

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF INDONESIAN LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS IN MAINTAINING CONSTITUENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the political communication strategies employed by Dra. Hj. Eni Khairani, a member of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) from Bengkulu, in maintaining her position for four consecutive terms. The study highlights three main strategies: character building, fostering togetherness, and building consensus. Through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, the study reveals how effective political communication, including direct interaction with constituents, fact-based messaging, and the establishment of compromise among political stakeholders, has played a key role in her sustained success. The findings offer valuable insights into political communication in Indonesia, particularly within the context of maintaining voter support and navigating political dynamics.

KEYWORDS Political communication, constituent maintenance, consensus building, Indonesian politics, legislative strategy



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INTRODUCTION

Political communication has an important role in the political process as a bridge for conveying messages that influence political behavior. Credibility and expertise are two main factors in the political communication of a figure. Credibility is not something inherent in the communicator, but in the audience's perception of him. According to Hovland and Wiss, credibility consists of the expertise and level of public trust in the communicator. Expertise relates to the impression formed in the public mind about a politician's ability to understand and convey political issues (Mulyana & Pengantar, 2010; Purnama, 2019).

The position of a member of the legislature is a mandate from the people to channel their aspirations in parliament. In a democratic system, there is no limit for someone to run for a seat in the legislature, as long as they have the support of the

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people (Manan et al., 2021). To gain and maintain this position, a candidate must win an election through various political strategies. Research on how legislative candidates win elections has become an interesting topic, with many studies highlighting winning strategies. Once elected, council members can maintain their constituents through various means such as media coverage, face-to-face meetings, and other social activities (Margaretha & Putra, 2019).

The election of legislative candidates is part of a democratic system that allows the people to elect their representatives in the functions of supervision, channeling aspirations, and policy making. Ahead of the 2024 elections, each legislative candidate uses a political communication strategy to attract public attention. The success team plays an important role in determining the candidate's victory with various campaign efforts. The election result depends on getting the most votes, which is greatly influenced by the political communication strategy implemented by the candidates (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

The Regional Representative Council (DPD) of the Republic of Indonesia is an institution that bridges the interests of the central and regional governments and fights for the aspirations of the community in national policies. DPD members come from various electoral districts in Indonesia, with a composition of incumbents and new faces that changes every period. The process of political communication of DPD members is carried out in various ways, such as direct delivery of aspirations, gathering of public opinion, and field visits. However, the effectiveness of this communication is still a challenge, because often the decisions taken do not fully reflect the aspirations of the community (Merisa & Hasan, 2021). One example of a DPD member who has managed to maintain his position is Eni Khairani from Bengkulu, who has won several elections with an effective political communication strategy (Tubbs & Moss, 2005; Umagapi, 2020).

Based on this background, the author is interested in exploring in more depth how the communication strategy of the Legislative Member of DPD RI for the Bengkulu Province Electoral District, Dra. Hj. Eni Khairani, M.Si, in defending her position as a Member of DPD RI for the Bengkulu Province Electoral District. So the author conducted research entitled: "Communication Strategy of the Legislative Member of the Republic of Indonesia in Maintaining Constituents".

This study aims to examine the political communication strategy applied by the legislative member of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia for the Bengkulu Province Electoral District, Dra. Hj. Eni Khairani, M.Si, in maintaining her constituents. The main focus of the research is to understand how the communication strategy that is applied is able to maintain her position as a council member for four consecutive periods. Thus, this research not only reveals effective political communication patterns but also provides deeper insights into the techniques and approaches used in maintaining relationships with voters.

This research has theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of political science, especially in the study of political communication strategies in elections. In addition, the results of this study can also be an academic reference for the development of political communication science. Practically, this research can be a reference for the community and academics who are interested in understanding political communication strategies and providing insights for other researchers who want to study electoral issues, especially related to the use of communication strategies in winning and maintaining voter support.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative methods to understand the political communication strategy of DPD RI legislator Dra. Hj. Eni Khairani, M.Si, in looking after her constituents. Qualitative methods allow researchers to explore social phenomena in depth through descriptions of words and reports from informants (Sugiyono, 2016). This research will be conducted directly in the field by observing and analyzing the communication strategy used by Eni Khairani. The technique for determining informants uses the purposive sampling method, where the main informant is Eni Khairani, while the key informants include the winning team, expert staff, member assistants, and the community. Informants were selected based on their understanding of the research issue and their willingness to be interviewed and provide accurate information (Moleong, 2014).

