

# The **Indonesian Update**

Monthly Review on Economic, Legal, Security, Political, and Social Affairs

## **Main Report**

**Can Social Media Bans for Children in  
Indonesia Really Protect Them?**

## **Economy**

- The Efforts to Improve Energy Governance in Indonesia amidst the Uncertainty and Instability of the Geopolitical World
- The Efforts to Encourage Integration, Collaboration and Institutional Leadership in Indonesia amidst the Global Geopolitical Crisis

## **Laws**

- The “No Kings” Demonstration and Reflections on Our Civil Space
- Terror and Intimidation of Civil Society and the State’s Role

## **Politics**

- The Revision of the Election Law: A Gateway to Political Party Reform?
- State Intervention in Cooperative Development in Indonesia: Implications for Policy Design and Governance

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## FOREWORD

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The April 2026 edition of the Indonesian Update features a main report titled “Disabling Social Media for Children in Indonesia: Can It Really Protect Children?” This article examines the discourse on restricting children’s access to social media in response to growing concerns about the negative impacts of the digital space. The report not only examines the effectiveness of this policy in providing protection but also critiques its potential implications for children’s rights, digital literacy, and the role of the state and families in creating a safe digital ecosystem.

On the political front, this edition features two thematic analyses. The article “State Intervention in Cooperative Development in Indonesia: Implications for Policy Design and Governance” examines the state’s tendency to approach cooperative development, as well as the risks that arise when physical strengthening is not accompanied by institutional strengthening. Meanwhile, the article “Election Law Revision: A Gateway to Political Party Reform?” examines the extent to which the revised election regulations can provide momentum to encourage improvements to the party system, including in aspects of cadre development, accountability, and political representation.

In the legal field, the Indonesian Update highlights the dynamics of civil space through two articles. The article “The ‘No Kings’ Demonstration and Reflections on Our Civil Space” discusses the phenomenon of public protest as a reflection of the relationship between the state and citizens, as well as the state of freedom of expression in Indonesia. Furthermore, the article “Terror and Intimidation of Civil Society and the Location of the State’s Presence” examines the increasing pressure on civil society groups and questions the extent to which the state is present in protecting and guaranteeing the basic rights of citizens.

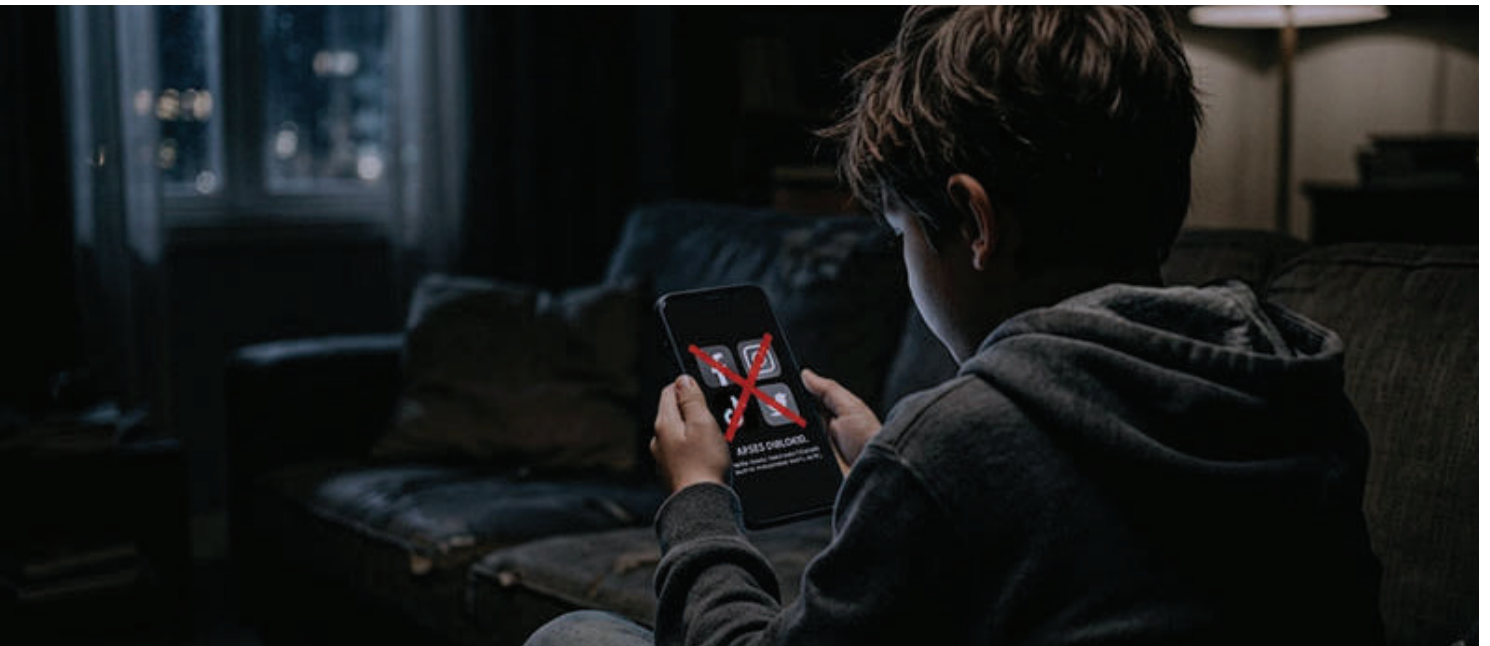
In the economic field, this edition addresses the issue of energy governance in an increasingly uncertain global context. The article “Efforts to Improve Energy Governance in Indonesia in a Condition of Global Geopolitical Uncertainty and Instability” discusses the challenges Indonesia faces in maintaining energy security amidst global dynamics. Furthermore, the article “Efforts to Promote Integration, Collaboration, and Institutional Leadership in Indonesia Amidst the Global Geopolitical Crisis” emphasizes the importance of cross-sector coordination and institutional leadership in responding to increasingly complex external pressures.

Through the monthly publication of the Indonesian Update which raises various strategic and current issues, it is hoped that this report can contribute to policy makers in government institutions, business actors, academics, researchers, think tanks, and civil society, both at home and abroad, to obtain contextual analysis of the political, legal, social, and economic dynamics in Indonesia, while enriching understanding of the challenges and direction of future public policy.

**Happy reading.**

## Can Social Media Bans for Children in Indonesia Really Protect Them?

-Made Natasya Restu Dewi Pratiwi-



As of March 28, 2026, Indonesia has begun effectively implementing Ministerial Regulation Number 9/2026 as an implementing regulation of Government Regulation Number 17/2025 concerning the Governance of Electronic Systems for Child Protection (Kompas, March 8, 2026). Through this regulation, children under the age of 16 will have their access to social media gradually restricted, including the deactivation of registered accounts.

This policy is designed to target high-risk platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, Bigo Live, and Roblox. In its implementations, the dynamics of platform compliance are beginning to emerge. As of April 7, Meta has adjusted its policy by setting a minimum age limit of 16 following further review by the Ministry of Communication and Digital (Ministry of Communication and Digital, 2026). Similar commitments have also been demonstrated by X and Bigo Live. However, Google has been found to be non-compliant with the regulation mandate and has not yet submitted a compliance commitment, resulting in administrative sanctions in the form of a first warning.

Although the Government has been responsive in addressing platforms that have not complied with the government regulation, which is designed to protect children, this policy continues to generate debate—primarily because the drafting process is considered to have involved minimal participation

from children as the primary target group (Indonesian Child Protection Commission, 2026).

Consequently, the policy's enactment appears rushed and lacks inclusive and meaningful child involvement. Through these dynamics, this analysis is conducted to critique the implementations of the implementing regulation of Government Regulation Number 17/2025 concerning the Governance of Electronic Systems for Child Protection so that it can still be implemented without overlooking the potential risks of negative impacts on children's mental well-being and the fulfillment of their social relationships.

### **Addressing Policy Implementation Gaps**

#### ***The Importance of Policy Impact Measurement Instruments***

Going forward, the Government must ensure that the implementing regulation of Government Regulation Number 17/2025 concerning the Governance of Electronic Systems for Child Protection, has a tangible impact on reducing digital violence against children, which forms the basis for the mandate to disable children's social media access in Indonesia. Without a well-prepared evaluation instrument, this policy risks remaining a mere formality, without successfully measuring its positive impact on supporting children's growth and development.

Over the next 1–2 years, evaluations can be conducted using several indicators. First, trends in cases such as cyberbullying, electronic sexual violence, and exposure to harmful content should be observed following the implementations of the regulation. This measurement should involve collaboration with civil society, platforms, law enforcement officials, and research centers, utilizing Indonesia's existing child violence reporting systems to ensure timely and relevant analysis.

These indicators need to be complemented by documentation of changes in children's behavior and mental health; for example, reductions in social media addiction and improvements in digital literacy. Furthermore, ecosystem readiness is also important to measure, such as through comparisons of parents' and teachers' digital literacy levels post-implementation, platform compliance, and the availability of psychological referral services for children affected by social media access restrictions who may experience worsening mental health due to dependency.

