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STATE FORMATION IN  
RIAU ISLANDS PROVINCE

MULYA AMRI AND FAIZAL RIAN TO

**ISEAS** YUSOF ISHAK  
INSTITUTE

# Trends in Southeast Asia



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# FOREWORD

The economic, political, strategic and cultural dynamism in Southeast Asia has gained added relevance in recent years with the spectacular rise of giant economies in East and South Asia. This has drawn greater attention to the region and to the enhanced role it now plays in international relations and global economics.

The sustained effort made by Southeast Asian nations since 1967 towards a peaceful and gradual integration of their economies has had indubitable success, and perhaps as a consequence of this, most of these countries are undergoing deep political and social changes domestically and are constructing innovative solutions to meet new international challenges. Big Power tensions continue to be played out in the neighbourhood despite the tradition of neutrality exercised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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# State Formation in Riau Islands Province

By Mulya Amri and Faizal Rianto

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The formation of the Riau Islands Province (RIP) in 2002 is argued to be part of a broader trend of *pemekaran* (blossoming) that saw the creation of seven new provinces and more than 100 new districts throughout Indonesia after the fall of the New Order.
- This article argues that the main motivation for these subnational movements was a combination of rational interests and cultural sentiments.
- In the case of RIP, rational interests involved struggles over unfair distribution of power and resources, including the way development under the control of (mainland) Riau Province had been detrimental to the peripheral and archipelagic people of Riau Islands.
- Cultural sentiments also played an important role, as the people of the Riau Islands considered themselves as “archipelagic Malays” and heirs of the great Malay-maritime empires of the past, as opposed to “mainland Malays” who were mostly farmers.
- Since becoming its own province, RIP has been performing well and has surpassed Riau, the “parent” province, in multiple aspects including human development, poverty alleviation, and government administration.
- Ultimately, the formation of RIP is argued to be a natural process in a large, diverse, and decentralizing country like Indonesia, where cultural identities are being reasserted and local autonomies re-negotiated.
- Despite the usual hiccups such as capacity gaps and corruption, the formation of the Province has been positive in achieving a balance between keeping the country intact while allowing local stakeholders a substantial level of autonomy.





# State Formation in Riau Islands Province

By Mulya Amri and Faizal Rianto<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The formation of Riau Islands as Indonesia's 32nd province in 2002 should be seen as part of a broader trend that saw the creation of new subnational government entities — seven provinces and 112 districts in total — throughout the country after the end of the New Order era (Tirtosudarmo 2008; Kimura 2013). This can be considered as a rational response from the peripheries against decades of centralization of wealth and power in Jakarta that culminated in the late 1990s (Emmerson 2000; Mietzner 2014; Malley 1999). At the same time, the desire to form a separate Riau Islands Province (henceforth RIP) should also be understood through local cultural and historical circumstances that are unique to the region. These include a shared history of being torchbearers of the great Malay maritime empires and civilization that dominated the local seas before the arrival of European explorers and colonizers (Trocki 2007; Killingray, Lincoln and Rigby 2004; Long 2013).

This combination of both rational interests and cultural sentiments was argued to have motivated numerous subnational separatist movements in South Asia, such as in Assam, Kashmir, and Punjab (Mitra 1995). In Indonesia, some subnational movements were indeed separatist in nature, as in the cases of Aceh, Papua, (mainland) Riau, and East Timor.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to these, however, the goal of subnationalism in

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<sup>1</sup> Mulya Amri was a Research Fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore; and Faizal Rianto is a Lecturer at Raja Haji College of Social and Political Science.

<sup>2</sup> East Timor separated from Indonesia and became an independent state in 2001.

Riau Islands was not separatism but broad autonomy under the context of decentralization. Still, in line with Mitra's (1995) thesis, we argue that both rational interest and cultural sentiments were the main motivations for establishing RIP in 2002 and these are still relevant for understanding much of the political dynamics taking place in the province fifteen years later.

This *Trends* describes "state formation" in RIP. We acknowledge the definition of the state as adopted by Ruggie (1993), which is essentially that it is an institution with legitimacy to exercise power over territorial space. But in this case, we also refer to the state as an autonomous government entity that may not be necessarily independent, such as a state in a federal country, or a province in decentralized Indonesia. Following Costantini (2015, p. 24) we define state formation as "the process by which a state forms and evolves as a result of agents engaging in a struggle for power that leads to the creation and transformation of the sites of authority".

In considering RIP as a subnational state, it is helpful to understand subnational movements, which are defined by Mitra (2012) as "collective efforts used to assert cultural nationalism in a territorial space that corresponds to a homeland that its advocates strongly believe to be legitimately theirs". He argued that subnational movements take a path that starts with build-up, followed by conflict, and if the movement is successful, culminates with banalization (Mitra 2012). Build-up of the movement starts with the establishment of a common identity, often defined by a common affinity towards a certain ethnicity, language, religion, or a collective sense of being oppressed. As the movement builds up, a conflict then takes place between proponents of the movement and the central state (or another higher level authority seen as element of the central state). Finally, if the movement succeeds and an autonomous subnational entity is established, it becomes inducted into the day-to-day politics of running a government.

This *Trends* starts with an overview of the Indonesia's abrupt and extensive adoption of devolution of authority to the subnational level right after the fall of Suharto's New Order regime in 1998. Subsequently, we explain the process of RIP formation in the context of central-eastern Sumatra, starting with the creation of Riau province in 1958, until the

secession of Riau Islands (previously a regency within Riau) in 2002. Here we discuss the relevant motivations, actors, and actions related to such secession. Throughout this narrative, aside from the rational struggles over power and wealth, we found the notion of “Malayness”, or the unique sentiment of “Being Malay” (Long 2013), to play a prominent role in the formation of a cultural identity to support the formation of RIP. Next, we explain the processes of institutional development in RIP after the province was formed, including development of government structure, manpower, budget, and political dynamics. Finally, we end with an overview of the RIP’s progress with some key indicators of human development, and assesses the extent to which RIP has lived up to its promise.

Ultimately, we conclude that RIP state formation is a natural process where cultural identities are being reasserted and local autonomies renegotiated in large and diverse post-colonial country like Indonesia. Following Mietzner (2014), we argue that the process is largely positive — despite the obvious hiccups — in achieving a balance between keeping the country intact while allowing local stakeholders to have enough authority to achieve the kind of development that they want.

## **RIAU ISLANDS IN THE CONTEXT OF DECENTRALIZATION**

The formation of RIP through separation from Riau province in 2002 was not a unique phenomenon for Indonesia and was just one of the ways in which some of Indonesia’s internal territories changed in physical boundary and cultural identity (Kimura 2013). In fact, there were seven new provinces formed throughout the country within a five-year period following 1998–99. These include North Maluku (formed in 1999, separated from Maluku), Gorontalo (2000, from North Sulawesi), Bangka Belitung Islands (2000, from South Sumatra), Banten (2000, from West Java), West Papua (2001, from Papua), West Sulawesi (2004, from South Sulawesi), and Riau Islands (2002, from Riau). Aside from these seven provinces, 112 new sub-provincial districts (*kota* or *kabupaten*) were also formed.

Indonesia sees the formation of new subnational governments in both a positive and a negative light. On the one hand, subnationalism seemed to accommodate the demand of many local stakeholders such that secessions were formally called *pemekaran* (which translates positively as proliferation or blossoming). On the other hand, the process also seemed to have gotten out of hand, with increased cases of corruption, abuse of local power, and the rise of local leaders who acted as “little kings”. Indonesia thus put a moratorium on the creation of new subnational governments between 2009 and 2012; after which the requirements for secession have become more difficult.

Not all attempts at creating new subnational entities were successful. Some proposed new provinces did not materialize, such as in the case of East Sulawesi (Tirtosudarmo 2008) and of Central Papua (Brata 2008; Sumule 2003). In the case of East Sulawesi, Tirtosudarmo (2008) indicates that the movement was motivated largely by political and territorial claims but without a strong enough cultural identity in terms of ethnicity and religion uniting the proposed new province. This contrasts with the formation of Gorontalo province, whose population (largely Muslims and Gorontaloese) is distinct ethnically and religiously from that in the main province of North Sulawesi (largely Christians and Minahasans). The same goes for the separation of North Maluku (largely Muslims) from Maluku (largely Christians), of West Sulawesi (largely of Mandar ethnic group) from South Sulawesi (largely Bugis), and of Banten (largely Bantenese) from West Java (largely Sundanese).

Seen within a longer timeframe of post-colonial Indonesia, the formation of new subnational entities has been a common affair. When Indonesia first declared independence in 1945, the country had only eight provinces: Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Lesser Sunda Islands, Maluku, and three provinces in Java Island: West Java, Central Java, and East Java. Sumatra was later divided into three provinces (North Sumatra, Central Sumatra, and South Sumatra) in 1950, and Kalimantan was apportioned into West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, and South Kalimantan in 1956. Many of these new provinces were created based on subnational cultural sentiments or as part of a strategy to deal with separatist threats. By the end of the “Old Order” era in 1966, Indonesia had twenty-four provinces.

