

## **REINFORCEMENT OF INDONESIA'S REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES COUNCIL FOR A BETTER FUTURE OF THE INDONESIAN PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the dynamics of the formation of representative institutions in Indonesia with a focus on the role of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI) in a representative democratic system. Applying a qualitative method with a literature review approach and documentation analysis, this study explores the main challenges faced by DPD RI, including the limited authority that limits its contribution to the legislative process. The findings show that Indonesia's bicameral system creates a significant power imbalance between the House of Representatives (DPR) and DPD RI, with DPR's dominance hampering DPD RI's representative function. The implications of these findings confirm the need for reorganization of Indonesia's bicameral system through strengthening the authority of DPD RI. This reform is expected to create a fairer balance of power, ensure better representation for the regions, and support a more democratic and inclusive system of government.

**Keywords:** Indonesia's Regional Representative Council, Representative Institutions, Institutional Strengthening, Bicameral System.

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika pembentukan lembaga perwakilan di Indonesia dengan fokus pada peran Dewan Perwakilan Daerah Republik Indonesia (DPD RI) dalam sistem demokrasi yang representatif. Menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan literature review dan analisis dokumentasi, studi ini mendalami tantangan utama yang dihadapi DPD RI, termasuk keterbatasan kewenangan yang membatasi kontribusinya dalam proses legislasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sistem bikameral Indonesia menciptakan ketimpangan kekuasaan signifikan antara Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR) dan DPD RI, dengan dominasi DPR yang menghambat fungsi representatif

DPD RI. Implikasi dari temuan ini menegaskan perlunya reorganisasi sistem bikameral Indonesia melalui penguatan kewenangan DPD RI. Reformasi ini diharapkan dapat menciptakan keseimbangan kekuasaan yang lebih adil, memastikan representasi yang lebih baik bagi daerah, dan mendukung sistem pemerintahan yang lebih demokratis serta inklusif.

**Kata kunci:** DPD, Lembaga Perwakilan, Penguatan Institusi, Sistem Bikameral

## **BACKGROUND**

The bicameral system adopted by Indonesia's representative institutions is supposed to provide a promising offer for the growth of democracy, healthy political processes and good governance. This is due to the principle inherent in the bicameral system is to create representative institutions that are balanced, representative and recognising the public interest. Bicameral is a term for a representative system consisting of two chambers (cambers) or two bodies, consisting of an upper house and a lower house in Indonesia known as the DPR RI and DPD RI which aims to achieve good governance and the achievement of checks and balances between State Institutions, especially in the Legislative Institution, which is one of the most important elements in the state's administration (Wati et al., 2022). The legislative institution is also the most important in the existence of a State considering that the voice of the people as the holder of sovereignty is represented by this institution (Omara et al., 2021).

The presence of a bicameral or two-chamber system in Indonesia's representative institutions has been manifested through the DPR RI and DPD RI, both of which carry out their duties as an extension of the people. It's just that if the DPR RI specifically has constituents from the Dapil that they represent, while the DPD RI represents their respective Regions or in other words is a delegate from the region. Both carry out tasks that are more rigidly regulated in the constitution. But in reality, today the DPD RI does not appear to show its fangs as a regional representative. Even its existence is only faintly heard to complement the existing system. This situation is certainly quite worrying because if we look at the perspective of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council functions they have an important part in the state system. Among the duties and functions of DPD RI are to propose a bill, discuss the bill, supervise the implementation of the act, regulate the relationship between the centre and the regions, compile National Legislation and others.

Regional Representative Council was born after the People's Consultative Assembly. The power of state administration that is centralised in the executive for decades has led to social and economic disparities between the Government (central) and local governments. With the birth of Regional Representative Council, there is great hope to be able to fight for regional interests to build and develop the region (Widodo, 2014). In this context, Regional Representative Council brings many ideas that are more than just the idea of representation. Such as ideas about democracy, welfare, unity, regional autonomy and others. Unfortunately, after several decades of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council (DPD) occupying its position, these ideas have become increasingly blurred. The weak position of DPD in the representative system in Indonesia has drawn a lot of attention from

academics who are mostly of the view that the duties and authority of DPD should be strengthened (Omara et al., 2021). The bicameral system adopted by Indonesia's representative institutions is supposed to provide a promising offer for the growth of democracy, healthy political processes and good governance. Because the principle inherent in the bicameral system is to create representative institutions that are balanced, representative and recognising the public interest.

