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Author(s)

Corresponding Author

 Defrida Suzana Lukuaka

 0009-0003-9849-3252

 [defisuzana@gmail.com](mailto:defisuzana@gmail.com)

 Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

 Desi Natalia Sihombing

 009-0007-3890-6966

 [desihombing05@gmail.com](mailto:desihombing05@gmail.com)

 Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

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## Balancing Freedom and Order: Civil Society Organization Governance, Policy Communication, and the Investment Climate in Indonesia

Defrida Suzana Lukuaka, Desi Natalia Sihombing

**Abstract :** Civil Society Organization (CSO) governance in Indonesia stands at the intersection of protecting democratic freedoms and maintaining public order to foster a favorable investment climate. Although various regulations have been enacted, research on policy communication has paid insufficient attention to how government policy communication can reconcile these often conflicting imperatives. This qualitative study used policy document analysis and a critical literature review to identify communication channels and barriers affecting interactions among state authorities, civil society groups, and investors. The findings indicate that closed and inconsistent regulatory messaging may contribute to information dissonance, constraining civic space and creating legal uncertainty for business actors. Conversely, an integrated communication model may help bridge state control and public participation through bureaucratic transparency, coordinated policy implementation, and interactive dialogue platforms. This study concludes that civil liberties and the investment climate can mutually reinforce each other when addressed through adaptive and inclusive policy communication. The findings offer theoretical contributions to public governance studies and practical recommendations for formulating balanced government communication strategies.

### About the Author(s)

Defrida Suzana Lukuaka is a postgraduate alumna of the Indonesian Defense University, specifically from the Faculty of National Security, and currently works as a freelance writer.

Desi Natalia Sihombing is a postgraduate alumna of the Indonesian Defense University and currently serves at the National Development Planning Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (Bappenas RI)

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## I. Introduction

Indonesia is a democratic country that positions economic development as one of its strategic national agendas (Halim et al., 2025). Amid increasingly competitive global economic dynamics, a country's ability to create a secure, stable investment climate with legal certainty is a critical factor in attracting capital flows, strengthening industrialization, increasing productivity, and accelerating the achievement of national development goals. For Indonesia, investment functions not only as a source of development financing but also as a strategic instrument for creating employment, accelerating technology transfer, enhancing industrial competitiveness, and strengthening Indonesia's position within the global value chain. Accordingly, security and stability, legal certainty, and the effectiveness of governance have become fundamental factors shaping investor perceptions of a country (Nurdin et al., 2025).

Within this context, domestic security is understood not merely as the state's capacity to confront military threats, but also as its capacity to maintain social order, protect economic activity, and ensure that all societal actors operate within the bounds of the law. Social instability arising from intergroup conflict, intimidation of the business community, or weak law enforcement can generate institutional risk that influences investment decisions. The World Bank (2020) explains that investors weigh not only economic factors but also institutional quality, regulatory certainty, and the government's capacity to guarantee security and protection for business activity when making investment decisions.

At the same time, these efforts must be balanced against the protection of civil liberties and public participation within Indonesia's democratic framework. The reform era has driven the growth of various forms of civil society organizations (CSOs) as an expression of increased public participation in political and development processes. The existence of civil society organizations is a consequence of democratic principles guaranteeing citizens' rights to assemble, associate, and express opinions, as stipulated in Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. In a democratic system, civil society organizations serve a strategic

function as intermediaries between society and the state through advocacy, interest articulation, and oversight of government administration.

In practice, however, the development of civil society organizations presents new challenges as some groups shift from serving as instruments of democratic participation to using organizational capacity for coercive acts such as intimidation, extortion, illegal levies, and other acts of intimidation and violence. This phenomenon creates a democratic paradox, since the freedoms granted to strengthen public participation are, in some cases, exploited to disrupt public order and economic activity.

One example of this phenomenon can be seen in the conflict between the Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia Bersatu (GRIB) and the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) over a land dispute in Pondok Betung, South Tangerang. This case illustrates how organizational capacity can be used as an instrument of pressure with the potential to disrupt institutional stability and public order (Wijayaatmaja, 2025). A similar issue has attracted government attention, as acts of intimidation and violence involving civil society organizations has increasingly been viewed as affecting the investment climate. Deputy Chair of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Eddy Soeparno, stated that the presence of civil society organizations engaging in problematic actions in various regions can negatively affect investor confidence in Indonesia (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, 2025). In addition, the government's response to alleged intimidation and illegal levies during the construction of PT Build Your Dream's (BYD) electric vehicle facility in Subang, West Java, demonstrates that such practices have become an issue concerning not only public security but also the sustainability of national investment (Poerwanti, 2025).

These developments show that acts of intimidation and violence involving organized groups differ from conventional forms of such conduct. Effendy (2013) explains that some social groups may, over time, transform into political thugs — groups possessing the capacity for social mobilization who exploit political networks to gain influence in the public sphere. This transformation creates new challenges, as the boundary between

legitimate political participation and the coercive use of social power becomes increasingly complex.

Land disputes and disrupted investment activities highlight ongoing friction between civil society and the state in Indonesia. While existing research has largely focused on political economy frameworks for analyzing power structures and patronage networks (Nuridin et al., 2025), it has paid less attention to communication gaps that arise during policy implementation. Recent cases, such as the GRIB and BMKG dispute, along with the friction surrounding PT BYD, show that these conflicts are not just driven by economic interests. Equally important are the communication gaps that divide government bodies, security forces, CSOs, and private investors during policy implementation.

