The New Perspective of Interfaith Dialogue as Da’wah Approach in Global Era

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Abstract
This article shows us how to understand new ideas and concepts of dialogue as a new approach to da’wa in the global era. The research method is library research by exploring and gathering relevant literature and sources. Sources excavation is carried out in 3 stages, namely: (1). The exploration: excavation and gathering of general materials. (2). Specific stage: digging and gathering specific materials according to the main problem of the study. (3). Stage of deepening (focus) on the main problem. Moreover, depth interview was conducted with many figures involved in interfaith dialogues to prevent tension among people of different beliefs as well as those involved in the efforts to develop and maintain harmony among the different beliefs in Indonesia. This study found a shifting idea in the dialogue between religions from “al-Ta’ăyusy” (living together peacefully) to “al-Ta’āwun” (cooperation or synergy), even shifts to walidat fi nazhārī aw ṣanā’ī (unity in thinking and actions). Then, dialogue in this new perspective no longer talks about conflict but tries to recognize the difficulties and suffering of each believer and develop a synergy to find the solutions or solve common problems, such as poverty, ignorance, health, drug abuse, human rights, and environmental problems. Again, because the purpose of dialogue is not to overcome conflict, but rather to solve life’s problems that are shared by followers of a religion, the dialogue method emphasizes openness, freedom, and respect for each other, as well as tolerance and willingness to share, and learn from each other. Besides, the last, from the Islamic point of view, this new perspective dialogue can be utilized as a new approach of da’wah, not in the sense of converting people, rather than conversation and civilization. For instance, this new perspective of dialogue should be developed as guidelines to address common concerns and avoid pitfalls.

Keywords: interfaith dialogue, da’wa, a new perspective, collaboration, global era

1. Introduction

Ever since the end of the last century, or the end of the Cold War, Religious Spirits Rejuvenation has risen among the people in both the East and the West. This tendency is even stronger and becomes a phenomenon in the last two decades. Research by Pippa Norris, as cited in Camil Ungureanu, confirms this phenomenon. It is said, “Religious is globally rising [1].” The religious uprising and the involvement of the religious groups in society and politics, especially in the secular western countries, is a new phenomenon that signifies the rise of a new era, which Jurgen Habermas called as “post-secular [2].”

It is common knowledge that in secular countries, religion is a private matter and not a state matter. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, there is a new trend, according to Biljana Popovska, as re-politicizing of religion. It is said that religion plays a critical role in global politics and events. Religious leaders are now involved in politics, not only on a national scale but also on an international scale. Popovska cites several examples such as “the radical Islamists” group in the Middle East, polarization between Islam and Judaism, and the
most prominent thing is the impact of the Roman Catholic Church’s influence in Europe and Latin America. Popovska further cites John Kerry, the US Secretary, who made an interesting comment on the influence of religions and religious leaders, and religious institutions within today’s global diplomacy. Within such conditions, Kerry considers religious studies or religious comparisons can be more important than political science [3].

Religions’ involvement or re-politicizing of religion, as Popovska stated above, is being of a concern to be able to trigger conflicts, not only among people of different beliefs but also among the believers of religion itself, especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community. The raising concern on such religious-based war and conflicts is not a new thing. It happens throughout the history of human civilization, for instance, the September 11, the Arabs Israel conflict, Iraq invasion, Military Aggression to Afghanistan, the Moslem and Buddhist conflict in South Thailand [4]. Regionally, there are also several cases. Such as the Moro Moslem Conflict in Mindanao, South Philippines, and some racial, ethnic, religious, and group conflicts in Indonesia. According to the Setara Institute [5], there were 160 incidents and 202 cases of violation of religious freedom across the 34 provinces of Indonesia in 2018. Like the Sampit case in Kalimantan Tengah, Poso conflict in Sulawesi Tengah, Maluku conflict, the 1998 riots, the conflict between Sunni and Shia believers in Sampang, and the Tanjung Balai Case in Sumatera Utara, etc. [6] [7]

