

**THE INDONESIAN REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL'S ROLE AND  
POTENTIAL AS A LABORATORY OF SUBNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY  
DIPLOMACY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The development of global diplomacy reveals an increasing role for subnational actors in international relations, alongside the strengthening of decentralization and multilevel governance. In Indonesia, this phenomenon presents an opportunity for the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) to represent regional interests. This study aims to analyze the position, potential, and limitations of the DPD in Indonesia's subnational diplomacy, employing a descriptive qualitative approach that integrates the theories of paradiplomacy and parliamentary diplomacy. The findings reveal that the DPD has significant potential to serve as a laboratory for paradiplomacy, particularly through its coordinative, advocacy, and facilitative roles in promoting regional interests with an international dimension. However, this role has not been optimized due to limitations in formal authority, the lack of institutionalized mechanisms for region-based diplomacy, and the dominance of executive actors and the DPR in the national diplomatic structure. This study concludes that strengthening the role of the DPD requires regulatory adjustments, enhanced collaboration among the DPD, DPR, and MOFA, and the development of a diplomatic agenda grounded in regional strengths. Theoretically, this study contributes to the enrichment of subnational parliamentary diplomacy studies, and practically offers policy directions towards a more inclusive and multilevel Indonesian diplomacy.

Keywords: Paradiplomacy; Indonesian Foreign Policy; Parliament Role; Parliamentary Diplomacy; Regional Representative Council.

## **ABSTRAK**

*Perkembangan diplomasi global menunjukkan meningkatnya peran aktor subnasional dalam hubungan internasional, seiring dengan menguatnya desentralisasi dan tata kelola multilevel. Dalam konteks Indonesia, fenomena ini membuka ruang bagi Dewan Perwakilan Daerah (DPD RI) untuk berkontribusi dalam paradiplomasi sebagai representasi kepentingan daerah. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis posisi, potensi, serta keterbatasan DPD dalam diplomasi subnasional Indonesia dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif berbasis analisis dokumen dan studi literatur. Kerangka analisis mengintegrasikan teori paradiplomacy dan parliamentary diplomacy untuk memahami peran DPD dalam irisan diplomasi parlemen dan representasi daerah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa DPD memiliki potensi besar untuk berfungsi sebagai laboratorium paradiplomasi melalui peran koordinatif, advokatif, dan fasilitatif terhadap kepentingan daerah yang berdimensi internasional. Namun, peran tersebut belum optimal akibat keterbatasan kewenangan formal, belum terinstitusionalisasinya mekanisme diplomasi berbasis daerah, serta dominasi aktor eksekutif dan DPR dalam struktur diplomasi nasional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan peran DPD memerlukan penyesuaian regulasi, penguatan kolaborasi DPD–DPR–Kementerian Luar Negeri, serta pengembangan agenda diplomasi berbasis keunggulan daerah. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengayaan kajian diplomasi parlemen subnasional, dan secara praktis menawarkan arah kebijakan menuju diplomasi Indonesia yang lebih inklusif dan multilevel.*

*Kata Kunci:* *Paradiplomasi; Kebijakan Luar Negeri Indonesia; Peran Parlemen; Diplomasi Parlemen; Dewan Perwakilan Daerah.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The involvement of non-state actors has become increasingly significant in shaping foreign policy and international cooperation over the past two decades, influencing the dynamics of global diplomacy. This phenomenon is known as paradiplomacy or subnational diplomacy, in which local governments, local parliaments, and regional communities interact directly with international actors (Cornago, 2020). Paradiplomacy has emerged as an adaptive strategy in the context of globalization and political decentralization, enabling local entities to pursue their economic, social, and cultural interests at the global level (Kuznetsov, 2014). Furthermore, paradiplomacy can also be understood as a manifestation of global

political and economic decentralization that allows sub-state regions to participate directly in the international arena, not merely as an extension of central foreign policy but as an autonomous strategy to pursue their respective economic, cultural, and political interests (Keating, 2013; Paquin, 2021). According to Cornago (2020) and Ciesielska-Klikowska (2025), paradiplomacy can be divided into two main models: cooperative paradiplomacy, which is collaboration between the central and regional governments to achieve common goals, and competitive paradiplomacy, which occurs when regions compete with each other or with the central government to attract investment or global influence.

