

## Fixed Asset Maintenance Budgeting in a State-Owned Logistics Enterprise: A Political Economy Accounting Perspective

Dusty Widha Hutama<sup>1\*</sup>, Driana Leniwati<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author

e-mail: [dustyhutama@webmail.umm.ac.id](mailto:dustyhutama@webmail.umm.ac.id)

**Received:** June 30, 2026; **Revised:** July 10, 2026; **Accepted:** August 16, 2026

**Abstract:** This study examines how fixed asset maintenance budgeting is formed, implemented, and negotiated within a state-owned logistics enterprise in Indonesia, using a Political Economy Accounting (PEA) perspective. Rather than treating budgeting as a neutral technical exercise, PEA views accounting practice as an outcome of power relations, economic pressure, and institutional interests. Using a theory-informed, single-case qualitative design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight informants across head-office and terminal-level units, of whom seven contribute directly to the interview evidence reported below, together with direct observation and internal documentation (budget plans, realization reports, and internal policies). Findings show that maintenance budgeting for port loading-and-unloading equipment begins as a technical-operational exercise grounded in equipment condition, breakdown history, and manufacturer (OEM) recommendations, but is subsequently filtered through corporate governance mechanisms (unit cost standards, budget ceilings, and standardized templates) that transform technical need into a governance instrument. Informants recurrently reported deviation between budget and realization, attributing it to unplanned breakdowns, imported spare-part price fluctuations, and additional work identified during dismantling; they characterized these deviations primarily as adaptive responses to technical uncertainty, although the available evidence cannot rule out contributing planning or forecasting weaknesses. Viewed through PEA, budget decisions appear shaped simultaneously by four dimensions: political (government regulation and Ministry of SOE direction), economic (efficiency and cost-effectiveness pressure), social (the enterprise's public-service mandate and the wider consequences of equipment downtime), and managerial interest (inter-unit negotiation between technical and finance functions). Building on this pattern, the study advances "adaptive, PEA-informed budgeting" as an emergent analytical proposition, in which flexibility and continuous justification, rather than rigid plan-realization matching, are treated as meaningful markers of budgetary accountability in this institutional setting, and outlines the further evidence needed to establish it as a distinct theoretical contribution.

**Keywords:** Asset Maintenance Budgeting, Logistics, Political Economy Accounting, Qualitative Case Study, State-Owned Enterprise

**How to Cite:** Hutama, D. W., & Leniwati, D. (2026). Fixed Asset Maintenance Budgeting in a State-Owned Logistics Enterprise: A Political Economy Accounting Perspective. *Journal of Economic Education and Entrepreneurship Studies*, 7(4), 108–125. <https://doi.org/10.62794/je3s.v7i4.414>

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## INTRODUCTION

A budget is more than a financial plan: it functions as a coordination device, a control mechanism, and a mechanism of managerial accountability (Anthony & Govindarajan, 2007; AR et al., 2018; Simons, 1995). In the public sector, this function carries additional weight: a budget in a public organization is not merely a technical-administrative document but a political and social instrument that reflects an entity's policy priorities; in state-owned enterprises (SOEs), a budget represents power relations, resource distribution, and the policy direction of government as capital owner. Alongside budgeting, asset management occupies a similarly strategic position: well-managed assets sustain long-term organizational value, and maintenance is conventionally divided into preventive maintenance (scheduled, condition-based upkeep) and corrective maintenance (repair after failure), with under-resourced preventive maintenance typically producing larger corrective costs later (Cheikh et al., 2024; del Castillo & Parlikad, 2024; Hauashdh et al., 2024; Sinjar et al., 2020). Deciding which maintenance need is addressed first is itself a resource-constrained prioritization problem, and the technical literature on this problem, including approaches to reliability-based maintenance prioritization (Nithin et al., 2022) and operational asset-management and reliability surveys in asset-intensive industries (Parra et al., 2024), treats prioritization primarily as an engineering optimization exercise, generally without examining how the resulting technical priorities are subsequently authorized, contested, or modified through an organization's budgeting process.

In practice, a persistent gap is observed between maintenance need and budget availability. Constrained allocations often lead to deferred preventive maintenance, which increases the risk of more severe failures and larger corrective costs later, while government pressure on state-owned logistics enterprises to control costs and raise profitability creates a further dilemma in maintenance budget allocation. This dynamic has intensified alongside government-driven consolidation and efficiency programs across Indonesia's logistics SOEs, which require harmonized maintenance standards, accounting systems, and budgeting mechanisms across previously separate entities.

Existing research on maintenance budgeting has generally treated the budget as a managerial-technical instrument, with attention concentrated on fund-use efficiency, program effectiveness, and plan-realization alignment (Abdelkader et al., 2025; Azizy et al., 2023; Marniati et al., 2023; Sinjar et al., 2020; Wicaksana et al., 2021). Studies on management control systems in state-owned enterprises demonstrate that budgets function as critical instruments for performance evaluation and strategic alignment, with budget-based key performance indicators forming the backbone of formal evaluation mechanisms in hybrid SOE contexts (Wang et al., 2025). Furthermore, in the context of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), robust managerial accountability and fiscal transparency are essential for sound governance and long-term financial sustainability. The absence of transparent reporting on public service obligations (PSOs) obscures the true cost of state mandates, creates hidden contingent liabilities, and significantly increases the risk of fiscal distress (Adebayo, 2026; Asatryan et al., 2026; OECD, 2024). This body of work, however, still frames budgeting primarily as a matter of planning accuracy and cost control (Ahmad et al., 2026), and pays comparatively little attention to the organizational reality that allocation decisions are shaped by the interaction of multiple actors with different authority: operational units, finance units, corporate management, and government as shareholder (Jiang et al., 2025; Mugisana & Sukanta, 2026). In state-owned logistics enterprises specifically, maintenance budget decisions are influenced not only by the technical urgency of an asset's condition but also by tiered approval mechanisms, corporate policy, and efficiency targets

(Martya et al., 2026), meaning the budgeting process cannot be understood as purely technical, but must also be read as an organizational process of interest negotiation.