Before going further into the problematisation of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council nowadays, we need to examine the historicity of this institution genealogically to understand in what position DPD was born and for what they were formed in the state system. The existence of DPD has existed before the amendment of the 1945 Constitution, only the name is not DPD but regional delegates. One of the members of the MPR based on the 1945 Constitution are delegates from the regions. The existence of regional delegates called regional representatives is due to several factors. Some of these factors are the territory of Indonesia which consists of many islands, each of which has regions and ethnic groups. These regions and ethnic groups have various interests that differ from one another. Because of the unequal interests and needs, it is necessary to have regional representatives called regional representatives (Nisa, 2017).

Reviewing the framework of the Indonesian representative system with the concept of bicameral, DPD RI is in an unfavourable situation because this system lives in a country with a presidential system that makes the parties and parliament as a system weak. Political parties continue to grow after the reformation which also results in the diverse interests of the power holders. The multi-party system adopted in Indonesia, which is clearly not synergistic with the presidential system itself, results in the weakness of political parties in Parliament itself (Fitri, 2020). The same narrative was also put forward by Hara (2014) in his study which explained that the presidential system in Indonesia lacks a strong cooperation mechanism between the executive and the legislature, besides that it also has great potential for conflict because legitimately the president and members of parliament are both elected by the people.

Many regional issues should be more optimally managed by DPD such as in the context of natural resource management and regional autonomy, the role of DPD RI should be more significant. As regional representation, DPD RI has the potential to advocate for policies that prioritize the balance between resource exploitation and environmental sustainability. This includes overseeing the implementation of regional autonomy policies that ensure that regions are not only objects of central policy, but also active subjects that contribute to national decision-making. However, the weak bargaining power of DPD in the existing bicameral system eventually some of these roles become stuttering and nervous to be carried out effectively.

In addition, more fundamental aspect of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) is that this institution should have a very important position in running the business organisation of the government and maintaining the unity of the country.

Considering Indonesia's Regional Representative Council is designed to build a mechanism of control and balance (checks and balance) between the branches of state power and within the legislature itself. Regional Representative Council is expected to be able to ensure and accommodate adequate representation and interests of the regions, as well as fight for the aspirations and interests of the region in the legislature. Then the Regional Representative Council was also formed to strengthen the bonds of the regions in the container of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, affirming the spirit of nationalism throughout the region in a forum that brings together various regional issues. In essence, providing a greater role of the region in the political decision-making process at the national level. Seeing the great *nawacita* expected from DPD RI, this institution should be given more binding authority not just normative authority that has been there.

Evaluation of DPD RI so far is not only on the authority attached to it but also on the implementation of tasks and functions that are not optimal. Some of the tasks and functions attached to this institution are considered by many parties not to touch the satisfaction even in the age of democracy that is getting older, DPD is still reluctant to show its fangs as an institution that can provide control for power. DPD today appears more as a symbolic institution that complements the representative system in Indonesia. Instead of having a significant position in many strategic decisions through its autonomy as a regional representative, what often happens is that DPD members are involved in practical political processes with political parties (Nursatyo, 2024).

This paper gives an important contribution to the idea of governance reform by highlighting the need for institutional strengthening of DPD RI. The strengthening does not only address the imbalance of power in the bicameral system, but also to increase the effectiveness of DPD RI in shaping strategic policies that support regional development. Thus, the proposed reforms will encourage the creation of a more equitable and inclusive governance system, while improving resource governance that is more in favor of regional interests.

As a state institution, DPD RI appears to be biased in almost everything from the authority that seems half-hearted, to the principle as an independent institution. In the constitutional mandate there are many tasks attached to DPD such as the formation and discussion of laws, regional autonomy and supervision. But in the aspect of authority, they are not given a strong and binding authority, for example in the discussion meeting of the Act this institution only has the capacity to provide input and consideration. In addition, there are still many ambiguities in the authority of DPD that can make it more paralysed. Then the independence aspect is also related to the principle of DPD which basically must be sourced from individual candidates as mandated by the constitution. However, today Indonesia's Regional Representative Council members are also those who are members of political parties. This situation is still a complicated dynamic in the institution of DPD, when the Constitutional Court (MK) allowed party members to register as candidates for DPD in the 2009 elections.

The politicisation that plagues DPD RI today has made the bicameral system in representative institutions in Indonesia biased. Because if DPD members are also party members then how can there be checks and balances. Instead, Indonesia's representative institutions are qualified for short-term transactions on the institution's back screen. This issue certainly has the potential to make the bicameral system adopted by Indonesia become deformed in principle and function.

In terms of institutional legitimacy, comparing to Regional Representative Council, has a stronger legitimacy in terms of real political support from the people. So that with its legitimacy, the limitation of DPD's authority makes the law disproportionate. In line with that, researchers from the Australian National University, Stephen Sherlock, argues that DPD is an unusual example in bicameral practice because although it has strong legitimacy, its authority is very limited (Marzuki, 2008).

