

Sacred Networks Vis A Vis Sovereign Interests: Faith-Based Diplomacy and the Western Sahara Question in Indonesia-Morocco Relations

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the foundations and limitations of faith-based diplomacy in Indonesia-Morocco relations, particularly through the Western Sahara dispute. Drawing on a qualitative case study, it analyses interviews, official documents, and secondary sources to assess how religious cooperation has shaped bilateral engagement. The analysis indicates that faith-based diplomacy contributed to strengthening symbolic affinity, trust, and transnational working religious networks between both countries. Still, these ties have not changed Indonesia's cautious and neutral position over Morocco's territorial claim. It is concluded that although religion may help facilitate people-to-people relations and normative legitimacy, ultimately sovereign interests and domestic political considerations trump all in sensitive geopolitical matters. This article highlights that faith-based diplomacy has symbolic and social power in the religious, development and humanitarian discourses of contemporary international relations but limited potential to shape state behaviour over territorial disputes; it contributes to scholarship on religion in international relations.

Keywords: *collaboration, faith-based diplomacy, Western Sahara, Indonesia, Morocco*

INTRODUCTION

Faith-based diplomacy has become a unique analytical framework for examining how religious actors, institutions and values inform diplomatic practice and foreign policy behaviour. Through an examination of faith-based diplomacy as the leading variable driving bilateral relations, this research explores such initiatives and their potential to change state behaviour in light of geopolitical interests and territorial disputes. In contrast to classical approaches in international relations that emphasized material power, security and institutional arrangements, more recent scholarship highlights the ability of religious actors to serve as providers of moral legitimacy, collective identity and transnational linkage (Fox & Sandler 2004; Haynes 2012).

This inquiry builds on several other studies that have laid the groundwork. Faith-based diplomacy, coined by Johnston and Cox (2003) and expanded in (Cox 2015), describes non-evangelical diplomatic efforts which weave religious values, institutions and networks into the fabrics of international relations processes, concurrent to state-centred forms of diplomacy. Shared Islamic faith foster trust and enduring people-to-

people ties among Muslim majority-states (Haynes 2012). Shifting from a materialist to a constructivist perspective, Wendt (1992;1999) argued that identities and norms can foster cooperation beyond self-defined interests, thereby infusing faith-based diplomacy with social and symbolic capital. Fox and Sandler (2004) offer empirical support, showing religion as an independent variable influencing foreign policy across various states. More recently, Blakemore (2019), and Hill and Beasley (2016) illustrate how non-state religious actors serve as diplomatic intermediaries, cultivating trust across borders. But previous studies have mainly explored faith-based diplomacy in the contexts of conflict mediation, humanitarian settings or on bilateral trust-building generally. They have not systematically tested whether such diplomacy generates diplomatic alignment over unresolved territorial sovereignty disputes on which national interests and international law are in sharp contention. The Western Sahara question, as studied by Zoubir and Benabdallah-Gambier (2005) and Evans (2021), remains such a dispute but was never studied through the lens of faith-based diplomacy. Different from earlier work, this study tests the extent of religious affinity when faced with competing sovereign territorial claims.

The question that follows this is, "What are the limits of religious-based diplomacy when state behavior comes into direct play like in case of geopolitics and land disputes?" This article seeks to answer this question, as the establishment of diplomatic relations with religious principles has made Indonesia and Morocco have a symbolic closeness that also covers transnational security networks so that it cannot be interpreted if the two countries 'separately' have similar views on sensitive political issues. In the end, what drives each country's policy is its sovereign interests, domestic political constraints and larger strategic calculations.

This is a qualitative case study focusing on Indonesia–Morocco bilateral relations. The data are extracted from primary sources, such as bilateral accords between Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs and Morocco's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (signed in 1994 then renewed in 2013 and 2018), the official stances of Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regard to the Western Sahara question, as well as existing records about faith-based NGO forums attended by both Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Morocco. There are two categories of sources: primary and secondary. For example, we use process tracing to determine if religious cooperation mechanisms translated into diplomatic alignment on the territorial issue.