Understanding can be measured by analyzing the extent to which children, parents, and teachers comprehend the mechanisms for disabling social

media access—including what is allowed, what is not, and how to access assistance if needed. All of these indicators need to be further categorized by region, gender, and disability status. In this way, the Government can assess whether policy implementation is equitable or unequal. This approach also helps identify areas with low compliance or limited digital literacy capacity, thereby providing a basis for prioritizing interventions.

### ***Risk of Inequality in Access to Child Protection During Post-Implementation***

Without a well-thought-out and inclusive design, this policy risks being ineffective at the grassroots level. Without strong mitigation, inequality in access to child protection could become inevitable, as this policy risks being effective only for groups with high digital capacity, leaving vulnerable groups increasingly behind.

For example, children with minimal parental supervision may still find loopholes to access social media. Meanwhile, parents may not have the capacity or time to supervise and explain the reasons for these restrictions. This is particularly evident in families with lower socioeconomic status, where parents tend to spend more time working than caring for their children and may have lower emotional stability (Lee, 2022; Khoiruddin et al., 2025). As a result, parents in economically disadvantaged families face greater challenges in educating their children regarding the implementations of Government Regulation Number 17/2025 concerning the Governance of Electronic Systems for Child Protection, partly due to the limited closeness of parent-child relationships.

Not only in low-income families, but according to a baseline study by UNICEF Indonesia (2023) regarding internet use practices and knowledge among parents and children in Indonesia, the majority of parents reported lacking sufficient knowledge and skills to accompany their children in using social media. They also found it difficult to monitor their children's activities due to limited time and a lack of education on how to protect children in the digital world. This indicates that in addition to implementing social media restrictions for children, the Government must first improve access to practical information on digital child protection for parents.

The relationship between parents and children is also a critical factor that the Government must address to ensure the success of this kind of regulation. A 2023 UNICEF Indonesia study found that children with weaker

family relationships are more likely to create secret accounts and access pornographic content, prohibited games, and negatively contextualized videos—especially when their parents are away, asleep, or working. This fact must be considered to ensure that clear support and monitoring mechanisms are in place, particularly for children whose parents have limited capacity and time.

Therefore, this policy approach cannot be merely prohibitive. Providing parents with education on child-rearing in the digital age must be a priority, especially for those in lower socioeconomic groups and with low digital literacy. The Government needs to provide practical guidance—for example, in the form of a guidebook or simple module that explains concrete steps parents can take to support their children and build healthy communication after social media access restrictions are implemented.

Equally important, parents must be equipped with ways to explain to their children that this is not merely a prohibition, but part of a protective effort. Children need to understand the benefits of these restrictions so that they do not only feel constrained, but are also emotionally and cognitively engaged. To reach grassroots communities, a community-based approach is essential. Cadres, religious leaders, and community figures can be involved to help educate parents. This approach can help bridge the gap in access to information, which has been a major barrier.

### **Impacts to Watch Out For**

A prohibitive approach without guidance risks hindering children’s ability to build resilience in the digital space. Children need to be introduced to technology gradually, in accordance with their psychological development and age, so that they can understand digital risks and make safe decisions.

Furthermore, strong social media literacy is essential to support children’s cognitive development, as it provides access to information, education, social support, creative expression, and opportunities for self-development (Livingstone et al., 2021; Naik et al., 2025).

If access is removed without an educational process, children are only temporarily distanced from risks—not equipped with the skills to face them. When they are re-exposed to technology, children who have received minimal digital literacy education may not be prepared to use social media wisely and strategically to support their self-development and self-actualization.

To address this, a balanced approach is required, combining restriction and empowerment. Restrictions can serve as an initial step, but they must be accompanied by strengthened digital literacy and continuous support for children.

Actors beyond the family also play a crucial role, particularly in supporting vulnerable groups. Clear mapping and designation of those responsible for supporting children in vulnerable communities are needed, including cadres, community leaders, religious figures, and social workers. They must become part of a support system that ensures children continue to have access to safe support—psychologically, economically, and socially—after social media restrictions are implemented.

This policy also risks unintended consequences if not accompanied by adequate outreach. All stakeholders—platforms, schools, teachers, and families—need to understand the implementation mechanisms of social media restrictions, including access restrictions and mitigation measures if negative impacts arise. For example, if a child experiences anxiety after losing access to social media, the Government must ensure the availability of easily accessible psychological referral services. Without this supporting ecosystem, the goal of child protection may not be achieved.

### **What Can We Adopt?**

International experience shows that banning social media does not automatically protect children. Studies indicate that the relationship between social media use and mental health is complex and not always causal, meaning that restricting access alone does not address root causes (Champion et al., 2025).

This evidence demonstrates that the risks children face are largely shaped by how they interact in digital spaces, the types of exposure they encounter, and their capacity to respond. Therefore, prohibitive measures without strengthening digital literacy, skills, and resilience risk shifting problems into more hidden areas. In the Indonesian context, new risks may emerge in poorly supervised digital spaces, including through illegal networks (Pratiwi, 2026).

Learning from Australia—the first country to implement social media restrictions for children—reinforces this point. While the policy has shown some positive impacts, it is not recommended as a standalone solution due to the lack of strong empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness in improving mental health or reducing digital violence (Holly, 2024; Champion et al., 2025).

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Various unintended consequences have also emerged following the deactivation of children's social media, including the risk of children shifting to less regulated platforms and increasing social isolation among children who previously relied on digital spaces for support, information, and self-expression (Livingstone & Sylwander, 2025; Rodriguez et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, the Government must anticipate these consequences. While the regulation is intended to protect children, it also risks limiting their access to information, social support, opportunities for self-actualization, and self-development. Therefore, the approach guiding its implementations must emphasize both prevention and empowerment, recognizing that prohibition alone is insufficient.

Policies must be directed toward building a safe and supportive digital ecosystem, including the meaningful involvement of children in planning and evaluation processes (UNICEF, 2025). Australia's experience also highlights the importance of consulting children throughout policy development. The protests that followed the implementation of social media restrictions there serve as a reminder that policies must prioritize children's needs and well-being.

Going forward, Indonesia must ensure continuous monitoring of behavioral shifts in children's digital engagement, including migration to alternative platforms or continued access through unregulated accounts. At the same time, digital literacy and mentoring efforts must not stop simply because restrictions are in place. It is also crucial to ensure that children from vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, continue to have access to the social support that has been largely obtained through online communities.

In conclusion, this policy will only be effective if accompanied by multi-stakeholder collaboration; a robust evaluation framework; and an approach that focuses not only on prohibition, but also on digital literacy, mentoring, empowerment, and providing adequate access to social support for children, such as through facilities for networking, expressing creativity, or playing with peers to avoid the risk of isolation; and inclusive and meaningful involvement of children throughout the implementation process to ensure the policy is relevant to their experiences and needs. Without this, this policy risks being ineffective and even creating new vulnerabilities or problems that disrupt children's psychological and social well-being.

## Recommendations

To ensure that the deactivation of children's social media accounts protects their rights holistically, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a. The Ministry of Communication and Digital, together with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection and the Central Statistics Agency, needs to develop a measurable evaluation framework, including baseline data, impact indicators, and disaggregation by region, gender, and disability status to support prioritization and monitoring. Consultation with children and families during policy monitoring must be mandatory to ensure relevance.
- b. The Ministry of Communication and Digital, along with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, needs to provide clear guidance for parents through a practical digital parenting guidebook that explains support strategies, how to communicate the benefits of restrictions, access deactivation mechanisms, and available support services.
- c. Local governments need to coordinate with civil society organizations, cadres, religious leaders, and community leaders to strengthen community-based digital literacy, especially in areas with lower socioeconomic capacity.
- d. The Ministry of Social Affairs, together with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, needs to map vulnerable children and ensure a clear post-implementation support system by empowering social workers, cadres, and local communities.
- e. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, along with schools and parents, needs to ensure that the restrictive approach is accompanied by empowerment through the integration of digital literacy and gradual guidance in technology use to prevent children from being unprepared to manage social media when they reach the legal age, and to not limit children's access to self-development information via the internet.
- f. The Ministry of Communication and Digital, together with digital platforms and research institutions, needs to strengthen oversight, develop robust age-verification systems, monitor behavioral shifts, and ensure platform compliance.

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***To ensure child protection is achieved after the implementations of this restrictions, the Government needs to ensure a measurable evaluation framework; provide guidance on assisting children after parents have stopped access to social media; strengthen community-based digital literacy; ensure policies take into account the fulfillment of children's rights; ensure the availability of community/networking facilities to support children's social relations; and actively involve children in all policy processes. Furthermore, platforms must also be continuously monitored for their compliance with the regulation to create a safe and child-friendly digital space, without exception.***

- g. Apart from the positive objectives of social media restrictions, the Ministry of Communication and Digital is obliged to ensure the existence of adequate facilities and community networks around children, especially children in vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and children with Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) are often isolated from friends due to stigma. This is crucial to ensure children's sense of social connection with their environment is not diminished. Restricting social media access should not limit children's access to social support, inspiration, and learning opportunities from friends they find through their social media networks.