Under Suharto, separatist movements were largely crushed and a common national identity and governing system — arguably based on Javanese values — were adopted. Subnational governments were an extension of the central government and formal local leaders and their annual budgets were very much decided in Jakarta, making Indonesia one of the most centralized states in Southeast Asia (Malley 1999). During this thirty-two-year era, only three new provinces were established: Bengkulu (1967), West Irian (1969, later renamed as Irian Jaya), and East Timor (annexed in 1976). The pent-up demand from various subnational regions to establish their cultural identities was bound to burst. Meanwhile, old separatist movements remained alive in some of Indonesia's most peripheral regions such as Aceh, Irian Jaya, and East Timor.

Demand for larger autonomy and fiscal resources (or even independence) finally found outlets in 1998 (Kimura 2013). The fall of Suharto provided space for Indonesia's subnational regions to demand more governing authority and self-determination over their territory, including a fairer share of revenue from natural resources (Malley 1999). East Timor broke out from Indonesia in 1999 and became the independent nation of Timor Leste. Threats of separatism from Irian Jaya and Aceh, and to a lesser degree from oil-rich provinces such as Riau and East Kalimantan, became more worrying than ever. To keep the country from disintegrating, Indonesia adopted a large-scale decentralization measure that devolved much of its governing authority to the district (subprovincial) level.<sup>3</sup> This was a strategic choice to give in to local demands but without allowing provinces to gain too much in strength. There was fear that stronger provinces could lead to stronger separatist movements (Emmerson 2000).

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<sup>3</sup> Decentralization in Indonesia kicked off based on Law 22/1999 (regarding subnational governments) and Law 25/1999 (regarding fiscal balance between the central and subnational governments). Over time, the former has been revised as Law 32/2004 and further as Law 23/2014, while the latter has been revised as Law 33/2004 (currently under another revision process). The evolution of the decentralization laws has brought about a stronger governing role for the provinces as coordinator of local district governments.

The provinces plagued by separatism were dealt with carefully. Irian Jaya was renamed Papua and obtained “special autonomy” where the bulk of natural resource revenue originating from the province was sent back to be used at their discretion.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Aceh was allowed special autonomy, where it could apply Sharia law and have local political parties.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the country, the new decentralization laws now allow localities to decide on their own development priorities and the central government distributes the financial resources for them to do so. In a positive light, this is viewed as “new regionalism” where local stakeholders are rediscovering their regional identities, redrawing the boundaries of their territories, and renegotiating their relationship with the central government (Tirtosudarmo 2008).

Decentralization in Indonesia was primarily driven by concerns of political and ethnic identity rather than economic rationality, much to the “disappointment” of many decentralization scholars (Malesky and Hutchinson 2016), and despite the increasing realization of the strategic roles that subnational governments can play in local economic development and industrialization (Hutchinson 2013; OECD 2013; Oates 1972). The inception of Riau Islands as a separate province from Riau occurred largely in this context. But to understand the motivation for this movement, and why RIP was more likely to be approved by the central government (despite rejection from Riau province), we need to explain the history of subnationalism in Riau and in the Riau Islands.

## **FORMATION OF RIAU ISLANDS PROVINCE**

### *Riau’s Malay Kingdoms*

The history of Riau Islands and its surrounding regions goes back hundreds of years to the Melaka sultanate, which served as an entrepot

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<sup>4</sup> Special autonomy for Papua (and later also for West Papua as a province that broke off from Papua) is governed by Law 21/2001.

<sup>5</sup> Special autonomy for Aceh is governed by Law 18/2001 and further by Law 11/2006.

connecting India, China, and the eastern parts of Indonesia (Rab 2002). Melaka was not only a centre of trade, but also a centre of Malay culture and the hub for Islam's spread in Southeast Asia. The fall of Melaka to European powers made the kingdom move its capital to Johor; and the sultan of Johor then held influence over several smaller kingdoms, including Riau and Lingga to the south of the Singapore Strait.

Conflict between Dutch and British colonial powers in Southeast Asia over territorial authority culminated in the Treaty of London, signed in 1824. Traditional territories of Johor kingdom were divided based on an imaginary line that stretched along the Melaka strait, where those to the south and west of the line became areas of Dutch influence, while those to the north and east of the line became British. Consequently, Peninsular Malaysia, including Johor and Singapore became British, while Sumatra and the islands to the immediate south of the Singapore Strait — including Riau Islands — became Dutch.

The treaty led to a weakening of local rulers. Sultan Husen (Hussein) of Johor sold Singapore to Raffles in 1824 for a lump sum payment and monthly stipend for the rest of his life (Ardi 2002; Rab 2002). Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, Sultan Abdurrahman of the Riau-Lingga kingdom also conducted a deal with the Dutch where he acknowledged Dutch rule in the region, and allowed the Dutch to establish a residency (*Residentie Riow*) in Tanjungpinang in return for protection for himself and his descendants (Rab 2002).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Riau region was receiving increased foreign investments. Initially, these went mainly into plantations (rubber, copra), forestry, and mining. In 1893 the Sultan of Lingga gave concessions to foreign businesses for tin mining in Singkep Island, employing 300 locals and 700 migrant workers, mostly from China (Ardi 2002). Such mining activities further expanded to Karimun and Kundur islands, attracting many migrants and impacting the local population who were mostly Malays working as farmers, fishers, and gatherers of forest products. Other foreign economic activities included logging, where logs were shipped to build Singapore and serve the marine and shipbuilding industries there (Ardi 2002). Exploration for oil and gas was started in 1924 by SOCAL (later renamed as Caltex and now Chevron) and production began in 1952 in the Minas oil fields in



the Siak district of Riau, mainland Sumatra (Potter and Badcock 2001; *Jakarta Post*, 21 May 2014).

### *Riau Province*

The 1948 amalgamation of three former Dutch residencies (West Sumatra, Jambi, and Riau) into Central Sumatra province<sup>6</sup> under the new Republic of Indonesia left many in Riau disappointed (Ardi 2002). The provincial capital of Central Sumatra was in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, while the capital of Riau Residency was in Tanjungpinang. From the very beginning, there were already demands to take the oil-producing region of Siak (then part of Bengkalis Regency) out of Central Sumatra and turn it into a province-level special territory (Ardi 2002). At the same time, separatist forces under the banner of Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) based in Central Sumatra increasingly became a concern for the Sukarno government.

Local sentiments to push for Riau to be its own province gained traction, and ultimately Central Sumatra was split three-ways into West Sumatra, Jambi and Riau in 1958.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, several other provinces in Indonesia, such as Sulawesi and Lesser Sunda, were also further divided into smaller provincial territories.

The 1958 law identified Tanjungpinang (the original capital of *Residentie Riow*) as the provincial capital of Riau to enable immediate functioning of the new province. Tanjungpinang already had readily available office buildings. However, the law also stated that the capital may be moved elsewhere if needed. After just one year, in 1959 a committee established by the Minister of Home Affairs indeed decided to move the provincial capital to Pekanbaru in mainland Sumatra (Rab 2002), which was much closer to the oil-producing districts and the separatist movement, PRRI, based in mainland Sumatra.

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<sup>6</sup> Formation of Central Sumatra Province was based on Law 10/1948.

<sup>7</sup> Formation of West Sumatra, Jambi, and Riau Provinces was based on Law 61/1958.

The motivation for Riau's secession from Central Sumatra was cited officially in Law 61/1958 and described in detail by Halim (2001). Formally, the issues were geographic distance and communication problems between the provincial capital in Bukittinggi and the regency capitals, which led to sub-par and unequal delivery of services across various regencies. It was also acknowledged that the regency governments would like to have direct communication with the central government in Jakarta.

Following Mitra's (1995) argument presented earlier, reasons for Riau's 1958 secession from Central Sumatra was part rational, part cultural. Secessionists claimed that more development took place in West Sumatra compared to Riau, and natural resources were exploited largely for the interests of outsiders (*Riau Pos* 2011). Culturally, the Riau people identified themselves as Malays while the people of West Sumatra were Minangs. Secession proponents argued that many provincial government posts were held by people from Jakarta or West Sumatra, but not from Riau (*Riau Pos* 2011).

These reasons remained relevant for the subsequent demands for Riau's independence in the late 1990s. Several books published during that era were clearly pro-independence and provocatively titled, such as *Why Must We Have Independence? Tears and Blood of Riau People in Fighting for Dignity* (Halim 2001), published by the University of Riau Press.<sup>8</sup> In general, there were three political camps in Riau: those who wanted independence, those who wanted a federal system, and those who wanted expanded autonomy (Heri 2002).

Materially, there was disappointment at how exploitation of Riau's riches (mining of oil in Siak, natural gas in Natuna, tin in Singkep, and sand in Karimun, as well as unfair compensation of land grabs in Bintan and Batam Islands did not materialize into better living standards for the local, native Malays (Halim 2001; Rab 2002). In the late 1990s, Riau was one of the provinces that contributed the most foreign exchange to

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<sup>8</sup> The original title in Indonesian is *Mengapa Harus Merdeka? Tangis dan Darah Rakyat Riau dalam Memperjuangkan Sebuah Marwah*.