This complexity is sharpened by the dual mandate carried by logistics SOEs: on one hand, operational efficiency, profitability, and competitive performance expected of any commercial enterprise (Hipui & Liestiawati, 2025); on the other, a mandate to support national development through reliable logistics services and stronger national economic connectivity. As a result, decisions about maintenance budget allocation are frequently caught between preserving asset reliability and meeting corporate efficiency targets (Azizy et al., 2023), a tension that has become more pronounced following government-led consolidation of logistics SOEs, where branch-level budget proposals must now pass through corporate harmonization and prioritization rather than being determined by field-level technical need alone.

Political Economy Accounting (PEA) offers a lens for this problem that existing maintenance-budgeting research has not applied. PEA treats accounting and budgeting practice not as a neutral technical process but as an arena of power relations and economic interests (Lhutfi et al., 2024). Within this framework, SOEs are subject to significant political influence beyond market forces, functioning as instruments through which incumbent politicians strategically manipulate public investment to enhance re-election prospects (Asatryan et al., 2026). Consequently, the cyclical manipulation of SOE investment where allocations expand before elections and contract afterward reveals how electoral motives become embedded in public investment decisions, distorting efficient resource allocation (Asatryan et al., 2026). Budgeting practices in SOEs thus reveal how state fiscal politics becomes embedded in accounting routines, as allocation decisions follow politically shaped priorities rather than purely technical needs analysis. Harfianah and Faisal (2023) similarly show that political and regulatory factors substantially shape public asset management, such that public-asset budget allocation cannot be understood as a purely technocratic process.

A conventional management-control or budgeting perspective would treat maintenance-budget variance mainly as a planning or forecasting problem to be minimized. What a PEA lens adds is attention to mechanism: how unequal decision authority between technical and financial actors determines whose account of urgency is accepted; how technical need is translated, and sometimes fails to be translated, into a financially legitimate claim; how efficiency functions not only as a cost criterion but as a legitimating discourse that can override technical argument; and how state ownership constrains discretion in ways a purely commercial budgeting model would not predict. This attention to mechanism situates the present study within a broader critical-accounting tradition (Hopper & Powell, 1985) that has examined how accounting and budgeting systems in state-owned and formerly state-owned enterprises operate as instruments of political and managerial control rather than neutral technique, from case evidence on how political intervention and labor-management relations shape accounting practice in a state-owned jute mill (Hoque & Hopper, 1994), to accounts of how privatization reconfigures regimes of accounting-based control in a state-linked enterprise in a less-developed-country setting (Uddin & Hopper, 2001), to analyses of how accounting controls interact with local socio-political relations to legitimate managerial authority (Wickramasinghe & Hopper, 2005), to accounts of accounting appearing as representational and reproductive of a wider political hegemony rather than constitutive of it (Alawattage & Wickramasinghe, 2008).

The present study extends this tradition to a domain (routine maintenance-budgeting practice within a single logistics SOE) that this literature has not directly examined. Within logistics SOEs specifically, PEA points to at least four relevant dimensions: political (government

regulation and Ministry of SOE intervention), economic (efficiency pressure and competitiveness demands), social (the enterprise's public-service mandate), and managerial interest (internal preferences that can generate inter-unit conflict over budget priority), drawn from Lhutfi et al.'s (2024) PEA framework and fixed a priori as the organizing structure for the interview guide and subsequent coding (see Method), rather than emerging inductively from the data. This framework is further supported by Adebayo (2026), who demonstrates how SOEs navigate the tension between public-service obligations and commercial imperatives, often generating conflicts that manifest in budgetary decisions.

A review of this literature suggests two under-examined areas. Research on maintenance budgeting has concentrated on technical efficiency and effectiveness; research applying PEA has concentrated on macro-level issues such as the state's role in the economy or SOE privatization (Qadri, 2024). To our knowledge, no study has applied a PEA perspective specifically to fixed asset maintenance budgeting at the operational level of a logistics SOE. This study addresses that gap by examining how maintenance budgeting policy for critical port equipment is formed, implemented, and negotiated in a single Indonesian state-owned logistics enterprise, asking: how is the policy of implementing the maintenance budget for fixed assets in a logistics SOE shaped, from the perspective of Political Economy Accounting? In doing so, the study aims to extend PEA's application from macro-level SOE policy to everyday, operational-level budgeting practice, and to connect asset-management theory (preventive/corrective maintenance, cost efficiency, asset-utilization optimization) with a PEA framework that treats budget numbers as the product of negotiated organizational and political-economic relations rather than technical calculation alone.

