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Building a Single-Executive Local Governance Model in Indonesia: A Comparative Study of Latvia

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Abstract

Background: Indonesia's local executive structure places regional heads and deputy regional heads within a joint electoral mandate while assigning them unequal executive authority, creating potential problems of overlapping political legitimacy, institutional ambiguity, accountability, and bureaucratic coordination.
Objective: This study examines the feasibility of developing a single-executive local governance model in Indonesia by drawing comparative institutional lessons from Latvia.
Methods: The research employs a normative legal method combined with a functional comparative law approach. It examines the constitutional and statutory foundations of local executive leadership in Indonesia and compares them with Latvia's local government framework across four dimensions: political legitimacy, allocation of executive authority, functional responsibilities, and accountability.
Results: The study finds that Article 18(4) of the 1945 Constitution expressly recognizes governors, regents, and mayors but does not constitutionally mandate deputy regional heads, leaving their institutional status largely to statutory design. The Latvian framework demonstrates an alternative arrangement in which democratic legitimacy is concentrated in an elected municipal council, while executive and administrative functions are organized without a jointly elected head–deputy structure.
Conclusion: A single-executive model may provide Indonesia with clearer alignment among political legitimacy, executive authority, and accountability.
Implication: Reform should be pursued through appropriate statutory restructuring, accompanied by stronger democratic oversight, transparency, legislative scrutiny, administrative accountability, and safeguards against excessive concentration of executive power.

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INTRODUCTION

Local government reform remains a central issue in Indonesia's administrative system. Following the late-1990s decentralization reforms, Article 18 of the 1945 Constitution established regional autonomy within the unitary state framework, dividing authority among provinces, regencies, and municipalities to accommodate regional needs, enhance public participation, and optimize service delivery (Adela Magdalena Jonathan Marramis et al., 2025). Within this constitutional arrangement, regional heads and deputy regional heads are placed within a shared electoral and governance structure, raising fundamental questions regarding

executive authority, political legitimacy, and institutional accountability (Fikri & Rizky Bangun Wibisono, 2023).

Although this dualistic arrangement combines a unified electoral mandate with a differentiated distribution of executive functions, its effectiveness depends heavily on the clarity of legal authority between both offices (Hariyanto et al., 2025). Where the deputy's authority is vaguely defined or overly dependent on delegation, institutional uncertainty arises. Conversely, substantial overlaps in functions create competing centers of executive authority (Firmansyah & Budiyono, 2025). Assessing this dual leadership design is therefore critical to determining whether the current model supports regional autonomy or requires structural reform to ensure administrative coherence and public accountability (Adnyani et al., 2025).

The structure of local executive leadership must consequently be understood as an important component of Indonesia's broader system of local governance. The institutional design determines not only how executive functions are distributed but also how political mandates are translated into governmental action and how responsibility for local policies is ultimately assigned. In a decentralized state, the effectiveness of regional autonomy depends upon institutional arrangements capable of maintaining coherence between political leadership, administrative authority, and public accountability. The configuration of the regional head and deputy regional head therefore warrants closer examination, particularly with regard to whether the coexistence of these two offices strengthens or potentially complicates the exercise of executive power at the local level. This institutional question provides the basis for examining more specifically the respective position and functions of the regional head and deputy regional head within the Indonesian local government system (Bakhri et al., 2025).

Within Indonesia's decentralized governmental structure, the regional head occupies the principal position in the administration of regional government. Governors, regents, and mayors function as the heads of provincial, regency, and municipal governments, respectively, and are responsible for directing the implementation of regional governmental affairs in accordance with the division of powers established by law. Their position encompasses both political and administrative dimensions, as they are not only holders of an electoral mandate but also the central executive authority responsible for translating regional policies into governmental programs and public services. The regional head therefore serves as the primary locus of executive responsibility at the local level, with authority extending to the formulation and implementation of regional policies, coordination of the regional bureaucracy, and representation of the regional government within the framework of the unitary state.

The deputy regional head, by contrast, occupies a supporting position within the local executive. The office is constitutionally and statutorily recognized as part of the regional governmental structure, but its functions are principally designed to assist the regional head in carrying out governmental responsibilities. The deputy regional head may perform duties delegated by the regional head, coordinate specific governmental functions, monitor the implementation of regional programs, and undertake other responsibilities prescribed by legislation. This arrangement indicates that the deputy regional head does not ordinarily constitute an autonomous centre of executive power equivalent to the regional head. Rather, the deputy's authority is largely embedded within a hierarchical relationship in which the regional head remains the principal decision-making authority.

The distinction between these positions becomes particularly significant when viewed in relation to their political legitimacy. The regional head and deputy regional head derive their democratic legitimacy through the same electoral process and are presented to voters as a single candidate pair. Their common electoral mandate is intended to establish political unity and facilitate cooperation in the administration of regional government. However, the existence of a shared electoral mandate does not necessarily produce an identical allocation of legal authority. Political legitimacy is therefore distributed jointly, while executive responsibility remains structurally differentiated. This distinction creates a potential institutional tension between the political status of the deputy regional head as a directly elected official and the legal character of the office as a supporting component of the regional executive.

The legal relationship between the regional head and deputy regional head is consequently characterized by both cooperation and hierarchy. The deputy is expected to

support the regional head and assume particular functions within the administration of regional government, while the regional head retains ultimate responsibility for the exercise of executive authority. Such an arrangement can function effectively where the two officeholders maintain political and institutional alignment and where the scope of delegated authority is sufficiently clear. However, the effectiveness of the arrangement may become more difficult to sustain when the legal distribution of functions does not correspond adequately with the political realities of a jointly elected executive leadership. Differences in political interests, interpretations of authority, or approaches to governance may transform a formally hierarchical relationship into a potentially competitive one.

From the perspective of local government law, the central issue is therefore not merely whether the regional head and deputy regional head possess distinct functions, but whether the existing legal framework provides sufficient clarity regarding the boundaries, sources, and accountability of their respective authorities. A sound institutional design should establish a coherent relationship between democratic legitimacy, executive authority, and administrative responsibility. Where these elements are not adequately aligned, the presence of two politically legitimized officeholders within the local executive may generate institutional uncertainty and affect the coherence of governmental decision-making. This issue provides an important foundation for examining the broader problem of dual executive leadership and the potential consequences of maintaining the current regional head–deputy regional head configuration in Indonesia.

Against this institutional background, the concept of single-executive local governance provides an alternative perspective for reconsidering the organization of executive authority at the regional level. Rather than distributing political leadership between a regional head and a directly elected deputy, a single-executive model places ultimate executive authority and political responsibility in one principal elected office. The central rationale of such a model is not simply institutional simplification, but the establishment of a clearer relationship between electoral legitimacy, executive authority, and accountability. By concentrating the political mandate and ultimate responsibility for local executive government in a single office, the model may reduce the possibility of competing centres of political authority while allowing supporting administrative positions to be structured according to functional rather than parallel political considerations. In this respect, single-executive local governance can be understood as an institutional alternative aimed at strengthening the coherence and accountability of decentralized government.

