

## An Analysis of Azyumardi Azra's Thought on Islamic Identity in the Era of Globalization

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pemikiran Azyumardi Azra mengenai identitas Islam dalam konteks globalisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan kajian pemikiran Islam melalui studi literatur dan analisis tematik. Azra memandang globalisasi sebagai tantangan sekaligus peluang bagi umat Islam, khususnya di Indonesia, untuk membentuk identitas keagamaan yang adaptif terhadap perubahan zaman. Melalui konsep Islam Nusantara, Azra menekankan pentingnya proses indigenisasi Islam yang bersinergi dengan budaya lokal, sehingga menghasilkan bentuk keberislaman yang moderat, inklusif, dan toleran. Identitas Muslim Indonesia dibentuk melalui interaksi dinamis antara ajaran Islam dan realitas sosial-budaya masyarakat. Studi ini juga mengaitkan pemikiran Azra dengan pandangan tokoh lain seperti Clifford Geertz, Robert W. Hefner, dan Nurcholis Madjid untuk memperkuat perspektif tentang identitas Muslim yang kontekstual. Hasil penelitian menegaskan bahwa identitas Islam bersifat dinamis dan terus berkembang melalui dialog antara tradisi keislaman dan tuntutan zaman.

**Kata Kunci:** *Azyumardi Azra, Pemikiran Islam, Identitas Islam, Globalisasi, Pendidikan Islam*

### Abstract

This study aims to analyze Azyumardi Azra's thoughts on Islamic identity in the context of globalization. It employs a qualitative method using the Islamic thought approach through literature review and thematic analysis. Azra views globalization as both a challenge and an opportunity for Muslims, especially in Indonesia, to develop a religious identity that is

adaptive to contemporary changes. Through the concept of *Islam Nusantara*, Azra emphasizes the indigenization of Islam by integrating religious values with local cultural traditions, resulting in a moderate, inclusive, and tolerant form of Islam. Muslim identity in Indonesia is shaped by the dynamic interaction between Islamic teachings and the country's socio-cultural realities. This study also connects Azra's ideas with the perspectives of other thinkers such as Clifford Geertz, Robert W. Hefner, and Nurcholis Madjid to enrich the understanding of contextual Muslim identity. The findings affirm that Islamic identity is dynamic and continues to evolve through dialogue between religious tradition and the demands of a globalized world.

**Keywords:** *Azyumardi Azra, Islamic Thought, Islamic Identity, Globalization, Islamic Education*

## **Introduction**

Globalization has become one of the most transformational phenomena in the modern world, influencing not only economic and technological advances, but also the cultural and social dynamics that shape individual and collective identities. One of the most significant aspects of this transformation is its impact on religious identity, particularly in Islam. In the context of Islamic identity, globalization can be seen as a double-edged sword: on the one hand it provides opportunities for renewal, but on the other hand it also presents challenges in maintaining traditional values. Increased global communication networks, interconnected economies, and cultural exchanges have led to changes in social norms that in turn affect the way Islam is practiced and understood. In this regard, Azyumardi Azra's thinking on Islamic identity provides a critical perspective on how Islam can adapt to globalization without sacrificing its core tenets.

The main issue raised in this article is how Islamic identity can be reshaped and maintained in the midst of the strong influence of globalization. "As the second-largest religion in the world, Islam must navigate the tension between modernity and tradition, between the universal forces of globalization and the claims of local Islamic identity particularism. Azra's analysis provides a deeper understanding of these tensions, arguing that while globalization brings challenges, it also creates new opportunities for Islam to thrive in an increasingly connected world. This research aims to explore Azra's views on how Islamic identity can survive and adapt in the midst of the wave of globalization, without losing the underlying religious values.

Much research has been done on Islamic identity in the era of globalization, but most of the literature tends to address two main perspectives: the impact of globalization on the erosion of religious values or its benefits in introducing renewal in religious practice. For example, works such as those by Huntington (1996) on the clash of civilizations, which emphasize the

potential conflict between Western and Islamic cultures, as well as studies by Giddens (2000) that view globalization as an opportunity to renew cultural identities, including religious identities. In the context of Islam, a number of studies such as those conducted by Eickelman and Anderson (2003) highlight how Islam can adapt in an increasingly global and connected world.

