INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AS THE BASIS FOR INCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS POLICY: REINTERPRETING THE THOUGHT OF A. MUKTI ALI IN THE CONTEXT OF INDONESIAN PLURALISM

DIALOG ANTARAGAMA SEBAGAI LANDASAN KEBIJAKAN KEAGAMAAN INKLUSIF: ANALISIS PEMIKIRAN A. MUKTI ALI DALAM KONTEKS PLURALISME INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study examines interfaith dialogue as the basis for the formation of inclusive religious policies through a reinterpretation of A. Mukti Ali's thinking in the context of Indonesian pluralism. The focus of the study is on how Mukti Ali's ideas on dialogue can be translated into principles of religious governance that uphold citizen equality, respect for diversity, and the strengthening of social cohesion. This study uses a qualitative approach based on literature review, combining qualitative content analysis and hermeneutic interpretation to trace the works of A. Mukti Ali, both academic texts and policy documents related to his tenure as Minister of Religious Affairs, in order to critically reconstruct the paradigmatic relevance of his thinking for the development of inclusive religious policy in Indonesia. Based on the analysis, three key elements were found that make Mukti Ali's thinking significant for the formulation of Indonesia's current religious policy. First, he positioned interfaith dialogue as an operational social instrument through the

strengthening of interfaith communication forums and the creation of meeting spaces to build mutual understanding. Second, he offered a concept of religious policy that rejected exclusivism by emphasizing inclusiveness as an ethical principle in state-religion relations. Third, the dialogical framework he proposed provides a practical basis for responding to polarization, intolerance, and radicalism that threaten social integration. In conclusion, this reinterpretation of Mukti Ali's thinking shows that interfaith dialogue is not merely a normative idea, but a conceptual foundation that can strengthen the direction of civilized public policy in Indonesia's multireligious society.

Keywords: *A. Mukti Ali, Inclusive Theology, Interfaith Dialogue, Public Policy, Religious Pluralism.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dialog antaragama sebagai landasan pembentukan kebijakan agama inklusif melalui reinterpretasi pemikiran A. Mukti Ali dalam konteks pluralisme Indonesia. Fokus penelitian ini adalah bagaimana gagasan Mukti Ali tentang dialog dapat diimplementasikan menjadi prinsip-prinsip tata kelola agama yang menjunjung tinggi kesetaraan warga negara, penghormatan terhadap keragaman, dan penguatan kohesi sosial. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berdasarkan tinjauan literatur, menggabungkan analisis konten kualitatif dan interpretasi hermeneutik untuk melacak karya-karya A. Mukti Ali, baik teks akademik maupun dokumen kebijakan yang terkait dengan masa jabatannya sebagai Menteri Agama, guna merekonstruksi secara kritis relevansi paradigmatis pemikirannya bagi pengembangan kebijakan agama inklusif di Indonesia. Berdasarkan analisis, tiga unsur kunci ditemukan yang menjadikan pemikiran Mukti Ali signifikan bagi formulasi kebijakan agama Indonesia saat ini. Pertama, ia memposisikan dialog antaragama sebagai alat sosial operasional melalui penguatan forum komunikasi antaragama dan penciptaan ruang pertemuan untuk membangun pemahaman bersama. Kedua, ia mengusulkan konsep kebijakan agama yang menolak eksklusivisme dengan menekankan inklusivitas sebagai prinsip etis dalam hubungan negara-agama. Ketiga, kerangka dialogis yang ia usulkan memberikan dasar praktis untuk menanggapi polarisasi, intoleransi, dan radikalisme yang mengancam integrasi sosial. Kesimpulannya, reinterpretasi pemikiran Mukti Ali ini menunjukkan bahwa dialog antaragama bukan sekadar gagasan normatif, tetapi landasan konseptual yang dapat memperkuat arah kebijakan publik yang beradab dalam masyarakat multireligius Indonesia.

Kata kunci: A. Mukti Ali, Dialog Antaragama, Kebijakan Publik, Pluralisme Agama, Teologi Inklusif

INTRODUCTION

Religious plurality is a fundamental characteristic of Indonesian society and influences social dynamics and public policies that regulate religious life. Although Indonesia has a constitutional framework that affirms the guarantee of freedom of religion, various religious policies at the practical level still show ambivalence between a commitment to inclusiveness and a tendency toward exclusivism. A number of regulations related to the establishment of houses of worship, recognition of religions, and protection of minority groups indicate that plurality has not been fully managed through an equitable and dialogical

approach (Siahaan, 2020). This situation underscores the need for a strong philosophical foundation to ensure that religious public policy is consistent with the principles of justice and respect for diversity.

