

The Jakarta Bandung High-Speed Rail Project 2008-2015, China Investment, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy-Making Process

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Abstract. The inaugural high-speed rail initiative in Indonesia commenced during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's tenure. In 2008, the task of designing the Jakarta-Surabaya High-Speed Rail Project was assigned to the National Development Planning Agency and the Ministry of Transportation, in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which conducted the feasibility study. Subsequently, after Joko Widodo (Jokowi) assumed the presidency in 2014, he introduced nine development priorities within the Nawacita program. This study explores the impact of public sentiment on Indonesia's foreign policy decision-making, particularly evident in projects like the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail. The intricate interplay between society, media, and government significantly shapes foreign policy determinations. Employing a qualitative approach, this research delves into Indonesia's perspective on its collaborative ventures with China for pivotal infrastructure and strategic undertakings, while scrutinizing the issue at hand through detailed case study analysis.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, China, Indonesia, Public Opinion.

1 Introduction

The inaugural high-speed rail initiative in Indonesia commenced during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's tenure. In 2008, the task of designing the Jakarta-Surabaya High-Speed Rail Project was assigned to the National Development Planning Agency and the Ministry of Transportation, in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which conducted the feasibility study. Subsequently, after Joko Widodo (Jokowi) assumed the presidency in 2014, he introduced nine development priorities within the Nawacita program. This study explores the impact of public sentiment on Indonesia's foreign policy decision-making, particularly evident in projects like the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail. The intricate interplay between society, media, and government significantly shapes foreign policy determinations. Employing a qualitative approach, this research delves into Indonesia's perspective on its collaborative ventures with China for pivotal infrastructure and strategic undertakings, while scrutinizing the issue at hand through detailed case study analysis [1]. Conducting a feasibility assessment, this was followed by Joko

Widodo's (Jokowi) triumph in the 2014 presidential election in Indonesia. Subsequently, Jokowi introduced a set of nine developmental focal points within the Nawacita program [2]. One of the development priorities is increasing people's productivity and international competitiveness. Realizing the priority, Jokowi considered continuing to build a fast train connecting Jakarta to Surabaya[3]. However, a fast train between Jakarta and Bandung is a more reliable option in the first-period building. Japan was interested in getting involved in this project because JICA conducted studies in Japan with advanced Shinkansen technology for railway projects since they developed this technology in the 1960s[4]. Meanwhile, on the other hand, half of the world's railroads were built in China in the past decade, bringing China as one of the important players in the world's high-rise rail technology. However, after going through a tender process, President Jokowi finally decided to choose a Chinese partner in the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Rail Project[5].



Fig. 1. The Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Rail

Source: <https://www.railway-technology.com/news/jakarta-bandung-high-speed-railway-project/>

Joko Widodo started his official overseas visit in November 2014 after the visit of the APEC Summit. He also visited the region in Tianjin [6]. Building on the momentum of 2015, another nation was privileged to forge a partnership in the realm of energy and infrastructure, commencing in January of that year. Indonesia opted for a Chinese counterpart to enhance the efficacy of its Coal Power Plant Assets under the Fast Track Program 1. Similarly, in March 2015, Indonesia once again selected a Chinese collaborator for a pivotal infrastructure endeavor the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Rail Project. This occasion marked the mutual recognition of infrastructural and industrial cooperation. A memorandum of understanding outlining this cooperation between Indonesia and China outlined four critical infrastructure domains: High-Based Railways, roadways including toll roads and highways, ferry ports and terminals, and airports. The Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail initiative held the distinction of being the initial project through which the Indonesian government partnered with China to advance its infrastructure development pursuits.

