The role of religious tolerance in ensuring social stability and peace: perspectives from J. Locke to J. Habermas

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Abstract

This paper analyses how religious tolerance has influenced the formation of social stability and peace within historical and philosophical contexts, from the ideas of J. Locke to the modern concepts of J. Habermas. The evolution of ideas on religious tolerance in European political and social thought is examined, with an emphasis on key works that highlight its importance for democratic societies. The study is based on a comparative analysis of philosophical concepts that substantiate the role of religious pluralism as a foundation for social harmony. The results indicate that the ideas of J. Locke laid the groundwork for the modern understanding of human rights, while J. Habermas refined these approaches, adapting them to the realities of pluralistic societies. In particular, it was found that countries where the principles of religious tolerance are enshrined in legislation demonstrate higher levels of social unity and fewer religious conflicts.

Keywords: pluralism, harmony, dialogue of cultures, democratic values, legal regulation.

El papel de la tolerancia religiosa para garantizar la estabilidad social y la paz: perspectivas de J. Locke a J. Habermas

Resumen

Este artículo analiza cómo ha influido la tolerancia religiosa en la formación de la estabilidad y la paz sociales dentro de contextos históricos y filosóficos, desde las

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ideas de J. Locke hasta los conceptos modernos de J. Habermas. Se examina la evolución de las ideas sobre la tolerancia religiosa en el pensamiento político y social europeo, haciendo hincapié en las obras clave que destacan su importancia para las sociedades democráticas. El estudio se basa en un análisis comparativo de conceptos filosóficos que fundamentan el papel del pluralismo religioso como base de la armonía social. Los resultados indican que las ideas de J. Locke sentaron las bases de la concepción moderna de los derechos humanos, mientras que J. Habermas perfeccionó estos planteamientos, adaptándolos a las realidades de las sociedades pluralistas. En concreto, se constató que los países en los que los principios de tolerancia religiosa están consagrados en la legislación muestran mayores niveles de unidad social y menos conflictos religiosos.

Palabras clave: pluralismo, armonía, diálogo de culturas, valores democráticos, regulación jurídica.

Introduction

Religion plays an ambiguous role in society. On the one hand, it can have a positive impact, fostering the creation of cultural values, the development of charity, and the establishment of social norms and moral principles. Religion often serves as a foundation for social solidarity, encouraging interaction between different groups and helping to maintain social harmony. On the other hand, history offers numerous examples of the destructive consequences of religion, particularly religious wars, which have taken countless lives, caused conflicts between peoples, and acted as a catalyst for long-term social tensions (Kushenova et al., 2025). In this context, it becomes essential to understand how religious tolerance can serve as a critical factor in achieving social stability. As Hjerm et al. (2019) emphasise, a key aspect in fostering social harmony lies not only in recognising religious differences, but also in actively promoting acceptance, respect, and appreciation of diversity, which are crucial for maintaining social integration in culturally pluralistic societies. Thus, religion plays an important role

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in shaping social stability and peace, exerting influence in various historical, cultural, and social contexts.

Within the liberal philosophical tradition, significant attention has been given to the role of religion in the formation of a just society, particularly in response to the need for new approaches to social harmony following prolonged and violent religious conflicts. In this tradition, religion was often seen not as a guarantor of stability or peace, but rather as a potential source of social contradictions, capable of generating tensions between different social groups (Ismayilov et al., 2025). This perspective necessitated the development of normative foundations of public order that would ensure the peaceful coexistence of religious and non-religious communities, including atheists. One of the key principles that emerged to support this goal was religious tolerance, regarded as an essential condition for societal stability (Ismayilov et al., 2024).

However, as Insel (2019) points out, the very concept of tolerance is ambiguous. While it allows for the coexistence of different groups, it does not ensure real equality among them. In many historical contexts, including in the Ottoman Empire, religious tolerance existed within a clearly defined political and social hierarchy, where the dominant group maintained a privileged position (Jumabekova et al., 2024). Even in modern republican societies, which theoretically proclaim the equality of all citizens, religious tolerance is often used as a tool for unilaterally imposing limits on minorities. Moreover, historical experience shows that societies that consider themselves tolerant may, in critical moments, easily resort to repression and even violence against those whom they had previously recognised as tolerable (Bedelbayeva et al., 2023). Thus, tolerance,

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under certain conditions, can serve as a mechanism for reinforcing inequality rather than overcoming it.