However, these studies often lack room for a more balanced perspective, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the core values of Islam while adapting to global challenges. Azyumardi Azra, with a more inclusive approach, makes an important contribution by highlighting the potential for pluralism in Islam in response to globalization, especially in the context of Indonesia which has a very rich and diverse religious tradition. Azra's thinking provides the perspective that Islamic identity can be maintained through adaptations that do not sacrifice the basic values of Islamic teachings, even in a society that is increasingly globally connected.

The purpose of this research is to explore the concept of Islamic identity according to Azyumardi Azra, especially in the context of the influence of globalization, analyze the impact of globalization on Islamic identity, considering the challenges and opportunities it poses, and investigate the role of pluralism and tolerance in Islam as an integral part of Islamic identity in the global era.

This research is important because it fills a gap that is still underexplored in contemporary Islamic studies, namely the relationship between Islamic identity and globalization, especially as seen through the thought of Azyumardi Azra. Most of the literature in this area tends to discuss the dangers or benefits of globalization to religious identity, while Azra offers a more balanced approach by emphasizing adaptation, tolerance, and the preservation of core values. Thus, this article aims to contribute to the study of Islamic identity by presenting a comprehensive analysis of how Islam can negotiate its identity in the midst of globalization.

The uniqueness of this study lies in the special focus on Azyumardi Azra's theoretical framework in overcoming the dynamics of changing Islamic identity in the era of globalization. In addition, this study also relates Azra's thinking to the reality of Indonesian society, which is known for its high religious and cultural plurality. In the Indonesian context, where Islam interacts with various local traditions, Azra's thinking provides new insights into how Islam can maintain its identity while responding to global demands. Taking into account the characteristics of Indonesia's pluralistic society, this study is expected to provide relevant

perspectives for the development of inclusive and adaptive Islamic thought at the local and global levels.

### **Research Method**

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design, using a library research strategy to examine the intellectual framework of Azyumardi Azra concerning Islamic identity in the era of globalization. Primary data sources include Azra's seminal works—such as *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia*, *Islam Substantive*, and other relevant writings and lectures—while secondary sources consist of journal articles, books, and previous research studies related to Islamic identity, globalization, and Indonesian Islam.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic content analysis. This method allows the researcher to identify, classify, and interpret key themes in Azra's thought concerning how Islamic identity is shaped and reshaped in response to globalization.

The thematic categories are derived inductively from repeated readings of Azra's works, ensuring that the analysis is grounded in the text. This methodology is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of Azra's intellectual framework and to contextualize his perspectives within the broader discourse on Islam and globalization, especially within the Indonesian context, where Islam is deeply embedded in a pluralistic cultural and religious landscape.

### **Research Finding**

#### **Biography of Azyumardi Azra**

Understanding the intellectual background of Azyumardi Azra is crucial in contextualizing his views on Islamic identity in the era of globalization. As one of Indonesia's most prominent Muslim scholars, Azra has played a significant role in shaping modern Islamic thought in Southeast Asia. His academic journey and scholarly contributions reflect the breadth of his influence in fields such as Islamic reformism, education, politics, and historiography.

Prof. Dr. Azyumardi Azra was born in Lubuk Alung, West Sumatera on March 4, 1955. After graduating from elementary school to secondary level in West Sumatra he continued his education at the faculty of education IAIN (State Islamic University) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and graduated in 1982. Furthermore, he continued his Master of Philosophy in the Department of History in 1990 and Doctor of Philosophy in 1992 at Columbia University. His thesis titled "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism in Indonesia: Network of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian" has been published in Canberra (Allen Unwin and AAAS),

Honolulu (Hawaii University Press), and Leiden, Netherlands (KITLV Press).