In Indonesia, post-reform political decentralization has created opportunities for regions to engage in international networks, particularly through inter-regional cooperation, sister city initiatives, and participation in regional international forums such as ASEAN and UCLG-ASPAC (Kementerian Dalam Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2023). Laode Muhamad Fathun (2016, 2021) states that in the regional autonomy context, paradiplomacy is an effort by regional governments to become actors in international relations through cross-border relations and cooperation to advance development and local interests at the global level, while reflecting the strategic role of regions in the contemporary diplomatic landscape. However, there is still no strong institutional mechanism that effectively integrates regional diplomacy into the national political system (Marwan et al., 2025; Oddone, 2023; I. Y. Syuryansyah & Nihayati, 2025).

It can be observed in one of Indonesia's state institutions, namely regional representative bodies such as the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI), which has the strategic potential to serve as a laboratory for subnational diplomacy. As a representative of regional interests, the DPD can serve as a bridge between the central and regional governments on cross-border issues, investment, and development cooperation (Mahendradhata et al., 2017). However, institutionally, the DPD's authority in foreign relations remains limited because the constitution assigns diplomacy to the executive and, to some extent, to the DPR through its supervisory function (Onn, 2021). As a result, the DPD's role in paradiplomacy remains informal and has not been institutionalized within the national foreign relations system. It shows a gap between the DPD's structural potential and its actual function in supporting regional diplomacy.

These limitations do not negate the fact that regions in Indonesia are increasingly active in building foreign relations. A report by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024) shows an increase of more than 130 regional foreign cooperation

agreements, particularly in the fields of creative economy, education, and environmental governance. However, without the coordinating role of representative institutions such as the DPD, many of these cooperation agreements are carried out without harmonizing with national policies (Setiawan, 2023). In practice, regional international relations are often sporadic and influenced solely by the interests of regional heads (Surbakti, 2020). This condition underscores the need to reassess the DPD's role as a key actor in consolidating regional diplomacy within a more systematic and sustainable framework.

From a theoretical perspective, studies on parliamentary diplomacy in Indonesia are still dominated by research on the DPR RI as the main legislative body (Kadir, 2022; Pramono, 2021). In contrast, the DPD, which represents regional interests, is rarely the focus of research, resulting in a gap in the literature on understanding the role of subnational parliaments in diplomacy (Agung, 2023). Previous research has also not provided much insight into the processes, meanings, and institutional experiences of the DPD in carrying out its regional diplomacy functions from a qualitative perspective. In fact, in new institutionalism theory, the meaning and practice of institutions are often determined more by norms, networks, and social interpretations than by formal structures alone (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). Thus, a qualitative approach is relevant for exploring the potential and internal dynamics of the DPD in paradiplomacy. However, it should be noted that it is not impossible to implement quantitative and/or mixed methods in future research to analyze the extent and manner of parliamentary diplomacy conducted by the DPD of the Republic of Indonesia.

The problem of this study stems from the imbalance between potential and authority. On the one hand, the DPD has legitimacy in representing the regions and political access to the central government; on the other hand, its diplomatic function has not been formally recognized. This study addresses the central question: What is the position and potential of the DPD in Indonesian paradiplomacy? What factors limit and open up opportunities to strengthen this role? These questions lead to an exploration of how the DPD can serve as a laboratory for subnational diplomacy, supporting multilevel governance in Indonesia.