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation to strengthen the validity of the research. Interviews were conducted with key informants and key informants to obtain comprehensive information. The observation technique was used to directly observe political communication activities carried out in the field, while documentation included searching for written archives such as books, journals, and related articles (Sugiyono, 2013). Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To ensure the validity of the data, this study used source triangulation, which is comparing the results of interviews, observations, and related documents. With this approach, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of effective political communication strategies in maintaining constituent support.

RESULT AND

Results

The success of Mrs. Eni Khairani became a DPD RI member from Bengkulu for 4 (four) periods is an interesting thing to do research on, especially research related to how the political communication strategy implemented in facing the the

election of members of Regional Representative Council of Bengkulu Province for 4 (four) periods.

To find out and explore the political communication strategies carried out by Mrs. Eni Khairani and teamher winning, the author quotes the opinion of Anwar Arifin (2011) in Political Communication-philosophy-paradigm-theory-purpose-strategy and Indonesian which political communication explains that Political Communication Strategies include:

a. Personality and

1. Caring for fame
2. institutionalize

b. Creating togetherness.

1. Understanding the audience
2. Compose a persuasive message
3. Establishing the method
4. Selecting and sorting media

c. Building consensus

1. The Art of Compromise
2. Willing to open up

As for the results of the research, it can be seen that the application of political communication strategies based on the above theory, others:

a. Regarding stature,

Rakhmat (2005) mentions that fame can be equated with ethos, which is considered a combination of credibility, attraction, and power. The most ethos relevant dimension of is, credibilitywhich explains the expertise of the communicator (leader) and our trust in him.

Identification occurs when an individual takes on a form of behavior that originated with with another person or group because he or she feels the behavior is associated satisfyingly self-defining relationship with that other person or group. For example, identification occurs when a child models his his teacher's father's behavior, a student mimics actions, or a fan dress like his idol. From that simple example we can see that the dimension of ethos most relevant to identification is attraction, which is the appeal of the communicator or leader.

The next point is submission, which will occur when individuals accept the influence of a person or group due to the desire to get a pleasant reaction from that person or group. This means that he has a desire to get rewards or even avoid punishment from those who influence him. For example, in the New Order regime, civil servants entered Golkar because they were afraid of being dismissed. This dimension of characterization related to submission is called power.

Aristoles, since 200 years ago, has emphasized how important a speaker's personal factors are in applying rhetoric, which specifically intersects with the

character traits that he called later ethos or what is often interpreted as communicator credibility, namely communicators who can be trusted. Hovland and Wiss in Ardial (2005) state that credibility or ethos consists of two components, namely: (1) expertise and (2) trustworthiness.

In summary, the expertise of political communicators depends on: 1) Ability and expertise regarding the messages delivered, 2) ability and skills to present messages in the sense of choosing themes, methods and mediapolitical. Trust is an impression formed in the audience towards a political communicator that has to do with his charactercharacter.

Politicians, activists, or professionals in this case are judged based on morality, such as honestydecency, sincerity and others. If the leader has three things (credibility, attraction, power) as described in the paragraph above, then his or her figurehead can be also called a political leader. In political communication, especially political rhetoric in front of the masses, basically the audience will pay attention to who the political figure is rather than the political message conveyed. This proves that characterization is very important in political communication.

Mrs. Eni Khairani and her winning team always maintain silturahmi with community leaders, religious leaders, traditional leaders and other figures, silturahmi is always done well with these figures by always visiting when conducting work visits, absorbing aspirations, socialization and other official activities. This can be seen from the interview excerpt with Mrs. Eni Khairani, who emphasized that related to the character, among others:

"As as a much as possible, regional representative, we must always be able to maintain communication and friendship with the the eldersboth during official visits to electoral district and when receiving his arrival in Jakarta."

From the interview excerpt, it that is very clear Mrs. Eni Khairani really maintains political communication both with the community in her electoral district and with the leaders in her electoral district.