In a global context, the discourse on interfaith dialogue has undergone significant developments through the ideas of figures such as Hans Küng and his concept of global ethics. He emphasizes the commonality of basic moral values among religions and has established a global ethics movement to support peace across faiths (Nugroho, Dhedhu, & Saeng, 2023). Diana Eck with her pluralism project, as she emphasizes the importance of active involvement in diversity, understanding across differences, and dialogue based on religious commitment (Eck, 2021). Raimon Panikkar on intra-religious dialogue, emphasizing the importance of finding a "place" within oneself to accept diversity of beliefs before one can engage in sincere dialogue (Tarigan, 2016). Paul Knitter on pluralistic theology and interfaith cooperation, as he sees suffering as a meeting point for cooperation and strengthening interfaith dialogue (Knitter, 2022). And José Casanova emphasized the importance of religion's role in the modern public sphere, positioning interfaith dialogue as a means to combat intolerance and strengthen religion's contribution to inclusive social development (Hermawan & Murjoko, 2025). These various ideas show that interfaith dialogue is not only a theological issue, but also part of the study of public policy, democracy, and diversity management. Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population and a highly diverse social structure, is in a strategic position to develop an inclusive religious policy model and contribute to the global conversation on managing plurality.

In the Indonesian intellectual landscape, A. Mukti Ali is one of the key figures who offers a systematic framework for interfaith dialogue. He is a Muslim intellectual and former Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia during the New Order era who introduced the concept of interfaith dialogue as a means to deepen understanding and cooperation across faiths. His idea of scientific-cum-doctrinaire emphasizes that dialogue is not intended to standardize beliefs, but rather to broaden rational understanding while remaining rooted in faith. The concept of concourse, or "moving together towards progress," positions dialogue as a collaborative process to maintain peaceful coexistence and build a public space that enables interfaith cooperation (Anwar, 2018). This idea makes an important contribution to formulating a public theology approach and policy framework that is more responsive to the complexities of Indonesia's plurality.

Based on this background, the focus of this study is to analyze A. Mukti Ali's thoughts on interfaith dialogue and examine its relevance in the development of inclusive religious policies in Indonesia. From this focus, the objectives of this study are (1) to describe the concept of interfaith dialogue according to A. Mukti Ali, (2) to explain the relationship between this idea and the principle of pluralism in the Indonesian context, and (3) to identify the implications of this thinking for the development of more open and dialogical religious policies.

The literature review and research gap indicate that a number of previous studies have highlighted A. Mukti Ali's thoughts from various perspectives. Among them, Rizal et al., (2022) discuss religious moderation and social values in Mukti Ali's thoughts, emphasizing the importance of harmony and social harmony in a pluralistic society. Anandari, (2024) examines the implementation of Mukti Ali's thoughts in promoting religious pluralism and social stability in Indonesia through an inclusive, dialogical, and educational approach. Asror, (2022) examines Mukti Ali's educational thoughts based on a scientific-cum-doctrinaire approach, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive and adaptive religious education in keeping up with the times. Wahid, (2021) reviews the relevance of Mukti Ali's thoughts in the development of inclusive and adaptive religious education in Indonesia. These studies have shown that there is contemporary attention to the social, moderation, and educational aspects of Mukti Ali's thoughts in the context of pluralism and religious inclusiveness in Indonesia (Rizal et al., 2022).

However, these studies have not yet thoroughly discussed the relevance of Mukti Ali's thinking as a philosophical basis for integrated inclusive religious policy, so this study occupies a strategic position to fill this gap. This is where the problem of this study lies, namely how Mukti Ali's dialogical thinking can be positioned as a normative basis for reformulating religious public policy that is more just, equal, and open. The novelty of this research lies in the reinterpretation of A. Mukti Ali's interfaith dialogue thinking not merely as a theological-historical discourse, but as a normative and operational framework for the formulation of inclusive religious policies in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies, which generally place Mukti Ali in the context of the history of Islamic thought or the practice of interfaith dialogue during the New Order era, this study explicitly shifts the analysis to the realm of policy studies, showing how the concept of dialogue as a method can be transformed into applicable public policy principles in the governance of contemporary religious pluralism.

In addition, this study presents a novelty by positioning Mukti Ali's thoughts in a critical dialogue with global discourses on interreligious dialogue, religious governance, and public theology. Through this approach, this study formulates a conceptual model of interfaith dialogue that functions as a mechanism for participation, mediation, and policy legitimation in a pluralistic society, thereby expanding the relevance of Mukti Ali's thinking beyond the national context of Indonesia.

Thus, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research expands the study of interfaith dialogue from a public policy perspective. Practically, this research can be used as a reference for the formulation of religious policies that better respect diversity and uphold tolerance. Ultimately, the significance of this research lies in its efforts to strengthen the theological and philosophical foundations for the development of a peaceful, inclusive, and civilized Indonesian society in the face of the challenges of plurality and globalization.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in qualitative content analysis and hermeneutic interpretation (Sukmana et al., 2025), conducted between August and November 2025. The combination of these two approaches enables both a systematic examination of textual data and a critical interpretation of the intellectual, historical, and socio-political contexts in which A. Mukti Ali's ideas on interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism were formulated and articulated. This methodological integration is particularly suited to studies that aim to reinterpret classical religious thought in relation to contemporary policy discourses.

