

Interfaith Dialogue in the Context of Globalization: The Role of Religion in International Diplomacy

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Abstract

This article examines the significant role of interfaith dialogue in facilitating cooperation between countries, promoting peace, and influencing foreign policy. This research uses qualitative methods with data collected through primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with diplomats, religious leaders, and community figures involved in the interfaith dialogue process in the context of international diplomacy. Secondary data is collected from sources such as diplomatic reports, international agreements, and relevant academic publications. Through concrete examples such as peace agreements in various conflicts, interfaith dialogue has proven effective in reducing religious tensions and supporting reconciliation between communities. However, challenges such as religious conflict, the politicization of religion, and the influence of globalization are also present in efforts to facilitate this dialogue. Therefore, this article underlines the importance of carrying out interfaith dialogue carefully, based on the principles of neutrality, respect for beliefs, and mutual understanding, to achieve the goals of international diplomacy and global peace in this era of globalization.

Keywords: *Interfaith Dialogue, International Diplomacy, Global Peace, Globalization, Cooperation Between Countries, Foreign Policy.*



A. INTRODUCTION

Religion has had a long role in the History of International Diplomacy. For centuries, religion has played an important role in international diplomacy. Conflict and cooperation between countries are often influenced by religious factors, such as the crusades in the Middle Ages or relations between the Vatican and Catholic countries (Sadouni, 2022; Giordan & Lynch, 2019). This reflects the importance of a deep understanding of religion in the context of diplomacy. The main influence of this is, of course, due to globalization in various sectors of life; this is because globalization has fundamentally changed the landscape of international diplomacy. Despite technological developments, growing international trade, and rapidly growing global connectivity, the role of religion in diplomacy remains a relevant key factor.

Globalization has facilitated the exchange of cultures, beliefs, and ideologies, and this has brought religion to the world stage in an unprecedented way (Anello, 2022; Barbato et al., 2020).

In this regard, new challenges are emerging, and serious conflicts are occurring in the increasingly unstoppable flow of globalization. For example, religiously inspired terrorism has become a global threat affecting the foreign policy and international diplomacy of many countries. Globalization also increases various sectors, which trigger various things, at least in the following points: increasing interconnectivity, global economic dynamics, and the emergence of non-state actors (Alles, 2021; Hedges, 2023).

Increased interconnectivity resulting from globalization has created interconnectivity that has never occurred before. Easier communication and travel have brought individuals and religious communities from different parts of the world together in unprecedented ways. This raises many opportunities and challenges in international diplomacy. Increasing interconnectivity will gradually trigger Global Economic Dynamics, international trade and the global economy have brought many countries together in economic cooperation. This has prompted countries to consider how religion can play a role in trade and economic diplomacy (Blakemore, 2019; Lehmann, 2020). Apart from this, this also triggers the emergence of non-state actors caused by globalization. Globalization has facilitated the emergence of non-state actors, including faith-based organizations, which have had a significant impact on international diplomacy. Organizations such as the Catholic Church, the Muslim World League, and other religious organizations have substantial global influence (Heynes, 2023; Panneer et al., 2020).

Interreligious Dialogue has an important role in international diplomacy; this cannot be debated because of the real impact that has been felt in the social life of world society. At least in conflict prevention, interfaith dialogue can play a role in preventing conflict and promoting intercultural understanding. When different religions can communicate and collaborate well, it may be easier to avoid conflicts triggered by religious differences (Saragih et al., 2020; Kors et al., 2020).

Apart from conflict prevention, another important point is in the field of peace and reconciliation. In existing conflicts, interfaith dialogue can play a role in peace and reconciliation efforts. An example is the role of religious leaders in the peace process in various conflicts, such as the conflict in Northern Ireland or South Africa. Conflict prevention is also closely related to global security, which is disturbed by terrorism in various countries (Elmira, 2022). Religiously inspired terrorism has become a major threat. Interfaith dialogue can help identify and address the root causes of terrorism, as well as promote peace and tolerance. The process mechanism can be seen in the following picture:

