

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

I conduct this study to identify the reasons for the ineffectiveness of interfaith diplomacy in Denmark. It is a fact that there are so many religious controversies in Denmark, especially regarding Islam. Many efforts have been made, but the result is still the same. This research intended to break down the causes of the ineffectiveness of interfaith diplomacy in Denmark. Not all diplomacy always ends up successful. I will explain the background in general to get a deeper understanding of the issue, and it will be narrowed down at the end. So, first, let us start with the general definition of diplomacy. According to Morgenthau (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1993), the concept of diplomacy is comprised of four objectives: (1) Diplomacy must choose its goals based on the power currently and potentially at its disposal to achieve those goals; (2) Diplomacy must evaluate the goals of other countries and the current and potential power at their disposal to pursue these goals; (3) Diplomacy must assess the degree to which these various agendas may coexist, and; (4) Diplomacy must use the tools necessary to achieve its goals. Additionally, Morgenthau classifies three types of diplomatic tools: symbolic, juridical, and representational. All of these classifications fit perfectly with the concept of religion as a symbol.

We must first acknowledge that religion has an important role in our life, hence it cannot be separated from people's identity. According to a thorough demographic study of more than 230 countries and territories by the Forum on Religion & Public Life of the Pew Research Center, there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children worldwide, or 84% of the 6.9 billion people who live in the world in 2010 (*The Global Religious Landscape*, 2012). Religion is something that must be addressed in the international relations sphere. In recent years, we also have seen the re-emergence of "religion" as a prominent subject in international affairs and diplomacy. There is widespread agreement among politicians and scholars that the role of religion in politics should not be downplayed. Coming back to what Morgenthau had classified as a tool for diplomacy, religion is the best tool that fits those classifications. Since a religious symbol provides evidence for the effectiveness of representation, though a crescent moon and a star are merely two astronomical forms, they together make up the universal representation of Islam. This was supported by the definition of religion from Geertz, in which I quote,

“A religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz, 2013).

Muzakkir provided the following explanation of the definition in his book *"Dekolonisasi: Metodologi Kritis Dalam Studi Humaniora dan Studi Islam."* Geertz views religion as the study of how symbols affect people's thoughts and behaviors. Geertz clarifies his use of symbols. As per his argument, symbols may be seen as tangible items like Buddha statues, cross pillars, or mosque domes, as well as actions like the crucifixion of Jesus or the migration of the Prophet, and human relations like those between a prophet and his people or a father and son. Humans use symbols to communicate with each other. In addition, symbols have the power to shape and affect human behavior. Religious symbols are the source of thoughts, worldviews, tendencies, feelings, and religious ethos. Religion, in simple terms, gives things meaning. Geertz also argues that this system of symbols exists and was created in order to address questions about the purpose of life for humans. It forms an idea of the universe's order. This perspective deviates from the fundamental belief that chaos, ignorance, and oppression characterize human existence. Everything that happens in the world has meaning because of religion (Muzakkir, 2023).

This also means that they will do anything to protect that religion or symbols that represent their religion since it shapes their life purpose and provides their life meaning. Thus, when there is a controversy related to religious symbols, it could create a considerable enough controversy to become an international issue. One of the cases was the cartoon controversy in Denmark. Amid calls from Muslim organizations for publications to censor themselves for the sake of cultural sensitivity regarding speech that Muslims may find insulting, the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published 12 editorial cartoons in September 2005 depicting the Prophet Muhammad in an effort to assert the right to freedom of expression and criticize aspects of Islam that Westerners find objectionable. Some of the cartoons were insulting sketches of Muhammad (depictions of Muhammad, any other prophet, and God are prohibited in Islam as idolatry), others mocked the alleged overreaction of Muslims to such depictions, and still others parodied contentious aspects of contemporary Islam, such as the position of

women in Islamic societies and the tradition's perceived openness to terrorism (*Jyllands-Posten Muhammad Cartoons Controversy*, n.d.).

The conflict escalated rapidly since several Muslim countries also protested, making it an international issue. Even though the first publication was in 2005, the animosity continues even after several years have passed by. The satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*, which published the cartoons in 2012, was targeted by an attack in Paris in 2015, and twelve people were killed in the attack (*Danish Prophet Muhammad Cartoonist Kurt Westergaard Dies, Aged 86*, 2021). Nonetheless, the Danish government does not believe that it is its role to start or participate in interreligious dialogue, in contrast to other European nations that have made it an official policy at various societal levels (Galal, 2020). Denmark does not have a national interfaith body, in contrast to Sweden and Norway, and in keeping with the absence of a church council or synod (Martikainen, 2016). Similarly, other religious groups have had little influence on public opinion regarding religious diversity, even in spite of efforts to form national councils such as the Muslim Council of Denmark. The discussion has been decentralized and has resulted in several uncoordinated initiatives in the absence of clearly defined dialogue structures and partners, be they state or church.

