

Contemporary Theological Issues

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Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 12-12-2025 Approved: 29 -01-2026 Published: 2-03-2026	<p>Background: Contemporary issues faced by Muslims are closely linked to global political dynamics and rapid technological developments. Foreign policies of several Western countries are often perceived as interventions in the Muslim world, triggering resistance and conflict that influence Islamic thought and give rise to various theological responses. At the same time, technological advancement accelerates the penetration of global culture, bringing values such as secularism, pluralism, consumerism, and individualism.</p> <p>Objective: This study aims to understand emerging contemporary issues and to analyze how Islamic theology (kalam) responds to secularism, pluralism, radicalism, and technological modernity. It also seeks to reaffirm the true teachings of Islam in accordance with Islamic law through a contextual and critical approach.</p> <p>Method: The research employs a qualitative method using a library study approach. It analyzes the concept of aqidah and rational arguments in the science of kalam, while tracing its development from classical to contemporary periods in responding to modern challenges.</p> <p>Findings and Implications: The study finds that kalam provides a normative and rational foundation to address modern beliefs and global issues. Inspired by Muhammad Iqbal's emphasis on ijtihad, theology must encourage independent reasoning as a dynamic principle within Islam. This approach enables Muslims to critically engage with technological and global transformations.</p> <p>Conclusion: Kalam remains relevant in confronting contemporary technological and ideological challenges. Through critical ijtihad and contextual understanding, Islamic theology offers guidance to navigate modernity while preserving authentic Islamic principles.</p>
Keywords: secularism; pluralism; radicalism; theological views on modernity; theological approaches to global issues	

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary issues faced by Muslims are also inseparable from the influence of global politics (Ayoob & Lussier, 2020). The foreign policies of some Western countries are often seen as interventions in the Muslim world, which then triggers resistance and conflict. In my opinion, from the statement above, western countries that intervene in the affairs of countries whose

majority are Muslim, their intervention does not mean that they care or want sovereignty for the Muslims themselves, but they prioritize their own national interests such as economic, military, and even political benefits. Like the conflict that is currently occurring in Palestine with Israel, many countries are interfering in the ongoing conflict in Palestine, usually they argue to fight terrorism, maintain stability, uphold sovereignty but it turns out as we see now Palestine has not felt all of that, even the impact on them is greater such as the worsening food crisis, more bombs thrown at themselves (Khan, 2025).

So some of their intervention is not because of concern but because of interests. An issue is a form of contradictory or polemic information about a person or organization that is considered problematic (Baumgartner & Jones, 2024). It can be an opinion or an expression through gestures or words that have a specific meaning. Contemporary in the KBBI means simultaneous, current, or at the moment (Syarifudin et al., 2023). So the issue is information that gives rise to differences of opinion or creates problems, whether in the form of words or sarcasm that have a certain meaning (Ellethy, 2022).

Theology can be interpreted as a science that studies everything related to divinity (Van Den Toren, 2016). In the book, Harun Nasution says that theology is a science that discusses the basic teachings of a religion, as humans want to delve into the ins and outs of their religion in depth (Musa & Khaidir, 2023). So theology is a science that discusses religious teachings so that we can understand everything related to God, both in terms of nature and his relationship with humans, so that we can understand God more deeply and rationally (El-Naggar, 2024).

Thus emerged the science of kalam, a science that discusses beliefs in a religion and explains Aqidah in a rational way (Suryani & Ningsih, 2022). According to Musyrifah Sunanto, the science of kalam was born for two reasons, first to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings from attacks from other religions, especially Judaism and Christianity; second to solve religious problems that are increasingly complex from a philosophical and logical perspective. Ahmad Amin in his book *Duha Islam* added, in addition to external causes such as the expansion of Islam and attacks from other religions, the science of kalam was also born for internal reasons that exist within the Islamic community itself (Okawa, 2021).

There are three internal reasons that Ahmad Amin expressed in his book *Duha Islam* (Amin, 2018). First, the Quran often explains the concept of monotheism (belief in one God) in religion, this theology is not only explained through doctrine, but also logic. Second, With the success of Muslims in expanding their territory, And the third reason that initiated the birth of the science of kalam is political reasons, perhaps this is the most obvious reason

in giving birth to theological schools in Islam. The emergence of many theologies is influenced by several factors, they want to understand God to suit their minds. In fact, God can be understood by reason, there are also those who cannot be understood by reason. When someone thinks about God excessively, the result is that they can equate God with his creatures and when someone is too excessive, theology emerges that can lead someone astray.

