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# **The Role of the Governments of Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in Organizing the Hajj Pilgrimage 2015 – 2021**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Hajj pilgrimage is one of the largest annual mass gatherings in the world, and has been held for a long time. This study presents an overview of a systematic research of published literature on the Role of the Governments of Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in organizing of the Hajj pilgrimage from 2015 until 2021 Period, with the aim of providing policy recommendations for the future. From this research, it can be concluded that the implementation of Hajj pilgrimage in Indonesia is strongly influenced by the bilateral relations between the two countries. This can be seen from a historical perspective, since Indonesia's independence there were quite a lot of pilgrims from Indonesia. The relationship between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia has been established from colonial era until now. In the future, bilateral relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in the context of organizing the Hajj will continue to be intensified. Considering that for the past 2 years, Indonesia has not sent hajj pilgrims due to the pandemic, as well as Saudi Arabia which has not opened its doors for hajj pilgrims outside of Arabia for 2 years, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia good governance diplomacy is the solution for better implementation of the Hajj Pilgrimage in the future.

*Keywords:* Hajj, Government, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia

## **1. Introduction**

Hajj is the 5th pillar of Islam which has close ties to economic, political, and cultural elements. This is because the hajj pilgrimage requires economic readiness as well as physical readiness to travel from where they live to Mecca. Therefore, the hajj pilgrimage is a pillar of Islam that is not obligatory for all Muslims, this worship is only reserved for those who can afford it. As an obligation (for those who can afford it), this hajj pilgrimage is a way to fulfill the religious values of a Muslim to become a kaffah Muslim.

In the early days of the Dutch colonial era, it was known that most of the

pilgrims came from the pesantren or traditional circles. This is based on the belief that carrying out the hajj pilgrimage is the embodiment of the unity of worship and the unity of the ummah (Nidjam & Hanan, 2001). It can also be seen that the hajj pilgrimage was the existence of the Muslims at that time, even today.

After Indonesia's independence, the management of Hajj is still a hot issue. Each period of government seems to have not been able to find the best formulation in the management of Hajj. However, since the issuance of PP No. 3 of 1960, hajj affairs have been monopolized by the government, especially the Ministry of Religion (Maskanah, 2014; Jannah, 2018). This form of monopoly is not absolute, but it also provides space for the private sector to be the executor of several activities. 8 of 2019. The private sector plays a role in the management of special hajj pilgrimages, which have better services and costs which are of course also more expensive.

The implementation of the hajj hajj pilgrimage is experiencing major challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rahmadhanitya, 2021). Since 2020, the Saudi Arabian government has only accepted a limited number of prospective pilgrims. Until now there is no certainty when the implementation of the hajj pilgrimage will reopen normally. This condition is certainly not profitable for Indonesia, because the queue for prospective Hajj pilgrims is already very long. Seeing the importance of the hajj pilgrimage for Muslims in Indonesia, this condition certainly disrupts economic and political stability in Indonesia. Not infrequently the hajj issue is raised to criticize government policies such as those related to the Habib Riziq Shihab issue and also the use of hajj funds for investment in domestic development.

In fact, the policy of Hajj is not determined by Indonesia itself. This relates to the policies of Saudi Arabia itself or even OIC policies internationally. Thus, we can understand that all Hajj policies in Indonesia are in accordance with

the Hajj policies of Saudi Arabia itself. Indonesia cannot decide unilaterally its Hajj policy without first looking at the Hajj policy of Saudi Arabia.

This is because the authority of the organizers of the hajj pilgrimage around the world is Saudi Arabia. What other countries can do if there is a discrepancy between the policies of Saudi Arabia and their country is to carry out diplomacy. This diplomacy is one way for the country to communicate so that the country's hajj interests can be achieved.

The Dutch East Indies Islamic Politics written by Aqib Suminto (1996) became an important source in studying Hajj during the colonial government. This book discusses a special section that shows how the colonial government supervised the pilgrims from the archipelago because of the strengthening of the understanding of Pan Islamism. In the early 20th century, the government established a separate office tasked with monitoring Muslims (Suminto, 1996). This is understood because there is a thickening of religious understanding experienced by pilgrims after returning from the holy land. After that, the colonial government through the advice of Snouck Hurgronje acted more repressively on the political affairs of the male natives.