In this regard, the policy communication gap cannot be understood merely as a consequence of weak regulation. The government already possesses a legal framework governing civil society organizations through Law Number 8 of 1985 on Mass Organizations, subsequently amended by Law Number 17 of 2013 and Law Number 16 of 2017. This regulatory framework guarantees freedom of association while also requiring civil society organizations to maintain public order, comply with the law, and refrain from activities contrary to the state ideology and national security. The regulation also grants the government authority to take administrative action against organizations that commit violations (Kurniawan, 2018).

Thus, the core problem in addressing acts of intimidation and violence involving certain civil society organizations lies not in the absence of legal instruments, but in the gap between formulated policy and its implementation. Existing policies have not been communicated clearly and effectively to all stakeholders with respect to the limits of freedom of association, organizational responsibility, oversight mechanisms, reporting procedures, and the legal consequences of actions that disrupt public order. This disconnect in policy implementation undermines a common understanding of policy objectives among the government, security forces, civil society organizations, the public, and the business sector.

This policy communication gap has implications for national security and stability, as it creates uncertainty over the boundary

between legitimate organizational activity within a democracy and conduct that constitutes a legal violation. When policy messages are not conveyed consistently and coordination mechanisms among actors do not function effectively, social conflict can escalate into broader disturbances to security and public order. The Ministry of Home Affairs has noted that social conflict in Indonesia continues to be shaped by various political, economic, and sociocultural factors that require stronger cross-sectoral coordination to address (Deputi V Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan Indonesia, 2026). In the context of domestic security, a study by the National Police Research and Development Agency (Puslitbang Polri) likewise shows that acts of intimidation and violence carried out by organized groups have the potential to disrupt public order, as such groups use their organizational structures and identities as instruments of mobilization (Saputra, 2024).

The impact of this policy communication gap becomes even more significant when security disturbances affect the economic sector. The National Police (Polri) has affirmed that acts of intimidation and violence associated with civil society organization activities can affect the investment climate through extortion, illegal levies, coercion, and disruption of business activity. Data from the Criminal Investigation Agency's Information Center (Pusiknas Bareskrim Polri) indicate that between January and April 2025, 169 cases involving acts of intimidation and violence were recorded within the jurisdiction of the West Java Regional Police, including crimes such as threats, assault, and extortion that could undermine security for businesses (Pusiknas Bareskrim Polri, 2025). This condition demonstrates that security concerns are directly linked to perceptions of investment risk, as investors take into account the state's capacity to guarantee legal certainty and protection for economic activity.

From the perspective of public policy communication, policy effectiveness is determined not only by the quality of regulation but also by the government's capacity to build a common understanding, convey policy messages consistently, and ensure coordinated implementation among actors. The OECD (2021) affirms that effective government communication is a critical element in building public trust, as it

helps bridge the gap between policy objectives and public perceptions of their implementation. Therefore, in the context of addressing acts of intimidation and violence involving certain civil society organizations, policy communication is an important instrument for strengthening government legitimacy, clarifying the boundaries of democracy, enhancing organizational compliance, strengthening security coordination, and signaling legal certainty to the business community.

Based on the problems outlined above, this study proceeds from the understanding that the government's challenge in maintaining Indonesia's investment climate concerns not only the capacity to formulate regulations, but also the ability to ensure that policies are effectively communicated, understood, and implemented by all stakeholders within a complex democratic environment. The gap between the normative objectives of policy and its implementation in practice indicates that policy communication plays a strategic role in bridging the interests of government, civil society organizations, security forces, and the business sector.

To address this policy communication gap, a robust theoretical framework is required to capture both the communicative dynamics and the structural complexities of policy implementation. Accordingly, this study integrates three complementary perspectives: Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), Edwards III's Policy Implementation Theory, and the Policy Paradox concept. These perspectives are deployed not as isolated analytical lenses, but as a unified framework in which each addresses conceptual dimensions that the others do not fully capture

First, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), developed by W. Timothy Coombs, is used to analyze the government's communication in addressing a crisis of public trust arising from acts of intimidation and violence involving certain civil society organizations. Coombs explains that organizational responses to a crisis can be carried out through three main strategic categories: denial strategies, diminish strategies (reducing attribution or impact), and rebuild strategies (restoring trust) (Claeys & Coombs, 2020). This framework evaluates how the government constructs a policy narrative that addresses demands for law enforcement while simultaneously preserving democratic legitimacy.

Second, this study employs George C. Edwards III's Policy Implementation Theory to analyze how government policy concerning civil society organizations is translated into practice. Edward III asserts that policy implementation success is driven by four variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure (Hidayat & Kemala, 2022). The communication dimension serves as the primary variable here, as the central challenge lies not in a lack of regulation, but in how existing policy is understood, conveyed, and implemented by stakeholders.

Third, the Policy Paradox concept explains the policy dilemmas inherent in regulating civil society organizations within a democracy. Simons and Voß (2018) note that public policy frequently confronts value conflicts when accommodating divergent interests. This paradox manifests across three dimensions: the normative paradox (tension between democratic values and economic stability), the implementation paradox (translating dual-purpose policy into practice), and the legitimacy paradox (maintaining trust among stakeholders with competing interests).