The principle of religious tolerance, according to Verkuyten and Kollar (2021), implies respect for the feelings, beliefs, faiths, and practices of others, even when they differ from one's own. This entails recognising the right of each individual to adhere to and publicly express their religious views, even if those views do not align with one's own beliefs. An important aspect of this principle is a tolerant attitude toward religious practices, even those that may provoke disagreement or misunderstanding.

Thus, religious tolerance not only contributes to maintaining harmony within society, but also plays the role of a mechanism that enables the coexistence of competing worldviews without threatening social stability.

Different authors interpret the idea of religious tolerance in diverse ways. For Fiet (2023), it is associated with the influence of religious doctrines on entrepreneurial activity, which highlights the importance of religious beliefs in shaping socio-economic models. In contrast, for Adejimi et al. (2022), religious tolerance is viewed as a means of combating domestic violence, particularly among men, which is seen as a crucial element for the development of healthy social structures within society.

Meanwhile, Oyetoro and Talabi (2023) emphasise that religious tolerance is a key factor in national development, as it fosters peaceful coexistence among people of different religious and cultural backgrounds, without discrimination. The authors note that religious intolerance has a detrimental impact on social, economic, and political stability, thus hindering national progress. They argue that

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to overcome these challenges, it is essential to introduce educational programmes, promote interreligious dialogue, and improve the legislative framework governing interfaith relations.

A similar opinion is expressed by Etim (2005), who regards religious tolerance as a key element of social development, particularly in the context of Nigeria, where religious conflicts have reached alarming proportions. He emphasises that, although religious intolerance is a global problem in the modern world, its consequences are felt especially acutely in Nigeria. According to the author, even minor disputes can escalate into large-scale violence, indicating deep-rooted tensions between religious communities. He argues that without religious tolerance, it is impossible to ensure long-term social and political order, and consequently, the sustainable development of the state.

Hoyeck (2020) analyses J. Habermas's approaches to the issue of religious tolerance and the role of the state in resolving religious disputes. Hoyeck (2020) notes that, according to J. Habermas, religious conflicts are an inherent part of social life, and tolerance must strike a balance between state neutrality and state involvement, creating conditions for dialogue between religious and non-religious groups. In this context, particular attention is given to the role of the secular state, which must guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, ensuring the equal coexistence of all social and cultural groups.

These concepts raise a fundamental question: under what conditions is it possible to build a just society in which religious tolerance fosters peace and stability, despite potential conflicts arising from religious differences? Although there have been numerous studies on this topic, debates about whether religious tolerance genuinely contributes to social stability remain ongoing.

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This research focuses on identifying the conditions under which religious tolerance can become an effective tool for preventing conflicts, promoting harmonious coexistence in today's globalised world, and supporting the construction of a just society.

1. Materials and methods

This study is based on a hermeneutic approach and employs a range of methods to analyse and interpret the concept of religious tolerance, including comparative, descriptive, historical, chronological, and systemic methods. Such an interdisciplinary approach aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the ideas and meanings embedded in the works of selected authors who examine the concept of religious tolerance.

The descriptive method was applied to analyse key aspects of religious tolerance, focusing on its relationship with socio-economic processes, its role in reducing violence, the separation of state and religion, and the necessity of state support for religious pluralism.

The comparative method was used to study various interpretations of religious tolerance and to compare the approaches of different philosophers and theorists towards this concept. Particular attention was given to comparing the interpretations of religious tolerance in the works of Hoyeck (2020) and Barnat (2024).

Comparing the views of these authors allowed for a deeper understanding of how different theoretical approaches define the role of religious tolerance in ensuring peace and stability in modern society. In particular, the works of Hoyeck

(2020) explore the role of religion in political and social life, and how their ideas contribute to the development of the concept of state neutrality regarding religious beliefs. Simultaneously, Barnat's work (2024) highlights the need to integrate religious perspectives into democratic processes without infringing upon the rights of other citizens. The comparison of these differing approaches not only underscores the importance of religious tolerance for peaceful coexistence, but also reveals how various philosophical traditions influence contemporary understandings of this concept in the context of globalisation and cultural diversity.

