



YOGYAKARTA'S PARALLEL DIPLOMACY TOWARDS VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, IN THE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstrak

Tujuan dilakukannya penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis kegiatan diplomasi paralel yang dilakukan DIY ke Victoria, Australia dalam pelestarian dan pengembangan warisan budaya daerah. Warisan budaya daerah berperan penting dalam memperkuat identitas suatu daerah dan mampu dijadikan sebagai sebuah peluang kerja sama. DIY yang dikenal sebagai pusat kebudayaan Jawa sadar akan potensi tersebut dan berusaha melestarikan dan mengembangkan warisan budaya dengan memanfaatkan jaringan internasional, yaitu diplomasi paralel. Konsep diplomasi paralel yang digunakan di dalam penelitian ini membuat tindakan luar negeri yang dilakukan DIY menjadi sah di mata hukum nasional dan internasional. Adapun pendekatan yang digunakan di dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan teknik wawancara dan studi dokumen. Temuan yang didapatkan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa diplomasi paralel DIY tidak hanya memperkenalkan budaya daerah kepada pihak global, melainkan turut memperkuat hubungan antaraktor serta menghasilkan kerja sama konkret dalam rangka pelestarian dan pengembangan warisan budaya daerah.

Kata Kunci: *Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, diplomasi paralel, Victoria, warisan budaya*

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze the parallel diplomacy activities by DIY towards Victoria, Australia, in the preservation and development of local cultural heritage. Local cultural heritage plays a vital role in strengthening the identity of a region and can be used as an opportunity for cooperation. DIY, which is known as the center of Javanese culture, is aware of this potential and strives to preserve and develop cultural heritage by utilizing international networks, namely parallel diplomacy. The concept of parallel diplomacy used in this research makes the foreign actions taken by DIY legitimate in national and international law. The approach used in this research is qualitative, using interview techniques and document studies. This research shows that DIY's parallel diplomacy not only introduces local culture to global parties but also strengthens relationships between actors and produces concrete cooperation in preserving and developing local cultural heritage.

Keywords: cultural heritage, parallel diplomacy, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Victoria.

Introduction

Globalization has influenced recent international relations activities. Undeniably, globalization has also accelerated the process of interaction and integration between different entities, individuals, and countries worldwide. In this regard, the development and advancement of technology in communication and transportation have also played a role in accelerating interaction and integration in international relations (Nurhaidah & Musa, 2015: 1-2). Thus, globalization is a network that can unite previously isolated and scattered societies to become interdependent.

However, this freedom has also created many challenges, such as global dynamics and global needs that become more complex in international interactions. The complexity of recent needs and problems also affected actors' interests in meeting their needs or overcoming the difficulties they faced directly and exclusively. This situation then encourages the emergence of new actors in international relations, such as sub-state or subnational actors (Sari & Mauludin, 2018: 457). In Indonesia, sub-state and subnation refer to provinces, cities, and districts with various representation units (Affandi, 2022: 1).

Foreign activities carried out by sub-state actors to achieve their regional interests are then known as parallel diplomacy. This terminology itself was first introduced by Ivo Duchachek and Panayotis Soldatos in the article "The International Dimension of Sub-National Self Government" in the 1980s. Furthermore, Aldecoa and Keating (1999) define parallel diplomacy, as mentioned by Duchachek and Soldatos earlier, as 'the foreign policy of subnational governments'. In this case, subnational actors can carry out foreign relations in influencing foreign policy, including subnational representation in foreign countries (McMillan, 2017; Mukti, 2020: 218).

The participation of local governments in the international arena is evidence that the concept of sovereignty has fundamentally changed. This is also supported by Cooper's (1996: 17) opinion that the significant changes in international relations today have resulted in a shift from the modern Westphalian State system to a new post-modern international system. Hence, state sovereignty has fundamentally changed, and the central government must share this sovereignty with local governments in their global activities (Mukti, 2015: 86). The changes have also further authorized local governments to take

actions deemed necessary to meet their domestic needs, including by establishing foreign relations (Dermawan et al., 2018: 387-388).

