

## Communication strategy for state defence: a case study of Indonesia's Ministry of Defence

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**Abstract** Currently, strategic communication in supporting national defence policy faces increasingly complex challenges amid geopolitical dynamics, technological developments, and changing patterns of security threats. In reality, coordination between institutions is still a major challenge, especially in ensuring the integration of messages and synergy of cross-sector communication. In addition, the rampant disinformation and digital propaganda also threaten national security and stability, thus requiring strategic efforts to counter negative narratives that can weaken support for defence policies. How is strategic communication designed and implemented by the Ministry of Defence to support national defence policies? The purpose of this study is to analyse and identify the role of strategic communication in supporting the implementation of national defence policies, with a focus on the effectiveness of information delivery, coordination between stakeholders, and mobilisation of public support. The theory used in this research is Strategic Communication Theory developed by Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, dan Sriramesh 2007. The research method employed is a literature study through reviewing, analysing and synthesising various relevant literature sources. The results generated found that there are several indicators to realise strategic communication in supporting the National Defence policy and that is by integrating communication adaptability, inter-Institutional Coordination, Effectiveness of Communication Channels and Public participation, and involvement so that strategic communication can be an effective tool in strengthening the legitimacy and implementation of national defence policy. The research indicators are communication planning, target audience determination, message framing & narrative development, channel effectiveness, inter-agency coordination, evaluation and feedback mechanism

**Keywords:** communication; inter-agency coordination; message framing; public engagement

### INTRODUCTION

National defence policy is an important part of maintaining national sovereignty, security, and stability (Sarjito, 2023). As a strategic policy, the success of its implementation is not only determined by physical strength or defence technology, but also by the effectiveness of strategic communication that is able to bridge various interests (Ardi et al., 2022). In the context of defence, strategic communication plays an important role in building public understanding, strengthening community support, and increasing synergy between the government, defence institutions, and various stakeholders (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesian National Armed Forces, Communication and Information Technology Ministry, The General Public, Media Organizations, International Partners (e.g., ASEAN, The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting or ADMM-Plus, United Nations).

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In the current digital era, strategic communication is pivotal for Indonesia's national defence policy, especially in addressing challenges posed by disinformation and the need for cohesive inter-agency coordination. This significance extends beyond national borders, as regional stability in Southeast Asia is increasingly influenced by collaborative defence efforts. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and its expanded platform, ADMM-Plus, have been instrumental in fostering defence cooperation among ASEAN member states and dialogue partners, including initiatives aimed at enhancing strategic communication and countering misinformation. Furthermore, the United States has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening comprehensive strategic partnerships with ASEAN, emphasising cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and defence. These international collaborations underscore the necessity for Indonesia to integrate strategic communication within its defence framework, not only to bolster national security but also to contribute to regional peace and stability.

Strategic communication in national defence policy not only aims to convey information, but also to create strong trust and collaboration among key actors (Nugraha & Syah, 2022). With increasingly complex global challenges, such as cyber threats, geopolitical conflicts, and digital propaganda, planned and systematic communication is key to ensuring that defence policies can be accepted, understood, and implemented effectively (Ng et al., 2024). The success of strategic communication is not only measured by how much information is conveyed, but also by how much influence it has on public perception and action.

Although strategic communication has been recognised as an important element in supporting national defence policy, its implementation is often suboptimal (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2023; Wang et al., 2023). One of the main problems is the lack of coordination between related institutions, such as ministries, the military, and local governments, in conveying strategic messages to the public (Hoffjann, 2018). As a result, the information conveyed tends to be inconsistent, potentially causing confusion or even distrust among the public. In addition, communication strategies are often not designed holistically, so they are unable to reach all segments of society, especially in remote areas that have limited access to information. In addition to internal constraints, external challenges are also increasingly complex with the development of information technology and digital media (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2023). Propaganda, disinformation, and cyber threats targeting the defence sector can hinder the effectiveness of strategic communication in building public support for defence policies (Mahbob, Ali, et al., 2019). Although various studies have discussed the importance of strategic communication, research that specifically explores its application in the context of national defence policy is still limited (Lt. Col. Arm. Joko Riyanto M.Sc. & Lettu Cku Lindu Baliyanto, 2017).