The state is willing to provide financial support for initiatives that address pressing challenges that the Danish society finds essential. For example, Denmark's government has been funding several interfaith dialogue efforts after the incident of Muhammad's cartoon controversy. With support from the Danish government, the 1000 Abrahamic Circle Project conducted an interfaith conversation program in 2019 (Rahmadansyah, 2021). The financing was derived from Denmark's foreign policy, the Danida program. In 2017, the Wahid Foundation and the Danish Embassy in Indonesia collaborated to plan an interfaith dialogue trip to Denmark to promote religious tolerance, diversity, and interfaith communication (Shenny, 2017). Not only that, but they also have the Danish-Arab Partnership Program (DAPP), which is Denmark's development cooperation initiative with the Middle East and North Africa. This program organized interfaith discussions between religious leaders, activists, and grassroots Arab and Danish communities that experienced a resurgence as part of Danish foreign policy and development (Galal, 2018). Regardless of those efforts, I believe the interfaith dialogue and Danish government effort is not enough yet and ineffective. Despite the government effort to handle the issue, anti-muslim sentiment still happen in Denmark, even increased recently, specifically an act of burning Quran

that happened again in Copenhagen, 12 August 2023 (*Danish Ultranationalist Group Danske Patrioters Burns Al-Qur'an In Front Of The Turkish Embassy, 2023*).

B. Research Question

Based on the background above, I formulate the following research question: Why have the efforts of interfaith dialogue that have been conducted in Denmark been ineffective?

C. Purpose of Research

This research intends to examine the ineffectiveness of interfaith diplomacy in Denmark and the factors behind it. Practically speaking, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of international relations, particularly with regard to the subject of religion-based diplomacy and the sociology of religion. Additionally, this research can be used as a complement to existing studies as well as a comparative resource for other researchers who wish to perform comparable studies in the area of religion-based diplomacy with interfaith dialogue as its tool.

D. Theoretical Framework

I use two theoretical frameworks in this research, namely:

1. Faith-based Diplomacy

According to Cox and Philpott (Cox & Philpott, 2010), faith-based diplomacy, as diplomats refer to it, is “track two,” or the diplomatic efforts of non-state actors, non-governmental organization (NGOs) representatives, religious leaders, and private citizens. Its most notable characteristic is that it has its roots in religions—their writings, rituals, and traditions, as well as the dual spiritual orientation that unites them all: first, the appropriate political orientation towards the transcendent, and second, the divine's active involvement in human affairs. Those who engage in faith-based diplomacy will undoubtedly draw on secular knowledge in areas such as political science, philosophy, national security, diplomacy, community development, and the like. But their faith serves as their main compass and guide.

They also mentioned a curiosity about the results of faith-based diplomacy leads to an interest in the situations where it is most likely to take place. There are at least four of these. Initially, there are disputes in which the people involved identify primarily

with their religion and may even engage in combat over it. When it comes to these kinds of disputes, a strategy that appeals to the factions' religious worldview may succeed where a strictly secular strategy would not. According to a former militant leader, "removing the militant's gun from their grasp is insufficient." The thoughts that lead someone to pick up a gun in the first place need to be addressed. One needs to make a stronger argument in order to accomplish that. Second, the circumstance that is conducive to faith-based diplomacy is when particular religious leaders possess a certain charisma that they can use to mediate and promote peace, irrespective of the identity of the involved parties. Third, dialogue between civilizations. Even the largest religious collectivities can experience conflict, at least of a broad ideological kind. Take the Islamic and Western civilizations, for instance, where public conflicts have recently increased. Pope John Paul and Iranian President Mohammed Khatami have responded by suggesting a "dialogue between civilizations" that entails spiritual discussions amongst religious leaders. It is true that those who identify as religious are well-suited to promote this kind of conversation because they are aware of the nuances of the theologies that characterize different worldviews and can steer clear of simplistic approaches to "consensus" that aim to find the smallest common ground that very few sincere religious adherents can support. Lastly, there are circumstances where faith-based diplomats can effectively transition into reliable envoys. Their standing can result from their connections to the social network of friendships (Cox & Philpott, 2010).

Interfaith dialogue can be the best tool to implement faith-based diplomacy, especially to also reach the grassroots. In its most basic definition, interfaith dialogue is a means of bringing individuals of various religions together to have conversations that lead to mutual understanding. This definition is provided by the United States Institute of Peace (United States Institute of Peace, 2004). Following are ten fundamental principles for interfaith discourse created by Leonard Swidler:

First, the goal of interfaith discussion is to advance knowledge by fostering understandings and insights into reality that are subsequently carried out correctly. Second, two parties, one of which is a religion, must initiate the interfaith conversation. Third the interfaith discussion requires sincerity and honesty from all participants. Furthermore, each party needs to believe the other is sincere and truthful. Fourth, comparing concepts with practice is prohibited in interfaith discourse. It is important to compare one concept to another, or one practice to another, throughout the conversation.