The book entitled Middle East in the Spotlight: The Dynamics of the Middle East in an Indonesian Perspective, written by Yon Machmudi (2021) provides the latest geopolitical insight in looking at the dynamics happening in Saudi Arabia in particular and the Middle East in general. This book describes how there have been fundamental changes in Saudi Arabia, which was pioneered by Muhammad bin Salman who promoted public openness in his country (Machmudi, 2021). In addition, this book also looks at how the Middle East is heating up related to the war for supremacy between the United States. This book can be used as a reference in viewing the geopolitical context in the implementation of Hajj in Indonesia in contemporary situations.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. Qualitative research is research whose data are expressed in verbal form and analyzed without using statistical techniques. The focus of research is in qualitative methods and that is researched to see the extent to which planned attitudes and policies are able to jellify national security. Research is focused on security vulnerability factors, attitudes and policies.

The process carried out in this study requires time and conditions to change, so the definition of this research will have an impact on the research design and ways of doing it which are also changing or flexible. So, the research conducted is qualitative research with the aim of descriptive research. The qualitative approach chosen by the researchers obtained data derived from literature studies (library research) or literature studies and interviews with informants. This research is analytical descriptive through the collection of detailed data from various sources of information, especially from various sources related to the object of study in this study.

### *2.1. Data Collection Technique*

As with qualitative research data acquisition procedures, the research data of this research object were obtained from literature studies and interviews. Literature study is intended to obtain data from various references related to the object of study by researchers. While the interview aims to obtain input data from various informants as sources from the academy (including intelligence observers) and practitioners (who have worked and have worked in intelligence services) related to the object of research. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, namely analysis by describing and reviewing primary and secondary data carefully and systematically using deductive methods, namely discussing general problems to things that are specific.

This research will first look at the implementation of the hajj pilgrimage from

the historical aspect. Historical data is very important to see changes in the implementation of Hajj in Indonesia from time to time, including policy changes made by the government of Saudi Arabia. Thus, a reflection will be obtained on the current implementation conditions. Then, at the next stage, a national interest analysis will be carried out to see the role of each actor in the contemporary context. Through this series of data analysis, it is hoped that this research will be able to answer the research questions compiled in the previous section.

## **4. Results**

### *4.1 Hajj pilgrimage of the Colonial Era*

In the era of the Dutch occupation in Indonesia, the Dutch East Indies government at that time did not prevent the implementation of Hajj for Muslims in Indonesia. Of course this could also benefit the Netherlands both economically and politically. If at that time they prevented Muslims from performing Hajj, it might have influenced them politically. Moreover, those who have just occupied Indonesia certainly want to win the hearts of the Indonesian people with their ethical politics.

Although not prohibited, from the beginning the Dutch considered that Hajj had a bad impact on the Dutch at that time. For example, Governor-General Raffles firmly stated that the hajj was the ringleader of the social unrest in Indonesia at that time (Saleh, 2008). Then the Dutch made a policy for the implementation of the hajj hajj pilgrimage, namely in the form of prospective hajj pilgrims having to ask for a pass to the regent, prospective hajj pilgrims had to show that they were financially capable, and after returning from Mecca the pilgrims were tested by the regent. , 2008).



Figure 1. The Three Kongsi Ship is transporting pilgrims from Indonesia

Source: (Sasongko, 2015)

#### *4.2 Post-Independence Hajj*

This sub-chapter will discuss the implementation of Hajj after independence in 1945. With the difference in the socio-historical context from the colonial era, of course, the implementation of Hajj will change. Pilgrims will get more certainty because the organizers are from the Indonesian government itself, which has just become independent. The conditions in those years forced the people to struggle to maintain independence with the Indonesian government. Moreover, KH Hasyim Asyari issued a fatwa and jihad command to all Muslims in Indonesia that "It is forbidden for Muslims to leave their homeland in a state of war against religion; It is not obligatory to go to Hajj, which applies fardhu 'ain for Muslims who wage war against the invaders of the nation and religion" (Nidjam & Hanan, 2001).

#### *4.3 Implementation of Hajj during the New Order Period*

After the fall of the old order and the replacement of the new order, major changes occurred in Indonesia. Of course for the new order, the main task that must be done at that time was to normalize the state system which was in disarray due to the G30S incident. Improving the system as a whole became the main focus of the New Order government at that time. Of course, the improvement of this system will also affect the implementation of Hajj in

Indonesia.

The overall management of the Hajj is transferred to the Director General of Hajj Affairs. This also includes costs, Hajj management system, organization and so on. This was in line with the New Order government which emphasized centralism in state management at that time. This is beneficial for the organization of Hajj, because it can make the implementation of Hajj more orderly and orderly because it is under the direct government. On the other hand, the public also sees that the government is more concerned with organizing the hajj.