The relevance of this alternative has to be considered within the broader body of scholarship on local government reform and executive leadership. Previous studies have examined local government primarily from perspectives such as decentralization, regional autonomy, democratic accountability, institutional capacity, electoral politics, and the relationship between political leadership and bureaucratic performance. Other studies have specifically addressed the relationship between regional heads and deputy regional heads, particularly in relation to political conflict, the distribution of authority, delegation, and the effectiveness of local administration. This body of research has contributed substantially to understanding the practical difficulties associated with local executive leadership and has demonstrated that institutional arrangements cannot be separated from the political and administrative dynamics of decentralization. Nevertheless, much of the existing discussion remains focused on improving the relationship between the regional head and deputy regional head within the existing dual-office framework, rather than questioning whether the dual executive structure itself constitutes an appropriate institutional design.

The comparative law approach is therefore particularly relevant to the examination of alternative models of local executive governance. Through comparison, the Indonesian arrangement can be evaluated against another institutional experience in which local executive authority is organized according to a different configuration. Such an approach allows the analysis to move beyond normative criticism of the existing dual leadership structure toward a more systematic assessment of possible institutional alternatives. The purpose of comparison is not to establish that a foreign model is inherently superior to the Indonesian system, but to identify institutional principles and mechanisms that may offer useful lessons for domestic

reform. This distinction is important because the effectiveness of a local government model depends upon its compatibility with the constitutional structure, political system, administrative traditions, and legal culture in which it operates.

Latvia is selected as the comparative jurisdiction because its local government framework provides a useful institutional contrast to the Indonesian model while operating within a modern constitutional and democratic system. The relevance of Latvia does not lie in the assumption that its local government structure can be directly transplanted into Indonesia, but rather in the opportunity to examine a different institutional configuration for organizing local executive authority. Latvia's experience is particularly valuable for comparative analysis because its local government system has undergone substantial institutional transformation following the restoration of independence and subsequent processes of administrative and territorial reform. These developments provide an important context for examining how the organization of local political leadership can be structured in response to changing requirements of decentralization, administrative efficiency, democratic accountability, and territorial governance.

The Latvian experience therefore serves as a comparative lens through which the Indonesian local executive structure can be critically reassessed. Rather than presenting Latvia as a normative model that should be adopted wholesale, the comparison seeks to identify institutional lessons concerning the concentration of executive responsibility, the relationship between representative institutions and executive administration, and the mechanisms through which local political authority is rendered accountable. The ultimate relevance of Latvia lies in its capacity to broaden the conceptual horizon of Indonesian local government reform and to demonstrate that the organization of local executive leadership can take forms other than a jointly elected head-and-deputy arrangement. This comparative perspective strengthens the basis for considering whether Indonesia could develop a more coherent single-executive model while maintaining the constitutional principles of decentralization, democratic participation, local autonomy, and accountable governance.

Despite the growing literature on decentralization, local government reform, and the relationship between regional heads and deputy regional heads, an important gap remains in the study of Indonesia's local executive structure. Existing scholarship has largely examined the legal authority of regional heads and deputy regional heads, political conflicts between the two offices, the implementation of regional autonomy, and the administrative consequences of local leadership. These studies provide important insights into the practical and legal difficulties of the existing system. However, relatively limited attention has been given to the institutional design of the dual executive itself as a structural issue of local government law. In particular, insufficient consideration has been given to whether the combination of a directly elected regional head and deputy regional head remains institutionally appropriate when the two offices possess a shared democratic mandate but an unequal distribution of executive authority. The question of whether the deputy regional head should continue to exist as a separately legitimized political office, rather than whether its functions can simply be better regulated, therefore remains insufficiently explored.

This gap becomes more significant when the issue is examined through a comparative legal perspective. Much of the existing debate on Indonesian local government reform is developed within the boundaries of the domestic constitutional and statutory framework, with relatively limited examination of alternative institutional arrangements found in other unitary states. Comparative analysis can contribute to this debate by examining how different constitutional systems structure the relationship between local democratic representation, executive authority, and political accountability. The comparison with Latvia is particularly useful because it provides an institutional contrast in which local political representation and executive governance are organized through a different relationship between elected municipal councils and executive leadership. The Latvian experience consequently offers an opportunity to examine whether the concentration and clarification of executive responsibility can be achieved without reproducing a dual political leadership structure comparable to Indonesia's regional head–deputy regional head arrangement.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to move the debate on Indonesian local government reform from the regulation of relations between existing officeholders toward a reconsideration of the institutional architecture of local executive leadership itself. Rather than focusing exclusively on how conflicts between regional heads and deputy regional heads can be prevented or resolved, this study examines whether the underlying dual-office structure should be reconsidered and whether a single-executive orientation can provide a more coherent basis for local governance. The research combines a doctrinal analysis of Indonesian local government law with a comparative examination of Latvia to identify the different ways in which political legitimacy, executive authority, administrative responsibility, and accountability can be institutionally organized. The contribution of the study is therefore not to propose the wholesale transplantation of the Latvian system, but to derive comparative institutional lessons that may inform the development of an Indonesian model compatible with its constitutional framework and decentralization principles.

Based on this research gap, the study addresses three principal questions. First, how is executive authority between the regional head and deputy regional head legally and institutionally structured under Indonesian local government law, and what problems arise from the distribution of political legitimacy, authority, and accountability between the two offices? Second, how does Latvia organize local political representation and executive leadership, and what institutional principles can be identified from its local government framework in relation to the concentration and accountability of executive authority? Third, to what extent can the comparative experience of Latvia provide a legal and institutional basis for reconsidering Indonesia's dual regional executive structure and developing a single-executive model of local governance that remains consistent with the constitutional principles of decentralization and regional autonomy?

The scope of the analysis is deliberately confined to the institutional organization of local executive leadership in Indonesia and its comparison with the relevant local government framework in Latvia. The study focuses principally on the legal position, source of legitimacy, allocation of authority, functional responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms associated with local executive leadership. It does not seek to provide a comprehensive comparison of all aspects of Indonesian and Latvian local government, nor does it advocate the direct transplantation of Latvia's institutional arrangements into Indonesia. Instead, the comparative analysis is used selectively to identify institutional principles that are relevant to the specific problem of dual political leadership and the possible reorganization of executive authority at the local level. Particular attention is given to the relationship between elected representative institutions, executive leadership, administrative structures, and mechanisms of political accountability.