These three perspectives must, however, be critically examined because each rests on implicit assumptions. SCCT treats crisis responsibility as a single "snapshot" at an initial point in time, whereas Jong (2025) demonstrates that responsibility attribution continually shifts as new actors emerge. This limitation is further underscored by AlAjmi and AlSaqri (2026), who observe that conventional crisis models focus on a single organization, whereas acts of intimidation and violence involving CSOs involve a multi-actor network, including CSOs, security forces, local government, and investors, each generating its own narrative.

Edwards III's model carries a different limitation: rooted in rational-technocratic planning, it assumes implementation proceeds according to central objectives once its four variables are satisfied. Macnamara (2025) shows that this assumption perpetuates a one-way "We Make, You Sell" pattern of communication, consistent with critiques of synoptic problem-solving, which, as Hyden (2012) argues, often fails to account for political realities. Through Tanzania's "We-Must-Run" strategy, Hyden demonstrates that political actors often prioritize value rationality

over instrumental calculation, a critical insight for Indonesia, where the central government may fulfill all technical variables yet fail to convince regional actors operating under distinct political logics.

At the intersection of these limitations, the Policy Paradox becomes indispensable. Nudzor (2009) shows that policy is simultaneously a "text" forged through power compromises and a "discourse" that shapes reality, suggesting that the classification of conduct as acts of intimidation and violence is contested rather than neutral. Ufel (2022) reinforces this by demonstrating that even deliberative processes contain coercive elements. Thus, what appears on the surface as an "implementation gap" (Edward III) or an "unfinished rebuild narrative" (SCCT) is fundamentally a manifestation of a structural paradox that cannot be resolved through technical instruments alone (Hyden, 2012).

To integrate these theories sequentially, this study adopts the three-phase framework of Schädeli and Ritz (2024), comprising sources, decisions, and reactions. The Policy Paradox explains the sources of structural tension between freedom of association and public order; SCCT explains how the government makes communication decisions in response to trust crises; and Edwards III's model explains how policy reactions are translated into bureaucratic processes during implementation.

Based on this integrated theoretical positioning, this study focuses on how government policy communication strategies can be designed to strengthen CSO governance, balance democratic principles with public order, and support Indonesia's investment climate. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the dynamics and challenges of governing civil society organizations in Indonesia in the context of maintaining a balance among democratic freedom, national security stability, and the investment climate?
2. What government policy communication strategies can strengthen CSO governance to support security governance, uphold democratic values, and sustain Indonesia's investment climate?

This study aims to examine how government communication capacity can bridge regulatory mandates and implementation in practice, thereby mitigating institutional risk signals that negatively affect investor confidence while preserving core democratic principles.

## II. Methods

This study used a qualitative approach and the library research method to analyze government policy communication strategies for strengthening the governance of civil society organizations and sustaining the investment climate in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was chosen to understand social and policy phenomena in depth through the interpretation of processes, meanings, and relationships among the actors involved. Library research was selected because the study focused on the dynamics of public policy, civil society organization regulation, government communication, and their implications for national security and stability and the investment climate. The study drew on data sources such as scholarly journal articles, policy documents, regulations, institutional reports, and documented events (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018; Ridwan et al., 2021).

The empirical focus of this study was limited to documented cases of acts of intimidation and violence linked to civil society organizations during the early period of the administration of President Prabowo Subianto, specifically between March and May 2025. The analysis focused on two primary cases: the land dispute between the Indonesian People United Movement (GRIB) and the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) in Pondok Betung (Wijayaatmaja, 2025), and alleged intimidation and illegal levies surrounding the electric vehicle facility investment of PT Build Your Dream (BYD) in Subang (Poerwanti, 2025). These cases were supplemented by documented cases of extortion and illegal levies across Cilegon, Subang, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Depok (Yanuar et al., 2025). Case selection was based on the availability of credible institutional and media documentation explicitly linking civil society organization activities to extortion, intimidation, illegal levies, or business disruption. These criteria distinguished the selected cases from cases involving the disbandment of civil

society organizations on ideological grounds, such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia.

To safeguard analytical validity, this study used data triangulation across three primary source categories: peer-reviewed academic literature, laws and regulations, and empirical documentation from reputable institutional reports and news media (Alaslan, 2021). Triangulation was used to ensure that each analytical argument was grounded in verified evidence rather than conceptual assumptions. The collected data were processed using qualitative content analysis and systematically mapped across policy communication sources, decision-making narratives, and implementation reactions to address the research questions posed in this study.

### III. Results and Discussions

#### A. Dynamics and Challenges of CSO Governance: Balancing Democratic Freedom, Security, and the Investment Climate

Research on land disputes involving civil society organizations in Indonesia has predominantly relied on a political economy framework, with a focus on regulatory deficiencies and security risks affecting the investment climate (World Bank, 2020; Kurniawan, 2018). The dynamics and challenges of CSO governance are evident in the Pondok Betung dispute between GRIB and BMKG, as well as the dispute surrounding PT BYD's investment in Subang. Both cases follow distinct trajectories, escalating from localized land disputes and acts of intimidation to broader public scrutiny and state intervention.