In addition, implementing regional autonomy has also opened up opportunities for regional participation in international relations more freely. Various possible efforts can be made by regions on diplomacy or conducting foreign relations. Aspects that the local government can make in carrying out its activities abroad include the economy, culture, environment, and others (Barston, 2014: 172; Dermawan et al., 2018: 388). Then, regarding the implementation of international activities by regions in Indonesia, Yogyakarta is one of the provinces that is quite active in carrying out its global activities, including parallel diplomacy activities. Yogyakarta has established many forms of regional foreign cooperation with subnational governments around the world, such as the State of Victoria (Australia), the Shanghai Municipality (China), California (United States), the Kyoto Prefecture (Japan), Gyeongsangbuk-do Province (South Korea), etc.

For years, Yogyakarta has been known as the center of Javanese culture because it has a diverse culture that is rich in values and history. A good example is Keraton Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta, which continues to practice its customs and traditions today. Moreover, Yogyakarta's people, who are still condensed to their cultures, also enhance the city's image as a *Kota Kebudayaan* (Cultural City). The many historic cultural heritage buildings, such as temples and the palace of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, also support this claim.

The role of culture in diplomatic activities is significant since it can serve as a bargaining chip for a party. With its cultural advantages, Yogyakarta tried to utilize this prominent aspect to fight for its regional needs (soft power diplomacy) (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasia Budaya Kemendikbud, 2018: 11). Thus, parallel diplomacy activities in the cultural field conducted by Yogyakarta are expecting to pave the way for negotiations and opportunities to strengthen cooperation with foreign entities to provide insights and perspectives in dealing with regional problems in various fields.

However, apart from fighting for regional needs, the implementation of parallel diplomacy activities in the cultural field by Yogyakarta is also one of the efforts made to encourage the preservation of cultural heritage while improving the image and appreciation of the region to foreign countries. Before utilizing cultural aspects as an enticement to attract cooperation with foreign entities, the Government of Yogyakarta

must encourage introducing and promoting regional cultural wealth to foreign countries. Through this parallel diplomacy, the local culture of Yogyakarta can then be positioned as part of a strong regional identity and be able to introduce its noble values to the world. Therefore, Yogyakarta can achieve the first goal of parallel diplomacy efforts in the cultural field by demonstrating to the global community that its regional culture is an identity distinct from that of other regions. This can be achieved later by developing and preserving regional cultural heritage. Therefore, in this research, the author will focus on the efforts made by Yogyakarta to conduct parallel diplomacy to maintain and develop its regional cultural heritage.

Theoretical Framework

Parallel Diplomacy

According to Constructivism, three concepts can explain and influence human actions in international relations: identity, norms, and language (Wendt, 1999: 219-220, 274-275). Furthermore, Wendt (1999: 1) also asserts that the study of Constructivism in international relations is not solely given by nature but can be built and developed by humans. In this case, the actions and interactions between actors and how they perceive each other create the reality of international relations. However, because the perceptions, values, and norms that construct the reality of international relations can evolve, the facts will also change over time (Wendt, 1999: 13). Thus, the focus given by constructivists in the study of international relations lies on ideational factors that show that reality is not static and eternal, but can develop and change through interactions between actors.

Moreover, the construction of international relations has also affected the conduct of foreign relations, which has become more diverse. One activity that has undergone these changes is diplomacy. Diplomacy activities that initially focused on countries and traditional issues began to experience changes and adjustments in several aspects, such as the issues in international relations, the actors involved, and even the implementation mechanism (Kristiana, 2024: 19). Furthermore, Lohmann (2017: 6) notes that the changes in diplomacy highlight the diversity of actors and processes. The changes affirm that the state's role as the central actor in international relations has begun to shift with the emergence of new actors, such as sub-state actors (Ohmae, 1996: 9).

With the fundamental changes in current diplomatic activities, we can call this phenomenon the transition from traditional to modern diplomacy. The structures and processes of contemporary diplomacy are often more complex, with interaction patterns that are not always linear or organized. This complexity reflects the current global reality, where relationships between local, national, and international levels are increasingly intertwined and complicated to separate. This global situation has led to parallel diplomacy theories and concepts.

Compared to traditional diplomacy, parallel diplomacy is a modern type that has grown in popularity recently. As one of the pioneers of the concept of parallel diplomacy, Duchacek (1986) defined it as international activities conducted by subnational governments (such as provinces, states, or cities) that aim to promote their economic, cultural, or political interests beyond national borders. Soldatos (1990) further expands the definition of parallel diplomacy by emphasizing the developmental aspect, where parallel diplomacy also encompasses all foreign actions and policies undertaken by subnational entities, either independently or within the foreign policy framework of the central government, to achieve economic, social, or political benefits. Thus, Soldatos does not simply see parallel diplomacy as an ad-hoc or incidental activity and an organized, systematic, and subnationally supported practice.

