

# LEADERSHIP MATTERS: EXPLAINING PARADIPLOMACY IN A UNITARY STATE THROUGH THE WEST JAVA–SHIZUOKA CASE

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## Abstract

This study examines how political leadership shapes paradiplomacy practices at the subnational level, focusing on the cooperation between the West Java Provincial Government of Indonesia and Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. While existing studies on paradiplomacy in unitary states tend to emphasize institutional and policy dimensions, limited attention has been given to the role of individual leadership characteristics in shaping international engagement. Addressing this gap, this article integrates paradiplomacy theory with political leadership and idiosyncratic approaches to analyze how leadership styles influence the direction and outcomes of subnational foreign cooperation. This research employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, document analysis, and secondary sources, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study compares the leadership of two Governors of West Java, Ahmad Heryawan and Ridwan Kamil, in managing paradiplomacy initiatives with Shizuoka Prefecture. The findings show that leadership idiosyncrasies significantly shape the orientation, strategy, and outcomes of paradiplomacy. Ahmad Heryawan's leadership emphasized institutional consolidation and foundational cooperation, while Ridwan Kamil's leadership demonstrated a more network-oriented and innovation-driven approach, expanding cooperation into digital governance and creative economy sectors. These differences influenced not only the scope of cooperation but also its impact on governance quality, including transparency, capacity building, and international positioning. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of leadership-driven paradiplomacy in a unitary state context and provides a more nuanced understanding of how individual-level factors interact with institutional frameworks in shaping subnational international relations.

**Keywords:** Idiosyncratic, Paradiplomacy, Political Leadership, Shizuoka, West Java.

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a topic that is widely discussed in various disciplines. Leadership in international relations plays a critical role in shaping relationships, political and economic dynamics, and global security. Leaders become key factors influencing the direction of their country's foreign policy, negotiating agreements, and dealing with complex international challenges. Its decisions and actions can encourage cooperation or exacerbate conflicts, thus making leadership an important factor in the international arena. The study of leadership in international relations is motivated by various theoretical perspectives. Realism emphasizes the role of power and national interests, viewing the leader as a rational actor who prioritizes the security and survival of his country (Morgenthau, 1948). On the other hand, liberalism emphasizes the importance of institutions, norms, and cooperation, which states that leaders can work together to achieve mutual benefit (Keohane, 1988). Constructivism offers a different point of view, focusing on the role of ideas, identities, and social norms in shaping leadership behavior. According to this perspective, leaders are influenced by their cultural and historical contexts, which shape their perceptions and actions (Wendt, 1999). Domestic political dynamics are one of the sources of idiosyncrasies in international relations. Leaders often adjust their

foreign policy to suit the needs of the domestic community, which often results in unpredictable or contradictory policies. The study of leadership in international relations is motivated by various theoretical perspectives. Realism emphasizes the role of power and national interests, viewing the leader as a rational actor who prioritizes the security and survival of his country (Morgenthau, 1948). On the other hand, liberalism emphasizes the importance of institutions, norms, and cooperation, which states that leaders can work together to achieve mutual benefit (Keohane, 1988).

Various fundamental changes that have occurred in the era of globalization have created a new order in relations between countries. The paradigm of international relations that originally focused on countries that are the main actors in playing an important role in the global world has shifted to non-state actors, including local governments. The phenomenon of globalization and the expansion of authority for local governments have stimulated the emergence of new systems and networks in carrying out diplomatic activities. One of the impacts that occurred due to the expansion of authority was the strengthening of recognition of the strategic role of sub-state actors, especially provincial governments, in fulfilling international relations agendas. The authority of local governments in Indonesia in conducting foreign relations is still limited and under the supervision of the Central Government. In line with the paradigm change in foreign cooperation, local governments have greater access to carry out cooperation with local governments abroad.

Foreign cooperation carried out by local governments is one of the relatively popular forms of policy in Indonesia. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' treaty database, there are at least more than 70 foreign cooperation involving local governments (Foreign Agreement Data, n.d.). One form of foreign cooperation that is widely carried out by local governments is by building cooperation between twin cities or twin provinces (sister cities/provinces). The majority of these cooperation focuses on cooperation in the economic field (Foreign Agreement Data, n.d.). All of these collaborations can be realized because of the role of regional heads in conducting paradiplomacy.