Yet existing studies rarely address how these ongoing conflicts reflect a deeper breakdown in state communication. Beyond enforcement limitations or regulatory loopholes, there is a fundamental gap in how authorities define and convey the boundaries of permissible organizational conduct to civil society, corporate actors, and the public. This communication gap forms the analytical focus of this study.

The governance of civil society organizations in Indonesia involves a fundamental dilemma between protecting freedom of association as a constitutional right and maintaining public

order to support a conducive investment climate. This complexity manifests across various interconnected dimensions, creating multifaceted communication challenges in which every government action potentially generates contradictory interpretations among different societal groups. Divergent perspectives on the boundaries of freedom of association arise when one party emphasizes the substantive dimension of that freedom, whereas another focuses on its procedural and formal legal dimensions.

The disbandment of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) demonstrates how this paradox manifests itself in state governance. This decision sparked fundamental debates regarding the interpretation of freedom of association in relation to principles of public order and security, illustrating how the government faces situations where every policy choice may carry significant political and social consequences. Paradoxical communication challenges emerge when firm action against organizations engaging in acts of intimidation and violence is perceived as democratic regression by groups prioritizing freedom of association, while tolerance of such conduct may damage state legitimacy in guaranteeing order and may be viewed as an inability to uphold the rule of law by groups prioritizing stability, such as investors.

It is important to clarify that the HTI case differs analytically from the cases involving acts of intimidation and violence discussed throughout this article. HTI was dissolved under Law No. 17 of 2013 primarily on ideological grounds, for disseminating an ideology considered contrary to Pancasila, and not because it engaged in extortion, intimidation, or violence against businesses (Kurniawan, 2018); it is cited here only to illustrate the general communication paradox surrounding the disbandment of CSOs, rather than as an example of the type of conduct examined in this study. In contrast, based on the information gathered, the conduct examined in this study includes extortion, illegal levies, intimidation, and physical obstruction of business activities. These cases include the Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia Bersatu (GRIB) in the Pondok Betung land dispute with BMKG (Wijayaatmaja, 2025), as well as documented cases of extortion and illegal security levies across Cilegon, Subang, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Depok, involving organizations such as GMBI and the Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat

(Yanuar et al., 2025). This distinction matters because conflating an ideologically motivated disbandment with restructuring in response to acts of intimidation and violence risks delegitimizing the restructuring agenda itself.

As reflected in media coverage, President Prabowo Subianto's response to cases involving acts of intimidation and violence affecting PT BYD's investment in Subang reflects efforts to address the paradox through a communication strategy emphasizing the rule of law without neglecting democratic principles. This approach demonstrates the evolution of government policy communication, where emphasis is placed not only on policy substance but also on how it is communicated to the public. The President's statement affirming the government's commitment to protecting business actors from extortion, illegal levies, intimidation, and persecution demonstrates the government's position on balancing law enforcement with respect for constitutional rights.

When examined through Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) framework, the Indonesian government's response can be interpreted as an indirect adoption of a rebuild strategy, which not only acknowledges systemic problems but also takes active responsibility for rebuilding public and investor confidence. The implementation of the rebuild strategy involves three dimensions: transparency, which requires accurate and comprehensive information; accountability, which requires the government to demonstrate democratic responsibility; and responsiveness, which requires rapid responses to community feedback (Claeys & Coombs, 2020). This strategy encompasses crisis identification through systematic audits, initial official statements that acknowledge responsibility, corrective actions through special task forces and new SOPs, consistent public narratives, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. In practical terms, the communication strategy that the government may employ is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Strategy Framework

| Phase                      | Main Activities                                                                                                                                     | Implementation                                                                                                                                  | Success Indicators                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Crisis Identification      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Root cause analysis</li> <li>Identification of affected actors</li> <li>Public perception mapping</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematic audit of similar cases</li> <li>Society and investor perception surveys</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive analysis reports</li> <li>Public perception baseline data</li> <li>Stakeholder mapping</li> </ul>           |
| Initial Official Statement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public apology</li> <li>Acknowledgment and responsibility</li> <li>Empathy for victims</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Official press conferences</li> <li>Press releases</li> <li>Direct communication to investors</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive media feedback</li> <li>Stakeholder responses</li> <li>Initial trust improvement</li> </ul>                      |
| Corrective Actions         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Situation recovery</li> <li>Internal system improvement</li> <li>Structural reform</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special task forces</li> <li>New coordination SOPs</li> <li>Early warning systems</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreased cases of intimidation and violence;</li> <li>Coordination updates</li> <li>Increased legal certainty</li> </ul> |
| Public Narrative           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication framing</li> <li>Long-term commitment</li> <li>Process transparency</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated communication campaigns</li> <li>Public dialogue</li> <li>Media engagement</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent media narratives</li> <li>Increased public understanding</li> <li>Stakeholder support</li> </ul>               |
| Monitoring and Evaluation  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public opinion surveys</li> <li>Periodic reports</li> <li>Result transparency</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public dashboard</li> <li>Regular surveys</li> <li>Transparent progress reports</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available tracking data</li> <li>Effective feedback loops</li> <li>Continuous improvement</li> </ul>                      |

Source: Author's synthesis, adapted from Claeys & Coombs (2020).