1.1 Objective

This study centers on adopting Indonesia's perspective to assess the repercussions of its foreign policy collaborations with China concerning substantial infrastructure and strategic ventures. By employing the Indonesian viewpoint, this research entails interpreting the outcomes of foreign policy decisions from an Indonesian vantage point. The rationale behind this approach lies in the dearth of extensive investigation into Indonesia's foreign policy outcomes within the framework of its domestic political landscape, particularly the influence of public sentiment on the foreign policy formulation process. The existing body of literature primarily revolves around analyses of the ASEAN China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) and China-Indonesia relations within the context of Southeast Asia, primarily leaning towards international political economy rather than an in-depth exploration of foreign policy dynamics.

Some articles argue that Indonesia-China relations are based on economic interests in trade and investment [7]. Meanwhile, several articles still capture the relationship based on the economy but with the wider region with the ASEAN framework in the focus of ACFTA [8]–[11]. A slightly different view captures that domestic elites can reshape Indonesia's foreign policy outcomes [12]. Furthermore, another article explicitly mentions the importance of the leader's point of view in Indonesia's foreign policy decisions with China [13]. Also, there is a relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decision making in Indonesia [14]. Based on the literature review above, research that uses the Indonesian domestic public opinion approach is still far behind research on international political economy views. Furthermore, this thesis will fill the gap between these approaches and contribute to research on Indonesian foreign policy decision making from the Indonesian public opinion approach. In addition, the view of Indonesia's domestic political environment describes the climate and dynamics of Indonesian public opinion, which are related to the considerations of leaders in making foreign policy decisions.

2 Literature Review

Scholars have adopted two primary avenues to uncover the dynamics of Indonesia-China Relations: the lens of International Political Economy Factors and the exploration of Domestic Political Factors. A prevailing viewpoint among experts contends that Indonesia-China Relations pivot on economic interests, energy resources, market demands, and the ACFTA-based Free Trade Agreement. Their analyses are largely confined to the broad context of China-ASEAN interactions, offering a generalized perspective on Indonesia-China ties. Conversely, certain scholars posit that internal political ideologies and leadership strategies contribute to the oscillations in Indonesia-China relations, with particular emphasis on leaders' responses to real-world events. However, scant attention has been devoted to comprehending the role of public sentiment in reshaping Indonesia's foreign policy choices. Consequently, the research landscape concerning Indonesia-China relations, approached from an Indonesian standpoint and utilizing public opinion as an analytical tool, remains conspicuously inadequate.

2.1. International Political Economy Factors

The primary contention revolves around economic interests. Scholars adopting this perspective delve into the realm of international politics through an economic lens. China's rapid growth has naturally kindled economic ambitions aimed at expanding its economic prowess. Consequently, the pursuit of economic interests drives China to seek broader avenues for product distribution, with significant focus on vast markets like Indonesia. Simultaneously, China contends with energy and raw material shortages, prompting the importation of these resources from external sources, among them Indonesia. Wu expounds on four pivotal factors that underpin the robust ties between these nations. Foremost, trade and investment occupy a central position, as the Chinese administration actively champions the "going out" strategy, motivating enterprises to embrace international ventures, particularly investments in ASEAN nations, including Indonesia. Furthermore, China's imperative to secure its energy resources and raw materials from external channels is pronounced. With China's substantial appetite for oil, projections by the US Energy Information Administration anticipate a staggering 130% surge in oil demand by 2025, reaching 12.8 million barrels daily. In response, China must diversify its resource outlets to bridge this consumption gap. Notably, Indonesia's reserves encompass 9 billion barrels of oil, 9.3 billion tons of coal, and an impressive 188 trillion cubic feet of gas [15]. Next, Indonesia's stature as the preeminent nation and economic powerhouse in Southeast Asia comes to the fore, boasting a population of 260 million. In tandem with its sizable demographic, Indonesia presents an expansive market of significant consequence. This reality catalyzes the aspirations of China, Japan, and the US to fortify their presence within Indonesia's borders. Moreover, Indonesia extends a warm embrace to Chinese investments, particularly channeling manufacturing capital into its territory. Notably, Indonesia has ushered in an era of unprecedented opportunities for foreign investment, as evidenced by its record in 2022, where it secured its position as the foremost recipient of substantial investment inflows (Table 1).