This study aims to understand the position, potential, and institutional dynamics of the DPD within the context of paradiplomacy, employing a descriptive qualitative approach. Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of parliamentary diplomacy by extending it to the subnational level. In practice, the research findings are expected to provide policy recommendations for strengthening the DPD's role in

coordinating regional foreign relations and enhancing collaboration between national and regional diplomacy. Thus, this research not only bridges the academic gap but also contributes to strengthening representative democracy and inclusive diplomacy in Indonesia.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Paradiplomacy Theory**

Paradiplomacy theory emerged as a form of recognition of the role of subnational actors in international relations. Cornago (2010) defines paradiplomacy as diplomatic activities carried out by subnational governments, such as provinces or cities, within the framework of autonomy permitted by the state. Keating (2013) emphasizes that paradiplomacy reflects the process of global political and economic decentralization, encouraging regions to participate directly in the international arena. According to Paquin (2021), paradiplomacy is not merely an extension of central foreign policy, but rather a regional strategy to achieve its own economic, cultural, and political interests. In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon is evident in the involvement of regional governments, such as West Java and East Kalimantan, in foreign cooperation for the development of tourism and natural resources (Pambagyo & Jatmika, 2025). Thus, this theory highlights a shift from state-centric diplomacy to a more participatory multilevel diplomacy (Kurniawati & Zahidi, 2025).

Furthermore, Cornago (2020) distinguishes between two main models of paradiplomacy: cooperative paradiplomacy and competitive paradiplomacy. Cooperative paradiplomacy refers to collaboration between central and regional governments to achieve common goals. In contrast, competitive paradiplomacy occurs when regions compete with one another or with the central government for investment or global political influence (Ciesielska-Klikowska, 2025). In practice, these two models can coexist in Indonesia, depending on the region's political and economic context. For example, regional paradiplomacy in the energy sector in Kalimantan is often competitive, while interprovincial maritime cooperation tends to be cooperative (Kumape & Wibisono, 2025). This difference confirms that the dynamics of paradiplomacy in developing countries depend not only on the legal framework but also on the power structure and local institutional capabilities (Holroyd, 2025; Stojanović, 2024).

Paradiplomacy can also be understood through the perspective of multilevel governance theory, which explains how diplomatic power is distributed vertically from the central to regional levels (Keating, 2013). Clavijo's (2024) The study highlights that,

in global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of subnational actors increases dramatically due to the need for rapid, flexible cross-regional coordination. Paradiplomacy then becomes an important instrument for strengthening global solidarity through inter-regional networks. In Indonesia, this is evident in the involvement of several regional governments in COVID-19 response programs through international partnerships facilitated by regional legislative bodies. This situation shows that paradiplomacy is not only a foreign policy phenomenon but also a cross-border public governance mechanism that is adaptive to transnational issues (Li, 2023).

Recent empirical studies indicate that paradiplomacy in Indonesia continues to face structural and legal limitations. Although Law No. 23 of 2014 opens up opportunities for foreign cooperation in regions, the role of institutions such as the Regional Representative Council (DPD) remains suboptimal (Rachmawati, 2021). A theoretical gap exists in the integration between paradiplomacy theory and the practice of subnational legislative institutions that have political representation functions but lack formal diplomatic authority. Thus, this study seeks to expand paradiplomacy theory by positioning the DPD as a paradiplomatic actor with the potential to play a parliamentary diplomacy role at the subnational level.

### **Parliamentary Diplomacy Theory**

Parliamentary diplomacy describes the involvement of legislative bodies in international relations through dialogue, inter-parliamentary cooperation, and participation in international organizations. Weisglas and de Boer (2007) define parliamentary diplomacy as diplomatic activities carried out by members of parliament to strengthen relations between countries through parliamentary channels. Stavridis (2021) notes that in the era of globalization, parliamentary diplomacy serves as a complementary mechanism to executive diplomacy, utilizing soft power. Parliaments can influence the foreign policy agenda through their oversight, legislative, and representative functions. In Indonesia, this function is evident in the activities of the Indonesian House of Representatives' Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Agency (BKSAP) and the cooperation initiatives of DPD members in building international relations based on regional issues (Nadalutti & Rüland, 2025). The theory of parliamentary diplomacy is relevant for understanding the interaction between legislative power and public diplomacy in the context of decentralized democracy.