This paper does not just want to provide a narrative that DPD institution is weak, and its authority should be strengthened or provide criticism on the representative system in Indonesia. But more than that, this paper wants to explain more substantively the problems that occur in Indonesian representative institutions, especially DPD and its consequences on political governance. Because seeing a representative institution in this context, DPD RI must be understood as a state institution that is connected to the consequences of the state process. This means that DPD RI in this paper is not seen as a separate institution from the state but rather part of the state with which it can hamper the course of government if there are problems. Unfortunately, the problems that are feared began to be sniffed for a long time within the DPD. Such as the weak authority, the existence of DPD that is vague with DPR and several political issues.

The weakness of the authority of DPD RI, especially in the aspect of legislation, makes its authority not comparable to the House of Representatives (DPR) RI. The authority of DPD RI is only limited to providing input and participating in discussing laws concerning the region. Only giving input, does not have great authority in passing the law. Such conditions force DPD to be able to create a supporting system to maximise its role and function. The state practice performed by members of DPD RI does not reflect the attitude of the people's representatives. Power struggles, arguing and even fighting in the courtroom add to the red record of the state institution. The bicameral system that is expected as a control and counterweight cannot be expected (Sagala, 1982).

In line with what is to be described in this paper, researchers from the Australian National University, Stephen Sherlock, argues that DPD is an unusual example in bicameral practice because although it has strong legitimacy, its authority is very limited (Marzuki, 2008). This situation further explains that the problems that plague DPD is not only an internal problem of the institution, but the system problems given by the state to the institution. In the end, the narrative that we will say will arrive at the point of strengthening the institution of DPD RI. But to arrive at that aspect requires a complete view of the imagination of the ideal representative system in Indonesia. Including reconstructing whether

the bicameral system that we have been using is still relevant to the Indonesian context today or needs to be re-initiated. This paper will try to touch the discourse fundamentally in understanding DPD RI in the representative system in Indonesia.

The reform of DPD RI's authority should also include its strategic role in legislating and overseeing policies that directly touch on regional interests, such as the distribution of development funds and the evaluation of autonomy policies. By strengthening DPD RI's ability to actively engage in discussions and decision-making, Indonesia's bicameral system can evolve to more effectively reflect the voices of all regions of Indonesia in an equal manner.

## **METHOD**

This study used qualitative methods with a literature review approach and document analysis. The approach was chosen to explore the role and effectiveness of the House of Regional Representative of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI) in the representative system in Indonesia and the challenges it faces. Primary data sources include official documents such as laws, regulations, and decisions of DPD RI, as well as transcripts of meetings and sessions. Secondary data sources are obtained from journal articles, books, research reports, and mass media relevant to the research topic (Wati et al., 2022; Omara et al., 2021).

The literature sources used in this study include academic literature in the form of scientific articles, journals, and books that provide theoretical and empirical insights. In addition, legal literature such as the 1945 Constitution and various related laws are used to understand the legal framework governing DPD RI. Additional information is also collected from the media, both online and print media, which have been reviewed for credibility to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data obtained. This combination of sources provided a comprehensive and rich database to support the analysis in this study. (Nisa, 2017; Widodo, 2014; Hara, 2014).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Overview of representative institutions in Indonesia**

Since the beginning of its establishment, history records that Indonesia's constitutional structure has been designed with the existence of representative institutions to accommodate the interests of the people. Through these representative institutions, various interests of the people from various regions can be communicated and negotiated with national policies designed and implemented by the government. In addition, these representative institutions also have a function to oversee other state institutions, especially the government (executive). Given the vastness of Indonesia's territory and the diversity of its communities, the founding fathers considered suitable forms and models of representation, resulting in the creation of the uniquely Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly. Based on these thoughts and considerations, the 1945 Constitution passed by the Indonesian Independence Preparatory Committee (PPKI) accommodates regional representation in the

People's Consultative Assembly through 'regional representatives' who work together with members of the House of Representatives (DPR) and group representatives in carrying out their duties and functions (Muslih, 2019).

The 1998 reforms had a major impact on various dynamics of the constitutional system in Indonesia. Starting from various protests, in which students were the main drivers, finally forced President Suharto to step down and was replaced by Vice President BJ Habibie. Under BJ Habibie's administration, elections that were supposed to be held in 2002 were accelerated to 1999. MPR members elected in the 1999 elections then amended the 1945 Constitution, which resulted in significant changes to the position, structure and authority of the MPR. One of the results of these changes was the establishment of new institutions, including the Regional Representative Council (DPD) which is regulated in Articles 2, 22C, and 22D of the 1945 Constitution. The essence of the arrangement of the three articles is that DPD members automatically become members of the MPR, with DPD members who are regional representatives who are equal in number in each province and elected through general elections.

