

National Disaster Policy: Criticism of the State's Response to the Disaster in West Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

The determination of national disaster status in Indonesia is frequently misconstrued as a purely technocratic decision governed by objective metrics of casualties and material loss. This article challenges that positivist assumption by analyzing the state's refusal to elevate the status of the May 2024 cold lava flood (*galodo*) in West Sumatra, despite catastrophic damage that exceeded regional fiscal capacities. Utilizing a Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) framework synthesized with Joel Migdal's State-in-Society theory, this study demonstrates that disaster status determination functions as a political mechanism for fiscal preservation and the management of central-regional power relations. The analysis reveals three primary policy patterns: (1) the discursive manipulation of legal definitions regarding "government paralysis" to avoid statutory obligations; (2) the deployment of "politics of survival" strategies to protect the central state budget from unlimited liability; and (3) the depoliticization of ecological causality to shield extractive political-economic interests from scrutiny. The findings indicate that the current disaster governance regime operationalizes a logic of containment that subordinates social justice to macro-political stability, effectively shifting the burden of recovery to peripheral local governments with limited resources. This article concludes that without structural reform to the legal framework specifically the objectification of disaster indicators the state will continue to perpetuate structural inequalities through discretionary exclusion.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia occupies a precarious geopolitical and geological position, situated on the Pacific Ring of Fire where high seismicity and volcanic activity are constants (Suppasri et al., 2018). While this geological reality renders the archipelago one of the most disaster-prone nations globally, the vulnerability of its population is not merely a product of tectonic plate convergence but is significantly shaped by political structures and policy decisions (Falco, 2019). In the architecture of Indonesian disaster management, the state retains absolute authority, exercised through the President, to determine the administrative "status" of a disaster event whether it is categorized as a district, provincial, or national disaster (Tanesab, 2020). This classification, stipulated in Law Number 24 of 2007 concerning Disaster Management, is far from a neutral administrative taxonomy. It is a fundamental political decision that dictates resource mobilization, command structures, and the ultimate trajectory of post-disaster recovery (Fia Hamid-Walker, 2025).

The cold lava floods (*galodo*) and landslides that devastated West Sumatra in May 2024 serve as a critical case study for analyzing these power dynamics. Triggered by a combination of extreme torrential rainfall and volcanic material from Mount Marapi, the disaster resulted in over 67 confirmed fatalities, dozens of missing persons, and the severance of vital national infrastructure, including the primary arterial road connecting Padang and Bukittinggi in the Anai Valley (Purwaningsih et al., 2024). Economic losses were estimated in the trillions of rupiah, a figure that vastly outstripped the fiscal capacity of the affected local governments (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet, 2024). Despite intensifying pressure from civil society coalitions and local administrations to declare a National Disaster status which would legally mandate full central government intervention and funding the central government, acting through the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), steadfastly maintained the disaster's status at the regional level (Putra, 2019).

This refusal sparked a contentious debate regarding the responsibilities of the state. Civil society actors argued that the scale of destruction had obliterated the social and economic fabric of the region, necessitating a national response (Gretskiy, 2023). Conversely,

the central government employed a legal-formalistic narrative, asserting that the regional government was "still functioning" and had not experienced the "total paralysis" required for a national declaration.² This divergence in interpretation highlights a significant research gap. While existing literature on Indonesian disaster management often focuses on technical capacity, community resilience, or the logistics of aid delivery (Migdal, 2018), there is a paucity of research that interrogates the *political mechanism* of status determination itself. Specifically, there is a lack of integration between Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) and state theory in explaining how disaster indicators are politically constructed to serve specific governmental imperatives in the context of Southeast Asia's decentralized governance. Most extant studies treat the "status" as a given variable rather than a contested political outcome. Furthermore, while Migdal's State-in-Society approach has been applied to general governance in Indonesia, its application to the specific, high-stakes arena of disaster status determination remains underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by reframing the issue not as administrative negligence, but as a calculated strategy of governance. By synthesizing CPA with Joel Migdal's State-in-Society theory, the article dissects the discursive and material strategies employed by the state to navigate the crisis. Through Migdal's lens, the state is viewed not as a monolithic entity, but as a fragmented arena where central and local actors compete for resources and authority (Tran, 2023). Within this framework, the decision to withhold national status is interpreted as a "politics of survival" a calculated maneuver by central elites to limit budgetary liabilities and manage political risk while maintaining a facade of social control through ad hoc, discretionary aid mechanisms (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Mainstream disaster policy studies often adhere to a positivist epistemology, assuming that indicators such as casualty counts or economic losses are objective facts that should automatically trigger standardized policy responses (Fischer, 2021). From this perspective, the disparity between the massive impact of the West Sumatra disaster and the state's limited administrative response appears as an anomaly or a failure of implementation. This study employs Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) to challenge such a view. As argued by Fischer,

Wagenaar, and other critical scholars, public policy is a social construct formed through discursive argumentation and the interplay of power.