Indonesia, but had amongst the highest poverty rates (Halim 2001). Even as late as in 2015, there were still disappointments over the fact that gas from Natuna was sent directly to Singapore through a subsea pipeline while many areas in the Riau Islands were still in dire need of power (Antara 2015).

Culturally, Rab (2002) argued how the governor of Riau was always appointed by the central government, despite the people's wish to be governed by a local. For example, in 1985, members of Riau Provincial Assembly (DPRD) voted for Ismail Suko, a native of Riau, as governor over military General Imam Munandar from East Java who was proposed by the central government. Suko won the election but Munandar became governor nevertheless. This is chronicled in detail in a book titled *Riau's Tragedy in Upholding Democracy: The 2 September 1985 Incident* (Asril 2002).<sup>9</sup> Ironically, less than three years after he became governor, Munandar died, in 1988, and was replaced by Soeripto: again a military personnel of Javanese origin appointed by the central government (Asril 2002).

### *Riau Islands Province*

Interestingly, the build-up of demand for Riau Islands' separation from Riau Province in the early 2000s was motivated by material and cultural sentiments similar to those that drove the secession of Riau from Central Sumatra in 1958 and the pro-independence movement in Riau in the 1990s.

The shifting of Riau's provincial seat from Tanjungpinang to Pekanbaru in 1959 disappointed many on Riau Islands, who saw their region as the centre of the original Riau-Lingga kingdom. Culturally, the people of Riau Islands considered themselves as "archipelagic Malays" as opposed to "mainland Malays". As a maritime kingdom, their main economic activities were fishing, seafaring and trading, as opposed to

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<sup>9</sup> The original title in Indonesian is *Tragedi Riau Memperjuangkan Demokrasi: Peristiwa 2 September 1985*.

farming in mainland Sumatra. Currently, many people from the Riau Islands identify themselves as “Kepri people” (*orang Kepri*), where Kepri is short for *Kepulauan Riau* (Riau Islands), to distinguish themselves from mainland Riau people. A detailed account of “Malayness” as the primary cultural identity of “Kepri people” is presented in Long (2013).

In terms of rational interests, the selection of provincial capital had indeed been a contentious issue. For example, the creation of Central Sulawesi province in 1964 heightened a local power struggle over whether the capital should be in Palu or Poso (Tirtosudarmo 2008). In the case of Riau, the shifting of provincial capital to Pekanbaru was argued to be detrimental for development in Riau Islands, largely due to geographic distance from the capital and difficulty for the population of Riau to maintain the attention of provincial leaders (Ardi 2002). Local figures in the Riau Islands testified how for many years the archipelagic parts of Riau were falling behind their peers on mainland Sumatra in terms of development (Alhajj 2012).

Riau Islands had abundant natural resources, such as tin in Singkep and Kundur, bauxite in Kijang, granite in Karimun; but not much of the benefits were felt by the people (Ardi 2002). Similarly, industrial development in Batam and tourism activities in Bintan were claimed to be more beneficial to foreign investors and Jakarta-based elites than to locals, and attracted workers largely from outside the region (Alhajj 2012).

In the case of RIP formation, the Malay ethnic group was said to be “angry” and “frustrated” at the neglect of development in the archipelagic areas of Riau. This was portrayed in the book titled *Malay Anger in the Demand for Riau Islands Province* (Ardi 2002).<sup>10</sup> In this book, Ardi explained that anger (*amuk*) and accommodation (*ajuk*) were two basic tenets of Malays. For example, Malays in Riau Islands have shown much *ajuk* towards development in Batam, which he argued was detrimental to the local people. *Amuk* was therefore a reaction to reclaim local authority due to pent-up emotions of accommodating foreign and Jakarta interests,

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<sup>10</sup> Original title is *Amuk Melayu dalam Tuntutan Provinsi Kepulauan Riau*.

as shown in this sentence: “with Malay anger, hopefully we can play a role and be respected in our own territory” (Ardi 2002).<sup>11</sup>

Following the aforementioned build-up, an opportunity to escalate tensions into a conflict came with the fall of the New Order regime and the start of Indonesia’s reform movement (*reformasi*). Student protests in Jakarta played an important role in toppling Suharto and provided inspiration for students in Riau Islands. The discourse to establish a separate Riau Islands province started during the Grand Conference of Riau Islands People (Musyawarah Besar Masyarakat Kepulauan Riau) on 15 May 1999 in Tanjungpinang, which was attended by representatives of twenty-two subdistricts within Riau Islands Regency (Ardi 2002). The conference resulted in three demands (Alhadjj 2012): first, to accelerate equitable development of people’s welfare through RIP formation; second, to apportion Riau Islands into the following regencies and/or cities: Tanjungpinang, Bintan, Karimun, Lingga Islands, and Pulau Tujuh (Natuna Islands); third, to convert Batam — at that time an administrative city — into an autonomous city within RIP.

To follow up on these demands, an executive team for the formation of RIP, commonly known as the “Team of Nine” was established, composed of prominent Riau Islands leaders based in Tanjungpinang, Pekanbaru, and Jakarta (Ardi 2002). They included: Huzrin Hood, Mochamad Saad, Arif Rasahan, Dun Usul, Idris Zaini, Saleh Wahab, Abdul Razak, Daut Kadir and Hendry Yuliardan. At the time, Huzrin Hood was a member of the People’s Representative Assembly of Riau Islands Regency (DPRD Kabupaten Kepulauan Riau). In late 1999, Huzrin was again elected as DPRD member, and became head of the assembly’s Committee for the Establishment of RIP (Badan Pekerja Pembentukan Provinsi Kepulauan Riau or BP3KP) (Alhadjj 2012). In 2001, Hood was elected as Head (*bupati*) of Riau Islands Regency. Many saw him as a symbol of resistance against Pekanbaru (Ardi 2002)

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<sup>11</sup> Original sentence in Indonesian is: “*Dengan adanya Amuk Melayu mudah-mudahan kita dapat berperan dan dipandang di daerah sendiri.*” (Ardi 2002, p. xii).

and as someone who was willing to resign from his post if RIP formation failed (Rab 2002, p. 43). Some others saw this movement as one that was led by local elites (Rab 2002).

The movement to form RIP faced major challenges, especially from the governor of Riau. The governor was concerned that the formation of RIP would lead to the secession of other areas in Riau, such as oil-rich Bengkalis (Azlaini 2001). Separation of Riau Islands would also lead to declining income for Riau, since the regency contributed substantially to Riau province's income through industrial estates in Batam, tourist resorts in Bintan, natural gas from Natuna, and others.

One of the major opponents of RIP formation was Tabrani Rab, professor at University of Riau, who wrote the book *Riau, Let's Unite (Rejection of RIP)* (Rab 2002).<sup>12</sup> Through an analysis of sultanate lineage, he argued that the Malay kingdoms in Lingga, Kampar, Siak, and Indragiri were part of one kingdom: Riau. Further, he stated that when Riau province was established in 1958, there was no intention to create two separate provinces. He questioned: "Will our 500-year history be divided into two provinces, Maritime Riau and Mainland Riau? Let the people dividing Riau be damned by the spirits of Riau's Sultans" (Rab 2002, p. 7).<sup>13</sup>

Rab was a member of the Local Autonomy Advisory Board (Dewan Pertimbangan Otonomi Daerah or DPOD), a central level decentralization forum that reports directly to the President.<sup>14</sup> DPOD rejected the formation of RIP on the following grounds: RIP formation did not have the approval of Riau's governor and provincial assembly;

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<sup>12</sup> The original Indonesian title is *Bersatulah Riau (Penolakan Provinsi Kepri)* (Rab 2002).

<sup>13</sup> The original sentence in Indonesian is: "Adakah lintasan sejarah yang lebih dari 500 tahun ini akan dipecah menjadi Provinsi Riau Lautan dan Riau Daratan. Terkutuklah oleh para arwah Sultan Riau orang-orang yang memecah Riau." (Rab 2002, p. 7).

<sup>14</sup> The advisory board was established based on Government Regulation no. 129/2000.

moreover, there were also rejections from the regent and the regency assembly of Natuna (Rab 2002). It was said that the reason for Natuna's rejection was because they were treated unfairly while being part of Riau Islands Regency (Riau Mandiri, 30 March 2002 — quoted in Rab 2002).

The DPOD report also stated that Riau Islands did not have the human resource capacity to be a province. Rab (2002) argued that becoming a province would make the local Malays second-class citizens in their own territory, unable to compete against migrants, and under the influence of foreigners, Jakarta-based powers, and implicitly, local elites like Huzrin Hood. It was also argued that domination of Chinese businesses (be they from Singapore, Hong Kong or Malaysia) in Riau Islands would change Batam into “Hong Kong country” (Heri 2002, p. 45).<sup>15</sup>

Proponents of RIP formation rejected these claims, and they were particularly offended that the Governor of Riau and his supporters seemed to indicate that movements for RIP formation was driven by foreign, instead of local Malay interests. They countered with statements that RIP was the true home of Malay people and that the “Malayness” of Riau Islands should not be questioned as Malays are found everywhere, in contrast to Pekanbaru, where it was difficult to even hear Malay being spoken due to the large number of migrants (Ardi 2002, p. 75).