#### 4.4 Performing the Hajj during the Reformation Era – now

With the end of the New Order's rule and the change to the reform era, it signaled a major change in the institutional context in Indonesia. The crisis that hit Indonesia at that time caused high inflation and soared prices. This also affected ONH at the beginning of the reform. In addition to the inflation factor, another factor that makes ONH increase is due to the monopoly on the implementation of hajj transportation carried out by national airlines (Nidjam & Hanan, 2001). With this monopoly, the government has no bargaining power in deciding the fares for the hajj transportation. Through Presidential Decree No. 119 of 1998, the government abolished the monopoly on hajj transportation.

#### 4.5 *Muhammed bin Salman: Leading Actor in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030*

Reading Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 cannot be separated from the core role of MBS. The young prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who is only 36 years old, has played a major role in the economic and political dynamics of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 2015 when he served as minister of defense. His progress has been even greater since he was appointed as crown prince on June 21, 2017. As crown prince, he appears to be at the forefront of



representing his father in all matters related to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

According to the study of Alhussein (2019), the aggressiveness of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in fighting Shia, is part of the United States' policy under Trump which plays the issue of nationalism. As is known, MBS has a very close relationship with the former president of the United States. The issue of sectarian-based nationalism has become an important object in maintaining the United States' strategic partners in the Middle East; Israel. Sunni groups will focus on competing with Shia groups driven by Iran. MBS as Trump's partner plays that role to increase the bargaining power of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the geopolitical realm in the Middle East.



Figure 2. Muhammed Bin Salman and President Donald Trump at The White House

Source : VoA Indonesia, 2018

#### 4.6 New Economic Sector developed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Muhammed Bin Salman moved quickly to build a new economic base for Saudi Arabia that was no longer dependent on oil. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is starting to look at the service sector to become a new realm in the kingdom's economy, as Vision 2030 wants to make this country a center of

international investment that will target populations from the African and Asian continents. The following are service areas that will be developed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the near future.

The service sector is not a new sector undertaken by Saudi Arabia. Previously, the Saudi Arabian service sector that we knew was only for Hajj and Umrah services, in the future they will develop the service sector more broadly in Saudi Arabia. Thus, this will also have an impact on the economic progress of Saudi Arabia itself.

Table 1. The business sector pursued by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Business Sector</b>
Health	allocated 11 Billion USD for the development of this sector such as education and research, development of health insurance, and the construction of facilities and infrastructure
Building	will build a new city with a budget of 67 Billion USD Transportation The government is preparing 90 billion USD for the development of public transportation such as bus routes and other modes that will connect Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca and Medina
Transportation	The government is preparing 90 billion USD for the development of public transportation such as bus routes and other modes that will connect Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca and Medina
Renewable Energy	The government prepares 1.33 billion USD to build an atomic-based energy plant with a size of 3.4 GW
Tourism	Government Tourism is targeting 1.5 million non-hajj and umrah tourist visits with easy access to services and also travel administration
Clean Water and Water Treatment	The government allocates 60 billion USD for the development of clean water management and also seawater refinery
Education	Education Government allocates 53 billion USD for Education sector development

Source : KPMG, 2017

From the table above, we can see which sectors will be the focus of Saudi

Arabia in the future in the service sector. With a large allocation of funds, this shows the seriousness of Saudi Arabia in developing the service sector in Saudi Arabia. For example, in the tourism sector, the Saudi Arabian government wants to increase the number of tourists who are outside the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Because so far most tourists from abroad are those who perform the Hajj and Umrah hajj pilgrimages in it.

#### *4.7 Building the City of the Future: NEOM*

Neom is a mega project that will be built as a manifestation of the 2030 vision. Neom is a city that will be built with artificial intelligence or AI governance. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2019 announced this plan and opened investment opportunities to various parties to make it happen. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has provided funds of 500 million USD for the construction of this future city. Neom is located between the borders of Egypt and Jordan with an area of 26,500 m<sup>2</sup>, including the Red Sea. Neom means 'new future' which is taken from Latin and Arabic (Asherhi, 2019).

NEOM's position which is between two continents, namely Africa and Asia, is certainly a clear message to make this futuristic city an economic hub on two continents. According to the official website of NEOM [neom.com](http://neom.com), the city consists of two parts; Oxagon and The Line. Oxagon is the main center of NEOM which is the center of research activities, industry, and other services. Then, The Line is a supporting part of Oxagon which offers a sustainable development side that is environmentally and planet friendly.

