

Indonesia-Egypt Diplomacy: Darussalam Gontor and Al-Azhar University

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe the diplomatic strategy of Darussalam Gontor with Al-Azhar University in the educational sector. This research was descriptive qualitative and studied Darussalam Gontor at Ponorogo and Al-Azhar University at the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Jakarta. In the data collection techniques, this research used interviews, observation, and proper documentation. The research found that Gontor has received an additional quota for the scholarship to their potential student who intends to study at the respective Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Al-Azhar, Indonesia, Egypt, Darussalam Gontor

Abstrak

Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk menggambarkan strategi diplomatik Darussalam Gontor dengan Universitas Al-Azhar di sektor pendidikan. Penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif dan mempelajari Darussalam Gontor di Ponorogo dan Universitas Al-Azhar di Kedutaan Besar Republik Arab Mesir di Jakarta. Dalam teknik pengumpulan data, penelitian ini menggunakan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi yang tepat. Penelitian menemukan bahwa Gontor telah menerima kuota tambahan untuk beasiswa kepada calon siswa mereka yang bermaksud untuk belajar di Universitas Al-Azhar masing-masing, Kairo, Mesir.

Kata kunci: Diplomas, Al-Azhar, Indonesia, Mesir, Darussalam Gontor

INTRODUCTION

The formation of many states in the world, the principles, and rules in international relations between states through international law and diplomacy have developed. The countries have started sending their delegates to negotiate and defend their interests. The Indonesian state, in particular, is bound by the provisions of international law and customs, which are the basis for the association between relations to various countries. Egypt was the first African state to recognize Indonesia's independence in 1946. The two states opened diplomatic relations marked by the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cordiality on June 10, 1947, which was then followed by the opening of the Indonesian Representative office in Cairo, Egypt, in 1949 (Indonesia, 2015).

The State of Egypt and Indonesia always provide mutual support for each other based on the principle of reciprocity of the mutual relations between the two in the nomination to become members or in occupying certain positions in international organizations. An indicator of a good relationship between the two states was also proved by the recognition of *De Facto* by Egypt towards Indonesian

independence on March 22, 1946, by the Secretary-General of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kamil Abdurrahman Bey (Fachir, 2009).

Besides, diplomatic visits by both countries have also existed. For the first time President Soekarno's inaugural visit to Egypt on July 18, 1955, Prime Minister Gamal Abdul Nasser's visit to Indonesia to attend the Conference Asia Africa in Bandung, 18-24 April 1955, visit of Egyptian First Lady Jihan Sadat to Indonesia on 31 October-4 November 1976, President Soeharto's visit to Egypt on 16 October 1977, visit of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to Indonesia on 9-11 April 1983, President Abdurrahman Wahid's visit to Egypt on June 17, 2000, and on February 24, 2001, President Megawati Soekarno Putri's visit to Egypt on September 12, 2002, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's visit to Egypt on October 20, 2004, and the visit of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi to Indonesia on September 4, 2015. (Fachir, 2009).

RESEARCH METHOD

Darussalam Gontor is an educational institution in Indonesia established for a long time in 1926. It has played an active role in

conducting international relations with other educational institutions around the world, for instance, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Syanggit University in Mauritania, Santiniketan University in India, and Aligarh Islamic University in India. Darussalam Gontor has a foundation of the above educational institutions. Since its establishment, a significant role is in the matter of cooperation and networking with Al-Azhar University, Cairo. the Egyptian government, through Cairo's Al-Azhar University, annually offers scholarships to Indonesian students. the scholarship has been available since the 1960s until now. This research wants to study the success of diplomacy in the field of education that has been carried out by Darussalam Gontor as an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia with Al-Azhar University, Cairo. So that way, the researchers took this research Diplomacy between Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor and Al-Azhar University as a non-state actor in international relations.

THEORY AND CONCEPT

The Concept of Bilateral Cooperation

The term bilateral itself comes from the word «bi,» which means

two. the origin of the member countries in this collaboration is not specified because the nature of bilateral cooperation is far more private than other cooperation. After all, it only involves two states. (Fatma, 2017).

Regarding the content of bilateral cooperation in practice, it cannot be standardized because the contents of the cooperation agreement are the rights between the two bound parties. Usually, bilateral cooperation contains several points, which are the objectives of cooperation between countries. These points cover the fields of economics, politics, military and technology, and transportation. Indonesia and Egypt have established cooperation in various fields, including politics.