The movement to establish RIP used three major strategies (Ardi 2002): first, through a communicative approach to the provincial government in Riau, which failed; second, through mass movements (demonstrations) to prove that the demand was broad-based and not just reflective of elite interests, and; third, through political lobbying to the central government and national congress (DPR RI). The third strategy was the most successful as the creation and abolishment of subnational governments were within the authority of the congress.

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<sup>15</sup> The original sentence in Indonesian is: “*Besarnya gelombang etnis Cina masuk Kepri (dari Hongkong, Singapura, maupun Malaysia), dan negara-negara Asia Timur lainnya, menandakan masyarakat Kepri... mengalami ketidaksiapan secara ekonomi dalam membendung gerakan ekonomi Cina ... Kepri sangat mungkin bahkan berpeluang besar menjadi ‘negeri Hongkong’*” (Heri 2002, pp. 74–75).

RIP formation proponents understood very well the central government's concern to keep the country together amidst threats of separatism. While some in Riau province demanded independence, proponents of RIP firmly declared themselves part of the unitary state of Indonesia (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia), and this allowed them to gain the support of the central government, which was trying to prevent Riau province from seceding (Kimura 2013). Proponents of RIP formation demanded the central government to acknowledge them as a province within Indonesia, but were not afraid to launch threats of separatism, as shown in this statement: "We have had enough of being lied to. As dignified Malay people, if we cannot have our own province, then why should we be afraid to 'shout independence'?" (Ardi 2002, p. xii).<sup>16</sup> They distinguished their movement from Riau separatism, and even took a jab at Riau's ethnicity claims: "Whereas the people of Mainland Riau wish to form their own country by separating from Indonesia, the people of Riau Islands are very wise to fight within the corridor of the unitary state of Indonesia. This is the difference between us Malays and non-Malays" (Ardi 2002, p. 46).<sup>17</sup>

Despite discouraging advice from the local autonomy advisory council (DPOD), the national congress (DPR RI) established a special committee (*panitia khusus*) to review the proposed formation of RIP, based on signatures of fifty DPR RI members who used their right to take the initiative (Heri 2002). Between 24 January and 4 February of 2002, allegedly 5,000 people gathered at the Hotel Indonesia Roundabout in Jakarta to show that RIP formation was not an elite affair, as had been claimed by Pekanbaru (Ardi 2002). In May of 2002, to commemorate

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<sup>16</sup> The original statement in Indonesian is: "*Cukup sudah kita dibohongi sebagai bangsa Melayu yang bermarwah, kalau tidak bisa propinsi mengapa takut 'teriak merdeka'.*" (Ardi 2002, p. xii).

<sup>17</sup> The original sentence is Indonesian is: "*Dimana masyarakat Riau daratan berkeinginan membentuk Negara sendiri memisahkan diri dari NKRI, masyarakat Kepri dengan bijak berjuang dalam koridor Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia. Di situlah perbedaan orang Melayu dengan orang yang bukan Melayu*" (Ardi 2002, p. 46).



the three-year anniversary of the first public demand for the creation of RIP, mass demonstrations took place in Tanjungpinang, which involved dramatic events such as the burning of statues of prominent people who opposed RIP formation, ceremonial changing of civil servants' shirts, and the changing of name plates in office buildings (Ardi 2002).

The government finally approved the formation of RIP through Law 25/2002, signed in October of 2002. The new province was to consist of five existing autonomous regencies and cities in Riau Province, namely: Karimun Regency, Natuna Regency (including areas which later became Anambas Regency), Riau Islands Regency (consisting of areas which later became Bintan Regency and Lingga Regency), Batam City, and Tanjungpinang City.

## **INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN RIAU ISLANDS PROVINCE**

Keeping with Mitra's (2012) framework, the following describes the process of becoming a province in the administrative sense, or a "banalization" of the struggle for RIP. After the formal establishment of RIP in 2002, there was a "vacuum" period during which RIP was under the supervision of the Assistance Team (Tim Asistensi) of the Ministry of Home Affairs.<sup>18</sup> During this brief period, the team was tasked to find a suitable mode of governance for the province. Their suggestion was to have RIP as a province with no governor in the initial three years, and that the governor of the parent province (Riau) was to govern both provinces jointly. Riau's governor would also prepare and authorize RIP's budget, which would be in the form of financial assistance from Riau Province.<sup>19</sup> However, RIP proponents rejected the proposal and pushed to have their own democratically elected governor.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Said Jaafar, RIP's first provincial secretary (2004–05), conducted in May 2017.

<sup>19</sup> The Governor of Riau would also prepare and authorize the provincial budget for RIP.

This demand was accommodated, and RIP conducted its first gubernatorial election in 2005 — together with six other provinces and more than 200 cities and regencies that took part in Indonesia's first ever direct local elections. In the meantime, to start the actual functioning of RIP as a province, the central government appointed Mr Ismeth Abdullah, chairman of Batam Industrial Development Authority (BIDA), as acting governor in 2004. Ismeth was originally appointed as BIDA chairman by President Habibie in 1998 to lead industrial development in Batam.<sup>20</sup> His tenure as BIDA chairman (1998–2004) was considered successful and he received prestigious government awards in 2000 (Satyalencana Pembangunan) and 2003 (Bintang Jasa Utama).

Between 2002 and 2008, there were several changes to the cities and regencies within RIP. In 2003, parts of Riau Islands Regency broke off and became a new regency called Lingga. This regency includes the Lingga and Singkep islands, where the old Lingga kingdom was based. Secondly, the remaining parts of Riau Islands Regency were renamed Bintan Regency in 2006, as the area is now largely confined to Bintan Island and surrounding areas. Thirdly, in 2008, parts of Natuna Regency broke off and became the new Anambas Islands Regency (sometimes also known as Pulau Tujuh, based on old Dutch terminology).

### *Politics*

Indonesia's post-1998 *Reformasi* era was not only known for local autonomy, but also local democracy. Since its formation, RIP has had three direct gubernatorial elections; in 2005, 2010, and 2015. RIP's first gubernatorial election in 2005 was depicted well by Choi (2007). Acting Governor Ismeth left his post in early 2005 and participated in the election as governor candidate. His vice governor candidate was Mr Muhammad Sani, then regent of Karimun and senior local Malay bureaucrat who had held various positions in Riau Islands. Ismeth's partnership with

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<sup>20</sup> Since Batam was declared a Free Trade Zone in 2007, BIDA has been renamed BIFZA (Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority) or Badan Pengusahaan Batam (BP Batam).

Sani was considered as politically required to win the votes of the local Malay community. The Ismeth-Sani pair won the election by a landslide, collecting more than 60 per cent of the votes.

Interestingly, Huzrin Hood — often considered as one of the central figures in the formation of RIP — did not participate in the race for governor position. He was convicted in 2003 for misappropriation of funds that took place in 2001–02, when he was head of Riau Islands Regency (*Tempo* 2010). Huzrin was freed in 2006 after serving his sentence, just missing the 2005 election. A corruption case also saw the end of Ismeth Abdullah’s tenure as governor. He was detained in February 2010 for corruption in the procurement of fire engines that took place during his tenure as BIDA chairman (*Kompas* 2010).

Beyond 2010, focusing on marine and fisheries was one of the policy directions of the following governor-vice governor pair, namely Muhamad Sani and Suryo Respationo (2011–16). Optimizing the utilization of marine and fishery resources, as well as developing marine-based tourism were some of the targets.<sup>21</sup> The marine and fisheries sector remains one of the focuses of the current (2016–21) leadership, Muhammad Sani and Nurdin Basyirun, who won the gubernatorial elections in 2015.<sup>22</sup> Other prioritized policies of the current government are in developing RIP’s processing industry, shipyard industry, and increasing the role of the port authority (*Badan Usaha Pelabuhan*) in the maritime sector.<sup>23</sup> Previously in the Ismeth-Sani administration of 2006–11, RIP’s Long-Term Development Plan focused on improving human resources and infrastructure support.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of Riau Islands Province 2010–15.