For a more detailed analysis of this topic, the historical method was also applied. This approach made it possible to reconstruct the views of scholars on concepts such as "eternal peace" and the "dispute of the faculties" within the context of the Enlightenment. It enabled an examination of how these ideas contributed to the formation of modern conceptions of religious tolerance and social harmony. The historical method involves considering philosophical concepts within the context of the time of their emergence, which allows for an understanding not only of their evolution, but also of their impact on the further development of social and political structures. Moreover, the historical approach makes it possible to explore how past ideas can be adapted to contemporary conditions, and to assess their relevance to addressing current issues related to religious diversity and social conflicts in multicultural societies.

In addition, the chronological method was employed to analyse the development of different approaches to religious tolerance, with careful consideration of their historical context. The research was structured to trace the evolution of ideas, from classical concepts to modern theories, focusing on

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changes in the understanding of religious tolerance over time and exploring how these ideas were formed and adapted to shifting social, political, and cultural conditions.

Sources for analysis were selected based on their relevance to the topic of religious tolerance, their significance within scholarly discourse, and their correspondence to the historical and ideological context. The final sample included philosophical treatises, monographs, and academic articles that address the concept of religious tolerance.

The use of systematic, descriptive, and comparative methods in this study made it possible not only to analyse individual concepts, but also to construct a general theoretical model that reflects the interrelation of ideas and approaches to religious tolerance. This approach also enabled the identification of key conditions under which religious tolerance contributes to peace and social stability.

The study is based on a hermeneutic approach and applies several methods to analyse and interpret the concept of religious tolerance, including comparative, descriptive, historical, chronological, and systemic methods. Such an interdisciplinary approach aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the ideas and meanings embedded in the works of selected authors who address the concept of religious tolerance.

The descriptive method was used to focus the analysis on key aspects of religious tolerance, including its relationship with socio-economic processes, its role in reducing violence, the separation of the state from religion, and the necessity for state support of religious pluralism.

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The comparative method was employed to examine different interpretations of religious tolerance and to compare the approaches of various philosophers and theorists toward this concept. Particular attention was given to the interpretations of religious tolerance in the works of Hoyeck (2020) and Barnat (2024).

Comparing the views of these authors has enabled a deeper understanding of how different theoretical approaches define the role of religious tolerance in ensuring peace and stability in modern society. In particular, the works of Hoyeck (2020) explore the role of religion in political and social life, and how their ideas contribute to the development of the concept of state neutrality with respect to religious beliefs. At the same time, the study by Barnat (2024) highlights the need to integrate religious perspectives into democratic processes without infringing on the rights of other citizens. Comparing such diverse approaches not only underscores the importance of religious tolerance for peaceful coexistence, but also reveals how different philosophical traditions shape contemporary understandings of this concept within the context of globalisation and cultural diversity.

For a more detailed analysis of this topic, the historical method was also applied, which enabled the reconstruction of scholars' views on "eternal peace" and the "dispute of the faculties" in the context of the Enlightenment. This approach provided an opportunity to examine how these ideas contributed to the development of modern concepts of religious tolerance and social harmony. The historical method involves considering philosophical concepts within the context of their emergence, which makes it possible to understand not only their evolution, but also their influence on the subsequent development of social and political structures. Moreover, the historical approach allows for the examination of how

past ideas can be adapted to contemporary conditions and their relevance in addressing current challenges related to religious diversity and social conflicts in multicultural societies.

The chronological method was employed to analyse the development of various approaches to religious tolerance, taking into account their historical context. The study was structured to trace the evolution of ideas, from classical concepts to modern theories, with a particular focus on changes in the understanding of religious tolerance over time, and on how these ideas were formed and adapted to evolving social, political, and cultural conditions.

Sources for analysis were selected based on their relevance to the topic of religious tolerance, their significance in scientific discourse, and their compliance with the historical and ideological context. The final sample included philosophical treatises, monographs, and scholarly articles that address and highlight the concept of religious tolerance.

The use of systemic, descriptive, and comparative methods allowed not only for the analysis of individual concepts, but also for the construction of a general theoretical model that reflects the interrelation of ideas and approaches to religious tolerance. These methods also provided an understanding of the key conditions under which religious tolerance contributes to peace and social stability.