Of the various paradiplomacy activities, one of the collaborations between local governments carried out by the West Java Provincial Government that is quite successful and has been running continuously is paradiplomacy with Shizuoka Prefecture. The paradiplomacy began to be carried out based on an agreement between the Governor of West Java (Ahmad Heryawan) and the Governor of Shizuoka Prefecture (Heita Kawakatsu) in Shizuoka (Japan) on November 9, 2016. Furthermore, the cooperation between the Provincial Government of West Java and Shizuoka Prefecture was inaugurated with the signing of an MoU by the Governor of West Java and the Governor of Shizuoka Prefecture on November 2, 2017 in Shizuoka (Japan). The scope of cooperation includes human resource development and economic cooperation.

In international relations studies, leadership is a key factor influencing decision-making processes, cooperation strategies, and successful policy implementation (Wehner & Thies, 2021). The ability of regional leaders to manage international networks, capitalize on global opportunities, and navigate institutional boundaries is a determining factor in successful cooperation. This aspect is closely related to the concept of leadership idiosyncrasy, namely the personal characteristics, background, and individual preferences of leaders that influence the style and direction of policy (Dyson & Briggs, 2017).

Literature on paradiplomacy can be divided into two main contexts: federal and unitary states. Studies in federal states (Pietrasiak et al., 2018) indicate that subnational actors have relatively high external autonomy and serve as complements to national foreign policy. Meanwhile, in the context of a unitary state like Indonesia, research (Trianggita, 2021) indicates that paradiplomacy is more limited and predominantly focuses on sectoral cooperation such as economics, education, and culture. Furthermore, studies on political leadership (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2013; Antlov, 2003; Mietzner, 2015) emphasize that leadership character and style influence the dynamics of central-regional relations, including the practice of paradiplomacy.

Existing studies tend to be structural-institutional and descriptive, failing to fully explain the role of

leadership as a determining factor in variations in paradiplomacy practices. Furthermore, there is still a separation between structural approaches (state models) and agency approaches (leadership) in explaining paradiplomacy in unitary states. This research offers an integrative approach by combining the structural perspectives of paradiplomacy and idiosyncratic leadership factors. Thus, paradiplomacy is understood not only because of state institutional design but also as a product of the interaction between authority structures and the character of political leadership within the context of a unitary state.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study integrates three main analytical perspectives—paradiplomacy, political leadership, and idiosyncratic leadership—to explain how subnational international engagement is shaped not only by institutional structures but also by individual agency.

### **Paradiplomacy as Subnational International Engagement**

Paradiplomacy refers to the involvement of subnational governments in international relations to pursue economic, political, and socio-cultural interests. The concept emerged in the 1980s through the works of Ivo Duchacek and Panayotis Soldatos, particularly in the context of debates on decentralization and the redistribution of authority within states. As noted by Kuznetsov (2014), paradiplomacy can be understood as a form of political communication conducted by local governments with foreign governmental and non-governmental actors to achieve various benefits. In this sense, paradiplomacy reflects the growing “foreign policy capacity” of sub-state actors, enabling them to engage in international activities beyond traditional state-centric diplomacy (Wolff, 2007). However, the extent of this capacity varies depending on the political system. In unitary states such as Indonesia, paradiplomacy operates within a framework where subnational actors remain aligned with central government policies, limiting their autonomy compared to federal systems (Kuznetsov, 2014). Despite these structural constraints, paradiplomacy has become an important instrument for regional development, facilitating international cooperation in areas such as investment, education, technology transfer, and cultural exchange. As Sergunin and Joenniemi argue, subnational actors may employ various strategies in paradiplomacy, including attracting foreign investment, building international networks, and promoting regional identity (Sergunin & Joenniemi).

### **Political Leadership and Foreign Policy at the Subnational Level**

While paradiplomacy provides the structural context, its implementation is significantly shaped by political leadership. The literature on foreign policy analysis emphasizes that leaders play a crucial role in decision-making processes, mediating between domestic pressures and international opportunities (Hermann, 2005; Putnam, 1998; Preston, 2017). Leadership is generally understood as a process through which an individual influences a group to achieve common goals (Northouse). In the context of governance, leadership style reflects a combination of values, skills, and behavioral patterns that shape how policies are formulated and implemented (Machali & Kurniadin). Classical and contemporary leadership theories further distinguish between different styles, such as transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership, each of which has distinct implications for organizational performance and policy outcomes (Bass, 1990). In subnational contexts, political leaders such as governors act not only as administrators but also as strategic actors who shape the direction of international cooperation. Their role becomes particularly important in paradiplomacy, where institutional frameworks may be limited and require proactive leadership to initiate and sustain international engagement.

