



The Return of Indonesia's Political Will: Implications of Takeover the Flight Information Region (FIR) Natuna's Airspace from Singapore

1st Khairi Rahmi

Department of Government Studies
Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji
Tanjungpinang, Indonesia
khairirahmi@umrah.ac.id

2nd Rizky Octa Putri Charin

Department of Government Studies
Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji
Tanjungpinang, Indonesia
rizkycharin@umrah.ac.id

Abstract— Management of the Flight Information Region (FIR) airspace in Natuna was taken over by the Indonesian Government after being managed by the Singapore Government for a long time. The policy several years ago of delegating the Flight Information Region (FIR) to Singapore over the airspace of the Riau Islands was indeed a bitter policy that could not be avoided considering Indonesia's limitations as a country that was still developing and unable to control the airspace itself over the Riau Islands region, where The airspace of the Riau Islands is indeed busy with international flight traffic. The implementation of the International Agreement regarding the Delegation of the Flight Information Region (FIR) of the Riau Islands airspace to Singapore certainly has very broad implications for Indonesia, especially the Riau Islands, which are right in the middle of the global vortex, and face to face with the constellation of world competition. So automatically access to the Riau Islands will only get busier. This includes air access, which would be impactful if only managed by Indonesia. This article aims to identify the implications of the Natuna air space Flight Information Region (FIR) takeover from Singapore, especially for the Natuna Regency Government and local community. The management of the Natuna air space was previously delegated to Singapore because decades ago Indonesia did not yet have an adequate system to control flights. In identifying the implications of the takeover of the Flight Information Region (FIR) management by Indonesia, the author uses the concept of political economy, which explains the political and economic impact of the policy. Data collected by literature study analysis. The main problem in this article is how the effects of Indonesia's takeover of the Natuna airspace are contained in the Flight Information Region (FIR) which of course has two sides, namely: advantage and disadvantage in the fields of security, economy, trade and investment. Then, this study will explain how the process of the efforts of the Indonesian government and the Natuna regional government in taking over the management of this airspace.

Keywords—Implications; Flight Information Region (FIR); Airspace

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Government has taken over management of the Flight Information Region (FIR) airspace in Natuna after being managed by the Singapore Government for a long time. The policy several years ago of delegating Flight Information Region (FIR) to Singapore over the airspace of the Riau Islands was indeed a policy that could not be avoided considering Indonesia's limitations as a country that was still developing and unable to manage its own airspace over the Riau Islands region where The airspace of the Riau

Islands is indeed busy and congested with international flight traffic. The implementation of the International Agreement regarding the Delegation of the Flight Information Region (FIR) of the Riau Islands airspace to Singapore certainly has very broad implications for Indonesia, especially the Riau Islands, which are right in the middle of the global vortex, and face to face with the constellation of world competition. So automatically access to the Riau Islands will only get busier in the future. This includes air access, which if only managed by Indonesia would be very impactful.

This article aims to identify the implications of the takeover of the Flight Information Region (FIR) of Natuna air space from Singapore for the Natuna Regency Government and local residents in particular. Management of Natuna air space was previously delegated to Singapore because decades ago Indonesia did not have an adequate system to control flights. In identifying the implications of Indonesia's takeover of Flight Information Region (FIR) management, the author uses the concept of political economy, which explains the impact of the political and economic side of the policy. The main problem being studied is the effects resulting from Indonesia's takeover of Natuna airspace as stated in the Flight Information Region (FIR), which has two sides: profits and losses in the security, economic, trade and investment sectors. Then, this research will also explain the process of the efforts of the Indonesian government and the Natuna regional government to take over the management of this airspace.

