

Navigating Complexity: A Soft Systems Approach to Indonesia's OECD Membership Bid

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Indonesia's readiness for OECD membership through the lens of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), focusing on the complex interplay between policy reform requirements and institutional capacity. Using data from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, public discussions, and document analysis, the research reveals significant gaps between current conditions and OECD standards across regulatory, economic, and institutional dimensions. Key challenges identified include the ambitious three-year accession timeline and a highly complex regulatory environment, often described as a "jungle of regulation". The study proposes five critical and actionable areas for transformation: (1) the establishment of a centralized Project Management Office (PMO), (2) the digitalization of coordination processes, (3) the strengthening of parliamentary involvement, (4) the enhancement of public-private dialogue, and (5) the maintenance of national policy autonomy while pursuing international alignment. The findings suggest that while Indonesia's political commitment to OECD accession is strong, substantial challenges remain in harmonizing domestic policies and building the necessary institutional capacity. This research contributes a structured framework for developing nations to navigate the intricate process of international policy alignment while preserving their strategic autonomy.

Keywords: OECD Accession, Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), Indonesia Foreign Policy, Policy Reform, Institutional Readiness, Global Governance.

INTRODUCTION

The evolving landscape of international development cooperation, especially since World War II, has changed the way countries engage globally. Klingebiel (2014) notes that development cooperation today includes not only financial assistance, but also capacity building and knowledge exchange, highlighting the importance of institutional mechanisms to spread ideas across borders. This shift makes development cooperation a cornerstone of global governance, shaping international relations and national development goals (Janus et al., 2015).

In this context, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) plays an important role in promoting international economic cooperation. The OECD serves as a forum for countries to share experiences, identify best practices, and coordinate domestic and international policies (OECD, 2021). By facilitating dialog, setting standards, and providing policy advice, the OECD encourages collaboration among its

members and partners to address common economic challenges and promote inclusive growth (OECD, 2021). By setting international standards and providing policy recommendations, the OECD helps countries to promote sustainable economic growth, financial stability, and social welfare (Clifton & Díaz-Fuentes, 2014).

Indonesia's involvement in the OECD reflects its commitment to strengthening international cooperation and aligning its policies with global standards. The OECD-Indonesia Joint Work Program (JWP) for 2022-2025, which aims to promote resilient and sustainable post-pandemic recovery, is an example of this collaboration (OECD, 2022). Through this partnership, Indonesia seeks to utilize OECD expertise and resources to support its economic reforms and enhance its participation in the global economy (OECD, 2022). By working with the OECD, Indonesia seeks to improve its economic governance, attract foreign investment, and enhance its international credibility (OECD, 2022).

As Indonesia strives to diversify its economy and strengthen its regulatory framework, potential accession to the OECD is of strategic importance. The OECD's role in promoting global standards of economic governance offers Indonesia significant opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange and long-term growth (Clifton & Díaz-Fuentes, 2014). Joining the OECD will allow Indonesia to deepen its engagement in international economic cooperation, benefit from learning from its peers, and contribute to shaping global economic policy (OECD, 2016). However, Indonesia must overcome several challenges to align itself with OECD standards, including regulatory barriers, transparency issues, and the need to improve government spending efficiency (OECD, 2016).

In this context, Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) offers a valuable framework to analyze Indonesia's readiness to become an OECD member. SSM, as described by Checkland and Poulter (2010), provides a structured approach to tackling complex and unstructured problems, making it particularly useful in navigating the various challenges in foreign policy formulation. By applying SSM, this study will explore how Indonesia can address OECD accession challenges, effectively engage stakeholders, and propose actionable recommendations to align itself with OECD standards.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign policy formulation within international cooperation frameworks is a complex process influenced by both domestic and international dynamics. Various theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights: realism emphasizes how large states adopt assertive strategies to maintain dominance (Prifti, 2017), while the agency-structure framework highlights the interaction between individual actors and systemic forces (Carlsnaes, 1992). For developing countries, the Role Approach explains how states with limited power engage strategically in global politics (Sekhri, 2009), and the bureaucratic politics model shows how internal government dynamics drive policy decisions (Brady & Kegley, 1977). Liberal institutionalism underscores the role of international organizations like the OECD, UN, and WTO in facilitating cooperation and shaping state behavior through collective action platforms and norm establishment (Keohane & Martin, 1995; Abbott & Snidal, 1998). Constructivist theory adds another dimension by focusing on how ideas, identities, and social norms shape foreign policy, with organizations serving as arenas where shared understandings are negotiated (Wendt, 1999; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001). The concept of policy transfer explains how organizations like the OECD facilitate policy exchange across borders, though tensions between state sovereignty and international norms remain challenging (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Carroll & Kellow, 2011; Krasner, 1999; Drezner, 2007).

Indonesia's foreign policy has evolved through distinct phases since independence in 1945, beginning with the non-aligned "free and active" principle articulated by Vice President Mohammad Hatta in 1948 (Sukma, 1995). Key milestones include leadership in establishing the Non-Aligned Movement and hosting the 1955 Bandung Conference under Sukarno (Mackie, 2005; Weinstein, 2007). After 1965, foreign policy became more pragmatic under Soeharto's New Order, prioritizing economic development and regional stability through ASEAN's formation in 1967 (Anwar, 2005; Wnukowski, 2015). The post-Cold War era saw expanded engagement with multilateral institutions including the UN peacekeeping operations, WTO, IMF, and World Bank (Sebastian & Lanti, 2010; Radelet, 1995). Under President Yudhoyono, Indonesia became more assertive globally, promoting democracy and climate initiatives while joining the G20 as an emerging middle power (Karim, 2021). President Jokowi's emphasis on maritime diplomacy and global competitiveness has opened new chapters in international cooperation, particularly through partnership with the OECD to promote good governance and sustainable development (OECD, 2022).