The escalation of conflicts and disputes such as those mentioned above are a raising concern due to two factors. First, the globalization factor. As it is a common knowledge that globalization has turned the world into a small borderless village (qaryah shaghîrah), both in territorial sense and in a cultural sense. Globalization has turned the plural community into an even more plural community. Secondly, social media. As we, all know that social media are now used to gather political support. Social media have played a critical role in the Arab Spring revolution in Egypt and Tunisia. In Indonesia, social media have played an important role in the general election and even more in the recent 2019 presidential election. In elections, social media are often used to spread black campaign against the political enemy through hate speech, hoax, and defamation of characters. Therefore, it is clear that these two factors should be properly managed, as they have the potential to trigger conflicts among culturally and religiously different groups [8].

The dialogue represents a new and major effort to understand and cooperate with others in increasingly interdependent and religiously diverse countries. The newness of dialogue and the absence of conceptual clarity have required experimentation. Questions about planning, organization, representation, and topics need thoughtful consideration and careful collaboration. Based on the things have been described above, the currently needed dialogue is a new perspective dialogue that suits the current opportunities and challenges. Such as a healthy and productive dialogue with a good intention, not only to understand other beliefs but more than that to understand their problems and to develop synergy to create a better and more peaceful life, either economically, politically, and socio-culturally.

This paper discusses the interfaith dialogue issue related to the new perspective of da’wah. It will first discuss the existence of dialogue itself as a da’wah method and approach. Next, it will describe the meaning and objectives of dialogue within the context of da’wah. Further, it will explain the principles of the dialogue. Lastly, it will consider the factors that currently support and factors that hinder the dialogue and to further find solutions for these hindering factors for the interfaith dialogue to be productive and yield the expected result.
This paper uses library research with a literature review toward several relevant sources. Then, interview with some leading figures in interfaith dialogue was also carried out. The interviewees were from the Indonesian Council of Ulama (throughout this paper will be referred to as MUI), Islamic organizations such as NU, PUI, FKUB, and other NGOs. The result of this literature review and interview were critically analyzed using deductive and inductive logic to further conclude a new perspective of interfaith dialogue as a new method and approach of da’wah in the global era.

2. Interfaith Dialogue as a New Approach of Da’wah

Da’wah is understood as a concept or meaning from the literal sense as speech (tablîgh) to the broadest concept of Islamization or development of the Islamic community and Islamic governance [9] [10].

However, within our perspective, civilization, in essence, is the core of da’wah. As da’wah can be understood as a “huge” humanity project, civilization, and humanization. For the human being to obtain God’s guidance and live peacefully and in dignified ways as the best creation of God. In this sense, da’wah shall not become a threat to other religions. Through da’wah, the Islamic community can be actively participating together with people of other beliefs to solve the problems of this age, such as underdevelopment, poverty, health problems, injustice whether in economic, politic and socio-cultural injustice. The new perspective of da’wah will lead to dialogue and partnership among communities of different ethnicities, cultures, and religions.

The Qur’an itself has urged the Muslim community to use dialogue as a method and approach in da’wah, especially with the people of the book (Ahlul Kitab) (QS. Al-Nahl: 125). Based on this ayah and considering the nature and characteristics of globalization, the grand Syekh, Syekh Yûsuf al-Qardâwî, proposes several new approaches in da’wah within the global era, such as dialogue approach (al-hiwâr al-Ahšan) that should be done to find the similarities to maintain unity and peace in the earth [11]. Similarly, Muhammad Imârah views dialogue as a new approach of da’wah that should be implemented, especially in responding to the globalization movement of the west. According to Imarah, the dialogue is away, or an approach offers by Islam to create a more just and civilized life [12]. Dialogue is the antithesis of the clash of civilization, which was widely advocated by the west scholars such as, Samuel P. Huntington [13] [14].