To move beyond a purely conceptual framework, Table 1 can be applied to the documented timeline of the PT BYD case in Subang. Eddy Soeparno's public statement on 17 March 2025 in Cirebon can be understood as an early crisis-identification signal at the national political level ([Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, 2025](#)). Meanwhile, President Prabowo, through a press statement delivered by Minister of the State Secretariat Prasetyo Hadi, expressed concern about the disruption of the investment climate by acts of intimidation and violence carried out under the guise of Civil Society Organizations. Hadi noted, "Frankly, we share this deep concern because acts of thuggery, particularly those carried out under the guise of activities by specific community organizations, should not be tolerated, as they fail to foster a conducive business environment." Thus, the President and the government are genuinely troubled" ([Al Hikam, 2025](#)).

The Corrective Actions phase is reflected in the optimization of the Investment Task Force and the Forkopimda coordination mechanisms discussed during the same period ([Wijayaatmaja, 2025](#)). However, evidence from the Pondok Betung dispute indicates that GRIB's occupation of BMKG land persisted in May 2025 despite these statements. In addition, no public dashboard or periodic transparency report on such cases was documented during this period, suggesting that the Public Narrative and Monitoring and Evaluation phases had not yet been fully realized. This gap between the conceptual framework presented in Table 1 and the empirical evidence reinforces the presence of structural constraints in the system rather than contradicting them.

The implementation of Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Strategy faces structural constraints arising from insufficient integration within bureaucratic systems. The land dispute case between the Indonesian People's Unity Movement and BMKG in Pondok Betung Village demonstrates that the democracy paradox manifests not only at the normative level but also at the operational level. Slow interagency coordination reflects a lack of synchronization between central-level political commitment and field implementation capacity, which has significant implications for communication strategy effectiveness. When gaps emerge between strategic communication and operational implementation, they may undermine

government credibility in managing tensions between democratic principles ([Ashbridge et al., 2022](#)).

The democracy paradox also manifests in the tension between providing legal certainty to investors and ensuring due process of law for civil society organizations. The government is committed to creating a conducive investment climate as a national economic development strategy ([Garritzmann et al., 2023](#)), but must also ensure that development processes do not come at the expense of democratic principles and human rights. Policy communication must articulate how both objectives can be achieved simultaneously without creating detrimental trade-offs.

Effective communication strategies for managing this paradox require holistic and integrated approaches that move beyond ad hoc or reactive communication and incorporate long-term strategies capable of anticipating various scenarios. Developing comprehensive strategies requires investment in human resource capacity and communication technology, ensuring that government personnel possess the competencies needed for effective crisis communication and paradox management. Another crucial aspect is the development of continuous feedback and evaluation mechanisms to measure policy communication effectiveness, identify factors affecting effectiveness, and anticipate potential new paradoxes in policy implementation.

Managing this paradox also requires a shift from a static to a dynamic understanding of crisis responsibility. Jong ([2025](#)) demonstrates that the attribution of responsibility among stakeholders in a crisis is rarely fixed at a single point in time but evolves as new information emerges and additional actors become implicated, as illustrated by the present case. President Prabowo's rebuild narrative in April 2025 initially framed the problem as an enforcement issue involving individual networks engaged in acts of intimidation and violence. Yet the Pondok Betung dispute in May 2025 indicated that responsibility had, by then, become more diffuse, involving multiple actors including local government, land administration agencies, and regional security forces. Treating the April statement as a closed "snapshot" rather than an evolving narrative risks a mismatch between the government's declared strategy and the public's

shifting perception, precisely the vulnerability Jong (2025) warns against.

To manage this evolving paradox more systematically, the analysis draws on Schädeli and Ritz's (2024) macro-level framework for paradox management in the public sector, which distinguishes three analytical phases: identifying the sources of paradox, deciding how to respond, and reacting to the consequences of that response. Applied to this case, the source phase of the paradox lies in the simultaneous constitutional guarantee of freedom of association and the state's obligation to maintain public order and protect the investment climate, as outlined in the Introduction section.

The decision phase is reflected in the government's choice of a rebuild strategy that avoids blaming civil society organizations as a whole while still maintaining its commitment to law enforcement. The reaction phase is where the empirical gap identified above becomes apparent: the government has not yet closed the loop between its declared strategy and demonstrable outcomes, as evidenced by the absence of a public dashboard or periodic transparency report. Taken together, these three phases of paradox management indicate that the communication challenge in managing acts of intimidation and violence involving civil society organizations is not only about crafting the right message but also about institutionalizing a feedback cycle that connects each phase.

## **B. Government Policy Communication Strategies for CSO Restructuring**

Building on the structural obstacles outlined above, the breakdown in policy communication operates across three distinct yet connected levels. First, an interest gap emerges between state priorities regarding investment security and civil society demands for local representation and economic livelihood. Second, an access gap persists because authorities rarely consult affected communities or organizations prior to finalizing restructuring plans. Third, a representation gap arises when security officials unilaterally define the boundaries between legitimate advocacy and acts of intimidation and violence, bypassing inclusive dialogue. Together, these three dynamics clarify why interventions in Pondok Betung and Subang have failed to resolve

underlying tensions, suggesting that the issue involves persistent communication gaps rather than simply a lack of regulation.