Conceptually, parliamentary diplomacy occupies a unique position by bridging domestic and global interests. Stavridis (2021) emphasize that parliaments act as

bridge institutions that enable transparency and accountability in foreign relations. In the context of Southeast Asia, research by Wallis and Tobilewicz (2025) reveals that parliamentary diplomacy is frequently employed to enhance regional legitimacy and foster networks among legislative institutions in the region. In the Indonesian context, the DPD, as a regional representative institution, has the potential to assume this function, particularly by strengthening international cooperation among regions and promoting diplomacy grounded in local issues, such as climate change, sustainable development, and regional investment. However, the constitutional limitations of the DPD's authority mean that parliamentary diplomacy at the subnational level has not yet been formally institutionalized (Kurniawati & Zahidi, 2025).

Empirical research shows a close relationship between parliamentary diplomacy and paradiplomacy when subnational legislative bodies are involved in foreign affairs (Hastira et al., 2025; Tsvetkova et al., 2019). The DPD, for example, can help bridge communication between local governments and international partners through region-based parliamentary diplomacy. Thus, the DPD is not only a national policy oversight institution but also a channel for regional representation in global forums. The empirical gap is the lack of a conceptual model that integrates parliamentary diplomacy and paradiplomacy theories within a unitary state undergoing decentralization, such as Indonesia. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by constructing a theoretical model of Subnational Parliamentary Diplomacy.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



Sources: Processed by Author, 2025

The conceptual framework proposed in this study combines the theories of paradiplomacy and parliamentary diplomacy by positioning the DPD as an actor at the intersection of the two, a parliamentary institution that also serves as a representative of the regions (Figure 1). Theoretically, the DPD has the potential to become an actor in

representative-based paradiplomacy, with the primary function of expanding the regions' international networks without exceeding the limits of state diplomatic authority. This concept emphasizes that the DPD's role in international diplomacy should not be seen as a form of competition with the central government, but rather as a cooperative subnational parliamentary diplomacy, in which diplomacy is carried out through cooperation between levels of government to strengthen the position of regions in the global order.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive, qualitative approach to understand the meaning and dynamics of the Regional Representative Council's (DPD) role in the context of paradiplomacy, through an in-depth analysis of relevant documents and literature. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena holistically, contextually, and interpretively without manipulating research variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this context, the DPD is positioned as a subnational actor with the potential to represent regions in non-traditional diplomacy. This type of qualitative research is also relevant for analyzing policies, institutional practices, and inter-actor political relations (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2023). This method enables an in-depth understanding of how the DPD's authority structure and institutional practices can be linked to the theories of paradiplomacy and parliamentary diplomacy, the primary analytical frameworks of this study.

The data collection techniques employed in this study were based on two primary sources: document analysis and literature review. Document analysis included a review of the Indonesian constitution (1945 Constitution), Law Number 17 of 2014 concerning the MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD (MD3 Law), as well as official reports from the DPD RI, such as the DPD RI Performance Report. Secondary data were obtained from literature reviews comprising academic articles on Indonesian paradiplomacy and the role of legislative institutions in modern diplomacy (Cornago, 2020; Kumape & Wibisono, 2025). The literature selection process used purposive sampling, ensuring only relevant and up-to-date sources were included. This approach aligns with the characteristics of qualitative research, which emphasizes data selection based on contextual relevance rather than statistical representativeness (Miles et al., 2018). The collected data were then categorized and coded to identify the main themes related to the position and potential of the DPD in paradiplomacy.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through source and method triangulation. Triangulation was employed by comparing the results of analyzing legal documents, institutional reports, and findings from relevant international and national academic literature (Denzin, 2017). In addition, data credibility was strengthened by limited member checking, which involved validating initial interpretations through discussions with constitutional experts and parliamentary practitioners. The validated data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, following the interactive analysis model of Miles et al (2018), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Through this approach, this study is expected to produce a strong conceptual description that can be replicated to a limited extent, particularly for institutional and subnational diplomacy studies in Indonesia.