The results illustrate how faith diplomacy between Indonesia and Morocco have effectively erected institutional linkages in religious education, cultural exchange, academic collaboration as well as transnational networks of state and non-state actors. Yet, despite these religious and cultural ties between both nations, Indonesia's approach to the Western Sahara question has been an ambivalent and largely neutral one. Indonesia, for its part, has continued to emphasize neutrality, the rule of international law, and peaceful dispute resolution as it refrains from endorsing Morocco's territorial claim in line with its general foreign policy tradition (Perwita & Yani, 2005; Acharya, 2014). As such, faith-based diplomacy produces symbolic and social capital but no automatic political convergence over sovereignty disputes.

By examining the role of faith-based diplomacy relative to territorial politics, this research contributes to the expanding scholarship on religion in IR by doing so in two particular ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of the limits of faith-based diplomacy to shift diplomatic outcomes where issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity are at stake, thereby refining constructivist expectations that shared identity will always trump material interests. Second, it demonstrates that non-state actors such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah serve as carriers of normative norms and trust-building yet their role remains residual not deterministic against state foreign policies. These contributions assist both scholars and policymakers in calibrating what religious engagement can provide geopolitical conflicts in terms of achievable results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion languished on the fringes of International Relations scholarship for much of the twentieth century. Dominant paradigms like realism and liberal institutionalism emphasized material power, state security, and inter-state cooperation at the expense of more ideational phenomena like religious actors, beliefs and institutions. This orientation was starting to change by the late twentieth century, with a growing numbers of

scholars recognizing the importance of religion in global politics. Fox and Sandler (2004) argue that religion is an important aspect of international relations because it defines political identities, legitimizes authority, and guides the behavior of state foreign policy. Likewise, religion may serve as a form of soft power that can enhance diplomatic engagement and broaden influence (Haynes 2012). Studying how religion functions via diplomatic avenues is thus not only a minor problem, but rather a central task for IR scholarship to take on in the twenty-first century, especially since actors rooted in faith are becoming salient both within and throughout global politics.

Within this discourse, scholars introduce the term of faith-based diplomacy to describe diplomatic efforts that leverage religious actors, institutions, and values. Johnston and Cox (2003) highlight how religious leaders and faith-based organizations provide distinctive assets for diplomacy – like moral authority, social legitimacy, and vast transnational networks – that bridge cultural or political gaps. Later studies expand on this, showing that such diplomacy often unfolds via informal and semi formal channels, such as educational exchanges, faith-based NGOs, and civil society efforts. Thus, faith-based diplomacy functions as a subset of track-two diplomacy, it compliments rather than replaces official state-to-state channels, creating opportunities for dialogue, trust-building, and conflict resolution when formal talks falter.

Faith-based diplomacy extends beyond merely resolving wartime conflicts. Certain scholars posit that its core aim lies in reconciliation – rebuilding trust and, in turn, establishing a moral and political order amid ongoing strife or even in peacetime (Johnston and Cox, 2003). In peacetime, it may continue to foster cooperation by means of educating exchanges, culture-contact, and interfaith dialogue leading to the enhancement of normative legitimacy and long-term relationship between its states and societies (Haynes, 2012; Brookings Institution, 2016). In that way, faith-based diplomacy serves as a response to violence but also as a mechanism for maintaining and buttressing collaboration when peace exists. A close perusal of this literature, however, reveals an unexamined premise: that shared religious identity itself makes diplomatic alignment easier. The assumption has yet to be systematically tested in cases where territorial sovereignty claims produce clear divisions between states.

Faith-based diplomacy closely aligns with – and sometimes overlaps – cultural and public diplomacy, yet remains conceptually distinct. Public diplomacy involves state efforts to engage foreign audiences and shape their views and actions (Melissen, 2005), while cultural diplomacy employs cultural artifacts, institutions, and exchanges to foster mutual understanding between peoples or nations (Seib, 2013). In contrast, faith-based diplomacy draws explicitly on religious values, moral authority, and faith communities as diplomatic tools, often via unofficial or semi-official channels (Johnston and Cox, 2003; Cox, 2015). The key distinction lies in its source of legitimacy and engagement style: cultural and public diplomacy tend to be state-driven and strategic, whereas faith-based diplomacy stems from religious conviction (Blakemore, 2019; Johnston and Cox, 2003), incorporating non-state actors such as religious leaders or organizations in dialogue and mediation. Rather, faith-based diplomacy can complement its cousins both public and cultural diplomacy by engendering greater trust, expanding access and reinforcing symbolic affinity in societies where religion constitutes identity and legitimacy (Haynes 2012; Brookings Institution n.d.). Yet, critically, the existing literature has failed to engage adequately with whether those complementarities carry over into situations where states have mutually exclusive positions on questions of territorial sovereignty.