In addition, regional representative council (DPD) has the functions of legislation, budget, supervision, and consideration (Subardjo, 2012). However, these functions are limited to a certain stage (propose a bill to DPR, participate in discussing the draft bill without the right / authority to approve or reject the bill, and supervise the implementation of certain laws). This limited authority is also still limited to certain fields. Furthermore, the results of the supervision can only be reported to the DPR for consideration for follow-up, without having the right to summon the institution that implements the supervised law, namely the government.

Along with the demand to strengthen democracy and fulfil social justice in various regions, as well as to increase regional participation and spirit in national life, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia decided to establish the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI) through the third revision of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in November 2001. This revision changed Indonesia's parliamentary and representative system from a unicameral system to a bicameral system. This change went through a long process of discussion in the community and MPR RI, especially in the Ad Hoc Committee I. In addition to paying attention to political demands and views that developed during the reform, the discussion process in the MPR RI was also based on academic research on government systems in other countries that adhere to democracy (Dpd.go.id, 2022).

The establishment of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council is seen as an important step to represent regional interests and maintain a fair balance between the centre and the regions. The idea arose from the realisation that centralised decision-making in the past had created inequality and injustice, even threatening national unity. The existence of Regional Representatives in the MPR RI before the revision of the 1945 Constitution was considered inadequate to respond to these challenges. The presence of DPD RI is expected

to be able to answer many problems, including regional affairs that have been negated by the government. However, in today's government practice with the presidential mecca, problems occur such as the weakening of the Indonesian parliamentary system with the emergence of many cartel practices and others within the party that not only hamper the work of parliament but also hijack democracy (Aritonang, 2012). A similar narrative was also put forward by Novianti in her study that the weak representation system in a democratic country reflects the failure of the principle of popular sovereignty (Noviati, 2016).

The establishment of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) is a hope for a more established representative institution in Indonesia. But on the other hand it turns out that running a two-chamber or bicameral representative system is not as simple as imagined. There are so many challenges that must be faced in running it starting from the division of tasks and functions, authority between one representative institution and another and many more. In line with this narrative, Ni'matul Huda in his book explains that when viewed more deeply, the term 'bicameral system' to describe Indonesia's representative system is actually not entirely appropriate. Indonesia's representative system is actually more inclined towards unicameral because in addition to the DPD and DPR, there is still the MPR which has a position as a state institution in accordance with the constitution and Law No. 22 Year 2003 on the Structure and Position of the MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPR (Huda, 2007).

The journey of Indonesian democracy has falsified the unicameral representative system that was previously adopted into a Bicameral system. The birth of DPD RI as one of the representative institutions of counterweight to the course of government and the control process makes the Indonesian representative institutions have been very well established with the presence of DPD and the establishment of MPR as the hallmark of the Indonesian parliament. The House of Regional Representatives has an initial idea to increase regional participation in the course of politics and state management. DPD is a representative body that participates in determining and overseeing the course of politics and state management. DPD is not a full legislative body. DPD is only authorised to propose and discuss draft laws in certain areas that are enumerated in the Constitution. On other matters, the formation of laws is only in the DPR and the Government (Wati et al., 2022).

After several decades Indonesia has a representative institution, especially after the reformation which is considered as a radical turning point in Indonesian democracy, but the role of DPD in the state administration is poorly understood by the public. As a state institution that has an important role, the existence of DPD needs to be socialised, both regarding its duties, functions, and authority so that people can understand the role of DPD in an effort to fight for the aspirations of the community and regions at the national level (Aspani, 2017).

However, as a new institution born after the third amendment of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, DPD has encountered obstacles in carrying out its functions as a legislative body, and has not been able to guarantee that it can carry out its functions as a representative of the regional community. At least the problem is caused: First,



its position as a high state institution mentioned in the constitution but has a very weak authority when compared to DPR as another chamber of parliament. Second, the problem of political party elements in DPD that brings internal problems, including causing poor legislative performance and the issue of leadership tenure. Third, the absence of a strict recall mechanism because it is only resolved dominantly by the internal DPD (Failaq et al., 2023).

Reviewing the genology of representative institutions in Indonesia, it can be concluded that there is a historical appreciation and interpretation of aspects of locality and diversity in the formation of representative institutions. The mechanism offered in the bicameral system is also intended to touch these aspects, namely facilitating regional interests, representing the aspirations of all citizens and others. It's just that in its implementation, the Indonesian representative system has experienced a lot of stuttering due to unbalanced authority, thus making all the tasks and functions of the representatives attached to it become hijacked.