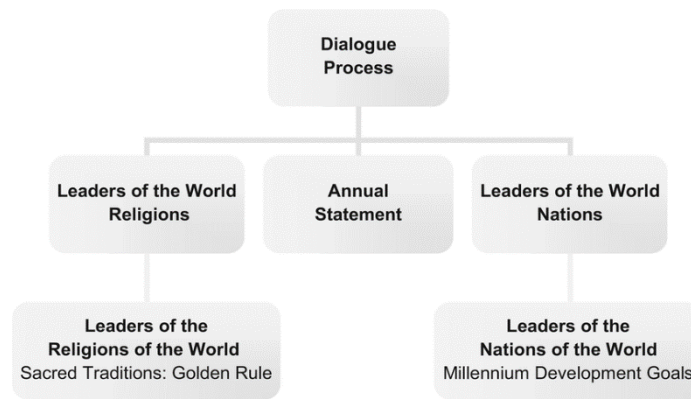


Figure 1. The Informal Interfaith Leaders' Dialogue Mechanism

Source: Novita (2010)

The ultimate goal of interfaith dialogue in international diplomacy is, of course, sustainable development. Religion can also play a role in supporting sustainable development goals. Interfaith collaboration can promote values such as social justice, peace, and sustainability. An in-depth study of interfaith dialogue in the context of globalization and the role of religion in international diplomacy has the potential to provide valuable insights into facing complex global challenges in the current era.

The importance of interfaith dialogue in international diplomacy in the Indonesian context is very significant. Indonesia is a country with extraordinary religious diversity, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and traditional religions. In this context, interfaith dialogue has high relevance and various important implications, as follows:

1. **Maintaining Religious Harmony:** Indonesia has a strong tradition of religious pluralism, and maintaining interfaith harmony is a top priority. Interfaith dialogue helps strengthen understanding and tolerance between religious groups, prevent religious conflict, and support sustainable harmony.
2. **Diplomacy within the Country:** Within the country, interfaith dialogue can contribute to interfaith cooperation in social development, education, and other social issues. This helps overcome differences and creates a climate of harmony that supports social and economic progress.
3. **Indonesia's Role in International Diplomacy:** Indonesia has the potential to become a mediator in conflicts involving religious differences at the international level. Interfaith dialogue can strengthen Indonesia's legitimacy as a mediator and contribute to resolving conflicts involving religions in various parts of the world.
4. **Promotion of Human Values:** Interfaith dialogue allows Indonesia to promote universal values such as peace, tolerance, and humanity in an international context. This can improve Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world.
5. **Economic Partnership and Investment:** In the context of globalization, interfaith dialogue can also support economic and investment cooperation with countries

with different religious majorities. This can help Indonesia expand economic relations with various international partners.

6. **Influence of International Organizations:** Indonesia is an active member of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Through interfaith dialogue, Indonesia can promote the values of tolerance and harmony in these forums.
7. **Empowering Civil Society:** Interfaith dialogue can also strengthen the role of civil society in international diplomacy. Civil society organizations in Indonesia that focus on religious dialogue can contribute to sustainable diplomatic efforts.

In the last few decades in Indonesia, interfaith dialogue has been an important instrument in Indonesia's international diplomacy, which can help promote interreligious harmony, support global peace, and increase Indonesia's role in the eyes of the world (Saragih, 2020). This is also consistent with the principles of Pancasila, which prioritize pluralism and tolerance, which are the foundations of the Indonesian state (Imronudin & Muhammad, 2023).

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Historical Context of the Role of Religion in International Diplomacy

In the history of international diplomacy, religion has played a very significant role, both as a driver of cooperation and peace and as a cause of conflict. Here is an overview of how religion has influenced international diplomacy throughout history, along with some relevant historical examples: a) **Treaty of Westphalia (1648):** The Treaty of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe. This agreement establishes the basic principle of religious non-interference, allowing for interfaith tolerance and understanding in diplomacy; b) **Camp David Agreement (1978):** This agreement mediated peace between Israel and Egypt with the mediation of the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, and inspired diplomatic cooperation between countries in the Middle East (Lehmann, 2020; Adesina, 2023).