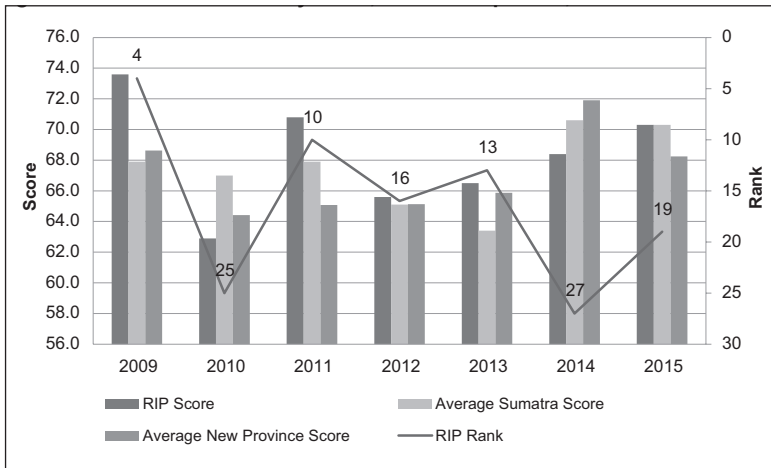
<sup>22</sup> Governor Sani passed away in April 2016, one year after being re-elected. He was 73 years old. Vice-Governor Nurdin was inaugurated as governor in May 2016. In December 2017, Mr Isdianto, Sani’s younger brother, was chosen as the new vice governor.

<sup>23</sup> Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of Riau Islands Province 2016–21.

<sup>24</sup> Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of Riau Islands Province 2010–15.

Regardless of the leaders, local elections have been a vibrant and popular affair in Riau Islands, especially considering the diverse ethnic base of RIP’s population. The Indonesia Democracy Index (IDI), published annually since 2009 by the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), identifies RIP as a middling performer among Indonesia’s 33 provinces in terms of democratic achievements (see Figure 1). RIP’s overall IDI score has largely been stable, fluctuating mildly from 73.6 in 2009 to 70.3 in 2015. For five of the seven years between 2009 and 2015, RIP’s IDI score has been higher than the average score for Sumatra provinces and for new Indonesian provinces. This seems to indicate that RIP’s quality of democracy is not bad. However, many other Indonesian provinces have been improving in terms of their IDI score, such that RIP in 2015 was ranked nineteenth nationwide, despite being ranked highly at fourth place in 2009.

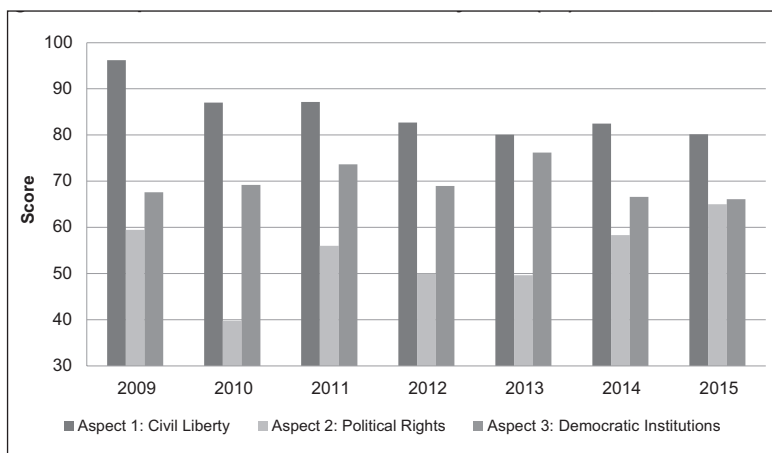
**Figure 1: Indonesia Democracy Index, RIP in Perspective, 2009–15**



Source: Authors based on data from Central Statistics Agency (BPS).

Going into the different aspects of the IDI, as seen in Figure 2, RIP performed relatively better in terms of Civil Liberty, despite showing a trend of deterioration. The Civil Liberty aspect measures freedom of speech, religion, and assembly and suggests that RIP is quite a liberal place in terms of the expressing of political and religious viewpoints. Meanwhile, RIP’s scores for the Political Rights aspect — which includes people’s participation in politics and in monitoring of governance processes — seemed to be its weakest, although there was a trend of improvement. Low scores for political rights seem to suggest that the people have not been participating actively in the day-to-day functioning of politics and governance, and that these have remained largely an elite affair. RIP’s performance in Democratic Institutions aspect (i.e., having free and fair elections, active role of the assembly) fluctuated over the years but remained fairly stable.

**Figure 2: Components of Indonesia Democracy Index (IDI) for RIP, 2009–15**



Source: Authors based on data from Central Statistics Agency (BPS).

## *Public Management*

Immediately after its formation, RIP faced challenges in its institutional development. It did not have functioning organizations or adequate personnel to run the bureaucracy. The following account is based on interviews with former acting head of the RIP personnel office, Mr Hasbi, in November 2016.

Between 2002 and 2004, civil servants of RIP numbered around 100 personnel. Initially, civil servants from cities and regencies within RIP were requested to transfer to the provincial level. But many were hesitant to answer the call, largely due to perceived career uncertainty, lack of sound personnel management system, and low budget availability in the provincial organization. Many who already held comfortable positions were reluctant to transfer to the RIP government as they might not have been able to keep their positions at the province level, or they would have had to compete for promotion against more qualified people. Payment issues also contributed to the low number of personnel transfer. During that period, civil servants at the province level received less benefits than those in the regencies and cities. As a consequence, RIP in its early years depended on unqualified personnel employed as auxiliaries, mainly as clerks or other administrative positions (*pegawai tidak tetap*).

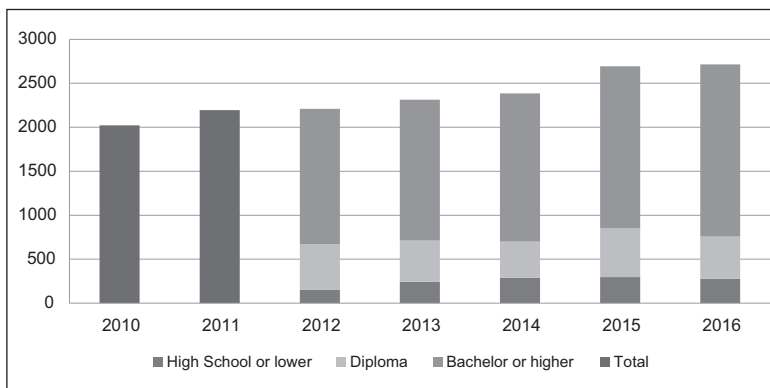
The provincial government started to offer more benefits and better performance incentives to civil servants in 2006. Subsequently, the provincial government started its own recruitment processes, both through transfers from cities and regencies as well as through open recruitment. Personnel transfers were mainly from Bintan Regency (then called Riau Islands Regency), Tanjungpinang City, and Karimun Regency.

Over time, RIP attracted more qualified personnel and as of 2016, there were 2,714 civil servants at the provincial level (not including those at the cities and regencies). This translates to a civil servant to population ratio of about 0.13 per cent, which is consistent with the proportion in Riau. The parent province had 7,969 civil servants at the provincial level and a population of 6,500,971 in 2016, leading to a civil servant to population ratio of 0.12 per cent. The ratio of provincial civil servants to population in 2016 for other provinces vary from 0.08 per cent in

Banten (with Banten being a relatively denser province) to 0.24 per cent in Bangka Belitung Islands (a new province in Sumatra).

Most civil servants in RIP (about 72 per cent) have a bachelor’s degrees or higher, about 18 per cent have diplomas, and about 10 per cent are high school graduates or lower (see Figure 3). The proportion of bachelors’ degree holders was highest in 2016 at 72 per cent, whereas in previous years they were: 68 per cent (2015), 71 per cent (2014), 69 per cent (2013), and 70 per cent (2012). Between 2010 and 2016, the number of RIP civil servants grew at an average rate of about 5.1 per cent per year. It was not possible to get personnel data for 2004–06 due to poor integration of the filing system in RIP, where data and other official files were kept by an individual either in portable mass storage device or in a personal or office computer. In this case, the data was kept by an unidentified individual who was transferred to another institution in 2016, and since then the data files for these years have not been recovered, according to Mr Hasbi. This highlights one of the growing pains in the life of a newly formed province, consistent with the narrative of “banalization” mentioned earlier.

**Figure 3: Number of Civil Servants in RIP by Education Level, 2010–16**



Source: Authors based on data from RIP annual statistical publication *Kepulauan Riau Dalam Angka, 2012–2017*.

According to the legal document on RIP formation,<sup>25</sup> the provincial capital was to be Tanjungpinang, the former capital of Riau Province for a year in 1958–59. But during the formation of RIP, this did not happen. In accordance with the law on RIP formation,<sup>26</sup> Batam became the provisional capital. This was done to ensure a smooth transition of RIP government functions, Batam being a much larger city than Tanjungpinang, until a new definitive governor was inaugurated. Aside from being an industrial area, Batam has a developed infrastructure that was able to support RIP’s interim government functions.

Tanjungpinang became RIP’s provincial capital only in 2006, shortly after the inauguration of RIP’s first definitive governor, Ismeth Abdullah. However, due to a lack of space for the growing provincial government institution, the latter had to make do with temporary space. Some of these temporary solutions were former offices of the Riau Islands Regency, and the RIP government was even said to have rented shop houses (*rumah toko*) in Tanjungpinang City, some of which were in “unrepresentative conditions” (Detiawati 2008). This led to the demand for a new dedicated compound for RIP government offices, which was later decided to be on the Island of Dompak, still within the limits of Tanjungpinang City.<sup>27</sup>

Technically, the main factor in determining Dompak Island as the location for the provincial capital was geographical, with the zone not overlapping with or being located in an existing town or a city. Another factor was land, where the zone was not to be located on productive land. Also, there had to be sufficient vacant and affordable land available. Dompak Island fulfilled these requirements, including the government’s financing ability (Detiawati 2008), despite its rather isolated position from Tanjungpinang, the nearest and largest existing city.