The significance of this research lies in its potential contribution to both the development of local government law and the formulation of institutional reform policy. From a legal perspective, the study contributes to the debate on decentralization by connecting the distribution of governmental authority between the central and regional levels with the internal design of executive power within regional government. It argues that the effectiveness of decentralization depends not only on the quantity of authority transferred to local governments but also on the institutional clarity through which such authority is exercised and for which political actors are held accountable. From a policy perspective, the study provides a comparative basis for reconsidering whether the existing regional head–deputy regional head structure remains the most effective institutional arrangement for contemporary local governance. By placing Indonesia's experience in dialogue with the Latvian institutional framework, the research seeks to contribute to a broader discussion on how local executive government can be designed to achieve clearer authority, stronger accountability, greater administrative coherence, and more effective public service delivery while remaining consistent with constitutional democracy and regional autonomy.

METHOD

This study employed a functional comparative legal method to evaluate local executive leadership models. Latvia was selected not as a direct equivalent of a single-executive model, but

as a functional comparative benchmark to demonstrate how local governance could operate effectively without a dual political executive mandate. While Indonesia coupled a directly elected regional head with a directly elected deputy regional head, Latvia concentrated local political legitimacy within the elected municipal council (*dome*) and separated political representation from executive-administrative management. Comparing these two jurisdictions allowed the study to analyze how different legal architectures addressed the distribution of executive power and accountability without reproducing parallel political mandates within the local executive.

Indonesia and Latvia were selected as comparator jurisdictions through purposive comparative selection. Indonesia represented a unitary state that had developed a decentralized system of regional government in which the governor, regent, or mayor was elected together with a deputy regional head. Latvia, likewise, was a unitary state with constitutionally recognized local self-government, but its local governmental structure organized political representation and executive authority through a different institutional configuration. The comparison was therefore based on both structural similarity and institutional difference: the two jurisdictions shared the characteristics of unitary statehood, local self-government, and a civil law legal tradition, while differing in the organization and allocation of local executive authority. These characteristics provided a meaningful basis for examining alternative approaches to local executive governance.

The legal traditions of the two jurisdictions were also considered in establishing the comparative framework. Indonesia and Latvia were both broadly situated within the continental European or civil law tradition, although their legal systems had developed through distinct historical and constitutional trajectories. Indonesian law had been significantly influenced by the Dutch civil law tradition, while Latvia's legal system reflected its prewar legal heritage, post-Soviet legal reconstruction, and subsequent European legal development. The comparison therefore did not assume legal-system equivalence. Instead, the shared civil law background provided a common legal reference point, while differences in constitutional structure, territorial administration, electoral arrangements, and local government institutions were treated as contextual variables in interpreting the comparative findings.

The comparison employed a functional-institutional framework consisting of four principal criteria. First, the study examined the source of political legitimacy, including the manner in which local political leadership obtained its mandate. Second, it analyzed the allocation of executive authority, particularly the position of the principal executive and the existence, role, and legal authority of supporting executive offices. Third, it examined the distribution of functions and responsibilities, including delegation, coordination, supervision, and the relationship between political leadership and the local administrative apparatus. Fourth, it evaluated accountability mechanisms, particularly the relationship between the exercise of executive authority and responsibility for governmental decisions and outcomes. These criteria enabled the study to compare the substantive functions of local executive institutions rather than merely their formal institutional labels (Mukhlis, Arowosaiye, et al., 2025).

The analysis was conducted in three sequential stages. First, the study identified and interpreted the constitutional and statutory framework governing local executive leadership in Indonesia, with particular attention to the relationship between the regional head and deputy regional head. Second, the corresponding institutional framework in Latvia was examined using the same analytical criteria. Third, the findings were comparatively assessed to identify similarities, differences, and institutional implications for Indonesian local government reform. The comparison adopted a functional approach because the objective was to determine how different institutional arrangements addressed common governance functions, particularly the allocation of executive authority and the establishment of clear political accountability (Mendy, 2024).

The comparative findings were interpreted contextually rather than through direct institutional transplantation. The study did not assume that the Latvian local government framework was inherently superior or that it should be adopted wholesale by Indonesia. Rather, Latvia was used as a comparative reference for identifying institutional principles that could provide insight into the reform of Indonesia's local executive structure. The analysis ultimately considered whether a single-executive model of local governance could provide a clearer

relationship among democratic legitimacy, executive authority, governmental responsibility, and accountability while remaining compatible with Indonesia's constitutional framework and principles of regional autonomy (Mukhlis Maskun, et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Institutional Structure and Authority of Regional Heads and Deputy Regional Heads in Indonesia

The constitutional foundation of regional governance in Indonesia is established under Article 18 Paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945), which explicitly states that "Governors, Regents, and Mayors respectively as heads of regional government shall be elected democratically." Crucially, the constitutional text refers exclusively to the regional head (*kepala pemerintah daerah*) and does not mandate the inclusion of a deputy regional head (*wakil kepala daerah*). This constitutional omission indicates that the existence, role, and authority of deputy regional heads fall within the domain of statutory policy (open legal policy) determined by the legislature rather than a mandatory constitutional requirement.

At the statutory level, the institutional relationship between regional heads and their deputies is governed primarily by Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government. Article 59 Paragraph (1) of Law No. 23/2014 provides that regional government is administered by the regional head assisted by the deputy regional head. While Article 65 explicitly enumerates the extensive executive powers of the regional head—including policy formulation, budgetary execution, and bureaucratic direction—Article 66 confines the deputy regional head to assisting, monitoring, and executing delegated tasks. This statutory hierarchy directly conflicts with the electoral mechanism under Article 1 Paragraph (3) of Law No. 10 of 2016 on Regional Head Elections (*UU Pilkada*), which mandates that regional heads and deputy regional heads be elected jointly as a single candidate pair. Consequently, Indonesian local government law creates a structural contradiction: Law No. 10 of 2016 confers a joint democratic mandate from the electorate, whereas Law No. 23 of 2014 concentrates actual executive authority solely in the regional head.

This structural asymmetry creates a distinct divergence between political legitimacy and administrative authority. Both the regional head and deputy regional head obtain their democratic mandate through a common electoral process as a candidate pair, providing both officeholders with direct electoral legitimacy derived from the electorate (Syahril & Redi, 2023). This arrangement is intended to establish political coherence within the regional executive and to provide voters with an identifiable governing team. Nevertheless, the existence of a common electoral mandate does not result in identical legal authority (Syahril & Redi, 2023). The regional head receives the principal mandate to administer regional government, while the deputy regional head is positioned primarily to assist the regional head in performing executive responsibilities. Consequently, the Indonesian system creates an institutional asymmetry in which political legitimacy is jointly acquired, while formal executive authority is principally concentrated in the regional head (Sinaga & Damayanti, 2025).