## DISCUSSION

### **The Position of the DPD in Indonesia's Diplomatic Structure**

Normatively, the position of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) in Indonesia's diplomatic structure is ambiguous, occupying a space between domestic representation and the articulation of regional interests in the international arena. Based on the 1945 Constitution and Law Number 17 of 2014 concerning the MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD (MD3 Law), the DPD does not have explicit authority in foreign policy, which is constitutionally the domain of the executive and diplomatic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the DPD has representative legitimacy, positioning it as an institutional channel for regional aspirations in the context of national policies that intersect with international relations (Asshiddiqie, 2021). Within the framework of cooperative subnational parliamentary diplomacy, the position of the DPD reflects the potential of parliamentary actors to act as a liaison between local needs and the global agenda without shifting the authority of state diplomacy, as described by Cornago (2020) in the concept of multi-layered diplomacy.

An analysis of the DPD RI Performance Report 2020–2024 reveals that, despite not having a formal diplomatic function, the DPD has participated in several international forums, including the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, through delegations that have discussed issues of sustainable development and regional equality (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah Republik Indonesia, 2024). This involvement signifies a shift in the meaning of parliamentary diplomacy, moving it from the exclusive domain of the DPR to a collaborative space that allows regional representation to contribute to thematic diplomacy. However, the DPD's participation in these forums remains symbolic, as it lacks the authority to

formulate a diplomatic agenda or produce binding policy briefs. This phenomenon reveals a gap between public expectations of the DPD as an articulator of regional interests and the limitations of its formal mandate (Prayitno et al., 2019).

The tension between the formal mandate and the strategic potential of the DPD can be understood through the theory of paradiplomacy, which holds that subnational actors can engage in international relations so long as this does not conflict with central government policy (Keating, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the DPD can be categorized as a semi-paradiplomatic actor because, although it lacks diplomatic tools, this institution represents regions with global interests, such as investment, tourism, and cross-border natural resource management (Karim et al., 2024). Data from Bappenas (2023) show that more than 40% of regional strategic programs are related to cross-border cooperation, which, in turn, requires a legislative mediation role in strengthening policy harmonization. Therefore, the existence of the DPD is crucial in building policy coherence between central diplomacy and regional interests.

Documentary interviews with members of Committee I DPD (as mentioned in the 2022 DPD RI Performance Report) reveal that this institution frequently receives requests for support from local governments to address issues with international dimensions, such as establishing UNESCO Global Geoparks or promoting exports from key regions (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah Republik Indonesia, 2022). Although the DPD's response to these issues has not been formal, this advocacy practice demonstrates a pattern of soft institutional engagement that strengthens its political legitimacy in the context of parliamentary diplomacy (Firdaus & Kresnawati, 2021). This pattern is consistent with the findings of the OECD (2020), which show that regional parliaments in developing countries often act as policy mediators, channeling local needs to international forums through consultative and representative mechanisms. Thus, the role of the DPD can be understood as a manifestation of embryonic cooperative subnational parliamentary diplomacy.

Within the framework of institutional analysis, the position of the DPD also reveals the dynamics of power asymmetry that reflect Indonesia's political system, which is still centered in Jakarta. The dominance of the DPR through the Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Agency (BKSAP) means that the DPD serves only as a supporting actor in diplomatic activities of a protocol nature. In fact, substantively, issues such as regional inequality, cross-border trade, and climate change require stronger regional articulation at the global level (Febriansyah et al., 2025; Hastira et al., 2026; S. Syuryansyah, 2024). Luerdi's (2021) study on DKI Jakarta's digital diplomacy shows that the success of regional paradiplomacy depends on political legitimacy and

adequate institutional capacity. Thus, when the DPD integrates its representative function with collaborative diplomacy practices, it can become a strategic link between central diplomacy and regional needs.

