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Religious Exclusivism and the Crisis of Tolerance in Indonesia: Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid on Religious Moderation

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of religious exclusivism and the crisis of tolerance in contemporary Indonesia through a comparative study of the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid. The rise in intolerance, social polarization, and the use of religion in identity politics indicate a gap between the ideals of religious teachings that uphold peace and the often exclusive social practices of religion. This study uses a qualitative approach with library research methods through an analysis of the main works of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid and relevant academic literature. The results show that Hans Küng emphasizes the importance of global ethics as a foundation for interfaith dialogue and world peace, while Nurcholish Madjid develops the idea of Islamic pluralism and inclusivism that places diversity as part of God's will. Although coming from different religious traditions, both figures share a commonality in rejecting exclusivism and emphasizing the importance of respect for human dignity. This study concludes that the synthesis of the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid can serve as a relevant conceptual foundation for strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia.

Keywords: Hans Küng; Nurcholish Madjid; religious exclusivism; religious moderation; tolerance

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is sociologically recognized as a global cultural locus characterized by highly complex and multidimensional religious, cultural, and ethnic heterogeneity. This reality of pluralism serves as invaluable social, cultural, and spiritual capital, underpinning the structure of national integration and enriching the fabric of national life. Such a multicultural Indonesian identity demands a high capacity for social adaptation from every segment of society to transform this objective diversity into a productive collective force. Success in managing this heterogeneity stands as a fundamental indicator of a nation's civilizational maturity—one that grounds its very existence in the principle of unity amidst equality in diversity (Azra, 2007).

However, in the empirical realm, this complex diversity also triggers the emergence of various crucial challenges that test the resilience of social integration, particularly those related to the dynamics of interfaith relations. Manifestations of these challenges often emerge in the form of social friction,

communal tensions, and resistance to the presence of different religious entities in the public sphere. The inability to harmoniously manage doctrinal and sociological differences has the potential to degrade the quality of harmony that has long been woven into the nation's history. This condition demands an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of social interaction to identify the determining factors that influence the fluctuations in the stability of interfaith relations in the context of Indonesia's highly dynamic diversity (Misrawi, 2007).

In recent years, the escalation of intolerance, discrimination based on religious identity, and the strengthening of identity politics have become clear indicators. This sociopolitical reality confirms that the domestic landscape of religious life still faces systemic obstacles in efforts to construct inclusive social relations. Religious practices that tend to be oriented towards strengthening the boundaries of group identity have widened the social distance between communities of different faiths. This phenomenon indicates a shift in value orientation in the public sphere, where religious sentiment is often instrumentalized for the pragmatic interests of certain groups, which in turn threatens the foundations of an inclusive nation.

Based on empirical data published by various social and human rights research institutions, acts of intolerance in Indonesia remain persistent. This phenomenon generally manifests in local community rejection of the establishment of houses of worship by certain religious groups deemed different from the majority. Furthermore, social marginalization, bureaucratic obstacles, and other forms of discrimination targeting religious minorities remain crucial issues that undermine the principle of citizen equality. This pattern of action demonstrates the unresolved tension between claims of majoritarianism and the fulfillment of the constitutional rights of minority groups in various regions of Indonesia (Bagir, 2018).

These social tensions are further exacerbated by the massive dissemination of hate speech based on religious sentiment through various digital media platforms. Cyberspace has transformed into a catalyst, accelerating the process of social polarization through the spread of radical narratives, negative stereotypes, and destructive religious prejudices. The limitless and rapid nature of digital media allows exclusive content to reach a wide audience without undergoing a rigorous verification process. This phenomenon creates an echo chamber that isolates individuals from more open and moderate religious perspectives, thus reinforcing hostile sentiments toward other groups (Lim, 2017).

This empirical situation reflects that some societal entities still adopt an exclusive and dogmatic pattern of religious understanding. This textualist religious perspective tends to view spiritual doctrine and truth as the sole property of one's own group, while denying the validity of the faith of other groups. The implication is that groups outside the community's circle are viewed pejoratively as deviant, misguided, or even diametrically opposed to the absolute truth they believe in. This rigid doctrine stifles space for dialogue and social empathy, so that differences are no longer understood as the law of God, but rather as theological threats that must be eliminated.

Through a more comprehensive sociological reading, the current phenomenon of religious intolerance cannot be isolated as a purely theological or dogmatic conflict. The reality on the ground shows that socio-religious tensions are the product of complex interactions involving various intertwined non-religious variables. Religion is often used merely as a cloak of legitimacy for struggles over economic interests, struggles for access to resources, and conflicts over control of public space between various community groups. A reductionist analysis of this phenomenon will only yield a partial understanding and fail to address the true roots of the problem.

Various recent political sociological studies confirm that the dynamics of social media significantly contribute to the strengthening of exclusivist attitudes in society. Digital media algorithms designed to maximize user engagement tend to present content that aligns with individuals' initial ideological preferences, thus reinforcing existing biases. This phenomenon goes hand in hand with the intensity of political polarization that utilizes religious sentiment as the most effective instrument of mass mobilization. When political elites exploit sacred symbols for electoral gain, social barriers at the grassroots level tighten, accelerating social divisions based on differences in belief (Kadir, 2017).

Given the complexity of these issues, the academic community and social practitioners require a comprehensive and integrative epistemological framework. This formulation of thought must possess the theoretical capacity to map the roots of intolerance, from the theological to the sociopolitical dimensions underlying it. Beyond its analytical function, the theoretical framework developed must also be able to offer normative solutions that are applicable and transformative in social reality. The doctrines of pluralism and

tolerance require reconstruction so that they can be implemented as ethical guides for managing social interactions in a pluralistic society.

In the taxonomy of religious studies, the theological orientation of exclusivism is understood as a paradigm of thought that claims the truth of eschatological salvation is sociologically valid only for one's own group. This perspective views other religious institutions outside the boundaries of one's community as entities lacking spiritual authority and in theological error. The implications of this perspective are the emergence of rigid identity boundaries and a reluctance to engage in equal cultural interactions with adherents of other faiths. Theological exclusivism often transforms into social exclusivism, which hinders the realization of social cohesion in multicultural societies.