The absence of periodic monitoring identified in the reaction phase highlights the need to reconsider the way the state interacts with civil society groups through a more inclusive approach. In this context, the restructuring of civil society organizations requires policy communication strategies that balance freedom of association with public order within Indonesia's pluralistic society. This complexity arises from the diverse ideological backgrounds and interests of civil society organizations, which often intersect with broader national economic development interests. Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution provides constitutional guarantees for freedom of association, but the regulatory framework and its implementation must establish clear and legally accountable boundaries that balance this freedom with the demands of a competitive investment climate in an increasingly globalized economy (Choi et al., 2020).

Communicating policies that seek to balance democratic freedoms with other public interests in Indonesia is particularly challenging because collective memories of authoritarianism make society skeptical of government efforts to limit civil society organizations (Iqbal, 2019). Government communication should clarify that restructuring does not constitute a restriction on democratic freedoms but rather seeks to establish a fair legal framework that applies equally to all parties. Deputy Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Eddy Soeparno's statement regarding the negative impact of civil society organizations on the investment climate underscores the urgency of restructuring and the need to communicate such efforts transparently to the public (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, 2025). Evidence-based communication has been shown to be more effective in persuading the public than political rhetoric alone (Haris, 2022).

Analysis using Edwards III's policy implementation model indicates that communication related to policy restructuring faces significant constraints due to unclear standards and procedures (Hidayat & Kemala, 2022). This ambiguity creates room for interpretation that can be exploited to justify actions that undermine public order. As demonstrated in the Pondok

Betung case, the absence of clear procedural standards allowed GRIB to frame its prolonged occupation of BMKG land as legitimate advocacy rather than unlawful obstruction (Ramadani, 2019). Therefore, systematic and comprehensive policy communication mechanisms are needed, encompassing not only the dissemination of regulations but also public education on the fundamental principles underlying them (Aprilia et al., 2022). This approach enables civil society organizations to understand not only the boundaries of permissible activities but also the rationale behind such limitations. The implementation of policy communication can be illustrated through the following model.

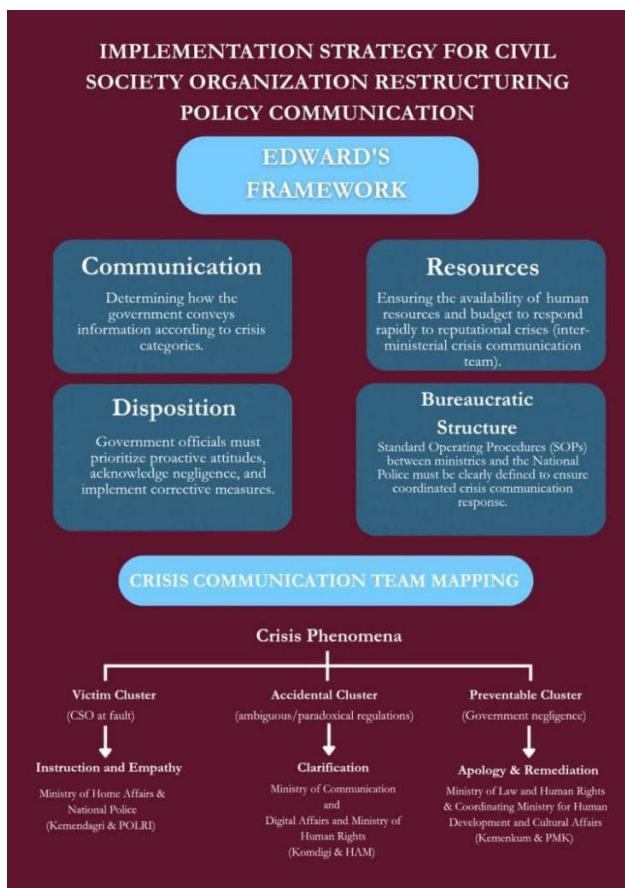


Figure 1. Integrated Policy Communication Model (adapted from Edwards III, 1980, and Claeys & Coombs, 2020)

Figure 1 can similarly be anchored to concrete evidence rather than left as an abstract offering. The Communication variable is illustrated by the police's establishment of the 110 hotline in response to documented cases of intimidation and violence in Bekasi, Karawang, and Batam between March

14 and 17, 2025 (Puspapertiwi & Adhi, 2025). The Resources variable is reflected in the proposed Integrated Task Force on Gang Activity following the Pondok Betung case (Wijayaatmaja, 2025). The Structure variable is reflected in the involvement of multiple institutions, from Polri to Forkopimda, in responding to cases of extortion documented across Cilegon, Subang, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Depok between February and May 2025 (Yanuar et al., 2025). The Disposition variable, however, remains the weakest link during this period, since none of the documented cases indicate a systematic change in how frontline officials or local government actors exercise their discretion when responding to organized intimidation. Mapping the model onto this timeline indicates that Edwards III's framework only partially accounts for the documented cases involving intimidation and acts of violence by CSOs in Indonesia in 2025. This limitation should be considered alongside the discussion of implementation constraints that follows.