Apart from peace negotiations, religion can also be a cause of international conflict. Some examples of historical conflicts triggered by religious differences include: a) **Crusades (Middle Ages):** The conflict involving Christianity and Islam in the Middle East is one famous example of how religion can trigger war and international conflict; b) **Northern Ireland Civil War (1969-1998):** The conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland is a modern example of how religious differences can influence diplomacy and peace.

Religious leaders often also play an important role in international diplomacy, either as mediators in conflicts or as peace advocates (Adesina, 2023; Akhmedshina, 2021). Examples are: a) **Pope John Paul II:** Pope John Paul II played an important role in the peace-building process in Central America and the Middle East during his reign; b) **Dalai Lama:** The Dalai Lama has played a role as a defender of human rights and

world peace, especially in the context of Tibet's conflict with China. Religion can be a source of inspiration for peace and tolerance, but it can also be used to justify conflict and violence. This is an important aspect that needs to be understood in understanding how religion influences international diplomacy in the current era of globalization.

2. Theories Supporting the Role of Religion in Diplomacy

Several theories support the role of religion in international diplomacy. These theories provide a framework for understanding how religion can influence international relations and diplomatic processes. Some of them are explained in the following paragraph (Kolyukh et al., 2023; Fei, 2020):

a. Realism Theory

Realism theory in international relations emphasizes national interests, power, and competition between countries. According to realism, states act to protect and expand their interests. In the context of realism, religion can be seen as a factor that influences a country's foreign policy if that religion plays a role in domestic politics. For example, a strong leader supported by a particular religious group can influence that country's foreign policy.

b. Constructivism Theory

Constructivism emphasizes the importance of ideas, norms, and identity in international relations. This theory argues that international actors shape their views of the world through social interactions and social construction. In constructivism theory, religion is considered one of the factors that shape state identity and norms. Religion can influence the way countries view themselves and how they interact with other countries.

c. Liberalism Theory

The theory of liberalism underscores the importance of international cooperation, free trade, and international institutions in maintaining world peace and stability. Liberalism emphasizes values such as human rights and individual freedom. Religion in the context of liberalism can play a role in supporting these values or as a basis for non-governmental organizations focused on peace, humanitarian aid, and human rights.

d. Soft Power Theory

The soft power theory introduced by Joseph S. Nye Jr. suggests that countries' influence can stem from the appeal of their culture, values, or ideology. Religion can be an important component of a country's soft power. Countries can use their religions and interfaith dialogue as a way to promote positive values and build a good reputation at the international level. For example, countries can use foreign policies that encourage interfaith dialogue as part of their soft power strategies.

e. Identity Theory

Identity theory in international relations focuses on the role of national and group identities in shaping state behavior. Religion is often an important component of national and group identity. Identity theory can explain how religion can influence a country's diplomatic attitudes and actions. Religious identity can be the basis for solidarity or division at the international level, which can influence diplomacy.

f. Security Theory

Security theory in international relations examines the factors that influence national and international security. Religion can play a role in creating security threats or, conversely, can be a source of solutions to conflict and tension. In some contexts, religion has been used to rationalize acts of terrorism or conflict, while in other contexts, religion has become a source of conflict resolution.

The importance of these theories is to provide a theoretical framework for understanding how religion influences international diplomacy. This understanding helps a deeper analysis of how religion can play a role in diplomatic cooperation, conflict, and peace efforts in the context of international relations.

C. METHOD

In this research, the research method used is a qualitative approach involving document analysis and case studies. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with diplomats, religious leaders, and community figures involved in the interfaith dialogue process in the context of international diplomacy. Secondary data is collected from sources such as diplomatic reports, international agreements, and relevant academic publications. Data analysis was carried out using a content approach and an interpretive approach, which allows the author to comprehensively understand the role of religion in international diplomacy within the framework of globalization.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The main findings show that religion has played an important role in international diplomacy in various contexts. Respondents who are diplomats and religious leaders identified that religion can function as a unifier in mediating conflict or as a source of inspiration for cross-border cooperation. Research data from interviews in this study is presented in the following table (the source did not wish to be identified):