Table 1. Indonesia's largest investor in 2022

Countries	Amount of Investment (in USD)
Singapore	3.1 billion
China	2.3 billion
Hong Kong	1.4 billion
Japan	0.9 billion
United States	0.8 billion

Source: <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2022/07/21/200000265/daftar-negara-investor-asing-terbesar-di-Indonesia>

According to Anne Booth, the interplay of economic fluctuations and recoveries in Indonesia has significantly influenced the economic rapport between China and Indonesia. This influence was notably apparent during the latter phase of the Suharto regime, which corresponded with the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis. The period subsequent to the political transition in 1998 witnessed Indonesia's economic resurgence, contributing to the stabilization of its economic ties with China. A noteworthy catalyst for robust growth stemmed from the establishment of the

ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), further bolstering the economic landscape. However, an aspect of apprehension within the Indonesian public perspective pertains to the prevailing inability of the country's agricultural and manufactured products to compete effectively with those originating from China. Within this context, the ACFTA is often perceived by many Indonesians as a mechanism that deepens the interconnectedness between the ASEAN region and China, an observation reflective of their concerns.

Rahul and Irfa capture that ASEAN-China relations are still shaping Indonesia-China relations. If China remains in its position to be involved in Indonesia's domestic politics, relations between the two countries will remain strong. Furthermore, Indonesia and China have signed strategic partnership cooperation. As a result, it brings more opportunities for satisfactory economic relations. However, both countries, especially Indonesia, showed a delightful result in the trade data as shown in Figure 2. and 3. below. They argue that US foreign policy shifted toward Asian countries, particularly Southeast Asia, through the ASEAN framework during the Obama administration. Neither China nor the US can ignore the fact that Indonesia is the most productive economy in ASEAN.



Fig. 2. Indonesia Exports to China (2012-2021)

Source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/indonesia/imports/china>



Fig. 3. Indonesia Imports from China (2012-2021)

Source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/indonesia/imports/china>

Alexander and Lucky have a sceptical argument about Indonesia-China Economic relations within the framework of ACFTA; they argue that Indonesia is not yet ready for free trade arrangements. Public opinion in Indonesia views that the government cannot implement this FTA to boost the domestic economy. On the Indonesian side, the market is flooded with cheap goods from China; they also argue that Indonesia should take this opportunity to engage more with China to accelerate Indonesia's domestic economy.

Maddaremmeng also concluded that Indonesia was not ready for free trade arrangements such as FTAs within the framework of ACFTA. Although the bilateral relations between the two sides are relatively good from an economic and political perspective, the Indonesian government can still not comprehensively meet their domestic economic conditions. He also believes that despite Indonesia's current economy, the prospect of economic relations with China will surpass if Indonesia joins China's initiation on one belt one road, which is a good opportunity to develop infrastructure in Indonesia. As a result, the domestic economy will emerge. Moreover, people's satisfaction with the government has undoubtedly increased.

2.2 Domestic Political Factors

In the late 90s, Indonesia entered a new chapter in the domestic political system to adopt western-style democracy in its constitution. These factors undoubtedly influenced Indonesia's foreign policy in many ways.

During the Suharto period, Indonesia severed its diplomatic relations with China due to political tensions between them. Meanwhile, during Soekarno's time, relations between Indonesia and China were quite good. Hafid argues that the change in foreign policy in Indonesia during Suharto's time was due to Suharto's perception that China's involvement in the 1965 events could pose a threat to Indonesia. Suharto's accusations of Chinese involvement in the 1965 coup must be based on historical evidence of Chinese involvement in the past and be strengthened by evidence of the

political dynamics that took place in the late Soekarno government. Therefore, the events of 1965 made a deep impression on the military, especially Suharto, for China's involvement in these events. The assessment of Chinese involvement is closely tied to evidence that the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) attempted to form a Fifth Force, seeking Chinese assistance with Sukarno's approval.