The OECD plays a crucial role in shaping global standards through its mission to foster economic growth, sustainability, and well-being worldwide (Salzman, 2012; OECD, 2021). Founded in 1961, it serves as a platform for governments to collaborate on globalization challenges through knowledge sharing, peer review mechanisms, and policy recommendations rather than binding treaties (Carroll & Kellow, 2011; Clifton & Díaz-Fuentes, 2011).

The accession process is rigorous, typically taking several years and requiring comprehensive policy reviews and significant reforms to align with OECD standards (OECD, 2017). Mexico's 1994 accession required extensive trade and investment liberalization (Wise, 1998), South Korea addressed corporate governance and labor policies in 1996 (Kim, 2011), and Colombia's decade-long effort culminating in 2020 membership demonstrates the sustained political commitment required (OECD, 2020). As Indonesia seeks OECD membership, it faces similar challenges in demonstrating commitment through comprehensive policy review and reform, requiring close collaboration with OECD experts and alignment with values of open markets, transparency, and good governance.

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), developed by Peter Checkland, offers a structured approach for addressing complex, unstructured problems involving multiple perspectives, making it particularly relevant for international relations and policymaking contexts (Checkland & Poulter, 2020). Unlike traditional "hard systems" approaches seeking clear solutions, SSM focuses on understanding and improving real-world situations through iterative learning processes and stakeholder engagement using tools like Rich Pictures (Checkland, 1999; Checkland & Poulter, 2010). SSM has proven effective in international scenarios such as post-conflict Afghanistan reconstruction (Shan & Feagin, 2021) and UK public service design (Checkland et al., 2008), demonstrating its utility in reconciling different worldviews and facilitating inclusive policy development. For Indonesia's OECD accession process, SSM provides a valuable framework to manage complexities, ensuring policies not only meet OECD standards but also gain support from key stakeholders, making the transition to membership effective and sustainable through structured problem exploration and feasible intervention development.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach by applying SSM as the main framework to analyze Indonesia's readiness in the OECD membership accession process. SSM was chosen because this method is effective in dealing with complex and unstructured problems, especially in the context of foreign policy and international cooperation (Checkland & Poulter, 2010). The research began with the selection of a case study focusing on Indonesia's OECD accession policy. Through multi-perspective analysis involving various stakeholders, SSM provides a systematic framework for defining, modeling and comparing the problem situation with the expected conceptual model (Hardjosoekarto, 2012). This paper is structured around a framework (Figure 1) that outlines the research design, starting from case study selection to SSM application, involving key steps such as unstructured problem identification, rich picture development, CATWOE analysis, and conceptual modeling. The framework illustrates how data collection through interviews, literature review, and document analysis integrates into the SSM process, guiding the research toward identifying feasible and desirable changes that can enhance Indonesia's policy alignment with OECD standards. Thus, this method is able to identify feasible and desirable changes to improve Indonesia's policy readiness.

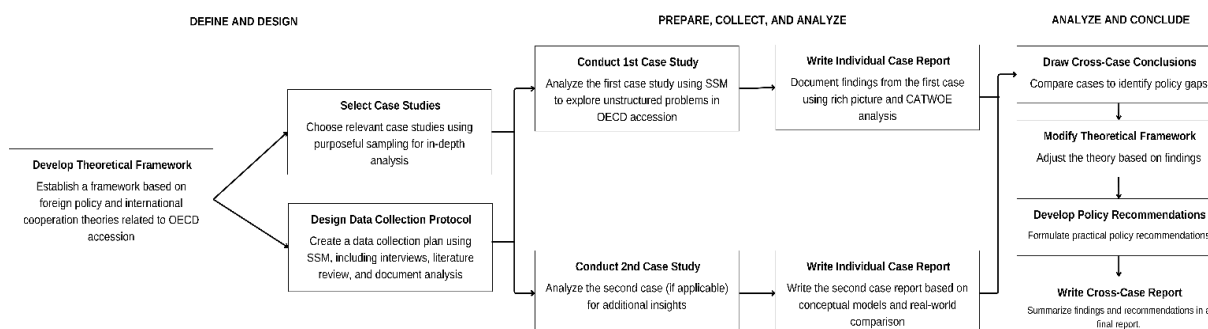


Figure 1. Structured Research Process for Analyzing Indonesia's OECD Membership Readiness Using SSM

SSM Steps in Case Studies

The application of SSM provided a structured seven-stage approach to analyze Indonesia's OECD accession complexities. Stages 1-2 (problem exploration) identified the unstructured nature of challenges rooted in regulatory issues, governance gaps, and diverse stakeholder interests including government agencies, international bodies, and domestic industries. Rich pictures visually mapped these dynamics, illustrating interconnected relationships between stakeholders, regulatory hurdles, and policy challenges (Checkland, 1999). Stage 3 (root definitions) employed the CATWOE framework to systematically define problem elements: Customers (Indonesian government, citizens, international partners), Actors (governmental bodies, OECD officials), Transformation

(policy alignment with OECD standards), Weltanschauung (belief that alignment fosters economic growth and international integration), Owners (decision-makers driving reforms), and Environment (global economic trends, political stability) (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). Stage 4 (conceptual modeling) developed ideal pathways emphasizing regulatory framework strengthening, transparency enhancement, and stakeholder collaboration as blueprints for governance reforms. Stage 5 (comparison) conducted gap analysis between ideal models and current conditions, identifying barriers such as political resistance and slow regulatory reform pace. Stages 6-7 (feasible changes and action) synthesized findings to identify actionable reform priorities, assess stakeholder support, and consolidate recommendations into a comprehensive policy roadmap (Table 1). This systematic SSM application effectively explored Indonesia's accession challenges by identifying root causes, mapping stakeholder dynamics, and providing actionable insights for strategic transformation toward OECD membership.