His experience in the academic world began since he became an active writer in *Panji Masyarakat* magazine (1979-1985), a lecturer at Faculty of Adab and Faculty of Islamic Education IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (1992-present), Professor of History at the Faculty of Adab IAIN Jakarta, and Deputy Rector I IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (1998), and later became Rector of UIN Jakarta until 2006. In 2006 he was also the Director of Postgraduate School of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta. Azyumardi also received a Professor Fellow from the University of Melbourne, Australia (2004-2009), a member of the Board of Trustees of International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan (2004-2009), Visiting Fellow at Oxford Center for Islamic Studies, Oxford University (1994-1995), Guest Lecturer at University of Philippines and University Malaya Malaysia (1997), and became an External Examiner at PhD Program University Malaya (1998-present).

Azyumardi Azra was active as the Chairman of the Senate of the Faculty of Tarbiyah IAIN Jakarta (1979-1982), Chairman of the Islamic Students Association (HMI) of Ciputat Branch (1981-1982), Member of the Selection Committee of Toyota Foundation & The Japan Foundation (1998 (1998-present), Indonesian Association for Social Sciences Development (HIPIIS), Member of the International Association of Historians (1998-1999), Steering Committee SEASREP (Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program) of Asia (IAHA) (1998-present), Board Member of the Journal *Ulumul Quran Journal*, Board

Member of the Islamic Editorial, Editorial board of *Journal Studia Islamika*, Deputy Director of Islamic Studies and Community Research Center (PPIM) IAIN Jakarta, Member of Journalist of *Jurnal Quranic Studies*, SOAS / University of London and *Journal of Ushuludin* University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

The academic work that has been published among them is the "Jaringan Ulama" (1994), "Pergolakan Politik Islam" (1996), "Islam Reformis" (1999), "Konteks Berteologi di Indonesia" (1999), "Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menghadapi Millenium Baru" (1999), "Islam Substantif" (2000), "Historiography Islam Kontemporer" (1999), "Paradigma Baru Pendidikan Nasional" (2002), "Reposisi Hubungan Agama dan Negara" (2002), "Menggapai Solidaritas" (2002), "New Conflict between Civilizations, Nusantara Islam-Global and Local Networks and Surau; Traditional Islamic Education in Transition and Modernization "Esei-Esei Pendidikan Islam, dan Cendikiawan Muslim" (1999), "Renaissans Islam di Asia Tenggara" (1999), "Islam Substantif" (2000), "Historiografi Islam Kontemporer" (2002), "Paradigma Baru Pendidikan Nasional" (2002), "Reposisi Hubungan

Agama dan Negara” (2002), “Menggapai Solidaritas” (2002), “Konflik Baru Antar Peradaban, Islam Nusantara-Jaringan Global dan Lokal, dan Surau; Pendidikan Islam Tradisional Dalam Transisi dan Modernisasi” (2003), “Shari’a and Politics” (2004).

Azyumardi Azra was noted as a Muslim scientist with a field of historical expertise. He also specializes in religious studies such as philosophy, theology, modernist schools, politics, and education. In addition, he is regarded as a professional, intellectual and has a great commitment to the reform of Islamic civilization, especially in Southeast Asia. Recently Azyumardi Azra's thought has a pattern of Islamic thought of Southeast Asia, especially in Nusantara and Indonesia.

### **The Concept of Islamic Identity**

#### Islamic Identity According to Azyumardi Azra

Azyumardi Azra defines Islamic identity not merely as a declaration of religious affiliation but as a dynamic and contextual manifestation of faith that aligns with the core values of Islam and the realities of local culture. According to Azra, Islamic identity must reflect the universal principles of Islam while simultaneously integrating with local wisdom and traditions. This perspective highlights the adaptive nature of Islamic identity, which is capable of engaging modernity and globalization without losing its authenticity.

#### Core Principles of Islamic Identity

Freedom of Religion Azra upholds that religious freedom is part of divine law (sunnatullah). Islam, in his view, rejects any form of compulsion in religious practice, as clearly stated in the Qur'an (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 256). This principle becomes crucial in a globalized world where interaction with people of diverse faiths is inevitable.

Contextualization of Teachings Islamic teachings must be contextualized to the realities of the time and place. Azra emphasizes that the Qur'an and Sunnah should be interpreted in ways that resonate with the needs and challenges of contemporary society. This does not mean altering the core message of Islam but rather applying it with wisdom (hikmah) in various contexts.