### **Idiosyncratic Leadership as an Analytical Lens**

To further explain variations in paradiplomacy practices, this study employs the concept of idiosyncratic leadership, which focuses on individual-level factors in decision-making. This perspective is rooted in foreign policy analysis, which argues that policy outcomes are influenced not

only by structural conditions but also by leaders' personal traits, perceptions, and cognitive processes (McDermott). Idiosyncrasy refers to the unique characteristics, behaviors, and preferences of individuals that distinguish them from others. In the context of political leadership, idiosyncratic traits may include personal vision, risk-taking tendencies, communication style, and network orientation. These traits influence how leaders interpret opportunities, respond to challenges, and design policy strategies.

As Envall suggests, variations in leadership behavior can lead to different policy outputs, even under similar structural conditions. This implies that differences in paradiplomacy practices across leadership periods cannot be fully explained by institutional factors alone, but must also consider individual agency.

### **Integrating Leadership and Paradiplomacy**

Building on the perspectives above, this study argues that paradiplomacy is a leadership-driven process in which individual characteristics interact with institutional frameworks to shape policy outcomes. While institutional arrangements define the scope and limitations of subnational international engagement, leadership determines how these opportunities are interpreted and utilized.

In this framework, idiosyncratic leadership acts as a mediating variable that links structural conditions and policy outcomes. Leadership characteristics influence: (1) the strategic orientation of paradiplomacy (e.g., economic-focused, network-driven, or innovation-oriented); (2) the choice of international partners and cooperation sectors; (3) the effectiveness and sustainability of cooperation outcomes.

Thus, differences in leadership between Ahmad Heryawan and Ridwan Kamil are expected to produce distinct patterns of paradiplomacy, even within the same institutional context of West Java Province.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive-analytical design to examine the role of political leadership in shaping paradiplomacy practices at the subnational level. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as the study aims to explore complex interactions between leadership characteristics and international cooperation outcomes, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods. The research adopts a case study strategy focusing on the paradiplomacy between the West Java Provincial Government and Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan, as this case represents one of the most sustained and institutionally developed subnational international partnerships in Indonesia.

The study applies a comparative perspective by examining two distinct leadership periods, namely the administration of Ahmad Heryawan (2008–2018) and Ridwan Kamil (2018–2023). This temporal comparison enables the analysis to capture both continuity and variation in paradiplomacy practices within the same institutional setting, while highlighting how differences in leadership styles influence the orientation, strategies, and outcomes of international cooperation.

Data for this research were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with three key informants who possess direct knowledge and involvement in the paradiplomacy process of the West Java Provincial Government. These informants include government officials and relevant stakeholders engaged in international cooperation activities. The selection of informants was conducted using purposive sampling, based on their relevance, expertise, and active participation in the policy process under study. Secondary data were gathered from official government documents, such as Memoranda of Understanding, cooperation reports, and policy records, as well as academic publications, journal articles, and credible online sources, including official government websites. These secondary sources serve to complement and validate

the findings derived from primary data.

Data collection was carried out through a combination of in-depth interviews, document analysis, and documentation review, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of both the formal and informal dimensions of paradiplomacy practices. The analytical process followed a thematic analysis approach, beginning with data reduction to identify relevant information, followed by coding to extract key themes related to leadership characteristics, paradiplomacy strategies, and cooperation outcomes. These themes were then categorized into broader analytical constructs and interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework, particularly the role of idiosyncratic leadership in shaping subnational international engagement.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study applies triangulation techniques by comparing multiple data sources, including interviews, documents, and secondary literature. In addition, source triangulation is conducted by involving informants from different institutional backgrounds, while theoretical triangulation is applied by interpreting the findings through multiple analytical perspectives, namely paradiplomacy and political leadership theories. While this study is limited to a single case, it provides in-depth insights into the interaction between leadership and paradiplomacy within a unitary state context, offering analytical relevance for similar subnational settings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### **The Idiosyncratic of Governor Ahmad Heryawan**

#### **Ahmad Heryawan's Contextual Background**

Ahmad Heryawan's leadership trajectory was shaped by the context of post-1998 political liberalization which opened up opportunities for intellectual-religious actors to enter the formal policy space. The momentum of Reformasi provides a new political ecology, where the Tarbiyah network that originally developed on campus gets institutional channels to influence the electoral arena and regional policies. In this context, Heryawan positions himself as a figure who is able to translate religious moral discourse into the agenda of local government, from advocacy of social issues in da'wah forums to programmatic articulation through the seat of the DPRD and then the seat of the Governor (Bush, 2009).