Table 1. Interview Data with High-Level Diplomat Sources, Religious Leaders, Academics, Human Rights Activists, and Experts in International Relations

Informant	Question	Answer
High Diplomat	How do you see the role of religion in international diplomacy today?	Religion has an increasingly important role in international diplomacy today. Religion can be a unifier or a divider, depending on how countries and religious groups use it. In some cases, religion has been a force promoting peace and tolerance, while in other cases, religion has been a source of conflict.
High Diplomat	What concrete examples of the role of religion in peace negotiations or international diplomacy have you witnessed or been involved in?	One example I witnessed was Pope John Paul II's role in mediating a peace agreement in Central America in the 1980s. The pope facilitated dialogue between the government and rebel groups with different religious backgrounds, which ultimately resulted in peace.
Religious Leader	In your view, what is the contribution of religion to international diplomacy?	Religion can make a significant contribution to international diplomacy by becoming a source of morals and ethics. Religious groups and religious leaders can promote messages of peace, tolerance, and justice in the context of international relations.
Religious Leader	How do you see the role of religious leaders in promoting messages of peace and tolerance in international diplomacy?	Religious leaders have a great responsibility in promoting the message of peace. They can engage in interfaith dialogue, mediate conflicts, and provide humanitarian assistance in various regions. They can be a voice fighting for justice and equality.
Academician of Religious Studies and International Relations	How can theories in the study of religion and international relations explain the role of religion in international diplomacy?	Theories in the study of religion and international relations provide insight into the role of religion in diplomacy. For example, constructivism theory highlights

		how religion shapes identities and norms that influence diplomatic actions. Soft power theory can explain how religion can be a valuable resource in international diplomacy.
Human Rights Activists in Interfaith Dialogue	How do you see the role of interfaith dialogue in fighting for human rights and justice in the context of globalization?	Interfaith dialogue plays an important role in fighting for human rights and justice. This helps promote mutual understanding among religious groups and creates cooperation in support of human rights throughout the world.
Expert in International Relations	In your view, is religion more often a source of conflict or cooperation in international diplomacy?	Religion can act as both, depending on the context. Sometimes, religion is used to justify conflict or separate groups. However, in many cases, religion can also be a source of inspiration for peace and harmony between countries.

Source: Data Proceed

In this interview, various views and understandings about the role of religion in international diplomacy emerge clearly. In general, these sources noted that religion can play both a unifying and dividing role in international relations, depending on how countries and religious groups use religion.

High-level diplomatic sources underscored the important role of religion in mediating conflicts and easing tensions between countries. They also noted that religion could be used as a tool to promote peace and tolerance in the context of diplomacy. Religious leaders expressed their views on how religion can be a source of morals and ethics in international diplomacy. They recognize the role of religious leaders in promoting messages of peace and interfaith harmony.

Academics in religious studies and international relations provide deep theoretical perspectives on the role of religion in international diplomacy. They explain how theories such as constructivism and soft power can help explain this phenomenon and warn that globalization has influenced the dynamics of religion in diplomacy. Human rights activists involved in interfaith dialogue highlight the role of this dialogue in fighting for human rights and global justice. They also provide concrete examples of how interfaith dialogue can influence foreign policy and diplomatic actions. Meanwhile, experts in international relations evaluate that religion can be a source of conflict but can also be a source of cooperation in international

diplomacy. They show that countries can capitalize on the role of religion by promoting interfaith dialogue and supporting the values of tolerance.

Overall, the results illustrate a diversity of views on the role of religion in international diplomacy. These results certainly reflect the complexity of the topic, where religion can have a very diverse impact on international relations, from positive to negative, depending on how religion is utilized and managed by the actors involved.

Analysis of interview data shows that religion is often used as a means to promote peace, especially in the context of conflict involving religious differences. Some examples include the mediating role of religious leaders in securing peace agreements in several countries with long-standing religious conflicts. The research results also illustrate how globalization has influenced the role of religion in international diplomacy. Respondents noted that globalization has expanded connectivity between religious groups and supported the exchange of religious ideologies around the world. Data analysis also reveals that globalization only sometimes produces positive impacts. Sometimes, globalization has strengthened religious polarization and exploited religious differences for certain political purposes, such as the results of research conducted by (Mercier, 2023)(Naz et al., 2023).