As a literature-based study, the data were derived exclusively from written sources. The selection of sources followed explicit, transparent, and replicable criteria to ensure analytical rigor. Primary sources consist of two major works by A. Mukti Ali published between 1972 and 1993, selected because they explicitly articulate his views on interfaith dialogue, inclusive theology, and interreligious relations. These texts constitute the core analytical corpus through which Mukti Ali's conceptual framework is reconstructed. Secondary sources comprise 42 scholarly works, including peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, dissertations, academic monographs, and research reports published between 2012 and 2025. The inclusion of secondary literature was based on three criteria: thematic

relevance to religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue, theoretical contribution to public theology and religious governance, and the use of analytical approaches relevant to policy studies.

Data analysis was conducted through three interrelated stages. First, a systematic coding process was applied to identify key concepts (Adibah, 2018), categories, and recurring themes within the primary texts, such as dialogue, pluralism, inclusivity, and religious maturity. Second, thematic categorization was employed to organize these concepts into analytical clusters, enabling comparison between Mukti Ali's ideas and contemporary discussions on interreligious dialogue and religious governance. Third, hermeneutic interpretation was used to critically examine the meaning and implications of these themes by situating them within Indonesia's evolving socio-political and policy contexts. This stage allows for a reinterpretation of Mukti Ali's thought not merely as a historical discourse, but as a conceptual resource for contemporary religious policy analysis.

To enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, this study applied source triangulation by systematically comparing interpretations across primary and secondary texts. In addition, the principle of theoretical saturation was used to determine data adequacy, ensuring that no new conceptual insights emerged at the final stage of analysis. Reflexivity was also maintained throughout the research process to minimize interpretive bias, particularly in linking normative religious concepts with policy-oriented analysis.

Through this strengthened methodological framework, the study provides a robust and transparent basis for reinterpreting A. Mukti Ali's thought as a conceptual foundation for interfaith dialogue and the formulation of inclusive religious policies in Indonesia.

DISCUSSION
A Brief Overview of A. Mukti Ali

Prof. Dr. K.H. Abdul Mukti Ali (1923–2004) was one of Indonesia's Muslim intellectuals who played an important role in the development of interfaith dialogue and religious policy in Indonesia. He studied religion at various Islamic boarding schools in Java (Zuhri, 2021), as well as formal and academic education in Indonesia and abroad, including Islamic History at the University of Karachi and a doctorate in Comparative Religion at McGill University, Canada. This

educational background, which combined Islamic scholarship and a modern academic approach, shaped his dialogical and inclusive religious perspective.

In his public career, Mukti Ali served as Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia from 1971 to 1978 (Rahman, 2019). During this period, he played an important role in strengthening interfaith dialogue and formulating religious policies that were responsive to the plurality of Indonesian society. The combination of intellectual capacity, bureaucratic experience, and social sensitivity made Mukti Ali a key figure in the history of Indonesian religious thought, particularly in bridging the relationship between religion, the state, and a diverse society.

The Concept of Interfaith Dialogue According to A. Mukti Ali

One of A. Mukti Ali's most fundamental ideas in the history of modern Indonesian religious thought is the concept of interfaith dialogue (Sholihin et al., 2025). This idea emerged in response to the needs of Indonesia's highly diverse population, in terms of religion, ethnicity, and culture, to find a peaceful and productive form of interfaith relations. The historical background of this idea's emergence is rooted in the socio-political context of the New Order era, when Mukti Ali served as Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (1971–1978). At that time, the government faced various interfaith tensions, both theological and social, which necessitated a new approach to building more constructive religious relations. Mukti Ali realized that dogmatic and apologetic approaches that emphasized the singular truth of a religion had the potential to cause conflict. Therefore, he proposed that each religion should not only be studied from within, but also understood from without, namely by opening a space for dialogue that would enable mutual understanding among followers of different religions (Rambe, 2017).

In The Modern Islamic Mind in India and Pakistan, H. A. Mukti Ali emphasizes that interfaith dialogue is a meeting of hearts and minds between followers of different religions, where each party can freely express their beliefs, respect each other, and understand one another, thereby strengthening personal beliefs while promoting harmonious social cooperation (H. A. M. Ali, 1993). Therefore, for him, interfaith dialogue is not merely an academic discourse, but also a way of life that requires the active involvement of every believer in building bridges of humanity amid differences in beliefs. According to him, interfaith dialogue is a meeting of hearts and minds between followers of different religions based on mutual respect and love (Albab, 2019). This dialogue

serves as a forum for communication among believers to discover shared truths and build cooperation on various matters of public interest. Through this dialogue, religious communities are invited to find common ground amid the real differences that exist in religious diversity.

He emphasizes that true dialogue can only occur when each party views the other as a partner, not an opponent, in the search for shared truth and peace. In his various writings, Mukti Ali formulates three main principles of dialogue, namely mutual understanding, mutual respect, and mutual cooperation or interfaith cooperation (Sila, 2024). These three principles form the pillars of dialogical ethics that guide religious communities to move away from exclusivity towards openness rooted in respect for human dignity. The principle of mutual understanding encourages each religion to understand the teachings of other religions honestly and objectively; mutual respect teaches the importance of respecting the uniqueness of other people's faith without having to sacrifice one's personal beliefs; while mutual cooperation emphasizes the importance of working together on humanitarian issues that transcend religious boundaries, such as social justice, poverty, and world peace.