Participation in politics is closely related to the governance of a country. Indonesia has cooperated in politics with Egypt marked by the opening of Indonesian-Egyptian diplomatic representation in Cairo and followed by the opening of the Egyptian Embassy in Jakarta. Also, the two countries have signed cooperation in the field of culture, which includes the exchange of lecturers and teachers between Indonesia and Egypt, student exchanges, and the implementation

of similar study programs of education, culture, and arts. By conducting cooperation, the two countries can establish friendships and can strengthen relations between the two. Besides that, the two countries can also learn from each other.

Multitrack Diplomacy

In terms of diplomacy, there are several definitions of diplomacy. When referring to an extensive Indonesian dictionary, diplomacy is the affairs of the organization of official relations between one country and another. It can also be defined as a matter of the interests of a country by the mediation of its representatives in other countries (Setiawan, 2012), while the definition of diplomacy in general, can be interpreted as regulating a matter for particular interests through its representatives. Usually, diplomacy is closely related to the state as one of the essential instruments in the implementation of foreign policy. Diplomacy is to establish, strengthen, and improve relations between one country and another to achieve common interests, by sending a diplomat who controls many matters related to the government / other countries as his representatives. (Arudam, 2015).

Along with the times, diplomacy itself has developed with the addition of new actors in international relations. New actors in international relations exist beside the main actor, namely the state. the birth of a new theory in diplomacy as Multi-track Diplomacy then followed this development. According to Dr. Louise and Ambassador John McDonald in a Thesis written by Rudi Candra, Postgraduate Study Program in International Relations, Gadjah Mada University, explained that Multitrack Diplomacy is a system that aims to create peace in international relations. This system is referred to as multi-track because there are several related elements, including individuals, groups, institutions, and communities. Some features will cooperate and support each other for the goals and the sake of peaceful and harmonious world life. Furthermore, the concept of Multi-Track Diplomacy requires unity between the main actors, namely the state and non-state actors. (Candra, 2013)

In his statement, Dr. Louise and Ambassador John McDonald explained who state actors and non-state actors were. State actors are diplomats explicitly sent by the state. in contrast, non-state actors

are all elements of a country's society that can interact and communicate with other governments or non-government parties. This interaction process has a positive impact on the sustainability of relations between the two countries. In the multi-track diplomacy concept delivered, there are nine channels, namely government agencies, professionals, business people, the general public, research/education, activists, religious groups, funding providers, and information media. (Diamond, 1996).

In this study, the authors explain following the theory conveyed above that Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is also an international relations actor. Although not as the leading actor/government, this pesantren institution has shown a significant role in interacting and establishing cooperative relations with Cairo's Al-Azhar University, where diplomacy has given birth to extraordinary success, and the Indonesian government should emulate it.

The History of Diplomatic Relationship between Indonesia and Egypt

Speaking of the history of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Egypt, the historical

evidence shows that in the period after Indonesia's independence precisely in 1945, the de-facto Indonesian state at that time needed support from various countries in the world. Recognition from other countries is an absolute requirement for the sovereignty of a nation. As in the theory of state administration, the obligation to become a sovereign state is the recognition of other countries. Precisely on March 22, 1946, through the Secretary-General of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kamil Abdurrahman Bey, Egypt became the first Arab country to recognize Indonesian independence. The two countries agreed to open diplomatic relations marked by the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cordiality on June 10, 1947, then followed by the opening of the Indonesian Representative Office in Cairo in 1949. (Indonesia, 2015).

After the two countries officially opened diplomatic relations, they always supported one another based on the principle of reciprocity of the mutual relations between the two countries in the nomination to become members or in occupying certain positions in international organizations. Relations between the two countries looked very closed, harmonious. There is no tension,

let alone the diplomatic severance of the two countries. (Fachir, 2009). the birth of support from the Egyptian state for Indonesian independence did not come naturally. However, through the significant role of the Egyptian society itself, the Indonesian people in Egypt, and students in Egypt have made efforts and lobbied and diplomatic to the Egyptian Government. in the post-independence period of Indonesia, the relationship between the Indonesian government and Egypt increasingly demonstrated its presence in the international world. the two leaders of the country, namely Soekarno and Gamal Abdul Nasser, became the leading figures who pioneered the birth of the Asian-African Conference (KAA) in Bandung in 1955. the closeness between the two leaders of these countries has reached emotional closeness and gave birth to good individual relations. From this good relationship, the name of President Soekarno became the name of a street in Cairo.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries have also been carried out in good faith, professionally and guided by the values shared by both countries. Where the two countries carry out state visits with one another,