Morality and Akhlak (Ethics) Islamic identity, according to Azra, must be rooted in moral excellence. Ethics (akhlak) is a universal aspect of Islam that guides personal and social behavior. Morals such as honesty, compassion, and justice are not only personal virtues but also foundational to a civil society.

Social Justice and Humanity Azra places strong emphasis on justice ('adl) as a fundamental Islamic value. Islam teaches fairness to all, regardless of religion or background. In line with this, Azra promotes the concept of ukhuwah insaniyah (universal brotherhood),

where all humans are treated with dignity and respect.

Education plays a central role in shaping Islamic identity. Azra advocates for an educational system that not only imparts knowledge but also builds character and social awareness in accordance with Islamic values. This is essential to prepare Muslims to engage constructively in a pluralistic and global society.

Islam and Cultural Engagement Azra argues that Islam and culture are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, Islamic identity can and should integrate with local cultural expressions as long as they do not contradict Islamic teachings. Cultural practices such as language, art, and rituals can serve as vehicles for religious values.

In order to demonstrate the comprehensiveness and consistency of Azyumardi Azra’s intellectual framework on Islamic identity, it is essential to present a thematic categorization of his thoughts supported by references to his major works. The following table systematically outlines the principal dimensions of Azra’s thought—including education, ethics, legal-political considerations, social-humanitarian values, and cultural integration—alongside relevant titles of his published writings. This structured overview provides an evidence-based foundation for the analysis and interpretation presented in this study.

**Table 1: Aspects of Azyumardi Azra’s Thought and Supporting Works**

Aspect of Thought	Azra’s Key Ideas	Supporting Work by Azra	Year
Islamic Identity	Islamic identity is dynamic, contextual, and integrates local wisdom without losing core Islamic values	<i>Islam Substantif</i> [Substantive Islam]	2000
Freedom of Religion	Islam opposes coercion in religion and promotes coexistence in a pluralistic society	<i>Reposisi Hubungan Agama dan Negara</i> [Repositioning the Relationship between Religion and State]	2002
Contextualization of Teachings	Islamic texts should be interpreted contextually according to historical and social realities	<i>Konteks Berteologi di Indonesia</i> [Contextual Theology in Indonesia]	1999
Morality and Ethics (Akhlak)	Ethics such as honesty, justice, and compassion	<i>Islam Substantif</i> [Substantive Islam]	2000

	are central to Islamic identity		
Social Justice and Humanity	Islam upholds justice (' <i>adl</i> ) and promotes universal brotherhood ( <i>ukhuwah insaniyah</i> )	<i>Menggapai Solidaritas: Penguatan Kohesi Sosial dalam Masyarakat Majemuk</i> [Achieving Solidarity: Strengthening Social Cohesion in Diversity]	2002
Education	Islamic education must shape character, promote critical thinking, and foster global awareness	<i>Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menghadapi Milenium Baru</i> [Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization in Facing the New Millennium]	1999
Culture and Local Wisdom	Islam and local culture can coexist if cultural elements do not contradict core Islamic teachings	<i>Islam Nusantara : Jaringan Global dan Lokal</i> [Islam Nusantara: Global and Local Networks]	2002

### Islamic Identity in the Context of Globalization

Globalization has accelerated cultural exchange, technological advancement, and economic integration. For Muslims, this process can be both enriching and challenging. Azra believes that Islamic identity can remain resilient if it is grounded in inclusive, ethical, and contextual principles. Rather than retreating into isolation or engaging in cultural resistance, Muslims should participate actively in the global discourse while maintaining their religious integrity. In the Indonesian context, Azra's thought is particularly relevant. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, demonstrates a pluralistic and tolerant expression of Islam. Azra sees this as a model of how Islamic identity can coexist harmoniously with democracy, modernity, and diversity. His perspective provides a powerful counter-narrative to radicalism and exclusivism, affirming that Islam can be a force for peace and coexistence in the global era.