In addition, Mukti Ali sees interfaith dialogue as a manifestation of the inclusive spirit of Islam and rahmatan lil 'alamin, which contains a universal message for all of humanity (Rambe, 2016). He believes that truth cannot be monopolized by any one group or religion, because every religion has noble values that guide humans toward God. In this view, dialogue is not intended to standardize doctrine, but rather to find common ground in humanity behind theological differences.

A. Mukti Ali's thinking, both philosophically and theologically, is rooted in the perspective that religion is not merely a collection of teachings and rituals, but rather a means for humans to draw closer to God and to organize a dignified and noble life. Therefore, he rejects an approach to religion that is purely apologetic, because, according to him, this closes off the possibility of true interfaith dialogue (Fatih, 2017). He believes that religion must be understood in the context of universal humanity and must be able to engage in dialogue with modern rationality (Nasution, Lubis, & Faishal, 2024). The philosophical basis emphasizes the importance of rationality and intellectual openness in understanding religious truth. He believes that truth is not singular in its formal form, but one in its substance, that is, it leads to the same God through diverse paths. Therefore, Mukti Ali developed an inclusive approach (inclusivism), in

which every religion is recognized as having truth value and the potential for salvation, despite differences in doctrinal formulations (Abizar, 2019).

Within his theological framework, A. Mukti Ali does not view religious plurality as a threat, but rather as divine will that enriches humanity's experience of God. He interprets Islamic teachings on religious diversity based on verses from the Qur'an that emphasize the importance of recognizing differences, such as Q.S. Al-Hujurat (49:13), which affirms that humans were created in tribes and nations so that they may know one another (Sofnita, 2018). With this interpretation, Mukti Ali seeks to construct a dialogical theology—a theology that not only speaks about God, but also about human relations within the framework of universal humanity. He rejects the view of theological exclusivism that claims that only one religion is true and rejects absolute claims to salvation. Instead, Mukti Ali promotes an open-ended theological approach that opens space for interfaith encounters and mutual learning.

A. Mukti Ali's thinking is closely related to John Hick's theory of religious pluralism, especially in terms of the view that all major world religions are essentially human responses to the same Ultimate Reality (Fuaddin, 2022). Like Hick, Mukti Ali sees religious differences as being more a matter of historical and cultural forms than of divine substance. However, Mukti Ali still emphasizes the uniqueness of Islam as a revealed religion that affirms the balance between faith and reason, between obedience to God and openness to others (Nuriawati & Maragustam, 2022). In this case, he developed what could be called "contextual theological pluralism," a form of pluralism that does not erase Islamic identity but uses it as a basis for dialogue and cooperation with other religious communities. This view also demonstrates the influence of a global theological approach, namely the effort to understand religion from a universal perspective without losing sight of its particular context.

Paradigm Scientific-Cum-Doctrinaire

Paradigm *scientific-cum-doctrinaire* is a methodological concept unique to A. Mukti Ali, born out of his concern about two extreme tendencies in religious studies in Indonesia (Syarifuddin, 2023): First, the normative-doctrinal approach, which tends to be exclusive and views other religions through the lens of a particular religion's internal theology; second, the scientific-secular approach, which attempts to understand religion as if it were a purely empirical object, thereby ignoring the dimension of belief that lives within its adherents. Mukti Ali argues that neither approach is entirely wrong, but they become

inadequate when used in isolation and in a confrontational manner. As a country that is pluralistic in terms of religion, ethnicity, and culture, Indonesia needs a paradigm that can bridge the epistemological gap between faith and science, between theological belief and rational openness, and between claims of religious truth and the need to live together in a pluralistic society. This is what led to the emergence of the scientific-cum-doctrinaire paradigm as a synthetic approach that rejects rigid dichotomies and offers a creative middle ground.

On the scientific dimension, Mukti Ali argues that religion must be studied using the analytical tools of social sciences and humanities (Trisnani, Awaludin, & Fadhilah, 2022). Religion, in his view, is not only something that is believed in, but also something that is lived and manifested in social practice. Therefore, a historical approach is necessary to understand the development of teachings, rituals, institutions, and traditions that shape religious experience. Anthropological and sociological approaches help us see how religion influences social structures, interactions between religious communities, and the formation of group identities. Even psychological approaches provide insight into the inner experiences and spiritual dynamics of religious individuals. With these scientific tools, the study of religion no longer stops at normative and dogmatic claims, but has developed into an objective analysis capable of explaining factual phenomena in the field. According to Mukti Ali, a scientific approach is very important to prevent exclusivism and suspicion between religions, because it opens up space for a more rational understanding that is free from prejudice.

