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**PARADIPLOMACY AND THE RISE OF THE GLOBAL CITY:
JAKARTA AS A SUBSTATE POLITICAL ACTOR**

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ABSTRACT

Following Indonesia's decision to relocate its national capital to Nusantara, Jakarta was designated as a Global City under Law No. 2/2024 on the Special Regional Province of Jakarta (DKJ). This status grants Jakarta enhanced political authority, enabling it to participate more actively in global affairs through paradiplomacy while strengthening its international profile. Previous studies on Jakarta's paradiplomacy and Global City status have focused primarily on sister-city cooperation and economic dimensions. This qualitative study examines Jakarta's paradiplomacy in its pursuit of Global City status by focusing on its political dimensions, an understudied aspect of existing literature. The analysis centers on two forms of paradiplomacy: sister-city partnerships and transnational networks. It further argues that Global City status expands the scope of subnational governmental authority, enabling Jakarta to exercise political actorness by responding to global challenges such as the refugee crisis. The findings indicate that Jakarta's paradiplomacy has become more structured under its Global City status. The study concludes that Jakarta's pursuit of Global City status through paradiplomacy demonstrates how substate actors can complement the state's role in addressing global issues. More broadly, Global City status and paradiplomacy reinforce one another, functioning simultaneously as both a goal and a driving force that strengthens the capacity of substate actors to emerge as global political actors.

Keywords: Paradiplomacy, substate government, global city, Jakarta, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Jakarta, the former capital of Indonesia, was officially designated as a Global City in 2024. This transition followed the relocation of Indonesia's national capital to Nusantara, located on the island of Borneo in Kalimantan. The relocation was mandated by Law Number 3/2022 on the National Capital,

which formally established Nusantara as the Ibu Kota Negara (IKN). Consequently, Jakarta was reconstituted as the *Provinsi Daerah Khusus Jakarta* (DKJ), or the Special Designation of Jakarta Province. Officially signed by President Joko Widodo on April 25, 2024, Law No. 2/2024 stipulates that the DKJ is an autonomous provincial-level entity serving as both the national economic center and a Global City. This legal restructuring not only redefined Jakarta's administrative status but also positioned it to pursue a more prominent role in global affairs as a subnational actor.

Jakarta's elevation to Global City status, however, experienced a temporary delay. As of January 2026, President Prabowo had not yet signed the Presidential Regulation concerning the relocation of the national capital. Instead, on June 30, 2025, he signed Presidential Regulation Number 79/2025 concerning the Update of the 2025 Government Work Plan, which stipulated that the IKN is scheduled to function as the country's political capital in 2028 (Hukumonline, 2025). Although the relocation timeline has shifted, this development does not halt Jakarta's transformation into a Global City. Rather, it further reinforces Jakarta's trajectory toward that role.

This continued trajectory toward Global City status is underpinned by Jakarta's enduring economic dominance within Indonesia. Jakarta is the epicenter of Indonesia's economy. In the first quarter of 2024, Jakarta Province's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) was the highest in the country, reaching IDR 3,200 trillion (equivalent to USD 206 billion) and accounting for 16.6% of the national total (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi DKI Jakarta, 2024). The Greater Jakarta area, which includes Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Cianjur, collectively known as Jabodetabekjur, contributes 23.8% of the national GRDP (Jakarta.go.id, 2024). Given its strong economic potential, Jakarta is positioning itself as Indonesia's leading economic center, building on key sectors such as trade, services, and finance at both the national and global levels.

Jakarta's position in the global city rankings varies across different institutional assessments. The Global Power City Index (GPCI) ranks Jakarta 45th in 2024. This ranking is determined by the city's capacity to attract people, capital, and enterprises across multiple dimensions. The assessment is based on six categories: economy, research and development, cultural interaction, livability, environment, and accessibility (GPCI, 2024). Meanwhile, Kearney's 2024 Global Cities Report ranks Jakarta at 74th, based on five dimensions: business activity (30%), human capital (30%), information exchange (15%), cultural experience (15%), and political engagement (10%) (Kearney, 2024). In addition, the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC) classifies Jakarta as an Alpha city, alongside seventeen others, including Milan, Sydney, Kuala Lumpur, and Toronto (GaWC, 2024). Alpha cities are influential cities that connect major economic regions and states to the global economy. They are ranked below Alpha++ cities, such as London and New York, and Alpha+ cities, such as Beijing and Tokyo.

Another index, the Cities in Motion Index (CIMI), ranks Jakarta 135th based on a theoretical model that evaluates governance, urban planning, technology, the environment, international profile, social cohesion, human capital, mobility and transportation, and the economy (IESE Cities in Motion, 2024). Although the Cities in Motion Index (CIMI) assigns Jakarta a relatively low overall ranking, the city is placed within the third tier of high-potential urban centers that are advancing rapidly, alongside New Delhi and Riyadh (IESE Cities in Motion, 2024). Taken together, Jakarta's performance across these four indices reinforces its claim to Global City status.

Jakarta's growing recognition as a high-potential global city raises important questions about how subnational actors engage internationally, a topic often examined through the concept of paradiplomacy

in studies of Indonesian provinces. However, Jakarta's status as a Global City remains a niche area of research. Existing studies on Jakarta's paradiplomacy have largely focused on sister-city programs (Anggraini, 2017; Fathun, 2022; Rusandi, 2017; Susilowati & Yunus, 2019), smart city initiatives (Farendy & Akbar, 2021; Ferdilianto et al., 2023), transnational networks (Astuti & Fathun, 2020; Fathun, 2022; Luerdi & Fitria, 2023), and global threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Luerdi, 2021, 2023). Jakarta's paradiplomacy, particularly in relation to the Global City concept and its distinctive features, such as the expansion of subnational authority, remains underexplored in the existing scholarship.