Dialogue and partnership, as discussed above, are becoming more important in the current era. In this new era, due to globalization, intercultural communication, as Kathrin Kutz has stated, is becoming more important because communication can be held with anyone, anywhere, anytime. Barry Maude even considers the ability to carry out this intercultural dialogue as the key factor in anyone’s success, including in da’wah [15]. In harmony with Maude, B. Hun B. Tomalin also considers intercultural dialogue as a critical soft power in management and international diplomacy in this new era [16].

However, it is important to note that the dialogue intended here is not a dialogue in a narrow sense of debate or discussion to win or defeat the dialogue counterpart, rather, a healthy and productive dialogue, a dialogue with a new perspective to not only solve the conflict but also develop synergy to develop the civilization of the world. A fairer, just, peaceful, and civilized new world as it will be discussed below.
3. The Meaning and Objective of Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue (from this point forward will be referred to as dialogue) is Allah’s command written within the Qur’an, especially with people of the book, the Christians and Jews. About the QS al-Nahl, 125, the Islamic ummah/community are asked to carry out da’wah using three methods/approaches, through knowledge, philosophically (bi al-hikmah), good advice (al-mau`izhah al-hasanah), and through good and ethical dialogue (al-latî hiya ahsan). According to al-Qardhâwî, Jadal al-husnâ or mujâdalah bi al-latî hiya ahsan in this ayah and several other ayahs means dialogue or hiwâr, more specifically interfaith dialogue or intercultural or inter civilization dialogue (al-hiwâr baina al-adyàn aw al-hadhârât). In Qardhâwî’s perspective, dialogue (hiwâr) is different from debate or discussion (munâzâhârah), as there is no winner in dialogue [17].

Dialogue is carried out with different religious and cultural groups (al-mutakhàlifûn), especially the people of the book [17]. In the QS al-Nahl, 125 above, it is clear that mau`izhah is sufficiently carried out in good efforts (hasanah). However, jadal should be carried out with the best efforts (ahsan). This, according to Qardhâwî, is because mau`izhah, in general, is carried with groups of people of similar belief (muwafiqûn), whereas dialogue (jadal) is generally carried out with people of different beliefs. Thus, there is two dialogue (jadal) methods, good and best methods. Those who spread da’wah (the da’î/preachers) are asked to carry out dialogue in better manners, as it will be further described, the da’î should select best words (araqq al `ibâr) and best language manners (althaf al-aslib), thus dialogue can bring empathy, bring people closer, and do not create fanaticism and hatred [17].

Dialogue, according to Qardhâwî, is not intended to merge between Sunni and Shia (or between Islam and Christianity within the context of interfaith dialogue), rather clear up the situation (tashfiyyat al-ajwîdî’ minmâ yukaddiruhû) due to hatred and suspicion, where if this situation is carried over it could destroy brotherhoods (dzât al-bayyîn). The destruction of al-bayyîn is what has been called by the Prophet PBUH as al-hâligah, the dagger that will destroy the religion. As the dialogue objective is tashfiyyat al-ajwîdî’ such as mentioned above, thus, dialogue should try to avoid negative and destructive things, things that could trigger disputes and conflicts. In a dialogue, Qardhâwî urges, that we should discuss things that bring both groups closer. The dialogue contains idea and the spirit of taqrîb; it is not a debate, munâzâhârah, where each group tries to strengthen their argument and points’ out the weakness of other and try to defeat the debate counterparts. Dialogue within the sense of debate, as commonly practiced today, is not bringing peace and reduce strain between two faiths; rather, it triggers the conflicts and widens the gap between the two.

Dialogue, in Popovska’s view, is not talking about the differences of religions, as dialogue is not intended to seek which belief that should be agreed on. Dialogue is also not intended to convert others into a particular religion because philosophically dialogue is an agreement of each party to be within and to believe in their faith. Similarly, the dialogue is also not a forum to make people denounce their religion, where people involved in the dialogue try to attack each other beliefs. Popovska further argues that dialogue is also not a negotiation as it does not seek agreement; it is not a debate as it does not seek for a winner, and also not a discussion as the rational and emotional as well as subjective experience are mixed and contribute to each other [17].