Table 1. SSM Stage and Data Collection Activities

SSM Stage	Description	Data Collection & Analysis Activities
Stage 1–2	Problem situation exploration (unstructured & expressed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted 4 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders • Participated in 3 public discussions on OECD readiness • Analyzed 4 critical policy documents (Presidential & Ministerial Decrees) • Developed rich pictures mapping stakeholder relationships
Stage 3	Root definitions of relevant systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied CATWOE analysis from interview data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers: Indonesian government, citizens, international partners • Actors: Ministry officials, OECD Secretary General • Transformation: Policy alignment with OECD standards • Worldview: OECD membership enhances economic growth • Owner: Decision-makers driving reforms • Environment: Global economic trends, political stability
Stage 4	Building conceptual models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed ideal pathway models for OECD accession • Mapped regulatory framework strengthening requirements • Identified transparency enhancement mechanisms • Modeled stakeholder collaboration structures
Stage 5	Comparing models with reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted gap analysis between ideal models and current conditions • Identified barriers: political resistance, slow regulatory reform • Assessed readiness across governance dimensions • Evaluated policy implementation challenges
Stage 6	Defining feasible & desirable changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesized insights from all data sources • Identified actionable reform priorities • Assessed stakeholder support for proposed changes • Developed implementation timelines
Stage 7	Taking action to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidated findings into policy recommendations • Created comprehensive report for policymakers • Proposed strategic transformation roadmap • Outlined monitoring and evaluation framework

Ethical Approval

This study was conducted in compliance with ethical research standards as evaluated by the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Padjadjaran Bandung. The research, titled *"Indonesian Foreign Policy in International Development Cooperation: A Study on Indonesia's Readiness for OECD Membership,"* proposed by Iwan Ridwan Zaelani, has been thoroughly reviewed and granted ethical exemption under approval number 978/UN6.KEP/EC/2024. The exemption confirms that the study meets the ethical, legal, social, and non-clinical requirements applicable to research involving survey questionnaires, social and cultural studies, and other non-clinical materials.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in this study prior to their participation. Written consent was acquired through signed consent forms, ensuring that participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, their rights, and the confidentiality of their responses. For participants who were unable

to provide written consent due to logistical reasons, verbal consent was obtained and documented through audio recordings with their explicit permission. The research team ensured that all participants were given adequate time to ask questions and withdraw from the study if desired.

RESULT

Based on the interview data, the alignment of Indonesia's strategic goals with its long-term aspirations for OECD membership presents a complex set of challenges. These challenges encompass multi-stakeholder involvement, navigating intricate policy requirements, and balancing international commitments with domestic interests, all while operating under considerable time constraints. The following section provides the unstructured analysis as part of the SSM process, highlighting key issues identified in Stage 1.

Stage 1 Unstructured Problem Situation

Indonesia is taking ambitious steps towards OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) membership as an integral part of its Vision 2045. This strategic endeavor aligns with the nation's aspirations to transform into a high-income developed country by its centennial year of independence. With a target per capita income of \$30,300 by 2045, Indonesia is committed to aligning itself with global economic standards through OECD membership as one of the key catalysts in realizing a Golden Indonesia.

A. Vision 2045 Strategic Alignment

The pursuit of Indonesia's Vision 2045 is central to its ambition to become a high-income, developed nation by the time of its centennial. As one interviewee expressed, "In Vision 2045, we want Indonesia to become a developed country, a high-income nation" (Interview 5). This long-term goal is closely tied to Indonesia's intention to join the OECD, as noted in a focus group discussion: "For Indonesia, its intention to join the OECD is one of the catalysts in preparing for Indonesia 2045 to become a Golden Indonesia" (FGD 1). The broader vision targets a per capita income of \$30,300 by 2045, reinforcing the need for alignment with global economic standards: "This is linked to the vision of achieving a Golden Indonesia where, by 2045, we aim to have a per capita income of around \$30,300" (Interview 3).

B. Multiple Stakeholder Involvement

Indonesia's bid for OECD membership involves a wide range of stakeholders, necessitating effective coordination across government, parliament, private sector, and civil society. A national team has been formed to oversee the preparation and acceleration of Indonesia's OECD accession: "The National Team for the Preparation and Acceleration of Indonesia's OECD Membership" (Interview 1). Parliament also plays a key role, as demonstrated by its participation in the OECD Global Parliamentary Network: "The Indonesian Parliament (DPR RI) is actively participating in the OECD Global Parliamentary Network" (Interview 8). The private sector provides valuable insights into economic realities and market dynamics: "The private sector, for instance, offers insights and feedback on economic realities and market dynamics" (Interview 1), while civil society ensures the process remains transparent and inclusive: "Civil society organizations act as advocates for transparency, accountability, and social inclusiveness" (Interview 1). Managing communication and collaboration among all these actors is a critical task: "We manage communication with all parties, including the government, the business sector, academia, and civil society organizations" (Interview 7).

C. Complex Standards and Policy Requirements

The process of aligning with OECD standards presents significant challenges, as Indonesia must meet a wide array of regulatory requirements. One interviewee highlighted the scale of this task: "There are 200 standards that must be met, and Indonesia has only complied with 15 of them so far" (Interview 4). Beyond meeting these standards, extensive policy reforms are required across 26 different areas: "There will be a considerable amount of work in 26 different policy areas" (Interview 5). Indonesia's regulatory environment, often described as complex, adds to the difficulty of this alignment: "Indonesia can be described as 'the jungle of regulations'—we have regulations for everything" (Interview 3).

D. Balance of International Commitments and Domestic Interests

Balancing international commitments with domestic interests is a delicate issue in Indonesia's OECD accession process. As Indonesia navigates various international agreements, it must also safeguard its national identity and interests. One interviewee stressed the importance of neutrality in international collaborations: "Indonesia must neutralize ideologies and seek non-ideological cooperation agreements" (Interview 4). This approach allows

Indonesia to maintain relationships with both Western countries and those less aligned with Western ideologies: "Indonesia can still foster cooperation with Western countries and those considered opposed to Western ideologies" (Interview 1). Preserving Indonesia's national identity remains a key priority: "We will not abandon our identity and the principles of Indonesia's foreign policy" (Interview 2).