His victory in the 2008 gubernatorial election indicated a shift in the preferences of West Java voters towards candidates who combined the image of integrity with the promise of public service, which was then packaged in the narrative of "West Java Beriman" to unite development orientation and religious values at the provincial level. Thus, the contextual dimension shows that the structural opportunities of Reformasi met with Heryawan's ideological capital and social network, and were then converted into electoral mandates that shaped the space for his policy movement (Bush, 2009).

#### **Personal Background**

Heryawan's ideosyncratic source departs from the experience of religious life in a rural environment and the intensive tradition of Islamic organizations from an early age. The traces of socialization in the Muhammadiyah family, pesantren education, and the role of student leadership form a firm moral habitus as well as training organizational skills. His academic trajectories that include Sharia, LIPIA, and later postgraduate studies in resource economics and management show a synthesis between Islamic normative ethics and modern governance. This synthesis becomes a lens that guides policy preferences while providing a vocabulary of legitimacy as it justifies public decisions through Sharia principles that are compatible with "good governance" and sustainable development.

Heryawan's production of knowledge in the form of books and policy writings strengthens his profile as a "*political scholar*" who not only adopts values but seeks to operationalize them in issues of welfare, education, and social tolerance. At the same time, the experience of cadre regeneration in the Tarbiyah

Movement and its transformation into a party structure provided a national network, an ideological apparatus, and organizational capital that accelerated its acceleration on the political stage (Machmudi, 2008; Wahid Foundation, 2016; Wildan, 2013). The convergence between personal disposition, intellectual-religious base, and institutional networks is what forms Heryawan's unique "handprint" in leading.

### **Leadership Approaches and Behaviors**

Heryawan's leadership style features a combination of technocratic servants with an explicit Islamic value frame. He organizes the policy process through evidence-based principles, forms a cross-university team of experts and demands data justification before strategic decisions are made. This practice shows an effort to balance ethicalnormative demands with modern analytical disciplines so that policy does not stop at the rhetoric of values, but is projected on measurable outcomes in public services.

In terms of content, his policy choices illustrate the red line of institutionalized religious preferences, such as regulations related to alcoholic beverages and school uniforms, accompanied by policies to strengthen the economy of the ummah through sharia microfinance and the development of BMT that expands financial inclusion in the lower segment. On the other hand, the infrastructure and bureaucratic modernization agenda marks the orientation of economic efficiency and connectivity, while the implementation of SPBE increases accountability and service satisfaction (Bank Indonesia, 2013; Dinas Kesehatan Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2012; Kementerian Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi (PANRB) Negara, 2024) .

External evaluation captures complex legacies. The increase in the perception of integrity and service goes hand in hand with criticism of the restriction of religious freedom in a number of cases, thus showing the limits of identity nuanced policies when dealing with the social plurality of West Java. This dynamic is important for paradiplomacy analysis because it shows that the credibility of the exit is often determined by the consistency of inward governance.

### **External Relations, Networking, and Paradiplomacy Reflections**

A record of actions beyond the boundaries of formal bureaucracy demonstrates the capacity for cross-community and cross-regional mobilization that is relevant for paradiplomacy. In the Aceh tsunami emergency response, Heryawan consolidated public support, volunteer networks, and medical competencies for large-scale humanitarian operations. This activity strengthens the reputation of responsiveness and expands the socio-political network that is a symbolic capital for collaboration between regions in the future (Setijadi, 2017).

His involvement as a "bridge" in the 2017 Jakarta Regional Election shows his competence in organizing narratives and coalitions across administrative boundaries, while emphasizing that ideological identity can be a binding tool for support when managed through effective communication. After taking office, the Entrepreneur Islamic Boarding School initiative affirms the orientation of sustainable empowerment through a combination of mentorship, financing schemes, and market connections, which indirectly builds a "collaborative ecosystem" with cross-regional appeal. Within the framework of paradiplomacy, this empowerment practice provides programmatic content that is easily linked to thematic international cooperation such as vocational education, sharia MSMEs, and community green economy.