Dialogue in its true sense is not a conversion in a narrow verbal sense; rather it is a good intention, which Robert called the heart of manners (dignity) [18]. Even, Massoudi
considers dialogue as transformation, a dynamic process where people exchange their spiritual energy with each other. Thus, what essential in dialogue is what happens between the people involved in the dialogue and not the dialogue itself [19].

It is important to note that interfaith dialogue has experienced the vast development of its model and objectives. Haji Hasan classifies dialogue into three models, namely: (1) Hans Hung model, a dialogue intended to be open, honest, and objective, and separated from evangelism and debate; however, the latter still influences the dialogue. (2) Werblosky and Wigoder model, a dialogue based on equality between both parties involved in a dialogue. Dialogue is truly not intended to make people convert from their religion; it is free from trying to seek the winner, which in the past is considered as a religious attitude. (3) New perspective dialogue, a dialogue that is not only intended to develop understanding, tolerance, and overcomes conflicts among people of different beliefs, but more than that this dialogue is intended to solve global humanitarian problems and together develop synergy for the future more peaceful, just, and prosperous world civilizations [4].

In harmony with Haji Hasan, Wulaim Sulaiman also notes a new development in current interfaith dialogue, both in reasoning and inactions, where it shifts from merely creating a more tolerant and peaceful life (al-ta`âyusy) into partnership (al-ta`āwun), to create a better and more just in all aspects of life. Even, Sulaiman expects a more progressive idea in this interfaith dialogue, that progresses from the partnership (al-ta`āwun) into the unity of thinking and actions (waḥdat fī nazharī aw `anālī). Sulaiman considers this as a new perspective of interfaith dialogue that becomes an urgent need in this global era [20].

This new perspective of interfaith dialogue is considered by Sulaiman as a relatively new development, as previously the emerging idea within the dialogue was istib`āb, an effort to separate one from another, thus, give rise to the never-ending disputes, conflicts, even wars between people of different religions. This is the fact behind the political efforts to achieve peace, where various conventions were produced, including the Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations in 1948. This signifies that dialogue is essential and the intention and basic needs of all humans on this earth (raghbah basyariyyah). This implies that everyone agrees and expects that there will be no more conflicts (istib`ād) in the world today. In fact, in this new age, both in the East and the West expect that everyone lives peacefully (ta`âyusy), help each other (ta`āwun), and respect each other (al-iḥtirām, aw tarāğüm) as well as working together for a better world. This is the essential objective, according to Sulaiman, of a new perspective interfaith dialogue [20].

The new perspective of interfaith dialogue also arose during ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting). Zainal Abidin Bagir, one of the speakers of the VI ASEM in Holland, put forward the importance of this new perspective interfaith dialogue. Bagir states that the objective of this new perspective dialogue is not only to reach an understanding but also partnership to create social and political justice. This is the basis for many problems that later involve people of different faiths into the conflicts. Bagir emphasizes that the interfaith conflicts are not always triggered by religious factors, but also by other factors, especially the socio-economic and political gaps, and injustice. Religion often used as a means to legitimate conflicts. Bagir views understanding as not only in the sense of understanding the teaching of other’s religion, but more importantly to understand their current sufferings and situations, and how to change and improve the situations using the available resources [21].
The new perspective of interfaith dialogue is strengthened post the September 11 attack, which suspected to widen the religious sentiment and become the root of conflicts for different religious groups. Since then, as Haji Hasan portrays, the religious dialogue has been carried out in a new form or method, such as carrying out citizenship education for the immigrants, training for teachers from different religious groups, meditation programs for leaders, and religious diversity training for social workers. Within such programs, the Moslems have been participating. In 2007, they came up with a tagline, “In a Common Word between Us and You.” The Islamic scholars and Ulamas declared that there were similarities or common ground between Islam and Christianity. Even, in 2008, for the first time, “Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement” was established, which was initiated by a collaboration of several institutions such as, The Hebrew Union College, Omar Foundation, and the University of Southern California [4].