## Economy

# The Efforts to Improve Energy Governance in Indonesia amidst the Uncertainty and Instability of the Geopolitical World

-Putu Rusta Adijaya-



The majority of countries in the world are facing a crisis related to energy needs and security as a result of the United States (US)-Israel war against Iran, which is still ongoing as of this writing. The impacts have also been felt by several of Indonesia's neighbouring countries in the Southeast Asia region; for example, food and electricity prices in Singapore have increased ([businesstimes.com.sg](https://www.businesstimes.com.sg), April 12, 2026; [channelnewsasia.com](https://www.channelnewsasia.com), March 30, 2026); petrol prices have risen in Vietnam ([aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com), April 6, 2026); and diesel prices have skyrocketed in Thailand ([asia.nikkei.com](https://asia.nikkei.com), April 11, 2026). At least 800 full cargo tankers were trapped in the area of the Strait of Hormuz for several weeks due to the war ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com), April 14, 2026).

As a country at war, the US panicked when the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route for world oil and gas supplies located between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, was closed by Iran. The closure of this chokepoint will have a tremendous impact on energy prices and security in the US. For example, gasoline prices in the US have reached above US\$4 per gallon for the first time since 2022 ([cnbc.com](https://www.cnbc.com), April 7, 2026). This indicator is a real consequence of what the US consumers feel as a result of the war in Iran. In fact, currently, the US has also implemented a blockade around the Strait of Hormuz after negotiations to end the war between the US and Iran failed ([aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com), April 14, 2026).

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As a developing country, Indonesia is inseparable from the domino effect of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. To reduce the impact of the Iranian war through transforming national work culture, energy efficiency, and strengthening national economic resilience, the Government, through the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, launched the “Eight Points of National Work Culture Transformation” (presidency.go.id, March 31, 2026; ekon.go.id, April 1, 2026).

For example, accelerating behavioral changes that are more modern and efficient. Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto stated that Indonesia’s economic conditions are stable with strong economic fundamentals, secure national fuel stocks, and maintained fiscal stability. According to the Head of the Downstream Oil and Gas Regulatory Agency (BPH Migas), Wahyudi Anas, in [cnbcindonesia.com](https://www.cnbcindonesia.com) (April 10, 2026), the total national reserves of RON 90 or Pertalite fuel oil (BBM) are still at 18.1 days, with reserve stocks reaching 1.51 million kiloliters (kl) with daily consumption of 84,038 kl. Non-subsidized fuel, such as Pertamina RON 92, can last up to 22.1 days, and Pertamina Turbo RON 98 lasts approximately 46.5 days. In addition, the resilience of subsidized diesel fuel stocks is 16.5 days, with national stocks reaching 1.57 million kl, and daily consumption of 95,638 kl. Pertamina DEX CN53 has 64.5 days of stock. Specifically for aviation fuel, stock durability reaches 28.1 days with national stocks reaching 388,626 kl, and daily consumption reaching 13,816 kl.

Another policy for transforming national work culture, energy efficiency, and strengthening national economic resilience is Work From Home (WFH) for State Civil Apparatus (ASN) every Friday starting on April 1, 2026. The implementation of the rules is regulated by the Circular Letter of the Minister for Administrative Reform and Bureaucratic Reform (PANRB) Number 3/2026 concerning the Implementation of Official Duties for ASN Employees in Government Agencies. Savings from the WFH policy have a direct impact on the State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN) amounting to IDR6.2 trillion, while fuel savings for the community amount to IDR59 trillion (ekon.go.id, April 1, 2026).

The Government has also determined mobility efficiency, reducing official travel for domestic trips by up to 50 percent and reducing it by up to 70 percent for overseas trips. Apart from that, refocusing and prioritizing ministry/agency (K/L) budgets, which provide efficiency potential of IDR121.2 trillion-130.2 trillion, implementing the B50 biodiesel policy on July 1, 2026 with an estimate of being able to reduce fuel consumption by 4 million kiloliters with a value of IDR48 trillion, as well as implementing restrictions

on purchasing subsidized fuel with a maximum limit of 50 liters per vehicle per day using the MyPertamina barcode, except for public transportation (ekon.go.id, April 1, 2026).

However, the Government must be aware that this policy is a short-term policy. This is due to Indonesia having deeper structural problems related to energy; namely, complex energy governance, which includes Indonesia's dependence on fossil energy, price distortions due to subsidies, and policy inconsistencies in a more sustainable energy transition.

Even though the energy sector is one of the drivers of Indonesia's economic growth (Gross Domestic Product (GDP) distribution based on current prices according to Mining and Quarrying business fields in 2025 is 8.75%; GDP distribution based on current prices according to Coal and Oil and Gas Refining Industry business fields in 2025 is 1.78%), the energy sector is one of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Indonesia.

Even today, Indonesia's energy mix is still dominated by fossil energy, especially coal and oil (iea.org, accessed April 14, 2026). Apart from the environmental and health risks resulting from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from fossil energy, this dependence also positions Indonesia as a country that is vulnerable to volatility in global energy prices, especially during the current Iran War.

In addition, when it comes to energy subsidies, the upper-middle class and the rich enjoy more of these energy subsidies than the target group; namely, the middle and poor groups. According to the Chair of the DPR RI Budget Agency, Said Abdullah, in kompas.com (April 7, 2026), 72 percent of people in deciles 6-10 enjoyed diesel subsidies, and those in deciles 5 and below only enjoyed 28 percent. The upper class enjoys 79 percent of the Peralite subsidy, and the middle to lower decile group enjoys 21 percent. Likewise, 69 percent of deciles 6-10 enjoy LPG subsidies compared to 31 percent in deciles 1-5. In other words, our implementation of energy subsidies is very inconsistent with targets and has even deviated.

Another problem lies in the limited investment in new and renewable energy. According to data, in 2025, the investment value in the mineral and coal sector will be US\$6.7 billion, the oil and natural gas (Migas) sector will be US\$18 billion, the electricity sector will be US\$4.6 billion, and the new renewable energy and energy conservation (EBTKE) sector will be worth US\$2.4 billion (cnbcindonesia.com, January 8, 2026). The problems described above show that the main problem in the Indonesian energy sector refers to the provision and management of energy that is more efficient, transparent, and sustainable.

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***The Government must be able to integrate integrated data and update data related to targeted communities. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources must also have the courage to implement economic policies that are not populist; namely, adjusting energy prices gradually so as not to overburden the country's fiscal space. The Government must also be able to accelerate the energy transition and integrate energy policy with environmental and climate policy, with consistent and realistic EBET mix targets, monitoring and evaluation systems based on real-time data.***

Therefore, policy recommendations are needed to improve energy governance in Indonesia amidst global geopolitical instability and uncertainty.

### **Policy Recommendations**

First, the Government, through the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and Pertamina, must be able to integrate and update data related to targeted communities. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources must also have the courage to implement economic policies that are not populist; namely, adjusting energy prices gradually so as not to overburden the country's fiscal space. The digitalization of distribution, production, supply, and demand must be built, integrated, and collaborated on so that it can be analyzed in real-time. By strengthening the energy digitalization ecosystem, the Government could analyze where the leaks are so that it could implement reactive policies that are evidence-based and have economic principles.

Second, because the Iran War also provides the reality that Indonesia is very vulnerable to world geopolitical conditions, where Indonesia is one of the net energy importing countries that still depends on fossil energy, the Government through the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources must also be able to accelerate the energy transition, such as new energy and renewable energy (EBET) in the form of solar, wind, geothermal and water energy which must also be accelerated by the Government in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of BUMN, and related ministries/institutions. This is a long-term, sustainable option so that Indonesia has resilient energy security and is less dependent on global supply lines, which are vulnerable to conflict.

Third, the Government, through the Ministry of Investment and Downstreaming/BKPM and Danantara, must be able to encourage investment in the new energy and renewable energy (EBET) sector by simplifying regulations and licensing in this sector, encouraging innovation and competitive incentives, as well as strengthening collaboration with the private sector through public-private partnerships. Apart from that, working with the Ministry of the Environment to integrate energy policy with environmental policy by setting consistent and realistic EBET mix targets, integrating with climate policy, especially those contained in the latest Second Nationally Determined Contribution report, and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation (MONEV) system based on real-time data.