Suharto's perceptions were influenced by his belief system shaped by Javanese adat and reinforced by his assessment of "what happened." The events of 1965 were previously colored by Sukarno's policy of sending a delegation to China to obtain small arms assistance to strengthen the Fifth Force, and "what must happen", Suharto's view required Indonesia to avoid interaction with China. The process of making foreign policy decisions at the level of a personal approach is Suharto's decision to sever diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China.

Another example of how domestic politics influences Indonesia's foreign policy is presented by Johanes, his argument based on one positive and negative side of the majority of the indigenous elite. There are three central parts of the elite view: elites outside the government who see relations with China as having a negative impact, other elites outside the government who see it can bring positive income to Indonesia, and elites within government circles.

Indigenous elite views on Indonesia-China relations are divided. First, it tells us that the government's desire to develop closer ties with China is not unanimously supported. Second, at the government level, suspicion of China, even among a handful of government officials, has slowed Jokowi's efforts to forge close relations with China. Thus, the impact of these negative perceptions may not be on policymaking but the realization of goals. It is a challenge that the president's inner circle must overcome. Johanes' argument reflects that elites have a strong influence in reshaping the government's foreign policy decision-making process.

Iis Gindarsah, a researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Defense in Jakarta, also describes Indonesia's foreign policy decision-making from domestic politics. In his article, he describes the relationship between Indonesia's democratic system in the early 2000s and Indonesia's foreign policy decision making. By using a case study of Iran's nuclear sanctions during Indonesia's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, Gindarsah managed to find evidence that public opinion undoubtedly influences the government's foreign policy decision making into its foreign policy output.

3 Method and Data Collection

When delving into the research quandaries, this study employs qualitative methodologies. As elucidated by Alan Bryman, qualitative research embodies a investigative approach that predominantly prioritizes textual information over quantification in both the collection and analysis of data. Nonetheless, it's noteworthy that these three components might not invariably be incorporated within qualitative research undertakings [16]. The analytical process involves the accumulation of data derived from the scrutinized case studies. Data predominantly assumes the shape of scholarly documents and literature to substantiate the research claims. Secondary data, comprising documents and literature, were systematically gathered through sources such as textbooks, political reports from both Chinese and Indonesian perspectives, as well as political and

economic journals. Statistical data were culled from official websites and publications of prominent entities like the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia, the Office of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Additionally, political and economic news articles contributed to the comprehensive dataset.