However, the scientific aspect alone is never sufficient in understanding religion (Irwan, 2022). This is because religion is not merely a social phenomenon, but also a system of beliefs that is considered sacred and absolute by its adherents. This is where Mukti Ali introduces the doctrinaire dimension, namely the recognition that every religion has internal doctrines that must be respected and cannot be reduced to mere social facts. The doctrinaire approach recognizes the importance of revelation, sacred tradition, dogma, and worship practices that live in the religious consciousness of the people. For Mukti Ali, understanding religion without respecting its internal beliefs is like studying the body without the soul: the analysis may be empirically complete, but it loses the deepest meaning that is at the core of religiosity. Therefore, he emphasizes that religious studies must continue to give space to the theological perspectives of each religion and not underestimate the claims of truth believed by their adherents. For him, this attitude of respecting doctrine does not hinder scientific

objectivity but rather supports mutual respect in the context of interfaith dialogue.

The integration of these two approaches is at the heart of the scientific-cum-doctrinaire paradigm. Mukti Ali does not view the scientific and doctrinal aspects as two mutually exclusive domains, but rather as two sources of knowledge that correct, complement, and enrich each other. The scientific approach helps one understand religion objectively and critically, while the doctrinal approach helps one understand sacred values that are believed in. This synthesis produces a dialogical, empathetic, and non-simplistic understanding of religion. Through this integration, the study of religion becomes more balanced: scientific in observation, but still relational and empathetic in meaning. Mukti Ali believes that interfaith dialogue cannot be achieved if one of these dimensions is ignored. Dialogue that relies solely on scientific rationality will lose its religious warmth; while dialogue that relies solely on theological claims will be trapped in dogmatic defense and close the space for encounter. The synergy of the two creates a space where religion can be studied with both the heart and the mind.

In the context of public policy and religious life in Indonesia, the scientific-cum-doctrinaire paradigm has made a very important contribution (Saputro, 2022). Mukti Ali believes that the state should not be exclusive towards any particular religion, as this has the potential to cause tension and injustice for other religions. However, he also rejects extreme secularization that removes religious values from the public sphere. According to him, religious policy must be based on a scientific understanding of the pluralistic reality of Indonesian society, while remaining sensitive to the religious values embraced by citizens. Thus, the state can develop policies that guarantee freedom of religion, strengthen tolerance, and encourage interfaith cooperation without interfering in the internal doctrines of religion. This approach makes religion a partner in national development, rather than a source of conflict or a tool for political legitimacy.

Reinterpreting Mukti Ali's Thought in the Context of Indonesian Pluralism

Mukti Ali's thoughts on religious pluralism demonstrate a systematic effort to modernize Islamic studies and build harmony among religious communities (Ali, 1969). By rejecting four approaches, namely syncretism, reconception, synthesis, and replacement, Mukti Ali seeks to emphasize that all methods that obscure religious identity or impose uniformity are not in line with the essence

of religion or the reality of a diverse society. He then chooses the approach of agreeing to disagree, which is an attitude that recognizes the uniqueness of each religion while still respecting similarities and differences (Usman, 2023). This tolerant attitude, which was greatly influenced by the thinking of his teacher, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, became the basis for the development of Comparative Religion studies and the discourse of pluralism in Indonesia. The social and religious environment in Indonesia was a decisive factor in the formation and development of A. Mukti Ali's ideas on interfaith dialogue. As a country founded on the principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity), Indonesia has a very complex reality of pluralism, where various religions, ethnicities, cultures, and traditions coexist within a single national framework. However, this complexity does not always run harmoniously. Indonesia's modern history, especially since the late 20th century to the contemporary era, has seen the emergence of various serious challenges, ranging from increasing intolerance and theological exclusivism to the politicization of religion, which has the potential to erode social cohesion and national brotherhood (Nendissa, Simamora, & Rotua, 2025). This phenomenon confirms the limitations of managing plurality without dialogical awareness, as emphasized by A. Mukti Ali through his approach of agreeing to disagree. Within Mukti Ali's framework, religious differences should be recognized as a reality that does not need to be negated, but rather managed through dialogue that enables mutual understanding and social responsibility. However, the contemporary context shows that without the institutionalization of participatory and sustainable dialogue, plurality can easily be manipulated into a source of conflict and social fragmentation.

In the context of globalization, the flow of information and transnational ideologies further complicates the dynamics of diversity in Indonesia (Robi & Kholifah, 2025). The penetration of global discourse through digital media and the influx of rigid religious ideologies often trigger polarization, give rise to stereotypes between religious communities, and cause social conflict at the grassroots level. This reality shows that the challenge of religious diversity in Indonesia is not merely a matter of differences in belief, but rather how society interprets, understands, and manages these differences in the context of rapid and multidimensional social change. This is where the relevance of A. Mukti Ali's thinking emerges as a critical and progressive conceptual answer.

From the outset, Mukti Ali emphasized the importance of an inclusive, rational, and open approach to interfaith dialogue. For him, interfaith dialogue is not merely an exchange of ideas or a symbolic formality, but a means of

building a shared awareness of the social responsibility of religious communities to maintain peace, justice, and harmony in society (Rambe, 2017). He reminded us that openness to differences in faith does not threaten individual beliefs, but rather deepens each party's understanding and experience of faith. In other words, true dialogue requires active engagement, empathy, and respect for the other party's perspective, resulting in constructive social interaction.