Within the Islamic world itself, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia first initiated the new perspective of interfaith dialogue in 2005. This dialogue, in the form of an international level conference, was held to solve the world’s problems through partnership (al-ta‘wun), and not conflict or istibdād, such as in the old perspective. Various religious leaders such as attending the conference itself from, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Interestingly, even though it is held in the city of Mecca, the conference was host by King Juan Carlos from Madrid, Spain.1

The agenda discussed and recommended from this conference in Mecca is interesting to note. As noted by A. Ilyas Ismail, member of Islamic reasoning, culture, and civilization, recommends that the Islamic world carry out several big agendas, namely: (1). Strengthening toward Islamic moderation to fight against terrorism. (2). Acknowledging various school of thoughts or madhab within Islam. (3). Cultural exchange (Tabādul al-Tsaqāfī) among the ummah/Islamic community. (4). Civilization dialogue among people of different religions. (5) Women and Children’s rights empowerment. (6) The Ulama attention toward youth problems, including (7) globalization and its impact on Islamic civilization [22] [9].

In a broader sense, the Islamic community is also urged to carry out cooperation with various nations, groups, and the international community. This is to respond to the new problems that have been rising in recent decades. Such as poverty, energy crisis, environmental changes, and the ever-stronger demand on democracy, politics, good governance, human rights, gender equality and equity, humanitarian crimes, religious radicalism and terrorism, the migration and refugee crisis, modern-day slavery, environmental issues, hunger, and violent extremism, as well as other emerging problems [4].

The new perspective of interfaith dialogue also has a solid foundation in Islam. According to Haji Hasan, the dialogue is based on the universalism of Islam itself as the blessing for the entire universe (QS. Al-Anbiya: 107). This is in line with the main mission of Islam as blessings for the entire universe. Thus the Islamic community should not take a passive role in dialogue and partnership with other groups to provide solutions for the world. This mission will not succeed when the Islamic community closed off and have no willingness to conduct a dialogue with people of other religions [22].

1 Similar congress was previously held in India in 2009 with the theme, “World Religions-Discourse and Symphony Conference. The World Council of Church and Roman Catholic Church also held similar dialogue to develop synergy between Christianity and Judaism. Ibid., pp. 27-28.
Ahmad Faizuddin bin Ramli bases the urgency of this new perspective dialogue on the diversity value (ta`addudiyah), a value that is acknowledged and upheld by Islam. He further explains that diversity is a blessing from God. Regardless of their ethnic, languages, and cultural (religious) differences, it is expected that human beings can live together in harmony and share good values. However, this expectation can only happen when there is a healthy and productive dialogue mechanism to develop understanding and respect toward each other [23]. A. Ilyas Ismail considers this fact of diversity [9], as a fact (and not a problem) and is part of sunnatullah. This means Islam, acknowledges and respects diversity. Toward this diversity (plurality), Islam uses the value of ta`āruf, that is mutual respect and mutual understanding among people of ethnically, culturally, and religiously different nations (QS. al-Ḥujurat/35: 13).

Meanwhile, Budhy Munawar-Rachman describes interfaith dialogue as the principle of religious freedom, based on the verse where there is no force in religion (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 256, 10: 108, 17: 15, and 18: 29). Islam acknowledges the existence of Judaism and Christianity to live harmoniously together (Al-Baqarah: 62). Since the beginning, as Munawar Rachman wrote, Islam urges for dialogue with the people of the scripture. The term people of the scripture means family. This shows kinship. The Islam people had once migrated to Abyssinia. They were accepted, as they were considered close and kin of the Abyssinians, thus, the harmony and closeness between these two religions were formed.