The state of the art indicates that existing literature has largely focused on the role of religion as soft power generator, identity forger and conflict mediator in international relations. Yet, most of this scholarship continues to treat faith based diplomacy mostly as a means of reconciliation or crisis management. What has been less examined is whether faith-based diplomacy can function as a mechanism for sustaining cooperation and building symbolic affinity in peacetime without thereby denying the possibility of political realignment on contested segments of disputed political interests. More specifically, no systematic study has examined how faith-based diplomacy functions when two states experience deep religious and cultural affinities but diverge on a question of territorial sovereignty such as that surrounding Western Sahara. Such a gap establishes research informing symbol social capital, provided by faith-based diplomacy and hard sovereign interest constraints.

Overall the literature on faith-based diplomacy has strongly established that religious actors, values and institutions can play a complementary role to state-led diplomacy in building trust, opening channels of communication and enhancing normative legitimacy. Scholars have also elaborated what distinguishes faith-based diplomacy from cultural and public diplomacy, specifically in terms of the basis for its moral authority and its third-party reliance on non-state intermediaries. Still, the existing scholarship does not sufficiently consider the limits of faith-based diplomacy when placed in conflict with sovereignty disputes and strategic state interests. This study fills that gap with a discussion of Indonesia–Morocco relations, which are characterized by affinity in Islamic identity and levels of religious cooperation, but tempered by the former's neutrality towards the latter's territorial claim over Western Sahara. The significance of this research stems from demonstrating that faith-based diplomacy works in peacetime too as tool for sustaining cooperation, bridging symbolic affinity, and reinforcing transnational religious networks but still limited when sovereignty disputes or strategic state interests are faced.

METHODOLOGY

The research employs a qualitative, case study approach in examining on the dynamics of faith-based diplomacy and territorial politics in Indonesia-Morocco bilateral relations. This study is looking to understand social and political dynamics that cannot be quantified; thus, the research has a qualitative character. The case study design allows the researchers to investigate contemporary political phenomena in their natural context (Yin, 2018). This research, by focusing on the Indonesia–Morocco bilateral relationship, provides an in-depth exploration of how religious cooperation functions and interacts with diplomatic mechanisms and geopolitics. In this respect, the methodological approach of a single embedded case study augments this research as it enables the analysis of multiple units of analysis within one bilateral framework: state-to-state religious agreements; transnational faith-based NGO networks; and diplomatic stances in relation to a territorial dispute. This approach is particularly well-suited to assessing the boundaries of faith-based diplomacy because it uncovers causal mechanisms for example, trust-building, symbolic affinity, normative legitimacy within an empirical context where religious affinity and sovereign interests can be empirically observed (e.g., Llewellyn et al. 2015).

There are several reasons why Indonesia and Morocco were chosen as the case studies. First, they are both Muslim-majority countries and have cultural and religious ties flowing from their Islamic heritage. Second, they put in place a formal cooperation on religious matters through two memorandums of understanding (MoU) between Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs and Morocco's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. Third, despite robust religious bonds, Indonesia has taken a cautious stance on Morocco's claim to Western Sahara. This seeming paradox provides a lens to assess the boundaries of faith-based diplomacy in International Relations. This article is part of a wider Ph.D. research project on faith-based diplomacy in the case of Indonesia–Morocco relations.

In this research, qualitative analysis and interpretation of primary data were obtained based on two sources: (i) semi-structured interviews; and (ii) national government documents/official manuscripts or archives (Kuch & Tran, 2020; Payne, 1997). The secondary data including some existing literature also on the political systems and histories of Indonesia and Morocco (Irwin & Winterton 2012; Long-Sutehall et al, 2010), are referenced not only in Indonesian and English but also French and Arabic sources to enrich the data. The research location is the collection of institutions and data sources across different sites that relate to faith-based diplomacy between Indonesia and Morocco, rather than a single physical site. As the research is qualitative, and it focuses on foreign policy analysis, faith-based diplomacy, and international relations, data were collected in several official institutions in Indonesia such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Directorate of Middle East and Africa), the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Moroccan Embassy in Jakarta as well as non-government organizations engaged in faith-based diplomacy such as Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) and Muhammadiyah academia who understand Morocco, either online or offline. The study also employs data sources from Moroccan institutions via electronic documents archives, statements released officially by the government, Moroccan domestic media as well as reports of

embassy agencies specialized in diplomacy and religion. Consequently the research setting is multi-site and document-based, correlating with the nature of modern International Relations research.