As an antithesis to these doctrinal tendencies, the paradigms of inclusivism and pluralism emerge, emphasizing the urgency of recognizing the existence of other groups. Inclusivism holds that although the ultimate truth resides in one's own religion, traces of divine truth and salvation can still be found in other religious traditions. Meanwhile, pluralism goes further, affirming that religious diversity is a positive reality with equal theological and sociological validity. Both paradigms demand genuine respect for universal human dignity, regardless of the particular background of one's beliefs.

The theoretical discourse on the dialectic between exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism has shifted to become a central theme in the dynamics of modern religious thought. The relevance of this debate is strengthened by its direct interaction with global humanitarian agendas such as upholding tolerance, creating peace, and institutionalizing interfaith dialogue. The transformation of thought from a conflictual to a dialogical nature is an absolute prerequisite for the survival of human civilization in the era of globalization. Therefore, contemporary religious thinkers continue to strive to formulate a welcoming theology capable of reconciling the internal claims of faith with the external ethical demands of justice.

In the contemporary global theological and ethical landscape, the conceptual framework articulated by theologian Hans Küng holds significant relevance. Küng initiated the idea of the importance of formulating a global ethic in response to various humanitarian crises and conflicts fueled by religious sentiment. This rationale stems from the premise that world religions share a shared moral responsibility to formulate universal values for the safety of humanity. Global ethics is not an attempt to unify religious doctrines, but rather a consensus on fundamental values, measurable standards, and core moral attitudes that can be mutually agreed upon (Küng, 2004).

Hans Küng's fundamental axiom explicitly asserts that universal peace at the global level is impossible without interfaith peace. Disharmonious relations between faith communities will always be the short fuse that triggers geopolitical conflict and large-scale communal violence. Furthermore, Küng states that interfaith peace will never be achieved without the willingness of religious adherents to engage in intensive interfaith dialogue. This thinking positions dialogue not merely as an instrument of formal diplomacy, but as a space for existential encounter that demands honesty, openness, and a willingness to listen to one another.

Hans Küng's intellectual contribution was ultimately widely recognized as one of the most solid conceptual pillars in the study of global ethics and the interfaith dialogue movement. This idea successfully shifted the paradigm of interfaith relations from an apologetic-confrontational one to a cooperative-constructive one. By emphasizing the search for common values, the concept of global ethics provides practical guidance for religious communities to collaborate in addressing issues of poverty, injustice, and environmental degradation. Küng's thinking provides theological legitimacy for religious communities to actively participate in transforming global society toward a more just order (Küng, 2004).

In the context of the development of Islamic thought in the Indonesian domestic sphere, Nurcholish Madjid stands out as a thinker who has successfully constructed an inclusive Islamic paradigm. The figure, familiarly known as Cak Nur, places his ideas on the importance of openness, pluralistic values, and high respect for socio-cultural diversity. According to him, the essence of Islamic teachings is an attitude of surrender to God (al-Islam), which corresponds to the universal nature of play that longs for peace and truth. With this perspective, Cak Nur deconstructs narrow religious understanding and replaces it with a cosmopolitan Islamic perspective relevant to modernity (Madjid, 2019).

In his monumental work, "Islam: Doctrines and Civilizations," Nurcholish Madjid presents a theological argument that societal diversity is an unavoidable sociological reality. He asserts that this plurality must be consciously understood and accepted as a manifestation of God's absolute will (sunatullah), which deliberately designed humans to be diverse. Therefore, diversity of thought and belief

should not be viewed as a threat that could degrade the integrity of a particular religious identity. Instead, diversity is a divine instrument to spur every component of humanity to compete in public virtue through healthy social interactions (Madjid, 2019).

Nurcholish Madjid's thinking provides a fundamental theoretical contribution to the formation of inclusive reasoning among Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and communities. By integrating the treasures of classical Islamic thought, particularly those of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Arabi, with modern and Indonesian values, he created a robust pluralist theology. This idea provides a strong ideological cushion in repelling radical religious claims that attempt to contrast Islamic identity with Indonesian national identity. Cak Nur's thinking successfully reaffirms that being a devout Muslim goes hand in hand with being a citizen committed to democratic values.

Although a large body of academic literature has been produced discussing Nurcholish Madjid's ideas of pluralism and Hans Küng's concept of interfaith dialogue, the majority of studies still position the two separately. Previous research tends to be trapped in monographic analyses that examine the thoughts of each figure within their own cultural and theological context. This partial approach results in the missed opportunity to see universal conceptual connections that transcend the geographical boundaries and religious traditions of the West and East. As a result, the theoretical richness of these two thinkers has not been optimized to formulate tolerance policies that are both global and local.

Scholarly studies that attempt to reconcile Hans Küng's Global Ethics with Nurcholish Madjid's pluralism paradigm in the context of strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia are still very limited. This paucity of transcultural comparative studies creates a significant academic gap in the treasury of contemporary religious thought in the domestic sphere. Yet, the convergence of thought between a Western Catholic theologian and a transformative Indonesian Muslim thinker has the potential to produce a rich conceptual synthesis. This synthesis is urgently needed as a theoretical foundation to strengthen the religious moderation program currently being intensified as a mainstream national policy.

Based on these limited literature, this study aims to fill the academic gap through a comprehensive comparative analysis. This research positions the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid as the primary conceptual instruments for constructing a paradigm of religious moderation in contemporary Indonesia. Through a comparative approach, this article focuses on an in-depth analysis of the nature of religious inclusivism in the thoughts of these two figures. Furthermore, this study aims to map their conceptual convergences and divergences, while simultaneously formulating their strategic relevance for strengthening social harmony in Indonesia.

Based on the overall theoretical and contextual explanations outlined, this study confirms that the complexity of socio-religious challenges in Indonesia requires a reconstruction of inclusive religious reasoning. The confrontation between Hans Küng's global ethics and Nurcholish Madjid's inclusive Islam offers a resolution to the problem of exclusivism. Both figures, although originating from different theological traditions and cultural spaces, demonstrate a strong theoretical convergence regarding the urgency of recognizing diversity for the benefit of humanity. Strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia can gain solid academic and theological legitimacy through this synthesis of interfaith thought, which positions dialogue as the primary foundation of social cohesion.

METHOD

This research operates a qualitative approach based on the library research method as the main epistemological axis in dissecting all written data. The choice of this methodological orientation is based on the objective need to explore in depth the thoughts of figures and reorganize the conceptual structure of the discourse of exclusivism, inclusivism, tolerance, and religious moderation through the lens of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid. The operationalization of this library research provides space for researchers to interpret thought texts hermeneutically in order to produce a conceptual reconstruction that is valid, complete, and relevant to social dynamics. Based on the methodological foundation formulated by (Zed, 2008), library research activities are positioned as a scientific scheme that utilizes written documents as primary data instruments to construct a well-established theoretical understanding of a phenomenon.