### **Idiosyncratic Leadership of Governor Ridwan Kamil**

#### **Contextual Background**

Ridwan Kamil's transition from academic professionals to regional heads took place at the momentum of increasing demand for innovative and participatory governance. His victory in Bandung marked the opening of opportunities for non-party figures to articulate the smart city agenda and responsive services, while his victory in West Java projected the model to the provincial scale through the "West

Java Champion" narrative that emphasizes improving social indicators and technology-based public services.

This context shows that Kamil's electoral competitiveness rests on offering concrete solutions that are effectively communicated to urban and suburban voters, then aligned with provincial policies that are oriented towards efficiency and service user experience (Tomsa, 2014). In other words, a political environment that values innovation and quick results becomes a stage that magnifies Kamil's ideosyncratic effect as a problem-solver.

### **Personal Background**

Ridwan Kamil's ideosyncratic base is built from the habits of the academic family, architectural traditions that demand creativity and spatial sensitivity, and professional experiences that emphasize participatory design and sustainability. From high school to college, the track of achievement and social leadership shows the consistency of public orientation. The establishment of Urbane Indonesia and the development of "collaborative architecture" solidified its view that citizens are not only beneficiaries, but co-designers of urban solutions (Urbane Indonesia, n.d.).

His architectural works provide practical evidence of the values he adheres to, ranging from energy efficiency, the use of local resources, to the creation of spaces for social interaction. Her academic activities extend impact through experiential learning methods and village revitalization projects, while the concept of "urban acupuncture" shows a preference for small-scale interventions with systemic impact. This entire trajectory confirms that his leadership style is rooted in a combination of aesthetic function, sustainability, and the coproduction of shared values of citizens (Margono & Zuraida, 2019; The Worldfolio, 2016).

### **Leadership Approaches and Behaviors**

At the implementation level, Kamil displayed a participatory technocratic pattern that utilizes digital technology as a lever for service reform. The experience of Bandung's smart city became a policy laboratory to improve service flows, fight disinformation, and open citizen reporting channels which were then raised to the provincial level through the West Java Smart Service and the integration of 1,254 services. The practice of policy communication through social media enables a rapid feedback process and modifies bureaucratic culture towards responsiveness, while the acceleration of service time shows a focus on the convenience of citizens and business actors.

Family tragedy in 2022 served as a defining event that led to a new focus on public safety and risk management. Early warning policies and integrated disaster command demonstrate the ability to translate personal experiences into impactful policies, while also marking leadership's adaptive capacity in dealing with the burden of emotions and public pressure.

In the socio-environmental realm, the Kang Pisman and West Java Masagi programs emphasize the emphasis on the circular economy and character education based on local wisdom, which on the one hand strengthens cultural legitimacy and on the other hand provides programmatic content that is compatible with international cooperation networks with environmental and educational themes (Bappeda Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2018b; Friastuti, 2015).

### **External Relations, Networking, and Paradiplomacy Reflections**

Ridwan Kamil's international reputation as a governance innovator and driver of public participation extends his leadership "credit" in cross-border forums. The World Mayor Prize affirms the narrative that policy novelty and citizen engagement can be negotiable political capital on the global stage, while the recognition of international institutions for West Java's disaster architecture strengthens the credibility to build thematic cooperation in disaster resilience and sustainable development.

In the aftermath of family tragedy, studies show a pattern of leadership growth that combines humanitarian sensitivity with technological drive, resulting in a mix of values relevant to solution-

based regional diplomacy and multi-stakeholder networking. This combination is important for West Java's paradiplomacy because it provides the capacity to act that can conclusively link local priorities with the international agenda, including when West Java positions itself in strategic partnerships that demand the integration of service innovation, education, and environmental resilience (Margono & Zuraida, 2019; Tisnadibrata, 2015).

### **The Impact of the Leadership of the Two Figures on Governance and Society**

Ahmad Heryawan's legacy in West Java governance shows an emphasis on public morality and the articulation of religious values in regional policies, which provides a context for the use of moral regulatory instruments such as controlling the circulation of alcoholic beverages in some districts/cities in the 2010s (Machmudi, 2019). At the same time, human rights monitors document the recurring tensions experienced by religious minorities in Indonesia, providing a critical lens when identity policies intersect with the protection of religious rights at the local level.

