

Roles of Religion in Politics



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Ice Breakers

The delegates began by introducing themselves and shortly after began the activity to break the tension. The task was to construct a tower from spaghetti and marshmallows, with the aim of making a taller and more stable structure than the opposing team. The delegates divided into two groups; interestingly enough, both adopted the same strategy of constructing a stable, triangle-shaped pyramid. The engagement and cooperation among the delegates made the experience more integrative and helped set the environment for later discussion.

Opening Speeches

The delegates presented their stance on the topic of discussion, with the majority stating that religion is a very important factor in inclusivity and human rights, while emphasizing the distinction between freedom of belief and political decision-making. Among this majority are significant countries such as Canada, Germany, China, and Egypt, showing that this stance is accepted across all continents, including countries with large religious populations. The general consensus was to prevent extremist views from influencing political decisions, concluding that religion should not have a place in politics.



Predominantly Muslim countries, including Somalia, Libya, and Yemen, which operate under Sharia law, held opposing stances to varying degrees of extremism. The delegate of Somalia stated that no law can contradict religion, while Yemen claimed that religion should complement political decisions, albeit to a much smaller extent. On the other hand, the delegate of Indonesia took a more neutral approach, raising the question of how religion and politics can coexist.

Debates

The discussion was initiated by the delegate of the Philippines, who prefaced that religion in politics should be allowed in order to promote a more united society, while also acknowledging that those same beliefs can be used to cause harm within a nation. The main belief was that, if managed correctly, religion in politics could strengthen a country, leading the delegate of China to question how extremism could be prevented.

It is evident that extremism can emerge on both sides of the argument, prominently demonstrated by the delegate of France, who supports a ban on religious expression in public political spaces altogether. France's troubling history of religious protests and discrimination led the nation to encourage keeping religion a solely private matter, a stance that faced backlash from fellow delegates regardless of its reasoning. However, France takes active measures to ensure governmental transparency, reassuring the public that decisions are not made based on religious beliefs. The equal treatment of all religions demonstrates that the ban is not targeted, but rather influenced by the country's violent history and intended as a measure to protect its population.



Turkey, although predominantly religious, took the most neutral stance on the matter, advocating for an inclusive resolution in which each country chooses the approach that benefits it most. This position stems from demographic, historical, and cultural differences; the point being that it is impossible to satisfy every population with the same law due to vast global dissimilarities. This belief was met with inquiries from France regarding how such inclusive resolutions could be implemented. Turkey responded by emphasizing the uniqueness and nuance of each country, implying that each nation holds the responsibility to make these decisions independently.



The discussion explored a wide range of perspectives, from extremist to neutral, and raised underlying questions such as how to prevent extremism, how to create inclusive measures, and how religion and politics can coexist.