The data architecture in this library research implementation is distributed into two main classifications which include primary data categories and secondary data categories. The primary data

segment is extracted directly from the fundamental text corpus of Hans Küng's original thought containing his influential formulation of theology and global ethics. Some of the main texts positioned as analytical anchors of Küng's thought include the book Christianity and the World Religions published in 1986, followed by the visionary work Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic in 1991, and the text A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics published in 1998. The availability of these original text sources guarantees the authenticity of the interpretation of the idea of global ethics promoted by the figure.

In line with the primary data collection scheme above, the construction of inclusive Islamic thought from Nurcholish Madjid is explored through a series of authentic texts that represent his transformative thinking in Indonesia. The exploration of these ideas is based strictly on the monumental book Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban published in 1992, which is then further contextualized through the book Islam Agama Kemanusiaan: Membangun Tradisi dan Visi Baru Islam Indonesia published in 1995. In order to broaden the spectrum of its sociocultural understanding, this research also involves an intensive review of the text Tradition Islam: Peran dan Fungsinya dalam Pembangunan di Indonesia published in 1997. The juxtaposition of primary literature from these two cross-cultural thinkers allows the process of tracing the epistemological structure to be carried out fairly from the source of their original thoughts.

To strengthen conceptual validity and contextualize reality, secondary data were selectively collected from articles in reputable scientific journals, supporting textbooks, social research reports, and official government regulatory documents. This secondary data corpus functions as an analytical instrument to map the discourse of religious pluralism, the development of religious moderation, the escalation of intolerance, and the fluctuations in interfaith relations developing in Indonesia's domestic sphere. The context of national sociopolitical policies and directions in responding to contemporary religious dynamics are authoritatively referenced through the pocketbook "Religious Moderation" officially published by the Research and Development and Training Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2019. The presence of this secondary data enriches the analytical dimension of the research so that it does not get trapped in a purely abstract theoretical vacuum.

The data collection procedure was carried out strictly through documentation methods by conducting searches, classifications, recordings, and critical reviews of the entire range of literature deemed to have thematic relevance. After all text data was collected adequately, the next stage was managed through the operationalization of descriptive-analytical methods synergized simultaneously with a transcultural comparative approach. The application of descriptive methods aims to describe, map, and organize the conceptual construction of each figure objectively and systematically in accordance with their original structure. Meanwhile, the use of a comparative approach is directed at identifying substantive similarities, differences in epistemological patterns, and concrete contributions from the synthesis of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid's ideas to strengthen religious moderation.

Efforts to maintain the validity, reliability, and objectivity of the theoretical interpretation results were carried out by consistently applying data source triangulation techniques throughout the research process. This methodological step was implemented by comparing the main thought texts of the two figures with various critical reviews from external observers and the results of relevant contemporary academic studies. The application of this cross-verification scheme is expected to minimize researcher subjectivity and produce a complete, reasoned, and in-depth conceptual understanding. Through this comprehensive approach, the relevance of the theological thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid in mitigating the dangers of exclusivism and the crisis of tolerance in Indonesia can be drawn into a solid scientific conclusion.

In the landscape of modern religious studies, the mapping of discourse on relations and patterns of interaction between faith communities is classified into three main typologies of theological paradigms: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. This highly influential triadic formulation in analyzing the theological characteristics of religions was widely popularized by a British theologian named (Race, 1984) through his scientific work. This categorical division serves as a cognitive map for researchers to identify the ideological positions and tendencies of religious behavior of a community group in response to the presence of other faith entities living around them.

The theological conceptualization of exclusivism is identified as a paradigm of thought that claims absolute truth and the sociological validity of eschatological salvation exist only within the boundaries of one's own religious institution. This rigid theological perspective refuses to acknowledge the theological,

spiritual, and soteriological legitimacy of other religious traditions beyond the boundaries of one's own community. The sociological impact of adopting this rigid perspective often triggers radical rejection, the strengthening of communal prejudice, and the marginalization of minority groups. Uncontrolled theological exclusivity has the potential to transform into a major catalyst that accelerates the escalation of intolerance in pluralistic societal structures.

As a theological response to the rigidity of exclusivism, the inclusivism paradigm offers a model of understanding that places one's own religious truth as the primary authority without ignoring the existence of truth values in other religions. This perspective constructs an awareness that although complete salvation is believed to reside in one's religious institution, traces of divine guidance remain scattered and can be found in the faith traditions of other groups. This accommodating theology opens up ample opportunities for the creation of productive dialogue and humanitarian collaboration in an equal public space. Through this inclusive model of understanding, bridges of communication between religious communities can be built without requiring adherents to abandon their respective religious identities.

At a more transformative level of thought, the paradigm of religious pluralism positions the diversity of faith as an objective reality with positive value and must be sincerely respected in social life. The lens of pluralism views all the diversity of religious traditions in the world as forms of varied historical and cultural human responses to the same Transcendent Reality. This idea of theological pluralism was developed philosophically by (Hick, 1989) in his scientific work. Through Hick's framework, dogmatic differences are no longer seen as dividing walls, but are recognized as the richness of human spiritual articulation in capturing the charm of divinity.

In the Indonesian domestic context, the discourse of religious moderation is formulated as a strategic instrument for reconstructing a religious order characterized by balance, justice, and social flexibility. An official publication from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2019) emphasizes that the religious moderation agenda is not intended to intervene in or change absolute religious doctrines. The primary focus of this concept is on efforts to improve humanity's perspective on religion to avoid being trapped in the extreme poles of either right-wing or left-wing extremism. Moderate religious awareness requires individuals to be able to balance sacred religious texts with the dynamic context of humanity.

The operational framework of religious moderation is supported by four fundamental pillars: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and the capacity to accommodate local cultural expressions (RI, 2019). These four normative indicators serve as both an ethical foundation and a practical guide for managing social integration amidst clashing communal interests. A harmonious and cohesive society can only be maintained if all elements of the nation adopt these indicators into their daily practices. In this comparative study, the concept of religious moderation is used as a normative analytical tool to gauge the suitability and tangible contribution of the ideas of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid.