## Economy

# The Efforts to Encourage Integration, Collaboration and Institutional Leadership in Indonesia amidst the Global Geopolitical Crisis

-Putu Rusta Adijaya-



The year 2026 could be said to be quite a tough year. This is because there are many conflicts between countries and trade fragmentation driven by protectionism, which affects the economic supply chain. For Indonesia, the existing challenges and obstacles are not only from external conditions but also from the weak integration, collaboration, and coordination of domestic institutions. When there is a mismatch between stakeholders; for example, both ministries and institutions and the Central Government and regions, the economic costs lost from inefficiency have the potential to increase, which will worsen the fiscal burden and lead to reduced competitiveness.

Theoretically and empirically, whether an institution is strong or weak influences the economic power or inability of a region. Ricardo Hausmann, in the World Economic Forum (WEF) (January 2, 2015), assessed that the “enabling environment” to create prosperity was supported by strong legal and administrative organizations, and when this was lost, the economy would result in failure and a lack of prosperity. Productivity is not solely the result of the public sector or the Government but is a collaboration between it and the private sector. This is what Ricardo Hausmann calls an “alliance” that is strongly influenced by strong institutions to be able to operate and function well (WEF, January 2, 2015).

Empirically, Uddin et al. (2023) found that transparency was an indicator that must be prioritized to improve institutional quality. Advanced economic

development is achieved through eradicating corruption and strong administrative intervention. They emphasized that policymakers must be able to prioritize improving institutional quality and eradicating corruption.

Therefore, this article aims to argue and remind that integration, again, collaboration, strengthened cooperation, and transparent and fair governance can boost Indonesia's economic resilience amidst the current global geopolitical crisis. Without institutional reform and good leadership, various strategic government policies, be it energy subsidies, food security, health, education, or the energy transition, would have the potential to run sub-optimally. Apart from that, this article also provides policy recommendations to the Government of President Prabowo Subianto.

### **Encouraging Integration, Collaboration and Institutional Leadership in Indonesia**

According to the “Index of Economic Freedom 2026” (2026) by The Heritage Foundation, Indonesia is a country that is economically “fairly free” with an economic freedom score of 65.1. This score makes Indonesia the 60<sup>th</sup> country in the world with the freest economy. The ranking has not changed from last year, and Indonesia is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> out of 39 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Indonesia is not free from the transmission of external shocks, conflicts between countries and trade fragmentation driven by protectionism. However, based on simple logic, theory and previous empirical results, the escalation of the global crisis should be able to be reduced if institutional leadership and the quality of the institutions are strong, transparent and fair.

Fiscal decentralization may show how the argument for economic freedom can encourage integration, collaboration, and institutional leadership in Indonesia. In 2026, fiscal decentralization in Indonesia will reach its 25<sup>th</sup> year, where fiscal decentralization in Indonesia began with the enactment of Law Number 22/1999 concerning Regional Government and Law Number 25/1999 concerning Financial Balance between the Central and Regional Governments, which gives authority to regional governments in managing their regional fiscal or financial affairs (Fiscal Policy Agency of the Ministry of Finance, 2021). In general, fiscal decentralization aims to provide space for regions to be independent and innovate economically and in governance. However, fiscal decentralization is also considered to increase governance complexity and reduce policy synchronization between central and regional Governments.

There are at least two classic problems in fiscal decentralization in the regions. First, there is fiscal inequality between regions due to unequal capacities. For example, using Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) per capita, regions with a strong economy have higher realized Regional Original Income (PAD) compared to regions with a weak economy.

On the other hand, although in terms of magnitude the correlation between GDP per capita at current prices and the Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia is moderate, only 0.40, theoretically, a strong economy makes it possible to encourage better health and education services, which in fact will encourage human capital. Returning again to the empirical findings of Uddin et al. (2023), a strong economy, especially for developing countries, is achieved through eradicating corruption and strong institutional quality.

According to the data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the Ministry of Finance (accessed April 10, 2026), in 2025, DK Jakarta Province was a high economic province with a GDP per capita of IDR367,687.07 thousand (based on 2025 current prices), which had a realized PAD in 2025 of IDR46,104.10 billion or 85.08% of the ceiling. In contrast, in the same period, Papua Mountains Province had a GRDP per capita of IDR19,111.44 thousand, and had only realized PAD of IDR411.51 billion, even though the percentage of the ceiling was very large (242.25%).

In 2025, when compared based on HDI, the HDI for the Jakarta Special Region (DK) Province would reach 85.05, and the HDI for the Papua Mountains Province would still be 54.91. In general, even though Papua Mountains Province, together with West Papua Province, Central Papua Province, and South Papua Province, were only created in 2022 from Papua Province, real economic inequality is still visible between these two provinces.

Furthermore, the second problem of fiscal decentralization is the orientation of regional spending, which still focuses on personnel spending compared to capital spending (Wibowo & Oktivalerina, 2022). Zakaria (2013), in Wibowo and Oktivalerina (2022), explains that the factor causing fiscal decentralization to not be able to reduce inequality between regions is that regional Governments tend not to prioritize budget allocations for capital expenditure.

If you look at data from the Ministry of Finance (accessed April 10, 2026), as of 2025, the realized value of regional spending was IDR1,221,622.85 billion. This realization was divided into the realization of personnel expenditure of IDR453,577.24 billion (37.13% of realized regional expenditure),

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the realization of goods and services expenditure of IDR363,817.77 billion (29.78% of realized regional expenditure), capital expenditure of IDR169,660.14 billion (13.89% of realized regional expenditure), and other expenditure of IDR234,567.70 billion (19.20% of realization of regional spending).

The dominance of personnel spending compared to capital spending can tell how the allocation of public resources is still not being used productively. For example, related to the previous HDI gap, education and health indicators between rich economic provinces and poor economic provinces can also be seen. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (accessed April 15, 2026) showed that in 2025, the average length of schooling for residents aged 15 years and over in DK Jakarta Province was 11.58 years, while in Mountainous Papua Province, it was only 4.76 years. From a health perspective, according to the 2024 data, the life expectancy (AHH) for DK Jakarta Province is 72.08 years for men and 76.28 years for women compared to the AHH of 62.83 years for men and 66.68 years for women in Papua Mountains Province. This reflected inequality in access to these basic services.

Related to this, the economic freedom perspective explains that Government spending must at least be used to create an environment that can encourage the acceleration of economic activity. Infrastructure development, network connectivity, and improving public service infrastructure will increase people's welfare and productivity, which will lead to better economic growth.

If analyzed from the perspective of economic freedom, which is an individual's fundamental right to carry out economic activities, such as using labor, property, and being free to carry out production, consumption and investment to achieve individual welfare (Kim and Roberts, 2025), the problem of fiscal decentralization in Indonesia is not only the two problems explained previously, but also reflects the good or bad quality of economic institutions at the regional level.

Furthermore, Adijaya (in The Indonesian Institute, July 2025) also considers that this condition reflects the implementation of the principle of economic freedom; namely, the existence of ample space for business actors to participate in economic activities with minimal structural obstacles. This view is in line with Kim and Roberts (2025), who emphasize that relatively free markets, which are characterized by low barriers to entry, tend to encourage innovation and present practical solutions for progress and sustainable recovery in various economic activities.

## Economy

*There are several recommendations to encourage strengthening the quality of institutions. First, the Central Government must be able to monitor and maintain maximum limits for personnel expenditure so that capital expenditure could be used for productive things and accelerate economic enabler activities. Second, regional governments need to carry out regulatory reforms and strengthen the quality of institutions through digitalization, strict monitoring of corruption and rent-seeking practices, and encouraging legal certainty through meritocratic processes. Apart from that, regional government leaders also need to create optimal fiscal decentralization by providing rewards and incentives for service elements and individuals in the regions related to reform, innovation, and collaborating with other regions that have best practices that they want to achieve.*

Another data proxy can be seen from the Regional Competitiveness Index (IDSD) for 2025. IDSD is a measure of regional competitiveness that presents the development of regional competitiveness and regional productivity. There are four dimensions measured; namely, the supporting environment dimension (4 pillars: institutions, infrastructure, adoption of technology, information and communication (ICT), macroeconomic stability), the human resources dimension (2 pillars: health, skills), the market dimension (4 pillars: product market, labor market, financial system, market size), and the innovation ecosystem dimension (2 pillars: business dynamics, innovation capability). Once again, if you look at the IDSD value in 2025, DK Jakarta Province had a value of 4.16, which was the highest compared to other provinces. The province with the lowest IDSD value in 2025 was Papua Mountains Province with 2.44. The difference between these two provinces was quite striking, around 1.72 points.

### Policy Recommendations

Looking at the perspective above, there are at least two policy recommendations that the Government could implement. First, the Central Government must be able to monitor and maintain maximum limits on personnel expenditures so that capital expenditures could be used for productive things. This is not to negate the autonomy of regional governments in using their regional spending but as an important step to ensure that regional government spending is used to accelerate economic enabler activities to encourage innovation, competitiveness, and greater growth in institutional governance.