E. Time Pressure and Process Acceleration

The timeline for Indonesia's accession to the OECD is ambitious, with the government aiming for a three-year process: "We want to complete the OECD accession process within three years" (Interview 7). However, there are concerns about the feasibility of this timeline. As one interviewee remarked: "The Indonesian Parliament understands that the Government's plan to join the OECD within three years is quite ambitious" (Interview 8). The reality of the accession process is that it typically takes between three to seven years: "The process of becoming an OECD member is not easy and can take a long time, between three to seven years" (Interview 1).

Stage 2 Structured Problem Situation

The rich picture in Figure 2 illustrates the complex interplay between domestic aspirations, institutional arrangements, and external influences in Indonesia's OECD accession process. This comprehensive visualization encapsulates the multifaceted nature of the policy transformation required for OECD membership while maintaining Indonesia's strategic autonomy. The framework demonstrates several key interconnected dimensions that shape Indonesia's approach to OECD accession.

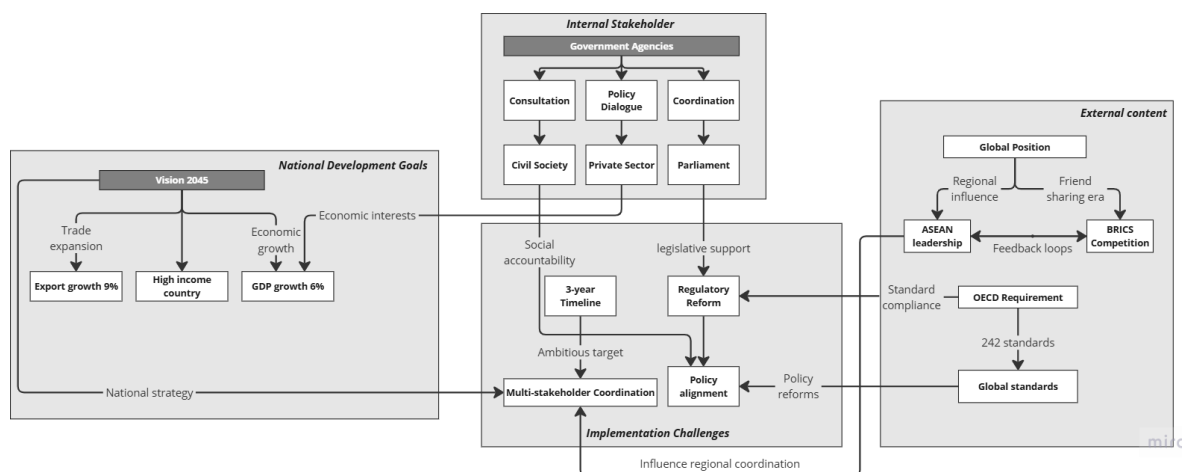


Figure 2. Rich Picture

The framework highlights the complexity of Indonesia's OECD accession process, shaped by interconnected external and internal elements. Externally, Indonesia must align with 242 OECD instruments, forming the foundation for its policy transformation (Interview 1). Its unique position as a developing nation with advanced economy aspirations underscores its ambition to become a distinctive OECD member (Interview 2). Indonesia's role as ASEAN's largest economy further reinforces its regional leadership, necessitating careful navigation of international alignments, such as the juxtaposition of OECD and BRICS (Interviews 4 and 9). Internally, the framework reveals a sophisticated governance and coordination mechanism. The "National Team for Preparation and Acceleration of Indonesia's OECD Membership" reflects strong institutional commitment (Interview 1). Parliamentary involvement is pivotal, particularly in aligning national regulations with OECD standards (Interview 8). Engagement with the private sector and civil society ensures diverse input, with businesses contributing insights on economic realities and civil society advocating for transparency and inclusivity (Interview 1).

The framework aligns closely with Indonesia's Vision 2045, which targets a per capita income of USD30,300 and a minimum economic growth rate of 6% (Interview 3; Interview 4). Sector-specific goals, such as achieving 9% annual growth in manufacturing exports, are integral to this vision (Interview 4), emphasizing the framework's link to broader development goals. In addition, implementation challenges are explicitly acknowledged, including regulatory density described as a "jungle of regulation" (Interview 3) and ambitious temporal targets aiming for completion within three years (Interview 7). Effective stakeholder communication is vital for managing diverse groups, including government, private sector, academia, and community organizations (Interview 7). These challenges highlight the complexity of aligning institutional reforms with strategic objectives.

The framework encapsulates Indonesia’s OECD accession as a strategic transformation initiative rather than a mere technical exercise. It underscores the importance of stakeholder engagement, robust coordination mechanisms, and the balancing of multiple national and international interests. This comprehensive visualization provides a clear picture of how various elements interact, showcasing both the opportunities and challenges in Indonesia’s journey towards OECD membership.

Stage 3 Problem Root Definition

The root definition analysis of Indonesia's OECD accession process reveals four interconnected core systems: OECD Accession Process, Policy Reform Implementation, Economic Transformation, and International Strategic Position. Each system is analyzed through the CATWOE framework (Customers, Actors, Transformation, Worldview, Owners, and Environment), providing a comprehensive understanding of the transformation process required for Indonesia's OECD membership bid. The primary transformation focuses on evolving from the current economic and institutional framework to achieve developed country status by 2045, while ensuring alignment with OECD standards and maintaining strategic autonomy.