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<sup>25</sup> Law 25/2002 on the Formation of Riau Islands Province, Article 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 13.

<sup>27</sup> This decision was based on Governor of RIP Decree (Surat Keputusan) No. 308/2006 and Mayor of Tanjungpinang Decree No. 30/2007 on the office location of RIP government agencies (*Tanjung Pinang Pos* 2011).



The master plan for provincial government office compound was completed in 2007 but was revised twice — in 2012 and 2014. In each revision, the environmental management plan was amended due to mismatch between plan and implementation, subpar economic and social development plans, and conflict of interest in existing regulations (Amelia and Mussadun 2015).

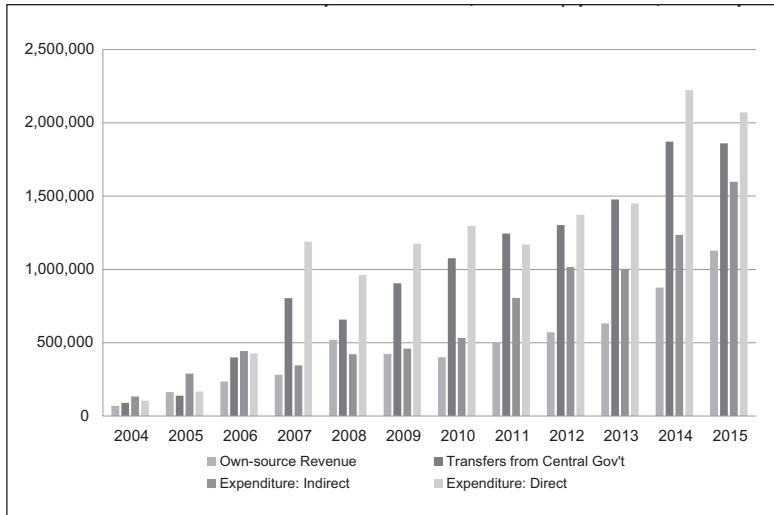
Dompok was planned as a multi-year scheme, with several strategic developments, namely: the Governor Office Complex, Provincial Assembly Building, a mosque, a sports stadium, and Dompok Bridge (there were three bridges connecting Dompok with mainland Bintan: Dompok Bridge I, II, and III). The cost for development was Rp1.6 trillion. However, the ambitious development plan was revised due to concerns about the financial capacity of the province. After the revision, the construction of a sports stadium was removed from the strategic plan (*Jawa Pos* 2016).

Physical development in Dompok faced some issues. Dompok Bridge I, for example, a 1.5km long bridge that connects mainland Tanjungpinang and Dompok Island, collapsed in 2015 eight years after completion (*Tempo* 2015). The provincial government also faced a lawsuit by one of its contractors for construction delays and was made to pay Rp42 billion out of the Rp92 billion demanded (*Tribunnews Batam* 2013).

Aside from dealing with office space, a government agency needs to manage public revenue and expenditure. As seen in Figure 4, the provincial government budget (APBD) for RIP grew substantially from 2004 to 2015. In 2015, RIP's revenue and expenditure were about Rp3,227 billion and Rp3,670 billion, respectively (in current prices). In 2004, the corresponding figures were about Rp245 billion and Rp239 billion, respectively (in current prices). These translate to average increases of about 29 per cent per year for revenue and 33 per cent per year for expenditure.

In terms of expenditure on a per capita basis, RIP's provincial expenditure grew from Rp658 thousand in 2006, to Rp1.06 million in 2010, to Rp1.86 million in 2015, according to the annual financial statistics of province government, published by BPS. As a comparison,

**Figure 4: Government Revenue and Expenditure of RIP, 2004–15 (Rp million, current prices)**

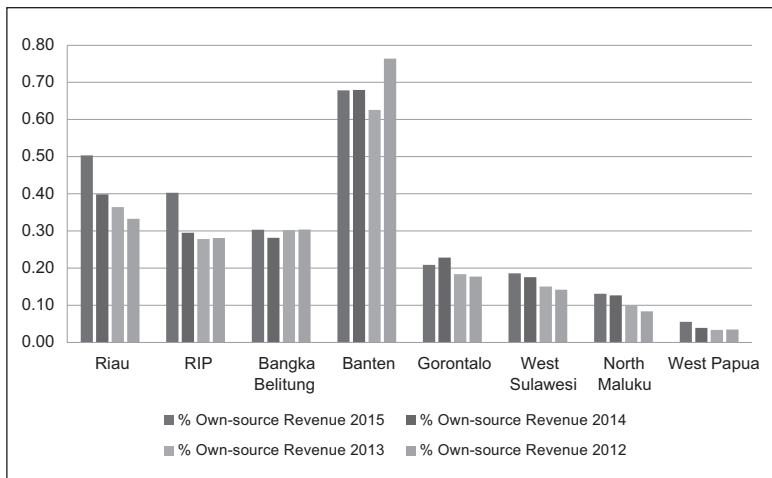


Source: Authors based on data from Directorate General of Fiscal Balance, Ministry of Finance <[www.djpk.kemenkeu.go.id](http://www.djpk.kemenkeu.go.id)>.

the corresponding figures for Riau province were Rp632 thousand in 2006, Rp770 thousand in 2010, and Rp1.68 million in 2015. Both RIP and Riau province have markedly higher provincial government expenditure per capita than Indonesia’s, which were Rp288 thousand in 2006, Rp472 thousand in 2010, and Rp1.09 million in 2015. In terms of the types of expenditure, RIP’s direct expenditure has been consistently larger than its indirect expenditure, indicating that a good percentage of the budget is used for posts that “directly” benefits the population, such as goods, services, and capital spending (see Figure 4).

Own-source revenue contributed to between 25 per cent and 44 per cent of RIP’s total revenue. This was relatively higher than in many other Indonesian provinces (see Figure 5). The larger part of RIP’s revenue

**Figure 5: Own-source Revenue as Percentage of Provincial Revenue: Riau, RIP and New Provinces, 2012–15**

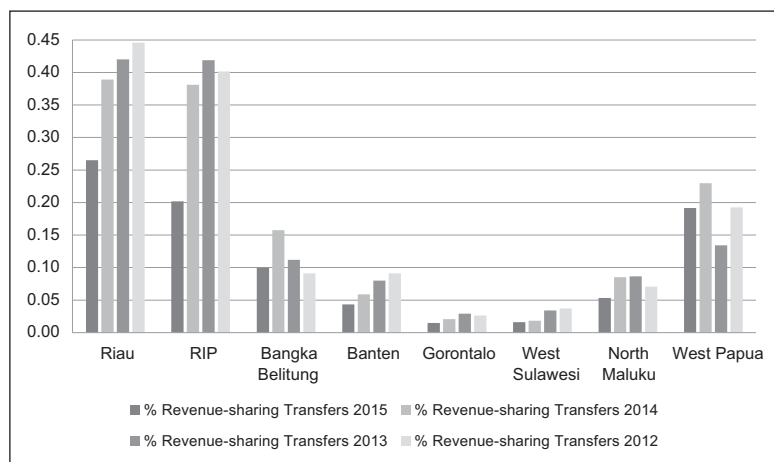


*Source:* Authors based on data from Directorate General of Fiscal Balance, Ministry of Finance.

(an average of 61 per cent over the years) came from transfers from the central government, but out of these transfers, close to two-thirds came from the revenue-sharing or *Dana Bagi Hasil* component (see Figure 6). Only about one-third came from unconditional grants or *Dana Alokasi Umum*. The opposite condition is found in many other provinces, where revenue primarily came from unconditional grants. Thus, we can say that RIP is financially more independent than other provinces, primarily due to its higher level of locally sourced income.

In terms of government performance, the Ministry of Home Affairs has been conducting an annual evaluation of regional government performance (Evaluasi Kinerja Penyelenggaraan Pemerintahan Daerah or EKPPD) since 2009, with the latest data available being that for 2014. The evaluation was conducted for various roles and responsibilities that regional governments were tasked to do, and the source for evaluation was the respective regional governments' annual report. The evaluation

**Figure 6: Revenue-sharing Transfers as Percentage of Provincial Revenue: Riau, RIP and New Provinces, 2012–15**



*Source:* Authors based on data from Directorate General of Fiscal Balance, Ministry of Finance.

was conducted for all sub-national government entities (provinces, cities and regencies) throughout the country, where each regional government was ranked against its peers. The evaluation scores and ranks are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows RIP ranked quite highly in terms of government performance, constantly within the top eight among thirty-three provinces since 2011 (see row 1). The province has consistently received scores of above 2.5 (“high” performance), except in 2010 when it received a “medium” score of 1.56. Compared to the performance of Riau province (see row a), Riau was performing better in 2009 and 2010, but then fell back and RIP took over from 2011 onwards.