The main findings show that interfaith dialogue is an important element in international diplomacy. This dialogue has helped strengthen understanding and harmony between religious groups and supported peace and reconciliation efforts. Analysis of interview data shows that interfaith dialogue has resulted in practical cooperation between religious groups in solving social and political problems in various countries. Examples include collaborative programs in the fields of education, health, and community empowerment.

Findings also identify challenges and obstacles in facilitating interfaith dialogue in international diplomacy. Respondents noted that there are sometimes internal tensions within religious groups that can hinder participation in dialogue. Political, economic, and social issues can also become obstacles to interfaith dialogue, especially if religion is used as a political tool to achieve certain goals. The results of this research show that the role of religion in international diplomacy in the era of globalization is a complex and varied phenomenon. Religion can be a source of conflict, but it can also be a tool for promoting peace and harmony. Interfaith dialogue plays an important role in facilitating mutual understanding between civilizations and promoting cooperation between religious groups. However, challenges and obstacles also need to be overcome to maximize the positive potential of the role of religion in international diplomacy.

The discussion of the results of this research data is divided into the following paragraphs:

a. The Role of Religion in International Diplomacy

Research reveals that religion can facilitate cooperation between countries in several ways. Religious groups can be a link that enables cooperation in various fields, including education, health, and social assistance. Apart from that, religion can also be a driver of collaboration in humanitarian and development projects at the international level. This shows that religion can play a role in connecting countries and promoting global partnerships.

Research notes that religion has played an important role in promoting peace in several international conflicts. Some concrete examples include the role of religious leaders in mediating peace agreements in areas hit by religious conflict. Religion has also been used as a source of norms and values that support peace, tolerance, and reconciliation. This shows that religion can be an important asset in global peace efforts.

The research results reveal that religion can influence a country's foreign policy. Sometimes, religious leaders or religious groups have significant influence in shaping the direction of their country's foreign policy. This may include issues such as support for countries with similar religions or advocacy for foreign policies that align with particular religious beliefs. However, it is also important to note that the impact of religion on foreign policy can vary depending on the country and situation.

While religion can have a positive impact on international diplomacy, research also highlights associated challenges and obstacles. These challenges include internal tensions within religious groups, the politicization of religion, and the use of religion for specific political purposes. These obstacles can hamper diplomatic efforts based on religious values. Globalization has also played an important role in the dynamics of religion in international diplomacy. In the era of globalization, connectivity between religious groups around the world has increased. This has enabled the exchange of religious ideologies and strengthened the role of religion in international diplomacy (Sadouni, 2022).

This evaluation highlights the complexity of the role of religion in international diplomacy. Religion can be a force that promotes cooperation, peace, and positive influence in a country's foreign policy. However, some challenges need to be overcome, especially those related to the use of religion for political purposes or internal conflicts within religious groups. In the era of globalization, the role of religion in international diplomacy has become increasingly important and varied, requiring in-depth understanding to manage its impact effectively.

b. The Importance of Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue has made a significant contribution to international diplomacy and efforts to promote global peace. Here are some concrete examples where interfaith dialogue has played an important role:

- 1). Peace Agreement in Mozambique (1992): In the conflict between the government and the FRELIMO and RENAMO rebel movements of different religious backgrounds, representatives of various religious groups helped mediate a peace agreement that ended 16 years of bloody conflict
- 2). Dialogue in South Sudan: In the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan involving religious differences (Islam vs. Christianity), interfaith dialogue involving religious leaders from various communities has helped defuse tensions and promote mutual understanding and peace.
- 3). Dialogue in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Following the bloody ethnic and religious conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, various interfaith organizations such as the "Interfaith Council" have played a role in facilitating dialogue and reconciliation between religious communities involved in the conflict.
- 4). Interfaith Dialogue in Israel and Palestine: A number of interfaith dialogue initiatives have existed to help promote understanding and peace between the various religious communities in Israel and Palestine. Some organizations, such as "Religions for Peace," have attempted to mediate conflicts and support peaceful solutions.
- 5). Interfaith Dialogue Conference in Kazakhstan (2003): Kazakhstan hosted a large-scale conference involving religious leaders from around the world. This conference aims to promote interfaith dialogue as a tool to mediate conflict and support global peace.
- 6). UN Interfaith Dialogue Forum: The UN has engaged in interfaith dialogue in its efforts to promote international peace and security. The UN Interfaith Dialogue Forum has brought together religious leaders from various denominations to discuss global issues.
- 7). Anti-Radicalization Program in Indonesia: Indonesia has utilized interfaith dialogue as a tool to counter religious extremism. Organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have been involved in efforts to prevent radicalization and promote a more tolerant understanding of Islam.