4 Results and Discussion

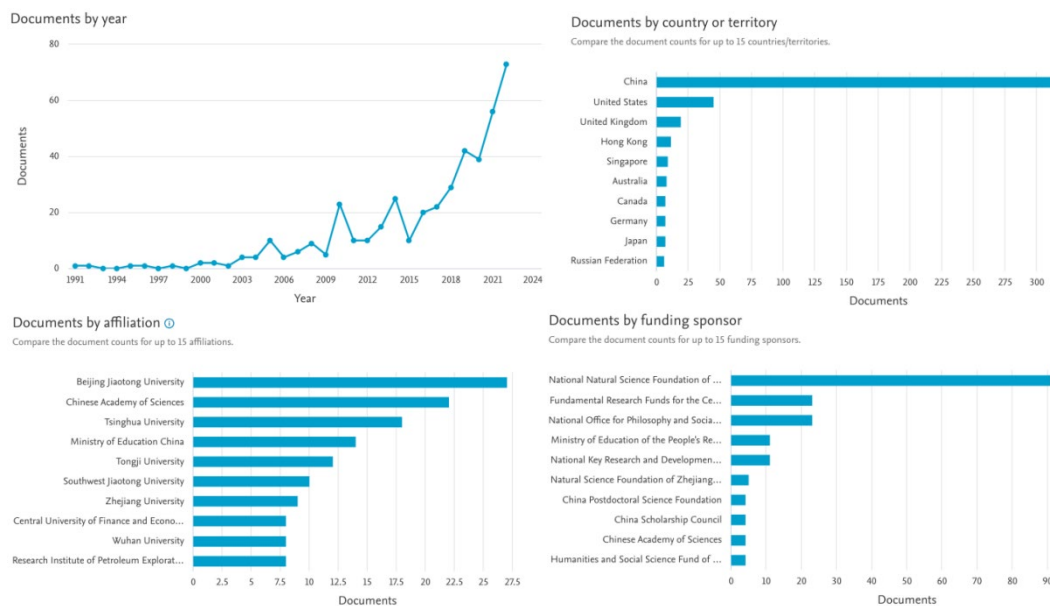


Fig. 4. SCOPUS.COM Analyze search results TITLE-ABSTRACT-KEYWORD (china AND investment AND high-speed), 426 document results, year range to analyze: 1991 to 2022

Querying SCOPUS.COM, the search yielded an array of results under the criteria TITLE-ABSTRACT-KEYWORD, employing the terms "china AND investment AND high-speed." This compilation consists of 426 documents. The analysis is confined within the year range from 1991 to 2022.

The financial support for these documents is substantial, with over 4 instances of first-level sponsorship provided by notable entities including the National Natural Science Foundation of China, the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities, the National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, the National Key Research and Development Program of China, and the Natural Science Foundation of Zhejiang Province. Regrettably, no records of sponsorship from Indonesia were identified.

The affiliations linked to these documents surpass nine instances, with primary affiliations involving institutions such as Beijing Jiaotong University, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Tsinghua University, Ministry of Education China, Tongji University, and Southwest Jiaotong University. Conversely, no affiliations from Indonesia were discerned.

Country/Territory analysis unveiled more than five prominent entities, spearheaded by China. Subsequent positions were occupied by the United States, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, and the Russian Federation.

In the broader context of international politics, two distinct categories of theories serve to elucidate phenomena. The initial category encompasses reductionist theories that center on individual or national levels of analysis. Contrarily, the second category pertains to systemic theories, which delve into explaining the intricacies of the international system itself [17]. Foreign policy analysis is a type of theory at the national level and focuses on explaining the policymaking process and the reasons behind the actions taken by a country.

Foreign policy constitutes a set of strategies designed to govern a nation's interactions with other countries. Nevertheless, the trajectory of foreign policy is intrinsically entwined with the fabric of domestic politics. As posited by Fearon, domestic politics significantly shapes the contours of a nation's foreign policy. This diplomatic approach serves as a conduit for the enactment of international political objectives, effectively extending the principles of domestic politics onto the global stage to achieve national interests and objectives. Consequently, a comprehensive assessment of a country's foreign policy necessitates a thorough examination of its domestic political landscape [18].

Fearon delineates two overarching theories for comprehending foreign policy: the systemic theory and the domestic political theory. The systemic theory perceives the state as a rational and cohesive entity. This theory posits that within international relations, interconnectedness prevails, prompting a country to contemplate the conduct of other nations prior to formulating specific policies. This interconnectedness essentially establishes a web of influence, where a nation's actions and decisions are not made in isolation but are intrinsically informed by the behavior and strategies of other nations. Consequently, a country's foreign policy is intricately linked with its perception of the actions that other countries have undertaken or are poised to undertake. This awareness compels the country to be attuned to and respond judiciously to the broader international landscape.

4.1 Domestic Political Theory

The domestic political theory underscores the distinctive attributes of a state, which play a pivotal role in elucidating a range of policy choices and specific political interactions that give rise to divergent implementations of policies. Instances of suboptimal policies can be clarified by considering perspectives outside the purview of the units engaged in formulating and deciding upon foreign policy, including factors such as the prevailing regime or policy-specific objectives. To illustrate, the roots of suboptimal policies can be traced back to the fundamental principles underpinning foreign policy or to the inclinations of key decision-makers aiming to consolidate their grip on power. Scrutinizing foreign policy through the lens of domestic politics is indispensable, as

domestic political dynamics can compel a nation to adopt policies that may fall short of optimal, impacting both the nation's internal welfare and its external influence. This analysis further elucidates how variations in political institutions, cultural nuances, economic structures, or a nation's leadership objectives contribute to the formation of foreign policy decisions.