this state visit is also a form of reciprocal visits that are never interrupted. From the beginning of Indonesia's independence, the state visit between the two has been going well. the forms of state visits between the two countries began with President Soekarno's inaugural visit to Egypt on July 18, 1955. Prime Minister Gamal Abdul Nasser's visit to Indonesia attended the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, April 18-24, 1955; Egyptian First Lady Jihan Sadat visited Indonesia on 31 October-4 November 1976; President Soeharto's visit to Egypt was on 16 October 1977. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's visit to Indonesia was on 9-11 April 1983; President Abdurrahman Wahid's visit to Egypt was on 17 June 2000 and on 24 February 2001. President Megawati Soekarno Putri's visit to Egypt was on September 12, 2002; President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's visit to Egypt was on October 20, 2004, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi's visit to Indonesia was on September 4, 2015. (Fachir, 2013).

Other evidence showing that relations between the two countries went very harmonious until now is the closeness between the people of Indonesia and the people of Egypt who are always friendly

in meetings and relationships between them. Many Egyptians even say in Arabic, «Masri Ummu Addunya wa Indonesia Abuhu.» (Ahmed, 2019). Although it looks small, this is a fact that shows the people of Indonesia and Egypt are always warm in friendship wherever and whenever. In an interview conducted by the researchers during a visit to the Egyptian Embassy in Jakarta, the close relationship between the people and individuals of the two countries has created cultural acculturation between the two countries through marriage ties. Until now, there have been many mixed marriages between Indonesian people and Egyptian society. (Ahmed, 2019).

The Pattern of Indonesia-Egypt Relations

Community and state relations between the countries of Egypt and Indonesia have been for a long time. The long age of the relationship between the two countries has proceeded in harmony. Within the framework of bilateral cooperation, Indonesia and Egypt have collaborated in various fields, such as educational cooperation between various universities, counter-terrorism cooperation, mutual support in various international forums, visa-free cooperation for

diplomatic and service passports and bilateral cooperation political consultations, defense cooperation and finally, criminal Trafficking in Persons (Surya, 2019).

Educational Cooperation between various Indonesian and Egyptian Universities includes several things, including diploma equality, scholarships, teaching Arabic, and student exchange and cooperation in scientific activities and recognition of the IAIN Diploma with the Al-Azhar University Egyptian Diploma (Mualim, 2018). In addition to the above forms of cooperation, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, also collaborates with the Jatikarya Silaturrahim Education Foundation in Bekasi and Mandiri Individual Education in Cibubur.

According to the representative of Al-Azhar University in Indonesia, Sheikh Ahmad Aid stated that this collaboration would eventually lead to scholarship facilities for students at the Institute to continue their studies at the Al-Azhar University of Egypt. With this collaboration, it has automatically shown that the Muslim community in Indonesia has a rational understanding that can be accepted by Egypt. Not the other way round, which has the wrong understanding of Islam. (Joko, 2017).

In addition to cooperation in the field of Education, Indonesia and Egypt have also collaborated in counter-terrorism. the cooperation between the two countries is by the signing of an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) conducted through the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior and the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT). the signing of the memorandum of understanding of the two countries was within the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior, Major General Mahmoud Tawfik, and the Head of the BNPT of the Republic of Indonesia, Police Commissioner-General Suhardi Alius. Also present at the signing of the MoU at the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior was the Indonesian Ambassador to Egypt in Cairo, Mr. Heli Fauzy, and accompanied by the main Secretary of the BNPT young Marshal Asep Adang Supriyadi. (Marboen, 2019) This collaboration aims to tackle the problem of Terrorism, which has a global network. It enters Indonesia and in Asian countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines, originated from doctrines, propaganda, and ideological transfers, especially from the Middle East because radical terrorist networks in Indonesia have joined ISIS, and the influence of ISIS in Indonesia is quite significant.

Thus, the authors can convey that this is the right momentum for Indonesia and Egypt to cooperate in combating terrorism.