The analysis demonstrates the complexity of stakeholder involvement and systemic changes needed across multiple domains. The OECD Accession Process system emphasizes the broad impact on customers ranging from Indonesian citizens to global investors, while the Policy Reform Implementation system highlights the extensive policy alignment required across 242 instruments. The Economic Transformation system focuses on escaping the middle-income trap, and the International Strategic Position system addresses the delicate balance between global integration and maintaining Indonesia's independent foreign policy. Each system's root definition follows the PQR format (What, How, Why), providing clear direction for the transformation process while acknowledging the constraints and opportunities within their respective environmental contexts.

Table 2. Problem Root Definition

Related Unit	Problem Situation	Root Definition	CATWOE
OECD Accession Process	Indonesia needs to transform its economy and institution to meet OECD standards while maintaining its strategic position and national interests	To transform Indonesia's current economic and institutional framework (P) through comprehensive OECD accession process (Q) to achieve developed country status by 2045 (R)	<i>Customers:</i> Indonesian citizens, Business community, Global investors, ASEAN region <i>Actors:</i> Indonesian government, Parliament (DPR), OECD secretariat, Private sector, Civil society, Academia <i>Transformation:</i> From current economic status to OECD-compliant high-income country <i>Worldview:</i> OECD membership as catalyst for Indonesia's 2045 Golden Vision, Development while maintaining independent foreign policy <i>Owners:</i> Indonesian government, OECD member states <i>Environment:</i> Global economic conditions, Geopolitical dynamics, Regional interests
Policy Reform Implementation	Need to align 242 policy instruments with OECD standards while maintaining national sovereignty	To reform domestic policies and regulations (P) through systematic policy alignment process (Q) to meet OECD standards while protecting national interests (R)	<i>Customers:</i> Government agencies, Business sector, Indonesian public <i>Actors:</i> National ministries, Parliament, Regulatory bodies, Policy experts <i>Transformation:</i> From current policy framework to OECD-aligned system <i>Worldview:</i> Policy reform as key to development, Balance between international standards and national interests <i>Owners:</i> Indonesian government, Parliament <i>Environment:</i> Domestic political conditions, Regulatory complexity, Institutional capacity
Economic Transformation	Need to accelerate economic growth and escape middle-income trap through OECD membership	To enhance Indonesia's economic capabilities (P) through implementation of OECD best practices (Q) to achieve high-income country status (R)	<i>Customers:</i> Domestic businesses, Foreign investors, Indonesian workforce <i>Actors:</i> Economic ministries, Central bank, Financial institutions, Business associations <i>Transformation:</i> From middle-income to high-income economy <i>Worldview:</i> Economic transformation as path to development, OECD standards driving growth <i>Owners:</i> Economic policymakers, Government leadership

Related Unit	Problem Situation	Root Definition	CATWOE
			<i>Environment:</i> Global market conditions, Investment climate, Economic competitiveness
International Strategic Position	Need to maintain strategic autonomy and balanced position while pursuing OECD membership	To strengthen Indonesia's global position (P) through strategic OECD membership (Q) while maintaining independent foreign policy (R)	<p><i>Customers:</i> Indonesian diplomatic corps, International partners, Regional allies</p> <p><i>Actors:</i> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic missions, International organizations</p> <p><i>Transformation:</i> From regional to global player while maintaining autonomy</p> <p><i>Worldview:</i> Strategic balance between West and East, Independent foreign policy</p> <p><i>Owners:</i> Foreign policy leadership, President</p> <p><i>Environment:</i> Global geopolitics, Regional dynamics, International alliances</p>

Conceptual Model

The framework in Figure 3 provides a structured and comprehensive approach to Indonesia's OECD accession process, emphasizing the integration of strategic planning and operational execution. It begins with foundational critical success factors, such as political commitment, resource availability, stakeholder buy-in, and international support, which align national priorities with OECD obligations (Anderson & Wilson, 2024). The hierarchical structure ensures clarity in the relationships between components while maintaining strategic flexibility through feedback mechanisms (Thompson et al., 2025). Building on these foundations, the assessment mechanism layer evaluates readiness across geopolitical, economic, capacity, and policy dimensions. This multi-faceted approach enables thorough gap analysis and alignment of strategic plans with OECD requirements, ensuring a holistic evaluation of internal capabilities and external positioning factors. The systematic assessment captures complex accession requirements and provides a strong basis for actionable strategies (Davis, 2023).

Furthermore, the strategic implementation component bridges assessment findings with actionable plans, addressing strategic, implementation, and policy gaps. This tripartite approach ensures comprehensive coverage while maintaining a focus on targeted interventions. By aligning identified gaps with specific strategies, the framework ensures a seamless transition from analysis to implementation, demonstrating operational relevance (White, 2023). Stakeholder engagement serves as a critical connection between planning and execution. By categorizing stakeholders into international, external, and internal groups, the framework enables targeted strategies and effective communication channels (Sheppard & Beck, 2022). This structured engagement approach ensures inclusive participation and enhances coordination, which is vital for maintaining strategic alignment and addressing the complex socio-political environment of OECD accession (Miller et al., 2020).

The monitoring system acts as an overarching feedback mechanism, supporting continuous improvement and strategic alignment through adaptation, impact evaluation, and progress tracking. This feedback loop allows for evidence-based adjustments and policy refinements, ensuring the process remains adaptive and coherent (Wilson, 2025). The combination of quantitative and qualitative monitoring enhances holistic performance assessment and real-time strategy optimization (Thompson et al., 2025). The framework integrates critical success factors, systematic assessment, strategic implementation, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive monitoring to provide a robust roadmap for Indonesia's OECD accession. Its comprehensive structure ensures practical applicability, operational alignment, and strategic coherence throughout the process.