This period goes from April 2024 to October 2025, including phases of research proposal seminar, literature review, diplomatic and religious documents collection, interviews in course and data analysis. The inquiry incorporates findings from a master's-level research project conducted in 2020 as well, with portions of the initial interview data reused as complementary evidence and reassessed through a broader analytical lens. The first phase (April-August 2024) focused on building a comprehensive literature review, mapping key theories and approaches while identifying existing theoretical gaps. The subsequent phase (July-December 2024) involved the collection of additional data and field insights, process that continued throughout the research. The final phase (January-October, 2025) is devoted to integrative analysis, synthesizing findings, and reinforcing theoretical argument. Overall, the study adopts a longitudinal design, facilitating sustained data collection and ensuring greater analytical coherence and depth. This research period is also determined by the changing dynamics of Indonesia–Morocco bilateral relations, especially on religious issues and halal industry, counter terrorism and political issues (like Western Sahara). Since this research builds upon prior work done in 2020, the extended period allows the researcher to reassess initial data while also encompassing developments that have taken place diplomatically and by way of policy thereafter.

The primary data was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with relevant key informants, who have had first-hand experiences in the Indonesia–Morocco relations. Semi-structured interviews (as opposed to structured interviews) are used as this type is in-depth, allows focused direction but also gives subject-participants the opportunity to provide responses that do not meet the expectations of the researcher (known or unknown to the researcher) (Ackerley & True, 2010: 168). More over, this interview approach has the advantage of producing relatively reliable results (Adams, 2015; Wilson, 2014; Longhurst, 2009). What they hold, greatly significant than the richness and innovativeness of data collected, is Validity due to political realities inherent in them as these semi-structured interviews are relative approaches. As Joseph A. Maxwell reminds us (by invoking Burman), humanitarian or democratic agendas that are prevalent in qualitative research such as equality or participation can be readily absorbed to sustain existing power relations (Maxwell, 2013: 92). Informants were then interviewed in person, over the internet or through written communication depending on availability and geographic constraints. This method can provide in-depth data without needing to travel physically for research to Morocco especially as access is limited, the literature on this topic is scarce and Indonesia–Morocco relations are still rarely studied. Semi-structured of interviews are supplemented with archives or official government documents as a means of triangulation.

Moreover, the embassy was open to sharing data for research purposes as long as the data were not classified on grounds of state interest and the state continues to offer much information that could be relevant for social research (Bryman, 2016: 549). This dissertation's primary input is the survey of unique qualitative sources guided by interview methodologies. Previous studies of faith-based diplomacy have typically been based on secondary archives, speeches, or broad policy reviews. Using in-depth interviews with ambassadors and key officials from each country, NGOs, as well as Indonesian students who studied or are studying in Morocco, this research is contrasting its objective reality on both diplomatic thinking and practice. This study also examines documentary evidence including Memorandum of Understanding (e.g. the MoU between the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Morocco's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs), joint communiqués, and statistics on trade and cultural exchange. This level of granularity in gathering information about the relationship is new: existing research into Indonesia–Morocco ties tends to rely on public statements or provide lengthy descriptive histories rather than interrogate the implementation and significance of agreements. This research, using interviews and original documents to open the black box of diplomacy, adds empirical depth. In particular, such analysis of internal MoUs (religious, educational, economic) tracks how both governments frame the idea of faith-based cooperation in practice something which has yet to be examined elsewhere.