This partial fit can be explained further by Macnamara's (2025) finding that government communication in policy processes is generally dominated by a one-way, promotion-oriented pattern that he characterizes as "we produce, you consume," in which public input is sought only after decisions have effectively been made. The Indonesian cases exhibit similar tendency. Instruments such as the 110 hotline and the proposed Integrated Task Force primarily serve to facilitate reporting and coordinate enforcement. They do not, however, provide mechanisms for civil society organizations, business actors, and affected communities to participate in defining the boundaries between legitimate association activities and acts of intimidation and violence before restructuring decisions are finalized. Because the Disposition variable in Edwards III's model was found to be the weakest link, closing this gap requires more than improving the dissemination of existing decisions. It also requires consultation to be incorporated earlier in the policy cycle, consistent with Macnamara's (2025) call to treat strategic communication as an input to, rather than merely an output of, policymaking.

However, the implementation of this communication strategy also requires the government to tailor its response to the nature and perceived responsibility associated with the

crisis. If the majority of the public is in the Victim Cluster, the government must avoid negative and provocative statements. This is intended to maintain the government's image and avoid perceptions that the government is anti-democratic. In the Accidental Cluster, the government must act as an educator by explaining the concept of public interest. The government should explain the concept of public interest in terms that are clear and relevant to the public. Public interest encompasses not only security and public order in the narrow sense but also broader concerns such as economic development, social welfare, and Indonesia's image at the international level (Fajarwati et al., 2022). Effective communication must demonstrate that restrictions on harmful practices involving civil society organizations are intended to protect broader interests that will ultimately benefit all Indonesian people.

The subsequent phase is the Preventable Cluster, in which the government seeks to establish a strong foundation for restoring investor confidence. While this may highlight supervisory failures, it also demonstrates government accountability, which may contribute to restoring investor confidence. In the Preventable Cluster, the government response also provides assurances against the recurrence of similar acts of intimidation and violence through civil society organization restructuring.

The effectiveness of restructuring also depends on building consensus on how acts of intimidation and violence should be defined and assessed in the context of civil society organization activities. Clear and comprehensive definitions and criteria are prerequisites for effective and fair implementation. They should address not only the conduct involved but also its motivations and impacts, while distinguishing legitimate civil society organization activities from acts of intimidation and violence (Mucharam, 2022). Without this consensus, the restructuring will face challenges related to legitimacy and consistency that may undermine its effectiveness.

Emmanuel and Ewuh's (2025) review of government communication and citizen participation offers a practical pathway for building this consensus. They show that public organizations achieve stronger legitimacy when they diversify communication channels, ranging

from town-hall meetings to digital platforms, and involve citizens early rather than merely disseminating finalized rules. For the restructuring agenda, this suggests that defining the boundary between legitimate civil society activity and acts of intimidation and violence should not be left solely to security agencies but should instead draw on structured dialogue involving civil society organizations, business associations, and local communities most directly affected by extortion and intimidation. This approach echoes the participatory principle identified by Eriksson (2018) as central to sustaining public trust throughout the life cycle of a crisis rather than only at its outset.

The final challenge that must be addressed is the perception that the government prioritizes economic interests over civil and political rights. Communication strategies must emphasize that restructuring aims to create an environment conducive to both economic and social development, enabling civil society organizations to play constructive roles in national development without harming other parties. The balance between freedom of association and public order can only be achieved through transparent, educational, and evidence-based communication, thereby contributing to legal frameworks that provide greater certainty for all parties within Indonesia's constitutional democracy.

An effective communication strategy for managing acts of intimidation and violence involving civil society organizations cannot rely on Coombs' rebuild narrative or Edwards III's implementation variables in isolation. It requires an architecture that connects crisis response with ongoing stakeholder engagement. AlAjmi and AlSaqri (2026) offer such an architecture through their Crisis Communication Ecosystem Framework (CCEF), which departs from organization-centered models by distributing three interdependent functions, namely signal monitoring, information coordination, and adaptive learning, across a network of actors rather than concentrating them in a single spokesperson or agency.

In the Indonesian case, the monitoring function corresponds to the audits, perception surveys envisioned in the Crisis Identification phase of Table 1, as well as Polri's Pusiknas data on acts of intimidation and violence. The coordination function corresponds to the Investment Task Force

and Forkopimda mechanisms documented in the PT BYD and Pondok Betung cases. The adaptive learning function corresponds to the periodic evaluation and public dashboard components discussed above, which remain the least developed aspects of the government's response. Viewed through this framework, the empirical gap identified in the discussion of Table 1 is not merely a missing administrative step but a missing function within the communication ecosystem. AlAjmi and AlSaqri (2026) argue that this function is essential for converting one-off crisis statements into durable stakeholder trust.

For investors, sustaining confidence depends not only on individual government statements, such as the President's April 2025 statement, but also on consistent monitoring, coordination, and public reporting over time. This is consistent with the finding that maintaining audience trust throughout a crisis depends on demonstrating responsiveness at each stage rather than only at the point of initial disclosure (Jong, 2025). Such responsiveness can reduce the ambiguity investors face when assessing government commitment across successive incidents in different regions and time periods.