4. The Norms and Ethics for Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue needs some principles and ethics that used as the basis of dialogue for the dialogue to be well implemented and productive. In this sense, Qardhawi emphasizes for the dialogue to focus on commonly agreed values among the different groups (al-tarkîz al-lā al-jawāmi` al-musyfarakah baina al-mutaḥādirin). Dialogue, according to Qardhawi, based on the similarities and not the differences (lā `alā nuqāṭ al-ikhtilāf wa al-tāmayuz). These similarities can create a more conducive dialogue and enable for the benefits of the dialogue to be gained, intifā`, for both parties. This way, according to Qardhawi, is the Qur’an’s way or method. Pay attention to, for instance, dialogue mentioned in QS Al-Ankaboot ayah number 46 [11], thus, resulted in closeness (taqrīb) [23].

Dialogue is the best method. In this case, he agrees with Sayyid Quthub in his book of tafseer Fī Zhilāl al-Qur'ān, that is the person who carries out dialogue should select the softest language (araqq al-`ibarāt) and using the politest language (al-thaf al-asalīb), not burdening the dialogue counterpart and not belittling the counterpart. Thus, the counterpart would feel at ease and would have empathy toward the da`I, as well as realizing that they are not trying to win, rather the dialogue is truly for seeking the truth. Humans have their ego. They will not easily let go of their view, except when they were persuaded politely and friendly [23].

Tayseir M. Mandour has established several principles of dialogue. One of the most important principles is equality. The next principle is mutual respect toward religious faith, culture, and characters of each other. This does not necessarily mean agree toward others’ faith; rather, it is a willingness of each dialogue participants to hear other views, including their critics through the best manners. These equality and mutual understanding principles are the basis for all dialogue. The next principles are tolerance and collaborative partnership [24].
In addition to those norms and principles, Qardhâwî also proposes several ethics in dialogue, which he classifies into two categories. First, the commands category or what should be done within the dialogue. In this, Qardhawi has noted several important things such as, good understanding (husn al-fahm) of other’s religion and faith, good prejudice (husn al-zhann), focus on things that are agreed on, similarities (al-jawâmi’ al-muytarakah) and not differences (nuqâṭ al-ikhtilâf wa al-tamâ‘yiz), as well as providing wise description and explanation (al-mushâra‘ah bi al-hikmah). Second, the prohibited category or the things that should be avoided in dialogue. Some of the important things that should be avoided in the dialogue are istifzâz, or using words that may offend the dialogue counterparts and utilization of titles that are not liked by others (QS. Al-Hujurat: 11), not pronouncing those who believe in Allah as hypocrite or kuffir, do not take extreme and overreact (ghuluw), and try to avoid hostility that will divide and weaken the community [17].

In his other writings, especially in the context of interfaith dialogue, Qardhâwî adds two other prohibitions. First, prevent provocative prayers, cursing during the Jumu’ah prayer or Qunût Nâzilah. According to Qardhâwî, provocative du’a is not considered as hikmah, as well as not mau’izah hasanah, and also not jadal bi al-latî hiya ah san. There is no such du’a within the al-Qur’an. Second, prevent utilization of the term kâfir or kuffâr, to the counterpart of dialogue, even more to the people of the scripture. The word kâfir has several meanings, among those, are atheist and materialistic. The ahlul kitab or people of the scripture are not atheists. Al-Qur’an does not use the term kafir; rather it often uses the terms al-nâs, bani ‘adam, ‘ibâdî, and alâhî kitâb. The term kafir is only found twice within the al-Qur’an, once in Al-Tahrîm ayah number 7 and it is used within the context of the afterlife, and once more within the surah al-Kâfirûn. However, it should be understood that the latter is used as khithâb to the unbelievers, watsani, paganisms, and those who worship deities that urges the Prophet PBUH to worship their gods. Surely, Allah SWT firmly rejects this, using these strong words; however, at the end of the surah, it is closed with the very moderate words, lakum dinukum wa liya dîn [11].