So the science of kalam is very important to learn to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings if there is no science of kalam then there will be many doubts for every community regarding the Islamic religion itself so that many people are easily influenced and do not believe in the teachings of Islam, according to Musyrifah Sunanto and Ahmad Amin the birth of the science of kalam is to maintain the purity of the Islamic religion, it can be understood logically if later contemporary challenges occur as we will explain, so when Islam spreads to various regions and gets challenges and certainly there will be several different views such as the Khawarij, Mu'tazila Murjiah, Ash Yariah schools, to maintain the teachings of Islam so that there is no division from various schools so that we can refute the challenges based on logic not just evidence so that it is easy to understand so that the teachings of Islam remain pure (Sahin, 2018).

Theology of the Bible is a way of performing worship in accordance with Islamic teachings. However, most people misunderstand theology, especially regarding the concept of divinity. As a result, the teachings conveyed contradict Islamic law. This is where differences arise, even conflicts, especially if they involve extreme groups. Ultimately, deviant ideologies such as secularism, pluralism, and radicalism emerged. Therefore, we will discuss secularism, pluralism, and radicalism. We must also understand how theology addresses modern beliefs such as those we face today, and how theology should approach increasingly complex global issues. The goal is to understand emerging contemporary issues and, most importantly, to understand the true teachings of Islam, in accordance with Islamic law.

RESEARCH METHOD

Our research employs a qualitative method with a literature study approach deemed relevant for theological analysis. Data were obtained from credible written sources, such as classic and contemporary books, reputable scientific journals, and academic documents related to the study theme. Data selection criteria were based on the relevance of the substance, the author's authority, and the consistency of the discussion with the research focus. Data analysis was conducted through a descriptive-interpretive analytical framework by examining the text content, comparing expert views, and

identifying evolving argumentation patterns. To maintain data validity, this study employed source triangulation techniques by comparing various references and conducting a critical review of previous findings. Through systematic data collection, grouping, and analysis, this study aims to produce logical, coherent conclusions and strengthen the theoretical foundation without involving field data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Secularism

In The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, Secularism is defined as: related to worldliness and rejecting spiritual values. While Secularize: the process of worlding, the process of moving towards secularism: the shift from sacredness to secularity. So secularization is the same as secularism, secularization emerged in the Western world because reason is more important than religion, while secularism tends to think about worldly material things rather than religion or spiritual values. They separate religious affairs from state affairs so that the state may not be based on religious values and may not abuse religion in political affairs (Grabus, 2024).

In fact, political affairs should be mixed with religious values because religious values teach an attitude of responsibility, trustworthiness, and justice so that this country can be directed and the state's policies are aligned with humanitarian principles. The difference between countries that use religious values and those that do not. Countries that use religious values have policies and laws that are more ethical, just, and moral. If the state is not based on religious values, the law has no source. So the country will make laws based on human agreements. It is likely that those who make the law will prioritize themselves and the moral crisis in religion that can cause division and even destruction (Nasr, 2024).

According to Nurcholis Madjid, better known as Cak Nur, secularism is the process of worldlyizing values that are supposed to be worldly and freeing Muslims from the tendency to *subjugate them*, or a process of worldliness. This definition is similar to what Harvey Cox expressed above, he added that secularism is contrary to religion, especially Islam. Because Islam teaches about the Hereafter (Akhirat), and Muslims are obliged to believe in it. So secularization is a tool to purify one's monotheism, only saying that God is One, even though everything in this world is relative and can be changed by humans (Arkoun, 2024).

Many people equate Secularism with secularization, whereas secularization emphasizes the natural process of separating worldly and

sacred values to prevent them from becoming mixed up. Secularism tends to be an ideology that rejects the influence of spiritual values in political life. If a country is not based on spiritual values, selfishness and division will occur within the country. Spiritual values such as trust and justice are values that maintain individual morals, thus reducing division and selfishness within a country. However, Cak Nur's view differs, according to him, secularization is a purification of monotheism by worlding relative matters, which is relevant in a pluralistic context so that Indonesia can avoid extreme actions (Rahman, 2020).