According to this explanation, parallel diplomacy involves subnational entities in international affairs, including direct international activities that support or complement the diplomacy of nation-states. These activities include signing cooperation, participating in global forums, and developing networks with foreign entities (Bappenas et al., 2023; Ibrahim, 2019). Those align with Kuznetsov's (2015) opinion in the book "Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational Governments in International Affairs," where he explains that parallel diplomacy activities include negotiations, signing international treaties, or forming delegations.

Cultural Heritage

A cultural heritage is a culture or lifestyle passed down from generation to generation. The rich cultural heritage of a country offers insights into the roots and forms of its identity, as well as a window into the country's shared history. As a result, cultural heritage falls into two categories: tangible and intangible. Tangible cultural heritage

comprises historical buildings, monuments, traditions, languages, art, music, and folklore (Silverman & Ruggles, 2007). In this way, cultural heritage is a thought, style, value, and language passed down from one generation to another to be preserved to maintain cultural diversity, foster a sense of belonging, and pass on knowledge to future generations (Zhang, 2022).

Cultural heritage also plays an essential role in the identity construction of a society. Heritage and culture can influence and be influenced by the daily lives of each community and its inhabitants. It is related to Di Pietro, Mugion, & Renzi's (2014: 1) statement on cultural roles in human development and the creation of individual and societal identities and behaviors. During globalization, it is undeniable that the identity of each group is slowly eroding and becoming universal. In this regard, cultural heritage plays a vital role in helping to counter cultural hegemonization. By emphasizing local and traditional values, cultural heritage can be used as a tool to maintain a unique identity in this increasingly globalized world (Panzera, 2022: 25). Following from this, cultural heritage can be explained as an element that can create a sense of collective identity that crosses national boundaries. Cultural heritage sites that engage such collective narratives can further encourage a sense of "we" among the wider community.

Recognizing cultural heritage as a potential instrument for strengthening local identity cannot ignore the recognition of different forms of cultural heritage, which can also create inter-group dialogue. States and sub-states can build closer international ties by using cultural heritage as a political tool. A good example is the city of Andalusia (Spain), which promotes its identity and culture internationally, attracts tourists and establishes cultural relations across countries by using Flamenco dance and music, a UNESCO cultural heritage.

Just like Andalusia, Yogyakarta, known as the center of Javanese culture, also has a valuable cultural heritage. Historical temples, *Wayang* shows, traditional dance, and music symbolize Yogyakarta's strong local identity and reflect the noble values, harmony, and wisdom upheld in Javanese culture. Parallel diplomacy activities that provide opportunities for subnational actors allow Yogyakarta to utilize its culture to build international relations.

As described earlier, cultural heritage is a valuable legacy that can reflect 'common humanity'. Its preservation becomes essential to maintain cultural diversity, foster a sense

of identity, and pass on knowledge to future generations. While challenges remain, individuals, communities, governments, and international organizations must cooperate to protect and celebrate these cultural heritages. With parallel diplomacy, Yogyakarta, as a subnational actor, can establish itself as a unique, relevant, and significant region in the international context. With this opportunity, Yogyakarta can utilize its cultural heritage as a link between local identity and global frameworks. By doing so, we can ensure that the richness of the past can continue to inspire and enrich the present and the future.

Research Method

In the study of International Relations, qualitative approaches play an important role in helping researchers create, interpret, and validate arguments. According to Lamont, qualitative research methods is a strategy for collecting and processing non-numerical data (Lamont, 2015: 94). In this case, the qualitative approach method focuses not only on numerical data—but more on non-numerical data, which allows researchers to dig deeper into the complex meanings and interpretations of various situations. Furthermore, the non-numerical data needed in this research will be obtained through interviews conducted through dialog and asking open-ended questions depending on the research needs. After the data is collected, the researcher concludes deductive analysis by starting from a general discussion to a specific discussion. Therefore, in conducting this research, the researcher used a qualitative approach method based on Lamont's explanation.