The distribution of functions between the two offices reflects this asymmetry. The regional head is responsible for leading the implementation of governmental affairs that fall within regional authority, establishing regional policies, coordinating the regional apparatus, and ensuring the implementation of regional development and public services in accordance with applicable law (Yulida & Talisa, 2024). The regional head also represents the regional government in the exercise of its governmental authority and bears the principal responsibility for the overall administration of the region. The deputy regional head, by contrast, is assigned functions that support the administration of regional government. These include assisting the regional head in implementing governmental affairs, coordinating certain regional apparatuses and programs, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of governmental activities, and carrying out other duties prescribed by legislation or assigned by the regional head. The deputy's functions are therefore principally supportive, coordinative, and delegated rather than constituting an independent sphere of executive authority equivalent to that of the regional head (Shoesmith et al., 2020).

The hierarchical relationship between the two offices becomes particularly evident from the legal character of the deputy regional head's authority. The deputy does not stand as a parallel executive authority alongside the regional head. Rather, the deputy operates within an institutional relationship of assistance in which the regional head remains the principal holder of executive responsibility (Tinambunan et al., 2025). The deputy may exercise significant governmental functions, but the legal basis for such functions is generally derived from statutory provisions, institutional assignments, or delegation by the regional head. This hierarchical structure is intended to maintain unity of command within regional government while enabling the regional head to distribute certain governmental responsibilities to the deputy. In principle, therefore, the arrangement combines a principal executive office with a supporting political office within a single regional executive structure (Sibuea et al., 2025).

This institutional configuration produces a notable distinction between electoral legitimacy and executive authority. Both the regional head and deputy regional head can claim a direct mandate from the electorate, yet only the regional head occupies the position of principal executive authority. The deputy's democratic legitimacy consequently exceeds the autonomous scope of executive power formally attached to the office (Wiranto & Sudiro, 2024). This does not mean that the deputy lacks legal or political significance; rather, it demonstrates that democratic legitimacy and formal governmental authority are not distributed in identical proportions between the two offices. The deputy's position is therefore characterized by a combination of direct electoral legitimacy, statutory recognition, and functional dependence upon the regional head within the executive hierarchy (Putra, 2020).

From the perspective of local government law, this arrangement seeks to reconcile two institutional objectives: maintaining a clear locus of executive responsibility while providing political and administrative support to the regional head. However, the coexistence of direct electoral legitimacy with a hierarchical allocation of authority also creates a potential institutional tension. Because both officeholders receive their mandate from the electorate, the deputy may possess substantial political standing even though the formal structure places the office in a supporting position. The effectiveness of the hierarchy consequently depends not only on the clarity of statutory rules but also on the political relationship between the two officeholders. Where their political interests and policy orientations are aligned, the distinction between principal and supporting executive authority may operate relatively smoothly. Where they diverge, however, the difference between shared political legitimacy and unequal executive authority may become a source of institutional friction (Yudi, 2025).

Table 1

Legal Position and Distribution of Authority between Regional Heads and Deputy Regional Heads in Indonesia

Feature	Regional Head	Deputy Regional Head
Legal position	Principal regional executive	Supporting executive
Political legitimacy	Directly elected	Directly elected together with regional head
Executive authority	Primary executive authority	Mainly delegated/supporting authority
Main functions	Regional administration and policy direction	Assistance, coordination, supervision
Decision-making	Primary decision-maker	Subject to legal limits and delegation
Accountability	Principal political/executive responsibility	Accountability corresponding to delegated functions
Institutional relationship	Superior/principal executive	Supporting/subordinate executive

Source: processed by author

The distinction between the legal position of the regional head and deputy regional head does not always translate into a clear separation of authority in practice. The problem arises

from the combination of a hierarchical legal structure and a joint electoral mandate. Although the regional head remains the principal executive authority, the deputy regional head is a directly elected political officeholder who exercises a range of statutory, coordinative, supervisory, and delegated functions. In practice, this arrangement may create uncertainty concerning the boundaries between assisting the regional head and exercising political or administrative influence independently. The problem becomes particularly visible when the regional head and deputy regional head have different political affiliations, policy preferences, or political support networks. In such circumstances, the formal hierarchy established by law may coexist with a practical distribution of political influence that is considerably more complex.

The institutional relationship between regional heads and deputy regional heads in Indonesia reveals a persistent tension between formal legal hierarchy and the political reality of shared electoral legitimacy. Under the prevailing legal framework, the regional head occupies the primary position within the regional executive and exercises the principal authority in administering regional government, while the deputy is formally positioned as an assisting officeholder whose functions are largely dependent upon the regional head. This hierarchical arrangement, however, coexists with a joint electoral mandate: the regional head and deputy regional head are elected as a single candidate pair by the electorate. Consequently, although their legal positions are differentiated, both officeholders derive their political legitimacy from the same electoral process. This institutional configuration creates the possibility of overlapping political authority, particularly when the deputy develops an independent political profile, exercises influence over particular policy areas, or seeks to interpret the electoral mandate as providing a basis for autonomous political action.

The Jakarta administration provides an instructive illustration of this tension. The political relationship between Joko Widodo and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) demonstrated that a deputy regional head may acquire considerable political visibility and influence despite the formally subordinate character of the office. Their subsequent succession also illustrates an important legal function of the deputy position: the deputy serves as a mechanism of executive continuity when the regional head can no longer exercise the office. Ahok's succession to the governorship following Widodo's resignation therefore demonstrates that the deputy is not merely an administrative assistant, but an office embedded within the institutional design of regional executive succession. At the same time, the Jakarta experience should not be interpreted as evidence that the deputy possesses an independent constitutional mandate equivalent to that of the regional head. Rather, it illustrates the structural tension between a legally subordinate office and a politically consequential position whose holder may possess substantial public recognition and electoral legitimacy.

The institutional problem therefore lies in the asymmetry between legal authority and political legitimacy. The regional head is the principal holder of executive authority, whereas the deputy's ordinary functions are derivative and dependent upon delegation or assignment. Nevertheless, both are produced through the same electoral mandate and may subsequently develop distinct political bases. This creates a form of institutional dualism in which the executive is formally hierarchical but politically potentially plural. The deputy's role is consequently neither fully autonomous nor merely administrative. It occupies an intermediate institutional position: legally subordinate to the regional head, but politically capable of acquiring an independent source of influence. This structural ambiguity provides a significant basis for examining whether the existing model of a directly elected regional head and deputy remains institutionally coherent, particularly in relation to the allocation of authority, responsibility, and accountability within the regional executive.