The communication dimension in a multicultural public space requires the institutionalization of interreligious dialogue as an effective socio-religious mediation channel. Interreligious dialogue is conceptualized as a process of intensive communicative interaction that enables adherents of different religions to understand, appreciate, and collaborate with each other (Küng, 2004). This process requires a sincere willingness to listen without offensive apologetic tendencies or the desire to convert others. Healthy dialogue positions all participants on an equal footing, allowing the barriers of sociological prejudice that have hardened due to minimal cultural encounters to be dissolved through an intensive process of mutual understanding.

The current of contemporary globalization that accelerates human mobility has direct implications for the increasing frequency of interactions between communities with different religious backgrounds and cultural traditions. This contemporary reality demands the presence of universal ethical guidelines that transcend the boundaries of particular groups in order to safeguard the survival of human civilization from the threat of a clash of civilizations. Faced with this crucial situation, theologian Hans Küng (1998) articulated a famous thesis that asserts the impossibility of realizing international peace without interfaith peace preceded by a process of dialogue. This premise underlies the birth of the formulation of a global ethic (Global Ethic) that prioritizes universal values such as social justice, respect for human dignity, ecological responsibility, and social solidarity.

In the discourse of Indonesian Islam, ideas about inclusivism and pluralism have gained strong theological legitimacy through a series of original thoughts from Nurcholish Madjid. This intellectual, often called Cak Nur, consistently advocates that sociocultural diversity is an integral part of the absolute

Sunnatullah (God's will) (Madjid, 2019). Human diversity, in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, and religious beliefs, is positioned as a divine design deliberately created to enrich the existential experience of humanity on earth. Therefore, rejection of the reality of diversity is seen as a disregard for God's absolute decree, which has outlined differences as a constant natural law.

Nurcholish Madjid applies a contextual interpretation method to the sacred text of the Qur'an to emphasize that Islamic teachings provide genuine theological recognition of the existence of human plurality. His conceptualization emphasizes that Islamic authority rejects all forms of coercion of faith and is fully committed to guaranteeing the freedom of human conscience (Munawar-Rachman, 2022). Cak Nur's view of pluralism should not be reduced to a syncretistic attempt to arbitrarily equate all aspects of religious doctrine. Pluralism is understood as an active commitment to building a peaceful, just, and democratic shared living space amidst the differing worldviews held by each socio-religious community.

This inclusive and transformative formulation of theological thought ultimately succeeded in laying a strong epistemological foundation for the growth of moderate Islamic discourse in Indonesia. By integrating classical Islamic intellectual heritage with modern values, human rights, and democratic principles, Cak Nur's thought offers a model of welcoming religiosity. This model of thought has proven effective in mitigating the spread of religious ideologies that are radical, literal, and unfriendly to the local context of Indonesia. The success of this conceptualization has made a significant contribution to shaping the character of Indonesian Muslims who possess a strong religious commitment while upholding national values.

The existence of religious moderation now occupies an increasingly central and strategic position in maintaining the rhythm of social stability in Indonesia's pluralistic domestic landscape. The Research and Development and Training Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia formulated this concept as an articulation of religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices that consistently take a middle path. The main characteristic of religious moderation is the rejection of extreme thoughts and actions, while continuously fostering the ability to appreciate differences. The conceptual emphasis is placed on the understanding that moderation is not aimed at tolerating the degradation of fundamental religious values, but rather is directed at fostering a proportional attitude in implementing those sacred values.

Within Indonesia's geopolitical context, the institutionalization of religious moderation has been transformed into a crucial cultural strategy for safeguarding national unity against the threat of disintegration. This strategy emphasizes the importance of achieving a harmonious balance between steadfast adherence to internal faith doctrine and a willingness to respect the civil rights of adherents of other faiths. Successfully maintaining this balance is an absolute prerequisite for the sustainability of a democratic and multicultural state governed by the rule of law. Religious moderation positions citizens not only as theological beings devoted to their religious institutions, but also as social beings responsible for civil peace in the shared public sphere.

The operationalization of religious moderation monitoring is measurably embodied in four main, functionally interconnected indicators. The first indicator manifests itself in a complete national commitment, marked by an unconditional willingness to accept the national consensus of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity). The second indicator manifests itself in the practice of authentic tolerance, namely a willingness to respect and provide a safe space for other groups to express their religious beliefs. The third indicator rests on the adoption of the principle of nonviolence, which rejects the use of physical or symbolic coercion in resolving social conflicts motivated by religious sentiment.

The fourth indicator is characterized by an accommodating disposition toward local cultural expressions, where archipelagic traditions are appreciated as long as they do not violate the fundamental principles of monotheism. These four socioreligious indicators formulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019) are fully adopted as the macro-analytical framework in this literature study. Through the use of these analytical instruments, the theoretical relevance, ethical contribution, and transformative power of the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid can be objectively evaluated. The results of this comparative evaluation are expected to provide fresh conceptual contributions to strengthening the foundations of religious moderation in order to respond to the challenges of religious exclusivism in the contemporary era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Exclusivism and the Crisis of Tolerance in Contemporary Indonesia

Indonesia boasts a high level of religious, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and traditional diversity, often considered one of the largest plural societies in the world. This diversity shapes the complex character of social life and serves as a crucial foundation for national development. However, over the past two decades, various social phenomena have emerged demonstrating a strengthening tendency toward religious exclusivism in various spheres of society. This phenomenon is evident in the rejection of the construction of houses of worship, the discriminatory practices experienced by religious minorities, the increasing spread of hate speech based on religious sentiment, and the use of religious identity as an instrument of mobilization in political contests. These events demonstrate that relations between religious communities still face significant challenges. Religious exclusivism is essentially a perspective that positions one's own group as the sole possessor of truth, while other groups are positioned as erroneous or lacking theological legitimacy. In a pluralistic society, this religious orientation has the potential to widen social distances, reduce the space for equal interaction, and limit the development of constructive dialogue between religious adherents. When these tendencies develop without adequate social control, religion risks experiencing a shift in function from being a source of peaceful values to legitimizing the emergence of social conflict and intergroup tension (Hick, 1989).