The qualitative approach is needed in this research to help identify and interpret the parallel diplomacy efforts made by Yogyakarta with subnational governments from other countries. This method assists researchers in identifying parallel diplomacy efforts and understanding the more profound social meaning of these interactions. This understanding further aligns with Lamont's opinion that the qualitative approach method is interpretivism, which focuses on global understanding of social and political meaning. Instead of searching for universal truths or testing hypotheses, qualitative approaches will try to understand the identities, standards, and cultures that play a role in global politics and dig deeper into subjective and social meanings (Lamont, 2015: 32). In this case, the DPMPTSP DIY (Dinas Penanaman Modal dan Pelayanan Terpadu Satu Pintu Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta) as a regional representative unit will be the subject of research in

more depth by using data in the field, data from the understanding of research subjects—both parallel diplomacy actors and researchers themselves, and data available in the field.

Result and Analysis

This section will analyze the parallels between the Indonesian National Government's work, policies, and collaboration with the Subnational Government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta) in terms of preserving and developing regional cultural heritage. This analysis will rely on two main frameworks. First is the outward-looking view, where Yogyakarta engages in parallel diplomacy and seeks regional foreign cooperation as an output to strengthen its positive image and promote regional interests, such as the need to preserve and develop regional cultural heritage. Next is the inward-looking view, where parallel diplomacy based on this view will focus on developing human resources in Yogyakarta to produce more advanced cultural works (Interview, 2025a).

Parallel Diplomacy in the Framework of the Republic of Indonesia

In this section, researchers will construct an overview of the phenomenon and practice of parallel diplomacy in Indonesia. Although parallel diplomacy activities have been ongoing since the 1980s, legislation on parallel diplomacy was only initiated in 1998 (Dermawan et al., 2024; Mukti et al., 2021). UU No. 22/1999 on Regional Government Articles 1d-1h specifies that, within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia framework, the Central Government devolves Government authority to Autonomous Regions based on the principle of decentralization. This framework gives local governments the right to regulate and manage the interests of their respective local communities. Since Indonesia had not been in a stable state post-reformation when UU No. No. 22/1999 was formulated and passed, and it is clear that the government at that time made this law to restore the community's political, social, and economic situation as soon as possible. This was achieved by granting broad authority to regions, including managing resources with minimal central government interference.

Furthermore—in restoring the post-reformation political, social, and economic situation—the regulation also allows local governments to cooperate with foreign institutions/agencies, as mentioned in Article 88 Paragraph 1. Further explanation of the

local government's authority to cooperate with foreign institutions/agencies is regulated in UU No. 37/1999 on Foreign Relations. As an opening, Article 1, paragraph 1 of UU No. 37/1999 explains Foreign Relations as follows:

“Hubungan Luar Negeri adalah setiap kegiatan yang menyangkut aspek regional dan internasional yang dilakukan oleh Pemerintah di tingkat pusat dan daerah, atau lembaga-lembaganya, lembaga negara, badan usaha, organisasi politik, organisasi masyarakat, atau warga negara Indonesia.”

Based on these regulations, some regions have established relationships with foreign entities - through economic cooperation, cultural cooperation, or development assistance. However, the rules in this law do not provide explicit provisions relating to mechanisms, limitations, or supervision from the central government.

The lack of regulations related to supervisory mechanisms stipulated in the law has further allowed regions to have greater discretion in determining the direction of their foreign cooperation. This also implies an inconsistent understanding of regional autonomy within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and creates egocentrism between regions because each regional head wants the broadest possible autonomy. The situation after the implementation of UU No. 22/1999 also worsened when there was disarray in the relationship between the central and regional governments because the hierarchical relationship between the autonomous regions and the government above was not regulated and explained in detail, thus causing unsynchronized policies in several areas (Mukti, 2020; Sekertaris Kabinet RI, 2023).

With the various problems arising from UU No. 22/1999, the government decided to conduct an evaluation and review to form a new regulation that could harmonize the central and regional governments. The review also involved the Amendment of the UUD NRI 1945 (Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia) as a guideline or constitutional foundation in the life of the nation and state. In 2000, the UUD NRI 1945 was amended to include three articles and eleven paragraphs concerning regional government (Barraq Suwartono, 2022). One of the key points in the amendment was the affirmation of regional autonomy. This is stated in at least two paragraphs, namely Article 18 paragraph (2) which reads: *“Pemerintahan daerah provinsi, daerah kabupaten, dan kota*

mengatur dan mengurus sendiri urusan pemerintahan menurut asas otonomi dan tugas pembantuan.”