Second, regional Governments need to carry out regulatory reforms and strengthen the quality of institutions through digitalization, strict monitoring of corruption and rent-seeking practices, and encouraging legal certainty through meritocratic processes. Apart from that, regional government leaders also need to create optimal fiscal decentralization by providing rewards and incentives for service elements and individuals in the regions related to reform, innovation, and collaborating with other regions that have best practices to be achieved.

Thus, the success of fiscal decentralization could be encouraged by strengthening the elements of economic freedom to ensure that regional autonomy could truly be followed by policies that are contextual and relevant in the region and produce human resources and a regional economy that is highly competitive, productive, efficient, and has equitable prosperity. Without encouraging the quality of institutions, fiscal decentralization could risk becoming just a distribution of budgets from the center to the regions, and not an instrument of economic transformation and regional independence.

## The “No Kings” Demonstration and Reflections on Our Civil Space

-Christina Clarissa Intania-



*Photo Source: liputan6.com*

On March 28, the United States was shaken by a mass demonstration under the banner of “No Kings”. The demonstration was attended by approximately 8 million citizens at more than 3,300 locations across the United States. The movement voiced rejection of the authoritarian and arbitrary conduct of Donald J. Trump’s administration, which appeared to behave like a “king” in the democratic republic of the United States (bbc.com, 29/3/2026).

The “No Kings” demonstration attracted global attention due to the massive scale of the action. Not only that, it also demonstrated how American citizens understand their right to free expression, as enshrined in their Constitution, and how they exercise it collectively for the common good. However, dozens of demonstrators were arrested by police in Los Angeles in connection with this demonstration (bbc.com, 29/3/2026).

Looking at the “No Kings” demonstration in the United States and the events that followed, this can serve as a learning opportunity and a mirror for civil society in Indonesia. Reflecting on the August 2025 demonstrations in Indonesia, criminalization, and other state statements, this article seeks to critically examine how secure and protected our civil space currently is.

## The “No Kings” Demonstration

The “No Kings” demonstration in the United States did not take place only on March 28, 2026, but had been ongoing since earlier rounds in 2025. The movement began on June 14, 2025, on the birthday of U.S. President Donald J. Trump, and was held again on October 18, 2025. The October 2025 movement was joined by millions of Americans across more than 2,700 events in all states (nokings.org, 6/4/2026).

The “No Kings” movement stands against the policies and conduct of the U.S. President, which are seen as disrespectful toward democracy. The movement specifically opposes the immigration enforcement agency known as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which operates without transparency and targets the arrests of individuals suspected of being undocumented immigrants without due process of law that is clearly defined (bbc.com, 30/3/2026). Other policies criticized by this movement include the discourse of eliminating elections; removing priorities for healthcare, environmental protection, and education; redrawing district maps after the census to ensure a particular party continues to win in newly drawn areas; allowing mass shootings and rising living costs; and funding wars and the destruction of foreign nations using taxpayer money (nokings.org, 6/4/2026).

In its operations, the movement is supported by more than 200 civil society organizations spanning a wide range of fields, from democracy and human rights to social inclusion, religion, education, labor, the environment, and more. The movement facilitates regular meetings in each region, organized by local civil society groups, with the goal of maintaining sustained discourse (nokings.org, 6/4/2026; edition.cnn.com, 30/3/2026).

The “No Kings” movement is also firm in its commitment to non-violent protest. Carrying weapons is also prohibited at “No Kings” events, including weapons that are legally permitted to be carried. To equip demonstrators taking part in the series of events, the “No Kings” movement provides various educational and training materials, including an exploration of the rights held by demonstrators, the policy changes being advocated for, digital advocacy and campaign strategies, the roles individuals can play according to their own abilities, safety and health procedures during events, and de-escalation mechanisms for demonstrators when facing dangerous situations. Events are also broadcast to provide access for those who cannot attend and to ensure transparency (nokings.org, 6/4/2026).

Following the conclusion of the “No Kings” demonstration in March, it was reported that approximately 75 demonstrators were detained in Los Angeles. 66 were detained for failing to comply with police orders to disperse, one for carrying a bladed weapon, and eight minors for failing to comply with police dispersal orders (abc7.com, 30/3/2026). Six people were also arrested in Memphis, but only three were charged with non-compliance, resisting arrest, and obstructing traffic on the highway. However, legal proceedings have not resumed, meaning access to justice has been obstructed. Civil society in Memphis again held demonstrations at Memphis City Hall, and one of the demonstration organizers also complained that the Memphis City Government had indirectly disclosed their personal data to the general public through an incompletely redacted permit, as a result of which they received terror and intimidation from unknown individuals (wreg.com, 15/04/2026; commercialappeal.com, 14/4/2026).

### **A Flashback to the August 2025 Demonstrations**

Turning back to the August 2025 demonstrations, these were triggered by public anger over poor public communication from several members of the House of Representatives in response to criticism regarding their allowance increases and other policies. The responses of these members were seen as failing to represent the people they serve and as being insensitive to the economic situation of society, where purchasing power has been declining (Intania, 2025). Moreover, the demonstrations escalated after a member of civil society died after being struck by a tactical vehicle belonging to the Mobile Brigade Corps (Brimob). This incident generated further anger directed at the Indonesian National Police (tempo.co, 30/8/2025).

Similar to the “No Kings” demonstration, all elements of the society were present in the August 2025 demonstrations across several cities, from students, laborers, workers, and *online* motorcycle taxi drivers, and other civil society organizations (kompaspedia.kompas.id, 4/9/2025). According to the Report of the Fact-Finding Commission/KPF (2026), which consists of KontraS, the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, and the Legal Aid Institute, the first wave of demonstrations took place in 23 cities on August 25, 7 cities on August 26, and 19 cities on August 27. Following the death of Affan Kurniawan, the number of demonstrations increased to 49 regions on August 29 and 76 areas on August 30 (bbc.com, 19/2/2026).

The atmosphere of the demonstrations from August 25 to 27 was generally peaceful. The escalation of violence only began on the 29th to the 31st. Incidents of vandalism, arson, and looting occurred in several areas. At least 6,719 people were arrested across Indonesia from the series of actions

and unrest. Charges commonly used included mob violence (Article 170 of the Criminal Code/KUHP), Incitement (Article 160 KUHP), hate speech (Article 28 paragraph (3) of the ITE Law), and spreading hoaxes that incite violence (Article 28 paragraph (3) of the ITE Law), and resisting officers (Articles 212 and 214 KUHP). Detention efforts were carried out both while the demonstration waves were still ongoing and in the aftermath (KPF, 2026).

At the same time, the use of disproportionate force and brutality by authorities also occurred. According to the KPF report, water canon and tear gas were used massively at various locations such as the DPR Building in Jakarta, Mako Brimob Kwitang, Kediri, Solo, and Bali. In addition to the killing of Affan Kurniawan, there was also the torture of a 15-year-old in Magelang, who was slapped, struck with a hose, and forced to chew kencur (galangal root) by police. Activist Reyhan Aryaputra was also arrested by plainclothes police, wrapped in duct tape, and held at gunpoint to force a confession of throwing a Molotov cocktail. In Makassar, a victim was reportedly vomiting blood and suffering beehive-like injuries from blows by blunt objects wielded by authorities. Attacks on journalists, including violence by police, terror/intimidation/cyber attacks, and obstruction of coverage, also occurred (KPF, 2026).

In response to the above, the Government issued a number of statements. Law enforcement authorities built a narrative that the escalation was caused by intellectual instigators within the crowd, rather than by organic discontent. There were also statements labeling student protesters and activists as “anarchist” groups or rioters in order to justify repressive measures. Allegations that the demonstrations were infiltrated by “mafias”, foreign interests, or opposition political factions were also made (KPF, 2026).

### **Comparing No Kings and the August 2025 Demonstrations**

Looking at both demonstrations, the number of detained demonstrators also differs greatly: while the “No Kings” demonstration attracted millions of participants, fewer than 100 were reported in the media as having been detained by police. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, with a smaller movement during the August 2025 demonstrations, as many as 6,719 people were detained. Factors such as the scale of violence and unrest that occurred may be relevant. However, the differences in charges brought against detainees in both demonstrations also need to be considered.

In the “No Kings” demonstration, protesters were charged under provisions for failure to comply with orders and carrying bladed weapons. In Indonesia,

the charges were more varied. Not only for failing to follow officers' orders or committing other acts of violence, detainees also faced charges related to incitement, defamation, and the spread of disinformation. Notably, it should also be remembered that many of those arrested under these charges were detained based on evidence of social media activity.

Similar charges were not found in the No Kings demonstrations. Given that the No Kings demonstrations are highly structured, involving many organizations and having written guidelines for their movement, if we apply the understanding of incitement and mastermind charges, there should have been far more arrests on incitement grounds. However, this did not occur in the United States. To understand this, we need to look more closely at freedom of expression in the United States.