This reality demonstrates a gap between the substance of religious teachings, which emphasize the values of compassion, justice, respect for human dignity, and a peaceful life, and the social practices that have developed in society. This discrepancy between normative values and social implementation is one of the issues that requires attention in studies of the relationship between religion and plural societies. In this context, the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid have academic relevance because they both developed a paradigm of religiosity that emphasizes inclusivity, openness, and the importance of dialogue as a foundation for building interfaith relations. The perspectives they offer provide space for recognizing the existence of others without having to abandon one's own theological beliefs. Alongside these dynamics, the development of social media has also presented new challenges in religious life. The transformation of communication technology has enabled the rapid dissemination of information and its widespread reach. Digital media algorithms, in many situations, present information that aligns with user preferences, thus limiting exposure to divergent views. This situation narrows the space for dialogue, reinforces intergroup prejudice, and accelerates the spread of exclusive narratives in the public sphere. This phenomenon shows that the issue of tolerance in Indonesia is not only influenced by theological aspects, but is also closely related to social and political dynamics, as well as the development of communication technology which continues to change.

Religious exclusivism in Indonesia is also growing alongside the strengthening of identity politics in various political contests. Religious symbols, narratives, and sentiments are often exploited as a means of gaining political support, thus gaining a dominant position in the process of social mobilization. This situation has the potential to strengthen social polarization because people are more easily grouped based on religious identity than on collective national interests. In such situations, differences in political preferences develop into differences in identity that are increasingly difficult to reconcile through rational and inclusive dialogue (Ramage, 2002). In addition to being influenced by political dynamics, the development of social media also strengthens exclusivist tendencies through the spread of hate speech, disinformation, and intolerant religious narratives. The nature of social media algorithms encourages the formation of echo chambers, a condition where individuals receive more information that confirms their own beliefs and interact less with divergent views. This situation narrows the space for communication between groups, reinforces stereotypes, and increases the potential for social prejudice against other groups (Hefner, 2011). Strengthening religious tolerance and moderation requires a comprehensive approach through theological, social, educational, and digital literacy dimensions so that society has a stronger awareness of the importance of building a life together in diversity and maintaining social cohesion in a pluralistic society.

The Concept of Inclusivism and Interreligious Dialogue in Hans Küng's Thought

Hans Küng's non-compliance is known as one of the Catholic theologians who had a significant influence on the development of interfaith dialogue thought in the 20th century. His contributions are not only visible in theological studies, but also in the formation of a paradigm of interfaith relations oriented towards world peace. The foundation of his thinking rests on the belief that the various conflicts that develop in global life cannot be understood solely as political, economic, or power interests, but are also related to the quality of relations between religious communities. According to Küng, sustainable peace can only be achieved through the creation of harmonious relationships among religious adherents. This view places religion as an element that has a moral responsibility in building a peaceful, respectful, and humanitarian-oriented life together. This idea is the main foundation of Hans Küng's overall thinking regarding the importance of building interfaith communication as part of efforts to create social stability and global peace (Küng, 2004).

One of Hans Küng's most well-known and widely referenced statements in the study of interfaith dialogue is, "No peace among nations without peace among religions. No peace among religions without dialogue among religions." This statement illustrates the close relationship between world peace, interfaith relations, and the continuation of dialogue as a means of building mutual understanding. For Küng, religion not only functions as a belief system that regulates human relations with God, but also has an ethical responsibility towards broader social life. Interfaith dialogue is seen as a mechanism that allows each religious community to build open communication without having to lose their respective identities or beliefs. Dialogue is not aimed at standardizing teachings or unifying religious doctrines, but rather becomes a shared space to strengthen understanding, develop mutual respect, and build cooperation in addressing the various humanitarian issues facing the global community. Through this dialogue, religions gain space to demonstrate their contribution to building a peaceful and harmonious life.

Hans Küng's commitment to strengthening interfaith ethics is manifested through the development of the Global Ethic (Weltethos) project, an initiative that seeks to formulate a set of universal values that can be accepted by various religious traditions around the world. This initiative is based on the view that although each religion has different theological characteristics, history, and religious practices, all have moral values that can form the basis of a shared life. Through Global Ethic, Küng identified four ethical principles that are considered universal: respect for human life, solidarity and economic justice, honesty and moral integrity, and equality and partnership between men and women. These four principles are positioned as a shared ethical foundation that allows for the development of more harmonious relationships among people with different religious backgrounds, cultures, and traditions. This idea demonstrates that moral values can be a meeting point that strengthens interfaith cooperation in social life.

According to Hans Küng, the existence of similar ethical principles across major religions demonstrates that doctrinal differences should not be understood as a factor that triggers conflict between groups. Each religious tradition has teachings that direct humans to value life, uphold justice, maintain honesty, and develop dignified relationships with others. These shared values form an important foundation for building constructive communication without diminishing each person's religious identity. This perspective demonstrates that the diversity of religious teachings does not hinder the formation of understanding in the field of social ethics. The emphasis on universal values provides space for the development of mutual respect while strengthening cooperation in addressing shared humanitarian issues. Through this framework, interfaith relations are positioned as relationships built on respect for human dignity and recognition of diversity as part of the reality of social life.

From Hans Küng's perspective, exclusivism that rejects the existence of other groups is inconsistent with the spirit of universal humanity that lies at the heart of various religious traditions. A view that positions one's own group as the sole party possessing full legitimacy has the potential to narrow the space for communication and hinder the development of harmonious relationships within a pluralistic society. Religion is seen as having a broader social function than simply strengthening a community's internal identity, namely as a moral force that unites people through the values of respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility. Dialogue occupies a crucial position because it serves as an instrument that enables mutual

understanding, reduces prejudice, and strengthens trust between religious groups. Through open communication and respect for universal humanitarian values, religion is expected to make a real contribution to building peace, strengthening social cohesion, and reducing the potential for conflict based on religious differences.

Islamic Pluralism and Inclusivism in the Thought of Nurcholish Madjid

Unlike Hans Küng, who developed the idea of interfaith dialogue through a Christian theological perspective, Nurcholish Madjid presents a paradigm with a similar orientation from an Islamic perspective. His thinking makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic discourse that positions diversity as an inherent part of social life. For Nurcholish Madjid, pluralism is not merely a social concept born from the dynamics of human relationships, but rather a reality that is constantly present in life and inseparable from the journey of human history. The diversity of religions, cultures, and social identities is understood as an objective reality that requires acceptance, respect, and a willingness to coexist peacefully. This view demonstrates that relations between groups in a pluralistic society require an open-minded foundation so that social interactions can develop in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Thus, pluralism occupies an important position as a framework for understanding the lives of diverse societies without eliminating individual identities or beliefs (Munawar-Rachman, 2022).