The agreement on the Re-alignment Flight Information Region (FIR) or Flight Navigation Service Area Adjustment between Indonesia and Singapore which was on January 25 2022 has been carefully prepared by the Indonesian Government, so it is hoped that it will provide positive benefits for Indonesia. Before the Indonesian government took over management of the air space in the Natuna region, the impact of controlling the FIR was of course also felt by several regions in the Riau Islands such as Batam, Tanjung Pinang, Karimun and Natuna. The implications for several fields [3]:

1. Implications in the field of security threats to the people of the Riau Islands.
Access of traffic control over flights in the airspace of the Riau Islands by Singapore means that all commercial and military flight permits are regulated by Singapore. If another country has control over our territory, of course foreign aircraft

© The Author(s) 2023

and illegal aircraft materials are passing over our territorial territory, of course we don't know about it and this of course has an impact on Indonesia not being optimal in anticipating the risk of threats that can come at any time and threaten us. Indonesian territorial security, especially the safety of the people of the Riau Islands.

2. Impact on the economic sector.
Considering the strategic location of the Riau Islands FIR, there are many other flights that pass through to reach the continents of Asia and Australia. Every plane passing there is subject to a fee, known as Route Charge. Through the 1995 Boundary Realignment Agreement which is the legal basis for this delegation, Article 6 regulates that the Singapore Government on behalf of the Indonesian Government will charge Route Air Navigation Service (RANS) Charges for civil flights in the airspace delegated to Singapore.
3. Impact in the field of development and investment.
The implications in the field of development and investment, as the largest country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia should play an important role in regulating aviation navigation, however, what has happened is the opposite, Indonesia has not yet been able to have full sovereignty within its own territory. This will certainly affect the investment climate in Indonesia, including the Riau Islands, including the development sector in the tourism sector.

The exposure of the impact of the Singapore Government's control over the air space in the Natuna region several years ago was the biggest trigger for the emergence of the Indonesian Government's political will since 1995. After the agreement on the Re-alignment of Flight Information Region (FIR) or Adjustment of the Air Navigation Service Area between Indonesia and Singapore is a new challenge for Indonesia in managing its air space.

The author begins the literature study by reviewing and explaining previous studies that are considered to be relevant to the research that the author will conduct. This aims to obtain relevance and comparisons that are appropriate to the research's problems. The big theme in this research is identifying the implications of the takeover of the Flight Information Region (FIR) of Natuna air space from Singapore for the Natuna Regency Government and local residents in particular. Flashback to the incident where the Flight Information Region (FIR) of the Natuna air space was still under Singapore's authorization.

Delegation of the Flight Information Region (FIR) of the Riau Islands airspace to Singapore has caused several losses to Indonesia and the Riau Islands in particular. Therefore, there needs to be "political will" from the government to try to take back the Riau Islands FIR which was delegated to Singapore [3]. The agreement between Singapore and Indonesia, namely the Agreement Between Government of the Republic of Singapore on the Realignment of the Boundary Between the Singapore Flight Information Region and the Jakarta Flight Information Region which was held in Singapore on 21 September 1995 regarding the "Flight Information Region" Agreement in The Natuna region is

linked to Article 1 of the 1944 Chicago Convention which states that every country has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory. It turns out that it is not effective or not appropriate because Singapore still controls the FIR in the Riau and Natuna Islands. If the agreement is resumed, the Indonesian government will have to revise the articles in it because the Indonesian side still suffers many losses [1]. Implications of delegation of Riau and Natuna Islands airspace to Singapore's FIR is in the political field, it will affect Indonesia's position in the eyes of world civil aviation which will have an impact on the world community's view of Indonesia's managerial abilities, especially in the aviation sector, which will be low. In the economic sector, income from the RANS Charge in Singapore's FIR area, which is included in Non-Tax State Revenue (PNBP), is not fully transparently received by Indonesia. [2].