CPA allows us to understand that disaster indicators are not "brute" facts but are interpreted and framed to serve specific political interests (Cummings et al., 2020).

In the context of the West Sumatra disaster, the legal requirement of "government paralysis" for a national declaration becomes a highly interpretive concept. CPA enables the deconstruction of how "functioning" is defined by central elites to justify the rejection of national status for instance, equating the physical standing of a regent's office with operational capacity while local actors define "paralysis" as the inability to meet citizens' basic needs due to fiscal insolvency (UMY, 2025). This analysis seeks not the "objective truth" of these indicators, but the political rationality governing their interpretation. It asks *who* defines the crisis and *whose* definition prevails in the policy arena.

To deepen the analysis of the power relations behind this policy, this article integrates Joel Migdal's State-in-Society perspective. Migdal's theory is particularly relevant to Indonesia's decentralized archipelago, highlighting the limitations of the state's capacity to penetrate society and implement rules uniformly (Drake, 2019). The state is not a coherent, autonomous actor but a "field of power" where various elements (central ministries, local governments, fiscal authorities) compete and negotiate with societal forces (Van Klinken, 2006). This perspective moves beyond the Weberian ideal of a rational-legal bureaucracy to expose the messy, negotiated reality of governance in the developing world.

Two key concepts from Migdal are utilized analytically. First, the Politics of Survival suggests that state leaders make policy decisions primarily to mitigate threats to their continued power and resource control, rather than for bureaucratic efficiency (Geddes, 2023). In disaster management, declaring a national state of emergency entails high political risks (admission of development failure) and fiscal risks (unlimited liability on the state budget).

Avoiding such a declaration is a rational survival strategy for the center. Second, Fragmented Social Control posits that the state must

constantly negotiate with local powers (Sellers & Scharff, 2020). In Indonesia's decentralized system, this manifests as a tug-of-war where the center seeks to avoid bearing the full burden of peripheral crises, while regions demand intervention. The disaster status determination thus becomes a mechanism to manage this fragmentation, allowing the state to be selectively present in rhetoric while limiting its material commitment (De Rivera, 2022).

2. Method

This study utilizes a qualitative method with a critical case study approach to examine the politics of disaster status determination. The selection of the May 2024 West Sumatra cold lava flood is based on the significance of its impact categorized as one of the deadliest disasters in the region in recent history and the intensity of the accompanying policy polemic regarding its status.¹ This case offers a unique vantage point to observe the friction between local needs and national political priorities during a transition period in Indonesian governance (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet, 2024).

2.1. Data Collection

Data was collected through a triangulation of three primary sources to ensure validity and depth:

- 1) Documentation Study: An exhaustive analysis of legal texts was conducted, specifically Law No. 24 of 2007 on Disaster Management and Government Regulation No. 21 of 2008 (Ariyaningsih et al., 2025). This provided the normative baseline for understanding the legal criteria for status determination. Additionally, budget documents and official guidelines for the Disaster Pooling Fund (PFB) were reviewed to understand the evolving fiscal architecture of disaster response (Aoki, 2023).
- 2) Situation Reports and Statistical Data: Secondary quantitative data was aggregated from Situation Reports (Sitrep) published by BNPB, Human Initiative, and official releases from the West Sumatra provincial government and relevant district agencies (BPBD) (Chandra, 2024). This data included casualty figures, infrastructure damage assessments, and economic loss estimates.
- 3) Media Discourse Analysis: Public statements from key actors including the Head of BNPB, the President, the Governor of West

Sumatra, environmental NGOs like WALHI, and academic experts were collected from credible national mass media and official press releases during the period of May–December 2024 (Fachri Hamzah, 2025).