The United States guarantees freedom of expression in its constitutional amendments, most notably the First Amendment. The freedom of expression protected by the First Amendment is very broad, but this does not mean everything is permitted. Under the First Amendment, expressions such as defamation, slander, offensive conduct, advocacy of illegal action, obscenity, fraud, solicitation of illegal conduct, true threats, child pornography, and fighting words may be restricted (constitution.congress.gov, 15/4/2026; Roqib, *et al*, 2020).

However, how states restrict certain expressions differs between the United States and Indonesia. In Indonesia, we have a series of laws that protect freedom of expression while also regulating its limitations and criminalization. In the United States, however, restrictions cannot be imposed by legislation. Restrictions are determined on a case-by-case basis by the U.S. Supreme Court. Because the United States is a country that prioritizes liberty and a self-regulatory approach, all forms of expression in the public sphere are important for mutual contestation (Bretschneider, *et al*, 2017; Sunstein, 2002).

This approach makes it difficult for the U.S. Government to pursue individuals considered to be opposing the government or seen as masterminds behind unrest. In terms of public perception and legal culture, American citizens also deeply understand their right to freedom of expression. This also works in reverse, in that their government likewise does not interfere with the expression of its citizens (Mathias *et al*, 2022).

From this, it can be understood that the United States only pursues demonstrators who actually committed violence during demonstrations. Indonesia, by contrast, goes further, seeking out who initiated the

***In terms of public perception and legal culture, American citizens also deeply understand their right to freedom of expression. This also works in reverse, in that their Government likewise does not interfere with the expression of its citizens.***

demonstrations and issuing statements that the demonstrations were not grounded in organic public sentiment. The differing perceptions of each government in viewing public expression are evident: one seeing it as something not to be intervened in, the other as something threatening.

### **Recommendations**

This article proposes several points:

- a. The new criminal provisions on insulting the President, the Government, and sedition in the Criminal Code (Articles 218, 222, 240) must be brought to the Constitutional Court by civil society, as these articles are vulnerable to being used to criminalize criticism;
- b. Civil society organizations need to strengthen the civil movement by not fearing criminalization and continuing to voice their opinions. An environment of ideal freedom of expression still needs to be created by fellow citizens so that fear does not deepen further;
- c. The broader public needs to understand their right to freedom of expression and commit to non-violent action; and
- d. The Indonesian National Police needs to focus not on civil society actors who are genuinely working in their field to voice criticism and input, but on pursuing individuals who are actively terrorizing civil society and causing unrest that endangers civil society.

## Terror and Intimidation of Civil Society and the State's Role

-Christina Clarissa Intania-



*Photo Source: stock.adobe.com*

Over the past year, there have been many incidents of terror and intimidation experienced by civil society members who actively voice criticism and suggestions to the Government or for the public interest. From Francisca Shristy Rosana, a Tempo journalist, who received a pig's head and rat carcasses sent to the Tempo office, to Tiyo Ardianto, Head of the Student Executive Board of Gadjah Mada University, who received messages containing kidnapping threats, to Andrie Yunus and Muhammad Rosidi who were attacked with acid, causing burns to their bodies (ylbhi.or.id, 31/12/2025; Komnas Perempuan, 2026; tempo.co, 13/2/2026).

The state, through its various relevant ministries and agencies as well as law enforcement, has issued statements affirming its commitment to thoroughly investigate these cases. President Prabowo himself has stated that what Andrie Yunus experienced constituted terrorism and must be fully investigated, including identifying who gave the orders (kompas.id, 20/3/2026). However, in parallel, President Prabowo has simultaneously also issued statements and created policies that discredit members of the public who actively voice criticism and suggestions for the Indonesian Government. Narratives such as civil society organizations being paid by foreign parties or being accused of deliberately causing chaos have made civil space increasingly constrained, as such actors are deemed to be breaking the law (Shihab, 2026).

This article discusses how the state should position itself in protecting freedom of expression and its commitment to creating a safe space for civil society. Considering these events, it is important for civil society to understand their rights in exercising freedom of expression.

### **Patterns of Terror and Intimidation in 3 Civil Society Cases**

In the cases mentioned above, the majority of perpetrators are unknown individuals (OTK, orang tidak dikenal). In the delivery of threatening messages via WhatsApp or physically, no identity accompanied the sender (bbc.com, 21/3/2025; Infid: 2026). In the case of Andrie Yunus, a fact-finding team managed to obtain evidence indicating that the perpetrators came from within the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) (Tim Advokasi untuk Demokrasi, 2026). In its follow-up, the acid attack case is to be referred to the military court on April 16, 2026 (nasional.kompas.com, 15/4/2026).

Looking back at the previously ongoing case, the case of the pig's head sent to the Tempo office has also yet to find clarity. In an article shared by Tempo 125 days after the incident, it was explained that all evidence had been reported, but police had not yet been able to identify either the perpetrator or the mastermind. Regarding the rat carcasses subsequently sent to the Tempo office, there has also been no visible progress. Obstacles such as damaged CCTV footage and the difficulty of tracing the pig slaughterhouse have hindered progress in this case (tempo.co, 26/7/2025). As of January 1, 2026, there is still no certainty regarding the perpetrator (bbc.com, 1/1/2026).

Turning to Tiyo's case, he received numerous private messages to his mobile number and social media accounts. The senders were unknown numbers and anonymous accounts, making accusations of him being a foreign agent, and including kidnapping and murder threats. Disinformation to character-assassinate Tiyo was also spread, such as posts claiming that Tiyo frequently hires *escort* karaoke escorts, manipulating Indonesia Smart Card funds, and similar allegations. Additionally, pressure was also placed on those close to Tiyo. Tiyo's mother also received messages from unknown individuals containing false information about Tiyo. Physically, Tiyo was also followed by two unknown individuals described as being of stocky build. When Tiyo reported the stalking incident, anonymous intimidation messages were again sent to him (konde.co, 4/3/2026; Kaukus Indonesia untuk Kebebasan Akademik, 2026).

## The State's Position

In the above cases, the state has given responses affirming that it protects citizens' freedom of expression. But at the same time, there have also been defensive or insensitive responses from the government. Not only President Prabowo, but Natalius Pigai as Minister of Human Rights also stated that the pig's head delivery was a form of threat to press freedom (Kementerian HAM, 2025). However, the former Presidential Spokesperson Hasan Nasbi (21/3/2025) suggested that the pig's head should just "be eaten." Responding to the terror and intimidation faced by Tiyo, Natalius Pigai (20/2/2026) commented that the terror did not originate from the government. On another occasion, State Secretary Minister Prasetyo Hadi (18/2/2026) stated that he was unaware of this issue and affirmed the state's guarantee of freedom of expression.

In general, the state has issued statements affirming that it guarantees freedom of expression. However, it is also apparent that some statements have been inconsistent over time. Beyond statements alone, the Government's attitude and law enforcement actions reflected in the progress of these cases have also not yet reflected the promised guarantees. Referring to recent developments, the case of the pig's head sent to the Tempo office and the terror and intimidation experienced by Tiyo have seen no visible progress, particularly the terror targeting Tempo which has been ongoing since 2025. This raises important questions about how the state concretely guarantees freedom of expression by protecting those whose freedoms have been violated.

Alongside the stance of state officials, several state ministries and agencies have been observed operating within the corridors of their functions. The Ministry of Human Rights supported the formation of a Working Committee by Commission II of the House of Representatives to oversee this case. The National Human Rights Commission and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency have also collaborated to support victims of terror and intimidation (nasional.kompas.com, 19/3/2026). These efforts are to be commended. However, returning to the point: the Government is a unified entity. The expectation is that there will be consistency between the Government's stated positions and its concrete efforts to protect victims.

When state actors become involved in acts of terror and intimidation against their own citizens, this is precisely where we need to revisit the concept of the terror state, where the state itself becomes a terrorizer of its own citizens. And yet, the duty of the state is to protect rights and make citizens feel safe. The fear experienced by citizens is thus created by a systemic

***In cases of terror and intimidation, the state has given responses affirming that it protects citizens' freedom of expression. But at the same time, there have also been defensive or insensitive responses from the Government. Under our human rights framework, the state has a role to respect, protect, promote, enforce, and fulfill human rights (or the 5P of Human Rights). Therefore, the state must be consistent in all of its efforts to fulfill these 5P obligations. It is not possible for only some elements to be fulfilled while others are not.***

power that cannot be easily removed, because that power is part of the state itself. Concrete examples of how a state creates terror include the Rohingya case in Myanmar and Indonesia during the New Order era (Lensa Universitas Islam Indonesia, 4/6/2025). The state's failure to fully process cases of terror and intimidation also perpetuates this situation, in which citizens do not receive the protection and enforcement of violations they are entitled to, and fear will continue to be present in society.