Data obtained were analyzed qualitatively interpretive, focusing on the identification of patterns and explanations with respect to the operational logic that populates faith-based diplomacy in Indonesia–Morocco

relations and its interaction with geopolitical factors. The analysis occurs in three consecutive steps. First, the study investigates the arc of Indonesia-Morocco religious cooperation from formal institutional agreements to transnational religious networks. Second, it examines how these transnational networks fostering regenerative trust, symbolic proximity and social capital between both societies. Third, the study evaluates how strongly these religious linkages impact diplomatic behavior on sensitive geopolitical issues, and especially on the Western Sahara dispute. This three dimensional analytical framework allows the definition of mechanisms that produce normative legitimacy and transnational networks through faith-based diplomacy, but also political and strategic boundaries. The relevance of this methodological approach for the research is that it allows to trace not only what actors do, but also how they understand and represent the role of religion in their diplomatic efforts; a type of access that statistical or experimental methods cannot provide.

In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the research outcomes, this study engages triangulation techniques that combine data from plurals as well as theoretical angles. The combination of interviews, official documents and secondary literature enables data triangulation. Using methodological triangulation, qualitative interpretation and documentary analysis complement each other. In addition, it uses theoretical triangulation by applying three different analytical lenses: constructivism, social capital theory, and two-level games model. By adopting several theoretical perspectives, the study reflects both the normative and political aspects of faith-based diplomacy in Indonesia-Morocco relations (Denzin, 1978; Yin, 2018).

DISCUSSION

Faith-Based Diplomacy as Normative Affinity

This investigation finds that faith-based diplomacy plays a crucial role in enhancing the Indonesian and Moroccan cultural-intellectual relations. Religious interactions, educational exchanges and scholarly networks have nurtured institutional and social ties between the two that enhance their sense of a shared identity. In the formal realm, religious cooperation between Indonesia and Morocco has been established through several agreements between the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Republic of Indonesia with the Morocco Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. These agreements are meant to encourage cooperation in various fields, such as Islamic education, religious sciences and cultural exchange.

Programs such as scholarships for Indonesian students who study Islamic sciences in Moroccan institutes, and the involvement of Indonesian ulama in Moroccan shamlat religious gatherings, demonstrate that transnational religious networks have already begun to connect between these two polities. These networks create trust-based relationships that allow for cooperation across institutional and cultural divisions (Putnam, 2000; Fukuyama, 1995), Lifestyles of Friends:2. Finally, in a constructivist framework, the shared religious identity serves as a normative basis that determines how Indonesia and Morocco approach their diplomatic relations. Constructivist scholars argue that state interests are determined not only by material factors but also and more so the identities, norms, and value systems developed through social interaction (Wendt, 1992, 1999). As such, the shared Islamic identity identifies Indonesia and Morocco to generate a symbolism that generates an affinity to work together through cultural and religious exchanges. However, while religious networks can contribute to cultural relations and people-to-people engagement between countries, their impact on broader political and economic cooperation is limited. Thus, the normative face of faith-based diplomacy does not mean that such an approach necessarily leads to enhanced interstate cooperation.

The Limits of Religious "Soft Power"

The results also reinforce a significant limitation of faith-based diplomacy as a form of soft power. While religious cooperation can create symbolic legitimacy and cultural appeal, its potential to shape state behavior is limited by broader political and strategic imperatives. The case of Western Sahara exemplifies this limitation. Despite strong religious and cultural ties between Indonesia and Morocco, Indonesia has maintained a cautious diplomatic stance towards Morocco's territorial claim over Western Sahara. It also signifies Indonesia's underlying foreign policy principles: neutrality, respect for international law and endorsement of peaceful resolution of dispute.

Religion can be a resource that facilitates diplomatic engagement and increases soft power (Nye, 2004; Haynes, 2012) from the perspective of soft power theory. However, the success of soft power strategies depends on the larger political context in which they exist. While it may bolster the symbolic links between societies, faith-based diplomacy does not always trump geopolitical constellations of power when it comes to national states' foreign policy decision-making. This is a finding that corroborates the hypothesis of faith-based diplomacy as functioning more in the domain of normative legitimacy, than it does in such material or strategic decision realms.

Sacred Networks and Sovereign Interests

In addition, I must examine the role of domestic politics in foreign policy decision-making to highlight the limits of faith-based diplomacy. Putnam (1988) has introduced a two-level games framework, according to which international negotiations at the state level are limited by domestic political considerations, so that foreign policies as choices can be influenced simultaneously. Meanwhile, foreign policy in Indonesia is usually guided by the principles of independence, neutrality, and non-alignment. Since the early years of independence, Indonesia has sought to balance diplomatic relations between a range of global partners and not align itself with any specific geopolitical bloc. Such domestic political considerations also shape Indonesia's diplomatic stance in international disputes, such as the Western Sahara conflict. Supporting the territorial claim made by Morocco may have been detrimental to Indonesia's diplomatic activities with other actors in the international community or undermined its broader commitment to peaceful conflict resolution under United Nations auspices.