The relevance of Mukti Ali's ideas in the context of Indonesian pluralism is also evident in his ability to balance two crucial poles: religious freedom and social responsibility. According to Mukti Ali, religious freedom should not be exercised egoistically or absolutely; rather, it must be exercised within the framework of ethical awareness of the common welfare of the nation (Anandari, 2024). Religious diversity that is conscious of social responsibility can become a moral force that promotes solidarity, tolerance, and interfaith cooperation, rather than being a source of conflict or segregation. This view is in line with the concept of scientific-cum-doctrinaire dialogue, which combines theological reflection with critical and empirical analysis of social reality.

In the context of contemporary pluralism, Mukti Ali's reinterpretation of thought contains several significant points. First, he asserts that interfaith dialogue must be a normative foundation in socio-religious life, not merely a symbolic or administrative practice. Second, Mukti Ali's proposed inclusive and dialogical approach provides a basis for the development of religious policies that place the values of inclusivity, justice, and respect for differences as key principles. Third, Mukti Ali's ideas open up space for religious education that emphasizes empathy, openness, and social awareness as key competencies for religious communities in a pluralistic society.

These implications show that Mukti Ali's dialogical thinking does not stop at the normative level, but has direct relevance for the formulation of religious policy in Indonesia. In the context of religious policy in Indonesia, interfaith dialogue as formulated by A. Mukti Ali can be operationalized as an instrument of diversity management. Dialogue does not only function as a normative ethos, but as a policy mechanism institutionalized through interfaith consultative forums, religious conflict mediation procedures, and channels for public participation in the formulation of religious policy. Through this mechanism, dialogue plays a role in articulating the interests of religious groups, reducing the potential for conflict, and providing social legitimacy to state policies in managing religious pluralism.

Interfaith Dialogue as the Basis for Formulating Inclusive Religious Policies

A. Mukti Ali's thoughts on interfaith dialogue do not stop at the conceptual level, but find practical relevance in the field of public policy, particularly inclusive religious policy. The dialogical ideas he offers become the normative foundation for the state's efforts to formulate policies that guarantee freedom of religion while fostering a spirit of interfaith unity. According to Mukti Ali, the state has a responsibility to create a conducive space for religious communities to live side by side in peace without suspicion and domination of one group over another. He strongly emphasizes that religious pluralism must be recognized and respected as a social reality inherent in Indonesia, and that the state, through the philosophy of Pancasila, must be the philosophical and pragmatic foundation for fostering religious harmony (Abizar, 2019). The state must guarantee freedom of religion with ethical awareness so that harmonious relations between religious communities can be created, suspicion can be eliminated, and the domination of one group over another can be rejected. This concept also includes national responsibility in inclusive nation-building based on respect for religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Mukti Ali invites all elements of society to work together to maintain conducive and harmonious social conditions through dialogue and mutual understanding among religious communities (Lestari, 2020).

This thinking was reflected in the policy direction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs during Mukti Ali's tenure as Minister of Religious Affairs (1971-1978). He emphasized the importance of religious studies in higher education as a means of broadening religious awareness and fostering tolerance (Ahmad Rizal et al., 2022). In addition, he encouraged a scientific approach to religion as an alternative to dogmatic views that tend to be closed to differences. This legacy of thought influenced subsequent policies, including the establishment of the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), which serves as a forum for dialogue and mediation at the local level. The FKUB is a concrete manifestation of Mukti Ali's spirit of dialogue, which is to bring together religious leaders in an atmosphere of equality and openness to build joint solutions to the problems faced by the people.

In line with this, Mukti Ali's inclusive orientation is also reflected in the multicultural education policy promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Education is directed not only at instilling religious doctrine, but also at fostering empathy and appreciation for diversity in faith and culture. In this

context, interfaith dialogue serves as a policy paradigm that positions religion not as a source of division, but as a unifying force for the nation (Amtiran & Kriswibowo, 2024).

Relational Analysis between the Thoughts of A. Mukti Ali and the Theory of Global Pluralism

Mukti Ali's ideas have a conceptual depth that is in line with modern theological thought, particularly as developed by John Hick (Usman, 2023). Both share the same concern about religious exclusivism, which is often a source of social and theological conflict. John Hick, through his theory of pluralism, asserts that all religions are human responses to the same Ultimate Reality, differing only in their historical and cultural forms (Saumantri, 2023). According to Hick, differences between religions are not differences between right and wrong, but rather reflections of variations in human experience in understanding this Transcendent Reality. He distinguishes between the Real itself (noumenal) and the reality experienced by humans (phenomenal), so that religions represent different responses to the Ultimate Reality in historical and cultural forms. Thus, religious pluralism according to Hick recognizes the validity of various religious traditions as paths to truth, even though they differ in form, without monopolizing salvation or truth exclusively. In this perspective, truth and salvation are not monopolized by a particular religious tradition, but are a universal manifestation of God's love and grace that transcends the institutional boundaries of religion.