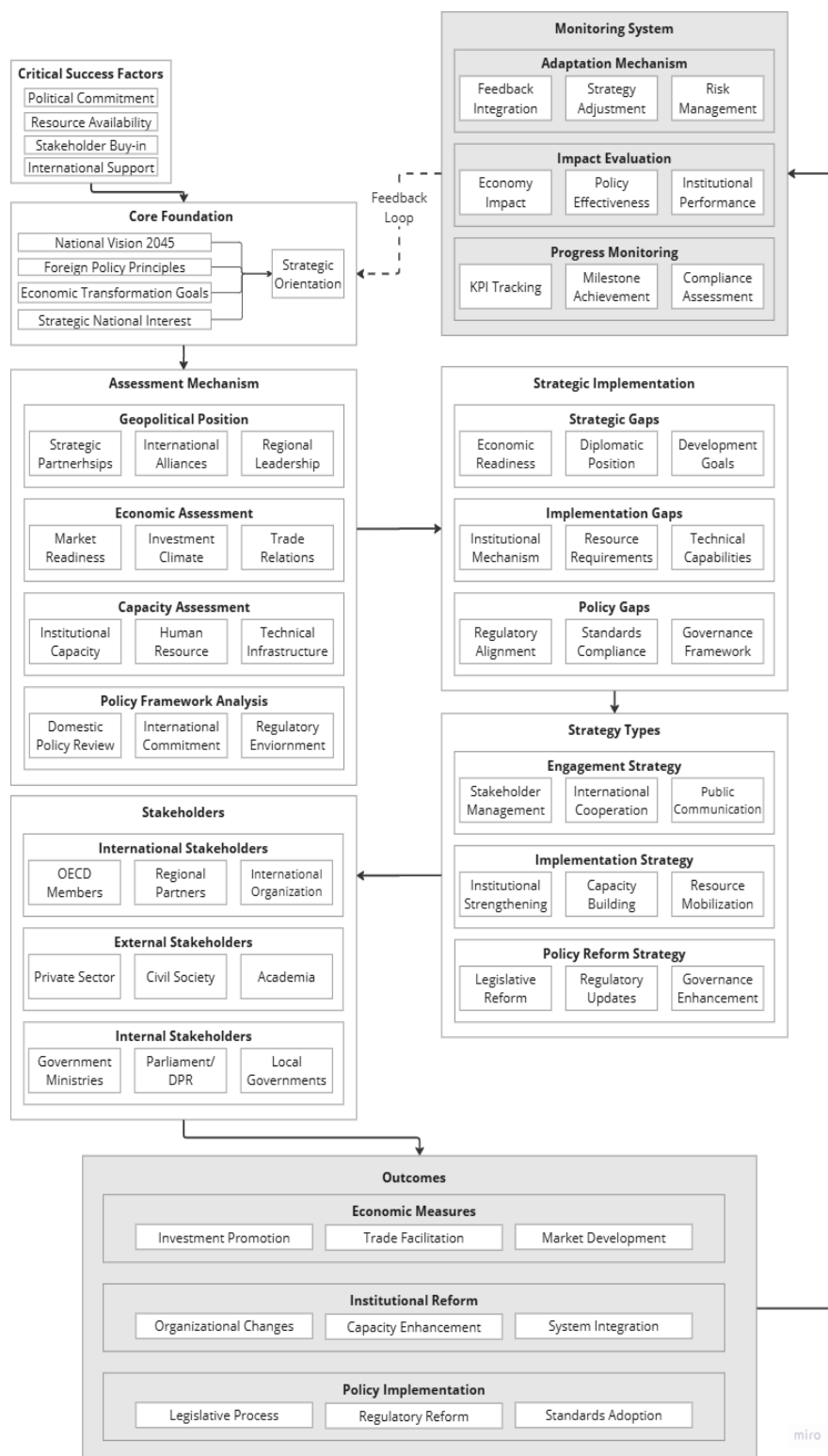


Figure 3. Indonesia OECD Accession Gap Analysis Framework

Comparison with Reality: Current Challenges

The comparison between conceptual models and reality reveals significant gaps in Indonesia's OECD accession preparedness across multiple dimensions. One of the most pressing challenges is the ambitious timeline set for OECD accession, with a senior parliamentarian noting that "The Parliament understands that the government's plan to join OECD in 3 years is ambitious" (Interview 8). This concern is further reinforced by historical precedent, as emphasized by one senior official: "The process of becoming an OECD member is not easy and can take a long time, between three to seven years" (Interview 1). Drawing from the experience of other nations, as noted in FGD 3, "Chile and Colombia needed around 5-7 years to complete their accession process."

To systematically assess Indonesia's current readiness for OECD accession, a comprehensive analysis was conducted across seven key areas: time constraints, regulatory environment, multi-stakeholder coordination, policy balance, institutional readiness, economic preparation, and public support. Table 3 presents these challenges along with their current implementation status and supporting evidence from key stakeholder interviews. The implementation status is classified into four categories: "IN PROGRESS" indicating active implementation is underway, "PLANNED" to signify formally planned initiatives that have not yet been implemented, "NOT STARTED" denoting areas where no substantial action has been taken, and "AT RISK" highlighting aspects that face significant challenges or concerns. This classification system provides a clear and nuanced picture of Indonesia's preparation journey, allowing for identification of both progress and areas requiring immediate attention. The evidence gathered from stakeholder interviews adds depth to this assessment, offering insights into the practical challenges and considerations at each stage of the accession process.