The FIR management controlled by the Singapore Government authorities is very worrying because Indonesia has a very large air sovereignty area (around 81% of ASEAN airspace), but there are parts of Indonesia's airspace that are controlled by other countries, namely Singapore (whose area is only less than 1% of ASEAN airspace). This should be a consideration for Indonesia, considering that the airspace over the land and waters of the Riau and Natuna Islands has a strategic location and is one of the densest air traffic areas in the world. Based on data from the Official Airline Guide (OAG) or official flight guide, it is stated that the Singapore-Kuala Lumpur flight route is the busiest flight route with the number of flights for 1 year up to February 2018 totaling 30,537 flights or 84 flights. Meanwhile, the tariff for navigation services (Route Air Navigation Service/RANS Charge) based on PP Number 6 of 2009 concerning Types and Tariffs for Non-Tax State Revenue (BNPB) at the Director General of Civil Aviation is USD 0.55 for the unit rate per flight carried out by Singapore FIR. However, the RANS Charge that Indonesia receives through PT. Angkasa Pura from CAAS Singapore averages approximately only 5 million USD per year and only from navigation services provided in sector A [4]

Based on the literature review that the author has carried out, the following research question is: what is the process of the Indonesian government and the Natuna regional government in their efforts to take over the management of this air space and what are the effects of Indonesia's takeover of Natuna air space as stated in the Flight Information Region (FIR) especially for the Natuna area itself?

II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

1) Process of Takeover Natuna Airspace Management

The process of efforts by the Indonesian government has gone through several stages, namely: diplomacy, law and technical. *The diplomacy* stage, negotiations were carried out between the Indonesian government and Singapore. At this stage, the Indonesian Government is negotiating with the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) to obtain approval for the management of FIR or air space in the Natuna region. This stage was the beginning of various conflicts of interest fought by the two countries. This

struggle for control began many years ago when Indonesia was deemed unable to control its air space, so now Indonesia must appear confident in its ability to control it. This has been carried out by relevant state institutions as policy guardians, including the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment which was appointed by the Government as coordinator.

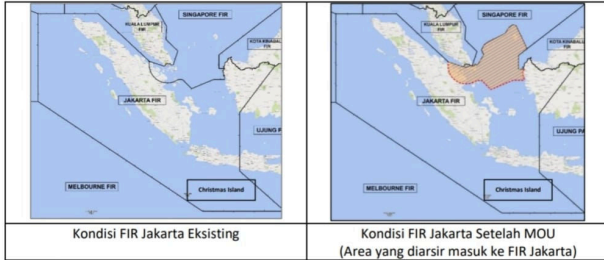


Figure 1. Flight Information Region Management Area Before and After Takeover by Indonesia. Source: Ministry Of Transportation.

The legal stage where control over air space management is determined by the state's capabilities from two sides: legal aspects and aviation technology. In an effort to take over the FIR on the legal side, the government has carried out through negotiation and regulatory efforts which then gave results in the form of bilateral agreements as a source of international law, however, by some parties, especially from the aspect of national defense and security, it is considered that the existing agreements still benefit the parties. Singapore. In fact, as a sovereign country over this region, Indonesia should have an understanding among internal policy makers in making efforts to take over aviation navigation services. The diplomacy carried out is still at the technical level and not yet at the policy level [5]. Reporting from the news page of the Ministry of Transportation which reported Indonesia's efforts to take over its rights or return political will in early 2022, the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo said, "With the signing of the FIR adjustment agreement, the scope of the Jakarta FIR will cover the entire airspace Indonesian territory, especially in the Riau Islands and Natuna Islands. I hope that in the future cooperation in law enforcement, aviation safety and security defense between the two countries can continue to be strengthened based on the principle of mutual benefit." The results of negotiations on air space adjustments over the Riau and Natuna Islands between Indonesia and Singapore were maximum results, while still prioritizing the principles of harmonious and mutually beneficial foreign relations, especially with neighboring countries, and of course bringing greater benefits to Indonesia [6].