One consequence of elevating Jakarta to Global City status is the amplification of its influence on the international stage. A city's capacity to act globally is closely linked to the strength of its economy. With strong economic power, coupled with support from the national government, a city can engage meaningfully in international affairs, including addressing global challenges and conducting diplomacy. In this context, Jakarta is well positioned to perform fully as an actor in support of Indonesian diplomacy.

Paradiplomacy in Indonesian cities has historically been exercised within the constraints of Law Number 37 of 1999 on Foreign Relations. Nevertheless, its practice dates back to the 1960s, when Bandung established a sister-city relationship with Braunschweig in Germany (Mukti, 2020). Similarly, the sister-city cooperation between Surabaya and Kitakyushu, Japan, which began in 1997, evolved into the Green Sister City initiative in 2012, demonstrating Indonesia's commitment to a global norm, namely the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Dzazira & Pratama, 2023). These historical precedents demonstrate that subnational engagement in Indonesia's foreign relations and diplomacy is not a recent phenomenon but rather a longstanding feature of the country's international interactions.

This study applies a qualitative research method. The data are drawn from official documents to provide historical context, government reports to track changes over time, news sources to monitor the development of issues, and field observations to capture and understand situations that may not be reflected in official records. To ensure the credibility, trustworthiness, and depth of the findings, the study employs an interpretative analysis through the triangulation of these materials, focusing on Jakarta's paradiplomacy efforts in its pursuit of Global City status, with particular attention to the political dimensions of this endeavor. Central to this analysis is how Jakarta leverages paradiplomacy to consolidate and project its political presence as a global actor following its formal designation as a Global City. The main question guiding this study is: How does Jakarta pursue its aspiration to become a Global City from the political perspective of paradiplomacy? As a caveat, the economic dimension, although central to the Global City concept, falls outside the scope of this study. Instead, this study seeks to understand how cities, as substate actors, can complement or fill gaps in the state's performance in global politics.

This article is organized into two main sections. The first section examines the Global City concept within the broader framework of paradiplomacy. It begins by outlining the evolution of paradiplomacy and the growing prominence of substate actors, particularly cities, in contemporary diplomacy before turning to a discussion of the Global City concept. The final subsection conceptualizes the city as a global political actor. The second section analyzes Jakarta's efforts to attain Global City status through paradiplomatic engagement, demonstrating how a subnational government can build international influence by responding to global challenges.

PARADIPLOMACY AND THE GLOBAL CITY: CONCEPTS REVISITED

Paradiplomacy

Paradiplomacy refers to foreign or international relations activities conducted by substate, subnational, non-central, or regional governments as an integral part of diplomacy (Duchacek, 1990; Hocking, 1999; Lecours, 2002; Soldatos, 1990). The prefix “para” in “paradiplomacy,” derived from the idea of “parallel diplomacy,” implies that substate international policies may run alongside and complement the central government’s foreign policy, although they may also diverge from the country’s broader international stance (Duchacek, 1990, as cited in Paquin, 2020). The concept of paradiplomacy developed in response to economic globalization and the growing interdependence in international relations, which exposed institutional tensions in federal states as federated units became increasingly involved in international affairs. This situation triggered dynamic processes of centralization and decentralization in the conduct of foreign relations (Aguirre, 1999).

In federal systems, significant political tension has often arisen between central and non-central governments, particularly because foreign policy has traditionally been the responsibility of the central authority. This was exemplified by tensions between Canada and its francophone province of Quebec, regarding the recognition of Quebec’s trade paradiplomacy by the broader international community of states (Paquin, 2022; Payette & Cole, 2024). Other examples include the US state of Florida, which weaponized paradiplomacy by banning Chinese researchers from its public universities in 2023, and San Francisco’s segregation of Japanese students between 1905 and 1907. Both cases strained US relations with foreign powers and limited the country’s soft power (Musgrave, 2025).

The expanding role of non-central governments in diplomacy aligns with their increasing capacity to manage foreign relations in a globalized context (Ali, 2025; Hocking, 1993). As regional governments gain more experience in engaging with foreign actors, paradiplomacy has become increasingly practiced by regions and cities around the world, despite the potential for tensions with national governments, as illustrated by the cases of Quebec, Florida, and San Francisco discussed above.

Regarding the terminology for subnational governments’ foreign affairs, Duchacek used terms such as “microdiplomacy,” “paradiplomacy,” “protodiplomacy,” and “macrodiplomacy” at different stages of his work to describe similar phenomena. He later agreed that “paradiplomacy” was the most appropriate term to capture the growing involvement of subnational governments in international politics (Aguirre, 1999). Aguirre (1999), however, suggests that the international engagement of non-central governments could instead be described as “postdiplomatic,” arguing that it reflects processes that extend beyond the nation-state and, consequently, beyond traditional diplomacy. Despite these different perspectives on terminology, the term paradiplomacy has gained widespread acceptance as the principal concept describing the international relations of subnational governments.