## METHOD

This study uses a theory-informed qualitative single-case design, in which the case is the maintenance-budgeting process for critical port-handling equipment within one Indonesian state-owned logistics enterprise, embedded across head-office and terminal-level organizational units. A qualitative case approach was chosen because the aim is to understand, in depth, the dynamics surrounding maintenance-asset budgeting within its real organizational context, not only its technical dimension but also its social, political, economic, and managerial-interest dimensions (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). The approach is consistent with the critical accounting research paradigm underlying PEA, which treats budgeting not as neutral technical activity but as practice always shaped by power structures, ideology, and political-economic context; the study therefore seeks not only to describe the budgeting process but to interpret the social-political meaning behind budget decisions. Consistent with this design, the study does not claim statistical generalizability; its aim is analytical and theoretical insight into how PEA dynamics operate within a bounded organizational case.

Data comprise primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews with key actors spanning corporate management, technical maintenance staff, and budget-authority personnel, and internal documentation, specifically the company's Rencana Kerja dan Anggaran Perusahaan (RKAP), annual financial reports, asset-maintenance reports, and internal and external regulations bearing on the budgeting process. Secondary data, comprising prior academic literature on budgeting, asset management, and PEA, were used to situate field findings within the broader conceptual and empirical literature. The identity of the enterprise, and the identity and number of the terminal units at which fieldwork was conducted, are withheld throughout. For the enterprise and terminal identities this reflects

the confidentiality undertaking under which the informants themselves are anonymized; the exact number of terminal units, however, is omitted because it was not systematically recorded during fieldwork rather than because reporting it would compromise confidentiality; this distinction is noted here so the omission is not read as more protective than it is. Internal budget documents are accordingly drawn on as corroborating evidence for the processes described rather than reproduced as figures or line items. What this article does and does not report about its own procedures is set out in full at the close of this section.

Observation was conducted overtly: the researcher's presence and purpose were known to informants, allowing observed activity to be understood within its ordinary organizational context (Moleong, 2007). Observation focused on four recurring activities in the budgeting cycle: the process of identifying maintenance need (equipment inspection, warehouse checks, infrastructure condition audits); internal technical-and-finance unit discussions during cost planning and preparation of the Rencana Anggaran Biaya (RAB); coordination and evaluation meetings reflecting approval, revision, and monitoring; and field-level implementation activities, including preventive and corrective maintenance work, delays, technical constraints, and changes in priority. Beyond formal procedure, observation also attended to informal dynamics, including inter-unit interaction, communication patterns, and potential conflicts of interest, that are not fully captured in interview accounts alone. Observational material is used in the analysis in a supporting role: to corroborate, qualify, or contextualize interview accounts of the budgeting cycle, rather than as a standalone evidentiary base.

Interviews were semi-structured: an interview guide was developed a priori from two theoretical frameworks, budgeting theory (covering planning and implementation) and the four PEA dimensions described above, while still allowing informants to raise considerations outside that guide. This combination was intended to keep interviews both focused and open to unanticipated themes. In practice, the two components of the guide were distributed unevenly across informants: the three management-tier informants (Informants 1–3 in Table 1, spanning head-office and subsidiary-unit roles) were asked the full set of questions spanning budget planning/implementation and all four PEA dimensions, while the four terminal- and staff-level informants (Informants 5–8) were asked primarily about budget planning and implementation and were not systematically asked the PEA-dimension questions. As a result, the political, economic, social, and managerial-interest findings reported below draw mainly on Informants 1–3, while the planning, implementation, and deviation findings draw on all available informants; this distribution should be read as a feature of how the interview guide was applied, not as evidence that lower-tier staff lack a view on these dimensions. Because the coding structure used in analysis (see below) was derived from this same a priori framework, findings organized under the four PEA dimensions should be read as evidence that fits a pre-specified theoretical structure; content that informants raised outside this structure was retained and is noted where it arose. Interviews were conducted individually with each informant, and all interview material presented below is quoted directly from the interview record.

The unit of analysis is a state-owned logistics enterprise engaged in the management and maintenance of port loading-and-unloading equipment (container cranes, rubber-tyred gantries, reach stackers, and heavy-duty forklifts), assets that bear directly on port performance indicators such as berth occupancy ratio, ship turnaround time, and container dwell time. Analysis covers the organizational structure of asset management (maintenance, operational, finance, and strategic-management units), the maintenance-budgeting process from need identification through implementation and monitoring, budgeting documents and policies (cost plans, annual

budget documents, realization reports), and the external context of Ministry of SOE policy and broader political-economic dynamics.

Data were collected from eight informants spanning head-office and terminal-level units, covering finance, equipment/technical, budget, and business-support functions. To protect confidentiality, informants are referred to throughout this article as Informant 1 through Informant 8, corresponding to the order listed in [Table 1](#). Interview material drawn on in the findings reported below comes from seven of these informants (Informants 1–3 and 5–8). The eight positions listed in [Table 1](#) reflect two considerations taken together. First, access: within this single-case design, eight was the number of informants for whom management approval to be interviewed was granted, and the sample size reported here reflects that organizational constraint rather than a target set in advance.

Second, within that constraint, selection targeted distinct organizational functions in the maintenance-budgeting cycle examined here: technical/equipment assessment, terminal-level execution, head-office consolidation and verification, and finance/budget authority, so that, subject to the access available, no major function identified during the study is unrepresented in the informant group; this is consistent with an information-power rationale for composition ([Malterud et al., 2016](#)) even though the total count was access-constrained rather than saturation-determined. Informant 4, the Budget Manager at Head Office, was interviewed using the same guide administered to the other management-tier informants (Informants 1–3). This interview was substantially briefer than the others (see below) and yielded correspondingly limited substantive material; the researchers judged it insufficiently developed to serve as citable evidence and it therefore does not contribute direct quotation to the findings reported below. This gap concerns a position with direct bearing on the study's central claims about budget authority and is addressed further, rather than left for the reader to infer from [Table 1](#) alone, in the Limitations.