The problem of overlapping authority is also visible in the day-to-day administration of regional government. Functions involving coordination, supervision, monitoring, and policy implementation may require the deputy regional head to interact directly with regional apparatus and governmental agencies. Where the scope of delegation is not sufficiently precise, the exercise of these functions may be perceived as parallel direction rather than assistance to the regional head. Bureaucratic officials may consequently face uncertainty regarding whether particular instructions originate from the principal executive authority or from delegated functions exercised by the deputy. The problem is not necessarily caused by the existence of

explicit contradictory legal provisions; it may instead emerge from the gap between formal institutional design and the practical exercise of governmental functions.

This institutional ambiguity has direct implications for accountability. A fundamental principle of public administration is that governmental authority should correspond to identifiable responsibility. In the Indonesian regional executive structure, however, political legitimacy is jointly acquired while formal executive responsibility is primarily concentrated in the regional head. At the same time, the deputy may exercise meaningful influence through delegated authority, coordination, supervision, and political engagement. This creates the possibility of an accountability gap: where the deputy exercises substantial influence over a governmental decision, it may be difficult to determine whether responsibility for the outcome rests with the deputy, the regional head who delegated the function, or the regional administration implementing the decision. Conversely, where the deputy is publicly associated with a policy initiative but lacks formal decision-making authority, political accountability may become detached from legal responsibility.

The accountability problem becomes particularly significant when political conflict develops between the two officeholders. The regional head may remain legally responsible for the administration of regional government even when the deputy publicly disagrees with particular policies or exercises substantial political influence over certain sectors. From the perspective of citizens, however, both officeholders may be perceived as members of the same elected governing team. The public may consequently find it difficult to distinguish between the political responsibility of the regional head and the political role of the deputy. This produces a structural tension between joint electoral accountability and differentiated legal responsibility. The electorate grants a common mandate, but the legal system assigns primary executive responsibility to only one member of the elected pair.

The phenomenon has also been observed in cases involving deputies who subsequently assume the position of regional head or develop independent political careers. The political trajectory of several Indonesian deputy regional heads demonstrates that the office can function not merely as an administrative support position but also as an important platform for political succession (Uzdah et al., 2024). This political significance is not inherently problematic in a democratic system. However, it reinforces the argument that the deputy cannot be treated exclusively as an administrative subordinate when the office simultaneously possesses direct electoral legitimacy and substantial political visibility. The institutional design must therefore account for the possibility that the deputy may operate as an independent political actor while formally remaining within a hierarchical executive structure (Warraich et al., 2025).

From this perspective, the central issue is not whether every regional head–deputy relationship inevitably produces conflict. Many pairs may function cooperatively and effectively. Rather, the legal-institutional question is whether a governance structure should depend substantially on political harmony between two directly legitimized officeholders when the formal allocation of executive authority is inherently asymmetrical. The Indonesian experience suggests that the combination of joint electoral legitimacy, differentiated authority, delegated functions, and unclear political accountability creates structural conditions under which dual leadership can become problematic. This provides an important basis for considering institutional alternatives that more closely align political legitimacy, executive authority, and accountability, including the possibility of reorganizing local executive leadership around a single principal executive.

The Institutional Design of Local Executive Leadership in Latvia: Political Legitimacy, Executive Authority, and Accountability

In Latvia, the legal framework governing local self-government is principally grounded in Article 101 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (*Satversme*) and regulated under the Law 'On Local Governments' (*Par pašvaldībām*). Under Section 21 of the Law 'On Local Governments', the elected municipal council (*dome*) holds exclusive decision-making authority on municipal policy, budgets, and organization, while administrative implementation is delegated to municipal executive directors and administrative bodies.

The local government system of Latvia is established within the constitutional principle

of local self-government. Latvia is a unitary parliamentary republic in which local governments constitute a distinct level of public administration responsible for managing local affairs within the powers assigned to them by the Constitution and national legislation. The contemporary structure of Latvian local government has been significantly shaped by territorial administrative reforms, particularly the consolidation of municipalities, which was intended to strengthen administrative capacity, improve the efficiency of public service delivery, and create more sustainable units of local self-government. Unlike Indonesia, where local executive authority is institutionally centered on an elected regional head accompanied by a directly elected deputy, Latvia organizes local government around an elected municipal council and an executive structure established within the municipal government.

The municipal council constitutes the principal elected representative institution at the local level. Council members are elected through local elections and exercise political authority on behalf of the inhabitants of the municipality. The council is responsible for adopting decisions concerning matters within local government competence, including local development, public services, municipal property, budgeting, and other functions assigned by law. The council therefore represents the principal democratic forum through which local political preferences are translated into binding decisions of the municipality. Its role is not limited to legislative or deliberative functions in the narrow sense; rather, the council forms an essential component of the institutional organization through which local self-government is exercised.

The executive dimension of Latvian local government is organized through the municipal executive leadership and administration established within the local government framework. Rather than creating a separately elected deputy executive with an independent electoral mandate, the Latvian system links executive leadership to the municipal institutional structure and the elected council. The council determines the political direction of the municipality and establishes the institutional framework through which municipal decisions are implemented. Executive and administrative functions are consequently exercised through the local government administration under the leadership arrangements prescribed by Latvian law. This produces a different relationship between political representation and executive administration from that found in Indonesia.

The distinction between the municipal council and the executive administration is particularly important for understanding the Latvian institutional model. The council functions as the principal representative and decision-making institution, while the executive administration is responsible for implementing decisions and managing the day-to-day functions of local government. This institutional differentiation establishes a relationship in which political decision-making and administrative implementation are connected but not concentrated in two jointly elected executive offices. The executive leadership is therefore situated within the broader institutional framework of municipal self-government rather than operating as a parallel political centre alongside another directly elected executive.

This arrangement also affects the allocation of political legitimacy and accountability. The democratic mandate of the municipality is primarily expressed through the elected municipal council, while executive and administrative responsibilities are exercised within the institutional framework established by that representative body. Political responsibility can consequently be linked more directly to the decisions of the elected council and the local executive structure responsible for implementing them. In contrast to Indonesia, where the regional head and deputy regional head jointly possess direct electoral legitimacy but have different degrees of executive authority, Latvia does not reproduce the same combination of two directly elected political officeholders within the local executive.

The Latvian structure is therefore relevant to the present comparative analysis because it demonstrates an alternative way of organizing local political authority and executive administration. The system does not rely on a directly elected regional head–deputy regional head pair to provide political leadership at the local level. Instead, it establishes an institutional relationship between an elected municipal council and an executive-administrative structure responsible for implementing local governmental functions. This configuration provides a useful comparative reference for examining whether the functions associated with a deputy regional head in Indonesia necessarily require a separately legitimized political office or whether they

can instead be incorporated into a unified institutional framework of executive administration and local self-government.

