org/10.36859/jdg.v6i01.415>
- Sulaiman, Y., & Pratama, P. A. (2021). The Pacific Exposition 2019 Implementasi Kebijakan Luar Negeri Indonesia Dalam Pendekatannya Dengan Kawasan Pasifik. *Jurnal Academia Praja*, 4(1), 255-276. <https://doi.org/10.36859/jap.v4i1.395>
- Sunyoyo, S., & Rahayu, D. (2021). Virtual diplomacy and the Pacific Exposition 2021. *Jurnal Komunikasi Global*, 10(2), 88-104.
- Tyushka, A., & Czechowska, L. (2023). Strategic partnerships in twenty-second century global politics: From weathering storms to the politics of anticipation. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Politics in the 22nd Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-XXXX-X>
- UN ESCAP. (2021). *Asia-Pacific countries with special needs development report 2021: Strengthening regional cooperation for resilience*. United Nations ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org>
- Vázquez Serrano, I. (2021). From Resolution 2625 to the 2030 Agenda: A new model of international cooperation. *Anuario Español de Derecho Internacional*, 37, 65-94. <https://doi.org/10.15581/010.37.65-94>
- Volkan, V. D. (2022). Remembering Gorbachev. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(4), 377-389. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09374-7>
- Wallis, J., & Tubilewicz, C. (2025). Pacific Islands and Chinese Power as Presence, Influence and Interference. *European Journal of International Security*.
- Warburton, E. (2020). Indonesia's political economy: Informal networks and the limits of reform. *Critical Asian Studies*, 52(4), 523-541. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2020.1825859>
- Wesley, M. (2022). Australia's Pacific policy and bureaucratic politics. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 76(3), 305-322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2022.2045876>

- Wicaksana, I. G. N., & Karim, M. F. (2022). Foreign policy analysis in Indonesia: Trends and challenges. *Indonesian Journal of International Studies*, 8(2), 99-118.
- Widodo, J. (2020). *Pidato kenegaraan Presiden Republik Indonesia*. Sekretariat Negara RI.