Conceptually, the DPD's position in Indonesia's diplomatic structure underscores the need to recontextualize the role of regional representation within a more inclusive foreign policy framework. The DPD has an excellent opportunity to become a norm entrepreneur in promoting a regionally-based model of parliamentary diplomacy. Referring to the experience of similar institutions such as the Committee of the Regions in the European Union (Tömmel, 2020), the DPD can strengthen its functions through a coordinating mechanism with the DPR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without violating constitutional boundaries. This reformulation of its role will enrich Indonesia's diplomatic practices with a bottom-up approach, in which diplomacy is not only an instrument of the state but also an expression of regional representation with a global orientation. Therefore, understanding the DPD's position in this context means paving the way for institutional transformation towards cooperative and multilevel parliamentary diplomacy.

### **The DPD's Opportunity as Indonesia's Paradiplomacy Laboratory**

The DPD's potential as a paradiplomacy laboratory lies in its role as an aggregator of regional interests and a facilitator of interaction between levels of government. Based on the concept of multi-layered diplomacy (Cornago, 2010, 2019), the modern diplomatic system is no longer hierarchical but open to the participation of subnational actors. In the Indonesian context, the DPD acts as a representative regional institution capable of consolidating various provincial paradiplomatic initiatives, such as cross-border cooperation and regional economic promotion (Karim et al., 2024). The 2023 DPD RI Performance Report documents several DPD activities related to facilitating regional foreign cooperation programs, including hearings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and meetings with foreign ambassadors. This data shows that the DPD can serve as a policy clearinghouse for regional paradiplomacy, which has been fragmented.

The phenomenon of paradiplomacy in Indonesia has grown significantly over the past two decades. Several regions, including Yogyakarta, Bandung, Bintan, and South Sulawesi, have employed thematic diplomacy in the fields of tourism, creative economy, and environmental management (Fadhilah, 2024; Hastira et al., 2025; S. Syuryansyah, 2024). However, these activities are often sector-specific and depend on the leadership capacity of regional heads. It is where the DPD has the potential to

become a consolidating institution that connects these practices with national policies and central diplomacy. As a region-based legislative body, the DPD has the moral and political legitimacy to articulate regional interests in a structured manner within the framework of state diplomacy. This aligns with Aldecoa and Keating's (2018) perspective that effective paradiplomacy requires national-level institutional support to prevent jurisdictional conflicts.

The DPD can also serve as a forum for networked diplomacy. An OECD study (2020) confirms that the successful integration of subnational actors in diplomacy depends on the ability to build cross-actor networks between the central government, regional governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations. In this context, the DPD can initiate a subnational diplomacy forum that brings together regional governments and international partners. A similar practice has been implemented in Canada through the Council of the Federation, which acts as a forum for coordinating interprovincial paradiplomacy (Paquin, 2022). By facilitating such coordination, the DPD could become a hub of regional diplomacy, strengthening regional cohesion while expanding Indonesia's bargaining power in the global arena.

In addition to network diplomacy, the DPD can also develop digital diplomacy as an effective means of strengthening regional paradiplomacy. Luerdi (2021) demonstrates how the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government leveraged digital platforms to foster international cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The DPD can replicate this model nationwide through an online portal that connects regions with foreign partners, whether for investment promotion, cultural exchange, or sustainable development. This digital approach aligns with the global trend in which parliaments and subnational institutions utilize digital media to enhance public diplomacy (Fathun, 2021; Hastira et al., 2026; Marwan et al., 2025; Novialdi et al., 2021). Thus, the DPD can act as a digital mediator, bringing together regional needs with opportunities for global cooperation by leveraging data and virtual communication.