Within RIP, two cities, namely Batam and Tanjungpinang, were ranked quite highly in 2013 (sixteenth and fourteenth respectively, out of ninety-one cities evaluated), but dropped in 2014, despite still receiving consistently high scores (see rows 7 and 8). RIP’s regencies experienced

**Table 1: Regional Government Performance Evaluation (EKPPD): Score and Rank for RIP and Cities/Regencies Therein, 2009–14**

	EKPPD Score*								EKPPD Rank				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	
1. Riau Islands Province <sup>a</sup>	2.58	1.56	2.52	2.69	2.76	2.82	16	28	8	5	4	6	
a. Riau Province (for comparison)	2.75	2.28	2.35	1.99	2.03	2.50	6	12	16	25	29	14	
2. Karimun Regency <sup>b</sup>	1.91	2.07	2.58	3.04	2.90	3.14	283	278	133	38	78	61	
3. Bintan Regency <sup>b</sup>	2.06	2.43	2.82	3.07	3.18	3.31	255	201	47	30	15	10	
4. Natuna Regency <sup>b</sup>	1.73	2.15	2.43	2.61	2.68	2.87	303	262	197	124	139	150	
5. Lingga Regency <sup>b</sup>	1.68	2.28	2.34	2.17	2.72	2.31	312	240	232	205	130	284	
6. Anambas Regency <sup>b</sup>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.38	2.60	2.91	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	161	156	138	
7. Batam City <sup>c</sup>	2.53	2.51	2.53	2.76	3.05	2.92	37	55	60	39	16	31	
8. Tanjungpinang City <sup>c</sup>	2.64	2.51	2.66	2.84	3.08	2.96	19	57	44	32	14	25	

Notes:

\*: Scores of 3.0 and above = “Very High”, 2.0 to 3.0 = “High”, 1.0 to 2.0 = “Medium”, and below 1.0 = “Low”.

a: RIP was ranked out of 33 provinces throughout 2009–14;

b: Karimun, Bintan, Natuna, Lingga, and Anambas were ranked out of 344, 346, 365, 373, 383, 395 regencies in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, respectively

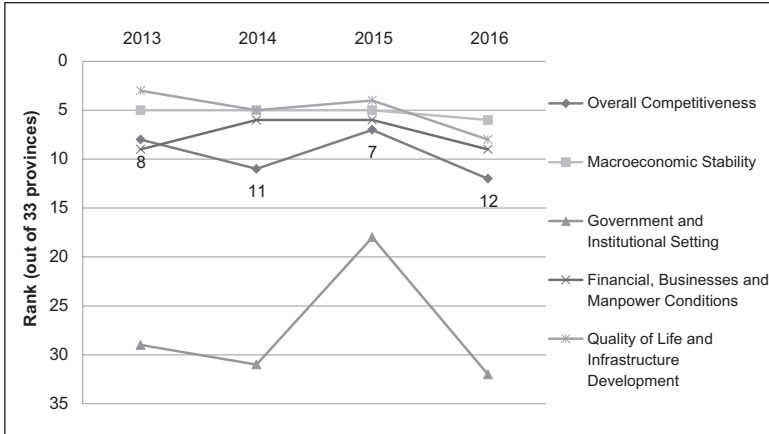
c: Batam and Tanjungpinang were ranked out of 86, 86, 90, 91, 91, 93 cities in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, respectively  
Source: Authors based on data from Directorate General of Regional Autonomy, Ministry of Home Affairs <<http://otda.kemendagri.go.id/>>.

the most improvement. For example, Bintan Regency received a “very high” score of 3.31 and was ranked tenth out of 395 regencies in 2014. This was very encouraging considering the regency obtained a score of 2.06 and was ranked 255th of 344 regencies in 2009 (see row 3). Karimun, Natuna, and Lingga regencies similarly improved between 2009 and 2012, but then slipped down due to faster rate of improvement in other regencies.

The EKPPD scores above reveal subnational government performance in general, namely related to their role on public services for the local population. But more specifically in terms of the government’s role in facilitating economic growth, RIP has not been doing very well. Figure 7 shows the RIP’s provincial competitiveness ranking among Indonesia’s thirty-three provinces, for 2013–16. Here, the “Overall Competitiveness” Index is divided into four sub-indices, namely: (1) Macroeconomic Stability, (2) Government and Institutional Setting, (3) Financial, Businesses and Manpower Conditions, and (4) Quality of Life and Infrastructure Development.

In terms of Overall Competitiveness, RIP has fared rather well in comparison with Indonesia’s thirty-three provinces, with a ranking that fluctuates mildly between seventh and twelfth position between 2013 and 2016 (Tan et al. 2013, 2015, 2017; Tan, Amri and Ahmad 2017). Interestingly, of the four sub-indices measured, RIP did poorly in Government and Institutional Setting, and ranked thirty-second out of thirty-three provinces in 2016 despite being consistently in the top-ten for the other three sub-indices (see Figure 4). This shows that despite RIP’s relative advantage in terms of the economy, business, and quality of life conditions, there have been concerns about how the government managed its economic conditions. Aspects which particularly scored low in the perception surveys were those related to Institutions, Governance, and Leadership (RIP was ranked third from the bottom in 2016, after North Sumatra and West Papua), as well as Competition, Regulatory Standards, and Rule of Law (RIP was ranked fourth from the bottom in 2016, after North Sumatra, North Maluku, and East Nusa Tenggara) (Tan, Amri and Ahmad 2018). Such concerns were primarily due to negative business sentiments related to the governing of Batam, RIP’s main industrial and population centre, with frequent tensions

**Figure 7: RIP's Provincial Competitiveness Ranking by Environment, 2013–16**



Source: Authors based on Tan et al. (2013, 2015, 2017), Tan, Amri and Ahmad (2017).

in industrial relations and confusion in terms of governing authority between the city government and the Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority (BIFZA).<sup>28</sup>

Governance and corruption issues continue to plague RIP. The alleged corruption case of International Port of Dompok (Pelabuhan Internation Dompok), for example, also extended the controversy on the development of the island as the government office centre. The construction of the port, that costs Rp121 billion, has not been completed and is now in a neglected condition (Batamnews 2017). Another case is the alleged corruption in the Port Authority (Badan Usaha Pelabuhan) of

<sup>28</sup> Accounts of confusing and overlapping authority between the Batam City Government and BIFZA (previously BIDA) have been described in many documents (Hutchinson 2015; Amri 2016).

PT Pelabuhan Kepri worth Rp25 billion, and alleged cases of corruption by the Provincial Department of Education and Sports (Dinas Pendidikan dan Olahraga) of RIP in 2015. Allegations of corruption in 2015 budget (Rp2.8 billion) were related to the activities of Youth Pledge and Youth Jamboree in Tanjungpinang. These alleged cases of corruptions are being investigated by Tanjungpinang City Police Department (Tribunews Batam 2018).

Furthermore, the RIP prosecutor-general (Kejaksaan Tinggi) is investigating alleged misappropriation of non-oil and gas revenue sharing fund that had not been paid by RIP government to seven cities and regencies in 2014, 2015, and 2016, worth Rp785 billion. In this case, the prosecutor-general has questioned several provincial government officials, among them the Head of Revenue Office (Dinas Pendapatan Daerah), Head of Development Planning Agency (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah), and Acting Head of Finance and Asset Management Board (Badan Pengelola Keuangan dan Aset Daerah) (Haluan Kepri 2016).

### *Human Development*

Aside from economic governance, RIP seems to be doing rather well in a number of other aspects, including human development. In 2002, when Riau Islands was a regency within Riau province,<sup>29</sup> its Human Development Index (HDI) was 67.3. This placed it at a rather mediocre ranking of 135 of 341 cities and regencies throughout Indonesia. Natuna Regency's HDI was lower at 64.7, putting the regency at a ranking of 217. Both figures were below the provincial HDI for Riau (the parent province of RIP), which was 69.1 in 2002.