Azyumardi Azra argues that Muslim identity cannot be separated from the dynamics of globalization, which accelerates cross-cultural, technological, and ideological interactions. According to Azra, Islamic identity should be contextual and inclusive rather than exclusive and rigid. In facing the currents of globalization, Muslims should not adopt a defensive stance or withdraw from global engagement; instead, they should actively participate in

intercivilizational dialogue while remaining committed to the ethical and universal principles of Islam. Azra emphasizes that Islam holds great potential as a moral force capable of contributing positively to a plural and complex world. He believes that the Indonesian experience of Islam—moderate, tolerant, and adaptive to local cultures—can serve as a model for Muslims in other countries in managing diversity and building a harmonious relationship between religion and the state.

### **Globalization: A Dual Phenomenon Affecting Islamic Identity**

Globalization is the process that connects the world more closely, with wide-ranging impacts on the economy, politics, and culture. Globalization offers great opportunities for access to information, education, and technology, but also presents serious challenges, such as Westernization and secularization, which can erode religious values. In the context of Islam, globalization creates a space for interaction that brings together various cultures and ideologies, often resulting in tension between Islamic traditions and global modernity. Globalization brings significant challenges for Muslims in maintaining their religious values amidst the dominant Western culture.

Some Muslims feel a loss of self-identity due to the strong influence of global culture, which often contradicts Islamic teachings. This shift in values can lead to uncertainty about how Muslims should live and interact in an increasingly interconnected world. Cultural shifts and declining religious practices. Technological advancements and digitalization have created new spaces for religious practice, but they also bring threats such as secularization and materialism, which reduce Muslims' attention to their spiritual and social religious values. Although social media offers opportunities for religious propagation, it also becomes a tool for the spread of extremism and radicalization. Uncontrolled content can distort Muslims' understanding of their faith and deepen polarization within the community. Azyumardi Azra emphasizes the importance of contextual Islamic education, one that adapts religious teachings to the realities of the modern world without compromising the essence of the faith. Moderate and inclusive education can reinforce Islamic identity in the face of cultural and ideological differences.

Azra encourages Muslims to develop an identity that not only emphasizes loyalty to tradition but also accommodates pluralism and universal values. This can be achieved by strengthening local Islamic cultures and emphasizing inclusivity and tolerance in religious. Using digital media as a tool for da'wah (Islamic preaching) and spreading moderate Islamic values can be an effective strategy to strengthen Islamic identity. Muslims must be prudent in

filtering information and promote the values of Islam that are rahmatan lil 'alamin (a mercy to all the worlds) in their online interactions.

Islamic identity in the era of globalization is the result of a negotiation between religious tradition and the demands of global modernity. While globalization presents significant challenges in maintaining Islamic values, it also provides a space for Muslims to develop and renew their identity in a way that is more inclusive and contextual. Azra emphasizes that a moderate and inclusive understanding of Islam, as well as acceptance of diversity, is key to ensuring that Islamic identity remains relevant and strong amidst the waves of global change.

### **Islam and the Socio-Cultural Identity of Muslims in Indonesia**

The Muslim identity in Indonesia is formed through a complex interaction between Islamic teachings and local culture. This process has occurred over a long period of acculturation, where the values of Islam, taught through religion and local culture such as customs, arts, and language, have enriched the Muslim identity in Indonesia. The use of Arabic in worship, such as in prayer, reading the Qur'an, and certain prayers, though universal, has merged with local practices, such as the use of regional languages in Islamic studies, religious sermons, and religious traditions.

On the other hand, Islamic holidays such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid Nabi) in Indonesia have distinctive forms. These holidays are not only moments for worship but also social rituals that strengthen the bonds among Muslims. For instance, Eid al-Adha, besides being a moment of sacrifice, is also a time to share and strengthen social relationships through the distribution of sacrificial meat, reflecting the spirit of mutual cooperation (gotong-royong), which is deeply ingrained in Indonesian culture. This shows that Islam in Indonesia is not merely a belief system but also shapes a collective social identity based on cultural interaction.