### **Indonesia's Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) in its Roles and Functions**

Local needs that at that time were considered unable to be met by national policies, encouraged the urge to create representative institutions that could pay attention to regional aspirations in local policies. This shows the importance of regional representation to truly reflect the wishes of the local community, which is the responsibility of each DPD member. Currently, there is a growing demand to enhance the role of DPD, driven by community expectations. This reflects the aspirations of the region so that DPD can function effectively in dealing with various problems that have not been accommodated by the previous central government (Aspani, 2017).

Indonesia's Regional Representative Council as the embodiment of the region is given duties and authority by law, namely:

1. Submitting a Bill (Bill) relating to regional autonomy, central and regional relations, the formation of the regional autonomy, central and regional relations, the formation and expansion and merging of regions, the management of natural resources and other economic resources, as well as those relating to the financial balance between the center and the regions to the DPR;
2. Participate in discussing draft laws relating to the matters referred to in point 1;
3. Compile and submit an inventory list of problems of draft laws from the DPR or the President relating to the matter referred to in point 1;
4. Giving consideration to the DPR on draft laws on the state budget and draft laws relating to taxes, education, and religion;
5. May supervise the implementation of laws on regional autonomy, formation, expansion, and merger of regions, central and regional relations, management of natural resources and other economic resources, implementation of the State Budget, taxes, education, and religion;
6. Submitting the results of supervision over the implementation of laws on regional autonomy, formation, expansion, and merger of regions, central and regional

relations, management of natural resources and other economic resources, implementation of the state budget, taxes, education, and religion to the DPR as consideration for follow-up;

7. Receive the results of the examination of state finances from the BPK as material for making considerations to the DPR on draft laws relating to the APBN;
8. Giving consideration to DPR in the selection of BPK members;
9. Developing national legislation programs relating to regional autonomy, central and local relations, the establishment and expansion and merger of regions, the management of natural resources and other economic resources, as well as those relating to the financial balance between the center and the regions.

Like DPR, DPD has the same three functions in Article 4 of the Regulation of the House of Regional Representative of the Republic of Indonesia No. 1 Year 2014 on Rules of Procedure, namely (1) Legislation function; (2) Budget function; and (3) Supervision function. Normatively all the duties and functions attached to DPD normatively, according to Jimly Asshiddiqie in (Wati et al., 2022), basically the legislative branch of power is in the hands of DPR. However, in matters relating to regional interests, as mentioned in Article 22D paragraph (1), DPD is authorized to propose draft laws. However, the bill must still be submitted to DPR as the main holder of legislative power. Therefore, it can be concluded that the existence of DPD is only as an addition or complement that is not too significant.

The role of Regional Representative Council (DPD) is negligible even though the procedure for selecting its members is very complicated and difficult. A person can only become a DPD member if he is really a widely known figure in his region and not a party person so that he can really be known outside the context of the political machine called the party. However, after being elected as a DPD member, he must live in Jakarta. His job is only to consider DPR in matters of legislation. This situation clearly indicates that DPD in state interaction with other institutions has weak bargaining power in making strategic decisions. In the context of the state, DPD RI should have a clear and strong working relationship with the Provincial and Regency DPRD to fight for regional rights at the central level (Santoso, 2011).

With the limited authority, duties and functions of DPD which only provide input, consideration, proposals and suggestions, while on the other hand there is a large portion for DPR who has the right to decide, so that DPD can be said as a council of consideration only in representative institutions in Indonesia and does not show that DPD is a bicameral representative that is classified either strong or soft.

With the limited position, function, duties, and authority of DPD in the 1945 Constitution after the amendment, so it is not excessive if there are most of the people call DPD is nothing more than a kind of “expert staff of DPR” this expression may arise because in the implementation of most of the position, function, duties and authority, which is unavoidable DPD must do it “through” DPR.<sup>22</sup> Steps that can be pursued so that DPD can be equal to DPR to produce a strong bicameral system is to amend the 1945 Constitution. It

has long been planned but still not realized. The following is DPD's proposal submitted in the 2007 MPR Session.

The post-reform transformation of Indonesia's representative system reflects the dynamics between the need to accommodate local aspirations and the challenges of implementation. In the context of the changes introduced through the amendment of the 1945 Constitution, the establishment of DPD RI not only represents the need to balance center-region relations but also to strengthen a more participatory democracy. However, several studies show that the limited authority of DPD RI is a significant obstacle in the implementation of its role. The study by Failaq et al. (2023) underlines that although DPD has the authority to propose and discuss certain draft laws, the limitation in final approval makes it not fully effective as a legislative body.