"In addition to maintaining communication and friendship with the elders, of course it is also done to listen to various complaints felt by the surrounding community both directly and those whose aspirations are entrusted through the elders".

More clearly, Eni Khairani said that the necessity of maintaining political communication both with the people in her electoral electoral elder district and with the leaders in her district is also in the context of conveying information or socialization of various various government programs as well as listening to input / complaints from communities in region the electoral district both directly and aspirations left to the in the.

This was also reinforced by the winning team, Mr. Rosidin and Mr. Usman, who said that Mrs. Eni Khairani, in principle, every regional visit is always scheduled to meet with community leaders.

"We have scheduled the mother to always go to the field to see up close the condition of the community in her constituency, as for the schedule to adjust the mother's activities, both official and recess activities"

From the interview above, organizationally Mrs. Eni Khairani visit has been indeed scheduled and adjusted to the flexibility of time and conditions by creating momentum in addition to maintaining silaturahmi with the leaders as well as with the community in her constituency

The winning team of Mrs. Eni Khairani always schedules Mrs. Eni Khairani's activities well, where communication with leaders, communities and youth elements is as in the always inserted photo above where Mrs. Eni Khairani is scheduled to be a speaker with students at University Muhamdiyah Bengkulu with material on the socialization of Pancasila values

Thus, the existence of a winning team is also very crucial in organizing schedules, organizing meetings, making meeting themes, taking notes and others. In this regard, Ms. Eni Khairani did not institutionalize the winning team.

Related to Strengthening institutions, Arifin Anwar (2011) emphasizes that the institution in question is a forum for cooperation of several people to achieve common goals. It can be understood that in the world of politics, institutions can be perceived in the form of political partiesparliaments, and governments or bureaucracies, besides that non-political institutions basically also have political power that really needs to be considered and treated for the achievement of political goals.

In the context of achieving political goals, Arifin Anwar (2011) explains that institutions also have human-like characteristics including externals, personality and activities. Therefore, institutions are also perceived by the public so that the institution's self-image is the built, be it the self-image of political parties, self-image the self-image of parliament and of the bureaucracy.

As above, in our deepening it is known that Mrs. Eni Khairani in the institutional context always maintains a positive relationship with both political parties, parliament and bureaucracy. In addition, the existence of Mrs. Eni Khairani's winning team is also very crucial in arranging schedules, organizing meetings, making meeting themes, taking notes and others. In this regard, Mrs. Eni Eni Khairani Khairani specifically did not create institutions or institutionalize the winning teamteam, but the winning could bring closer Mrs. Eni Khairani with existing institutions including political parties, parliament and bureaucracy as well as other non-party institutions.



Ms. Eni Khairani's Agenda with Aisiyyah Bengkulu Organization

From the picture above, it is clear that the efforts of the winning team in strengthening the relationship between Mrs. Eni Khairani and institutions outside the Party, Parliament and Bureaucracy are also massive and measurable. The ability of the winning team in an effort to build and strengthen the character has been tested considering that the winning team is filled with people who were directly selected by Mrs. Eni Khairani and have been indeed following for a long time so that positive chemistry can be found in carrying out each task assigned. This is in line with what was conveyed by Mr. Rosidin that:

"Mom did not institutionalize the winning team from the beginning on the grounds that was it easier it easier for to to move and not from isolated the community, making us enter various communitiesthis is where we consider one of the important keys to the strength of mother's communication"

The ability of the Winning Team in strengthening the character of Mrs. Eni Khairani and maintaining the role of existing institutions is also of the onekeys to success that makes Mrs. Eni Khairani as a DPD Member of Bengkulu Province Representative for 4 (four) consecutive periods.

As it is known by the public that the public highly appreciates institutions that can fulfill their needs interests, thus the positive image of an institution is greatly influenced by the ability of the institution to fight for aspirations and meet the needs of the community itself.

Thus, it can be understood that the efforts of the winning team in sorting out institutions that can support and raise the stature strategy of Mrs. Eni Khairani is an appropriate so that it is very worthy of appreciation considering that the efforts made by the winning team are considered capable of being able to maintaining

stature and being able to glue the relationship between Mrs. Eni Khairani and institutions that are perceived by the public as provide and fulfill the needs of the community.

b. Creating Togetherness

In the context of creating togetherness, Arifin Anwar (2011) explains that political communication is aimed at audiences (communities) or individuals who always interact with other individuals in a container or institution called society. More specifically, Arifin Anwar (2011) explains that to recognize and understand the psychological, social, cultural, economic and political conditions of the audience can be done through orientation, survey exploration, or initial research, so that a more careful identification of the public can be done.