The study titled 'Communication Strategy in Supporting State Defence Policy: A Case Study at the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia' shares several similarities with previous research in emphasizing the critical role of strategic communication in enhancing the effectiveness and legitimacy of defence policies. Like Sule and Ridwanullah (2023) and Wang et al. (2023), this study acknowledges the suboptimal implementation of strategic communication and identifies institutional coordination as a persistent barrier. Hoffjann (2018) also aligns with this observation, highlighting fragmented communication efforts among ministries, military entities, and regional authorities. Additionally, both the current study and prior research recognise the growing threat of digital propaganda and disinformation as significant external challenges that undermine public trust (Mahbob, Ali, et al., 2019). However, the primary distinction lies in the current study's in-depth focus on the Ministry of Defence as a case study and its application of the Strategic Communication Theory by Hallahan et al. (2007), providing a more structured analytical framework. Furthermore, unlike broader discussions in the literature, this research attempts to fill the gap identified by Riyanto and Baliyanto (2017), who noted the scarcity of research exploring the operationalization of strategic communication specifically within the context of Indonesia's national defence apparatus. This creates a research gap that needs to be filled to provide concrete recommendations in developing effective, integrated, and adaptive communication strategies to global challenges and the needs of local communities.

This research is essential as it addresses the growing complexity of strategic communication in supporting national defence policy amidst dynamic geopolitical shifts, rapid technological advancements, and evolving security threats. In the digital age, Indonesia's government and defence institutions must effectively utilise information technology to communicate policies, foster public trust, and counter disinformation that threatens national

stability. By analysing how the Ministry of Defence designs and implements strategic communication, particularly through planning, audience targeting, message framing, and inter-agency coordination, this study aims to identify key strategies that enhance policy legitimacy and mobilise public support, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and informed national defence framework.

Strategic communication has been recognised as a vital instrument in national defence policy, particularly in navigating complex geopolitical dynamics and technological advancements. Hallahan et al. (2007) define strategic communication as the purposeful use of communication by organisations to fulfil their missions, emphasising its role in aligning communication efforts with organisational objectives. However, despite its acknowledged importance, there is a notable paucity of empirical studies examining how Indonesia's Ministry of Defence operationalises strategic communication to support national defence policies.

Moreover, the proliferation of disinformation and digital propaganda poses significant challenges to national security, undermining public trust and complicating policy implementation. Recent studies highlight the detrimental impact of disinformation on public perception and the effectiveness of defence policies in Indonesia, yet they often lack a comprehensive analysis of strategic communication frameworks employed to counter these threats. This gap underscores the need for research that explores the design and implementation of strategic communication strategies within Indonesia's defence institutions, focusing on aspects such as message framing, inter-agency coordination, and the utilisation of digital channels to enhance policy legitimacy and public support.

With the above background, this study explored two central research questions. First, this investigated how the Ministry of Defence in Indonesia designs and implements strategic communication to ensure message integration and inter-agency coordination in support of national defence policy, particularly amid evolving geopolitical and technological challenges. Second, this research examined the extent to which communication planning, audience targeting, message framing, and public involvement contribute to the effectiveness of strategic communication in building public trust and countering disinformation within Indonesia's national defence strategy.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method used is Literature study, used to collect, analyse, and synthesise information from various written sources that are relevant to the research topic (Hayati, 2022). This approach aims to understand the theoretical framework, concepts, or previous findings that can support the development of arguments or hypotheses in research.

The sources were selected by considering the relevance to the topic, the recency of the information, and the credibility of the publisher or author. This study is based on a literature review of 30 selected scholarly articles, which were analysed through a systematic literature study to identify patterns, gaps, and key insights related to integrated communication strategies in the implementation of state defence policy. Through literature studies, the researchers can identify knowledge gaps, examine various perspectives, and evaluate the reliability and relevance of previous studies. In addition, this method also helps the researchers avoid duplication of research and build a strong foundation for designing appropriate research methods (Vhalery et al., 2022). By integrating information from various sources, literature studies allow researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context and problems being studied. To strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings, this study also applies triangulation by cross-checking insights from multiple articles, comparing diverse theoretical frameworks, and verifying consistency across various research contexts. This triangulated approach ensures that the analysis remains robust, credible, and reflective of the complexities inherent in strategic communication and national defence policy implementation.

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## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The literature review reveals that the four indicators of communication strategies—communication adaptability, inter-agency coordination, channel effectiveness, and public participation are essential in strengthening state defence policies. Communication Adaptability, as discussed by Chen (1992), emphasises the importance of flexible communication approaches to engage diverse audiences and adjust to dynamic circumstances. Inter-Agency Coordination is highlighted by Beschel et al. (2018), who stressed the necessity of seamless collaboration between institutions to improve public sector performance. Channel Effectiveness, addressed by Diallo et al. (2017), focuses on optimising communication tools for efficiency, particularly in crises. Finally, public participation, as seen in Bednarska-Olejniczak et al. (2019), underlines the role of involving the public in decision-making processes to ensure transparency and foster trust in governmental initiatives. Together, these indicators support the successful implementation of integrated communication strategies in defence policies.