More than just understanding and being tolerant of each other as stated by Qardhâwî, Wulaim Sulaimân further establishes three basic principles that should be fulfilled in each dialogue.

First, understand others like how they want to be understood (fahm al-akhar kamâ yurid an yakûna mafhuman). This is the basis of dialogue, which is how to see others’ faith and believe from the perspective of that person, and not from the perspective of others. Even though we believe that our faith and belief are the correct one, and all other’s faith is wrong. Respecting the faith and beliefs of others is the key factor in the success of dialogue.

Second, freedom of expression. This is basic for healthy and productive dialogue, as there is no dialogue without freedom. From this freedom, Sulaiman considers dialogue as essentially the da’wah itself. This is as dialogue is open and free; each person is challenged to describe the truth of their religion as best as possible. In this dialogue, each person testifies on the trueness of their religion, a testimony that obtains acknowledgment and respect from others. Dialogue is not intended to create syncretism (al-taufiq wa al-talfiq) to see relative truth. No! Each person is upholding (al-iltizâm al-kâmil) their religious trueness, and not denouncing it for the sake of reaching an agreement (al-tanâzul) [24].

Third, finding the religious substance (Jauhar al-dîn). It needs to be understood that the most principle idea within the religion is the god or belief in God. He is God, the absolute
reality that rules over everything and anything. The god worshiped by all religions; a God
wants by everyone, who since the beginning has created human beings into various
ethnicities, languages, religions, and faiths. In this substance level, all religion merges, which
Fritjof Schuon calls as, ‘unity transcendent of religions.’ Such a view demands religious
believers not to be separated from each other and urges them to develop a stronger
relationship with their fellow human beings. Religion shall not become a barrier; rather it
should become a bridge that strengthens the understanding of God and faiths among them
[24]. As religion is often cited as a cause of violent conflict, yet there is little recognition of how
faith communities contribute toward peacemaking in zones of conflict throughout the world.

Dialogue is an encounter between two or more human beings. We will see how scientists,
philosophers, and religious scholars have analyzed at dialogue and attempt to learn from each
tradition. As the process of dialogue would pass pre-dialogue, dialogue, and also post-
dialogue. Suggestions and techniques are offered for each phase and as to how to synthesize
the three stages into a ‘whole’ dialogue.

Again dialogue is an essential ingredient to fostering common understanding, but only in
tandem with the advancement of accountability measures to redress the circulation of
extremist ideology, people and arms while simultaneously strengthening the ability of victims
of violence on freedom of religion or belief to speak and act collectively.

5. Conclusion

In an age where religious persecution is spreading at speed, it is crucial to consider
steps that need to be taken to prevent further acts of religiously motivated violence. If it is not
possible to prevent this altogether, then we must, at least, consider how we slow it down. In
its implementation, dialogue does not always work as expected; however, there are often
obstacles. The biggest obstacle, according to Kathrin Kutz, is a language obstacle. Language
is the key factor that determines the success or failure of dialogue. Kutz suggests avoiding this
obstacle as it may result in miscommunication, and interfaith miscommunication is something
that should be best avoided as it involves people of different values, ideologies, religions, and
cultures [25].

B. Tomalin also describes that three other obstacles often suspend the success of
dialogue, namely: (1). Parochialism, the fear of being degraded or self-defense attitude that
often triggers conflict. (2). Ethnocentrism, from the word ethnos, which means tribe, and
centrum, which means a center that is a view that considers one’s culture as better than others,
and (3). Lazzynism, which is a stereotype, a negative view toward certain tribes or groups, or
a view that considers others to have certain defects [16] [25].