Paradiplomacy is inherently political. When Duchacek introduced the term “protodiplomacy,” he defined it as “diplomatic preparatory work for a future secession and for the international diplomatic recognition of such an occurrence” (Duchacek, 1988, as cited in Tavares, 2016, p. 38). This definition has contributed to the perception of protodiplomacy as a potential political threat to state sovereignty. In contrast, rather than viewing paradiplomacy primarily as a sovereignty-building action, Duran (2016) frames it as a site of political agonism, reflecting the political conflicts that emerged between central governments and subnational governments during the 1970s and 1990s. Agonism, or agonistic pluralism, is a social and political paradigm that emphasizes the constructive potential of conflict. From

this perspective, Duran examines the political separation and estrangement between central governments and their regions. He views paradiplomacy as a mechanism through which state authorities and their constituent units can cooperate more effectively, rather than remain disconnected or in conflict, in an increasingly globalized world. In the Indonesian context, Mukti (2020) considers paradiplomacy an instrument of development, describing it as a strategic avenue for attracting cooperation that supports the nation-state's economy. While acknowledging the potential for tension related to sovereignty, the Indonesian national government continues to authorize cities and subnational governments to engage in foreign relations. Therefore, the political character of paradiplomacy lies in its capacity to shape narratives in support of national interests.

Paradiplomacy is distinct from conventional diplomacy, not only because of its more limited relationship to sovereignty but also in its practical application. Tavares (2016) identifies four aspects that distinguish paradiplomacy from traditional diplomatic practice. First, the issues addressed in cities' foreign policies are linked to their specific areas of jurisdiction, such as health, education, transportation, culture, tourism, and public security. Second, paradiplomacy involves the participation of non-governmental actors who help promote and protect both state and local interests in the international arena. Third, the *modus operandi* of cities tends to be more adaptive. Rather than pursuing clearly defined state interests, it is generally more pragmatic, narrowly focused, and opportunistic in advancing local interests. Fourth, the ultimate goals of paradiplomacy are closely tied to residents' needs, as cities seek to learn from other local authorities and adopt policies that improve public welfare.

Cities generally adopt two forms of paradiplomacy. The first involves bilateral relationships, most commonly through sister-city partnerships, which focus on economic, cultural, or educational cooperation (Anggraini, 2017; Dzazira & Pratama, 2023; Lextyorini et al., 2024; Primawanti et al., 2019; Rusandi, 2017; Susilowati & Yunus, 2019; Tavares, 2016) (Davies & Nogueira, n.d.; Mendes & Figueira, 2017). The second takes the form of transnational networks, through which cities collaborate on specific issues (Duran, 2016; Fathun, 2022; Ferdilianto et al., 2023; Hafizha et al., 2024; Lextyorini et al., 2024; Luerdi, 2021, 2023; McHugh, 2015; Mendes & Figueira, 2017; Mocca, 2020; Musgrave, 2025; Paquin, 2022; Tidwell, 2021). Both forms of paradiplomacy support development strategies that help cities internationalize and address urban development agendas by linking sectors and policies with like-minded institutions.

What motivates subnational governments or cities to engage in paradiplomacy? Keating (1999) identifies three main drivers: economic, cultural, and political. Economically, regions pursue diplomacy to attract investment, expand product markets, and gain access to technology that supports development, as demonstrated by Quebec (McHugh, 2015; Paquin, 2022; Payette & Cole, 2024), Jakarta (Anggraini, 2017; Ferdilianto et al., 2023; Hafizha et al., 2024; Luerdi, 2021; Luerdi & Fitria, 2023; Primawanti et al., 2019), Surabaya (Dzazira & Pratama, 2023), Makassar (Abbas, 2018), and Hong Kong (Chan, 2019). From a cultural perspective, regions with distinct languages or cultural identities may seek resources and support abroad, particularly when the national government shows limited interest or when the language community extends beyond national borders, as illustrated by Quebec (Payette & Cole, 2024) and the cross-border relationship between Tanjung Pinang, Indonesia and Johor Bahru, Malaysia (Swastiwi et al., 2024). Politically, regions may enter the international arena to gain greater recognition and legitimacy, use international engagement as a platform for internal region-building, or influence public opinion in other countries (Chan, 2019; Mocca, 2020; Newland, 2022; Tidwell, 2021; Wattimena, 2025). Similarly, Lecours (2002) explains the drivers of paradiplomacy at both the domestic, political and international levels within a multi-layered system comprising regional political structures, national institutions, continental regimes, and the broader global system.

Global City and the Global Power Structure

Global Cities are increasingly recognized as significant actors in global politics (Acuto & Rayner, 2016; Bassens et al., 2019; Curtis, 2014, 2016a; Ljungkvist, 2014; Sassen, 2016). Their emergence reflects a transformation in the international order, in which cities are no longer peripheral entities but active participants in international society. The role of cities as international actors is evident in their involvement in advancing global agendas such as the SDGs. As Acuto and Rayner (2016, p. 1147) observe, “nations talk, cities act,” underscoring the practical and implementation-oriented capacity of cities in global governance. Another expression of this role can be seen in city networks that address global concerns, including migration, human rights, the energy transition, urban development, climate change, and transnational organized crime. Curtis (2016b) argues that recognizing cities as international actors raises broader questions about state transformation, the dynamics of global governance, global security, and the architecture of the global political order. Engagement in global political issues, therefore, demonstrates how a Global City functions as a global political actor. Cities address global political issues that relate directly to their needs, which may require considerable time for national governments to address because of differing political priorities, aspirations, and administrative constraints, including bureaucratic delays and competing regional interests. Such challenges can hinder effective responses to urgent global concerns. In this context, Global City status enables Jakarta to respond more rapidly to global issues that align with its needs and ambitions, thereby contributing to the evolving global political order as a growing range of actors gain international influence.

Put simply, a global city refers to an urban center that functions as a key economic hub within the globalized economy. Saskia Sassen, a leading scholar of globalization and human migration, conceptualizes the global city as a site where global scale processes intersect with local transformations, including the restructuring of local labor markets and shifting patterns of income distribution (Stanoeva, 2012). From this perspective, the Global City constitutes a spatial manifestation of contemporary developments in global capitalism. Curtis (2008) further employs the term “global cities” to connect these urban formations with broader theories of globalization. Accordingly, influence within the global economy emerges as a central dimension of the Global City.