According to Nurcholish Madjid, human diversity is part of God's will or sunnatullah, which is the fundamental character of life. This diversity is seen as a reality that has both religious and social significance because its existence has become part of Divine decree. This perspective positions religious differences not as a threat to communal life, but rather as a space that allows for the development of cooperation, mutual understanding, and the formation of broader understanding among fellow human beings. This view shows that diversity is not positioned as a source of conflict, but rather as a condition that encourages the birth of more mature social relationships. Acceptance of diversity is part of a religious attitude that respects human dignity while recognizing the existence of others in social life. This thinking emphasizes that respect for plurality is an inseparable part of understanding social life from an Islamic perspective, as explained by Nurcholish Madjid (Madjid, 2019).

In "Islamic Doctrine and Civilization," Nurcholish Madjid explains that Islam recognizes the existence of other religious communities and provides space for the creation of a peaceful coexistence. Recognition of the existence of adherents of other religions is understood as part of Islamic teachings that respect diversity in social life. Based on this view, religiosity is not measured by an exclusive attitude that closes oneself off from other groups or by rejecting their existence. Nurcholish Madjid rejects the view that equates religious commitment with a closed attitude because such an approach does not reflect the breadth of Islamic values in building interpersonal relationships. Religiosity is understood as a process that connects loyalty to religious teachings with respect for pluralistic social realities. Through this understanding, Islam is positioned as a religion that provides space for the creation of harmonious social relationships without ignoring the beliefs of each of its adherents (Madjid, 2019).

One of Nurcholish Madjid's important contributions lies in developing the concept of inclusive Islam as a religious paradigm capable of accommodating pluralistic societies. In his view, a Muslim can maintain a strong commitment to Islamic teachings without rejecting the existence of other groups or viewing differences as a reason for social distance. Loyalty to religious beliefs is understood as a form of spiritual responsibility that is not associated with hostility toward those with different religious backgrounds. This perspective demonstrates that Islamic identity can go hand in hand with respect for the existence of other communities in social life. The concept of inclusive Islam provides space for the development of communication, cooperation, and social relationships built on respect for human dignity. With this approach, religiosity is understood not only as an individual's relationship with God but also as an ethical foundation for building peaceful and respectful social relations.

Nurcholish Madjid's thinking also emphasizes the importance of democracy, respect for human rights, and religious freedom as values aligned with Islamic teachings. These three aspects are understood as manifestations of the spirit of justice, respect for human dignity, and moral responsibility, which are inherent in religious teachings. In his view, these values do not exist outside the Islamic framework but are closely related to the humanitarian principles taught by Islam. Through this approach, Nurcholish Madjid strives to build a model of religiosity that is moderate, open, and contextual, in keeping with the reality of Indonesian society,

which is characterized by a diversity of religions, cultures, and social identities. His thought orientation demonstrates an effort to present a religious life that maintains a commitment to Islamic teachings while respecting plurality as part of the national reality. This paradigm is an important contribution to the development of Islamic discourse relevant to the pluralistic character of Indonesian society.

Comparative Analysis of the Thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid

An epistemological comparison of the intellectual heritage of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid reveals a profound philosophical convergence, despite both being grounded in the landscape of theological traditions and particular sociocultural particularities. This comparative study indicates that the geographical separation, intellectual genealogy, and sociopolitical structure in which they articulated their ideas did not hinder the emergence of consistent paradigmatic meeting points. This conceptual meeting point reflects a collective intellectual response to the existential anxiety of modern humanity, which is often threatened by social fragmentation based on metaphysical claims. A critical examination of the spectrum of thought of these two thinkers reveals an articulation of a commensurate commitment to constructing an order of religious life that is accommodative, emancipatory, and transformative amidst the currents of modernity. The ideas offered by Küng and Madjid transcend the boundaries of narrow dogmatism to formulate a new theological reasoning capable of responding to the reality of the diversity of contemporary civilization in a comprehensive, inclusive, and methodologically accountable manner.

The fundamental axiom that unites the theological argumentation of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid is a radical rejection of the purification of rigid religious exclusivism and its manifestation in the public sphere. Both thinkers rigidly detect that the absolutization of monolithic and closed theological truth claims has an inherent tendency to construct destructive social barriers for the ecosystem of diversity. These hegemonic truth claims are considered to be the main determinant that gives rise to social alienation, negative stigmatization, and the escalation of large-scale communitarian conflicts in the history of human civilization. The exclusive perspective that positions external entities as dogmatically deviant others is seen as a clear distortion of the transcendent nature of religious spirituality itself. This theological rejection is based on the ethical awareness that human religious interpretations are always tentative, historical, and limited, and therefore should not be absolutized as instruments of sociopolitical coercion that threaten the stability of social peace in multicultural societies.

The next connecting pillar in the spectrum of thought of these two intellectuals is manifested through a very fundamental methodological emphasis on the urgency of institutionalizing interreligious dialogue in every social stratification. Hans Küng's epistemology places interfaith dialectical activity as an absolute prerequisite in the scheme of creating a new civilized world order through the articulation of global ethics that transcends the institutional boundaries of traditional religions. Küng's version of the global dialogical formulation finds a very symmetrical conceptual resonance in the thought space of Nurcholish Madjid through the sociological deconstruction of the reality of domestic pluralism. Madjid interprets cross-border dialogue activities not merely as a pragmatic instrument for artificial social harmony, but as a logical-theological consequence of the inevitability of socio-religious plurality in the sociology of the Indonesian nation. The actualization of this inclusive discursive communication is positioned by both figures as an epistemic bridge to erode historical prejudice, build collective mutual understanding, and break down the walls of theological isolation that often hinder the progress of human civilization.

The axiological dimension of the theological thought of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid places the preservation of universal human values as the main meeting point in forging harmonious relations between religious communities. Both maintain a strong theoretical belief that the authentic manifestation of the doctrine of religious piety must make a concrete contribution to the establishment of true peace, distributive justice, and absolute respect for human dignity (Küng, 2004). Religion in this axiological perspective is no longer positioned as a mere dry system of eschatological rituals, but is reconstructed into a spiritual energy driving social emancipation of society. Human dignity is elevated to the highest ethical evaluation standard that underlies the validity of every contemporary theological interpretation in the public sphere. This prioritization of the humanitarian aspect enables the process of transcending religious dogma, which was originally

particularistic and exclusive, to transform into a universal character that is functional for solving real problems of universal humanity.