**Table 1. Informant Profile**

| No | Position                   | Unit            |
|----|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1  | Senior Finance Manager     | Head Office     |
| 2  | Equipment Manager          | Head Office     |
| 3  | Operations Support Manager | Subsidiary Unit |
| 4  | Budget Manager             | Head Office     |
| 5  | Terminal Site Manager      | Branch/Terminal |
| 6  | Terminal Site Manager      | Branch/Terminal |
| 7  | Staff                      | Head Office     |
| 8  | Staff                      | Head Office     |

Data analysis followed [Miles and Huberman's \(1994\)](#) interactive model of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification, applied continuously throughout the research rather than as a discrete final step. Coding was primarily deductive: interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were coded into themes covering budget planning, implementation, deviation, and the four PEA dimensions established a priori in the interview guide (political, economic, social, and managerial interest). Content that did not fit these categories was retained as a separate theme rather than discarded. Because this a priori structure creates a genuine risk that evidence was simply sorted into categories the analysis had already decided to find, two mitigating steps were taken. First, tentative conclusions drawn from interviews were treated as provisional and checked against internal documentation and observation before being retained; for example, informant claims about government or Ministry of SOE influence over maintenance-budget size were checked against regulatory and internal policy documents rather than accepted from interview testimony alone. Second, the study used

source triangulation (comparing accounts from management, mid-level managers, and staff), method triangulation (comparing interview, observation, and documentary evidence), and theoretical triangulation (comparing empirical patterns against budgeting theory and the PEA framework), following [Denzin's \(2009\)](#) approach to qualitative validity and consistent with the trustworthiness criteria set out by [Lincoln and Guba \(1985\)](#).

Several procedures conventionally reported in qualitative research are not claimed for this study, and should not be assumed by the reader; where the underlying record exists, it is reported below rather than simply flagged as absent, and where it does not, the consequence for evidentiary credibility is stated directly rather than left for the reader to infer. The budget years covered by the RKAP and realization documents consulted are 2023/2024 and 2024/2025; the precise start and end dates of fieldwork were not systematically recorded and cannot be reported here. Without this information a reader cannot align the documentary evidence cited in the Results with the exact period the interview and observation data describe beyond the two budget years identified above, or judge whether the case falls within a period of unusual disruption or stability within those years.

One interview was conducted per informant. Interviews with Informants 1–3 and 5–8 lasted close to an hour on average; the interview with Informant 4 was substantially shorter, at approximately ten to fifteen minutes, and yielded correspondingly limited material, the basis on which it is not drawn on as citable evidence below (see also the note on Informant 4 above and in the Limitations). Interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented by handwritten notes taken during the interview; recordings were not transcribed in full for every interview. Recruitment proceeded through purposive selection ([Patton, 2002](#)) on the basis of an informant's role in the maintenance-budgeting process; informants were not approached directly by the researchers but were contacted and scheduled through the enterprise's secretariat, acting as an internal liaison, a channel that facilitated access but that readers should weigh in assessing whether informants were free to decline or to speak candidly.

No formal research-ethics approval was obtained for this study, and no separate, documented informed-consent procedure was administered beyond informants' agreement, secured through the enterprise secretariat, to be interviewed and quoted on an anonymized basis. This is disclosed as a limitation rather than a procedural detail: without a documented consent process, a reader cannot independently verify that participation was fully voluntary or that informants had a complete understanding of how their statements would be used before agreeing to speak, which bears on the standing of the quoted material itself and not only on procedural completeness. One of the researchers had a prior professional connection to the enterprise studied. This connection plausibly facilitated the access on which the study depends, but it is disclosed here as a positionality consideration rather than a neutral fact: a researcher with an existing professional connection to the site may be granted franker disclosure by some informants and more guarded responses by others, particularly on matters bearing on budget authority, and the findings below should be read with that possibility in mind.

Analytically, it does not claim independent double coding, calculated inter-coder agreement, a codebook or audit trail retained for external inspection, systematic negative-case analysis, that is, a deliberate search for instances in which technical urgency prevailed over efficiency pressure, or in which a branch proposal was approved without adjustment, or member-checking of interpretations with informants; the consequence is that the interpretive claims below cannot rule out that evidence was read selectively through the a priori PEA categories, a risk the triangulation steps described next are intended to reduce but not eliminate. What the

study does claim is the verification set out above: interview-based conclusions were treated as provisional and checked against internal documentation and observation before being retained, and source, method, and theoretical triangulation were applied in the manner described. The interpretive claims in the sections that follow rest on that basis and no stronger one, and the consequences of this are carried through to the discussion of the study's limitations.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Company Context**

The research site is a state-owned logistics enterprise responsible for managing and maintaining loading-and-unloading equipment across multiple Indonesian port terminals. Maintenance of this equipment is treated not as routine technical activity but as a strategic function directly linked to terminal productivity and service continuity; equipment failure carries a direct risk of service disruption, cost escalation, and reduced operational performance. Asset management and budget preparation involve coordination among the maintenance unit (which assesses asset condition and prepares cost plans based on technical need), the finance unit (which evaluates proposals against the budget ceiling, efficiency policy, and performance targets), and strategic management (which holds final approval authority). In recent years the enterprise has also undergone structural and regulatory transformation that has centralized reporting and harmonized budgeting mechanisms across branches, tightening budget justification and financial control over maintenance spending.