The concept of a global city differs fundamentally from that of a conventional city. A global city does not merely represent the apex of a spatial hierarchy progressing from the neighborhood to the regional, national, and global levels. Rather, Sassen (2016) argues that the global city is defined less by territorial boundaries than by its production functions, namely the economic activities and processes embedded within existing urban spaces that extend across broader spatial scales. In this conception, traditional urban attributes such as size, population density, or land area are not determinative. Likewise, designation as a national capital does not automatically confer global city status; instead, connectivity and functional integration into the global economy are far more decisive. At the same time, when global city regions are viewed as forms of urban development, territorial dimensions remain analytically relevant.

Sassen’s conceptualization of the global city is intrinsically linked to the deepening interdependence generated by the process of globalization (Stanoeva, 2012), particularly from the perspective of the global economy (Curtis, 2008). Sassen highlights the relationship between cities and economic globalization, as well as the ways in which economic forces reshape the urban fabric. Her work also traces the parallel development of spatial, economic, and social dimensions in relation to global processes, as illustrated in her studies of London, New York, and Tokyo. In addition, she emphasizes the role of digital networks in generating new urban functions. Global cities are regarded as an essential

element of economic globalization, shaped by and continually evolving through global processes and relationships (Curtis, 2008). Collaboration across multiple sectors further demonstrates that the Global City is both a product and a process of interdependence. In the context of Jakarta, Global City is the product of a long and continuous process of interdependence with other entities, including cities and international organizations.

A global city can be viewed as a distinctive space that may, at times, bypass the national level in its engagement with global processes (Sassen, 2016). Sassen links the development of global cities to the relative weakening of nation-states and the strengthening of transnational networks in areas such as economics, finance, and trade (Stanoeva, 2012). However, Curtis (2016a) argues that transnational city networks should not be viewed solely as a challenge to state power. Rather than signaling the displacement of the state, the rising influence of cities can be interpreted as part of the state's strategic recalibration in adapting to an increasingly complex global environment. In this sense, cities do not operate outside the state but become embedded within the broader world order. Through transnational networks linking the Global South and the Global North, city diplomacy and decentralized cooperation acquire renewed strategic significance (Wenden, 2023). These networks encourage policymaking across multiple political levels, for example by shifting migration issues from being purely national concerns to matters of international governance. Both city associations and transnational networks play significant roles in facilitating knowledge exchange, redefining governance, strengthening transnationalism and multilevel governance, and enhancing the capacity to respond to emergency situations (Wenden, 2023). From this perspective, the Global City can be understood as a diplomatic strategy that strengthens state capacity by enabling substate actors to address complex transnational issues.

City as an Actor in Global Politics

The idea of the city as an actor in international politics has gained wide acceptance, as reflected in the expanding scope of city engagement in paradiplomacy. Yet, does a city's growing role in the global political landscape imply the erosion of state power in international politics? Pinson (2019) proposes two hypotheses to explain the city-as-actor phenomenon. First, city activism may be understood as a policymaking strategy shaped by the territorialization of the economy. According to Pinson, this shift reflects policymakers' efforts to respond to emerging challenges associated with rapid urbanization and the spatial diffusion of economic activity. A territorial approach to policymaking, grounded in urban contexts and reinforced by the growing significance of local governance, enables cities to strengthen governance capacity and assume a more visible role in international politics. Second, the rise of cities as actors is linked to the contested nature of state authority and the often tense relationship between national and subnational governments. In this view, the city's role is shaped by competition or conflict between different levels of government. The city as a global political actor can therefore be understood as a product of both economic territorialization and competing state–substate relations.

A notable development emerged as cities began engaging in a highly politicized issue that traditionally falls outside the substate domain, namely refugee and asylum policy. Since 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has promoted the #WithRefugees campaign. The campaign aims to mobilize both public and institutional support for refugees and asylum seekers. One component of this initiative, Cities #WithRefugees, invites cities and local authorities to sign a statement of solidarity with refugees. As of November 2024, around 308 cities had signed this statement (UNHCR, 2024). Conventionally, refugee policy falls under national jurisdiction because it involves cross-border movement and sensitive political considerations. Although cities may have diverse

motivations for joining this initiative, their participation can be understood as a form of paradiplomacy. At a minimum, cities contribute to responses to a global refugee crisis that extends beyond their traditional responsibilities and may, at times, intersect with national refugee policies.

As a foreign policy actor, a subnational government is not fully autonomous. It must navigate complex relationships and interests both within and beyond its national context (Hocking, 1993). This understanding implies that paradiplomacy forms part of national diplomacy, and that subnational governments are not fully autonomous actors in the international order. Their subordinate position in foreign relations stems from the principle of sovereignty, which is intrinsically linked to statehood. The absence of full sovereignty explains why, although subnational governments are recognized as participants in international relations, they are not regarded as subjects of international law. They cannot establish embassies or conclude treaties, and their role is often compared to that of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Paquin, 2020). They exercise sovereign authority only to the extent that the state grants them the constitutional or legal authority to do so. Nevertheless, despite these constraints, Paquin (2020) argues that subnational governments are able to operate within the international relations system because they exercise constitutionally recognized authority within their respective territories. This constrained position may, in some cases, encourage subnational actors to adopt principled international postures and take firm stances on sensitive issues (Paquin, 2020). Limited sovereignty, therefore, helps explain the distinctive ways in which cities develop and exercise foreign policy and engage in international affairs.