2.2. Justification for Media Discourse Analysis

The use of media discourse as a primary data source is validated by the tenets of Critical Policy Analysis and recent scholarship in disaster communication. Media outlets serve as the primary arena where policy meanings are constructed, contested, and disseminated to the public (Van Hulst et al., 2025). In the context of disaster policy, where decision-making processes within the cabinet are often opaque, public media statements by officials constitute the most accessible evidence of the "discursive strategies" used to justify policy choices (Riffe et al., 2023). Furthermore, discourse analysis allows for the examination of how language (e.g., specific terms like "paralysis" or "functioning") is deployed to exercise power and frame reality, a core component of this study's theoretical framework (Mosurska et al., 2023). It provides a window into the "front stage" of politics where legitimacy is manufactured.

Data was analyzed using critical discourse analysis (CDA) techniques to examine how narratives of "regional autonomy" and "government capacity" were constructed by state actors to legitimize the refusal of national status (Van Hulst et al., 2025). These narratives were then correlated with Migdal's theoretical concepts to explain the underlying political rationality.

It is important to acknowledge that this study relies on public discourse and secondary data. Access to internal government meeting minutes or confidential policy memos regarding the status decision was not possible, which limits the ability to definitively trace the internal decision-making process or the specific interactions between the Ministry of Finance and the BNPB behind closed doors. Additionally, while the study infers political motivations based on theoretical frameworks and observed outcomes, it cannot claim access to the private intentions of individual policymakers. The focus remains on the *structural* and *discursive* manifestations of policy rather than individual psychology. Furthermore, the analysis is limited to

the specific context of the West Sumatra floods and may not be universally generalizable to all disaster contexts in Indonesia without further comparative research.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents a critical analysis of the state's response to the 2024 West Sumatra disaster, structured around six dimensions that reveal the gap between empirical reality and policy construction.

3.1. Scale of Damage and Humanity: The Empirical Reality

The disaster that struck Agam Regency, Tanah Datar, and Padang Panjang on May 11, 2024, was not a routine hydrometeorological event but a catastrophic convergence of extreme weather and volcanic vulnerability (Roslimah et al., 2024). Heavy rainfall mobilized millions of cubic meters of cold lava material (*lahar*) from Mount Marapi, creating debris flows that obliterated settlements and critical infrastructure. The empirical data underscores a scale of destruction that objectively overwhelmed local capacities.

Humanitarian indicators reveal a devastating toll. Official data from BNPB and local command posts confirmed over 67 fatalities, with at least 20 individuals reported missing and dozens more injured (Lang et al., 2024). This high mortality rate, particularly among vulnerable groups, signals a catastrophic failure in early warning and civil protection systems (Reichstein et al., 2025). Beyond the immediate loss of life, the disaster displaced more than 4,000 people, creating a humanitarian crisis necessitating long-term shelter and psychosocial support that local governments were ill-equipped to provide (Turkson, 2023). The social fabric of the *Nagari* (traditional village) system, central to Minangkabau society, was severely disrupted, with community leaders reporting an inability to cope with the trauma and displacement without external intervention.

In terms of infrastructure, the destruction was systemic. The severance of the national road connecting Padang and Bukittinggi in the Anai Valley effectively paralyzed the economic artery of the province, this road is not merely a local thoroughfare but a strategic logistics corridor connecting the west coast of Sumatra with the resource-rich provinces of Riau and North Sumatra. Its collapse

triggered immediate inflationary pressures and disrupted supply chains across the region (Istijono et al., 2025). The destruction of 19 bridges further isolated remote communities, rendering them inaccessible to standard relief operations and deepening the "paralysis" of local logistics.

Economically, the losses were staggering. While initial rapid assessments suggested losses in the hundreds of billions of rupiah, comprehensive validations by local agencies (BPBD) and the Ministry of Finance revised these figures significantly upward. The damage to agricultural land, irrigation systems, and housing stock in West Sumatra alone was estimated to exceed Rp 516 billion in direct material losses (Perdana Putra, 2024). However, when aggregating the broader economic impact and infrastructure reconstruction needs across the affected regions of Sumatra for the relevant period, estimates from the Ministry of Finance and independent think tanks like Celios placed the potential economic loss and recovery requirement at approximately Rp 52 trillion to Rp 68 trillion (Perdana Putra, 2024). This disparity between the trillions in required recovery funds and the meager "Ready-to-Use Funds" (DSP) available to local districts whose contingency budgets (BTT) were already depleted objectively meets the legal criterion of "massively disrupting the lives and livelihoods of the community" (Shofa, 2025).