And Article 18, paragraph (5) which reads: *“Pemerintahan daerah menjalankan otonomi seluas-luasnya, kecuali urusan pemerintahan yang oleh undang-undang ditentukan sebagai urusan Pemerintah Pusat.”*

Based on these two paragraphs, it is clear that the regions are entitled and authorized to regulate and manage their government affairs according to the principles of autonomy and assistance tasks and have the greatest possible autonomy, except for government affairs, which are determined by the central government.

This law has been amended three times in its journey: UU No. 22/1999, UU No. 32/2004, and UU No. 23/2014. In the current regulation, UU No. 23/2014, local governments still have the freedom of autonomy to determine the fate of their respective regions based on the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This is stated in Article 1, Paragraph 6, which reads: *“Otonomi Daerah adalah hak, wewenang, dan kewajiban daerah otonom untuk mengatur dan mengurus sendiri Urusan Pemerintahan dan kepentingan masyarakat setempat dalam sistem Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia.”*

As a result, regional autonomy can no longer be interpreted as total independence or freedom in exercising its autonomous rights and functions without considering the national interest at large. The freedom to manage the affairs of self-government must be interpreted as responsible freedom, considering that the central government controls the implementation of regional autonomy. In this study, researchers will rely on the concepts of decentralization and regional autonomy to complement the theory of parallel diplomacy, especially within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This policy mapping is crucial to indicate the success of parallel diplomacy implementation, mainly because the level of success or failure varies depending on the extent to which the national government can provide opportunities for subnational governments to engage in parallel diplomacy (Novialdi & Rassanjani, 2022: 111).

Moreover, regarding the regional authority in conducting foreign relations or cooperation, several regulations have already specifically regulated the implementation these activities. Some of them are PP (Peraturan Pemerintah) No.28/2018 concerning Regional Cooperation, Permenlu (Peraturan Menteri Luar Negeri) No. 3/2019 concerning General Guidelines for Foreign Relations by Regional Governments, and Permendagri (Peraturan Menteri Dalam Negeri) No. 25/2020 concerning Procedures for

Regional Cooperation with Regional Governments Abroad and Regional Cooperation with Institutions Abroad.

The implementation of parallel diplomacy by regions in Indonesia is urgent in increasing human resource capacity, fulfilling public services, improving the economy and investment, and increasing regional competitiveness. Regional foreign cooperation in parallel diplomacy can include cultural exchanges, advancing science and technology, promoting regional potential, enhancing technical and government management capabilities, or other initiatives approved by the central government that align with statutory provisions (Luerdi, 2021).

However, local governments must be concerned with other fundamental issues before achieving these goals. According to PP No. 28/2018, one of the requirements for local governments to permit foreign cooperation is to have diplomatic relations. In this case, local governments cannot establish relationships or propose cooperation plans with regions or institutions abroad that do not have a history of diplomatic ties with the Indonesian National Government. Indeed, this is a basic consequence of Indonesia's construction as a unitary state. The state owns sovereignty, and its authority over foreign relations is a part of its sovereignty. In other words, local governments can only conduct parallel diplomacy with regions or institutions abroad with whom they already have diplomatic ties.

The Implementation of Parallel Diplomacy by Yogyakarta

Hierarchically, Yogyakarta is one level below the central government and classifies as a subnational actor in international relations interactions. Unlike other regions in Indonesia, Yogyakarta has a long history and played a significant role in the struggle for Indonesian independence. Based on this, Yogyakarta was given its privileges compared to other level 1 administrative governments in Indonesia. This privilege is a form of appreciation for Yogyakarta's active role in fighting for and defending Indonesian independence and recognizing the continuity of local traditions and culture that are still maintained today. The concrete form of this privilege is the enactment of UU No. 13/2012 on the Privileges of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The legislation explains that the specificities owned by Yogyakarta include the governance, cultural, and spatial fields.