The dynamics of substantial differences remain prominent as distinctive characteristics that enrich the academic content of the theological thought of these two multidimensional intellectual figures. Hans Küng consistently directs the focus of his intellectual orientation on the project of discovering, formulating, and institutionalizing a universal global ethical consensus that can be accepted by all world religions. Küng's theological thought architecture strives to explore the basic, universal moral foundations of various faith traditions in order to construct a comprehensive international geopolitical peace. This global orientation was born as a critical response to the macro humanitarian crisis, ecological degradation, and militaristic tensions between civilizations that plague the structure of the modern world. Küng's conceptual emphasis rests on the creation of shared ethical norms that transcend doctrinal particularities in order to ensure the survival of human civilization in the future.

The discourse orientation developed by Nurcholish Madjid demonstrates a particular focus deeply rooted in the agenda of renewal and the deconstruction of domestic Islamic thought. Madjid's methodological focus is not on the creation of a normative global ethical order, but rather on the epistemological reconstruction and transformation of the internal consciousness of Muslims to align with the demands of contemporary plurality. Madjid dedicates his intellectual energy to dismantling the rigidity of ijtihad, campaigning for the idea of conceptual secularization, and instilling an awareness of theological inclusivism grounded in the roots of authentic Islamic tradition. This internal transformation process seeks to foster theological flexibility, sociological readiness, and cultural openness in the Muslim community in appreciating the presence of other religious entities in the same public space.

The subsequent methodological divergence stems from the differences in the locus of academic traditions and the real sociopolitical challenges faced by each of these progressive thinkers. Hans Küng moved, thought, and formulated his theological ideas within the circle of Western Christian theological scholarly tradition and was actively involved in international interfaith dialogue forums. Küng's intellectual struggle arena was massively influenced by the dynamics of European secularism, the historical trauma of religious wars, and the urgent need for global reconciliation after World War II. Nurcholish Madjid articulated the structure of his thought within the realm of Indonesian Islamic intellectual tradition that directly confronts the dialectic of democratic consolidation, the management of ethnic-religious diversity, and the process of nation-building. Madjid's struggle revolves around efforts to harmonize Islamic identity, global modernity, Indonesianness, and democratic national values.

A conceptual synthesis that can be abstracted from the dialectic of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid's thought emphasizes that the project of religious moderation requires two main, integral foundations. The first foundation embodies the absolute recognition of the maintenance of property rights and human dignity as objective values that are universal and transcend dogmatic boundaries. The second foundation demands the availability and sociological commitment of every religious entity to actively engage in dialectical discourse without sacrificing the particularity of its authentic theological identity. The construction of this theoretical synthesis breaks the erroneous assumption that equates inclusiveness with shallow theological fusion or syncretism in the public sphere. This conceptual formulation opens up space for the articulation of a new model of religiosity that possesses solid theological depth while displaying high sociological flexibility in social interactions.

The Implications of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid's Thoughts on Strengthening Religious Moderation in Indonesia

The theoretical articulations inherited by Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid possess a highly transformative level of contextual relevance to the acceleration of the project of strengthening religious moderation in the domestic sphere. The substantial ideas of these two thinkers provide a rich epistemological supply to unravel the problem of identity tensions that often threaten the sociopolitical stability of the Indonesian nation. The conceptualizations they offer do not remain sterile artifacts of academic thought in the ivory tower, but rather serve as analytical instruments to engineer the reality of religiosity to be more inclusive.

The application of this inclusive-dialogical thinking is a crucial need in efforts to reduce the tendency of radicalization and socio-religious polarization that have the potential to undermine national integration. Küng and Madjid's conceptual framework offers an alternative methodology for transforming the potential for communitarian conflict into a constructive energy for peace through a series of structural adaptations across various sectors of societal life.

The practical implementation of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid's ideas in education is realized through the reconstruction of the national curriculum based on pluralist values and interreligious dialogical methodology. Educational institutions in this new paradigm are designed to function beyond simply transferring exclusive and segregative doctrinal knowledge. Religious theology learning is reformulated to foster students' critical awareness of the existential urgency of peaceful coexistence amidst a multicultural reality. Pedagogical materials are not merely directed at strengthening internal faith but are expanded to develop multicultural intelligence and social empathy toward communities of other faiths. This sociopedagogical approach positions the classroom as a mini-laboratory of inclusivism, where theological prejudices are eroded and the foundations of moderate character are sown from an early age (RI, 2019).

Transformations in the sociological realm demonstrate that the adoption of the concepts of global ethics and Islamic pluralism has direct implications for strengthening the structure of social cohesion and civil solidarity across religious boundaries. These substantive values serve as the legitimate basis for the formation, development, and institutionalization of various collaborative humanitarian programs that actively involve various faith communities. Concrete collaborations in the areas of poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability advocacy, and disaster mitigation can break down the walls of theological suspicion between citizens. These collective humanitarian-based activities create a space for intensive encounters that gradually eliminate negative stigmas and socio-religious biases embedded in society's collective memory. The social solidarity built through this concrete humanitarian work strengthens the community's resilience in countering provocations based on religious sentiment (Hefner, 2011).

The public policy formulation sector demonstrates that the substance of the thoughts of these two figures provides significant theoretical contributions in strengthening the legitimacy of the religious moderation agenda mainstreamed by the state. Fundamental principles such as a complete national commitment, active tolerance, non-violence, and respect for local traditions align with the pillars of Küng and Madjid's thought. State policy in managing religious affairs has a strong philosophical anchor, so that the resulting regulations are oriented towards protecting the constitutional rights of all citizens without discrimination. The thoughts of these two figures justify the role of the state as a fair facilitator in maintaining a balance between religious freedom and maintaining public order. This synergy between intellectual thought and public policy instruments ensures that religious moderation does not become trapped as a temporary political slogan.

The integration of the academic contributions and practical significance of the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid ultimately emphasizes the vital role of inclusive theology in safeguarding the future of democratic consolidation in Indonesia. The ideas offered by these two thinkers provide a comprehensive roadmap for the formation of a resilient, tolerant, and emancipatory civil society in expressing its spiritual identity. The successful internalization of these dialogical values ensures that the democratization process is not hijacked by manipulative and divisive sectarian political interests. The piety of religious rituals is successfully converged with the socio-political piety of citizens within the framework of a rational and inclusive national consensus. The inheritance of this theological-philosophical thought becomes a valuable cultural modality for the Indonesian nation to maintain harmony, justice, and peace amid the dynamics of contemporary global civilization.