This idea finds strong resonance in the thinking of Mukti Ali who, although rooted in the Islamic tradition, rejects a theological attitude that closes itself off from the faith experiences of others. He teaches the principle of "agree in disagreement," which means accepting and respecting others and their beliefs and ways of life completely, without closing oneself off from dialogue and the faith experiences of others. This approach emphasizes dialogue and tolerance as a way of finding common ground in religious diversity and faith experiences (Anandari, 2024).

Unlike Hick, who emphasizes metaphysical universalism, Mukti Ali places pluralism within a more contextual socio-cultural framework. For him, religious plurality is an objective reality in Indonesian society that must be managed through a dialogical approach, not a confrontational one (Abizar, 2019). He rejects the reduction of pluralism to relativism, but understands it as an awareness of differences that must be transformed into moral strength to build a

shared life. This is where global pluralism and the Indonesian context converge: if Hick speaks of the Real as the center of all religious traditions, Mukti Ali speaks of the real society, namely Indonesia's diverse society, which requires a space for interaction that is fair, open, and mutually respectful.

Thus, this relational analysis shows that A. Mukti Ali successfully synthesized the global theological paradigm with the local reality of Indonesia. He presents pluralism not as an abstract theory, but as a social praxis relevant to policy and national life. Mukti Ali's thinking emphasizes that pluralism is not only about recognizing religious diversity, but also about the responsibility to build a social order that reflects justice, togetherness, and universal humanity (Basuki., 2025). Through the framework of interfaith dialogue, Mukti Ali succeeded in placing Indonesia in the global intellectual conversation on pluralism, while offering a model unique to Southeast Asia that combines theological rationality, cultural sensitivity, and commitment to nationalism.

Implications for Strengthening Religious Life in Indonesia

A. Mukti Ali's ideas had a significant impact on strengthening religious life in Indonesia, as his ideas guided religious communities to take a new direction in practicing their faith amid the diversity of modern society. For him, religion must be a moral and cultural force that drives national development through an inclusive, rational, and dialogical attitude in order to advance Indonesia's diverse society (Ali, 1972). His thinking emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue, which is not merely a discourse of passive tolerance, but an active effort to understand one another and build cooperation among religious adherents (Irfan, 2018). In the context of Indonesia, a nation composed of diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, this idea serves as a philosophical foundation for strengthening civilized religious life. According to A. Mukti Ali, a healthy religious life is one that is rooted in the recognition of the existence of "the other" as part of a social reality that cannot be ignored (Bahri., 2024). Therefore, an open and dialogical attitude towards diversity is a prerequisite for the creation of a peaceful and harmonious society.

The paradigm offered by A. Mukti Ali calls for renewal in religious policy and approaches at the national level (Zuhri, 2021). Religious life cannot be regulated solely through formal regulations; it also needs to be given space for active participation from people of different faiths. The government can draw inspiration from the concept of "interfaith dialogue" introduced by Mukti Ali during his leadership at the Ministry of Religious Affairs to strengthen a non-

monolithic model of religious policy. Participatory policies will foster a sense of ownership of national values and shared spirituality. In this framework, religious life is no longer viewed as a purely private matter, but also as a social arena that promotes solidarity and collective responsibility.

Mukti Ali's thinking calls for a reorientation of religious education from an exclusive and indoctrinative pattern towards a dialogical approach that fosters reflective abilities and openness to differences (Saputra et al., 2021). Within Mukti Ali's dialogical framework, religious education is not intended to reinforce claims of truth in a closed manner, but rather to shape religious maturity—a maturity that enables students to critically understand their own beliefs while respecting religious diversity. However, in the context of contemporary pluralism, this approach needs to be expanded so that religious education does not stop at shaping personal attitudes, but also equips students with social awareness and dialogical competencies that are relevant to living together in a pluralistic society. According to Windayani et al., (2024), religious education that instills values of inclusivity and social empathy will help the younger generation understand that mature faith grows from encountering differences, not from rejecting them. This education shapes multicultural awareness and positive attitudes toward diversity through the development of inclusive curricula and teacher training, thereby creating a tolerant learning environment that supports the development of inclusive character and mature faith. In this context, religious education curricula in schools and religious institutions can integrate the values of dialogue, interfaith cooperation, and universal human ethics that are at the core of Mukti Ali's thinking

Furthermore, the values of inclusivity promoted by Mukti Ali can serve as a basis for strengthening social cohesion amid increasing religious identity polarization. In a pluralistic society, religion is often a source of social tension, but through a relational and dialogical approach, religion can instead become an instrument of reconciliation and peace. According to Rahardjo (2021), the religious moderation that is developing in Indonesia today is actually a concrete realization of Mukti Ali's religious vision, which rejects extremism and emphasizes a balance between personal piety and social responsibility. Religious moderation is a way of believing that remains firm in one's own teachings, but at the same time is open to accepting differences. This attitude manifests itself in the form of tolerance, respect for diversity, and rejection of all forms of coercion in the name of religion. In Indonesia, this idea is increasingly important for maintaining harmony in society and preventing the spread of radical ideas

that easily influence those who have a narrow understanding of religion (Ali & Firmansyah, 2023). Thus, Mukti Ali's thinking is not only historically relevant, but also relevant in facing the challenges of radicalism and intolerance today.