### **Budget Planning**

Maintenance budget planning begins with technical need identification at the branch level. As Informant 5, a terminal site manager with 20 years of experience, explained: "As Site Manager, I make sure maintenance budget planning always starts from real field need. We evaluate equipment condition, check breakdown history, and get input from technical supervisors about potential repairs or critical component replacement for the coming year ... whatever concerns the smoothness of loading-and-unloading operations has to be the top priority." Informant 6, a site manager at the same terminal with 15 years of experience, described a similar sequence: "I always start from mapping the branch's operational needs. Every piece of equipment used to support loading and unloading is assessed through routine inspection reports from the equipment supervisor. We also look at the previous year's damage records to understand maintenance patterns and risk potential ... my principle is simple: equipment must not become a bottleneck for the logistics flow, so critical needs always come first." Both informants identified equipment urgency, age, OEM maintenance recommendations, and current spare-part prices as the main factors shaping which items enter the branch's cost plan.

Once compiled, branch proposals move to head-office verification and consolidation. Informant 7, a head-office staff member with more than five years' experience in this role, described the function directly: "My job is to make sure every proposal follows the budget guideline and doesn't exceed the ceiling. Once the data is in, I verify and harmonize it before it goes to management ... so planning at the head-office level is really more about validation and harmonizing branch needs against company policy." This informant added that head office also checks "whether the frequency of maintenance is realistic" and reviews prior-year budget-use trends, "including deviation that has occurred before," particularly for branches with a history of large deviations. Informant 8, a head-office staff member with more than ten years' experience, described a parallel comparative step: "I do a comparative analysis across branches, mainly to see whether the cost differences submitted are consistent with each location's conditions," adding

that head office relies on a standing set of instruments: a company budgeting guideline covering cost limits, standard unit prices, maintenance classification, and OEM-recommended intervals, plus a uniform RAB (cost-plan) template, “so that the analysis process at head office becomes easier and the result can be accounted for.” Even though field-level operational need is dynamic, planning therefore proceeds within a formal regulatory frame that filters and standardizes it before it reaches final approval.

### **Budget Implementation**

Budget implementation combines field-level execution with tiered oversight of realization. At the terminal, Informant 5 described direct, hands-on control: “Every maintenance job that’s approved has to go through my approval, whether it’s internal work or work involving a vendor. I monitor field execution through daily reports and direct checks, especially for equipment with a direct impact on vessel operations.” Informant 6 described a parallel process at the same terminal, coordinating closely with branch finance “so every expenditure is documented and doesn’t go outside the budget limit,” while execution proceeds through a structured administrative sequence: purchase requisition, purchase order, technical verification, before work is carried out by an internal team or a vendor. At head office, Informant 7 described the oversight side of this same sequence: “If there’s a deviation, I have to ask the branch for an explanation and prepare a recommendation report” for their supervisor. Informant 8 described how these individual reports are aggregated: head office monitors realization “through monthly and quarterly reports sent by branches,” and where work is delayed, accelerated, or costed differently than planned, “the branch is required to give an explanation,” which is then compiled into an evaluation discussed at the management level. Oversight during implementation is thus layered across two organizational levels, direct field control at the terminal and periodic administrative-financial review at head office, that together function as the discipline mechanism for budget policy.

### **Deviation between Budget and Realization**

Deviation between planned budget and actual realization was independently and consistently reported across six of the seven informants drawn on for this article's findings: Informants 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8, spanning both terminal and head-office roles, with Informant 1's interview focused on finance-authority and reporting questions rather than field-level deviation experience, which gives the pattern stronger evidentiary support than a single account would provide, though it remains informant-reported perception rather than a finding verified against period-specific budget-realization records.

Informant 5 described the experience directly: “differences can’t be avoided, especially in field operations. Breakdowns don’t always happen as predicted. Sometimes equipment suddenly breaks down, or when a unit is dismantled we find additional damage ... maintenance costs often change while the work is already underway.” Informant 3, in a head-office operations-support role, pointed to a wider set of contributing factors: “unplanned maintenance, price inflation, lead time [for] imported goods, and additional work needs [found] during field inspection ... sometimes the technical unit finds other damage while work is in progress, which adds to the cost.” Informant 2 added that deviation is “almost certain” for equipment operating in a heavy port environment, since “a critical component [can fail] before its scheduled interval.”

Deviation was broadly regarded across informants as acceptable provided it carried a rational, documented explanation: Informant 7 described how head office “usually look[s] at the deviation pattern to assess whether the planning was inaccurate or whether field conditions genuinely changed,” rather than treating deviation itself as a violation. Taken together, these

accounts, corroborated independently by informants across both terminal and head-office roles, suggest that budget deviation in maintenance is not necessarily only a symptom of planning weakness but may also reflect interaction between technical uncertainty, market dynamics, and internal policy; the two explanations are not mutually exclusive, and even this cross-informant corroboration cannot establish how much of the observed deviation reflects genuine adaptation as opposed to forecasting error, delayed procurement, or inaccurate cost estimation, since no informant offered a specific, traceable case with figures.

### **A Political Economy Accounting Reading**

Read through PEA, budgeting for maintenance in this enterprise is shaped simultaneously by political, economic, social, and managerial-interest dimensions that cannot be understood in isolation. At the policy level, budget preparation and approval must align with the company's state-approved Rencana Kerja dan Anggaran Perusahaan (RKAP) and long-term plan, the Rencana Jangka Panjang Perusahaan (RJP).