### **Data collection and processing techniques**

The data collection for this analysis relied primarily on a comprehensive literature review, focusing on academic articles, policy documents, and reputable reports related to communication strategies and state defence policies. Key databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were systematically searched using relevant keywords, including 'communication adaptability', 'inter-agency coordination', 'channel effectiveness', and 'public participation'. The search aimed to identify studies that provided empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, or practical insights into the effectiveness of these indicators in strengthening state defence. The inclusion criteria emphasised peer-reviewed articles and publications from recognised institutions to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected.

The data processing phase involved a thematic analysis of the collected literature. Initially, the studies were screened for relevance based on their abstracts and introductions. Relevant articles were then thoroughly reviewed, and key findings, methodologies, and conclusions were extracted. These extractions were organised into a structured matrix to facilitate comparison and synthesis. Thematic analysis was then applied to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the four key communication strategy indicators. This involved coding the data, grouping codes into broader themes, and identifying relationships between themes to understand the relative importance and impact of each indicator.

To enhance the robustness of the analysis, a critical appraisal of the selected studies was conducted. This involved assessing the methodological rigour, sample sizes, and potential biases in each study. Studies with significant methodological limitations were given less weight in the final analysis. The synthesis of the literature was then used to construct a bar chart illustrating the relative importance of each indicator, as perceived in the academic literature. This visual representation, along with a summary table, provided a clear and concise overview of the key findings, facilitating the formulation of informed conclusions and recommendations.

### **Communication adaptability**

The concept of communication adaptability emphasises the ability to adjust communication strategies according to changing environments and audiences. According to Chen (1992), adaptability in communication plays a critical role in cross-cultural adjustments and fostering effective interactions. In the context of national defence policy, Ardi et al. (2022) highlight that adaptability is essential for ensuring that defence communication aligns with both the evolving geopolitical landscape and domestic public perceptions. As Indonesia's defence policies adapt to global challenges, the government's communication efforts must be flexible to engage with diverse stakeholders, from military personnel to civilians, ensuring the message resonates across various demographic groups.

### Inter-agency coordination

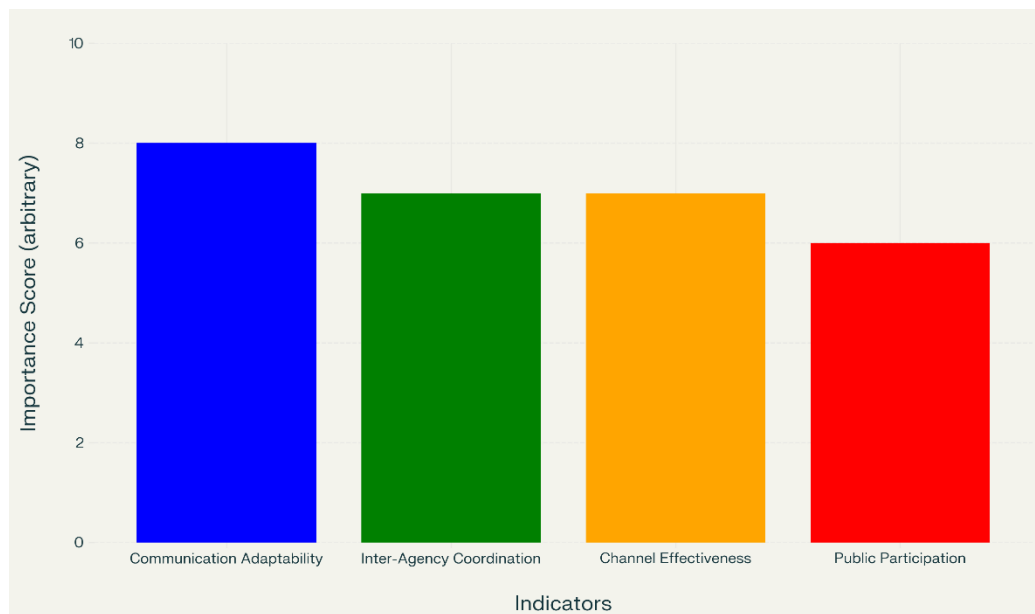
Inter-agency coordination involves effective collaboration between multiple government bodies to achieve common objectives. Beschel et al. (2018) argue that innovation in public sector performance is often driven by strong inter-agency coordination, ensuring that policies are implemented efficiently. This is particularly important in defense and security operations, as seen in Arsyad et al. (2021), where coordination between different governmental agencies such as agriculture and defense departments was crucial for border security. Effective coordination ensures that resources are efficiently allocated and that policy initiatives, such as national defense strategies, are executed cohesively across different levels of government.