Table 3. Current Challenges

Area of Challenge	Current Status	Supporting Evidence
Time Constraints		
Accession timeline (3-year target)	AT RISK	"The Parliament understands that the government's plan to join OECD in 3 years is ambitious"
Initial accession stages	IN PROGRESS	"The process has been very fast, we only submitted our intention in July 2023"
Initial Memorandum preparation	IN PROGRESS	"Currently preparing Initial Memorandum, which contains self-assessment from around 26 sectors"
Regulatory Environment		
OECD standards compliance	NOT STARTED	"Out of 200 standards that need to be met, Indonesia only fulfills 15 of them"
Regulatory harmonization	NOT STARTED	"We are the jungle of regulation, we have regulations for everything"
Legal framework adjustment	PLANNED	"Parliament plays a strategic role in creating or revising laws to align with OECD standards"
Multi-stakeholder Coordination		
National Team establishment	IN PROGRESS	"National Team for Preparation and Acceleration of Indonesia's OECD Membership has been formed"
Project Management Office	PLANNED	"A dedicated Project Management Office for OECD will be established"
Digital coordination system	PLANNED	"Digitizing all processes so all parties involved in OECD can get symmetrical information"
Policy Balance		
International standards integration	NOT STARTED	"By fulfilling all international requirements or standards, there will automatically be improvements across all sectors"
Foreign policy alignment	IN PROGRESS	"We will not abandon our identity and principles of Indonesian foreign policy"
Domestic interests protection	IN PROGRESS	"Indonesia must balance domestic interests with international standards in the accession process"
Institutional Readiness		
Bureaucratic reforms	NOT STARTED	"Need to improve institutional capacity, enhance corruption control, improve regulatory quality"
Parliamentary oversight	IN PROGRESS	"Parliament consistently monitors the OECD accession process"
Inter-ministerial coordination	IN PROGRESS	"Process involves more than 20 ministries and institutions in Indonesia"
Economic Preparation		
Growth target achievement	NOT STARTED	"Indonesia needs economic growth target of minimum 6%"
Manufacturing export standards	NOT STARTED	"Indonesia must be able to drive exports minimum 9% year-on-year in Manufacturing"
Investment grade improvement	PLANNED	"Improving our Investment Grade is still a target"
Public Support		
Public awareness	NOT STARTED	No explicit evidence of public awareness programs

Area of Challenge	Current Status	Supporting Evidence
Private sector engagement	IN PROGRESS	"Have not found anyone opposing joining the organization"
Academic involvement	IN PROGRESS	"Involving business sector, academia, and civil society organizations"

Indonesia faces multifaceted challenges in its pursuit of OECD accession, with the regulatory environment emerging as one of the most significant hurdles. Despite needing to comply with 200 OECD standards, Indonesia currently meets only 15 (Interview 4). The regulatory landscape is characterized as a "jungle of regulation" (Interview 3), underscoring its complexity. Harmonizing these regulations with OECD standards requires coordination across more than 20 ministries, each with distinct frameworks and timelines. While the establishment of a National Team for Preparation and Acceleration demonstrates an awareness of these challenges, implementation is still in its infancy. This aligns with Clifton and Díaz-Fuentes's (2014) observation that emerging economies often face difficulties aligning domestic regulatory frameworks with international standards.

In parallel, Indonesia's economic readiness presents another critical area requiring transformation. To achieve OECD standards, the country needs a minimum of 6% economic growth and a 9% annual increase in manufacturing exports (Interview 4). These goals are integral to Indonesia's Vision 2045, which aims to elevate the nation from middle-income status to a high-income country, achieving a GNI of USD30,300 by 2045 (FGD 2). However, this transformation must occur alongside maintaining investment grade improvements and addressing disparities across Indonesia's regions. Anderson and Wilson (2024) emphasize that economic prerequisites, such as these, are vital for OECD accession, making this a pivotal yet complex area of reform.

Compounding these challenges is the need to balance policy autonomy with OECD alignment, reflecting what Sheppard and Beck (2022) term the "sovereignty-compliance paradox." Indonesia is committed to maintaining its national identity and independent foreign policy principles (Interview 2), even as it works to align with international standards. This balancing act is further complicated by the need to manage relationships not only with OECD member states but also with ASEAN and other emerging economies. These dual commitments highlight Indonesia's unique position as a developing nation aspiring to join the OECD. The implementation of these reforms faces additional barriers, particularly in public engagement. Despite the critical role of societal support in successful policy transformations, Indonesia's outreach efforts remain underdeveloped. Public communication is further challenged by the country's vast and diverse population, spread across thousands of islands, making systematic engagement a daunting task.

Institutional capacity also requires significant strengthening to support these reforms. Enhancing corruption control, regulatory quality, and overall governance mechanisms is essential, but these efforts must be balanced with maintaining uninterrupted government operations (Thompson et al., 2025). Achieving such reforms demands not only technical compliance but also cultural and operational shifts within institutions (White, 2023). As a nation from the Global South, Indonesia faces the additional challenge of positioning itself strategically within the OECD, while aligning these efforts with its broader development aspirations (Interview 2). Indonesia's OECD accession journey involves addressing deeply entrenched regulatory challenges, achieving ambitious economic targets, balancing national sovereignty with compliance, enhancing institutional capacity, and fostering public engagement. Each of these dimensions is interconnected, requiring a comprehensive and coordinated approach to navigate the complexities of reform and transformation.

Feasible & Desirable Changes

Based on the comparison with reality, several feasible and desirable changes have been identified to address Indonesia's OECD accession challenges. The proposed changes are evaluated across five critical dimensions: ease of implementation, resource requirements, political support, urgency, and strategic value. Each dimension is assessed using standardized criteria to ensure consistent evaluation, with implementation ease categorized as "EASY" (minimal obstacles), "MODERATE" (some challenges), or "CHALLENGING" (significant complexity). These changes are organized into five major initiatives, each targeting specific aspects of the accession process.

Table 4 presents a comprehensive assessment of these change initiatives, highlighting both their implementation requirements and strategic importance. Among these initiatives, the establishment of a Project Management Office (PMO) emerges as a foundational change, with its central unit deemed critical and requiring immediate attention despite moderate implementation challenges and high resource demands. This initiative is complemented by operational frameworks and monitoring systems that show more favorable implementation conditions while maintaining high strategic significance.