Informant 1, a senior finance manager, explained: "Government regulation and direction from the Ministry of SOEs greatly influence our budget policy. Every year there's an official guideline on spending limits, investment priorities, and efficiency standards ... We can't prepare the budget freely; everything has to refer to the approved RKAP and RJP. Some expenditure items even require special approval if they exceed the set authority limit." The same informant linked this directly to reallocation: "when the government focuses on national logistics stabilization or a certain priority program, the company's budget can be adjusted to support that agenda. Sometimes there's a sudden reallocation to make sure public service is maintained."

Informant 3, in an operations-support role at a subsidiary unit, gave a corroborating account of the same regulatory boundary operating one organizational level down, describing head-office budgeting guidance as the frame within which subsidiary proposals must fit. Both informants' accounts converge on the same limit: political influence works through setting priorities, ceilings, and authority limits rather than through direct intervention in technical maintenance decisions: Informant 1 was explicit that "political intervention usually doesn't reach the technical level, but more into arranging funding priority." This evidence establishes hierarchy and formal compliance clearly, and is corroborated by two informants in different roles (finance and operations-support) rather than resting on a single account; even so, hierarchy by itself is not yet the political-economy mechanism this study claims. Demonstrating that mechanism more fully would require showing, in specific instances, whose interpretation of maintenance need was accepted, which expenditure was rejected or deferred, and how the resulting decision was justified, a level of evidence the inter-unit negotiation findings below approach more closely than the political dimension does on its own.

Economic considerations function as an equally powerful selection mechanism, and were described in closely matching terms by all three management-tier informants interviewed on this dimension. Informant 1 stated that "every budget proposal has to show its impact on operational efficiency and productivity ... every unit has to include an economic justification before its budget is approved," while Informant 2 used nearly identical language: "efficiency remains the main criterion in the budget evaluation." Under tighter financial conditions, all three independently described the same triage logic rather than an across-the-board cut: low-risk or minor work is postponed while assets classified as critical retain funding. Informant 1: "low-risk work can be postponed, but maintenance of critical assets stays fully funded. The challenge is balancing efficiency and reliability, especially when the company's financial condition is tight."

Informant 3 described the same pattern at the subsidiary level: “some maintenance programs [get] rescheduled or reduced in volume ... [but] for vital operational assets, the company still gives priority.” Social considerations sit close alongside this economic logic and are distinctive to a logistics SOE: equipment downtime is read not purely as a technical problem but as a risk with consequences beyond the organization. Informant 1 explained that “asset downtime can disrupt distribution of essential goods, and the impact can be felt by the wider public,” linking this to a public-service obligation that operates independently of short-term profitability: “not every budget decision is based on short-term profit ... public service must not be disrupted even while the company is cutting costs.” Informants 2 and 3 both described an equivalent concern in relation to vessel delay and disrupted goods distribution.

From a PEA standpoint, the budget here functions as an instrument for managing organizational social legitimacy: all three management-tier informants independently described layered reporting mechanisms: to the board of directors, commissioners, internal audit, and, per Informant 1, the state audit body BPKP, as the practice through which this public accountability is discharged, consistent with the general claim that the enterprise is accountable not only to its shareholder but to the public as service beneficiary.

These political, economic, and social pressures converge in a fourth layer: inter-unit negotiation, and this is where the interview evidence is richest and most consistent across informants. All three management-tier informants described essentially the same structure independently, without prompting from one another: a technical/operational side favoring reliability and full maintenance coverage, a finance side favoring cost control, and a resolution reached through coordination meetings rather than unilateral authority. Informant 1 described her own role explicitly as balancing these interests: “the technical unit wants all maintenance prioritized for reliability, while we in finance have to consider the company’s capacity ... if the technical unit has a strong risk justification, we can usually approve its budget.”

Informant 2 described the equivalent tension from the equipment side: “the technical unit wants every maintenance need met to keep equipment performance up, while finance wants to make sure the budget doesn’t balloon. Our role as equipment manager is to bridge both sides by providing technical data and risk analysis as the basis for decision-making.” Informant 3 described occupying a similar position: “we often act as the bridge so the two sides can meet in the middle.” All three described the resolution mechanism in near-identical terms: coordination meetings in which each unit presents its needs and the risk of non-approval, followed by an adjustment set by finance/management against the budget ceiling. Informant 1 summarized the outcome as a “compromise between operational need, risk, and financial capacity,” and Informant 2 described it as “a balance point” reached through a process that runs “openly and is data-based.”

Because this account is now independently corroborated by three informants occupying three different organizational positions, finance, equipment/technical, and operations-support, rather than resting on a single voice, the negotiation dynamic is the dimension for which this study’s evidence is strongest, and it comes closest among the four PEA dimensions to demonstrating an actual political-economy mechanism, since it identifies which actors possess de facto influence over the final figure and on what grounds. What the evidence still does not provide is a single traceable case: one specific budget request followed from initial technical justification through negotiation to final allocation, with figures, that would let this negotiation dynamic be demonstrated rather than described in general terms.

Taken together, these findings support the following explanatory sequence: field actors translate equipment condition and operational risk into technical budget claims; corporate accounting

controls (RKAP alignment, unit-cost standards, ceilings, and standardized templates) then translate those claims into financially legitimate or illegitimate expenditure; actors with different organizational authority negotiate the meaning of urgency, efficiency, and acceptable deviation; and final allocations represent an institutionally sanctioned distribution of scarce resources rather than a purely technical calculation. This sequence is substantially stronger as a PEA contribution than simply reporting that political, economic, social, and managerial-interest considerations were each present, because it specifies how accounting procedures move a claim from technical assessment to financial legitimacy and back again through negotiation. Set against a conventional management-control account, in which budget ceilings and standard costs exist primarily to promote efficiency and comparability, the PEA reading adds that these same instruments also function as a legitimation mechanism: they determine whose technical claim is accepted as a genuine organizational need versus an unfunded preference, and they do so through a process of justification and negotiation rather than a fixed formula.