To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between religious identity and national order in multi-faith societies, an analysis of survey results on religious attitudes toward Buddhism and Islam in South and Southeast Asia was also conducted. This analysis helps to focus attention on how religious identity, particularly Buddhism, is connected to national and cultural identity in countries

such as Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, where Buddhism is the dominant religion.

2. Results and discussion

According to Barnat (2024), J. Locke's ideas played a key role in shaping the concept of religious tolerance in modern political thought. J. Locke was one of the first thinkers to seriously address the role of religion in the state. He rejected the claim that the power of a monarch or prince is based on divine right, and instead proposed the concept of a social contract as the foundation for the legitimacy of power. In his view, the right to religious freedom is an essential element of a just society, and religious tolerance is a necessary condition for its proper functioning. According to J. Locke, the state should remain neutral regarding the religious beliefs of its citizens, and religious freedom must never be subject to external coercion.

Barnat (2022), analysing J. Locke's concept, notes that J. Locke argued that no person has the right to impose their faith or worldview on others, and that religious belief should be the result of free choice, not coercion. Furthermore, J. Locke emphasised the importance of separating religious and secular legislation, asserting that religious matters should not fall under the jurisdiction of state authorities. He also firmly opposed the idea that state authorities have the right to determine which religion an individual should adhere to, thereby reinforcing the principle of freedom of religious beliefs.

According to Barnat (2022), J. Locke's theory envisaged two types of autonomy. The first concerns state power, which should focus on promoting the well-being and security of citizens. The second concerns religious autonomy,

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where individuals have the right to freely choose their religious beliefs and organise religious life independently. The authority of religious leaders should be limited to the religious sphere, and any interference in secular affairs is deemed unacceptable (Spytska, 2023).

Bowers (2021) analyses the views of J. Locke and J.-J. Rousseau on religious tolerance. He notes that J. Locke regarded religious tolerance as one of the fundamental components of a just society, whereas J.-J. Rousseau approached the issue from a different perspective, emphasising the need for certain restrictions on religious freedom in order to maintain social order.

The author highlights that J.-J. Rousseau believed the legitimacy of state power to be based on a social contract, but also introduced the concept of "civil religion", which he considered a necessary condition for societal stability.

According to J.-J. Rousseau, religious freedom, if unrestricted, could lead to civil conflicts and the disruption of social order due to religious divisions. Bowers (2021) also points out that J.-J. Rousseau repeatedly argued for the necessity of the government establishing certain rules concerning religion to ensure the unity of citizens through a shared religious foundation, which would simultaneously help preserve the moral basis of society.

The key difference between the approaches of J. Locke and J.-J. Rousseau to religious tolerance lies in the extent of freedom they advocate. J. Locke insists on absolute freedom of religion, free from state interference, whereas J.-J. Rousseau supports limiting religious freedom to preserve social order. Thus, while J. Locke views religious tolerance as an essential element of individual rights, J.-J. Rousseau considers it a tool for ensuring social harmony (Table 1).

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Table 1: Comparison of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's approaches to religious tolerance

Aspect	John Locke	Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Approach to religion in the state	The state must remain neutral with regard to the religious beliefs of its citizens.	Religion should serve social unity and moral order.
Religious freedom	There must be absolute freedom of religion, without interference from the state.	Freedom of religion is limited so as not to disrupt social order.
Role of religion	Religious beliefs should be the result of free and independent choice.	Civil religion should unite citizens around common moral norms.
Place of religious beliefs in society	Religious beliefs constitute a private matter for citizens.	Religion should form the basis of moral laws and norms that support the stability of society.
Principles of religious tolerance	Religious tolerance includes the right to freely choose one's faith without coercion.	Freedom of conscience is limited in order to prevent religious conflicts.
Role of the state in religious matters	The state must refrain from interfering in religious affairs; any restrictions are impermissible.	The state should regulate religious matters to preserve civil unity and stability.
Autonomy of religious beliefs	Believers must have the right to religious autonomy, free from state interference.	State religion should exist as part of civil religion to ensure social order.

Source: compiled by the author based on Tate (2021).

These different approaches are significant for contemporary theories of religious tolerance. In the context of modern multicultural societies, where there is a wide diversity of religious ideas and beliefs, the issue of finding a balance between guaranteeing religious freedom and ensuring social stability becomes particularly important. Views that emphasise the importance of personal freedom may be applied in democratic countries, where religious diversity is part of

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national identity (Kotsur, 2021). However, the concept that implies certain restrictions in religious matters may be relevant for countries facing interreligious conflicts or social instability.