Another prominent opportunity is the development of thematic diplomacy based on regional excellence. The DPD can play an advocacy role in raising specific issues, such as maritime affairs, tourism, the green economy, or local culture, to international forums. Through a thematic diplomacy approach, regional representation can enrich the narrative of national diplomacy, which has so far been too focused on macro issues such as trade or geopolitics (Athira, 2024; Novialdi & Rassanjani, 2022). For example, the DPD's initiative to support the blue economy in coastal areas can be part of Indonesia's inclusive maritime diplomacy agenda (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah Republik Indonesia, 2021, 2024). This model demonstrates that paradiplomacy is not

merely an external activity of the region, but also an integral part of national diplomacy, grounded in local identity and sustainability.

Conceptually, making the DPD a laboratory for paradiplomacy means positioning it as an institutional learning space for regional diplomacy practices. It enables the DPD to serve as a hub for policy innovation and cross-regional collaboration, integrating academic, political, and practical perspectives in fostering cooperative regional diplomacy. Cornago (2020)s asserts that the cooperative paradiplomacy paradigm necessitates institutional mechanisms that strike a balance between regional autonomy and central coordination. By strengthening its research, advocacy, and digital diplomacy functions, the DPD can become a model for developing countries in building region-based parliamentary diplomacy. Therefore, transforming the DPD into a paradiplomacy laboratory is a strategic step towards adaptive and inclusive multilevel diplomacy governance.

### **Model for Strengthening the DPD in Indonesian Parliamentary Diplomacy**

A model for strengthening the DPD in parliamentary diplomacy needs to be developed within an institutional framework that positions the DPD as a supporting actor rather than a competitor in the national diplomatic architecture. Theoretically, parliamentary diplomacy emphasizes the importance of political representation in expanding international relations networks based on public legitimacy (Fiott, 2021). In the Indonesian context, this strengthening model can be used to institutionalize the DPD's empowerment through strategic partnership mechanisms with the DPR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This approach aligns with the practice of cooperative subnational parliamentary diplomacy, where diplomacy is conducted through coordination among levels of government to enhance the effectiveness of foreign policy without creating overlapping authorities (Cornago, 2020). Thus, the DPD has the potential to become a formal and measurable coordination hub for regional diplomacy.

The first institutional model that can be adapted is the European Union's Committee of the Regions (CoR). The CoR functions as a consultative body that provides input on the European Union's external policies, grounded in regional aspirations (Tömmel, 2020). This type of structure can be implemented in Indonesia through the establishment of a Regional Diplomacy Forum, coordinated by the DPD, with members comprising regional representatives, the DPR, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This mechanism will enable regions to have an official channel to convey their perspectives on national foreign policy, particularly on issues of trade, migration, and sustainable development (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah Republik

Indonesia, 2023; Indonesia, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). Institutionally, this forum will enhance policy coherence between the central and regional governments, while fostering the DPD to serve as a strategic link in multi-layered diplomacy that promotes the principles of harmony and participation.

The second relevant model is the practice of delegated missions in Quebec, Canada. Through General Delegations, Quebec has representatives in various countries to promote economic and cultural interests without infringing on national diplomatic authority (Paquin, 2022). The DPD can adapt this concept by facilitating the involvement of DPD members or secretariats in economic and social missions carried out by the central government. For example, DPD delegations can participate in Indonesia–EU Partnership Forums or regional trade missions to bring regional perspectives to international negotiations (Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2023). Thus, the DPD can play a role in representative diplomacy, that is, diplomacy grounded in regional representation, which strengthens national legitimacy through regional participation in global forums.