Table 1. Comparison of Impact Indicators and Policy Responses

Impact Indicators	Field Data/Facts	Ideal Policy Implications (Normative)	Policy Response Reality (Empirical)
Fatalities	> 60 dead, dozens missing, hundreds injured.	Triggering a national response due to the escalation of high mortality rates.	Considered to still be within the tolerance threshold for regional management.
Infrastruktur	National Road Cut Off (Anai Valley), Bridge Destroyed	Paralysis of vital national functions (interprovincial connectivity)	Sectoral technical improvements (Ministry of PUPR) without changing the disaster status.

Impact Indicators	Field Data/Facts	Ideal Policy Implications (Normative)	Policy Response Reality (Empirical)
Economy	losses > Rp 1.2 trillion (West Sumatra), Sumatra aggregate >Rp 50 trillion	Exceeding regional fiscal capacity: An absolute requirement for full state budget intervention.	The assistance is ad hoc (ready-to-use funds) and limited grants.
Government	BTT depleted, budget deficit, disrupted services	Definition of "Functional paralysis".	The definition of "paralysis" is interpreted narrowly in terms of physical administration.

Sources: (West Sumatra Statistics 2024)

The empirical evidence confirms that the May 2024 disaster exceeded the threshold of local management capacity in terms of casualties, infrastructure paralysis, and economic loss. The sheer magnitude of the event, with damages reaching tens of trillions of rupiah against depleted local budgets, empirically substantiated the call for a national disaster status, rendering the state's refusal a decision requiring political, rather than technical, explanation

3.2. State Narrative Construction

Despite the overwhelming physical evidence, the central government consistently refused to declare a national disaster. This refusal was not a passive omission but an active discursive construction. Using Critical Policy Analysis, we can observe how the state mobilized specific narratives to normalize this decision. The primary discursive strategy centered on the reinterpretation of "government paralysis (Mayasari et al., 2024).

The Head of BNPB, Lt. Gen. Suharyanto, and other high-ranking officials repeatedly emphasized that the disaster remained a provincial responsibility because the local government was "still functioning" (Sayers et al., 2019). This construction deliberately obscures the reality of "functional paralysis," where a local government, though administratively present, possesses zero fiscal or operational capacity to respond to the crisis. It creates a disconnect

between the *form* of government (which remained) and the *function* of government (which had collapsed).

Furthermore, the state employed a strategy of *historical comparison* to delegitimize the urgency of the West Sumatra case. By frequently citing the 2004 Aceh Tsunami and the COVID-19 pandemic as the only "true" benchmarks for a national disaster, the government set an impossibly high threshold for intervention (Deportes et al., 2024). This rhetoric implies that unless a disaster threatens the total collapse of the national sovereign entity, it remains a local problem. President Prabowo Subianto later reinforced this stance, stating that since "35 other provinces remained safe," a national status was unnecessary, framing the issue as one of containment rather than justice (Assegaf, 2020). This effectively raises the bar for national status to a level that excludes virtually all "routine" but catastrophic disasters, normalizing a state of permanent regional emergency that does not warrant national legal recognition.

Finally, the state deployed the rhetoric of "maximum support without status" to quell public outcry. Statements asserting that "the central government is fully present" and "status labels do not matter" served to mask the legal distinction between *discretionary assistance* (charity) and *statutory obligation* (rights) (Maria Cicilia Galuh P, Nabil Ihsan, 2026). This narrative successfully shifted the discourse from the state's duty to protect its citizens to the state's benevolence in aiding the regions. It transformed a question of legal rights into a performance of executive generosity.

The state successfully maintained its refusal of national status through a discursive hegemony that redefined "government paralysis" as solely administrative rather than functional. By invoking extreme historical precedents and promoting a narrative of "support without status," the central government effectively neutralized legal claims for full state intervention, validating the CPA premise that policy metrics are socially constructed to serve power.

3.3. Politics of Survival

Behind the discursive maneuvering lies the stark reality of the "politics of survival," as elucidated by Migdal. The refusal to declare a national disaster is fundamentally a strategy to preserve the state's fiscal resources and avoid unlimited liability. Under Law No. 24/2007, a National Disaster declaration transfers the entire financial burden of emergency response, rehabilitation, and reconstruction to the State Budget (APBN) (Fia Hamid-Walker, 2025).

For the Ministry of Finance and the central executive, this represents an unquantifiable fiscal risk. With aggregate recovery needs for the Sumatra floods estimated at over Rp 50 trillion (Shofa, 2025). Assuming full legal responsibility would have severely impacted the national budget posture. This is particularly critical in a context where the state is committed to other capital-intensive strategic projects, such as the construction of the new capital city (IKN) or populist electoral programs (BNPB, 2025). The politics of survival dictates that the center must insulate its core resources from peripheral drains. A declaration of national disaster would have legally bound the central government to finance the recovery fully, potentially diverting funds from these strategic priorities and weakening the central elite's control over discretionary spending.