Under Indonesia's human rights framework in Law Number 39/1999 on Human Rights, as well as the government's strategic plan, the state has a role to respect, protect, promote, enforce, and fulfill human rights. In another formulation, this is also known as the 5P of Human Rights. Respect for human rights is carried out through the state not intervening in or violating the human rights of citizens. Protection is carried out by protecting individuals or groups from human rights violations by other parties. Promotion of human rights is done by increasing public awareness and knowledge about human rights. Enforcement is done through legal action against human rights violators so that justice is served. Meanwhile, fulfillment is done by ensuring that citizens can enjoy their rights (LBH Masyarakat, 2024).

Therefore, the state must be consistent in all of its efforts to fulfill these 5P obligations. It is not possible for only some elements to be fulfilled while others are not. It is not sufficient to conduct socialization and education vigorously if enforcement is not pursued. The 5P of Human Rights are interconnected, working together to create an ecosystem in which citizens' human rights are present and truly guaranteed by the state.

### **Recommendations**

Referring to the discussion above, the following points are proposed:

- a. Law enforcement authorities, particularly the Indonesian National Police, must thoroughly investigate the perpetrators of acts of terror and intimidation against civil society;
- b. All parts of the Government, both central and regional, must stop using narratives such as "foreign agent", "paid by foreigners", and similar narratives that discredit civil society; and
- c. Civil society must continue to monitor the progress of terror and intimidation cases so that they are not lost and forgotten.

## The Revision of the Election Law: A Gateway to Political Party Reform?

-Arfianto Purbolaksono-



The push to revise the General Elections Law (UU Pemilu) has intensified in recent times. This demand is driven not only by the need to improve the technical aspects of election administration but also by the awareness that the design of Indonesia's electoral system still leaves behind several fundamental problems. The urgent discussion of the revision demonstrates the urgency of providing legal certainty while improving the quality of democracy (Kompas, 2026).

However, the revisions of the Election Law never occur in a vacuum. They are always an arena for political tensions, particularly among political parties that hold dominant positions in the legislative process. In this context, revisions to the Election Law are not only a policy instrument but also an object of contestation fraught with electoral interests.

This paper argues that revisions of the Election Law have the potential to serve as a gateway to political party reform, but at the same time face significant challenges in the form of policy capture by political parties themselves. Without serious efforts to address these conflicts of interest, the revisions of the Election Law have the potential to reinforce the status quo in the Indonesian party system.

### **The Revision of the Election Law = Political Party Reform?**

The need to revise the Election Law is inextricably linked to the evaluation of previous elections, which revealed various serious issues. The complexity of election design, particularly in the context of simultaneous elections, has created an extremely high workload for election organizers. The extreme impact of this situation was evident in the 2019 Election, where hundreds of officials suffered exhaustion and even died. This confirms that election system design is not merely a technical issue but also concerns humanitarian aspects and democratic governance (Purbolaksono, 2021).

However, these implementation issues are merely symptoms of a deeper problem. At a more fundamental level, the revision of the Election Law has always been under the shadow of conflicting political party interests. Crucial issues such as the electoral system, parliamentary threshold, electoral district size, and the design of simultaneous elections have become points where party electoral interests are openly contested (Purbolaksono, 2021).

In reality, the actors with an interest in the Election Law are not only political parties as election participants, but also other actors such as election organizers, voters, and candidates (legislative/executive). Howlett and Ramesh (1995) stated that the dominant factors in the policy-making process were policy actors and the institutions associated with those actors. Individuals, institutions, groups, or organizations that were stakeholders in a policy had their own interests and were a very influential factor in producing a policy.

However, in practice, political parties do not act as neutral actors formulating policies in the public interest but rather as rational actors seeking to maximize their electoral advantage. The choice of electoral system; for example, often reflects strategies for maintaining or expanding power. Open proportional representation systems tend to be defended by those who benefit from the popularity of individual candidates, while the push for closed systems often comes from party elites seeking to strengthen internal control. Similarly, debates over the parliamentary threshold are inextricably linked to the calculation of who will be eliminated and who will survive in the political competition.

This situation indicates the presence of policy capture, where the policy formulation process is dominated by actors with a direct interest in the policy's outcome. Policy capture itself is defined as a consistent or repeated process that steers public policy decisions away from the public interest and toward the interests of specific interest groups or individuals. Policy capture

is the antithesis of inclusive and equitable policymaking and consistently undermines core democratic values (OECD, 2017).

In the context of the revision of the Election Law, the dominance of political parties in the legislative process has resulted in policies that tend to reflect compromises between parties' interests, rather than the objective needs of a democratic system formulated jointly from the interests of various actors. Therefore, this aligns with the view that actors and their interests are the dominant factors in the public policy process (Purbolaksono, 2021).

The implications of this situation are significant. The revision of the Election Law has the potential to lose its substantive direction and become trapped in short-term political negotiations. The hoped-for reforms could actually stagnate because every change requires compromise, often weakening the policy's substance. Even the decision not to revise the Election Law—as has happened in the past—is a policy driven by a configuration of political interests, not simply a consideration of public needs (Purbolaksono, 2021).

On the other hand, the revision of the Election Law still holds strategic potential as an instrument for political party reform. Pippa Norris (2004) classifies political party reform into two aspects: formal and informal. The formal aspect tends to encourage change from outside the party. Meanwhile, the informal aspect tends to encourage change from within the political party itself. When linked to the revision of the Election Law, this falls under the formal aspect, where election regulations are expected to encourage change or reform in political parties.

Changes to election regulations that can be used to reform political parties include regulations at various stages, from party registration and the candidate nomination process to transparency and accountability in campaign funding (Hukumonline, 2026). According to a study by The Indonesian Institute (TII) on “Encouraging Institutional Reform of Political Parties to Become Inclusive, Relevant, and Responsive” (2021), one way to reform political parties is by improving recruitment mechanisms for political office.

Political recruitment must prioritize meritocracy, gender equality, and representation, rather than solely satisfying kinship or group interests, or the favoritism often applied for short-term and pragmatic gains. Through an open, transparent, and accountable process, it is hoped that political recruitment can be truly democratic, supported by cadres with integrity, commitment, and competence. Furthermore, strengthening regulations on campaign fund reporting is also needed as an effort to increase transparency and accountability of political party finances, particularly during campaigns (TII, 2021).

According to this study, it is crucial for political parties, as pillars of democracy, to reform themselves to prevent policy capture in a democratic system. Failure by political parties to reform themselves will impact the quality of democracy and the policies produced by the government. However, if political parties successfully implement reforms, this will improve the quality of democracy and the government, delivering policies that meet the public interest.

Therefore, within this framework, the Election Law serves not only as a competitive regulatory framework but also as an institutional engineering instrument to strengthen democracy. However, this potential can only be realized if the revision process can escape the trap of conflicts of interest. Without it, the revision of the Election Law will simply become a repetitive regulatory cycle without producing meaningful change.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Facing the challenge of strong policy capture in the revision of the Election Law, the first step is to open the legislative process in a transparent and accountable manner. The public must be able to access and understand each party's position on crucial issues so that political pressure can be directed toward promoting policies that are more oriented toward the public interest.

Furthermore, it is crucial to broaden the actor base in the policy formulation process. The involvement of election organizers, academics, and civil society must be strengthened to counterbalance the dominance of political parties. Without this mechanism, the revisions of the Election Law will remain within the purview of the political elite.

In terms of substance, the revisions of the Election Law need to be directed at limiting the scope for manipulation by short-term political party interests. Regulations regarding the electoral system, threshold, and electoral district design must be based on comprehensive empirical studies, not simply the result of political compromise. An evidence-based approach is crucial to ensuring that the system's design truly supports the quality of democracy.

Furthermore, regulations in the election stage must be maximized to encourage internal political party reform. Strengthening regulations in the party registration stage needs to ensure clear institutional standards. In the nomination stage, regulations must promote transparency and meritocracy in candidate selection. Meanwhile, in the campaign stage, strengthening transparency and accountability in funding is key to reducing transactional political practices.

***The revisions of the Election Law never occur in a vacuum. They are always an arena for political tug-of-war, particularly among political parties that hold dominant positions in the legislative process.***

At the same time, the revision of the Election Law must also address the complexity of election administration. Simplifying election design is crucial not only for efficiency but also to maintain the quality of democracy and protect election officials from a disproportionate workload.

### **Conclusion**

The revision of the Election Law represents a crucial moment in determining the future direction of Indonesian democracy. However, this momentum lies at a crossroads between the opportunity for reform and the risk of reinforcing the status quo.

If the revision of the Election Law is dominated by conflicting political party interests, the resulting policies will only reproduce the same problems. Conversely, if the revision process transcends short-term interests and is directed toward strengthening the political system as a whole, it could pave the way for more substantial political party reform.

Thus, the main stake in the revision of the Election Law lies not merely in the content of the regulation, but in its ability to free the policy process from the dominance of narrow interests to a broader orientation toward the public interest.

Politics

## State Intervention in Cooperative Development in Indonesia: Implications for Policy Design and Governance

-Felicia Primaresti-



Cooperatives are a long-standing concept, or rather, they could be considered a part of the Indonesian nation's identity due to their unique concept. In his book, "Building Cooperatives and Cooperatives Building" (1971), Mohammad Hatta stated that cooperatives were the "mainstay of the Indonesian economy," based on the values of mutual cooperation, collectivity, and resistance to colonial capitalism.