Interfaith dialogue has helped build bridges between different religious groups, created space for understanding, and eased tensions in conflict situations. It also facilitates cultural and educational exchange between religious communities, which can reduce stereotypes and mistrust between religions. In an era of globalization filled with religious differences and tensions, interfaith dialogue has an increasingly important role in promoting peace and tolerance at the global level.

c. Challenges and Obstacles

Facilitating interfaith dialogue is a complex task and can be faced with various challenges and obstacles. In the context of globalization, these challenges become

more diverse and often complex. Below are some of the main challenges and ways to overcome obstacles in facilitating interfaith dialogue:

1). Tension and Religious Conflict

Religious tensions and conflicts can be a major obstacle to initiating interfaith dialogue. Historical conflicts or deep differences in beliefs can hinder efforts at dialogue. To overcome this challenge, it is important to start with a highly sensitive approach based on respect for each party's beliefs and beliefs. Choosing a mediator who is neutral and trusted by all parties can help reduce tensions.

2). Internal Challenges in Religious Groups

There are differences of opinion or internal conflicts within the religious group itself, which can hinder participation in interfaith dialogue. Religious leaders can have different views. It is important to engage diverse religious leaders in interfaith dialogue. Supporting efforts within religious groups to achieve internal consensus and understanding can also help overcome these challenges.

3). Politicization of Religion

Religion is often used for political purposes, especially in the context of conflict and elections. The politicization of religion can obscure the objective of interfaith dialogue, which should be neutral and pave the way for political agendas. It is important to maintain the neutrality of interfaith dialogue and separate the political agenda from the dialogue agenda. Facilitators must ensure that dialogue focuses on mutual understanding and promoting peace and tolerance rather than being used for political purposes.

4). Influence of Globalization

Globalization can strengthen religious conflict through the spread of extreme ideologies and religious polarization. This can create distrust of interfaith dialogue. In addressing the effects of globalization, education and campaigns that promote religious understanding, tolerance, and inclusion can help meet these challenges. Interfaith organizations can also collaborate globally to address the negative impacts of globalization on interfaith dialogue.

5). Security Issues

In some cases, especially in conflict areas, the security of participants in interfaith dialogue can be a serious problem. Threats and risks to participants can be a barrier. Ensuring participant safety is a top priority. This may include cooperating with security authorities, holding dialogues in secure locations, and keeping participants' identities confidential if necessary.

In the context of globalization, it is important to recognize that the challenges of facilitating interfaith dialogue may involve more complex factors. Therefore, cooperation between countries and international organizations is also key to overcoming this obstacle. By taking thoughtful steps based on the principles of neutrality, respect, and understanding, interfaith dialogue can become a powerful tool for promoting peace and tolerance in a world increasingly connected through globalization.

E. CONCLUSION

In the context of globalization, interfaith dialogue has played an important role in facilitating cooperation between countries, promoting peace, and influencing foreign policy. Religion can connect countries, create understanding, and promote collaboration in various fields. In addition, in situations of international conflict, interfaith dialogue can help mediate conflicts and support reconciliation between the religious communities involved. However, challenges such as religious conflict, the politicization of religion, and the influence of globalization also exist in efforts to facilitate this dialogue. Therefore, carrying out interfaith dialogue carefully and based on the principles of neutrality and mutual understanding is the key to achieving the goals of international peace and diplomacy in this era of globalization.

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