The third model refers to cultural-economic diplomacy practices such as those carried out by Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain. Both regions utilize their local culture and economy as instruments of soft power to enhance their regional image while supporting national policies (Keating, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the DPD can initiate Thematic Parliamentary Missions that highlight local identities and regional potential, such as promoting the creative industries of Yogyakarta, marine tourism in South Sulawesi, or coffee exports from Sumatra (Karim et al., 2024). This approach aligns with the soft diplomacy paradigm, which emphasizes cultural narratives as tools for enhancing a country's bargaining power (Novialdi et al., 2021). The implementation of this model not only strengthens locally based economic diplomacy but also expands the reach of Indonesian diplomacy through the uniqueness of regional identities.

From an institutional perspective, strengthening the DPD in parliamentary diplomacy also requires policy reform and internal capacity building. Based on the 2024 DPD RI Performance Report, the main challenges facing this institution are the limited number of human resources with expertise in global issues and the absence of a permanent work unit to handle parliamentary diplomacy professionally. Therefore, a capacity-building strategy is needed through international diplomacy training for DPD members, the development of cooperation with universities and research institutions, and the digitization of regional diplomacy to expand cross-border communication

networks (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah Republik Indonesia, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). This strengthening will position the DPD as a policy entrepreneur capable of formulating region-based diplomacy ideas and synergizing them with national strategies.

The model for strengthening the DPD in parliamentary diplomacy must ultimately be oriented towards the development of collaborative, participatory, and multilevel governance of diplomatic processes. By emulating the practices of the Committee of the Regions (European Union), Quebec Delegated Missions (Canada), and cultural diplomacy models (Spain), Indonesia can develop a more decentralized diplomatic system without compromising central control. The DPD acts as a coordinating node between regional and central actors, ensuring that diplomacy is not only an instrument of the state but also a collective expression of regional communities on the global stage (Cornago, 2010, 2020; Paquin, 2021). This model aligns with the vision of cooperative subnational parliamentary diplomacy, in which the role of the DPD is not merely symbolic representation, but an integral part of transforming Indonesian diplomacy towards a more inclusive, adaptive, and locally rooted global governance.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be confirmed that the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) has significant potential to serve as a laboratory for paradiplomacy within Indonesia's foreign relations system. This potential stems from the DPD's representative legitimacy as a regional representative, its position between local interests and national policies, and its involvement in these areas. However, it should be noted that this remains limited to international forums and to the facilitation of regional issues with a global dimension. Through the integration of paradiplomacy and parliamentary diplomacy theories, this study demonstrates that the DPD can play a role as an actor in cooperative subnational parliamentary diplomacy, specifically as a supporting actor that strengthens state diplomacy through the coordinated articulation of regional interests. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in expanding the study of parliamentary diplomacy to the subnational level in the context of a decentralized unitary state, while filling the gap in the literature on the role of regional representative institutions in multilevel diplomacy. Thus, the DPD is not merely understood as a domestic institution, but as a potential node capable of connecting regional development dynamics with the national and global diplomatic agenda.

However, this study also emphasizes that this potential has not been fully utilized due to formal and structural limitations that limit the DPD's room for manoeuvre in international diplomacy. The absence of explicit authority in regulations, the dominance of executive actors and the DPR in the national diplomatic architecture, and the lack of a systematic institutional mechanism mean that the DPD's role remains symbolic and sporadic. Therefore, to strengthen the role of the DPD as a laboratory for paradiplomacy, strategic steps are needed that remain within the constitutional corridor, including the establishment of a regional diplomacy coordination forum, strengthening parliamentary diplomacy capacity, and utilizing digital diplomacy as an instrument for consolidating regional interests. From a policy perspective, closer harmonization among the DPD, DPR, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs is crucial to establishing inclusive and sustainable diplomatic governance. Meanwhile, for academic development, further research is recommended to deepen empirical analysis through regional case studies or direct interviews with relevant institutional actors, thereby further testing the effectiveness of the proposed subnational parliamentary diplomacy model. Thus, this conclusion confirms that the DPD is not merely a complement to the representative system but has the potential to become a crucial node in the transformation of Indonesian diplomacy, making it more adaptive to global dynamics and regional needs.

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