On the other hand, comparative studies of representative systems in other countries show similar challenges in implementing a bicameral system that gives a significant role to the second chamber. A study by Santoso (2011) highlights that countries with a tradition of federalism tend to give greater authority to the second chamber to ensure balance between regions, something that remains a challenge in Indonesia. Thus, there is an urgent need to re-evaluate the role and function of DPD in order to be more in line with the purpose of its establishment, which is to strengthen regional representation in national decision-making.

In the end, this research consistently argues that although DPD RI was formed with the aim of strengthening the role of regions in the representative system, its implementation is still far from expectations. This is due to various structural and functional limitations faced by DPD, which specifically distinguishes this study from other studies. For example, research by Huda (2007) focuses more on the normative analysis of Indonesia's representative system as unicameral disguised into bicameral, while this study emphasizes the practical impact of these structural weaknesses on the effectiveness of the legislative function of DPD. This finding is also different from the study of Novianti (2016), which highlights the problem of the principle of popular sovereignty in the representation system, while this study examines the technical and political aspects that affect the role of DPD as a regional representative.

Theoretically, this finding contributes to the enrichment of literature on bicameral representative systems in countries with decentralized models such as Indonesia, while criticizing how institutional design affects the effectiveness of the role of representative institutions. Practically, this research provides important recommendations for policymakers to consider constitutional revisions that allow DPD to have more balanced authority with DPR, so that it can fulfill expectations as a strong regional representation. Thus, this research not only provides new insights into the challenges of implementing a bicameral system in Indonesia, but also offers concrete steps to improve the role of representative institutions in national decision-making.

### **Indonesia's Regional Representative Council (DPD) and Biased Bicameral System**

This study identifies an imbalance in Indonesia's bicameral system caused by the DPD's lack of authority, despite its strong political legitimacy. Most of the previous literature, as discussed by Chaniago (2018), highlighted the positive potential of Indonesia's bicameral system without exploring the impact of the power imbalance between the DPR and DPD. The study focuses on the practical consequences of the imbalance, especially in terms of representation of regional interests and oversight of government policies. In contrast to previous works that tend to discuss the potential for bicameral reform in general, this study provides a more in-depth analysis of how the dominance of the DPR can hinder the DPD's function in providing effective oversight and representing regional interests to the fullest. Theoretically, the findings adjust the understanding of a bicameral system that should have balanced power, while practically, the results of this study indicate that structural reforms to the authority of both institutions are needed to create a fairer and more effective representative system for all Indonesian people.

The presence of DPD in the representative system in Indonesia is trying to activate democracy in the government system through checks and balances with bicameral facilities offered. But on the way, DPD makes the bicameral system itself becomes biased with the lack of role and authority of DPD. This narrative is in line with what Denny Indrayana stated that although DPD is present as a state institution, its existence is almost the same as its absence. DPD exists because one of them is relatively strong legitimacy, with its members elected through a district election system that represents many people. However, DPD is also "absent" because despite its strong legitimacy, its authority tends to be minimalist, especially when compared to DPR. In the 1945 Constitution that has undergone four changes, DPD does not have significant powers. DPD can only provide input, consideration, proposals, or suggestions in accordance with Article 22D, while the final decision remains in the hands of DPR. Thus, the existence of DPD with DPR cannot be referred to as bicameralism in the conventional sense. The greater power of DPR, which has a lot of authority, makes the system of checks and balances between the two institutions hampered (Indrayana, 2008).

The birth of DPD indirectly changed the face of our parliament into a bicameral parliament that is a two-chamber system. The bicameral system of representation in Indonesia refers to a parliamentary structure consisting of two chambers, namely the House of Representatives (DPR) as the lower chamber and the House of Regional Representatives (DPD) as the upper chamber. This approach aims to reflect a broader representation of Indonesian society, with consideration of region (DPD) and population (DPR). In principle, the bicameral system of representation in Indonesia is an attempt to integrate national and regional interests in the legislative decision-making process. Although it has challenges and room for improvement, this system remains one of the important political structures in realizing the principles of democracy in Indonesia (Chaniago, 2018).

However, the problems in strengthened authority of Indonesia's Regional Representatives Council has biased the imagination of a well-established representative institution in a bicameral system. The bicameral system of representation in Indonesia, with

the House of Representatives (DPR) as the lower chamber and the Regional Representative Council (DPD) as the upper chamber, presents power dynamics that are not always balanced between these two institutions. In this context, differences in authority between the DPD and DPR can have a significant impact on Indonesia's representative system. In the context of a bicameral representative system in Indonesia, the imbalance of authority between the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Regional Representative Council (DPD) can cause this system to be biased and fail in several crucial aspects.