Relationship Between Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor and Al-Azhar University

Starting from the ideals of the founders of Darussalam Gontor KH. Ahmad Sahal, KH. Zainuddin Fananie and KH. Imam Zarkasyi or known by *Trimurti* that they wanted Darussalam Gontor to have a different concept in learning Arabic with salaf / traditional schools in Indonesia at that time. Where the teaching system used by the lodges in Indonesia still uses the *sorogan* method or the *bandongan* method and studies the yellow book. It is with the ideas and concepts promoted by *Trimurti* that Darussalam Gontor is guiding international educational institutions known as the Gontor synthesis. These include Al-Azhar in Egypt, Syanggit in Mauritania, Aligarh in India, and Shantiniketan in India. *Trimurti*, the founder of Pondok Gontor, studied these international institutions which have ethical values. So that in the founding of Gontor, the Arabic learning method and its education system integrated the processes, policies, and education of the four Institutions.

Also, the founders of Gontor did not rule out the values of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. He continued to implement several curricula carried out at Salaf Hut then used at Gontor. Like the Fathul Pole study conducted by students in Gontor. They within a week looked for problems of Islamic law and then looked for answers from the books provided. Relations between the two institutions have started from the beginning of the founding of Darussalam Gontor. At that time, Darussalam Gontor founders or also known as *Trimurti*, had aspirations to establish a boarding school with a waqf system so that the Pondok family did not own the cottage for themselves. Many Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia also had not implemented a waqf system yet. *Trimurti* was not in favor of Darussalam Gontor with the same fate as other traditional religious schools in Indonesia. Therefore, the Darussalam Gontor founders learned from Al-Azhar Cairo University in the field of *waqf* and sustainable development.

Implementation of the Value of Waqf from Al-Azhar

One of the reasons behind the relationship between Darussalam Gontor and Al Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, is the *waqf* system

developed by Al-Azhar, where this waqf system has created sustainability in the development of the University. From the beginning of the establishment of Al-Azhar to the present day, the University can still stand firm and continue the process of Islamic education. Although Al-Azhar's age is already thousands of years, this system eventually became the example of the founders of Darussalam Gontor at that time, because in Indonesia at that time was still in the colonial period. It is where the implementation of ideas and ideals exist in Darussalam Gontor until now. on October 12, 1958, at the Gontor Ponorogo Pondok Modern Darussalam Hall, witnessed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Indonesia and his staff, the founders of Gontor (*Trimurti*) donated the land and buildings of the Gontor Modern Darussalam Cabin to the Pondok Modern Family Association (IKPM). (Nasrullah, 2016).

At that time, Gontor was also represented and did not belong to an individual or family. However, it belongs to Muslims. From there, the founders of Gontor imitated the Waqf system in Al-Azhar. For the Pondok to continue standing and not die because of its leadership, it is necessary to implement a

waqf system. At that time, the religious school in Indonesia had not implemented a waqf system, but Gontor had implemented it as Al-Azhar did. In its development, Pondok Gontor has added and completed buildings according to educational needs. Since the 1970s, an increase in the quantity and quality of the building has occurred. Means of transportation are also very much and quite diverse. Besides that, Darussalam Gontor also has several business units such as rice milling machines, bread makers, bottled water producers, bookstores, or printing companies. (Nasrullah, *Historical Traces of the Darussalam Darussalam Gontor Cottage*, 2016).

The development of Gontor's relationship with Al-Azhar from day to day is increasingly harmonious and closed. This relationship continues to be maintained by both institutions in the name of respecting one another. The establishment of this cooperative relationship began with Al-Azhar University, who sent two of its teachers to teach at Darussalam Gontor in the 1960s. (Dr. KH. Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, 2019). Then, Darussalam Gontor also always sends cadres, students, to continue their education at Al-

Azhar University. The cadres and students went there to study starting from first, second to the third level. After their education period from Al-Azhar finished, they returned to serve at Pondok Gontor and also served at Darussalam Gontor University (UNIDA) Gontor. This process continues every year until now. Besides, Darussalam Gontor always plays an active role in sending students who have the advantage of attending training in Egypt for more or less within two weeks. (Zarkasyi, 2019).

Similarities in Education Ideology and Values

Egypt is famous for its Al-Azhar and has given birth to well-known figures and Islamic scholars in the world, such as Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, and Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar Ahmad Mal Thayyib. Especially the Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar of Egypt, who always made his visit to the country of Indonesia. The visit was an essential visit where Indonesia was the country with the largest Muslim majority population in the world and has been recognized by Sheikh Azhar himself that Indonesia is a pluralistic country or has a diversity of cultures and religions but has integrated into a nation. It was one of Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar's visits to (Koes 2018).