As suggested by Tavares (2016), cities are not the only participants in transnational city networks that support paradiplomacy. Non-governmental organizations often collaborate with cities within these networks, enabling them to address development agendas such as peacebuilding and international migration. One example is United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), which brings together more than 300 mayors and local government leaders. UCLG also served as a board member of the Municipal Alliance for Peace (MAP) in the Middle East, which sought reconciliation in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in 2005 (Acuto & Rayner, 2016). Through collaboration with non-state actors, cities assume roles in international relations that help address gaps in global governance where state action may be limited (Acuto & Rayner, 2016; Curtis, 2016a). The range of issues addressed by cities illustrate how their involvement has become an increasingly significant feature of international relations.

In conclusion, the discussions on the conceptualization of paradiplomacy and Global City reveal both the convergence and distinctiveness of these two concepts. Conceptually, paradiplomacy and the Global City both seek to enhance the involvement of substate entities as global actors and are therefore political in nature. However, how these two concepts are linked and whether they reinforce or undermine each other has not yet been clearly explained. Previous studies on paradiplomacy and the Global City were focused primarily on sister-city activities and economic dimension, while the political aspects of these endeavors remain underexplored. This study therefore examines the relationship between paradiplomacy and Global City status from the political perspective of cities as global actors participating in global governance. The analysis focuses on Jakarta's Global City status and its paradiplomacy activities as the key phenomena under investigation. Specifically, this study addresses two guiding questions: Does Jakarta's paradiplomacy become enhanced or constrained under its Global City status? How does Jakarta seek to participate in global governance?

JAKARTA PARADIPLOMACY AS A GLOBAL CITY STATUS

Jakarta's Global City status constitutes a designation conferred by the national government that recognizes the authority and strategic potential of the city. As Mukti (2020) suggests, paradiplomacy may function as an instrument of development for the Indonesian government. This status can also be interpreted as an expression of national support that enables Jakarta to play a more substantial role as a global actor, operating alongside, while remaining hierarchically subordinate to, the central government. This aligns with Paquin's (2020) argument that cities may exercise limited "sovereignty" granted by the state. Luerdi and Fitria (2023) propose that the concept of a Global City serves as an ideational factor that propels a city to become more internationally visible and to engage in paradiplomacy. Over time, Global City status can attract highly skilled migrants and foster a cosmopolitan form of citizenship that extends beyond the nation-state (Wenden, 2023). In short, Jakarta's Global City status represents a national strategy that empowers the city to participate in international relations alongside the state, with the aim of strengthening Indonesia's overall presence in global politics.

The motivation behind Jakarta's vision of becoming a Global City is closely linked to political considerations. On January 18, 2022, Law No. 3 of 2022, which mandates the relocation of Indonesia's capital to East Kalimantan, was approved by the House of Representatives. With the relocation of the capital, Jakarta stands to lose several privileges it previously enjoyed. Future investments in infrastructure, major trade and business facilities, and human capital development may no longer be concentrated in the city. As a result, Jakarta must reposition itself as a globally recognized and competitive urban center. The development of a global city can be understood through three main dimensions: livability, which includes housing and health; the environment, which encompasses waste management, sanitation, and wastewater systems; and accessibility, which involves public transportation and road networks (Jakarta.go.id, 2024). Achieving meaningful progress in these areas requires sustained efforts and coordinated collaboration across multiple sectors, including government, the private sector, and the wider community. This dynamic also creates broader opportunities for Jakarta to strengthen cooperation with foreign cities, both through existing sister-city partnerships and through the establishment of new relationships with other established or aspiring global cities.

An indicator of subnational power as a Global City can be observed in its degree of actorness in foreign relations. Ali (2025) argues that the actorness of substate actors extends beyond conventional state attributes such as sovereignty, territory, population, and international recognition. Rather, it is manifested in the capacity of substate entities to pursue a degree of foreign policy autonomy through which they articulate and institutionalize their global engagement. Such autonomy does not necessarily entail competition with the national government; instead, it often serves a complementary function that reinforces broader national objectives. In a pluralistic international system characterized by the diffusion of authority across multiple levels, the coexistence of diverse actors may generate broader political outcomes. Within this analytical framework, the actorness of a Global City is primarily expressed through the institutionalized practices of paradiplomacy.

Global City status in the context of paradiplomacy can also be understood as a process through which a city recognizes itself as an actor in the global order and actively engages in initiatives to fulfill that role. Luerdi (2023) observes that Jakarta's aspiration to attain Global City status functions as a strategic form of city branding embedded within its broader paradiplomacy practices. This perspective aligns with Mendes and Figueira (2017), who argue that a city's pursuit of Global City status and its aspiration to distinguish itself in the international arena shapes its paradiplomacy initiatives. In its efforts to establish itself as a Global City and to function as a global actor, Jakarta engages in bilateral partnerships and actively participates in transnational organizations. The following sections examine these forms of engagement.

Sister City: Bilateral Relationships for Development

The establishment of sister city relationships represents Jakarta's strategic effort to strengthen both its hard and soft power through economic, social, cultural, and other forms of cooperation (see Table 1). As of 2025, Jakarta has established 22 sister-city partnerships worldwide, beginning with its first agreement with Jeddah in 1979. During an official visit to New York in July 2025, Jakarta's Governor, Pramono Anung, held discussions with leaders of prominent global cities to explore potential sister-city partnerships, including discussions with representatives of Buenos Aires and the Mayor of New York, with the aim of strengthening bilateral city-to-city cooperation (Jakarta Smart City, 2025). He also signed a Letter of Intent with the Mayor of Heidelberg to initiate urban development cooperation between Jakarta and Heidelberg (Jakarta Smart City, 2025).