Based on the results of interviews with Mrs. Eni Khairani related to creating togetherness, especially understanding the audience information can be obtained:

"We do continue to maintain friendship with various groups in the Bengkulu Region, both during visits, recess periods or campaign activities, the Team has conducted an assessment, or a small survey to find out the depth in the field, oh yes we also do not use public consultants or national survey institutions, but we empower the Team more, considering that we have worked for more than 15 years, so that these things become the understanding of each individual in the Team."

From the above context, it can be understood that what was actually done by Mrs. Eni Khairani was a winning team in understanding the audience in accordance with the steps to the audience as described by Arifin Anwar. The winning team can take an approach in an effort to understand the audience more carefully, the accuracy of identifying the public can be known more modern a person's life is, the his reference group and the wider the scope of his reference, and vice versa the more the traditional a person's life will be the smaller the group and closer or stronger the relationship with his group.

In this section the initial explanation of audiences is about the masses that can be referred to as audiences or groups of individuals in interacting and interrelating with other individuals. Audiences, in this section, are not passive at all, but instead appear to be active (in Arifin, 2003, p.155). Audiences actually determine the form and content of the messages they want to receive from political communicators.

Based on the psychological paradigm, the psychological components that must be recognized and have a strong influence on the audience are beliefs or ideology, including religion and tradition. In addition, other elements such as the needs and motivations of individuals who will later become political audiences also need to be understood, as does the knowledge and ability of audiences in their need to access political messages.

Furthermore, it is also mentioned that this is related to the condition of the audience's personality and physical, which consists of three things, namely: 1) the audience's knowledge of the subject matter, 2) the audience's ability to receive messages through the media used, and 3) the audience's knowledge, especially the vocabulary used. In addition to what has been described above, there are other factors that need to be understood, namely the form of group and community influence, values and norms in the existing group or society, and the situation in which the group is located. In this regard, there are three forms of group influence mentioned, namely: (1) attention area, (2) public area and (3) sentiment area,

The results of the interview with Mrs. Eni Khairani above related to creating togetherness, also especially understanding the audience are reinforced by the results of Mr. Rosidin's interview:

"We as the winning team have conducted an assessment, or a small survey to find out the sociological conditions of the community, what their needs, problems and desires are"

Mrs. Eni Khairani's agenda in listening to residents' complaints



The photo above illustrates that Mrs. Eni Khairani listens to complaints and input from the community. This can be done well, of course, with the winning team first exploring the sociological situation of the condition of the community's problems in the area.

In addition to understanding the audience, there are stages of compiling persuasive messages that are more specifically explained by Arifin Anwar (2011),

namely what must be considered in building persuasive political messages is the awakening of attention from the audience to the political messages conveyed and then moving a person or crowd to carry out an activity according to the goals formulated so that the audience has the desire to accept the message stimulated by the communicator and finally make a decision to practice it in an action.

In addition, it should also be noted that the message that raises attention is a message that is easy to obtain and therefore the message must be seen in contrast to other messages. Thus, it can be understood that political communication messages must be easily obtained by the audience because in some of the same problems people always choose the easiest ones that do not take too much energy and look contrasting compared to other messages.

The long-lasting attention of the public is also not only based on the ease and contrast of persuasive messages but also the quality of the content of these messages. For this reason, the quality of political messages must also adjust the conditions of the audience and must be able to meet their needs. For this reason, political communication that is built to change the attitude of the audience must be based on a positive message conception and not use a negative message style or communication model

The most important part is the preparation of persuasive political messages by determining themes and materials properly. Its implementation involves the attention of the audience to the political messages delivered. Schramm (in Arifin, 2003, p.89) proposes several conditions for the success of the message, namely: 1) Messages must be planned and delivered in various ways in order to attract audiences. 2) The that message is expressed through signs have been recognized by the audience and the communicator itself, 3) Messages should be also able to arouse personal needs in each target, as well as provide advice that can achieve goals, 4) The message includes suggestions for the audience in obtaining their needs. These four conditions basically only consist of intensity and subject matter. In the application of political communication, a political message content can only attract attention if there is a fulfillment of personal and group needs. On the other hand, a political message can also only attract attention if it basically triggers expectations or results that are relevant to a need.