Pluralism

Pluralism comes from Latin, namely plural which means multiple. Etymologically, terpluralisme means al-ta'addudiyah (diversity), in English it is called pluralism, consisting of two words namely; plural which means diverse and ism which means understanding. So it can mean diverse understandings, or various understandings. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary it is stated that Pluralism means an understanding, or a state of a pluralistic society (the plurality referred to is diversity related to the social and political system). It is stated that if the above understanding is simplified, then an understanding can be drawn that pluralism is the realization of various beliefs in one time and region while maintaining the differences and characteristics of each (Winter, 2021)

According to the views of preachers on the thought of Religious Pluralism, it is identified into two typologies: First, Tolerance-based Typology. In this view, the concept of religious pluralism is more interpreted as a concept of "religious plurality", where each religious community can live side by side, respecting and appreciating each other's beliefs, and what is more important than this assimilation-based typology is the establishment of social interactions between religious adherents dynamically, carrying out social activities together (coexistence) without causing conflict in it. This tolerance-based typology they live in harmony even though they have different religions, respect each other both in terms of worship and social and they do not have conflicts between differences between them.

Second, the Intolerance-Based Typology. In contrast to the first type of view, the non-assimilationist view understands that the religious pluralism movement is an attempt by the enemies of Islam to obscure the Islamic faith itself. This can be seen from the MUI's view on Religious Pluralism, which states that: "Religious pluralism is an understanding that teaches that all religions are equal and therefore the truth of all religions is relative. Therefore, every religious adherent may not claim that only their religion is true and all

others are wrong. Pluralism also teaches that all religious adherents will enter and live side by side in heaven" (Toha & Muna, 2022).

From the statement above, pluralism is divided into two typologies based on tolerance and intolerance, the typology of tolerance where someone of different religions lives side by side, respecting each other without any conflict. While intolerance states that all religions are the same. Whereas in the verse of the Qur'an itself it is explained in (Q.S Al Kafirun: 6) which reads " لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ " (for you your religion, and for me my religion) this verse emphasizes on faith and not mixing our worship with belief, as in the previous verse it clearly explains that the rituals of worship in each religion are different so worship according to our own beliefs and respect the religion of others without causing division, and being responsible for what is done in their respective religions.

Radicalism

Radicalism comes from the Latin radix which means "root". It is an ideology that demands major changes and reforms to achieve progress. From a social science perspective, radicalism is closely related to an attitude or position that desires change to the status quo by completely destroying it and replacing it with something completely different. Simply put, radicalism is a thought or attitude characterized by four things that simultaneously become its characteristics: first, an attitude of intolerance and a refusal to respect the opinions or beliefs of others. Second, a fanatical attitude, which is always feeling right and assuming others are wrong. Third, an exclusive attitude, which distinguishes oneself from the customs of the majority. Fourth, a revolutionary attitude, which tends to use violence to achieve goals (Toha & Muna, 2022). So in Indonesia there is a term religious moderation where this moderation is part of the pillars of nationality and diversity, moderation teaches an attitude of mutual respect for differences in beliefs and religious rituals for each of its adherents, it is not permitted to carry out physical or verbal violence for every religious adherent, accept and respect the culture of society, and not be fanatical, a fanatical attitude itself that feels the most correct what is followed and blames someone who is different from what is followed, with religious moderation we can live in harmony, peace, in society without extreme actions and no conflict and strengthen national unity.

The Kalam Science's View of the Challenges of Modernity

Iqbal also rejected conservative views that rejected Muktazilah rationalism. He argued that rejecting rational thinking would only lead to a stagnation of thought and the decline of the Muslim community. Instead, he

encouraged the use of reason to understand and apply Islamic teachings in a modern context.

Iqbal's response to the challenges of modernity included an emphasis on education and critical thinking. He argued that Muslims should develop science and technology as part of an effort to strengthen their position in the modern world. Iqbal believed that by combining Islamic values with the achievements of modernity, Muslims could create an advanced and dignified civilization (Fhadilah, Hidayah, et al., 2024).

The idea offered by Nurcholish Madjid was indirectly rejected by prominent thinkers in Indonesia, even some Islamic thinkers are allergic to the term modernization, because this term modernization comes from the West. In this case, Nurcholish Madjid actually differentiates modernity from culture that comes from the West (westernization). For him, modernity is something that must be accepted and this modernity does not conflict with Islam.