Table 4. Feasible and Desirable Changes

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation	Resource Requirements	Political Support	Urgency	Strategic Value
Establish Project Management Office					
Central PMO Unit	MODERATE	HIGH	STRONG	IMMEDIATE	CRITICAL
Operational Framework	MODERATE	MODERATE	STRONG	HIGH	HIGH
Monitoring System	EASY	MODERATE	STRONG	HIGH	HIGH
Digitalize Coordination Process					
Digital Platform	CHALLENGING	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH	HIGH
Data Integration	CHALLENGING	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH
Information System	MODERATE	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH	CRITICAL
Strengthen Parliamentary Involvement					
Oversight Mechanism	EASY	LOW	STRONG	MODERATE	HIGH
Legislative Support	EASY	LOW	STRONG	HIGH	CRITICAL
International Network	MODERATE	MODERATE	STRONG	MODERATE	MODERATE
Enhance Public-Private Dialogue					
Stakeholder Forums	MODERATE	MODERATE	STRONG	HIGH	CRITICAL
Private Sector Engagement	MODERATE	MODERATE	STRONG	HIGH	HIGH
Academic Partnership	EASY	LOW	STRONG	MODERATE	HIGH
Maintain Policy Autonomy					
Standards Alignment	CHALLENGING	MODERATE	STRONG	HIGH	CRITICAL
Policy Balance	CHALLENGING	MODERATE	STRONG	HIGH	CRITICAL
National Interest Protection	MODERATE	MODERATE	STRONG	HIGH	CRITICAL

The analysis highlights key patterns in Indonesia's proposed changes for OECD accession, emphasizing both challenges and strategic opportunities. Digitalization efforts are particularly critical but face significant resource and implementation barriers. These include the need for advanced technical infrastructure and expertise to achieve symmetrical information sharing across all stakeholders (Interview 3). In contrast, parliamentary involvement initiatives show the most favorable implementation conditions due to low resource demands and strong political support. Parliament's role in creating or revising laws to align with OECD standards is seen as a strategic early-stage priority (Anglmayer & Scherrer, 2020; Interview 8). Public-private dialogue mechanisms offer a balanced approach, with moderate implementation challenges but high strategic value, especially in fostering stakeholder forums and private sector engagement (Sheppard & Beck, 2022).

The challenge of maintaining policy autonomy is one of the most complex aspects of reform. Indonesia must balance alignment with international standards while safeguarding national interests, reflecting the sovereignty-

compliance tension highlighted by Karim (2021). High urgency ratings across these components underscore their critical role, with policymakers emphasizing the importance of preserving Indonesia's identity and principles of foreign policy throughout the process (Interviews 2 and 5).

A consistent pattern across all initiatives is the strong political support, which creates a favorable environment for reform despite varying technical and resource demands (Wilson, 2025). The involvement of over 20 ministries and institutions demonstrates broad institutional commitment, reinforcing the interconnected nature of these reforms, where progress in one area often drives success in others (Interview 1; White, 2023). This interconnectedness calls for careful sequencing and prioritization, beginning with initiatives that are both strategically important and feasible to implement, while building capacity for more complex changes.

In addition, strategic value ratings show that even the most challenging reforms are essential for accession, reflecting Indonesia's unique position as a developing nation aspiring to become a developed OECD member (Anderson & Wilson, 2024; Interview 2). A phased implementation approach is recommended, combining realistic capacity-building efforts with ambitious targets. This ensures alignment with Indonesia's Vision 2045, including achieving per capita income of US\$30,300, while strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing corruption control, and improving regulatory quality (Davis, 2023; Interview 3). This structured framework balances practical constraints with strategic imperatives, providing decision-makers with a clear roadmap for reform. It ensures the proposed changes are both ambitious enough to meet OECD requirements and realistic within Indonesia's current institutional and resource capacities.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Indonesia's OECD accession journey through Soft Systems Methodology reveals a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities that must be carefully navigated to achieve successful membership. The study identifies significant gaps between Indonesia's current policy framework and OECD standards, particularly in areas of regulatory harmonization, institutional capacity, and economic readiness. While Indonesia demonstrates strong political commitment to the accession process, as evidenced by the establishment of dedicated coordination mechanisms and broad stakeholder support, the ambitious three-year timeline for accession appears challenging given the scope of required reforms. The research shows that successful OECD accession will require not just technical compliance with standards but fundamental transformations in governance structures and policy implementation mechanisms.

Looking forward, Indonesia's path to OECD membership represents a critical test case for how emerging economies can effectively engage with international standards while maintaining their strategic autonomy and national identity. The proposed framework for managing this transition, emphasizing the establishment of a Project Management Office, digitalization of coordination processes, and enhancement of public-private dialogue, provides a structured approach to addressing the identified challenges. However, the success of these initiatives will depend heavily on sustained political commitment, effective resource allocation, and the ability to balance international requirements with domestic interests. The findings suggest that while the path to OECD membership presents significant challenges, a carefully managed, phased approach to implementation, coupled with strong stakeholder engagement and clear strategic vision, can enable Indonesia to successfully navigate this complex transformation process while maintaining its distinctive role as a developing nation pursuing advanced economy status.

RESEARCH IMPLICATION

This study provides significant theoretical and practical implications for understanding how developing nations navigate complex international policy alignment processes. Theoretically, the research extends SSM application to international policy contexts, demonstrating its effectiveness in analyzing multi-stakeholder challenges and bridging domestic-international policy requirements while contributing to foreign policy analysis literature by enhancing understanding of how developing nations maintain strategic autonomy while pursuing international standards alignment—particularly valuable for academics studying the intersection of domestic governance and international coordination in developing economies. Practically, the research offers policymakers a structured implementation framework for managing complex policy transformations including stakeholder engagement tools and progress monitoring metrics, highlighting critical needs for institutional capacity building and digital transformation in policy coordination while informing comprehensive reform strategies and effective inter-agency coordination mechanisms. These implications are especially relevant for countries pursuing similar international alignments, demonstrating how international standards can be adapted to local contexts while maintaining national interests

through integrated approaches that balance technical compliance with institutional development, supported by strong stakeholder engagement and sustainable capacity-building initiatives.

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