The balance between religious freedom and social stability is a complex task that must be addressed, taking into account the specific circumstances, historical traditions, and cultural characteristics of each society (Locke, 1983).

Gifford (2016) analyses the role of religious tolerance in contemporary Senegal and its impact on social stability. He emphasises that religious tolerance in the country serves as a foundation for ensuring peace among different religious groups, especially in the context of religious pluralism. Gifford (2016) notes that the Senegalese experience demonstrates how religious tolerance can act as a unifying factor, contributing to the development of national identity and stability. At the same time, he points out that state neutrality in religious matters helps to avoid conflicts and strengthens connections between various social and religious groups, thus creating a solid basis for peace.

Gill (2001) addresses the problem of religious tolerance within the context of comparative politics, emphasising the importance of this concept for understanding the stability of modern democratic states. She argues that religious tolerance is a necessary condition for ensuring social harmony and development, as it allows for the recognition of diverse religious beliefs without undermining social integrity. However, according to Gill (2001), the state should act as an active arbitrator, guaranteeing not only freedom of religion but also mechanisms for resolving conflicts arising on religious grounds. This enables the state to maintain a balance between the rights of minorities and the majority, thereby contributing to stability and peace within society.

González et al. (2009) examine religious tolerance in the context of the public sphere and deliberative democracy, emphasising that religious beliefs should form part of an open and constructive public dialogue. They argue that only through a pluralistic and inclusive approach to religion can social stability and peace be achieved; as religious groups must be able to participate in public discussions on equal terms. This approach, they contend, reduces tensions between religious and non-religious groups and creates space for peaceful coexistence. Thus, religious tolerance, supported by the principles of deliberative democracy, becomes an essential tool for ensuring stability and peace in multi-faith societies.

Religious tolerance is essential to minimise violence and to protect individuals from fear and persecution by others. In a liberal society, the state should create conditions for tolerance and religious pluralism that enable citizens to live free from fear and violence (Auanasova & Auanassova, 2024).

Each of these scholars has approached the issue of religious freedom with consideration for specific social and political contexts, yet all agree that the state must guarantee neutrality towards religions, ensuring freedom of conscience and the practice of religion without discrimination or persecution.

Griera (2020) explores the issue of managing religious pluralism through interfaith initiatives. The author focuses on the opportunities and challenges that arise when seeking to ensure effective interaction between religious communities in a context of diversity. He examines religious initiatives that promote peaceful coexistence and exchange between religious groups, while also highlighting the difficulties that may emerge from potential contradictions and tensions between religions within the same state. The main emphasis is placed on the need for a

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policy of tolerance that takes into account the various religious contexts shaping practices of interreligious dialogue and cooperation.

Körs (2020) analyses the role of religious communities in societies characterised by religious pluralism. He highlights how religious communities can contribute to maintaining social order and fostering religious tolerance in countries with diverse religious beliefs. Körs (2020) emphasises the importance of religious institutions not only as places of worship but also as platforms for integrating different cultural and religious groups into society. The author also examines mechanisms of interreligious interaction that may contribute to reducing conflicts and to building a more tolerant and equitable society.

Gunn (2011), in his study, addresses the significant issue of the use of religious symbols in the public sphere and their impact on religious tolerance and social stability. He raises the crucial question of whether religious symbols should be permitted in public spaces, particularly within state institutions, schools, and other public settings. This issue is of profound relevance in modern democratic societies, where the principles of freedom of expression and equal rights for all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation, are fundamental. Gunn (2011) argues that the expression of religious beliefs in public spaces can simultaneously promote religious tolerance and social harmony or threaten these aims if not appropriately regulated. For instance, he observes that in countries with diverse religious groups, such as Hindu, Muslim, or Christian communities, the public display of religious symbols can foster a sense of belonging and cohesion and strengthen tolerance among different groups. However, he warns that without clear regulations, such displays may provoke tension and conflict. The presence of religious symbols in public institutions or schools, for example, can create