The technical stage is a study of the standards and procedures for FIR management that apply in the world which must also be implemented if Indonesia has taken full control of its air space. Efforts in the technical stages of taking over FIR from Singapore have been carried out since 2009 with the issuance of Minister of Transportation Regulation No. 55 of 2016 concerning Air Navigation Regulations, this regulation stipulates the steps for taking over an FIR starting from the preparation stage, initial implementation to full implementation. However, the technical stages that have been carried out do not coincide with success in diplomatic efforts due to internal debates among policy makers. As a result, the takeover process has

become stagnant and the expected targets have not shown significant results. The sovereignty of the Indonesian state in national airspace is still not enforced completely and exclusively in a regulation so it cannot be used because it still does not have a legal basis as a basis for its operations [5].

2) Implications of the Takeover of Natuna Airspace Management from Singapore to Indonesia

The differences that can be seen before and after the management of the Flight Information Region (FIR) is managed by the Indonesian government can be related to a number of aspects, in administrative arrangements, security, efficiency and flight services. The following is the difference between the conditions before and after the management of FIR by the Indonesian government, although currently it has not shown significant results (this could be a benchmark or target for the government in the future).

Conditions FIR Management was controlled by the Singapore Government:

- a. In terms of regional autonomy, in the previous period, FIR management was not under the central government (Indonesia) or local authorities. This may result in differences in the policies, procedures and standards implemented in the region.
- b. In terms of limited authority, regional governments have limited authority to regulate air traffic in managing the FIR. This could impact their ability to participate in air traffic management efficiently and ensure flight safety.

Conditions after FIR Management controlled by the Indonesian Government:

- a. Provided consistency and coordination in the management of FIR by the Indonesian government, there is the potential to create greater consistency and coordination in the management of air traffic across the region. This can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of flight operations where Indonesia can fully regulate its own territory. then the Indonesian government will apply uniform national standards throughout FIR management, in accordance with international regulations set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) which can help ensure that all parties, including airlines, comply with the same rules.
- b. Increased security monitoring by the Indonesian government will have more resources to monitor and maintain aviation security in the FIR area. This is especially important if the FIR area has strategic significance from a national defense perspective as well as ensuring system characteristics with other countries and maintaining Indonesia's reputation in the international aviation community.
- c. There is increased coordination with the Natuna regional government, even though FIR management will be carried out by the central government, good cooperation and coordination with local governments in the FIR area is still important to understand local needs and challenges.

Changes in FIR management can bring benefits in terms of efficiency, aviation safety and national security monitoring. However, the effect will depend on implementation and cooperation between the central and local governments.

B. Discussion

Political Economy Perspective on Managing Flight Information Regions in the Airspace of Natuna

In its application to state life, political economy theory helps in understanding various aspects of the relationship between economics and politics in the context of public policy, policy formulation, and the implications of these policies on society. Based on a political economy perspective, Indonesia's takeover of Flight Information Region (FIR) management can be seen from two aspects: sovereignty (political) and economic.

a. Aspects of sovereignty

Indonesia's management of the FIR is an affirmation of Indonesia's air sovereignty in the region. This is important to maintain aviation security and safety and prevent violations of Indonesian airspace. Natuna Regency is located on the border between Indonesia and Malaysia and Singapore. This is because Indonesia will have full control over the air space in the region. Furthermore, the decision to take over the FIR can trigger political support and opposition within the country. Political parties, interest groups and civil society may have different opinions about these actions, which will influence domestic political dynamics.

a. Economy Aspects

Indonesia's management of FIR can increase state revenue from aviation navigation services. This is because Indonesia will charge fees for planes passing through Natuna airspace. Increased state income from aviation navigation services can be used for the development and development of Indonesia as a whole. Indonesia's management of FIR can also support regional development around Natuna Regency, such as tourism and industrial development. Natuna Regency has great tourism potential, such as marine tourism and historical tourism. Indonesia's management of FIR can help to increase accessibility to Natuna Regency, thereby encouraging tourism development in the region. Natuna Regency also has industrial potential, such as the fishing industry and mining industry. Indonesia's management of FIR can help increase investment in the region, so that it can encourage industrial development. Overall, the Indonesian government's takeover of FIR management is a positive step that can provide benefits for Indonesia, both in terms of sovereignty and the economy. In general, the management of FIR is managed by the central government and is not part of the realm of governance by regional governments, however, if all the regulations and technical implementation of FIR are in place within the central government, in the future there is still

the possibility of carrying out assistance tasks related to air space management in Natuna. . In fact, this is also a future challenge for regional governments in developing superior human resources in the field of air space management.