Nevertheless, the Latvian model should not be characterized simply as a "single-executive system" equivalent to the proposed reform in Indonesia. Its institutional logic is different because the municipal council plays a central role in local political decision-making and in the organization of executive functions. Its comparative value therefore lies not in providing a ready-made institutional model for Indonesia, but in demonstrating that local government can organize political representation, executive authority, and administrative implementation without relying on the same directly elected head-and-deputy arrangement. This distinction is important for assessing which institutional principles, rather than which formal institutional structures, may be relevant to the reform of Indonesian local executive governance.

The allocation of political legitimacy in Latvian local government differs fundamentally from the Indonesian regional head–deputy regional head arrangement. Local political legitimacy is primarily derived from the election of members of the municipal council. Citizens elect council members to represent local interests and to participate in determining the political direction of the municipality. The council consequently constitutes the principal democratic institution through which local political authority is exercised. Rather than establishing two directly elected executive officeholders with a common electoral mandate, the Latvian framework concentrates democratic representation within the elected municipal council and subsequently organizes executive functions through the institutional structure of the municipality.

The allocation of executive authority follows this representative structure. The municipal council occupies a central position in determining the policies, decisions, and organizational arrangements of the local government, while executive functions are carried out through the municipal executive leadership and administrative apparatus. The executive leadership does not therefore derive its authority from a separate direct electoral mandate comparable to that of the Indonesian regional head. Its authority is institutionally connected to the local government framework and the decisions of the elected council. This arrangement creates a clearer institutional distinction between the source of political legitimacy and the mechanisms through which administrative and executive functions are implemented.

The division between political and administrative functions is consequently an important feature of the Latvian model. The municipal council performs representative and political decision-making functions, including determining local policies, adopting the municipal budget, and deciding matters within the competence of the local government. The executive and administrative apparatus, by contrast, is responsible for implementing those decisions, managing municipal functions, and ensuring the continuous operation of local government. This separation does not imply that political and administrative institutions operate independently of one another. Rather, they are institutionally interconnected through a framework in which the elected council establishes the political direction and the executive-administrative structure translates that direction into governmental action.

This configuration has important implications for accountability. Because the principal political mandate originates from the elected municipal council, political responsibility for major local governmental decisions can be connected to an identifiable representative institution. At the same time, executive and administrative officials are responsible for implementing decisions within their legally defined competences. Accountability is therefore distributed according to institutional functions rather than divided between two jointly elected executive officeholders. This creates a different accountability relationship from Indonesia, where both the regional head and deputy regional head possess direct electoral legitimacy but formal executive responsibility is principally concentrated in the regional head.

The Latvian arrangement does not eliminate the possibility of political disagreement or administrative conflict. Local councils may contain competing political groups, and disagreements may arise concerning policy priorities, budgets, appointments, or implementation. Nevertheless, such disagreement occurs within an institutional framework in which the principal source of democratic legitimacy is the elected representative body rather

than two separately influential executive officeholders. The institutional distinction between political decision-making and administrative implementation can therefore provide a clearer basis for identifying who determines policy, who implements it, and through which institutional mechanism responsibility is exercised.

For the purposes of comparative analysis, the significance of Latvia lies in this institutional relationship rather than in the formal existence or absence of a particular office. The Latvian framework demonstrates an alternative mechanism for connecting democratic legitimacy, executive authority, administrative implementation, and accountability. It provides a useful contrast to Indonesia because the latter combines a jointly elected regional head and deputy regional head with an unequal distribution of executive authority. The comparison therefore makes it possible to assess whether greater institutional coherence could be achieved by reducing the number of politically legitimized executive centres and establishing a clearer relationship between political mandate, executive authority, and responsibility.

Table 2
The principal characteristics of the Latvian arrangement

Comparative Dimension	Latvian Local Government Arrangement	Institutional Implication
Political legitimacy	Primarily derived from the election of members of the municipal council	Democratic legitimacy is concentrated in an elected representative institution rather than two directly elected executive offices
Executive authority	Exercised within the municipal institutional framework through the council and executive-administrative structure	Executive authority is institutionally linked to the local government rather than based on a separate deputy executive mandate
Political functions	Municipal council determines local policies, adopts budgets, and makes decisions within local competence	Political direction is established through a representative body
Administrative functions	Municipal executive leadership and administration implement council decisions and manage day-to-day governmental functions	Political decision-making and administrative implementation are institutionally differentiated
Accountability	Political accountability is linked to elected council members and the local governmental structure; administrative responsibility follows legally assigned functions	Responsibility can be assessed according to the institution exercising the relevant function
Executive leadership	Organized within the municipal government framework rather than through a jointly elected head–deputy executive pair	Avoids the same asymmetry between joint electoral legitimacy and differentiated executive authority found in Indonesia

Source: processed by author

This institutional configuration provides the basis for the subsequent comparative assessment. The relevant question is not whether Latvia offers a directly transferable model, but whether its allocation of political legitimacy and executive responsibility provides institutional principles that can help address the problems of overlapping authority, diffuse accountability, and dual political leadership identified in Indonesia.

Comparative Assessment and the Prospect of a Single-Executive Model for Indonesian Local Government

The comparison between Indonesia and Latvia relies on a functional comparative perspective rather than structural equivalence. While Latvia does not operate a presidential single-executive model, its local governance architecture avoids executive dualism by anchoring political legitimacy in the elected municipal council while structuring administration through non-politically paired executive directors. The objective of this comparison is not to transplant Latvia's council system into Indonesia, but to derive core institutional principles on how separating political mandates from administrative support can eliminate executive friction, clarify lines of authority, and strengthen public accountability within a unitary state framework.

The comparison reveals an important institutional issue for Indonesia. Direct electoral legitimacy is not inherently problematic when shared by more than one political actor. The difficulty arises when multiple officeholders derive legitimacy from the same electorate while their legal authority and institutional responsibility are substantially unequal. This may produce competing expectations regarding leadership and participation in governmental decision-making. Latvia demonstrates an alternative institutional principle in which the principal democratic mandate is concentrated in an elected representative institution and executive authority is subsequently allocated through a legally defined institutional structure.

The distribution of executive authority also differs substantially between the two jurisdictions. Indonesian regional government is characterized by the presence of a principal executive, namely the regional head, who is assisted by a deputy regional head. Formally, executive authority is concentrated in the regional head, while the deputy performs functions prescribed by legislation and functions assigned or delegated within the regional governmental structure. This arrangement is designed to maintain a single principal locus of executive authority while simultaneously providing political and administrative support.