Nurcholish Madjid is considered a modernist thinker. He believes that Islam should be involved in modern struggles. Islam should not be limited to matters of marriage, funerals, or anything mystical. He believes that Islam is a religion of humanity and also a religion that is positive towards the development of science and technology. The Islam in question is of course open, open to social, national, and even global realities. It cannot be denied that developments in the era are increasingly changing, Islam is also faced with problems that require appropriate answers to face the times, the need for new laws, the results of new ijtihads, so that Islam can be the answer to all problems, and of course in accordance with the developments of the times.

Nurcholish Madjid observes that Muslims today have experienced stagnation and lost their psychological striking force. A new dilemma will soon emerge: whether to choose the path of renewal, at the expense of long-desired integration, or to maintain efforts related to that integration, even if it means having to tolerate a frozen mindset.

Nurcholish Madjid stated that Islam is the religion closest to modernity, this refers to Islamic teachings on universalism, scripturalism, and rational systematization of social life. The pure variant of Islam according to Nurcholish Madjid is always egalitarian and scholarly, he also emphasized that today's Muslims can use modern materials coming from the West without experiencing westernization. This is an implication of changing times and of course being modern is not a matter of choice but rather a necessity, more precisely like the necessity of History. The ideas conveyed by Nurcholish Madjid aim to foster a great sense of self-confidence in Muslims in responding to Western modernization (Akmalia et al., 2021).

A Critical Approach to Global Issues

The main approaches used by Muhammad Iqbal in his thinking include:

1. The Approach to Rationality and Modernity in Kalam.

Iqbal argued that Islamic thought should continue to develop through *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and new interpretations, rather than relying solely on traditional interpretations.

2. Revitalization and reconstruction approach

Iqbal is known as one of the Muslim intellectual figures who contributed significantly to the renewal of thought in the contemporary context.

3. Philosophy and Theology.

Iqbal combined philosophy with theology to build a strong foundation of thought. He rejected overly speculative views and focused more on rationality and the integration of reason and revelation.

4. Ego Concept Approach

Iqbal emphasized the importance of the concept of Ego (self) as the foundation of life. According to him, humans must continue to strive to create desires and ideals, and develop their potential through creative and dynamic activities (Fhadilah, Hidayati, et al., 2024).

A comparison of the thoughts of Muhammad Iqbal and Nurcholis Majid demonstrates that both share the same desire for Muslims to progress in facing the modern world, but in different ways. Muhammad Iqbal emphasized that Islam must develop and move forward by encouraging *ijtihad*, namely creative thinking and interpreting Islamic law in accordance with current developments while remaining relevant.

Nurcholis Majid's pure Islamic view refers to the basic teachings of Islam, which emphasizes reason, rationality and openness to developments in the era, but differs from secularism. Rationality is the first teaching in Islam, namely "iqro" (read). Allah commands reading. This motivates a person to think critically and thus be able to face social and cultural change. Islam also forbids blind imitation, but rather encourages thinking and *ijtihad* (ijtihad) regarding Islamic teachings to ensure their relevance in the contemporary era.

Thus, modernity does not mean totally following Western secularism but utilizing the internal potential of religious teachings to be able to respond and adapt to changes and progress of the times. The two differed in their opinions. Iqbal focused on reforming Islamic law and the political identity of the Muslim community to counter Western domination. Cak Nur, on the other hand, focused on reason, tolerance, and rationality, ensuring that Islam would be compatible with Indonesia's diverse society. This difference of opinion is a reflection of diversity, but despite their differences, both share a desire to keep Islamic teachings relevant to the times.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary technological issues are not only related to the practical aspects of life, but also have a major impact on religious, social and cultural dimensions. Technological developments have led to the rise of secularism, the separation of religion from the public sphere, potentially weakening its moral authority. On the other hand, pluralism has developed as an idea of acceptance of differences and tolerance, although if left unchecked, it can lead to relativism. Meanwhile, radicalism emerges as a response to dissatisfaction with modernity and is often expressed in extreme, even violent, ways. In this case, the science of Kalam provides a normative basis for understanding and responding to these dynamics. Muhammad Iqbal emphasized the importance of creativity, dynamism, and self-actualization in facing modernity so that religion can emerge as a responsive and progressive force. Meanwhile, Nurcholish Madjid saw modernity as an opportunity to develop rational, open, and inclusive Islamic thought, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing the essence of religion from narrow political interests. The critical approach of Kalam science to global issues emphasizes the Rationality and Modernity Approach in Kalam, the revitalization and reconstruction Approach, the Philosophical and Theological Approach, the Ego Concept Approach.

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