Yogyakarta's specificity is not only recognized in the context of international law through Law No. 13/2012 but also reflected in the strategic position and symbolic reputation played by Yogyakarta in non-formal international relations, particularly in the practice of parallel diplomacy. Outside the framework of official diplomacy conducted by the central government, Yogyakarta has become a visiting magnet for various international actors, including high-ranking officials of foreign countries, leaders of international organizations, foreign businessmen, and ambassadors and consuls-general from various countries. Every year, numerous courtesy calls are made by representatives of foreign countries to the Governor of Yogyakarta, marking Yogyakarta as an essential point of contact in a network of non-state diplomacy based on cultural and political symbols. This phenomenon shows that Yogyakarta, through its sultanate institution and the figure of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, has normative power and strong symbolic charm in the international community's view (Interview, 2025b).

Considering that the first ambassadors to the President of the Republic of Indonesia visited Yogyakarta after accreditation, Yogyakarta is seen as an authentic and valuable representation of Indonesian culture for building diplomatic understandings and connections on an affective and symbolic level. Official visits from prominent international figures such as the Emperor of Japan in 2023 and the President of Germany in 2022, who have only visited two domestic entities-the President of Indonesia and the Governor of Yogyakarta-indicate Yogyakarta's unique position in the constellation of Indonesian cultural diplomacy. These events are not merely a form of respect for individual regional heads but reflect recognition of Yogyakarta's historical status, cultural role, and international appeal as a center of cultural heritage and social pluralism that has played an important role in Indonesia's national history. These audiences are not just protocol but are often the starting point for initiating strategic cooperation in various sectors, such as culture, education, technology, and the creative economy (Interview, 2025b).

Yogyakarta's symbolic and cultural proximity in the context of subnational diplomacy is inseparable from Indonesia's strategic position in bilateral relations with key partner countries, including Australia. The relationship between Yogyakarta and Victoria stems from the friendship between Indonesia and Australia that has existed since 1968 with the signing of the Indonesia-Australia cultural cooperation agreement. This

relationship continued and was further strengthened by establishing the Australia-Indonesia Center (AIC) 2014 at Monash University (Putri, 2024). The AIC is a bilateral collaborative research initiative established for the governments of both countries, leading universities, and industry. The mission of the AIC is to advance people-to-people relations in science, technology, education, innovation, and culture (*The Australia-Indonesia Centre*, n.d.). In its development, AIC, which had its headquarters in Melbourne, discovered that the characteristics of Victoria's cultural and education sectors offered a convenient connection with Yogyakarta— an artistic and student city in Indonesia.

A living example of these characteristics is the reputation of Melbourne, Victoria's urban center, as a "city of education" and "city of art". Victoria, particularly through the City of Melbourne, has long been recognized as a center for contemporary art in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. The existence of world-class cultural institutions, such as the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO), and Arts Centre Melbourne, reflects the State Government of Victoria's high regard for the creative sector as an instrument of sustainable development. Art galleries and music performances in Victoria serve as spaces for artistic appreciation and a medium for cultural diplomacy and social transformation. On the other hand, in the education sector, the City of Melbourne is also recognized as one of the best student cities in the world according to various international rankings, such as QS Best Student Cities. This title is inseparable from the presence of world-class higher education institutions, such as the University of Melbourne, Monash University, and RMIT University. Melbourne's success in living up to its nickname as a "city of education" and "city of arts" reflects its capability as a global network node that combines the roles of culture, knowledge, and economy in an integrated urban ecosystem.

The early initiation of Yogyakarta-Victoria cooperation came from the Premier of Victoria, Mr. Denis Napthine, in 2013. At that time, Mr. Napthine and 450 Victorian SME entrepreneurs came to Yogyakarta to review potential business opportunities in Yogyakarta (Renggani, 2018). From this visit, a further meeting was held between the Governor of Yogyakarta, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwana X, and Mr. Napthine to discuss the plan to establish friendly cooperation between Yogyakarta and Victoria. A return visit by the Governor of Yogyakarta and his delegation to Melbourne in 2014 was also

mediated by the General Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia (KJRI) in Melbourne. The discussion of cooperation covered several fields, such as education, culture, and tourism, as well as the industrial sector and creative economy (Putri, 2024: 69). Yogyakarta and Victoria worked intensively on developing the cultural sector during the process of writing their cooperation (action plan). In this regard, the AIC acted as an active mediator in bridging communication, coordination, and formulation of cultural cooperation initiatives between these two subnational entities (Putri, 2024).