#### *4.8 Public Investment Fund and Diversification of the Kingdom's Business*

The Public Investment Fund (PIF) is an agency belonging to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that functions to accommodate people's funds. In its official website, PIF is a means to achieve the second pillar of Vision 2030, namely economic development. Since 2015, MbS has fully owned PIF ([Kompas.com](http://Kompas.com),

24 October 2018).

PIF's total wealth stands at 430 billion USD, making it the 8th richest institution in Asia, and third in the Middle East. By MbS, PIF is used to build business relations overseas. PIF acquired a majority stake of 80% of Newcastle United (NUFC), the premier division football club in competition in the United Kingdom with an investment value of 300 million Pounds.

#### 4.9 Future of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 Era

Before the COVID-19 pandemic took place, the benefits of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from the Hajj were 12 billion USD annually (Kompas.com, 27 September 2020). It is recorded that every year about 2.6 million pilgrims visit Saudi Arabia every year. This figure is much smaller than the Umrah pilgrims who reach 19 million people every year. Therefore, MBS seeks to increase the number of Umrah pilgrims to 30 million people every year.

In the 2030 vision document, not a single word is written about Hajj. On the other hand, Umrah has a special place in the document. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will work hard to increase the number of Umrah pilgrims by increasing more integrated accommodation services. The increase in the number of Umrah pilgrims is the focus because the timing of Umrah is more flexible than the Hajj.

#### 4.10 *Diplomacy of Indonesia and Saudi Arabia*

Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have a very long history of diplomatic relations. The two countries are both countries with a majority inhabited by Muslims. Not surprisingly, this diplomacy is also sometimes related to the religion. One of them is related to the hajj pilgrimage.

Historically, before Indonesia's independence, hajj trips were accommodated by the Dutch East Indies government. Moreover, with the opening of the Suez

Canal at that time, it made accessibility from the Dutch East Indies to Arabia to carry out the hajj pilgrimage faster. Therefore, a Dutch Consulate was created in Jeddah under the Ambassador (Gezant) of Istanbul (Constantinople) (Putuhena, 2007).

The general task of this consulate is to assist Dutch transport ships and pay attention to the interests of Dutch citizens and take responsibility for the results of decisions in that country. In addition, the general task is to make information on residents, citizenship and others. This was the general duty of all consulates, including the Dutch consulate in Jeddah at that time.

#### *4.11 Indonesian Diplomacy From 2015 – Before the Pandemic*

As the holder of the authority to organize the hajj pilgrimage around the world, Saudi Arabia has full control over the policies for the implementation of the hajj pilgrimage. Other countries are competing to carry out diplomacy with Saudi Arabia so that there are no obstacles in the implementation of the hajj pilgrimage, including Indonesia. As explained earlier, Indonesia has a history of good relations with Saudi Arabia.

Diplomacy related to Hajj between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia (as well as other countries) is usually related to quotas from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia. Hajj quota is very important for a country, many countries carry out diplomacy to increase the quota. This is a sign that the Hajj is actually a national interest.

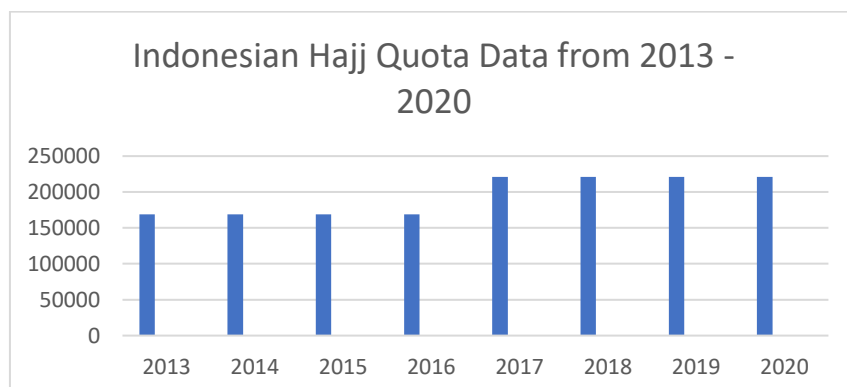


Figure 3. Indonesian Hajj Quota Data from 2013 - 2020

Source : Indonesian Ministry of Religion

The chart above is a comparison of Indonesia's hajj quota data from 2013 - 2015. We can see that the renovations carried out by Saudi Arabia began in 2013 and ended in 2017 with the return of Indonesia's hajj quota to its original state. We also see that there was stagnation in these years. This also indicates that Indonesia's efforts to increase the hajj quota have not been successful.