#### **Azyumardi Azra's Thought on Islam Nusantara and the Muslim Identity in Indonesia**

Azyumardi Azra provides a relevant theoretical framework in the Indonesian context with the concept of Islam Nusantara. Azra argues that Islam in Indonesia has undergone a process of indigenization or adaptation to the local culture, making Islam in Indonesia have its own distinctive characteristics. The concept of Islam Nusantara refers to an understanding of Islam that is not only normative and textual but also accommodates the diversity of culture and local wisdom. In Azra's perspective, Islam in Indonesia is not separated from the culture and traditions of society; rather, Islam synergizes with local values and becomes an integral part of the everyday life of Muslims.

For example, religious practices such as study groups (pengajian), dhikr (remembrance

of God), and the Maulid of the Prophet often incorporate local traditions, showing how Islam in Indonesia can live and evolve according to the social and cultural context of the community. Azra emphasizes that Islam Nusantara is not merely a cultural adaptation but also creates a new identity that blends religious and cultural values in a mutually reinforcing way. Therefore, the Muslim identity in Indonesia is not a closed identity but is open to changes and developments within society.

### **The Role of Islam in Shaping the Muslim Identity in Indonesia**

According to Azra, Islam in Indonesia plays a role in shaping a dynamic and diverse Muslim identity, in line with the local cultural context. In Indonesia, Islam and local culture interact and transform to form a distinctive identity, known as Indonesian Islam or Islam Nusantara. This process has been influenced by various Islamic traditions, such as those brought by scholars from India, the Middle East, and China, which then intersected with the indigenous culture of Indonesia.

The importance of Islam Nusantara, according to Azra, lies in its ability to accommodate diversity and tolerance, two values that are essential in the context of Indonesia's plural society. In Indonesia, Islam serves as an integrative force, not only in religious aspects but also in preserving cultural diversity. The Muslim identity in Indonesia, according to Azra, is the product of the interaction between Islamic religion and local culture, allowing Indonesian Muslims to identify themselves as part of the global Muslim community, while remaining strongly rooted in the local values of Indonesian society.

### **Azyumardi Azra and Other Thinkers in the Context of Muslim Identity in Indonesia**

Azyumardi Azra's thoughts on *Islam Nusantara* provide valuable insights into how Islam in Indonesia interacts with local culture, creating a distinctive Muslim identity. Azra argues that Islam's development in Indonesia is not merely normative and textual but also accommodates local values and cultural wisdom. In this context, *Islam Nusantara*, as introduced by Azra, represents an Islam model that is adaptive to the local social and cultural context.

However, to gain a deeper understanding of how the Muslim identity in Indonesia is formed, the views of other scholars such as Clifford Geertz, Robert W. Hefner, and Nurcholis Madjid offer additional perspectives that enrich Azra's ideas.

Clifford Geertz: *Islam and Culture from an Anthropological Perspective*

Clifford Geertz, in his book *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (1971), sees Islam in Indonesia as a phenomenon that involves two main forms:

Islam santri and Islam abangan. Geertz emphasizes that Islam santri, which is more normative and conservative, differs from Islam abangan, which is more flexible and blends Islamic teachings with local culture. According to Geertz, this interaction creates two complementary social frameworks, with Islam santri being more anchored in the texts of Islamic teachings, while Islam abangan tends to be more open to integrating local cultural practices.

Geertz's view underscores that the Muslim identity in Indonesia is not rigid but rather flexible and layered, where religious elements and local culture are intertwined. In this regard, Azra's *Islam Nusantara* aligns with Geertz's thoughts about the deep acculturation between Islam and local culture, though Azra emphasizes more the indigenization process of Islam to strengthen local identity.

Robert W. Hefner: Islam, Democracy, and Pluralism in Indonesia

In Robert W. Hefner's view, Islam in Indonesia also plays a crucial role in fostering social diversity and tolerance. Hefner highlights that Islam in Indonesia is not only a religion that governs the spiritual life of its adherents but also a force that strengthens pluralism in a diverse society. Hefner argues that Islam in Indonesia has the ability to adjust to the plural social realities and supports democratic principles.