The signing of the Letter of Intent (LoI) between the Provincial Government of Yogyakarta and the State Government of Victoria on September 30, 2015, reflects the preliminary commitment of both parties to achieving sister-province cooperation. The follow-up process of this LoI does not immediately result in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) but must go through verification and approval stages under applicable laws and regulations, which can take one to two years. One of the main obstacles in this process is the approval stage from the DPRD, which in practice often takes longer than normatively stipulated in the Permendagri. Despite DPRD (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah) regulations stating that a request can be deemed approved if it does not receive a response within one month, the mechanism is not always followed (Interview, 2025b).

In addition, new regulations require that LoIs are valid only for one year; if they expire without a plan of action, the application process must be repeated. Therefore, the LoI must be attached to a plan of action so that it does not become a dormant document or a "zombie agreement". After obtaining legislative approval, the agreement will be verified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Directorate of International Law and Agreements and by the Ministry of Home Affairs through the Cooperation Facilitation Center. The process also involves cross-ministerial coordination, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, and other relevant sectoral ministries (Interview, 2025b).

Although the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was officially signed in 2017, collaborative activities between the two parties have started since 2016, which the AIC facilitated at Monash University. One of the flagship programs arising from this collaboration is the Youth Music Camp, an orchestral training for young Yogyakarta musicians in an intensive training format with mentors from the Melbourne Symphony

Orchestra (MSO). The program includes technical music training and a collaborative concert as a final presentation. The best participants of this program have the opportunity to join a one-month internship program at the MSO headquarters in Melbourne. In addition to the Youth Music Camp, since 2019, this collaboration has also included the Art Management Workshop, which focuses on performing arts management training. The best participants from this workshop also get an internship opportunity in Australia. Additionally, around 30 high school students from Victoria participated in a student exchange program to learn the language and culture of Yogyakarta. The whole series of programs shows that although the MoU was administratively effective only in 2017, substantive cooperation has been active long before through a cultural and education-based diplomacy approach. (Interview, 2025b).

Parallel Aspects of Yogyakarta's Parallel Diplomacy on the Preservation and Development of Local Cultural Heritage

Yogyakarta is a unique example of the implementation of regional autonomy in Indonesia, which is not only administrative but also cultural and historical. The specificity of Yogyakarta is recognized and guaranteed by UU No. 13/2012 on the Special Autonomy of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, which provides special authority in five main aspects, one of which is cultural affairs management. Culture is vital in building regional identity and cultural diplomacy and strengthening Yogyakarta's social cohesion in this context. The specialty in the cultural field gives Yogyakarta the flexibility to formulate policies and programs for the preservation, development, and utilization of local cultural values independently, which substantively includes the preservation of customs, local languages, traditional arts, and social norms that are an integral part of community life.

According to UU No. 5/2017, Indonesia has a culture advancement law that regulates the preservation and development of local cultural heritage. The regulation aims to preserve and develop Indonesia's national culture systematically and sustainably. In this framework, the state positions culture not merely as a legacy of the past but as a strategic resource to strengthen national identity, enhance social cohesion, and improve community welfare through cultural values. Furthermore, this law also emphasizes the importance of synchronizing across sectors and scales, including the involvement of local

governments, the education system, the private sector, and international cooperation. Therefore, promoting culture is positioned not only as a domestic effort but also as part of cultural diplomacy that can strengthen Indonesia's position in the global arena. Thus, UU. 5/2017 is a protective regulation of cultural heritage and a transformative instrument to make culture a force for nation-building in the modern era.

As a derivative regional regulation to UU No. 5/2017, Perda DIY No. 3/2017 deals with cultural preservation and development. This regulation shows the paralleling of regulations between national and regional policies in encouraging the preservation and development of culture. Both do not run separately but strengthen each other in an integrative framework that favors promoting culture as the foundation of national and regional identity. The Cultural Advancement Law establishes four strategic pillars: the protection, development, utilization, and guidance of the ten Objects of Cultural Advancement. This law is paralleled by Yogyakarta Regional Regulation No. 3/2017, which regulates the mechanism of protection and development of Yogyakarta's local cultural elements, including customs, values, institutions, languages, arts, and social practices, which are essential elements in the framework of Yogyakarta's specialty.