Instead of a national declaration, the state utilized ad hoc financial mechanisms like the Ready-to-Use Fund (DSP) and the nascent Disaster Pooling Fund (PFB) (Financing Disaster Resilience in Indonesia: Assessing the Landscape and Charting Path Forward, n.d.) The DSP allows the central government to disburse aid (e.g., Rp 3.2 billion for initial response in West Sumatra) at its own discretion controlling the timing, amount, and allocation. This contrasts sharply with the mandatory spending required by a national status. The operationalization of the PFB, designed to insure state assets and pool disaster risks, further reflects a shift towards financializing disaster management rather than treating it as a direct state obligation (Financial Protection Forum, 2025). This approach allows the state to appear responsive while maintaining strict fiscal discipline. It transforms disaster relief from a civic right into a managed financial risk, prioritizing the solvency of the state over the immediate recovery of the victims.

3.4. Fragmented Social Control

The disaster response in West Sumatra also highlights the phenomenon of "Fragmented Social Control" described by Migdal. In Indonesia's decentralized system, the state must manage the tension between central authority and local autonomy. The disaster policy became a mechanism to discipline the regions and reproduce the center's dominance.

The narrative of "regional autonomy" was weaponized to shift the burden of the crisis. By insisting that disaster management is primarily a local responsibility, the center forced West Sumatra and its districts to exhaust their own meager Contingency Funds (BTT) before receiving substantial aid (Lipiäinen, 2024). This created a dependency relationship where the region had to "beg" for central assistance rather than claim it as a right. The fragmentation was further evident in the disparity of the response. The central government effectively utilized the crisis to reassert its hierarchy, stepping in only when local resources were completely depleted, thereby reinforcing the perception of the center as the ultimate savior rather than a partner in governance.

Sectors vital to the national economy received immediate, high-level intervention. The Ministry of Public Works (PUPR) moved rapidly to repair the Anai Valley national road, a critical logistics artery for the macro-economy (Isril, 2024). In contrast, the recovery of community housing and local agricultural land issues of "human security" rather than "capital security" was relegated to slower, bureaucratic grant mechanisms (Akinbi & Oluwole, 2025). This two-speed response reinforces structural inequalities: the state is efficient and "national" when capital flow is threatened, but fragmented and "local" when the survival of peripheral communities is at stake. This selective interventionism ensures that the center's economic interests are protected while the social costs of the disaster are localized.

The implementation of disaster policy in West Sumatra reproduced the unequal power relations of the center-periphery divide. Through the mechanism of fragmented social control, the state prioritized the restoration of national economic infrastructure while relegating social recovery to the local level, thereby reinforcing the region's dependence and the center's hegemonic position.

3.5. Reproduction of Central-Regional Inequality

A critical dimension of the state's response was the depoliticization of the disaster's causality. While the government framed the event as a "natural disaster" caused by "weather" and "volcanic activity," civil society groups like WALHI (The Indonesian Forum for the Environment) presented strong evidence of an "ecological disaster" driven by human activity (Edelman, 2023). Data from WALHI and independent researchers indicates that the severity of the floods was exacerbated by massive deforestation and land conversion in the upstream areas of Mount Marapi and the Bukit Barisan range. Between 2001 and 2024, West Sumatra lost approximately 320,000 hectares of primary forest, with 32,000 hectares lost in 2024 alone (Mukhlis, 2025). This degradation, driven by illegal logging, mining, and agricultural expansion, destroyed the landscape's hydrological capacity to retain water, directly contributing to the magnitude of the flash floods (Chomsky, 2020). The "cold lava" phenomenon was not merely volcanic; it was the result of volcanic material washing down slopes that had been stripped of their natural vegetation cover, allowing water to carry debris at destructive velocities.

By maintaining the "natural disaster" status, the state effectively shielded these structural causes from scrutiny. A National Disaster status often triggers comprehensive audits and national media attention that could expose regulatory failures, corrupt licensing practices, and the complicity of local and national elites in environmental destruction (Peters, 2018). Framing the disaster as an "Act of God" allows the state and its corporate allies to evade accountability for the ecological degradation that manufactured the risk. It shifts the blame to nature, absolving the political-economic alliances that benefit from the extractive industries responsible for the land conversion (Ridzuan & Maiddin, 2024).