At the same time, the government's language when communicating the restructuring of civil society organizations should be chosen carefully. Nudzor (2009) and Ufel (2022) both caution that policy communication is never a neutral transmission of information but a form of discourse capable of privileging one interpretation of legitimacy over another. In this context, the restructuring agenda can be framed as necessary legal ordering, but it may also be perceived as majoritarian pressure on civic space, echoing the collective memory of authoritarianism discussed earlier (Iqbal, 2019). Preserving democratic legitimacy therefore requires that the monitoring-coordination-adaptive learning cycle proposed above be paired with deliberative forums where civil society organizations and affected communities can provide input on and help refine the criteria for restructuring, rather than encountering them only as a finalized decision.

Taken together, these findings address the second research question by indicating that an effective policy communication strategy for Indonesia's civil society organizations is neither a

single rebuild statement nor a static implementation checklist, but an adaptive ecosystem that combines Coombs' crisis-response logic, Edwards III's implementation variables, and continuous multi-stakeholder feedback. Such a strategy can enable the government to uphold constitutional freedoms, restore public order, and sustain the confidence of domestic and foreign investors in Indonesia's investment climate. These findings carry broader academic implications for research on acts of intimidation and violence involving civil society organizations within Indonesia's evolving investment climate, a field still largely dominated by political economy perspectives. While that approach remains relevant, this study demonstrates that crisis and policy communication frameworks also play a significant, though often underappreciated, role in explaining why such disputes persist even when formal legal instruments are already in place.

## IV. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the challenges of regulating civil society organizations in Indonesia cannot be explained simply by the absence of regulation, but instead reflect a dynamic democratic paradox involving multiple actors. As illustrated by the cases involving Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia Bersatu (GRIB), and Gerakan Masyarakat Bawah Indonesia (GMBI), CSO governance involves two distinct dimensions: HTI's ideological position and the economic interests associated with acts of intimidation and violence involving GRIB and GMBI. Accordingly, the governance of CSOs requires a continuous balancing of freedom of association, national security and stability, and the investment climate as the nature of each case evolves, rather than treating this balance as a matter resolved at a single point in time (Jong, 2025; Schädeli & Ritz, 2024). Failure to distinguish between these two categories risks undermining the legitimacy of the restructuring agenda itself.

This distinction also underscores the need for an effective government policy communication strategy for strengthening the governance of civil society organizations that is neither limited to a single, one-time rebuild statement (Claeys & Coombs, 2020) nor based solely on the separate application of Edwards

III's implementation variables (Hidayat & Kemala, 2022), but rather constitutes an adaptive and sustainable communication ecosystem. This ecosystem integrates the logic of crisis response, policy implementation variables, and a continuous cycle of stakeholder engagement, as proposed in the Crisis Communication Ecosystem Framework (AlAjmi & AlSaqri, 2026), thereby providing a framework through which the government can seek to uphold constitutional freedoms, support public order, and maintain the confidence of both domestic and foreign investors.

Based on these findings, this study recommends four concrete policy measures. First, the government needs to institutionalize a mechanism for periodic monitoring and public reporting, such as a transparency dashboard for cases of acts of intimidation and violence, in order to close the gap between the official narrative and evidence of implementation on the ground, which has thus far constituted the weakest link (Wijayaatmaja, 2025). Second, the definition and criteria of acts of intimidation and violence in the context of civil society organizations need to be formulated through structured dialogue rather than being unilaterally determined by security forces, involving civil society organizations, business associations, and affected communities from the earliest stage of policy formulation (Emmanuel & Ewoh, 2025). Third, strengthening the disposition-related competence of frontline personnel and local governments should be made a priority, given that the Disposition variable in Edwards III's framework remains the weakest link identified in the analysis of cases involving acts of intimidation and violence throughout 2025 (Hidayat & Kemala, 2022). Fourth, the government needs to carefully frame its restructuring policies to avoid perceptions of majoritarian pressure that could restrict civic space, particularly given the collective memory of authoritarianism that remains embedded in Indonesian public perceptions (Iqbal, 2019; Nudzor, 2009; Ufel, 2022).

This study has limitations because it employs a library research approach and media document analysis and therefore does not include primary data on the direct perceptions of investors, civil society organizations, or policy-implementing officials. Future research is recommended to

complement these findings with a quantitative approach or perception survey in order to empirically test the effectiveness of the proposed communication ecosystem.

Overall, this study affirms that the sustainability of Indonesia's investment climate depends on the state's ability to navigate the tension between democratic freedom and public order through transparent, participatory, and sustainable policy communication. By integrating monitoring, coordination, and adaptive learning into a single, cohesive cycle, the proposed communication ecosystem could help strengthen democratic legitimacy while simultaneously providing certainty for the business community, thereby supporting the coexistence of democratic governance and economic development. More broadly, these findings indicate that future academic research on organized acts of intimidation and violence in Indonesia's investment sector must move beyond political economy-dominated frameworks and incorporate crisis and policy communication perspectives, which are equally important for explaining why such disputes persist.

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This article has undergone a plagiarism check using Turnitin, received a similarity score of 8%, and has been determined to be free of plagiarism in accordance with the journal's policies.

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Generative AI tools were used exclusively for language refinement, translation assistance, and grammatical editing. The theoretical framework, literature review, empirical case selection, data interpretation, and scholarly conclusions were developed entirely by the author without AI generation.

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DSL was responsible for conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, formal analysis, and preparation of the original draft. Desi Natalia DNS contributed to data curation, validation, data interpretation, and writing review and editing.

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