### Documentary and Observational Corroboration

The preceding sections have described how documentary and observational evidence was used to corroborate interview accounts, but that corroboration has so far remained largely implicit. Table 2 makes it explicit by setting each major finding against the interview evidence and the type of documentary or observational record consulted for it. Consistent with the confidentiality undertaking described in the Method, no commercially sensitive figures, document titles, or dates that could identify the enterprise are reproduced. Beyond that, specific anonymized document references, periods, and non-sensitive ranges were in most cases not retained in a citable form during fieldwork; where this is so, the table states that directly rather than implying a level of documentary verification the study did not achieve. Findings for which this leaves only a single source of corroboration, or interview evidence alone, are flagged in the table as such and should be read with correspondingly reduced confidence.

**Table 2.** Correspondence between Findings, Interview Evidence, and Documentary/Observational Corroboration

| Finding                                                                                                                                                  | Interview Evidence (this study)                 | Documentary / Observational Corroboration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Branch cost plans are filtered through a corporate budgeting guideline (unit-cost standards, ceilings, OEM-interval classification) before consolidation | Informants 7, 8 (head-office verification role) | Consulted during fieldwork (see Method) but no anonymized document code, version, or year was retained in a citable form; corroboration rests on the document's content as described by informants rather than on a specific reference.                                                               |
| Budget preparation and approval must align with the approved RKAP and RJP; reallocation follows Ministry of SOE priorities                               | Informants 1, 3 (finance; operations-support)   | RKAP/RJP documents for budget years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 were consulted (see Method); no specific reallocation episode within the documents was independently reviewed, so this corroboration is limited to the general regulatory alignment described, not to a documented reallocation instance. |
| Deviation between budget and realization recurs and is evaluated against a documented                                                                    | Informants 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8                     | Realization/variance reports were consulted as a category of evidence (see Method), but no anonymized period or non-sensitive deviation range                                                                                                                                                         |

|                                                                                                                              |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| justification rather than treated as automatic non-compliance                                                                |                                               | was retained in a citable form; this finding is accordingly better characterized as informant-reported and document-consistent than as document-verified.                                               |
| Public accountability is discharged through layered reporting to the board, commissioners, and the state audit body (BPKP)   | Informant 1                                   | No internal reporting-policy or audit-cycle document was independently retained for citation; this finding rests on Informant 1's account alone and should be read as single-source until corroborated. |
| Coordination meetings are the arena in which technical and finance positions are negotiated and adjusted against the ceiling | Informants 1, 2, 3 (independently convergent) | Observation of coordination meetings was conducted as described in the Method, but the number and dates of sessions observed were not systematically logged in a form that can be cited here.           |

### Boundaries of the Negotiation Evidence

A single maintenance-budget decision reconstructed end to end, from initial technical need through RAB submission, head-office review, negotiation, approval, and realization, is not available in this article. The underlying field notes and interview records were not kept at a level of case-specific detail that permits a single decision to be traced through each stage, and no RAB drafts or meeting minutes were retained for this purpose during fieldwork.

The claims made elsewhere in this article are scoped accordingly. The inter-unit negotiation dynamic reported above rests instead on convergent, independently corroborated accounts from three informants occupying different organizational positions who describe the same general mechanism. This is meaningful evidence that this negotiation occurs and of who participates in it, but it does not amount to evidence of how a specific contested claim was resolved in a specific instance. The political-economy reading offered in this article should accordingly be read as identifying a negotiation structure and the actors who hold influence within it, rather than as demonstrating, through a traced case, how that influence is exercised on a particular decision. This is a genuine limit on what the evidence presented here can support. It is also the most important direction for a follow-up study, ideally one designed from the outset to capture RAB drafts and meeting records for at least one full budgeting cycle.

Budget deviation is also better understood alongside this sequence than as an isolated finding. Read through PEA, deviation is one arena in which branch units must justify cost change while central authority retains the power to accept or reject that justification, reaffirming the organization's hierarchical control relation (Harfianah & Faisal, 2023). At the same time, the evidence gathered here cannot rule out more conventional explanations for the same pattern: forecasting error, underinvestment in preventive maintenance, delayed procurement, inaccurate cost estimation, or shifting operational priorities, and an adaptive reading should not be presented as though it excludes these alternatives. What the PEA lens adds is not proof that deviation is exclusively adaptive, but an account of how deviation, whatever its origin, must pass through the same negotiation and justification process before it is accepted as legitimate.