Cultural actors and indigenous communities can actively participate in cultural preservation efforts through both regulations' participatory and community-based approaches. In addition, both prioritize long-term planning—through the National Cultural Strategy at the central level and Yogyakarta's Cultural Master Plan at the regional level—demonstrating a systemic commitment to making culture a strength of sustainable development. At the practical level, the provincial government of Yogyakarta successfully translates this regulative mandate through various cultural parallel diplomacy efforts. A parallel diplomacy effort is reflected in Yogyakarta's cooperative relationships with overseas partners, including Victoria, Australia, focusing on arts exchange, cultural education, cultural heritage preservation, and promoting Yogyakarta's local values globally. This strategy not only strengthens Yogyakarta's position as a cultural center but also aligns with the spirit of the Law on the Promotion of Culture, which encourages the use of culture as an instrument of Indonesia's soft power diplomacy. In this context, Yogyakarta is not only an implementer of central policy but also an active participant in shaping the face of Indonesian culture at the international level through a decentralized but synergistic cultural strategy (Interview, 2025a; Interview, 2025b).

Concerning parallel diplomacy conducted by subnational governments, Yogyakarta has yet to have a regional-level regulation that explicitly regulates the practice of diplomacy autonomously. Unlike federal countries, where subnational regions are given greater legislative space in regulating their foreign relations, in a unitary state system, the implementation of parallel diplomacy by Yogyakarta is still guided by the national regulatory framework and limited to predetermined coordinative spaces. This reflects Yogyakarta's desire for a monitoring mechanism that maintains alignment between the central agenda and regional initiatives (Interview, 2025b). In this way, central and regional policies regarding administrative compliance and strategic objectives are similar. Yogyakarta shows that an effective parallel diplomacy can innovate locally without departing from the national development framework.

In particular, implementing Yogyakarta's parallel diplomacy towards Victoria does not operate in isolation from the central government but instead involves close coordination and collaboration. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly the Directorate General of International Law and Agreements, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Cooperation Facilitation Center, must be verified. In addition, the involvement of the KJRI in Melbourne plays an essential role as a diplomatic facilitator and direct link between regional actors and foreign partners. In addition, partner institutions such as the AIC, which serves as a bridge between educational and cultural institutions, strengthen this cooperation. Programs such as the Youth Music Camp are clear examples of inter-level collaboration, where regional initiatives gain support and legitimacy from national policies and central diplomacy. In this context, collaborative parallelism means that Yogyakarta is an implementer of international cooperation and part of Indonesia's diplomatic system. This collaboration ensures that regional parallel diplomacy remains integrated with the direction of national foreign policy while providing space for local innovation in supporting the country's strategic interests.

Conclusion

The parallel diplomacy model in the cultural sector promoted by Yogyakarta is bottom-up and rooted in the community. This approach differs from the state diplomacy model—which is often top-down—because it involves direct participation from the community of artists, cultural observers, creative economic actors, and grassroots communities. This

initiative shows that Yogyakarta has successfully positioned itself as the center of an alternative cultural movement that does not solely rely on state institutions but builds strength through cultural solidarity and horizontal networks. This strategy emphasizes the role of culture as a meaningful negotiation space and a symbolic production mechanism with political and economic influence on an international scale. Furthermore, this parallel diplomacy is also a powerful way to preserve and develop regional cultural heritage, as it enables the direct exchange of cultural knowledge between communities across countries and strengthens the legitimacy of local culture in the global sphere. Through cultural cooperation with state governments such as Victoria, Australia, Yogyakarta promotes traditional arts such as batik, gamelan, and traditional dances. It makes it part of reciprocal cultural diplomacy, where local values actively shape the world's cultural discourse.

Therefore, Yogyakarta's parallel cultural diplomacy represents how sub-national entities can play a strategic role in global politics through cultural power. Yogyakarta's success in building culture-based international relations shows that this is not just a historical legacy but also a contemporary potential to form a symbolic strength that can articulate local identity in a global framework. From the perspective of International Relations studies, this strategy shows the potential of subnational entities as transnational actors that could fill the space missed by formal state diplomacy. Thus, the parallel diplomacy model in cultural matters conducted by Yogyakarta is a form of regional policy innovation relevant to the spirit of autonomy and recognition of diversity within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

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