Critique of the Thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid in the Context of Religious Moderation

Every intellectual idea inherently has both contributions and limitations. Similarly, the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid, while providing an important foundation for the development of tolerance and interfaith dialogue, are not without criticism. A critical study of these two figures is crucial so that their thoughts are not merely understood normatively but can be evaluated based on their relevance to contemporary social realities.

1. Critique of Hans Küng's Thought

Hans Küng is widely known for his idea of Global Ethics, which seeks to find universal moral values acceptable to all world religions. According to Hans Küng, world peace can only be achieved through a shared ethical agreement that transcends religious, cultural, and national boundaries. This idea has gained widespread appreciation for its ability to open up space for more constructive interfaith dialogue (Küng, 2004).

However, a number of academics believe that the concept of Global Ethics tends to be normative and idealistic. Küng is considered to overemphasize shared values between religions without adequately addressing the structural factors that often underlie conflict, such as economic inequality, political power struggles, and social injustice. In many cases, conflicts that appear to be religious are actually more related to socio-political issues than simply theological differences.

Furthermore, Küng's concept of universal ethics has also drawn criticism from some who believe that each religious tradition has unique characteristics and moral foundations. Therefore, attempts to formulate universal values applicable to all religions are considered to potentially oversimplify the complexity of diverse religious traditions. This criticism suggests that interreligious dialogue requires an approach that not only emphasizes similarities but also respects the real differences among religious communities.

2. Criticism of Nurcholish Madjid's Thoughts

As one of Indonesia's leading Islamic reformers, Nurcholish Madjid successfully introduced an inclusive, democratic, and open-minded Islamic paradigm. His thinking has made significant contributions to the development of discourse on pluralism and religious moderation in Indonesia.

However, Nurcholish Madjid's thinking has not been without criticism. Some conservative Muslim groups believe that his ideas of pluralism have the potential to blur the boundaries of religious identity (Barton, 1999). They argue that too much emphasis on pluralism can create the impression that all religions have equal standing in theological matters, even though Nurcholish Madjid himself never taught religious relativism.

Another criticism concerns the implementation of his ideas in public life. Nurcholish Madjid's ideas have flourished in academic circles, intellectual organizations, and urban educated circles. However, their influence has not yet fully reached the grassroots, who are often still influenced by exclusive religious understandings. As a result, there is a gap between the development of pluralist discourse at the intellectual level and religious practices at the societal level (Azra, 2002).

Furthermore, criticism has emerged that an approach that overemphasizes rationality and openness could potentially face resistance from groups that prioritize a textual approach to understanding religion. This situation suggests that disseminating the idea of pluralism requires a more contextual strategy to achieve acceptance across all levels of society.

3. Critical Synthesis of the Thoughts of the Two Figures

Despite these criticisms, the ideas of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid remain strongly relevant in responding to the challenges of religious diversity in contemporary Indonesia. The critique of Hans Küng demonstrates the importance of considering the socio-political dimension in building interfaith peace, while the critique of Nurcholish Madjid reminds us of the need for broader implementation strategies to ensure that the idea of pluralism does not remain confined to the academic realm.

In Indonesia's multicultural context, a synthesis of the thoughts of these two figures can provide an important foundation for strengthening religious moderation. Hans Küng provides a universal ethical framework emphasizing shared human values, while Nurcholish Madjid offers an Islamic theological foundation that supports respect for diversity. The combination of the two allows for the formation of a religious paradigm that is not only conceptually inclusive but also socially and practically relevant.

Thus, while not free from criticism, the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid have made significant contributions to the development of interfaith dialogue, tolerance, and religious moderation in Indonesia. The primary strength of both figures lies in their efforts to utilize religion as a means of building peace and human solidarity in an increasingly pluralistic and complex society.

Contribution of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid's Thoughts to the Development of the Study of Religions

The thinking of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid has made significant contributions to the development of religious studies, particularly in the study of interfaith relations, pluralism, and interfaith

dialogue. Both figures sought to shift the exclusivist approach to religion toward a more open and dialogical paradigm. In an academic context, their thinking helped broaden the understanding that religion can be studied not only as a belief system but also as a source of values that contribute to peace and social cohesion.

Hans Küng's contribution lies in the development of the concept of Global Ethics, which emphasizes the importance of universal values as the basis for interfaith relations. Through this concept, Küng demonstrated that all major world religions possess moral values that can serve as a meeting point for building global cooperation. His thinking provided a theoretical foundation for the development of interfaith dialogue, which is now a crucial field in the study of religions.

Meanwhile, Nurcholish Madjid's contribution is evident in his efforts to develop an inclusive, democratic, and open-minded Islamic paradigm that embraces diversity (Abidin, 2014). His thinking successfully reconciled Islamic values with modern principles such as democracy, human rights, and pluralism. In the Indonesian context, these ideas have significantly contributed to the development of moderate Islamic discourse and the strengthening of harmonious religious life.

For the discipline of religious studies, the thoughts of these two figures demonstrate that religion should not be understood as a source of conflict and disagreement. Instead, religion can serve as a source of ethics, dialogue, and human solidarity. Therefore, the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid remain relevant as academic references in developing studies of religious diversity, tolerance, and moderation in Indonesia and globally.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the rise of religious exclusivism and the crisis of tolerance in Indonesia pose serious challenges to pluralistic societies. This phenomenon is influenced not only by theological factors but also by social dynamics, identity politics, and the development of digital media, which exacerbate polarization. A comparative analysis of the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid reveals that both figures reject excessive exclusivism and emphasize the importance of dialogue, respect for human dignity, and interfaith cooperation. Hans Küng offers the concept of Global Ethics as a universal ethical foundation for world peace, while Nurcholish Madjid develops an inclusive Islamic paradigm that accepts diversity as part of God's will.

The similarities and differences in the thinking of these two figures yield a conceptual synthesis relevant to strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia. Religious moderation requires not only tolerance of differences but also a commitment to universal human values and a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue. Thus, the thoughts of Hans Küng and Nurcholish Madjid can serve as a theoretical and practical basis for building a more inclusive, tolerant, and harmonious Indonesian society amidst the increasingly complex reality of religious diversity.

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