Table 1

Jakarta's Sister-City Partnership

Partner city	Date of cooperation	Date of expiration
Jeddah	1979	Not available
Seoul	1984	Not available
Islamabad	1984	Not available
Rotterdam	1986	Renewed for 2017-2019, last MoA 2023-2024
Tokyo	1989	Not available
Los Angeles	1991	Not available
Casablanca	1991	Not available
Beijing	1992	Not available
Arkansas	1993	Not available
Berlin	1992	Renewed in 2009
New South Wales	1994	Renewed in 2015, renewed in 2022
Paris	1995	Not available
Bangkok	2002	Not available
Hanoi	2004	Not available
Istanbul	2007	Not available
Maputo	2007	Not available
Kyiv	2007	Not available
Moscow	2007	Renewed in 2017
Al-Quds al-Syarif	2007	Not available
Pyongyang	2007	Not available
Budapest	2009	Not available
Shanghai	2020	Not available

Source. Modified by the authors from various sources.

One particularly significant example of Jakarta's paradiplomatic engagement is its sister-city partnership with Jerusalem (Al-Quds), Palestine. Indonesia has long maintained a supportive relationship with Palestine, having been among the first countries to recognize Palestine as an independent state and to establish an embassy there. A sister-city Memorandum of Understanding between Jakarta and Jerusalem was signed in 2007, covering cooperation in disaster and crisis management, education and training, and socio-cultural exchanges. This agreement has been implemented through various initiatives, including the Palestine Film Festival in 2012 and an exhibition titled "Jerusalem: History and Civilization" in 2015, which introduced the socio-cultural heritage of both parties (Susilowati & Yunus, 2019).

Jakarta's sister-city partnership with Seoul, established in 1984, was designed to expand economic opportunities (Anggraini, 2017) while simultaneously strengthening cultural ties, particularly through tourism initiatives (The Jakarta Post, 2017). Both Jakarta and Seoul serve as major economic hubs in their respective countries and are home to numerous private companies. Trade between the two cities has primarily involved Jakarta exporting agricultural and manufactured products to Seoul, including spices, frozen seafood, plastics, furniture, and chemicals. Data indicate a significant increase in Jakarta's own-source revenue (OSR), which in 2015 was 240% higher than in 2011 (Anggraini, 2017). During a visit to Jakarta in 2017, Seoul's Deputy Mayor, Gyoung-Gee Liu, also promoted South Korea's cultural industries, collectively known as *Hallyu*, or Korean Wave. *Hallyu* encompasses music (K-Pop), film, television drama series (K-Drama), fashion, beauty, and cuisine. The Jakarta–Seoul sister-city partnership has therefore contributed not only to economic development but also to strengthen socio-cultural exchange between the two cities.

Another example of cooperation driven by economic and socio-cultural exchange is the partnership between Jakarta and Beijing. The two cities have maintained a sister-city relationship since 1992, with the Memorandum of Understanding updated in 2009 to broaden the scope of cooperation. The Jakarta–Beijing partnership emphasizes economic collaboration in sectors such as public transportation, investment, and trade (Primawanti et al., 2019). Beijing has also supported Jakarta by helping local industries strengthen their technological capabilities and expand into global markets (Foreign Affairs Office of Beijing Municipal Government, n.d.; Jakarta Sister City, 2016). In terms of cultural and educational exchange, the two cities launched the Jakarta Sister City Youth Program under the Sports and Youth Service of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, which facilitates interaction between Indonesian youth and their counterparts in Beijing (Jakarta Sister City, 2016; Khalifah, 2023). The Jakarta-Beijing sister-city partnership, however, has remained focused on economic and socio-cultural cooperation and has not yet extended to global political issues, such as collaborative efforts in global governance.

Other sister-city partnerships that seek to promote economic and socio-cultural development include Jakarta–Tokyo and Jakarta–Berlin. Since the Memorandum of Understanding between Jakarta and Tokyo was signed in April 1990, cooperation has expanded to include reciprocal study visits in urban administration, as well as exchange programs involving students participating in the Student Learning Assessment (SLA) and their teachers. Under the Jakarta–Berlin partnership, the Department of Tourism and Culture of the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government, in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Berlin, launched several initiatives in 2011 (Rusandi, 2017).

Urban development is also a key focus of Jakarta's sister-city partnerships. The cooperation between Jakarta and Rotterdam exemplifies this type of partnership through initiatives in water management, port development, and the National Capital Integrated Coastal Development (NCICD) project. As both cities are classified as delta cities, they share a common interest in improving water management and strengthening human resource capacity through the exchange of knowledge and experience (Medcom.id, 2015; Tempo, 2022). Jakarta has also benefited from Rotterdam's expertise in water management by sending engineers to participate in the Dutch Training and Exposure Program (DUTEP) (Tempo, 2022). Sister-city cooperation, therefore, contributes to urban development, particularly in addressing challenges arising from the geographical characteristics of both cities.

Transnational Network

Transnational networks constitute another key dimension of subnational paradiplomacy. Jakarta is a member of several international organizations and forums that serve as networks of local governments. Although each network has its own specific objectives, they collectively contribute to broader goals related to sustainable urban development and global governance (refer to Table 2).