On this basis, this study advances "adaptive, PEA-informed budgeting" as a preliminary, case-derived analytical proposition rather than a fully established theoretical contribution. As currently supported by the evidence, its core elements are: (1) technical claims are treated as

provisional until filtered through governance instruments (RKAP, ceilings, standard costs, templates); (2) deviation is tolerated when accompanied by documented justification, but the authority to accept or reject that justification remains centralized; and (3) the resulting allocation reflects negotiated compromise among actors with unequal authority rather than either pure technical calculation or pure managerial discretion. What this study cannot yet specify, and what would be needed to establish the concept as a distinct contribution beyond flexible, contingency-based, or risk-based budgeting, is the precise boundary conditions under which adaptation is permitted versus overridden, the specific evidence thresholds that legitimize a deviation claim, and how this pattern differs in practice from adaptive budgeting behavior documented in non-PEA management-control research. We flag this as a direction for further, more evidence-intensive analysis rather than resolving it here.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study finds that fixed asset maintenance budgeting in the logistics SOE studied is a complex, dynamic process rather than a purely technocratic one. Branch-level cost planning begins from technical-operational rationality, equipment condition, breakdown history, operating hours, and OEM recommendations, but this technical need does not automatically translate into final allocation: it passes through head-office consolidation and adjustment, where SOPs, standard unit costs, standardized templates, and budget ceilings apply a governance and accountability logic that filters and, at times, constrains field-level technical proposals. Implementation unfolds under conditions of high operational uncertainty, and informants recurrently reported deviation between budget and realization, attributed to unplanned breakdown, spare-part price fluctuation, vendor constraints, and work identified during field inspection. This study reads such deviation as plausibly reflecting organizational adaptation to technical uncertainty rather than only inefficiency or weak control, while recognizing that the interview-based evidence gathered here cannot exclude a contributing role for planning or forecasting weakness, and that the two explanations are not mutually exclusive.

Read through Political Economy Accounting, maintenance budgeting is shaped simultaneously by political dimensions (government regulation and Ministry of SOE direction, which shape funding priority and the scope of managerial discretion), economic dimensions (efficiency pressure and cost-effectiveness demands that constrain allocation), social dimensions (the wider public consequence of service disruption), and managerial interest (negotiation among technical, finance, and senior-management actors), and, more specifically, by a sequence in which technical claims are filtered through accounting-governance instruments and then negotiated among actors with unequal authority before an allocation is finalized. Taken together, the findings support characterizing maintenance asset budgeting in this enterprise as an arena of institutional negotiation rather than simply a cost-planning instrument, an observation from which this study derives “adaptive, PEA-informed budgeting” as a preliminary, case-derived analytical proposition rather than an established theoretical contribution.

Theoretically, this study applies Political Economy Accounting, typically used at a more macro level (the state’s role in the economy, SOE privatization), to the operational level of maintenance budgeting within a single logistics SOE, and connects asset-management theory (preventive/corrective maintenance, cost efficiency, asset-utilization optimization) with the PEA framework. Whether this application amounts to a genuine theoretical extension, in the sense of identifying a new mechanism, relationship, or boundary condition rather than demonstrating PEA’s applicability in a new setting, depends on how convincingly the negotiation mechanism

described above can be substantiated with further evidence; at present, this study is more confidently described as an operational-level application of PEA than as a theoretical extension of it.

Practically, the findings suggest, as implications for management to consider rather than as directly demonstrated empirical results, that logistics SOE management may benefit from a more adaptive and contextual approach to maintenance budget governance, one that treats deviation as an expected feature of operational reality while directing control mechanisms toward transparency, risk-based justification, and organizational learning rather than numerical compliance alone. Four implications follow: (1) risk-based budgeting could be strengthened by integrating asset-risk analysis into the maintenance budget process, so that allocation more directly reflects criticality and downtime impact; (2) maintenance budget policy could build in clearer flexibility to accommodate unplanned maintenance without protracted bureaucratic approval; (3) integration between technical and financial data systems could be strengthened, so that budget decisions draw on historical failure trends and more comprehensive cost-benefit analysis; and (4) budget performance indicators could be aligned so that success is measured not only by budget absorption but also by asset reliability, downtime, and logistics service quality. These are offered as plausible directions consistent with the findings, not as validated recommendations.

This study is limited to a single logistics SOE and a purposive sample of eight informants; the findings describe the dynamics of this case in depth but are not intended to generalize statistically to other SOEs or sectors. The account relies substantially on organizational insiders across head-office and terminal-level units; external stakeholders potentially affected by maintenance decisions and budget deviation, such as port customers, shipping lines, or regulators, were not directly interviewed, and their perspective on the consequences of equipment downtime is inferred rather than observed. Within the informant group itself, Informant 4 (Budget Manager, Head Office) does not contribute direct quotation to the findings above: the interview was substantially briefer than the others and yielded correspondingly limited material, for the reasons given in the Method; because this is the position with the most direct formal authority over the final allocation figure, the negotiation and budget-authority findings rest on how other actors describe that authority rather than on its own direct account, and should be read with that gap in mind.

The analysis is also theory-informed and interpretive: the four PEA dimensions were fixed a priori as the coding structure, which strengthens theoretical coherence but creates a risk that findings were organized to fit a pre-specified framework; this study used documentary and observational triangulation to mitigate that risk (see Method), but, as set out there, does not claim independent double coding, a retained codebook or audit trail, systematic negative-case analysis, or member-checking of interpretations with informants. Its verification rests on documentary and observational triangulation alone, and the interpretation offered here should be weighed on that basis.

A final limitation concerns the evidentiary form of the central claims. The negotiation dynamic and the deviation pattern reported above are established through convergent testimony from informants occupying different organizational positions, not through a decision episode traced end to end with figures, from initial cost-plan submission, through negotiation and approval, to final allocation and realization, and the internal budget and realization documents consulted are used to corroborate that testimony rather than to quantify the magnitude or frequency of deviation. Reconstructing such episodes in full, including cases in which technical

urgency prevailed over efficiency pressure, is the step that would allow the boundary conditions of adaptive, PEA-informed budgeting to be specified rather than flagged, and it is the direction in which further work on this case, or on comparable logistics SOEs, would most directly strengthen the argument advanced here.

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