First, this imbalance creates inequality in the representation of national and regional interests. The DPR with its dominant legislative powers tends to focus more on general national interests, while the DPD, which is supposed to represent regional interests, often has limited authority to propose or influence policies that benefit specific regions. This can result in an inequity of representation, where regional interests are overlooked or not given enough attention in the national decision-making process. In the context of Indonesia's bicameral representative system, the imbalance of authority between the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Regional Representative Council (DPD) can cause the system to be biased and fail in several crucial aspects.

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Second, the imbalance of authority between the two chambers can also hinder legislative efficiency. With DPR having the dominant authority in lawmaking, DPD sometimes faces difficulties in fighting for amendments or revisions that are considered important for their regions. This can hamper the ability of the representative system to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of diverse regional communities.

Third, in terms of oversight of the government, an imbalance of authority can potentially reduce the effectiveness of control and balance of power. Although DPD has a role in oversight, its more limited authority could be an obstacle in ensuring that government policies truly reflect the needs and aspirations of Indonesia's diverse regions. As a result, the risk of policies that are not in line with regional interests may increase.

Finally, this imbalance can create political tensions between the DPR and DPD as well as between regions and the central government. Feelings of discontent over unequal and unfair representation can threaten political stability and reduce the legitimacy of the representative system in the eyes of the public. Overall, the imbalance of authority between DPD and DPR not only threatens the principle of fair representation, but can also affect the

political stability and effectiveness of the legislative system in Indonesia. Therefore, serious reform efforts are needed to balance the roles and authority of these two institutions, so that the bicameral representative system can be more effective in realizing justice, more equitable representation, and stronger political stability for the country.

The existing bicameral system should be able to make the representative system in Indonesia stronger and stronger in carrying out its duties and functions, especially in terms of supervising government performance. But sadly, DPD and DPR are often involved in complicated conflicts of interest. This situation confirms the bias of the bicameral system adopted by Indonesia. This narrative is not just an assumption. But it has happened in several cases. In addition, in the context of supervision of the government, sometimes DPD also faces challenges in carrying out its function as a supervisory institution for government policies that have a direct impact on the region. Despite having the authority to conduct supervision, the implementation of the results of this supervision sometimes has not achieved optimal results (Maheswara et al., 2020).

During 2019, there was tension between DPR and DPD regarding the revision of the KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission) Law. DPR proposed several amendments that were considered by some DPD members and civil society as weakening the KPK's authority in eradicating corruption. Although DPD fought for its views, DPR, which has more power in the legislative process, finally approved the revision without following all proposals from DPD. Overall, the concrete examples above illustrate how the imbalance of authority between DPR and DPD can lead to the inability of the bicameral system to reach a consensus that is beneficial to all parties, as well as showing a lack of balanced representation between national and regional interests. Whereas if we look back, the House of Regional Representatives was born as part of the demands of the 1998 reform with the aim of eliminating the centralized state administration. So that its functions and authority must be in line with the initial goal of providing a democratic touch that is asymmetrical to the government through regional representatives in DPD RI (Pirmansyah, 2014).

This situation is very worrying because in the general theory of Bicameral In principle, the two chambers of parliament have a balanced position, both in terms of political and legislative. In a bicameral parliamentary system, it is common that a bill becomes law after approval from both chambers. However, it is possible that the two chambers do not have equal powers. Therefore, based on the powers granted by the constitution to both chambers, a bicameral parliamentary system can be classified as strong or lenient.

### **Strengthening the Institution of DPD RI: Reorganizing Our Parliament**

Furthermore, to strengthen the DPD RI institution, it is also important to formulate a clear mechanism related to supervision and accountability of this institution. One step that can be taken is to ensure that DPD not only provides input or consideration in the legislative process, but also has a more active role in supervising government policies that have a direct effect on the region. In this context, strengthening the authority of DPD RI in the supervisory

function will have a positive impact on equitable development in various regions of Indonesia, which is often neglected in more centralized policies. In addition, it is important to ensure a transparent and accountable system in managing the authority of DPD so that this institution is not only effective in carrying out its duties, but also has public trust in carrying out representation of regional interests fairly and equitably.

Fixing the authority of DPD RI in Indonesia's representative system does need to be done to create a quality representative institution. But this stage must be done with a comprehensive approach. This means that it is not only to give stronger authority to the DPD institution but also to make a fundamental arrangement in the aspect of regulation and refining the principles of DPD as an independent and non-party institution. Because if these aspects are ruled out, it is likely that the authority given to DPD will not produce an ideal representative institution because its authority and function are not balanced (Nugroho, 2004).