Ms. Eni Khairani's agenda in delivering political messages

In the on section determining methods, Arifin Anwar (2011) explains that to achieve the objectives of political communication is to choose the appropriate method of conveying and the method of preparing the content of political messages, while the selection of this media method must be also adjusted to the form of the message the state of the audience, facilities and costs.

Anwar Arifin outlines six political communication methods that can be used according to the conditions and situation of the audience. First, redundancy or repetition, which is the continuous repetition of political messages to make them easier to remember, although it risks causing boredom. Second, canalizing, which is adjusting political messages to the motives, attitudes, and personalities of the audience to make them easier to accept. Third, informative, where communicators convey facts, data and information that can guide public opinion. Fourth, persuasive, which aims to persuade audiences to accept political messages without critical thinking by creating a situation conducive to suggestion. Fifth, educative, which is an educational method by conveying facts, opinions, and experiences that can be accounted for to slowly change the views of the audience. Sixth, coercive, which is coercive by conveying threats or rules backed by certain forces, often used in the form of government regulations or intimidation.

With regard to methods, the interview with Mrs. Eni Khairani above obtained information:

"We for several periods have been directly door to door visiting the community to go down to the field to understand the problems in addition to introducing our good intentions going forward, we have done this method for

several periods and it is more effective than multiplying props, why is that because what we are dealing with is humans, they have real feelings and thoughts that we have to manage well if we want to be their representatives."

From the results of the interview above, it can be understood that the method used by Mrs. Eni Khairani is an educative method considering that the model of delivering Mrs. Eni Khairani's political messages has been carried out for almost more than 15 years continuously and in delivering political messages is carried out by including data and facts so that this is in accordance with the theory of the method of delivering political messages with the educative category.

This is also reinforced by the results of an interview with the winning team, namely Mr. Rosidin as follows:

"In carrying out the aspiration absorption process, whether during recess, working visit or campaign period, we always see you with a style that nurtures the community, always listening to their complaints they need a leader figure who is willing to listen, and we see it in, you besides that, if I'm not mistaken in every interview, or discussion with the community, you always convey data and facts so that there is no potential for lies on what you promise or will fight for."

From the interview above, it can be understood that as an effort to influence the community carried out by educative methods through a political statement conveyed which realized is in the form of a message containing opinions, facts and experiences, in other words, this is method called an educational method that provides ideas to the audience based on data facts and experiences whose truth can be accounted for, because it is carried out regularly and planned the within of changing people's behavior in the desired direction.

Photo 12 Ms. Eni Khairani's agenda in delivering political messages



Furthermore, the results of an interview with the winning team, namely Mr. Rosidin, explained Mrs. Eni Khairani's political message as follows:

"" Regarding political messages, there it's are many actually things that mothers are concerned about be family welfare, women's empowerment improving the baliata nutrition improving quality of women clean government, etc., if I'm not mistakenfour periods. However, in each of his periods there is a tagline that we brand and try to glue with the characterization of the mother, namely in the first period is women choose women the second period is CANTIK alias (Intelligent, Amanah, Ikhlas and Tulus Commitment), then the third period was real work and yesterday's fourth period real work, smart work and sincere work "

In the section on sorting and choosing media, Arifin Anwar (2011) explains that the use of single or multiple media in political communication needs to be carefully sorted and selected to suit the conditions and situation of the audience, taking into account the political communication system in a country.

In political communication, all media can be used because the goal is to form and build public opinion and influence voting in elections. In addition, political communication also aims to influence policies and decisions in making regulations, which is why all forms of political communication activities are needed such as lobbyingaction, rhetoric, public relations, political and mass communication, so all types of media are needed in the political communication process.

There. In additionare various types of media, such as newspapers, magazines, posters and banners, there are also media that can be heard (the audial media) such as radio, telephone, siren and drum. Furthermore, there are media that combine two elements of audio and visual such as movies, television, and interactive media through computer networks or gadgets (internet).