This thought reinforces Azra's argument that *Islam Nusantara* has the capacity to adapt to Indonesia's cultural diversity. In Indonesia, Islam is not only accepted as a religious system governing human relations with God but also as an integrative force that strengthens social and cultural bonds among various groups. Azra's *Islam Nusantara* is one manifestation of the diversity and tolerance inherent in Indonesian Islam, which can be linked to Hefner's view of religious pluralism.

Nurcholis Madjid: Islam as a Religion of Liberation and Modernity

Nurcholis Madjid emphasizes the importance of Islam's role in responding to the challenges of the times and facilitating social modernization and reform. Madjid argues that Islam in Indonesia must be able to adapt to the developments of the era, not only in religious aspects but also in social, political, and cultural progress. For Madjid, Islam is not a static religion but a dynamic and transformational force.

Madjid's thoughts add an extra dimension to Azra's ideas on *Islam Nusantara*. While Azra primarily focuses on Islam's acculturation with local culture, Madjid introduces the perspective that *Islam Nusantara* must also respond to the challenges of modernity and open up space for intellectual reform without neglecting Islamic values. Madjid suggests that the Muslim identity in Indonesia must remain open to the developments of the time, in line with how *Islam Nusantara* can evolve as part of the modernization process in Indonesian society.

### Relevance of Azra's Ideas to Other Thinkers

In the context of Muslim identity in Indonesia, Azyumardi Azra provides a strong theoretical foundation for Islam Nusantara as a form of Islam adapted to local culture. However, considering the ideas of Clifford Geertz, Robert W. Hefner, and Nurcholis Madjid, we can observe how the formation of Muslim identity in Indonesia is shaped not only through cultural acculturation but also by the dynamic interaction between religion, culture, society, and modernity.

Geertz's emphasis on acculturation of Islam with local culture complements Azra's view, particularly in highlighting the coexistence of Islam santri and Islam abangan. This distinction reflects how Islam in Indonesia is not a monolithic practice but rather a flexible identity formed by both religious and cultural influences.

Meanwhile, Hefner's focus on pluralism and democracy strengthens Azra's assertion that Islam Nusantara embodies tolerance and inclusivity. Both thinkers highlight the adaptability of Islam to Indonesia's multicultural landscape, where Islam functions as a unifying force while maintaining its religious integrity.

Finally, Madjid's vision of Islam as a dynamic religion capable of addressing the challenges of modernity adds a layer of temporal relevance to Azra's concept of Islam Nusantara. Madjid's argument that Islam must adapt to the changing realities of the modern world complements Azra's idea of a flexible, evolving identity that integrates both traditional and modern elements.

Thus, Azra's Islam Nusantara, in relation to the ideas of Geertz, Hefner, and Madjid, provides a comprehensive understanding of Muslim identity in Indonesia, emphasizing not only cultural adaptation but also the dynamic relationship between religious practice, social change, and modern challenges. Meanwhile, Madjid emphasizes the need for reform and the ability of Islam to address the challenges of modernity. All these ideas highlight that Muslim identity in Indonesia is the result of a highly dynamic and complex process that involves the interaction between Islamic teachings, local culture, and changes in society.

To enrich the conceptual foundation of Azyumardi Azra's thought on Islam Nusantara, this study engages in a comparative analysis with other influential scholars who have significantly contributed to the discourse on Indonesian Islam. The following table highlights key thinkers whose ideas intersect with or support Azra's framework. By juxtaposing their main contributions with Azra's intellectual orientation, this comparative overview underscores the coherence, relevance, and distinctiveness of Azra's vision of Indonesian

Islamic identity in the context of cultural adaptation, pluralism, and modernity.