Foreign policy is a realm influenced not only by the international milieu but also by the intricate dynamics inherent to a nation's domestic context. Consequently, domestic politics assumes significance as a vital analytical framework when examining foreign policy. While the systemic level of analysis elucidates a nation's foreign policy responses to the international landscape, the lens of domestic political analysis delves into the reasons behind and the mechanisms through which domestic factors exert influence over the formulation and adoption of foreign policies. Domestic political analysis gains prominence when the systemic level of analysis alone falls short in explicating the intricate interplay between a country's policies and its broader environment. This approach capitalizes on internal dynamics to track the motivations underlying these policies.

Domestic politics is indeed very dynamic, and the environment is diverse. Indeed, political affiliation, be it democratic or authoritarian, plays an important role in understanding the nature of domestic political behavior. Indonesia has changed its domestic political system from an authoritarian model to adopt a democratic system in the last two decades, precisely when the Suharto regime fell in 1998. Since then, the political transition must mature Indonesia's democratic system. The milestone was the presidential election in 2004. Many Indonesians of about 114 million, eligible to vote, turned up at the polls to cast their ballots in the first national direct presidential election.

4.2 Public Opinion Theory

Indisputably, the democratic framework has left a significant imprint on Indonesia's internal political landscape. Within this context, the prevalence of freedom of speech and governmental transparency has introduced openings that influence the involvement of public sentiment in shaping national policies. As a result, public opinion stands forth as a principal instrument for dissecting the intricacies of Indonesia's foreign policy decision-making process. Taking a cue from Robinson's work "Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases," published by Oxford University Press, it's discerned that perspectives advocating for the validation of public opinion can be segregated into two distinct categories: the pluralist model and the elite model [19].

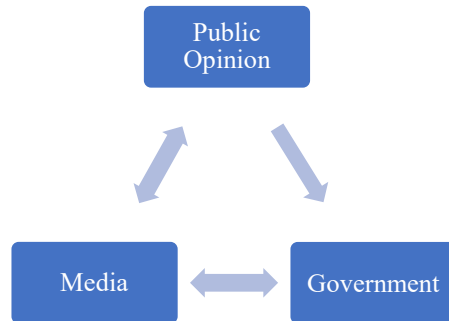


Fig. 5. Pluralist model

The premise of the pluralist model is that society has its strengths. Therefore, society (public and media) has higher power than the government, consequently influencing foreign policy decision making. Therefore, the pluralist model believes that public opinion stands alone without government influence. Besides that, the government must take public opinion into account in the policy decision-making process.

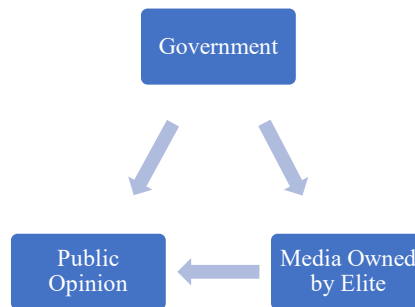


Fig. 6. Elite Model

Meanwhile, the premise of the elite model is that the dominant power axis condenses within the elite group, where they have a more significant influence on foreign policy decision making. In this model, the government takes control of public opinion. As an irreplaceable partner of public opinion, the media acts as an agent of the government to move their agenda and gain support from the public. To some extent, in authoritarian governments, the media act as propaganda tools for government policies. The democratic political system is related to the pluralist premise that the community has power, and the government acts as the community's mandate to regulate the administration of the state. For this reason, the government needs to satisfy public opinion to maintain its political position in a democratic political system.

Robinson also defines public opinion into two categories, Isolationist and Internationalist, using US citizens as an analogy. Isolationists categorize as citizens who oppose the involvement of their

governments in global affairs. Paradoxically, internationalists are citizens who favour the active role of governments in global affairs[19].