Table 2

Jakarta's Participation in Transnational Networks and Forums

Network or forum	Type	Year joined	Main activity/objective
UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments)	Network	1991	Encourages cities to contribute to global agendas, including the SDGs.
ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability)	Network	2002	Fosters capacity building and collaboration among cities for sustainable urban development.
Network for Crisis Management	Network	2003	Supports human resource development in crisis management and facilitates knowledge sharing among member cities.
C40 Cities, A Mayors' Network	Network	2006	Promotes science-based collaboration among cities to address climate change by reducing emissions, limiting global warming, and strengthening urban resilience.
Metropolis	Network	2008	Facilitates global cooperation among metropolitan cities in economic development, sustainability, social cohesion, and gender equality.
Vital Strategies	Network	2011	Assists governments in strengthening public health systems, including tobacco control.
Resilient Cities Network	Network	2016	Provides resources to help cities strengthen climate resilience.
U20 (Urban 20)	Forum	2017	Provides a platform for cities to contribute to G20 agendas.
Partnership For Healthy Cities	Network	2017	Support cities in preventing noncommunicable diseases and injuries through public health policies and interventions.
GCoM (Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy)	Network	2017	Unites cities in advancing climate action toward low-emission and climate-resilient societies.
Cities for Better Health	Network	2018	Promotes health initiatives that improve urban well-being.
International Mayors Forum	Forum	2024	Provides an annual platform for policy dialogue and knowledge sharing related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
World Cities Culture Forum	Network	2024	Facilitates culture-based knowledge exchange to promote more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable cities.

Source. Modified by the authors from various sources.

In addition to participating in transnational networks, Jakarta has also adopted global urban models in its effort to become a Global City, including the Smart City concept introduced in 2014. The Smart City initiative aims to transform Jakarta into a smart city 4.0 by optimizing the use of technology in governance and public services delivery for the benefit of its residents (Jakarta Smart City 2023). The initiative is founded on four core principles: mobile-first services, data-driven decision-making, digitalization, and collaboration. In line with these principles, Jakarta has made measurable progress in strengthening its digital ecosystem. One notable example is the enhancement of digital public service delivery through the JAKI application, a “super app” designed as an integrated, one-stop platform that enables residents to report and monitor issues related to public facilities and municipal services. The platform is claimed to improve public service delivery by reducing bureaucratic barriers, enhancing cost-efficiency, and providing a user-friendly interface (Jakarta Smart City, 2023). The city has also promoted the digitalization of the local economy through programs such as JAKmikro, which provides various forms of business support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) (Farendy & Akbar 2021). Furthermore, the government has encouraged cashless transactions across several public sectors, including public transportation. Familiarity with, and integration into, a digital ecosystem are considered important steps toward achieving Global City status.

POWER EXERCISE: MIGRATION ISSUES

Jakarta’s ambition to become a Global City was reiterated by Governor Pramono Anung during the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on July 16, 2025. He stated that Jakarta is committed to competing with other global cities and aims to rank among the world’s top 50 global cities by 2030, primarily by mainstreaming the SDGs into local policies and programs (Jakarta Globe, 2025). Jakarta is currently ranked 74th in the 2024 Kearney Global Cities Index (Kearney, 2024). According to Anung, Jakarta seeks to position itself as “a pioneer of resilient, inclusive, and globally integrated national development... a place where everyone has space, and no one is left behind” (Jakarta Globe, 2025). This statement indicates that Jakarta’s development principles are intended to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Anung further emphasized that Jakarta is prepared to transform various aspects of governance, ranging from urban development to social-political dimensions, in order to enhance its competitiveness and attractiveness as a Global City (Jakarta Globe, 2025). Aligning local development priorities with the global agenda is therefore a strategic step toward strengthening Jakarta’s standing among the world’s leading metropolitan cities.

Tavares’ (2016) conception of paradiplomacy suggests that cities engage in a wide array of policy domains, including health, education, transportation, culture, tourism, and public security, that are directly connected to the everyday needs of their populations. This functional orientation distinguishes paradiplomacy from traditional state-centric diplomacy, which is typically concerned with high politics and intergovernmental relations.

Within this framework, the pursuit of Global City status may enhance a city’s institutional capacity and generate momentum for the further consolidation of its international engagement strategies, governance innovation, and transnational partnerships. As political actors, cities, often in collaboration with non-state actors, are increasingly expected to respond to global challenges that transcend national borders.

One illustrative example is the emergence of Transnational City Networks (TCNs), which focus on issues such as international migration and migrant integration. These networks reflect the expanding

role of cities in migration governance beyond their immediate territorial boundaries (Triviño-Salazar, 2023). Jakarta's participation in such networks creates opportunities for the city to deepen its engagement with migration-related policy debates and to position itself more prominently within global urban governance frameworks.

One of Jakarta's most prominent migration-related challenges concerns the refugee situation. Alongside the city of Makassar, Jakarta has been a pioneer in local government involvement in refugee protection in Indonesia. As a transit location for refugees seeking resettlement in third countries, Jakarta hosts nearly half of all refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia (UNHCR, 2024). The Indonesian national government, which is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, adopts a non-binding approach to refugee protection (Adiputera & Missbach, 2021) and does not allocate government funding for refugee assistance. In practice, refugee management in Indonesia relies heavily on the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and various non-state actors. UNHCR and IOM provide protection mechanisms ranging from limited living assistance to repatriation and resettlement programs. Meanwhile, local NGOs and community members contribute through legal assistance, empowerment programs, donation initiatives, and public advocacy (Viartasiwi et al., 2021). Refugee issues in Jakarta have reached a scale that is difficult to ignore, as the growing number of refugees has created significant challenges in housing, healthcare, and social integration.

The central government also restricts certain basic rights of refugees, including the right to work (Pudjiastuti et al., 2023; Sianturi & Viartasiwi, 2021) and access to education for refugee children (Pudjiastuti & Putra, 2022). However, the principal national regulation on refugee management, Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016, assigns important roles to local governments and non-state actors in refugee management. This provision creates an opportunity for Jakarta to take a more active role in protecting refugees within its territory.