feelings of discrimination or inequality among citizens who do not identify with those symbols, thus endangering social stability (Ivashko et al., 2020; Shapran, 2023). Gunn (2011) underscores that the role of the state in this context is critical. He argues that the state must establish clear boundaries regarding the use of religious symbols in public institutions. This should include specifying the places and conditions under which religious symbols may be displayed, in order to ensure both freedom of religion and the state's neutrality towards religion. For instance, in schools or workplaces, regulations could be designed to safeguard freedom of choice and religious expression while preventing religious symbols from becoming instruments of social division or political manipulation (Chernyshev et al., 2020; Frankiv, 2024). Gunn (2011) pays particular attention to the dual potential of religious expression in public life – how it can both support and undermine social harmony. On the one hand, he acknowledges that providing space for religious symbols may enhance respect and mutual understanding among citizens, creating a foundation for greater tolerance and acceptance of diverse religious traditions. On the other hand, without adequate regulation, it can lead to social segregation, where some religious groups may feel unwelcome or excluded from public space. Furthermore, Gunn (2011) notes that, in certain cases, religious symbols may be used as tools of political or social influence, resulting in the manipulation of religious beliefs to pursue specific objectives, including political or social identity formation. In such instances, religious symbols cease to represent purely spiritual expressions and instead become components of political or cultural strategies, posing risks to social stability (Bedelbayeva et al., 2024; Novozhenov, 2024). Based on his analysis, Gunn (2011) concludes that to ensure social harmony in contexts of religious diversity, it is essential to establish clear

guidelines and rules governing the use of religious symbols in public spaces. This approach would allow for a balance between the rights and freedoms of citizens while preserving religious tolerance, social stability, and equality for all religious groups – elements fundamental to the functioning of a democratic and multicultural society.

Khotimah (2020) explores various perspectives on religion in the public sphere, particularly focusing on the impact of religion on politics and public life. The author examines ideas concerning the role of religion in society, proposing theoretical models for understanding how religion can and should interact with state institutions in the modern world. Special attention is given to issues of freedom of conscience, religious tolerance, and the limits of secularism in public administration. The author emphasises the importance of supporting religious freedom while maintaining social stability and equality of rights.

Khotimah (2020) considers religious tolerance to be a crucial tool for national development. The author highlights that tolerance is an essential component of social unity and stability in multi-faith countries, particularly in the context of Nigeria. It is noted that religious tolerance not only contributes to peace and stability but can also serve as a strategic instrument to address social and economic inequalities. Moreover, Khotimah (2020) analyses how religious tolerance can play a significant role in societal development by raising the level of education and improving interethnic relations.

In addition, the concept of the "liberalism of fear" is introduced into the scientific discourse, emphasising the necessity of reducing cruelty and avoiding severe harm in politics. The primary role of government institutions, according to this approach, is to protect citizens from persecution, violence, and tyranny

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(Khamzin et al., 2022). The guarantee of religious freedom by the state is identified as a key element in safeguarding citizens from religious intolerance (Auanasova et al., 2024; Makhmudova et al., 2023). This ensures that individuals are able to practise their faith freely and without fear of persecution or discrimination. In a liberal society, the state must protect its citizens from such threats by promoting tolerance and religious pluralism (Kuttygaliyeva et al., 2024). Social order, in this context, avoids imposing any particular vision of life – religious – upon individuals. Importantly, religious tolerance does not imply that the state should favour or promote any specific religion (Auanasova et al., 2025). Thus, religious tolerance is essential for minimising violence and protecting individuals from fear and persecution by others.

Oyetoro and Talabi (2023) emphasise that interreligious dialogue is not only a tool for peacebuilding but also an important component of national identity, contributing to the formation of mutual respect and understanding among different religious communities. They argue that such dialogues can serve as a catalyst for socio-economic development, as they help strengthen ties between citizens, reduce the risk of radicalisation, and maintain stability in diverse societies. Ajaegbu (2012) highlights that through open discussions of religious differences and a shared commitment to peace, a more inclusive society can be fostered – one that actively works to resolve conflicts and ensure harmonious coexistence.