Indonesia's parliamentary system puts DPD in a silent room that is negated in many policy agendas. This situation makes us obliged to rethink whether the bicameral system has provided a promising arena for DPD RI as an extension of the Region with all its aspirations. To understand this more deeply, let's go to what was conveyed by Widayati in his study which explains that usually, a unitary state parliamentary system is unicameral, and a federal state parliamentary system is bicameral. The parliamentary system applied in Indonesia changes in line with the changes in the constitution and the changing form of the Indonesian state (Widayati, 2015).

The narration above is in line with what is conveyed by Efriza and Nursatyo in their study which explains that the problematization of DPD members who come from political party members underscores the need to reconsider the regional representation system in Indonesia. It is important to ensure that DPD members can carry out their functions effectively as regional representatives without getting caught up in party political dynamics that can reduce the quality of their representation. Measures are needed to strengthen the independence of DPD members and increase their accountability to the interests of the regions they represent (Nursatyo, 2024).

There are several opinions of researchers about the rearrangement of DPD's authority, such as those conveyed by Syarwi Chaniago in his study which states that the choice for the future of DPD consists of only three options: first, maintaining the status quo with limited authority as it is today; second, strengthening or changing its authority; third, removing DPD altogether. Indonesia as a large country cannot only have one legislative body (one chamber), but must have at least two institutions (two chambers). Many large or majority countries have a two chambers system, which is also one way to overcome inequality between Java and regions outside Java.

A fierce debate took place between supporters and opponents in the DPR on whether the DPD should be strengthened with functions and duties equal to those of the DPR, or kept with its current limited authority. Eventually, this led to a political compromise or a middle

option, which may result in a DPD with authority and functions similar to what exists today (Chaniago, 2018).

On the other hand, some observers provide more final input that the functions and authority of DPD should be added and strengthened through the amendment of the 1945 Constitution. The points proposed in this strengthening idea include increasing the authority of DPD in the bill not only limited to certain affairs, then the number of DPD added and others. In essence, this opinion requires an escalation of authority for DPD RI which is trying to be pushed radically through the amendment of the 1945 Constitution (Muslih, 2019). However, to make the amendment work well and certainly lead to the strengthening of DPD RI, it is necessary to have the support of DPR RI as the people's representation, but if the polemics in DPR make this difficult to realize then support from civil society must be shown (Pratama et al., 2019).

Some views related to the rearrangement of DPD have given us an idea that there must be concrete steps taken to answer the problems of representative institutions in Indonesia. In this section the author wants to emphasize his idea that in providing strengthening functions and authority to the DPD, it must also be followed by the purification of DPD as a state institution. Purification of the House of Regional Representative (DPD) as a non-party institution and the confirmation of its function as a representative of the region is a crucial step in strengthening the parliamentary system and democracy in Indonesia. This concept aims to secure regional interests more independently, without being affected by party political dynamics that can obscure the main priorities of regional representation.

Furthermore, if the strengthening of the functions and authority of DPD is taken, DPD must be able to be presented as an authentic and distinctive institution. This means that the DPD should not only be a different name from DPR. But they should really be able to act as a counterweight to the legislative dominance of DPR in the decision-making process. By maintaining its unique identity, DPD RI can provide additional perspectives in broader legislative discussions and decision-making, ensuring that regional interests are not marginalized in the national political process.

## **CONCLUSION**

The history of the formation of representative institutions in Indonesia reflects a dynamic effort in creating a representative democratic system. The House of Regional Representatives (DPD RI) was formed as an effort to strengthen regional representation in the legislative process. However, in practice, various challenges have hindered the optimization of DPD's functions, which often has difficulty carrying out its mandate effectively.

DPD Indonesia has the main task of providing input on policies that impact the regions, but its limited authority in the legislative process reduces its ability to effectively fight for regional interests. Indonesia's bicameral system reveals an imbalance between the House



of Representatives (DPR) and DPD RI, where DPR has more dominant power, making it difficult for DPD to play a significant role in strategic decision-making at the national level.

Strengthening DPD RI requires a comprehensive restructuring of the parliamentary system, including granting greater authority to DPD RI, realigning functions, and roles between DPR and DPD to ensure better representation for all regions in Indonesia. To achieve this, constitutional amendments or legislative changes could be introduced to give DPD RI greater influence in the decision-making process. This would address the imbalance between the two institutions and provide a clearer path towards fairer representation. In conclusion, this paper highlights the importance of strengthening the DPD RI institution to create a more democratic and representative system of government. By increasing the authority and function of DPD, Indonesia can move towards a more balanced power structure and ensure fairer representation for all regions.

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