To solve these weaknesses, B. Tomalin recommends that participants of dialogue to
be aware and do the four things below:

First, we should accept that we are different. The difference is a reality, part of the law
of life, and not a problem. Second, we should be aware that we are different from others. This
awareness is important to make us reader and agree in disagreement. Third, we should be
able to control our feelings and action during our communication with people of other groups
and religions. Self-control is important, to develop empathy and sympathy from each party
involved in the dialogue. Fourth, since the beginning, it should be understood that cultural
differences are not only about language but also on other more fundamental aspects such as thoughts, values, ideology, religion, etc [16].

On the contrary, we should not be considered that Interfaith dialogues are elitist. As mostly by bringing together very senior, very influential religious leaders, the assumption is that they can wield their power to shape the thinking and practices of those lower down their institutional hierarchies. But on the contrary, as enormously influential as these senior leaders are, local leaders are not simply footed soldiers following commands from the top. If the power-based of local religious leaders is one that is not favorable to religious equality and liberty, they are not going to de-legitimize themselves by going against the flow. Besides, in many cases, local leaders from different religious communities have explained to me that while they respect their senior leaders, they see their rhetoric as part of their high-level diplomacy.

The result from the field reveals that following the in-depth interview with several Islamic leaders who are involved in interfaith dialogue to develop unity and peace and to prevent conflicts among people of different faiths in Indonesia, several obstacles and alternative solutions as the following are obtained.

In addition to fanaticism, Ahmadie Thoha points out that interfaith conflict also happens due to the existence of parties who interfere in other faiths’ business. For the Islamic people, if they are consistent with the doctrine of, *lakum dinukum wa liya din*, they will not interfere in other religion’s business. Thus, the interfaith conflicts would not easily happen. This does not necessarily mean that Islam cannot do da’wah or spread Islamic teaching to others. No! It can be done. However, they cannot force others to accept and believe in Islam as in Islamic principles; there is no compulsion in religion (QS. Al-Baqarah, 258) [26].

Another more dangerous obstacle, as revealed by KH. Dr. Bukhori Muslim is an attitude that considers people of other belief as an enemy, and in extreme level, as they are considered as an enemy, for instance, they can be combated. Such an attitude is often due to lack of knowledge, and lack of learning the teaching of other religions is from its source. In general, they only briefly hear about it. When the true doctrine is described, they will understand that their current belief in other’s religion is wrong. To solve this, KH Bukhori proposes that interfaith dialogue be held with the good intention of seeking common goodness. In this dialogue, each party should show their love for peace [28].

Quite different from the views above, the main obstacle of dialogue, according to Wahyudi Purnomo, is the level of knowledge and life experience of each person. According to Wahyudi, level of understanding and life experience, often, even though not necessarily parallel to the level of tolerance. This means, when one has an extensive level of understanding and extensive life experience, that person will tend to be tolerant and vice versa. The initiative recognizes that interfaith dialogue is occurring but that it needs to be strengthened to develop recommendations on priority issues that draw on interfaith insight and experience. Thus, the appropriate solution to develop dialogue and partnership among people of different dialogue is through enlightening, an effort to broaden one’s knowledge and enrich one’s life experience, either socially, culturally, or religiously [29]. As the purpose of interfaith dialogue is to increase our understanding of and respect for other religious systems and institutions, thereby increasing our appreciation of their values. Dialogue should enhance our sensitivity to the feelings of all professing religious people in their relationship
with God. Good dialogue should, besides, result in the deepening of the faith of every participant.

Aside from all those, the new perspective of interfaith dialogue needs courage, experience, and personal maturity. The dialogue will not be productive when there is no willingness from participants to open up themselves, which is the openness to give and take knowledge voluntarily and enthusiastically. Participants in dialogue should represent their faith group views, but may also share their views as individuals. Thus the rich spectrum of conviction within any faith group can become manifest. Mutual understanding and mutual respect, the spirit of sharing, can prevent the interfaith conflicts early on. This is the time for people of all religions to develop synergy, to cooperate for humanity and the better and more peaceful civilization of the world.

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