However, over time, the meaning of cooperatives has often been reduced to the interests of certain regimes. During the New Order; for example, the Soeharto Government created the Village Unit Cooperative (KUD) policy. Criticisms of KUDs include their overly centralized approach, minimal citizen participation, focusing on physical resources rather than human resource development, and the risk of corruption.

Following the 1998 Reformation, the Government began to "release" cooperatives. This was reflected in changes to the legal framework, such as Law Number 25/1992 concerning Cooperatives, which emphasized cooperative independence, and the reduction of centralized development programs such as the Village Unit Cooperative (KUD), which had previously been the primary state instrument at the village level (Zain, 2015). However, this release created new problems, given that cooperatives were not equipped with adequate human resource skills, such as organizational

management, business planning, and other skills. As a result, many cooperatives subsequently collapsed and lost competitiveness to the private sector or large corporations.

With various basic cooperative problems, which until now have not been resolved, the new Government under Prabowo-Gibran has again launched a policy entitled the Red and White Village Cooperative through Presidential Instruction (Inpres) Number 9/2025. Reflecting on history, this policy is certainly not without criticism and is filled with concerns that it will repeat the same mistakes.

This article examines how the design of cooperative policies, and in the current era, the Red and White Village Cooperative, actually hinders the movement of grassroots communities to meet their economic needs.

### **State Intervention and *Top-Down Cooperative Patterns* in Indonesia**

In many people's economic policies, the state is often positioned as the primary solution provider or the cause of structural problems in general. This view is not entirely wrong, but in many Indonesian contexts, the problems often stem from the state's presence and poor governance, rather than the absence of the state's role, including in the management of cooperatives.

Since their inception, cooperatives have never been completely free from state intervention. During the New Order era, for example, Law No. 12/1967 concerning the Principles of Cooperatives served as the primary legal basis for cooperatives. Rather than strengthening member independence, these various forms of intervention often created *top-down relationships*, weakened governance, and created long-term dependency. Cooperatives during the New Order era were also often used as tools of political power, rather than as a genuine people's economic movement (Zain, 2015).

In other cases, Village Unit Cooperatives (KUD) are often viewed as part of the state bureaucratic chain, where cooperatives are used as a means of food distribution and implementation of Central Government policies in villages (Hadiwiratma, 2022). For example, through the Logistics Agency (BULOG), farmers are often directed, if not required, to sell unhusked rice to KUD at a predetermined price (Suryaningrum, 2017). This *top-down pricing* leaves farmers with limited bargaining power, as they lack control over selling prices or alternative distribution channels. In many cases, this situation places farmers in a subordinate position within the rural economic structure.

## Policy Design Issues in the Red and White Village Cooperatives in the Prabowo Era

KUD is potentially prone to similar mistakes. The Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (INDEF, 2025) assessed that the design of the KDMP/KKMP policy was also very *top-down*.

KDMP/KKMP was formed through Presidential Instruction (Inpres) Number 9/2025 concerning the Acceleration of the Establishment of Red and White Village/Sub-district Cooperatives, where the Inpres was used as a “*command*” “*line*” so that everything runs uniformly. Furthermore, from a constitutional law perspective, policy instruments such as Presidential Instructions are essentially administrative instructions from the President to ministries/institutions to implement established policies.

However, when a program has large-scale characteristics, involves a significant budget, has a structural impact on sectors such as food, villages, and the economy, and requires cross-institutional coordination, then in terms of normative design, ideally the policy should have a stronger legal basis such as a Law or at least a Government Regulation.

For example, the Government plans to procure approximately 105,000 commercial vehicles, consisting of pickup trucks and trucks, to support the operations of village cooperatives (BBC Indonesia, February 24, 2026). The estimated value of this procurement is approximately Rp24.66 trillion, indicating the substantial fiscal intervention in the program. On the other hand, the estimated cost per cooperative unit is also considered high, reaching approximately Rp1.6 billion, which has drawn criticism from the legislature as too lavish and not reflecting the real needs of cooperatives at the village level (Tempo, November 18, 2025).

The use of Presidential Instructions for large-scale programs can be understood as a form of accelerating policy implementation ( *executive shortcut* ); namely, the Government wants policies that are fast, flexible, and can be directly communicated to ministries and regions. However, at the same time, such policies have the potential to narrow the space for public deliberation in the policy formulation stage. From the perspective of the formation of legislation, the legislative process through laws generally involves the House of Representatives (DPR) and opens up space for greater public participation, both through public hearings and public consultation mechanisms ( Law Number 12/2011; Constitutional Court Decision No. 91/PUU-XVIII/2020). Thus, the use of Presidential Instructions for large-scale programs has the potential to produce policies that are more *executive-driven* and lack democratic control in the early stages of formulation.

In the theory of legislative formation, the regulatory hierarchy places the Law as an instrument involving legislative participation through the House of Representatives (DPR), so ideally it contains elements of public deliberation and stronger democratic control than executive instruments such as Presidential Instructions. This certainly has consequences for governance, such as legislative oversight that tends to be more limited at the policy design stage, policies become more *executive-driven*, and the space for public control in the initial stages of policy formulation is relatively smaller compared to if policies were formed through a formal legislative process.

### **Cooperatives are Caught Between the State and the Market**

Cooperatives in Indonesia have long been in an uncertain position. On the one hand, they are expected to be independent, member-based economic organizations, but on the other, they continue to be pushed through strong state intervention. This ambiguous position has prevented cooperatives from developing optimally, either as competitive economic entities in the market or as autonomous social movements.

In the context of policies such as the Red and White Village/Sub-district Cooperative (KDMP/KKMP), *top-down state intervention* is once again dominant. The state acts not only as a facilitator but also as the primary director in the formation, design, and operation of cooperatives. This situation risks repeating old patterns where cooperatives function more as instruments for policy implementation than as organizations that grow from the needs and participation of their members.

One strong indication of an overly centralized control-oriented approach can be seen in plans for large-scale asset procurement, such as the purchase of operational vehicles to support village cooperatives. Several reports have indicated that the Government is considering large-scale procurement, including the option of importing vehicles from abroad, such as India (BBC Indonesia, February 24, 2026). This approach raises a fundamental question: should the priority of cooperative development be strengthening member capacity and governance, or should it be providing physical assets that may not necessarily meet real needs on the ground.

A focus on physical procurement without a corresponding institutional strengthening has the potential to repeat the old pattern of cooperative development in Indonesia, where cooperatives are administratively formed but lack managerial capacity and member participation. While assets such as vehicles or infrastructure can improve short-term operations, without management capabilities, good governance, and member involvement, these assets tend to be suboptimal and even risk becoming a burden. Studies show

***Cooperatives in Indonesia have long been in an ambiguous position between being instruments of state policy and being member-based economic entities. On the one hand, the state continues to encourage cooperative development through various interventions. On the other hand, this approach often limits their autonomy and institutional capacity. As a result, cooperatives are unable to fully function as competitive market actors or as independent economic movements at the grassroots level.***

that the main weakness of cooperatives in Indonesia lies in the *governance aspect*. and the quality of human resources, not just limited capital or assets ( Baswir , 2000). In the long term, this approach can actually strengthen cooperatives' dependence on the state and weaken their competitiveness in the market.

Thus, cooperatives in Indonesia currently face not only external challenges from market dynamics but also internal pressures from policy designs that do not fully promote autonomy and sustainability. Cooperatives find themselves trapped: neither flexible enough to compete in the market, nor autonomous enough to become a member-driven economic movement.

### **Recommendations**

To escape this trap, a shift in policy approach is needed that is more oriented towards institutional strengthening than administrative expansion.

- a. The Government, in this case through the Ministry of Cooperatives, needs to shift its role from controller to facilitator. The state's role should be focused on creating a supportive ecosystem, such as providing access to financing, adaptive regulations, and capacity building, rather than on overly detailed operational arrangements.
- b. Village governments need to prioritize strengthening the internal governance of cooperatives. This includes improving management capacity, transparency, and member participation in decision-making. Without improvements in these areas, expanding the number of cooperatives will only lead to the proliferation of ineffective entities.
- c. The Central Government must abandon its *one-size-fits-all approach and focus more on* participatory approaches, empowerment, and mentoring as a facilitator. The needs and context of each village are different, so cooperative design should be more flexible and based on local needs, not centralized instructions.
- d. The Central Government needs to be more cautious in its use of the budget for large-scale physical asset procurement. Priority should be given to long-term investments such as human resource development, management systems, and the integration of cooperatives into the broader economic value chain.
- e. Finally, it is crucial to strengthen cooperative policy evaluation and accountability mechanisms. Without data-driven and transparent evaluation, the risk of repeating past policy mistakes remains high.

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