Nevertheless, the existence of a directly elected deputy creates a distinctive institutional complexity. Although the deputy does not possess an autonomous sphere of executive authority equivalent to that of the regional head, the office possesses substantial political legitimacy and visibility. The practical influence of a deputy may therefore exceed the formal authority attached to the office. In particular circumstances, coordination, supervision, and delegated responsibilities may create uncertainty concerning the boundaries between supporting the regional head and exercising independent political influence. The Indonesian system consequently contains a potential tension between the formal concentration of executive authority and the broader political significance of the deputy office.

The Latvian framework, by contrast, does not reproduce this same dual political executive structure. Executive authority is organized within the broader municipal institutional arrangement and connected to the representative and administrative structures of local government. Political direction and local decision-making are linked to the municipal council, while implementation and administrative management are carried out through the executive and administrative apparatus according to legally established competences. The principal institutional advantage of this arrangement is not necessarily the concentration of all governmental power in a single individual, but the clearer differentiation between representative decision-making and executive-administrative implementation.

This comparison suggests that the Indonesian debate should move beyond the question of whether the deputy regional head should receive more or fewer functions. The more fundamental issue concerns whether the existence of two directly legitimized political figures within a single executive structure contributes to institutional coherence. A reform-oriented approach should therefore consider how executive authority can be organized around a clearer and more identifiable locus of leadership while maintaining adequate administrative support and democratic accountability.

The Indonesian model allocates functions through a relationship of leadership, assistance, coordination, and delegation. The regional head is responsible for directing the administration of regional government and bears primary responsibility for governmental performance. The deputy regional head assists in the implementation of governmental affairs and may coordinate particular functions, supervise programs, and perform duties assigned by

law or delegated by the regional head. This functional arrangement provides flexibility because the principal executive can distribute responsibilities according to administrative needs.

However, flexibility may also generate institutional ambiguity. Broad functions involving coordination and supervision can intersect with the general responsibilities of the regional head. Where the boundaries of delegation are unclear, the deputy may become involved in areas that are simultaneously subject to the political direction of the regional head. The problem is not necessarily that both offices formally possess identical powers, but that their respective functions may overlap in practice. The distinction between assistance and parallel political leadership can consequently become difficult to maintain, particularly when political relations between the two officeholders deteriorate.

The Latvian institutional structure provides a different functional distinction. Political representation and major local decision-making are exercised through the elected municipal council, whereas executive and administrative functions are performed through the institutional apparatus responsible for implementation and day-to-day management. The separation is therefore organized primarily around institutional functions rather than around two jointly elected executive personalities. This structure does not eliminate coordination problems, but it provides a clearer basis for distinguishing the institution responsible for political decision-making from the institution responsible for administrative execution.

For Indonesia, the relevant institutional lesson is that effective governance requires a clearer correspondence between functions and responsibility. Political leadership should establish the direction of government, while administrative institutions should possess clearly defined authority to implement that direction. Supporting positions may remain necessary, but their institutional status should not create an alternative centre of political legitimacy capable of competing with the principal executive authority.

The different allocation of political legitimacy and executive authority directly affects accountability. In Indonesia, the regional head bears primary responsibility for the administration of regional government. However, the deputy regional head shares the electoral mandate and may exercise substantial political and administrative influence. This creates a potential discrepancy between influence and formal responsibility. Citizens may perceive both officials as equally responsible members of the elected governing team, while the legal framework places ultimate executive responsibility primarily upon the regional head.

The result may be an accountability problem when political disagreement emerges. A deputy may publicly distance himself or herself from particular policies while remaining part of the executive leadership elected by the same electorate. Conversely, a regional head may bear formal responsibility for policies or administrative activities in which the deputy played a significant political or functional role. The relationship between political influence, legal authority, and public responsibility may therefore become blurred.

In Latvia, accountability follows a different institutional structure. Political accountability is primarily connected to the elected representative institution, while executive and administrative responsibility is associated with the institutions and officials exercising legally assigned functions. This arrangement makes it possible to distinguish more clearly between political decision-making and administrative implementation. Although accountability may still be complex, it is not complicated by the existence of two jointly elected executive officeholders who simultaneously derive legitimacy from the electorate but possess unequal authority.

The comparative lesson is that accountability is strengthened when the source of authority, the exercise of governmental functions, and responsibility for outcomes can be institutionally identified. A system should avoid creating political offices whose electoral legitimacy substantially exceeds their legally defined authority or whose political influence cannot be matched with corresponding responsibility.

The Indonesian regional head–deputy regional head model possesses several institutional advantages. The deputy can provide political and administrative support to the regional head, assist in managing the substantial workload associated with regional government, and ensure continuity of leadership when the regional head is unable to perform his or her duties. The joint electoral process may also encourage the formation of a broader

political coalition and enable voters to elect a leadership team rather than a single political figure. In large and administratively complex regions, the existence of a deputy may therefore provide practical advantages in terms of coordination and governmental continuity.

Nevertheless, these advantages must be assessed against significant institutional limitations. The most important limitation is the potential mismatch between joint electoral legitimacy and unequal executive authority. The deputy possesses democratic legitimacy but lacks an independent executive mandate equivalent to the regional head. This can create uncertainty concerning the appropriate role of the deputy and may generate political expectations that exceed the formal authority of the office. The system may also become dependent upon personal harmony between the regional head and deputy. When political cooperation deteriorates, the institutional structure may facilitate competition rather than coordination.

A second limitation concerns the potential diffusion of accountability. Because the public elects a leadership pair but the legal structure concentrates executive responsibility in the regional head, citizens may encounter difficulties in determining the political responsibility of each officeholder. A third limitation concerns bureaucratic coordination. Where regional heads and deputies exercise competing political influence, bureaucratic institutions may face uncertainty regarding priorities and leadership. These limitations do not mean that every regional head–deputy relationship is ineffective. Rather, they indicate that the institutional design contains structural vulnerabilities that may become visible under conditions of political disagreement.

The principal lesson from Latvia is not that Indonesia should adopt the Latvian local government system. The constitutional structures, territorial characteristics, political environments, and administrative traditions of the two countries are substantially different. Latvia should therefore be treated as a source of comparative institutional principles rather than as a ready-made model for legal transplantation.

One important lesson concerns the separation between democratic representation and executive-administrative implementation. Latvia demonstrates that local democratic legitimacy does not necessarily require multiple directly elected executive officeholders. Political representation may be concentrated within an elected representative institution, while executive and administrative functions are allocated through a legally structured institutional framework. This reduces the possibility of overlapping electoral mandates within the executive sphere.

A second lesson concerns the importance of institutional clarity. The organization of local government should make it possible to identify who determines policy, who exercises executive authority, who implements decisions, and who bears responsibility for outcomes. The Latvian experience demonstrates the value of structuring these functions through differentiated institutions rather than relying upon a hierarchical relationship between two politically prominent executive actors.