Ridwan Kamil's legacy is marked by innovation in public services and the digitalization of government processes that emphasize responsiveness and user experience. The Provincial Government established the West Java Digital Service to develop the West Java Smart Service, data portal, and policy dashboard as the backbone of data-based services at the provincial level. In the realm of ASN management, the State Civil Apparatus Commission placed West Java in the very good category for the implementation of the merit system in 2024, which is internalized as a more performance-based recruitment and talent management practice (Bappeda Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2024). The SPBE evaluation and dataset capture achievements and areas for improvement in electronic governance, thus providing institutional evidence of the drive for digital transformation in this province.

The impact on society appears in two major patterns. In the Heryawan period, morally nuanced policies supported by religious bases showed an effort to assert public identity, but the national context showed a risk to religious freedom when local regulations were used exclusively against minority groups (Feillard & Madinier, 2013). In the Kamil period, the expansion of digital service channels, rapid complaint applications, and data ecosystems strengthened service access and coordination, although the SPBE evaluation document underlined the need for governance consistency and capacity building so that the equitable distribution of digital benefits is not unequal between regions.

Overall, the legacies of the two leaders show two complementary paths of governance consolidation. Heryawan represents the articulation of religious values into regional policies with a pressure point on public norms, while Kamil encourages more technocratic governance through digitalization, meritocracy, and data utilization. The combination of the two enriches the practice of local democracy in West Java, while marking the dilemma between identity politics and expanding access to effective and inclusive services for citizens (Machmudi, 2019; Warburton, 2018).

### **West Java-Shizuoka Paradiplomacy in the Leadership Continuum**

The West Java–Shizuoka paradiplomacy can be read as a continuum that crosses the leadership period, not as a momentary project of a single political figure. The relationship between the two regions dates back to the beginning of the sister province agreement in 1993, then reaffirmed through the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding* in 2016 that marked a new phase of more structured cooperation. The book *West Java Outward-Looking Strategy* (WJOS) notes that since 2016 this cooperation has moved from symbolic initiatives such as unagi gastrodiploacy to partnerships that explicitly focus on economic development and human resource capacity building (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2023). Thus, West Java-Shizuoka is an example of a long-term relationship that is able to adapt to changing contexts and leadership styles in Java.

Empirically, WJOS ranks Shizuoka as one of the most successful partnerships in the West Java KSDPL portfolio. In the 2016–2021 period, there were 22 action plans designed, 19 of which were successfully

implemented and only 3 were not realized, so that the implementation rate reached 86 percent (West Java Provincial Government). Empirically, WJOS ranks Shizuoka as one of the most successful partnerships in the West Java KSDPL portfolio. In the 2016–2021 period, there were 22 action plans designed, 19 of which were successfully implemented and only 3 were not realized, so that the implementation rate reached 86 percent (2023). The program does not only focus on one sector, but is spread across human resource capacity, economy, and governance development. Concrete examples include the organization of the West Java Eco Marathon 2017, the West Java–Shizuoka Business Forum in Hamamatsu, cooperation in the management of the Izu–Ciletuh Geopark with UNESCO standards, the Sakura Science Program for high school students in West Java, and the establishment of the Shizuoka Desk to protect and facilitate Shizuoka companies in the Karawang industrial area. WJOS's official evaluation confirms that the high level of implementation reflects dedication and effectiveness in realizing the goals of cooperation and provides a solid foundation for the continuation of the partnership in the future.

This continuum continues in the 2022–2027 phase when West Java–Shizuoka cooperation is maintained and expanded, despite facing new contexts such as the pandemic and changes in development priorities. In this period, 11 action plans were designed, with 7 that have been implemented and 4 that have not, resulting in an achievement rate of around 64 percent (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2023). This figure decreased slightly compared to the previous period, but still shows that the partnership did not stop, but transformed into more complex programs such as the Shizuoka Job Fair which took place repeatedly and attracted the high enthusiasm of prospective Indonesian migrant workers, as well as a series of employment webinars that prepared West Java residents to enter the Japanese job market (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2023). In other words, this cooperation is "upgrading": from merely a symbolic exchange and promotion of commodities to a tangible instrument for the placement of skilled labor, the increase of the competitiveness of human resources, and the integration of West Java economic actors in the Japanese production network.