The refusal of national status served a crucial ideological function: it depoliticized the disaster. By categorizing the event as "natural" and "local," the state successfully forestalled a broader investigation into the political economy of deforestation and land use,

thereby protecting the extractive status quo that underpins much of the region's oligarchic power structures.

3.6. Synthesis of Policy Responses

The following table synthesizes the divergence between factual indicators and the political policy response, highlighting the mechanisms of exclusion discussed above. The data is sourced from the triangulation of official reports and media analysis conducted for this study.

Table 2. Comparison of Impact Indicators and Policy Responses

Impact Indicators	Field Data/Facts (Source)	Ideal Policy Implications (Normative)	Policy Response Reality (Empirical)
Fatalities	> 67 dead, 20+ missing, hundreds injured (BNPB, 2024; West Sumatra BPBD, 2024) (encyclopedia, 2024).	High casualty rates should trigger national resource mobilization to prevent further loss of life.	Fatalities were treated as statistics within the "regional tolerance threshold," managed via limited search and rescue support without status elevation.
Infrastructure	National Road Cut Off (Anai Valley), 19 Bridges Destroyed, Irrigation Systems Ruined (PUPR, 2024; BPBD, 2024) (Perdana Putra, 2024).	Paralysis of vital national functions (inter-provincial connectivity) warrants national emergency status.	The state bifurcated the response: rapid "sectoral" repair of national roads by the Ministry of Public Works, while local infrastructure was left to slow grant mechanisms.
Economic Loss	Direct Material Loss > Rp 516 Billion (West Sumatra BPBD); Aggregate Recovery Needs > Rp 50 Trillion (Ministry of Finance/Celios Est.) (Isril, 2024).	Losses exceeding regional fiscal capacity (APBD) are a legal prerequisite for APBN intervention.	The state avoided "National" status to prevent unlimited APBN liability, opting for capped "Ready-to-Use Funds" (DSP) and future PFB insurance schemes.
Government Function	BTT (Contingency Funds) depleted, budget deficits in affected districts	Definition of "Functional Paralysis": inability to fund	The central government imposed an "Administrative" definition: because

(Agam/Tanah Datar Gov. Releases) (Shofa, 2025).	basic services.	offices were open and officials present, the government was deemed "functioning," ignoring fiscal insolvency.
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Sources: Synthesized by authors from BNPB Situation Reports (encyclopedia, 2024), West Sumatra BPBD Data (Perdana Putra, 2024), Ministry of Public Works (PUPR) statements (Isril, 2024), and Ministry of Finance/Celios economic estimates (Shofa, 2025).

This synthesis demonstrates that the rejection of national status was not due to a lack of evidence regarding the disaster's severity. Rather, it was a systematic outcome of political calculations that redefined "paralysis" to avoid fiscal liability and maintained a dual-track response that protected national economic interests while localizing social costs.

4. Conclusion

The determination of disaster status in Indonesia, as reflected in The determination of disaster status in Indonesia, as evidenced by the 2024 West Sumatra case, is a highly politicized mechanism of governance rather than a neutral administrative procedure. Through the lens of Critical Policy Analysis and State-in-Society theory, this article concludes that the refusal to declare a national disaster was a manifestation of the state's "politics of survival." The state successfully navigated the crisis by employing three strategic maneuvers: (1) Discursive containment, defining government capacity in purely administrative terms to deny legal obligations; (2) Fiscal insulation, utilizing ad hoc aid to bypass the unlimited liabilities of the Disaster Management Law; and (3) Ecological depoliticization, framing the catastrophe as natural to obscure the structural failures of environmental governance.

While this analysis points toward the need for clearer, objective indicators in Law 24/2007, it is crucial to reflect on the significant political obstacles to such reform. The current deadlock in revising the Disaster Management Law (RUU PB) reveals deep-seated resistance within the political elite. The central government, particularly the Ministry of Finance, has shown reluctance to institutionalize

automatic triggers for national status that would strip the executive of its discretionary power over the budget. Furthermore, the debate over the institutional authority of the BNPB versus the Ministry of Social Affairs indicates a fragmentation of state power that complicates any coherent legislative reform. Consequently, technical recommendations for "objectification" are likely to face stiff resistance from a "survivalist" state apparatus that prizes flexibility and fiscal control over binding legal commitments. The resistance is not merely bureaucratic but deeply rooted in the preservation of executive power.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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