**Tabel 2. Comparative Overview of Selected Thinkers on Indonesian Islam and Their Relevance to Azyumardi Azra’s Thought**

Thinker	Main Ideas	Relevance to Azra’s Ideas
Azyumardi Azra	Islam Nusantara as a form of Islam adapted to local culture, accommodating local values, and creating a distinctive Indonesian Muslim identity.	Azra emphasizes that Islam in Indonesia is not only normative but also synergizes with local culture to form a flexible and dynamic identity.
Clifford Geertz	Islam in Indonesia is divided into two forms: <i>santri Islam</i> (normative) and <i>abangan Islam</i> (more open to local culture). Indonesian Islam is the result of acculturation.	Geertz supports Azra’s idea of <b>acculturation</b> between Islam and local culture. Indonesian Islam is not monolithic but flexible, with religious and cultural values influencing each other.
Robert W. Hefner	Islam in Indonesia plays a key role in strengthening pluralism and democracy, adapting to the highly diverse social realities.	Hefner’s ideas support Azra’s argument that <i>Islam Nusantara</i> acts as an integrative force that strengthens social and cultural bonds among diverse groups in Indonesia.
Nurcholis Madjid	Islam is a dynamic and transformational religion that must adapt to changing times, including social and political modernization.	Madjid’s ideas add a dimension to <i>Islam Nusantara</i> by stressing that Islam must open space for intellectual renewal and respond to the challenges of modernity.

This table summarizes the perspectives of several thinkers on the adaptation of Islam in Indonesia, specifically regarding the concept of *Islam Nusantara*, a form of Islam that is integrated with local culture and values. Azyumardi Azra: He argues that *Islam Nusantara* represents a version of Islam that is flexible and dynamic, blending Islamic teachings with local culture, forming a unique Indonesian Muslim identity. Clifford Geertz: Geertz discusses the division in Indonesian Islam between *santri* Islam (more orthodox and normative) and *abangan* Islam (which is more open to local cultural influences). He supports Azra’s view on the acculturation process, where Islamic practices adapt to local contexts. Robert W. Hefner:

Hefner focuses on the role of Islam in fostering pluralism and democracy in Indonesia, highlighting how *Islam Nusantara* helps integrate diverse social groups. His views align with Azra's ideas about Islam's role in unifying diverse communities in Indonesia

## Conclusion

Azra encourages Muslims to develop an identity that not only emphasizes loyalty to tradition but also accommodates pluralism and universal values. This can be achieved by strengthening local Islamic cultures and emphasizing inclusivity and tolerance in religious. Using digital media as a tool for da'wah (Islamic preaching) and spreading moderate Islamic values can be an effective strategy to strengthen Islamic identity. Muslims must be prudent in filtering information and promote the values of Islam that are rahmatan lil 'alamin (a mercy to all the worlds) in their online interactions.

Islamic identity in the era of globalization is the result of a negotiation between religious tradition and the demands of global modernity. While globalization presents significant challenges in maintaining Islamic values, it also provides a space for Muslims to develop and renew their identity in a way that is more inclusive and contextual. Azra emphasizes that a moderate and inclusive understanding of Islam, as well as acceptance of diversity, is key to ensuring that Islamic identity remains relevant and strong amidst the waves of global change. Azyumardi Azra's thoughts on Islamic identity in the context of globalization emphasize the importance of preserving essential Islamic teachings while adapting to the dynamic global changes. Azra argues that in the face of modernization and globalization, Muslims in Indonesia need to strike a balance between deep-rooted Islamic traditions and the ability to innovate in response to contemporary challenges. According to Azra, the concept of Islamic identity not only refers to the understanding of religious doctrines and teachings but also to social behavior and the way Muslims build relationships with the outside world. In the Indonesian context, this has significant implications for Muslim behavior and social interactions, enabling them to face global challenges more adaptively without compromising the integrity of Islamic teaching.

To further strengthen Islamic identity in the era of globalization, educational institutions in Indonesia should integrate Islamic teachings with modern subjects in a balanced way. This would encourage students to not only excel academically but also stay grounded in Islamic values and ethics. Islamic education should also place more emphasis on developing critical thinking and creativity among students. This can help them adapt Islamic principles to solve

contemporary global issues while staying true to their faith.

In addition, Islamic education should promote interfaith dialogue and cultural understanding. This approach will allow Muslims to contribute to a more inclusive and tolerant Indonesian society while preserving their Islamic identity. Embracing technology and digital literacy is another important step. Educators should explore the potential of online platforms, digital tools, and interactive resources to enhance the delivery of Islamic teachings and reach a wider audience, especially in rural and remote areas.

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