In turn, Mukti Ali's conceptual contribution to strengthening religious life in Indonesia cannot be separated from his enthusiasm for grounding universal religious values in national life. For him, religion is not an entity separate from social reality, but a source of public ethics that fosters peace and justice. Therefore, his thinking guides religious communities in Indonesia to move from an exclusive paradigm to a relational and transformative paradigm. In practice, this can be realized through interfaith cooperation in the social, educational, and humanitarian fields, which also serves as a tangible manifestation of living faith. Through this, his ideas provide a new direction for the development of an inclusive, moderate, and common good-oriented religious life amid the ever-evolving global dynamics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research findings that confirm the relevance of A. Mukti Ali's thinking in the development of an interfaith dialogue paradigm, a number of academic implications can be formulated. Conceptually, the results of this study show that the scientific-cum-doctrinaire framework opens up space for an approach to religious studies that harmoniously integrates theological reflection and scientific analysis. The academic implication is the need to strengthen interdisciplinary research that examines the relationship between inclusive theology, public policy, and contemporary religious social dynamics. In addition, effective interfaith education must be built on the basis of pluralistic ethics and reflective-inclusive epistemology in order to foster empathy, dialogue, and awareness of peaceful coexistence in a diverse global world (Arjana, 2025). These findings also indicate opportunities to expand theoretical comparisons between the thinking of A. Mukti Ali and global pluralist thinkers such as John Hick, Hans Küng, or Raimon Panikkar, thereby deepening the horizon of pluralism studies in Indonesia. In the context of higher education, this research provides a theoretical basis for the development of a religious studies curriculum that places interfaith dialogue as an epistemological perspective, rather than merely a practical competency.

From a public policy perspective, the findings of this study provide several relevant policy implications. This study shows that A. Mukti Ali's dialogical

paradigm is in line with participatory policy theories that emphasize the importance of collaboration among stakeholders on issues of diversity. Thus, the values of openness, inclusiveness, and respect for differences have the potential to become a normative framework in the formulation of regulations on religious life (Wahid, 2021). These findings also indicate that institutions such as interfaith harmony forums function more effectively when understood as deliberative arenas that facilitate social learning, rather than merely administrative units. The policy implications suggest that integrating a dialogical approach into governance practices can strengthen social resilience and citizen cohesion amid diversity.

Furthermore, this study confirms that the interfaith dialogue practices developed by Mukti Ali contribute to the formation of a reflective and collaborative religious culture. From a policy perspective, this relates to social capital theories that place trust, interfaith networks, and cross-faith communication as prerequisites for social stability. Therefore, these findings indicate that mainstreaming the value of dialogue in cultural, educational, and social development policies has the potential to expand the space for interfaith encounters and strengthen community solidarity.

Therefore, this study opens up opportunities for further studies and policy research that place religious moderation as a theoretical and practical framework. The findings on Mukti Ali's dialogical approach can be used as a basis for critically assessing various existing religious policy models and testing their effectiveness in strengthening justice, humanity, and peace amid diversity. Thus, the academic and policy implications of this study contribute significantly to the discourse on inclusive social and religious development in Indonesia.

CLOSING

This study confirms that A. Mukti Ali's idea of interfaith dialogue is a significant contribution to building a theological and philosophical foundation for inclusive religious policies in Indonesia. The main issue raised, namely how Mukti Ali's thinking can respond to the challenges of pluralism and intolerance in Indonesian society, finds its answer through a dialogical approach that emphasizes mutual understanding, mutual respect, and interfaith cooperation. This idea does not stop at the conceptual level, but has practical relevance in strengthening religious and national life in the modern era.

Theoretically, Mukti Ali's thinking is rooted in the paradigm of inclusivism in Islamic theology and is in line with the principles of global pluralism developed by John Hick. By combining religious and rational dimensions, he has succeeded in building a bridge between faith and science in the context of a diverse nation. Through this relational approach, religion is understood not as a dividing identity, but as a space of encounter that unites humanity in universal humanity.

In practical terms, the dialogical values offered by Mukti Ali can be used as a basis for developing more participatory and inclusive public policies in the field of religion. This principle is reflected in the strengthening of institutions such as the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), multicultural education programs, and the religious moderation movement, which are now national policies. Thus, Mukti Ali's ideas are not only historically relevant but also applicable in addressing contemporary diversity issues.

In conclusion, this study shows that the interfaith dialogue model developed by A. Mukti Ali is an effective approach in balancing religious freedom and social responsibility amid Indonesia's plurality. His thinking emphasizes that harmony cannot be achieved through domination, but rather through encounters and cooperation based on respect for human dignity. With this foundation, religious life in Indonesia has the potential to develop towards a more just, harmonious, and civilized order. This study broadens the horizon of interfaith policy studies by linking Islamic dialogical theology with the public policy paradigm. Further studies need to develop an empirical model of dialogical value-based policy through surveys or case studies across religious institutions in Indonesia.

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