The following are some of the political economic implications of Indonesia's takeover of FIR management:

- a. Increase in state income: Indonesia's takeover of FIR management could increase state income from air navigation services. This can increase state income and support national development.
- b. Increased investment: Indonesia's management of FIR can increase investment in areas around Natuna Regency. This can increase economic growth in the region.
- c. Regional development: Indonesia's management of FIR can support regional development around Natuna Regency, such as tourism and industrial development. This can improve the welfare of the people in the area.

However, Indonesia's takeover of FIR management also has several challenges, including: Increased operational costs. FIR management requires adequate infrastructure and human resources. This can increase operational costs. Demands for improved services, where Indonesia needs to improve flight navigation services in the Natuna air space. This can be a challenge for Indonesia. Then it will return to the potential for conflict with Singapore, the management of the FIR which was previously managed by Singapore and taking over this management could lead to potential conflict with Singapore if Indonesia does not immediately technically take concrete steps through various regulations governing the management of the Natuna FIR area. The Indonesian government needs to overcome these challenges so that Indonesia's takeover of FIR management can provide optimal benefits for Indonesia.

III. CONCLUSION

The effort to take over the management of Flight Region Information (FIR) by the Indonesian Government went through three stages: the diplomatic stage, the legal stage and the technical stage. At the diplomacy and legal stages, the Indonesian and the Singaporean sides held negotiations, which gave birth to cooperation agreements which this time were quite profitable for Indonesia. This agreement also confirms that Indonesia's political will has returned in managing its air space, especially in the Natuna region. However, at the technical stage after the decision to manage the FIR for the Natuna region by the Indonesian Government in 2022, up to now there has been no update regarding its legal basis. Some of the political economic implications of taking over the management of FIR by the Indonesian government are related to state sovereignty and economic improvement, namely state income, increased investment and development of the Natuna region where accessibility is centered on the tourism and industrial potential in Natuna.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This activity is supported by the Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji and Faculty of Political Science and Social Science. I am especially grateful to the committee members of the 2nd SHIMBA International Conference, reviewers, students and cooperation partners involved in this activity.

REFERENCES

- [1] Davinsky Rashad Wirgantara. (2021). Pengelolaan *Flight Information Region* Wilayah Natuna dan Singapura Berdasarkan Prinsip Kedaulatan Negara dan Keselamatan Penerbangan. *Prosiding Ilmu Hukum-SPeSIA*, 368-371.
- [2] Eco Silalahi. (2015). Implikasi Hukum Internasional Pada Flight Information Region (FIR) Singapura Atas Wilayah Udara Indonesia Terhadap Kedaulatan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia, 2(1), 1-14
- [3] Lenny Husna. (2019). Implikasi Perjanjian Internasional *Flight Information Region* (FIR) Singapura atas Ruang Udara Indonesia terhadap Kepulauan Riau. *SNISTEK* 2, 31 Agustus - 1 September 2019, 127-132.
- [4] Suhartono. (2019). Singapore Region Realign Ment Flight Information In The Making Of State Sovereign Enforcement In National Air Area. *Jurnal Strategi Pertahanan Udara*, April 2019, Volume 5 Nomor 1, 96-128.
- [5] Canris Bahri. (2022). Politik Hukum Pengambilalihan Flight Information Region dari Singapura. *Dharmasisya UI*, Desember 2022, Volume 2 Nomor 1, 87-98
- [6] Direktorat Jenderal Perhubungan Negara. (2022). Kesepakatan Penyesuaian FIR Sudah Dipersiapkan dengan Matang dan Mendatangkan Manfaat bagi Indonesia. Access link: dephub.go.id.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