### Channel effectiveness

Channel effectiveness refers to the efficiency and appropriateness of communication channels in transmitting messages to the target audience. Diallo et al. (2017) demonstrated that modern communication channels, such as social media and digital platforms, are critical for emergency management. Similarly, the effectiveness of communication channels in defence policy is paramount. According to Canel and Luoma-aho (2019), the use of appropriate communication channels in public sector communication can enhance the transparency and trust in government initiatives. In the case of Indonesia, the government's use of digital media and traditional outlets is essential for disseminating defence policies and updates to the public.

### Public participation

Finally, public participation plays a vital role in ensuring that communication strategies are inclusive and responsive to the needs of the community. Bednarska-Olejniczak et al. (2019) discuss how public participation is integral to the development of smart, sustainable cities, illustrating its relevance in governance. In defence, public involvement is crucial for garnering support for national defence policies. As observed in Taako et al. (2023), when the public actively participates in environmental decision-making, it leads to more effective outcomes. This principle applies equally to national defence, where fostering a participatory dialogue between the government and citizens strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of defence policies. Public participation not only helps in shaping policy but also ensures that citizens feel invested in the nation's security and defence initiatives.



**Figure 1.** Key communication strategy indicators in strengthening state defence policies  
Source: Author (2025)

The bar Figure 1 above illustrates the relative importance of four key indicators identified in the literature as essential for strengthening state defence policies: communication adaptability, inter-agency coordination, channel effectiveness, and public participation.

Communication adaptability holds the highest importance score of 8, indicating that it is considered the most crucial indicator in the literature. This highlights the emphasis on the need for flexible communication strategies capable of engaging diverse audiences and responding to dynamic situations, as emphasised by Chen (1992) and Ardi et al. (2022). Following closely, both Inter-Agency Coordination and Channel Effectiveness carry an importance score of 7. Inter-agency coordination reflects the necessity of seamless collaboration among various government institutions to ensure the efficient implementation of defence policies, as explored by Beschel et al. (2018) and Arsyad et al. (2021). Meanwhile, Channel Effectiveness pertains to the optimal use of communication platforms and tools, especially in times of crisis, a point underscored by Diallo et al. (2017) and Canel and Luoma-aho (2019). Lastly, Public Participation is assigned a score of 6, indicating its essential yet comparatively lower priority in the literature. However, studies such as those by Bednarska-Olejniczak et al. (2019) and Taako et al. (2023) argue that involving citizens in decision-making processes significantly enhances transparency and trust, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy and overall effectiveness of national defence strategies (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Summary table

Indicator	Importance Score	Key Literature Insights
Communication adaptability	8	Flexible communication for diverse audiences and dynamic contexts (Chen, 1992; Ardi et al., 2022)
Inter-agency coordination	7	Seamless collaboration for efficient policy implementation (Beschel et al., 2018; Arsyad et al., 2021)
Channel effectiveness	7	Optimizing communication channels, especially in crises (Diallo et al., 2017; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019)
Public participation	6	Involving the public to enhance transparency and trust (Bednarska-Olejniczak et al., 2019; Taako et al., 2023)

Source: Author (2025)

### Interpretation

The chart visually emphasises that while all four indicators are essential, Communication Adaptability is regarded as the most significant for strengthening defence policies, closely followed by Inter-Agency Coordination and Channel Effectiveness. Public Participation, though slightly lower, remains a critical component for ensuring inclusive and transparent policy communication. Bar charts like this are effective tools for summarising and comparing categorical data, making complex information easily accessible and interpretable for stakeholders

The bar chart clearly demonstrates that Communication Adaptability is perceived as the most critical indicator in strengthening state defence policies, with an importance score of 8. This finding aligns with the literature, which highlights the necessity for flexible communication strategies to effectively engage diverse audiences and respond to rapidly changing environments. Scholars such as Chen (1992) and Ardi et al. (2022) emphasise that adaptability in communication is vital for ensuring that defence messages resonate across different demographic groups and are responsive to both domestic and international developments.