For Indonesia, these lessons support the broader proposition that institutional effectiveness may be improved by reducing unnecessary fragmentation of political executive authority. The objective should not be to weaken democratic participation but to ensure that democratic legitimacy, executive power, and accountability are organized in a coherent manner.

Based on the comparative assessment, a single-executive model represents a possible direction for institutional reform in Indonesian local government. Such a model would concentrate the principal electoral mandate, executive authority, and ultimate political responsibility in one regional executive office. Governors, regents, and mayors would therefore become the sole directly elected holders of local executive political authority, while supporting functions would be reorganized within a professional administrative structure or through positions that do not possess a separate and competing electoral mandate.

The elimination of the directly elected deputy position would not necessarily mean the elimination of institutional support for the regional head. On the contrary, the administrative complexity of Indonesian regional government requires an effective supporting structure. The difference would concern the legal and political status of that support. Rather than maintaining a separately elected deputy with an independent political profile, supporting executive

functions could be assigned to senior professional officials or other legally defined administrative positions whose authority is clearly derived from law and institutional delegation.

Such a model could establish a clearer chain of executive authority. The directly elected regional head would serve as the identifiable political and executive leader of the region, while the regional bureaucracy would operate through a professional administrative hierarchy. Functions currently performed by deputy regional heads could be redistributed according to their substantive character. Political decision-making would remain with the regional head within the applicable constitutional and statutory framework, whereas coordination, administrative management, and program implementation could be assigned to professional officials with clearly defined responsibilities.

However, the single-executive model should not simply concentrate power without institutional safeguards. The removal of the deputy regional head could potentially increase the concentration of political authority in a single individual. Reform would therefore need to be accompanied by strengthened mechanisms of democratic oversight, transparency, legislative scrutiny by regional representative institutions, administrative accountability, and judicial review. A clearer executive structure should not result in weaker checks and balances. Instead, institutional simplification must be balanced with mechanisms capable of preventing excessive concentration or abuse of executive power.

The implementation of a single-executive model would require careful consideration of Indonesia's constitutional and legal framework. Article 18 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution provides that governors, regents, and mayors are democratically elected. The constitutional text specifically identifies these offices as heads of regional government and does not expressly establish the deputy regional head as a constitutionally mandatory office. This distinction is significant because it suggests that the institutional existence and functions of deputy regional heads are primarily matters of statutory design.

Consequently, the transition toward a single-executive model may not necessarily require constitutional amendment, provided that the democratic election of governors, regents, and mayors remains consistent with Article 18 paragraph (4). Nevertheless, this proposition requires careful constitutional interpretation and cannot be treated merely as a technical legislative reform. The removal or fundamental restructuring of the deputy regional head would require comprehensive amendments to the statutory framework governing regional government and local elections.

The principal legal reform would therefore involve the revision of legislation governing regional government and the electoral framework for regional leadership. Reform would need to address at least four issues. First, the legal position of the deputy regional head would need to be abolished or fundamentally reorganized. Second, the functions currently assigned to deputies would need to be redistributed among the regional head and the professional administrative apparatus. Third, a new mechanism would be required to ensure continuity of executive leadership when a regional head dies, resigns, is dismissed, or becomes permanently unable to perform official duties. Fourth, the accountability and oversight mechanisms applicable to a single regional executive would need to be strengthened.

The issue of succession is particularly important because the deputy regional head currently performs an institutional continuity function by replacing the regional head when the office becomes vacant. A single-executive system would therefore require an alternative succession mechanism. Possible options could include an interim appointment mechanism regulated by law, the designation of a professional acting official for a limited period, or another democratically legitimate procedure for filling a permanent vacancy. The appropriate mechanism would need to balance governmental continuity, democratic legitimacy, and constitutional stability.

Ultimately, the comparative assessment demonstrates that institutional reform should focus on establishing a stronger correspondence between political legitimacy, executive authority, and accountability. Indonesia's current system provides important benefits in terms of executive support and continuity, but it also contains structural vulnerabilities arising from the coexistence of joint electoral legitimacy and asymmetrical executive authority. Latvia

provides a useful comparative perspective by demonstrating that local democratic governance can organize political representation and executive administration without relying on the same dual political executive arrangement.

The prospect of a single-executive model should therefore be understood not as a proposal for institutional simplification alone, but as an effort to redesign the relationship between democratic mandate, governmental authority, and political responsibility. A carefully designed reform could reduce the potential for dual political leadership, clarify the locus of executive decision-making, strengthen accountability, and create a more coherent relationship between political leadership and the regional bureaucracy. Nevertheless, such reform must remain sensitive to Indonesia's constitutional structure, democratic principles, territorial diversity, and administrative needs. The central challenge is not simply whether the deputy regional head should be retained or abolished, but how Indonesian local government can be institutionally designed to ensure that authority is clearly allocated, responsibility is identifiable, and democratic governance remains effective and accountable.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the institutional structure of local executive leadership in Indonesia contains a fundamental asymmetry between political legitimacy, executive authority, and accountability. Although regional heads and deputy regional heads obtain democratic legitimacy through their joint election, the legal framework principally concentrates executive authority and ultimate governmental responsibility in the regional head. The deputy regional head, meanwhile, occupies a politically significant position while exercising predominantly supportive, coordinative, and delegated functions. This combination creates structural conditions in which the boundaries of authority may become unclear, accountability may be diffused, and political disagreement may develop into institutional dualism. The problem, therefore, should not be understood merely as a consequence of personal incompatibility between individual officeholders, but as a potential consequence of an institutional design that combines shared electoral legitimacy with asymmetrical executive authority.

The comparative assessment of Latvia demonstrates that local democratic governance can be organized through a different institutional relationship between political representation, executive authority, administrative functions, and accountability. Rather than providing a model for direct institutional transplantation, Latvia offers important institutional lessons concerning the need to establish a clearer correspondence between the source of political legitimacy, the exercise of governmental authority, and responsibility for public outcomes. On this basis, this study argues that a single-executive local governance model constitutes a relevant direction for Indonesian local government reform. Such a model could concentrate the electoral mandate and principal executive responsibility in the regional head while reorganizing supporting and administrative functions within a clearly defined professional institutional structure. Nevertheless, its implementation would require comprehensive statutory reform, particularly regarding the position and functions of deputy regional heads, executive succession, and mechanisms of democratic oversight. Ultimately, reform should aim not merely to simplify the structure of local government, but to create a more coherent institutional relationship between authority, responsibility, accountability, and effective democratic governance.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors jointly conceptualized the study and analyzed the legal materials. Syafa'at Anugrah Pradana drafted the initial manuscript. Anatolijs Kriviņš conducted the comparative legal analysis and performed critical revisions. Wiwin contributed to legal data analysis and manuscript editing. All authors reviewed, refined, and approved the final manuscript.

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