Media is an irreplaceable partner of public opinion whenever they are actively acting independently as a government performance watchdog or subordinate to the government to influence public opinion to ensure their political interests and support from the public. Furthermore, Robinson classifies how the media works to influence public opinion in more pro-pluralist actions vis-a-vis pro-elite, namely Agenda Setting, Priming, and Framing [19].

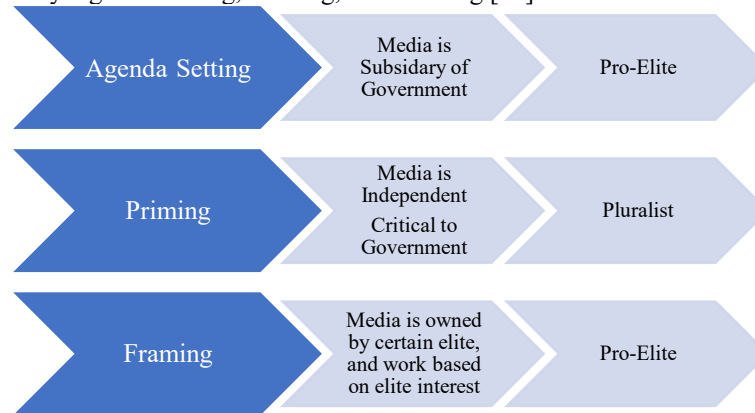


Fig. 7. Media in Public Opinion

Agenda Setting refers to the role of the media as subordinate to a more pro-elite government. The media try to influence public attention to awareness and support the government's agenda on certain issues. In contrast, in priming, the media tries to oppose the government by criticizing government policies and gaining public awareness to push the government and either to cancel their current policy decisions or cancel the discourse of policy decision making. The last is framing. In this case, media works fluctuate from time to time, both pro-pluralist and pro-elite. Media captures issues from different perspectives to influence public opinion. So, in the same particular issue, the content and position of the media can be very different. As a result, public opinion reactions also differ on issues that are, in fact, the same.

4.3 Foreign Policy Analysis

Analyzing foreign policy can be done at three levels, international, national and individual levels. In this thesis, analysis of domestic politics at the national level is possible. This thesis uses a public opinion approach, with a pluralist and an elite model as analytical tools. To better understand the isolationist and internationalist variables are also used in this thesis, along with the concepts of agenda-setting, priming, and framing to understand how the media influence public opinion.

Indonesia as a country has experienced a transition from an authoritarian regime in the New Order era to a democratic era after the fall of the Suharto regime. Democracy has been a part of Indonesian society for nearly two decades. Moreover, it is proven by the direct election of both the

executive and the legislature. Even though Indonesia is a democratic country, domestic politics is not necessarily 100% free of interests, and some elites are also interested in domestic politics in Indonesia.

In this case, the government has been directly elected by the majority of people who support isolationists. Isolationism in this context means domestic economic development and social justice for all citizens. Japan has offered and initiated the project by conducting a feasibility study of the High-Rail Project in the previous presidential period. However, Japan's proposal would emphasize economic conditions that most people favour isolationists. In addition, the series of corruption scandals carried out by the democratic party became a significant reason why the public "punished" him in the 2014 national election.

Subsequently, following the election of the new government, China extended a proposal for the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project. Significantly, China's proposition harmonized with the new government's policy of isolationism. This alignment of interests gained reinforcement from influential elites who also shared a vested interest in the government's approach. Consequently, the intricate process of policymaking culminated in the realization of the project, with China being chosen as the collaborative partner.

In summation, the findings of this thesis reveal compelling evidence of the impact of public opinion on foreign policymaking. Notably, the prevailing isolationist sentiment within society reflects a collective desire for national economic progress. This sentiment was exemplified in the case of the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project, where the electorate's response to the preceding government's actions was a resounding electoral rejection. This mandate subsequently gave rise to new isolationist policies and choices. Further substantiating these dynamics, a select group of influential elites control the media landscape, predominantly aligning with the new isolationist agenda. The media, acting in concert with these interests, employs a strategic framing of news coverage that assumes a negative, positive, or neutral stance as suits the elite's intentions.

The Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project stands on the cusp of realizing China's grand vision of an expansive global high-speed rail network. This endeavor reflects China's ambition to establish an intercontinental transport network, bridging the British mainland and China through the Beijing-London route. This network serves China's multifaceted economic interests, encompassing resource acquisition and connectivity. Within Indonesia, China's focus extends to the construction of a high-speed train link to Surabaya. The scope of China's aspirations also encompasses other Asian nations such as Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Vietnam, and India, where similar high-speed rail projects are contemplated.

Both China and Japan have demonstrated their commitment to the high-speed rail project. Representatives from both nations engaged with Indonesian officials to discuss collaboration possibilities. In August 2015, the Japanese delegation expressed their interest through discussions with the then trade minister, Rachmat Gobel. Japan showcased its intent to not only construct projects but also invest in human resources and technology transfer. Simultaneously, the Chinese delegation, led by Minister of National Development Xu Shaoshi, presented a feasibility study for the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project to President Jokowi on August 10, 2015.

Intriguingly, both China and Japan submitted balanced proposals, prompting President Jokowi to pit the two proposals against each other for evaluation. In pursuit of fairness, an independent consultant, the Boston Consulting Group, was appointed to assess the proposals. However, as the

deadline approached, Japan revised its proposal, introducing an additional offer. This move elicited disappointment from the Chinese representatives.

Ultimately, President Jokowi, through Presidential Regulation 102 of 2015, reframed the project's assessment timeline and rejected both China's and Japan's proposals, as they involved state budget usage. Instead, he entrusted the high-speed train project to state-owned enterprises (BUMN) through a business-to-business scheme. This led to the formation of PT Kereta Cepat Indonesia China (KCIC), a consortium of Indonesian and Chinese companies, to operate the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed train. The project marks a pivotal milestone in Indonesia's pursuit of high-speed rail, a vision that traces back to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's era in 2008. Under his leadership, the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) and the Ministry of Transportation (Kemenhub) initiated the high-speed rail project design for Jakarta-Surabaya, engaging the Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA) for a comprehensive study.

China's involvement in the project took shape during President Jokowi's leadership, marked by his visit to the 22nd APEC Summit in Beijing in November 2014. During this visit, China seized the opportunity to capture Indonesia's attention, culminating in the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the 800 km Jakarta-Surabaya high-speed train. This agreement between China Railway Construction Corporation Limited and PT Resteel Industry Indonesia was formalized at the Indonesia-China Trade Investment and Economic Forum in Beijing.

"China is very enthusiastic about the many projects that this country is fighting for," said Didi Suwondo, chairman of the organizing committee for the Indonesia-China Trade Investment and Economic Forum [20].

Within a fortnight, Chinese investors in the High-Speed Train initiative embarked on a direct journey to Indonesia to give tangible shape to the memorandum of understanding. In March 2015, President Jokowi embarked on an official state visit to China, where he engaged with President Xi Jinping. This visit held monumental significance, as it provided the platform for Minister of State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN), Rini Soemarno, to formalize a memorandum of understanding for the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project with the China National Development and Reform Commission. With this decisive step, China unequivocally emerged as a potent contender against Japan in the high-speed rail endeavor within Indonesia.

5 Conclusion

The impact of public opinion on Indonesia's foreign policy choices regarding the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project is notably substantial. This influence is particularly evident in the project's historical trajectory, where Japan was initially entrusted with conducting a feasibility study. The democratic system's effectiveness in integrating public sentiment into governmental deliberations has played a pivotal role. Moreover, this influence resonates deeply within the corridors of foreign policy decision-making, ultimately culminating in the selection of China as a strategic partner for the project.

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