When statistics for RIP began to be collected in 2004, the province's HDI stood at 70.8. Batam's more advanced level of development and

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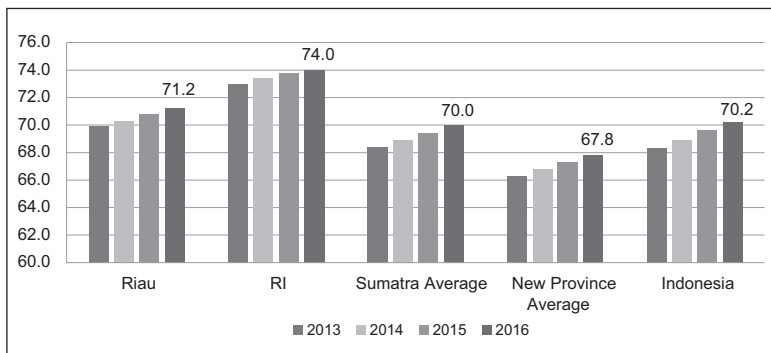
<sup>29</sup> Riau Islands Regency in 2002 includes the current regencies and cities of Bintan, Tanjungpinang and Lingga. By this time, Karimun, Batam and Natuna were already established as regencies and cities in their own right, and thus were not included under Riau Islands Regency.



large population certainly helped improve the figure for RIP collectively. RIP's HDI at the time was below that of Riau Province (72.2), but still it was the eighth highest out of Indonesia's thirty-three provinces. Over time, RIP's performance in HDI improved in absolute terms and relative to other Indonesian provinces. By 2007, RIP's HDI was the sixth highest nationwide. Starting in 2010, Indonesia adopted a change in the HDI calculation methodology, in line with global standards. Using the new methodology, RIP's HDI in 2016 was 74.0 (see Figure 8), the fourth highest out of thirty-four Indonesian provinces (behind only Jakarta, Yogyakarta and East Kalimantan). Meanwhile, using the new methodology, Riau's HDI was adjusted and became 71.2 in 2016, substantially below RIP's, which was 74.0. From Figure 5, we can also see that HDI in RIP has been improving over time, and is well above the level for Riau (the parent province), and above the average for Sumatra's, Indonesia's, and the newly established provinces.

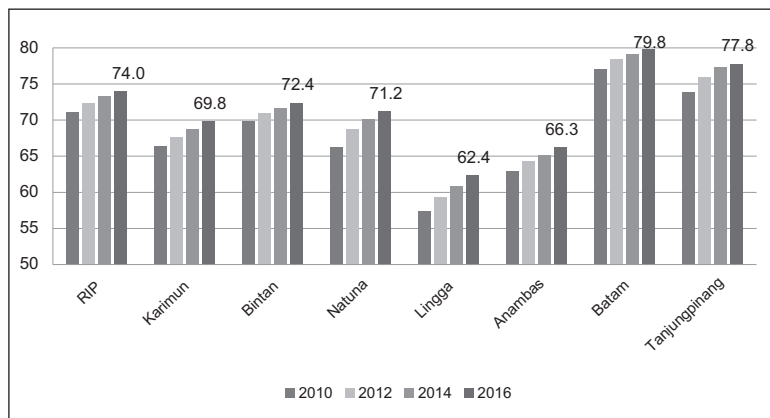
Despite the improvement in HDI, disparity of development at the subprovincial level remains an issue. Lingga and Anambas were among RIP's regencies that received the lowest HDI in 2016, at 62.4 and 66.3 respectively, although they have also improved much over the past six years (see Figure 9). Lingga's and Anambas' low HDI stood in contrast

**Figure 8: Human Development Index: RIP in Perspective, 2013–16**



Source: BPS Website.

**Figure 9: Human Development Index: RIP and Cities/Regencies Therein, 2010–16**



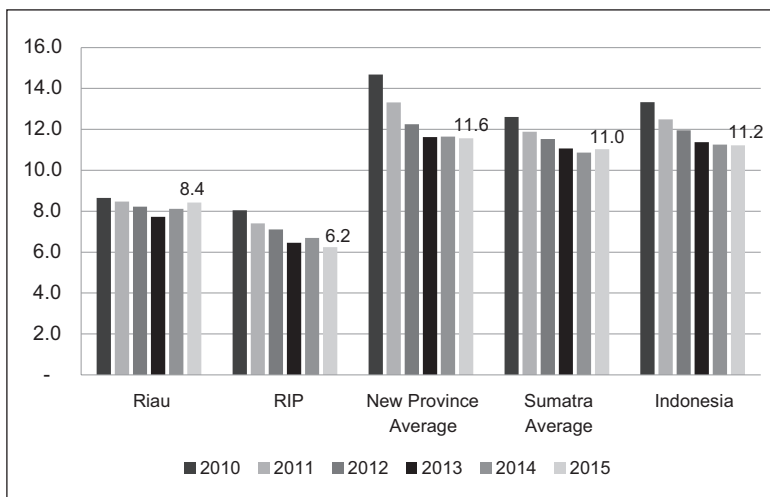
Source: BPS Kepulauan Riau website.

with that of Batam and Tanjungpinang, which obtained a high of 79.8 and 77.8, respectively. Batam’s HDI in 2016 was the highest for Indonesia, beating the capital, DKI Jakarta, which obtained a slightly lower HDI of 79.6. Meanwhile, Lingga’s HDI was just slightly above that of West Papua province (62.2), which was among Indonesia’s least developed provinces.

Specifically looking at poverty rates (see Figure 10), we see that the level of poverty in the province was relatively low and remained on a declining trend. RIP’s poverty rate was 6.2 per cent in 2015, which was below Riau’s (8.4 per cent). Both RIP and Riau fared better in achieving a poverty rate that was lower than in other provinces, with the nationwide poverty rate standing at 11.2 per cent, the Sumatra average at 11.0 per cent, and the average for new provinces at 11.6 per cent in 2015.

Among the cities and regencies within RIP, most had a low poverty rate, except for Lingga Regency, and to some extent, Tanjungpinang City. The latter had the largest proportion of poor people in the province — 15 per cent in 2015. Worryingly, the trend has been worsening for the

**Figure 10: Poverty Rate: RIP in Perspective, 2010–15**



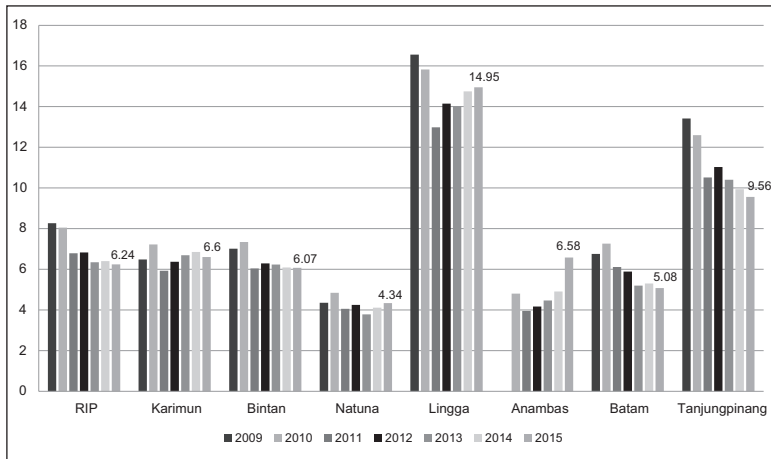
Source: BPS Website.

past four years (see Figure 11). Interestingly, Tanjungpinang City, which obtained high HDI and EKPPD scores for government performance, had the second highest poverty rate after Lingga, at close to 10 per cent in 2015. However, poverty was on a declining trend in Tanjungpinang considering the city had a 12.6 per cent poverty rate in 2010. Overall, except for the case of Lingga, the poverty rate in the local jurisdictions of RIP was favourably low.

## CONCLUSION

In 2017, RIP celebrated its fifteenth birthday. It is a relatively new province, but its achievements have been commendable. Within a short period, RIP has surpassed Riau, its “parent” province, in multiple aspects. Some of the areas where RIP and the cities/regencies therein have generally excelled are subnational public sector performance (EKPPD), human development (HDI), and poverty rate. In terms of democracy (IDI), RIP’s scores have been relatively stable, although it

**Figure 11: Poverty Rate: RIP and Cities/Regencies Therein, 2010–15**



Source: BPS Kepulauan Riau website.

is slipping down the ranks due to other provinces improving faster. RIP is doing rather well in Civil Liberty, but still lagging in Political Rights, indicating that there is more room for regular people to be involved in the local political and governing processes.

In terms of provincial competitiveness, again RIP faces a conflicted situation where its economic and quality of life aspects have been laudable, but the way Batam’s industrial areas have been governed left many investors wary. RIP, and Batam more specifically, is undergoing a transformation process where politically the local leaders and local Malay population are no longer keen on being a “periphery” and merely an economic development tool for Jakarta and Singapore (Amri 2016). Industrial development activities and foreign direct investment in 2017 may not be as substantial as it was twenty years ago, but that does not make Batam a less vibrant place now that it has become a full-blown city with more than 1 million population. The city is attracting more domestic investment nowadays, particularly in the consumption and tourism sectors.

The creation of new subnational government entities by way of secession has garnered much criticism as politically-driven movements that do not have a real grassroots basis. And certainly, we have seen many newly created regencies in Indonesia whose operations are highly dependent on central government transfers. However, demand for the central government to acknowledge local identity and local autonomy concerns throughout Indonesia is real, and it has pushed for decentralization and the creation of many smaller governing units with better reach into the population (Mietzner 2014).

Various indicators show that RIP's secession from Riau has improved local conditions, in the way the locals prefer. The province may be lucky that it has plenty of natural resources, very close access to the international community, and a history of policy-induced industrial development in Batam, Bintan, and Karimun. Thus, it is in no way a generic case that can be replicated easily elsewhere. Fifteen years onwards, despite various aspects that still need to be improved upon, the local population do not seem to be questioning whether the formation of RIP as a separate province from Riau was a good idea. It just makes sense to them.

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