This last is also known as cyber media. Basically, the use of one of each media is very dependent on the needs or ability of the recipient audience and digest the political messages to be conveyed. So media selection is based on the abilities, needs and interests as well as the location of the audience targeted by political communication, because each media has its disadvantagesown advantages and.

Furthermore, the results of interviews with the winning team, namely s Mr. Rosidin, explained the media used in conveying Mrs. Eni Khairani'political messages as follows:

"Regarding political messages, we we usually use props only according to what is regulated in the KPU, not beyond that, never use use social media to convey political messages the use of Whatsaap groups is more for technical implementation in the field, sometimes we even HT considering that there are locations that are not covered by signals".

From the results of the interview above, it, and even then it is can be understood that Mrs. Eni Khairani uses props according to what is determined, such as billboards, banners, stickers, etc. only in certain places not massive considering that Mrs. Eni Khairani is already known by the community.

Furthermore, the results of the interview with Mrs. Eni Khairani are as follows:

"So far, we have only used props such as billboards, stickers, etc. which are allowed by law, but we prioritize going down to the field, the term blusukan, every time we go around visiting residents from one place to another, of course the winning team has prepared in advance."

c. Building Consensus

In the context of building consensus, Arifin Anwar (2011) explains that the third strategic step taken in achieving political communication goals is to build consensus both between politicians from the same party and from different parties. In the intercultural paradigm, politicians have the same and equal position so as to create a dialogical atmosphere. A dialogical atmosphere must be built through the creation of togetherness or homophily by practicing empathy.

Photo 16

Ms. Eni Khairani's agenda in delivering political messages



Furthermore, Arifin Anwar also emphasized that in building consensus, which is one must have the ability to compromise an art in itself. Thus, a politician must must be not think in black and white mathematics or normative only, there always opportunity to compromise or build a consensus together. For this reason, a politician must always train himself in thinking, bonding and acting alternatively in an effort to find solutions and build consensus for the greater interest.

From the explanation above, it can be understood that to achieve the objectives of political communication, it must be able to build consensus, in other

words, in have alternative capabilities finding a middle ground between various existing interests. This is certainly in line with what is happening in the community's expectations of the problems and limits of the state that its capabilities require any politician to also realize and prepare an effective communication strategy.

Furthermore, the results of interviews with the winning team, namely Mr. Rosidin, explained Mrs. Eni Khairani in building consensus as follows:

"Your experience as a DPD member from the Bengkulu region for 4 periods certainly shows your quality in building an understanding between various interests, we realize that we have scheduled many meetings with local and national politicians to discuss problems in the Bengkulu region and their solutions."

Furthermore, the results of the interview with Mrs. Eni Khairani in building consensus are as follows:

"Building an understanding or middle ground or say consensus is not easy if each person does not open themselves, in the journey we often find such individuals, but slowly we approach for the sake of greater interests, finally we can accept it all, so when building consensus the key word is to open yourself"

In line with what Mrs. Eni Khairani said, politicians who are looking for solutions or building consensus must start with a willingness to open up, accept input, ideas and new experiences that are sometimes different from what we want. Regarding the ability to open up, Arifin Anwar (2011) explains that there are several factors that encourage the birth of a willingness to open up, among others: (1) similarity of personal: (2) characteristics physical attractiveness; (3) familiarity; (4) closeness; and (5) ability.

CONCLUSION

The success of Dra. Hj Eni Khairani, M.Si political communication as a member of DPD RI Bengkulu Province for four consecutive periods is supported by three main strategies. First, the strategy character, where she is able to maintain good relations with community leaders and various institutions, including political parties, parliament, bureaucracy, and community organizations. His acceptance by the community and the hard work of his winning his team were important factors in maintaining position. Second, the strategy of creating togetherness, which can be seen from his understanding of the audience and his campaign approach that does not rely on social media, but rather on blusukan and direct interaction with the community through data and fact-based messaging. Lastly, the strategy of building consensus, where he succeeded in establishing compromises with elite figures, parties, and the wider community, creating a balance between the interests of the marginalized and the elite as well as opening up to new ideas and ideas for regional progress and community welfare.

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