Figure 4. Indonesian Hajj Quota Diplomacy Process

Source: Author's Analysis Results, 2021

From the chart above, we can conclude that the journey of the Indonesian government in returning the hajj quota is a fairly long journey. From 2013 with a reduction of 20%, it only returned to normal in 2017. This long journey of diplomacy is important because it also brings other issues such as economic issues, education and so on.

#### 4.12 Indonesia-Saudi Arabia Diplomacy in the Covid-19 Pandemic

The world is experiencing the Covid-19 Pandemic which began in early 2020 and continues to spread throughout the world. Including its influence to Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. All policies in the world change according to the applicable Health protocol. This includes the implementation of the hajj, where in its activities there are activities that have the potential to transmit the Covid-19 virus.

As we know, the spread of the Covid-19 virus will be faster through crowds. Therefore, government policies were taken to quickly deal with the spread of the Covid-19 virus. In the context of worship, for example, some time ago there was an appeal for temporarily abolishing congregational prayers in mosques, then religious events with potential crowds were also eliminated.



Figure 5. The atmosphere of the 2020 Hajj hajj pilgrimage  
Source : Kompas.com, 2020

With the hajj quota of only 1000 for the total hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, automatically other countries cannot send their hajj pilgrims. Indonesia itself in 2020 will not send pilgrims. This decision is contained in Letter Number 494 of 2020 concerning the cancellation of the Hajj hajj pilgrimage (Mulyana, 2020).

#### *4.13 Anticipation of accidents in the organization of the Hajj Hajj pilgrimage*

The implementation of the hajj hajj pilgrimage does not only show the process of worship, but there are many other aspects that must be reviewed. Such as aspects of management, relations between the two countries to aspects of security and health of the pilgrims. Of course this is not new in the organization of the hajj hajj pilgrimage. Historically, we can see that even from the implementation of the hajj hajj pilgrimage to time, this is also the aspect that is being discussed.

In the current context, of course, the safety aspect of the hajj pilgrims becomes very important. What we see from year to year the number of pilgrims from all over the world is increasing (before the covid-19 pandemic). Of course, this is an important concern for Saudi Arabia as a country that organizes the hajj pilgrimage.

Several cases of accidents have occurred in the process of organizing the hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. For example, in 2004 there was a tragedy in Mina where as many as 251 pilgrims from various countries died due to being trampled during the jumrah throwing process (Salihah, 2020). Then in 2015 there was also a crane crash, which was 60 pilgrims. The accident occurred at the time of the Grand Mosque at that time due to weather factors where strong winds hit Mecca at that time (BBC, 2015).

The two tragedies above serve as examples that the implementation of the security and safety aspects of the Hajj in Saudi Arabia is very important. This



is also the reason Saudi Arabia did not open its doors to pilgrims from other countries when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world.

In the context of the 2015 tragedy, we see that Saudi Arabia is fully responsible for the incident. Saudi Arabia provides compensation for those who are victims. This is a form of responsibility of the state of Saudi Arabia to the victims of the accident. In fact, Saudi Arabia formed an investigation team to thoroughly investigate the crane accident case (Aista Wisnu Putra, 2017).

Reflecting on this case, Saudi Arabia, as the country that organizes the hajj pilgrimage, guarantees the severe safety of the pilgrims, especially pilgrims from Indonesia. Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Indonesia Mustafa bin Ibrahim Al Mubarak emphasized that Saudi Arabia will prioritize the safety of the pilgrims (Wikanto, 2015). This also confirms that the accident case is purely an accident case, there is no element of intent or negligence on the part of the organizers of the hajj pilgrimage.

From the Indonesian side, more attention should be paid to the safety aspect. With improvements at the organizer level, that Hajj as a public service must be carried out on a professional, effective, efficient and accountable basis (Fahham, 2015). Thus, prevention from the Indonesian side can also be effective in order to reduce the number of accidents for pilgrims so that the safety of organizing the hajj pilgrimage is even better.

## **5 Conclusion**

Based on the discussion in the previous chapters, we can conclude that the implementation of Hajj in Indonesia is strongly influenced by the bilateral relations of the two countries. This can be seen from a historical perspective, where even before Indonesia's independence there were quite a lot of pilgrims from Indonesia. The relationship between the Government of the Dutch East Indies (before Indonesia's independence) and Saudi Arabia was already

established.

In the future, bilateral relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in the context of organizing the Hajj will continue to intensify. Considering that for the past 2 years, Indonesia has not sent its hajj pilgrims, as well as Saudi Arabia, which has not opened its doors for pilgrims outside of Arabia for 2 years. Of course, diplomacy is the main way for Indonesia so that the implementation of the Hajj can run smoothly according to the existing plan.

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