Fifth, each participant in the interfaith discussion needs to arrange themselves in accordance with their own existence. This implies that a Muslim must advocate for himself as a Muslim and not on behalf of Christians or other groups. Six, as long as the integrity of their belief is upheld, each participant in the interfaith dialogue is justified in reaching an agreement with the others rather than assuming that differences are to be found. Seven, a balanced stance is the best way to conduct interfaith discourse. This implies that knowledge should be shared equitably by all parties. Dialogue is impossible, for example, if a Muslim believes that a neighbor or another party is beneath him. Eight, mutual trust is a necessary condition for the interfaith conversation to occur. It indicates that all parties are willing to communicate and fulfill the necessary conditions. For example, those who are ignorant of their faith are unable to have a conversation. Nine, those who plan to take part in the interfaith discussion are, at the very least, self-critical about their beliefs. He therefore knows very well that he still needs to improve, as does diversity. Lastly, each participant in the interfaith discussion has to make a sincere effort to live out the religion or beliefs of the other participant. Because in order to comprehend religion properly, one must enter it and emerge from it with a deep and rich understanding (Swidler, 1985).

2. Secularism

The secularism model used in France today is based on the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau. According to this theory, the government defines, oversees, and controls religion. Only religion that is approved by the state is acceptable in public (Muzakkir, 2023). This type of model has recently been called *laicite* in France. This type of secularism is also portrayed in Danish society. The Lutheran-evangelic church and its organizations have a favorable position among other religions since the constitution designates the Lutheran-evangelic Church as the Danish People's Church ("Folkekirke"), and it is supported by the state. It ensures that all tax-paying residents support the priests and bishops of the "Folkekirke," regardless of their own personal religious views. It is almost a given that every citizen is a "Folkekirke" by birth. It's not right to expect the people to walk out of the church on their own volition (Dencik, n.d.).

There are also types of secularism that is brought up by Ahmet T. Kuru in his book titled, "Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey", which are assertive secularism and passive secularism. The state must

take an "assertive" stance in order to keep religion out of the public eye and keep it in the private sector, according to assertive secularism. Assertive secularism is a "comprehensive doctrine" (Kuru, 2009). Another definition came from Jean-Paul Burdy and Jean Marcou, assertive secularism in France is "republican, monist, and anxious about the individual citizen's expression of his or her religious or communitarian affiliation in the public space," (Burdy & Marcou, 1995). In Danish society, there is a significant secularist movement that aims to reduce the impact of religion on public affairs. This was seen in several of the government policy dated from between 2014 and 2018, starting from the ban of halal slaughter, the burka ban, etc. From this definition I believe that the anxious nature of secularism in seeing others perform their religious affiliation in the public eye hinders the interfaith dialogue process. Since before even join the discussion or interfaith dialogue these people already anxious and have the assumption or judgement towards Islam.

E. Arguments

I have three arguments regarding the issue that is brought up in this paper. First, the Danish government prioritize the freedom of speech rather than tolerances. Second, the limited scope and weak nature of interfaith dialogue is a significant factor contributing to the failure. Interfaith dialogue does not have the power to force people either to join their dialogue or to come to an understanding; it only provides a space for those who want to join, which means those who already understand and agree with each other. Lastly, secularism became a limit to interfaith dialogue. Since the people are already used to state religion, it may raise concern in seeing other people's expression regarding their belief in public space as it is different from their belief.

F. Research Method

I employ a descriptive qualitative method for this research. Colman claims that the qualitative research method describes the research object using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, thematic analysis techniques, or phenomenological analysis techniques to reveal specific phenomenon objects. This interpretive procedure of the meaning of non-numerical (non-numerical) data is directed towards a focus of the object being studied, such as verbal data. The *verstehen* process (internal/emic appreciation) is the foundation of qualitative research methodologies, as opposed to *erklären* (explanation from the outside) (Haryoko et al., 2020). Thus, I will gather the

primary data for this research especially regarding secularism, religion-based diplomacy, blasphemy, islamophobia in Denmark, Danish government efforts towards islamophobia, and Danish law from the existing journals, books, web articles, former research, and other types of literature.

G. Structure of Thesis

I organize the structure of this thesis into four chapters, namely:

CHAPTER I: Introduction

This chapter consisted of the background, research question, the purpose of research, theoretical framework, argument, research method, and structure of the thesis.

CHAPTER II: Anti-Muslim Sentiments and Interfaith Dialogue Efforts in Denmark

This chapter will explain interfaith dialogue efforts that had been conducted in Denmark and anti-Muslim sentiments that have been happening in Denmark up until this very present.

CHAPTER III: Factors Behind the Ineffectiveness of Interfaith Dialogue

This chapter will analyze and explain the factors that make interfaith dialogue in Denmark still ineffective, starting from the government aspect, interfaith dialogue aspect, and individual actor aspect.

CHAPTER IV: Conclusion

This chapter serves as a conclusion, reflecting on the entire study and providing an answer to the problem formulation based on the information gathered from the conversation regarding the effectiveness of interfaith dialogues in lowering blasphemy against Islam in Denmark.