In its study, the Pew Research Centre (2023) points to significant aspects of religious identity and its connection to national order in countries of South and Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, where Buddhism is the predominant religion. The study reveals that for many Buddhists in these countries, Buddhism is not only a religion but also a key element of national

identity, culture, and family tradition. To some extent, this phenomenon reflects the role of religion in public life, as considered by J. Locke, who underscored the importance of religious freedom for ensuring social stability. According to the Pew Research Centre (2023) study, in countries where Buddhism is the religion of the majority, it is frequently regarded as the foundation of national identity. For example, 95% of Buddhists in Sri Lanka consider Buddhism to be an essential part of their national identity. This underscores the significance of religious tolerance in promoting national unity and stability.

The Pew Research Centre (2023) also found that a majority of Buddhists in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand support the idea that national laws should be based on Buddhist dharma. In Cambodia, this position is supported by almost all Buddhists (96%), while in Sri Lanka and Thailand it is less popular but still enjoys significant support. This approach to lawmaking can be compared to the political liberal theory of J. Rawls, who introduced the concept of "rational pluralism", whereby different social and religious groups should be able to interact on equal terms, ensuring equal opportunities for all without infringing upon the rights of minorities.

At the same time, the study revealed that a majority of Buddhists in these countries support the participation of religious leaders in the political process, particularly advocating for their right to vote in elections. For instance, 81% of Buddhists in Cambodia believe that religious leaders should have the right to vote, while support for this idea among Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Thailand is comparatively lower. This again underscores the importance of religious tolerance for achieving political stability and social harmony. In the context of I. Kant's theory, which also promotes secularism and freedom of religious belief, it may be

argued that states should ensure neutrality in religious matters, avoiding preference for particular faiths. Such an approach makes it possible to maintain social peace and political stability in multi-faith societies (Table 2).

Table 2: Theoretical concepts and religious identity in the context of national characteristics of Asian countries

Basic concepts	Pew Research Centre	Connection with theoretical concepts
Religious identity and national identity	Buddhism is not only a religion but also a significant element of national identity, culture, and family tradition in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.	This confirms J. Locke's idea regarding the importance of freedom of religion as a foundation for ensuring social stability.
Relationship between Buddhism and national laws	The majority of Buddhists in these countries support the idea that national laws should be based on Buddhist dharma, with particularly strong support observed in Cambodia.	It also parallels J. Rawls's theory, which supports pluralism and the principle of equal opportunities, where different religious groups can interact on equal terms.
Political participation of religious leaders	Most Buddhists also endorse the participation of religious leaders in political processes, including the right to vote.	Furthermore, it reflects I. Kant's ideas about secularism and religious freedom, according to which states should maintain neutrality towards all religions.
Religious tolerance and national stability	Religious tolerance and the promotion of national unity through mutual respect among different religious groups are seen as essential for maintaining social harmony and political stability.	Thus, these findings correspond to theoretical concepts emphasising the significance of religious freedom, pluralism, and state neutrality in maintaining social harmony and political stability.

Source: compiled by the author based on Pew Research Centre (2023).

In the context of religious tolerance, policies and strategies that promote inclusion are essential, as they play a crucial role in ensuring peaceful coexistence within multicultural societies. Anas et al. (2025) highlight the significance of

policies and strategies implemented in the city of Salatiga, Indonesia, aimed at fostering religious tolerance and acceptance of the "other". The authors also stress that establishing a system that supports inclusion can contribute to social cohesion and stability in a city where diverse religious communities coexist. This approach to religious tolerance aligns with the views of J. Locke, who underscored the importance of religious freedom and its role in maintaining social stability.

Research on the role of exercise tolerance and resilience in students' emotional states, conducted by Zhang et al. (2022), also has a relevant connection to the psychological benefits of fostering tolerance and inclusion in society. Although the study by Zhang et al. (2022) centres on students' emotional well-being, it also highlights the societal importance of resilience and tolerance. A society that fosters emotional resilience and acceptance is better positioned to enhance mental health outcomes and promote peace and stability within communities

In Indonesia, Ardi et al. (2021) examine how religious schemas influence tolerance toward marginalised groups. The authors emphasise the role of religion in sustaining harmony and mutual understanding among different religious communities in Indonesia. Acceptance of religious diversity and an appreciation of religious differences through dialogue serve to strengthen national unity and reduce social conflict.