In terms of leadership, this sustainability pattern cannot be separated from the regulatory and institutional foundations laid in the Ahmad Heryawan era and then consolidated in the Ridwan Kamil era. As explained in the previous subchapter, Ahmad Heryawan's period was marked by the arrangement of Regional Regulations, Governor's Regulations, and *the grand design of* regional cooperation that clarified the procedures, division of roles, and evaluation mechanisms of KSDPL (Peraturan Daerah Provinsi Jawa Barat No. 9 Tahun 2010, 2010; Peraturan Gubernur Jawa Barat No. 43 Tahun 2012, 2012; Peraturan Gubernur Jawa Barat No. 44 Tahun 2015, 2015). This framework becomes an institutional "rail" that ensures that cooperation such as West Java–Shizuoka can be maintained beyond the change of leaders. On the other hand, Ridwan Kamil inherited the framework and used it as a platform to encourage sector diversification, program intensification, and implementation governance improvements, for example through the establishment of the Shizuoka Desk and a more systematic skilled labor recruitment program (Kamil, 2024; Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2023).

Just like Governor Ahmad Heryawan who emphasized institutional consolidation, Ridwan Kamil also positioned paradiplomacy as an instrument of development, but with a more technocratic, communicative, and digital leadership style. In the interview, he defined leadership as "the art of serving and inspiring" and emphasizing a combination of "technocratic rationality and humanistic empathy" and the use of social media to build transparent and participatory two-way communication (Kamil, 2024).

This approach is reflected in the way West Java–Shizuoka is operational: through business matching with HIPMI, the opening of formal channels such as the Shizuoka Job Fair, and training programs for Indonesian Migrant Workers Candidates that are not only placement-oriented, but also capacity building to be able to compete globally (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2023). Beyond the economic dimension, RK's leadership has also pushed for the expansion of the agenda to disaster mitigation, the development of Geoparks, and the Sakura Science Plan program that sends West Java youth to study

science and technology at Japanese research institutes, which is explicitly projected as a long-term investment in human resources and epistemic networks (Kamil, 2024).

Thus, the West Java-Shizuoka paradiplomacy is not just a mechanical continuation from one period to another, but the result of the interaction between institutional continuity and leadership style innovation.

## CONCLUSION

This research departs from the question of how the leadership role of the Governor of West Java in the practice of paradiplomacy of the West Java Provincial Government towards Shizuoka Prefecture, by placing the governor as a representative of the central government as well as a regional head who manages the paradiplomacy space within the framework of a unitary state and good governance. Through reading the regulatory framework, cooperation documents, the West Java Outward-Looking Strategy (WJOS) program portfolio, sectoral data, and interviews, this study came to several main conclusions.

First, the governor's leadership seems to be a decisive element that bridges the opportunities available in the laws and regulations with the practice of paradiplomacy that is actually running in the field. The space provided by Law Number 23 of 2014 and Government Regulation Number 33 of 2018 only functions fully when it is turned on by leaders who are able to read the context, take initiative, and direct the bureaucracy. Second, the leadership roles of Ahmad Heryawan and Ridwan Kamil in the West Java Shizuoka paradiplomacy appear in the form of a configuration of three main roles. Ahmad Heryawan played a major role as an initiator and stabilizer, who initiated the preparation of the vision of cooperation, encouraged the birth of a memorandum of understanding of the sister province, sought ratification through the DPRD, and utilized local commodities and symbols such as coffee and cultural arts to build initial trust with Shizuoka. Third, the sectoral implementation of West Java paradiplomacy in Shizuoka shows how the governor's leadership style and personal characteristics are closely related to the application of the principles of good governance as formulated by Johnston. Fourth, the partnership with Shizuoka confirms that paradiplomacy actively guided by the governor can move out of the pattern of mere ceremonial diplomacy. In many contexts, the memorandum of understanding at the regional level ceases as a symbol of no follow-up. Fifth, this study also found that the role of governor leadership in paradiplomacy has not been fully followed by equal readiness at the district and city levels.

Overall, this research article concludes that the role of the governor's leadership in the West Java Provincial Government's paradiplomacy towards Shizuoka Prefecture is not only related to formal authority in subnational foreign relations. Political leadership, personal peculiarities, and the ability to harmonize the principles of good governance make paradiplomacy function as a means of reforming governance and strengthening more targeted regional development.

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