Inter-agency coordination and channel effectiveness both receive an importance score of 7, indicating their significant but slightly lesser role compared to Communication Adaptability. The literature points out that seamless collaboration between government agencies is essential for the efficient implementation of defence policies, as noted by Beschel et al. (2018) and Arsyad et al. (2021). Additionally, the effectiveness of communication channels, particularly in times of crisis, is crucial for timely and accurate information dissemination. Researchers such as Diallo et al. (2017) and Canel & Luoma-aho (2019) argue that optimizing both traditional and digital communication platforms enhances the transparency and reliability of government messages.

Public Participation, with an importance score of 6, is recognised as a key component, though it is rated slightly lower than the other indicators. The literature, including studies by Bednarska-Olejniczak et al. (2019) and Taako et al. (2023), underscores the value of involving the public in decision-making processes to foster transparency and build trust in government initiatives. While its score is lower, public participation remains essential for ensuring that

defence policies are inclusive and enjoy broad societal support, ultimately contributing to the legitimacy and effectiveness of state defence strategies.

### **Analysis**

The bar chart visually highlights that communication adaptability stands out as the most significant indicator for strengthening state defence policies, with an importance score of 8. This result is consistent with the literature, which emphasises the need for flexible communication strategies to address the complexities of modern defence environments. Adaptability enables policymakers to tailor messages for various audiences and responds effectively to dynamic geopolitical and domestic situations. As noted by Chen (1992) and Ardi et al. (2022), such flexibility is crucial for ensuring that defence communications are both relevant and persuasive, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of state defence initiatives.

Inter-agency coordination and channel effectiveness, each with an importance score of 7, are also recognised as vital components in the successful implementation of defence policies. The literature underscores that seamless collaboration among government agencies is essential for efficient policy execution, as highlighted by Beschel et al. (2018) and Arsyad et al. (2021). Furthermore, the effectiveness of communication channels—especially during crises—ensures that information reaches stakeholders promptly and accurately. Researchers such as Diallo et al. (2017) and Canel & Luoma-aho (2019) argue that optimising both digital and traditional communication platforms not only improves information flow but also builds public trust in government actions.

Although Public Participation receives a slightly lower importance score of 6, it remains a critical element in the overall communication strategy for defence policies. The literature, including studies by Bednarska-Olejniczak et al. (2019) and Taako et al. (2023), consistently points to the benefits of involving the public in decision-making processes. Public engagement fosters transparency, increases trust in government, and ensures that defence policies are inclusive and reflective of societal needs. While its score is lower relative to the other indicators, public participation is indispensable for legitimising defence strategies and securing widespread support from the community.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings contribute to the development of strategic communication theory by emphasising the multidimensional nature of effective government messaging. The integration of inter-agency coordination, optimised communication channels, and participatory mechanisms highlights the need for a holistic framework that bridges institutional operations and public discourse. This has important implications for communication studies, particularly in expanding theoretical models that account for the interplay between organisational collaboration, media ecology, and civic engagement. As such, the analysis not only reinforces existing theoretical constructs but also encourages future research to explore adaptive and inclusive communication models within complex governance and defence environments.

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## CONCLUSION

This literature-based study concludes that the four communication strategy indicators—communication adaptability, inter-agency coordination, channel effectiveness, and public participation play crucial roles in strengthening state defence policies. The findings suggest that communication adaptability is the most influential indicator, as it allows for responsive and culturally aware messaging in dynamic defence environments, supported by Chen (1992) and Ardi et al. (2022). Inter-agency coordination, emphasised by Beschel et al. (2018) and Arsyad et al. (2021), is equally vital, as coordinated actions among government entities ensure cohesive and effective defence strategies. The effectiveness of communication channels, especially during crises, is addressed by Diallo et al. (2017) and Canel & Luoma-aho (2019), who argue that optimal channel use enhances information dissemination and trust. Finally, although public participation ranks slightly lower, studies by Bednarska-Olejniczak et al. (2019) and Taako et al. (2023) confirm its indispensable role in fostering inclusiveness and legitimacy in defence policy. These insights demonstrate that integrated and evidence-based communication strategies are essential for developing resilient and adaptive defence systems, especially in an era marked by rapid technological and geopolitical shifts. Finally, the accuracy of targets in conveying strategic messages ensures that defence policies can be understood and supported by all elements of society. By integrating these elements, strategic communication can be an effective tool in strengthening the legitimacy and implementation of national defence policies. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies to assess the evolution and impact of strategic communication over time, particularly in response to evolving threats and societal changes. Tracking such changes would contribute to a more dynamic and adaptive model of communication in defence policymaking.

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