A test to Jakarta's commitment to refugee protection emerged in early 2018. At that time, thousands of asylum seekers gathered outside the UNHCR office following rumors within refugee communities that accommodation and living assistance would be provided (Nilofar, personal communication, February 2, 2019). When it became clear that this information was hoax, many refugees moved to the Immigration Detention Center (Rudenim) in Kalideres, West Jakarta, in the hope of securing shelter. However, since 2018, Indonesia has no longer used Rudenim facilities to accommodate refugees (Missbach, 2021). As a result, hundreds of refugees erected makeshift tents along the sidewalks surrounding the facility. Concerns over safety, sanitation, and public order prompted resistance from local residents, who opposed the presence of asylum seekers in their neighborhood (Wijaya, 2019). In response to escalating tensions and the risk of conflict between host communities and refugees, the Jakarta Provincial Government intervened by allocating a former Military District Command (Kodim) building in Kalideres as temporary accommodation. With the support of the UNHCR and the IOM, which provided basic necessities, Jakarta was able to extend temporary protection and humanitarian assistance to the displaced population.

Jakarta's decision to engage in refugee protection was not without risk. Xenophobia and hate speech frequently emerge in public debates surrounding refugee issues. Refugees are often perceived as social and economic burdens, which can intensify hostile attitudes among local communities (Fadhil & Imtyas, 2024; Lee, 2023). Some residents expressed resentment and opposed the policy (Sadjad, 2022). Nevertheless, the Jakarta Provincial Government maintained that its actions were part of its responsibilities under Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016 (Tempo, 2019). As a result, around 1,200 refugees accommodated in the Kodim building between 2018 and 2019 (Antara News, 2019).

Apart from providing temporary shelter for refugees, Jakarta, together with seven other provinces in Indonesia, was mandated in 2019 to support the education of refugee children through a letter issued by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (No. 75253/A A4/HK/2019), dated July 10, 2019, concerning education for refugee children. Two years later, in 2021, Jakarta further expanded its role in refugee management through Governor's Decree Number 1550 of 2021 on the Provincial-Level Task Force for Handling Refugees from Abroad (Keputusan Gubernur, 2021). This regulation enabled the establishment of a dedicated task force to coordinate refugee management within the province. In 2024, during a coordination meeting with IOM and several NGOs working on refugee protection, Taufan Bakri, Head of Jakarta's National and Political Unity Agency, stated that Jakarta's involvement in refugee management was closely linked to its aspiration to become a Global City. He emphasized that Jakarta sought to maintain its credibility before the international community by preventing refugees from living on the streets.

While the national government has demonstrated political caution regarding refugee issues, Jakarta's approach has been more practical and responsive. Through paradiplomacy, Jakarta has exercised its role as a political actor alongside the national government and, at times, has addressed gaps left by national policy. Jakarta's actions in refugee protection, whether through implementing central government policies or undertaking its own initiatives, reflect its emergence as a global political actor. The city has assumed an active role in responding to the global challenge of the refugee crisis in ways that differ from the national government's general approach. Whereas the central government has often relied primarily on international organizations such as the UNHCR and the IOM, Jakarta has cultivated more direct and operational partnerships with these institutions at the local level. From a paradiplomacy perspective, Hubert and Dermawan (2020) characterize the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government's response to the Kalideres crisis as an example of paradiplomatic practice, as it reflects alignment with international humanitarian norms and an effort to mitigate potential criticism regarding refugee protection. Subsequent initiatives, including the establishment of the task force and continued coordination with non-state actors, are closely connected to Jakarta's Global City aspirations. Jakarta is thus exercising its authority and deploying strategies to strengthen its role on the global stage, with paradiplomacy serving as a key instrument.

CONCLUSION

Jakarta's path towards Global City status through paradiplomacy demonstrates that substate actors can complement the state's role in global politics. Sister-city partnerships, participation in transnational networks, and engagement with global issues function as key instruments of paradiplomacy that enhance a substate actor's profile on the international stage. While sister-city relationships represent a more established form of substate international engagement, participation in transnational networks and responses to complex cross-border issues are more recent developments, closely linked to emerging global challenges such as urban governance, migration, global health, and environmental sustainability. These transnational issues provide opportunities for Jakarta to strengthen its identity as a well-connected and capable city, which constitutes an important indicator of Global City status.

The findings also suggest that the pursuit of Global City status encourages and strengthens paradiplomacy practices. The case of refugee management illustrates how substate authority can help address governance gaps left by the state. Motivated in part by its Global City aspirations, Jakarta has adopted a more proactive approach to refugee protection than the national government, which must also take broader national security considerations into account. This case demonstrates how a substate actor

can respond to governance gaps while supporting the welfare of city residents, regardless of citizenship status. The enhancement of Jakarta's political role is particularly evident in the area of migration, which has traditionally been managed by the central government. These developments reflect the expanding role of cities in international politics.

However, the ability of substate actors to fill gaps in state action may be constrained when support from the national government is limited. In Jakarta's case, the Indonesian government has demonstrated political commitment by formally recognizing the city's Global City role through legislation. Such supportive conditions may not exist in other contexts. Politics, therefore, remains a central factor shaping the capacity of substate actors to play a meaningful role as political actors on the global stage.

Finally, the Jakarta case demonstrates that Global City status can function simultaneously as a goal, a driving force, and a strategic orientation that reinforces the pathways through which a substate actor becomes a global political actor, with paradiplomacy serving as a key mechanism. The findings underscore the growing capacity of substate actors and their potential to become significant participants in global politics, particularly on issues that intersect with interstate relations. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether the expanding responsibilities of cities signal a decline in the state's influence as the primary actor in international relations or instead represent a natural evolution of a changing global order that fosters new forms of interaction between states and cities. Future research could explore the extent to which, and the conditions under which, sovereignty constrains or shapes substate power in global politics.

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