Morocco's diplomacy on Western Sahara is deeply shaped by domestic political dynamic as well. As the monarchy derives from its role as *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful), religion plays a significant role not only in domestic governance but also in the framing of foreign policy narratives (Willis, 2012; Bojji, 2013). Nevertheless, Morocco's pursuit of international recognition for its territorial claims is driven primarily by concerns of state sovereignty, rather than by faith-based diplomacy.

The relationship between faith-based diplomacy and the Western Sahara conflict presents a significant dissonance between normative proximity and sovereign prerogatives. On the one hand, religious networks help maintain social ties and symbolic solidarity across Indonesia and Morocco. Strategic and political factors continue to play a major role in diplomatic decisions on territorial disputes. This tension is emblematic of a larger trend in international relations. Faith-based diplomacy can promote dialogue, cultural exchange and mutual understanding between societies. Yet, when questions of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and geopolitical competition surface, state interests tend to trump symbolic religious solidarity. The Indonesia–Morocco case therefore shows that faith-based diplomacy should not be seen as a replacement for traditional diplomatic structures. Instead, as a mode of engagement it bolsters cultural ties and social networks, while running parallel to traditional state diplomacy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on these findings, this inquiry concludes that the shared religious background between Indonesia and Morocco does not necessarily translate into stronger political or economic corporation. In this bilateral context, faith-based diplomacy functions primarily as symbolic capital and a mechanism for building trust, rather than as a fully developed strategic foreign policy instrument. This limitation can be attributed to three main factors: constrained institutional capacity, the dominance of geopolitical and economic priorities, and the insufficient integration of faith-based diplomacy into formal state diplomatic strategies.

Beyond historical and cultural affinities, Islamic traditions in both Indonesia and Morocco are grounded in a shared Sunni intellectual heritage alongside strong Sufi influences. From a constructive perspective, this common identity serves as a form of social glue that fosters mutual trust and legitimacy. Nevertheless, religious identity operates more as a symbolic framework that enriches narratives of friendship than as a driver of national strategic decision-making. The bilateral relationships is therefore shaped more by people-to-people connections -such as interactions among ulama, student mobility, and transnational religious network – than

by formal state-to-state engagement. Yet, these linkages do not readily translate into structured policy outcomes, largely due to the absence of effective institutional mechanism.

Analysis of the 2018 MoU revealed more ambitious normative design, but lacking implementation mechanisms. Most areas of cooperation remain effectively unattained due to a lack of technical regulations, inactive joint working group meetings and inter-institutional coordination. Anticipated spill-over from religion into economic cooperation has not happened with regard to this argument – at least from a functionalist perspective. Halal market portals have tried to form, but geographical proximity and Morocco's orientation toward the European market present systemic barriers to their effectiveness. In addition, Indonesia's neutrality on Western Sahara (whose conflict was initiated by self-determination) shows that religious affinity does not result in political support for Morocco's territorial claim. Last but not least, differences in the position between state and religion (Morocco: Amīr al-Mu'minīn; Indonesia's pluralist frame) push faith-based diplomacy into very different directions.

In practice, it will be crucial for Indonesia to institutionalise faith-based diplomacy through a cross-ministerial coordination mechanism that links the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, along with non-state actors such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Both sides must renew the Joint Committee, within a clear operational framework that includes both annual action plans and regular reviews. For the halal sector, a Mutual Recognition Agreement between Indonesia Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) and The Moroccan Standards Institute (IMANOR) needs to be speeded up. In addition to the former, on Western Sahara faith-based diplomacy should be handled pragmatically as a complement and not alternative political diplomacy.

Future research could also explore comparative studies of Indonesia–Jordan, Indonesia–Egypt, or Indonesia–Saudi Arabia to identify variables that determine the success of faith-based diplomacy. The recommended methodological approach is mixed method combining document analysis, elite interviews and network mapping. More conceptual work is required in separating faith-based diplomacy from cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy.

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