Besides that, Indonesia is a moderate country or Wasathiyysah where Muslims in Indonesia are Muslims with a middle ground view and a reasonable approach in Islam, not being extreme against other schools and upholding tolerance in religion. Thus, this statement is in line with what is taught by Cairo's Al-Azhar University, where Al-Azhar wants to re-enhance the views of Wasathiyah, which became Al-Azhar's teachings.

Gontor himself has a big hand in Indonesia in the field of education, such as implementing moderate Islamic culture or Wasathiyah and instilling other Islamic values. Since its establishment until now, Pondok Gontor has scored its alumni having a Gontor world view and spread across all lines in Indonesia. the motto of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is «Gontor stands above and for all *goongan*» then «Above only the sky and below only the ground.» Gontor's role in educating and implementing Wasathiyah Islamic values in Indonesia has become strategic for Al-Azhar because both have similarities and harmonious relationships in maintaining these values. Therefore, every time Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar visits Indonesia. He will visit Pondok Gontor.

The relationship between Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor and Al-Azhar Cairo University is very harmonious and very closed, as stated by Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar in his speech during a visit to Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor at the opening ceremony of 90 years of Gontor. He conveyed that Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is a miniature of Al-Azhar Cairo University to form a generation of young Indonesians who hold fast to the teachings of Islam. Gontor has an essential role in shaping moderate soul and mind through education, teaching, and culture, where this business is the most strenuous business that some countries in the world have not been able to carry out until now (UNIDA Gontor, 2016).

The statement is in line with what has been said by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Dasuki Kesbah during a visit to UNIDA Gontor in 2019. Where he stated that Gontor, as an Islamic educational institution that has the principle of Islamic Wasathiyah, these two institutions have also organized the Robitah Al-Islamiyyah Conference held in Gontor Darussalam. With the arrival of the International Conference, countries, especially in the Middle East, will become more

familiar with Gontor University and Darussalam University. Pondok Gontor comes from the values of sincerity, generosity by its founders to give birth to the soul, the spirit of the struggle of Islam. It teaches how Islamic values are implemented in our daily lives, starting from waking up to sleep again, and it becomes significant with the presence of Darussalam University Gontor, especially with the International Relations Study Program that studies international interaction.

Arabic Language Education

Arabic Language Education at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has become a fundamental thing to educate its students so that they can interact and communicate on an international level. Arabic in Gontor began to be taught from the beginning when becoming students' prospective until when they graduated from the cottage. in fact, in everyday life, the Arabic language becomes a compulsory language used by all students and teachers in communicating both in the classroom and outside the classroom. in the Arabic teaching method used in Gontor, in addition to learning from books, it also teaches the daily conversation, public speaking, and vocabularies/*mufrod*at methods. This method

proved to be very helpful for students in learning Arabic more easily. It is different from the Arabic way of teaching in traditional Islamic boarding schools, where the students are only taught Arabic from books like Nahwu and Sharf by memorizing and interpreting texts without teaching the techniques of conversation and practice in daily life.

The Arabic language that Gontor has taught his students also much helps them in learning and working in Middle Eastern Arab countries. Likewise, for those who study at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, it is easier for them to receive lessons and study material / Madah Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University. With the ability of Arabic owned by the students, it will help them in dealing with and communicating with people on the international scene. (Prof. Dr. Dasuki, 2019). It is what ultimately becomes an added value for Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Cottage in the eyes of Al-Azhar University, so it is essential as a collaborative partner. With the advantages and disadvantages of Gontor, Al-Azhar has given confidence and gratitude that have an impact on the addition of Gontor santri scholarships to study at Al-Azhar Cairo.

CONCLUSION

Egypt is the first country to recognize Indonesian sovereignty. the recognition of Egypt was beneficial for Indonesia when at the beginning of independence. Indonesia was in dire need of support from other countries in the world. the fact that both have a harmonious relationship is visible from both countries' interaction and collaboration. When Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar visited Indonesia, he always made time to visit Pondok Gontor. Gontor has the same ideology and educational value, namely the implementation of *waqf*, teaching about Islamic principles, and their application in daily life where these are the principles taught by Al-Azhar. Besides, Gontor as an educational institution that is concerned about Arabic.

Therefore, many alumni, when continuing their education in the Middle East, especially in Al-Azhar, can follow what the Azhar Community teaches well as well as the many Gontor Alumni who take part and become prominent figures in Indonesia. It is what makes Egypt design to give scholarships to Gontor and provide additional scholarships to students and cadres of Gontor.

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