Finally, Ali et al. (2020) analyse the dynamics of tolerance and competition within the discourse of multiculturalism in Salatiga, Indonesia. They argue that although tolerance is the foundation of peaceful coexistence, it must be complemented by a competitive discourse that allows for the development and expression of diverse religious and cultural identities. The authors highlight the

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importance of considering the specific cultural context of each society. They assert that religious tolerance cannot be applied uniformly across all cultures; rather, it must evolve in ways that are adapted to local realities and traditions, thereby enabling social harmony without suppressing cultural or religious practices. In Salatiga – an Indonesian city where various ethnic and religious groups coexist – the capacity for local adaptation is crucial, as it ensures sustainable peaceful coexistence while preserving diversity.

As the authors point out, tolerance should not merely function as passive acceptance of another religion or culture but should also be seen as an opportunity for open dialogue and mutual respect. This approach allows different groups to collaborate toward common goals while preserving their unique identities. The authors emphasise that religious tolerance must be dynamic and flexible, capable of responding to new social challenges and accommodating the integration of diverse social and cultural elements into the broader societal framework. Thus, religious tolerance should serve not only to maintain peace and stability but also as a stimulus for fostering cultural and social diversity within a unified society.

Religious tolerance is a crucial component of stability and social cohesion in democratic societies, and the results of this study confirm its significance. Religious tolerance not only ensures freedom of conscience but also serves as the foundation for maintaining harmony within culturally pluralistic societies (Kononenko, 2024). This aligns with the views of thinkers such as J. Locke, who, in his works, emphasised the necessity of religious freedom as a cornerstone of a just society. J. Locke also argued that religious tolerance is an essential condition for the harmonious functioning of society, underscoring the importance of state neutrality regarding citizens' religious beliefs, as well as the freedom to choose a

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religion without coercion. In light of the study's findings and considering the context of globalisation and cultural pluralism, it is important to note that religious tolerance assumes particular significance in multicultural societies. As demonstrated in Gifford's (2016) study on the role of religious tolerance in Senegal, tolerance can serve as a foundation for maintaining peace among different religious groups, thereby contributing to national unity and stability. In this context, the neutrality of the state in religious matters emerges as a critical element in preventing conflicts and strengthening ties between diverse social and religious groups, which corresponds with the conclusions of this study.

Furthermore, the analysis of various concepts of religious tolerance leads to the conclusion that the role of the state in ensuring and sustaining tolerance is of paramount importance. According to Gill (2001), the state should act as an active arbitrator, guaranteeing freedom of religion and establishing mechanisms for the resolution of religious conflicts. Such mechanisms contribute to maintaining stability and peace, which, as Gill (2001) argues, are essential preconditions for the development of a democratic society.

Continuing the analysis of the issue of religious tolerance, it is important to consider the approach proposed by Attaftazani (2023), which focuses on assessing the level of religious tolerance through indices such as the "Tolerant City Index". This index is widely used to measure the level of tolerance in cities, enabling comparisons between different urban spaces based on indicators related to religious diversity and inclusiveness. However, Attaftazani (2023) highlights that this approach has notable limitations, as it primarily focuses on external aspects, such as political declarations or explicit acts of tolerance between religious groups. According to him, such indices often fail to account for significant social,

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economic, and cultural dimensions, which are crucial for meaningful interaction among religious communities.

Attaftazani (2023) criticises existing instruments for measuring tolerance on the grounds that they are insufficient to reflect the actual level of socio-cultural integration of religious groups in everyday life. Indices such as the "Tolerant City Index" frequently overlook deeper factors, including everyday social practices, interactions between individuals of different religious backgrounds in routine settings, and the degree of mutual trust among diverse communities.

He argues that achieving genuine religious tolerance requires more than legal or formal recognition of equal rights for all religious groups; it necessitates the actual acceptance and understanding of religious diversity at a deeper socio-cultural level. According to Attaftazani (2023), real religious tolerance extends beyond official declarations or formalised social practices and must involve an inclusive attitude toward religious differences embedded in everyday life. Thus, the measurement of tolerance should not rely solely on external signs, such as the public celebration of religious holidays or mutual invitations to religious events, but should also consider the real perceptions and integration of religious groups into the social, economic, and cultural fabric of society.

In this context, Attaftazani (2023) emphasises the importance of fostering socio-cultural acceptance of religious pluralism. He argues that genuine religious tolerance should be manifested in everyday practices, such as dialogue, the exchange of experiences, and active interaction among members of different religious communities. Only under such conditions can a society be created in which religious differences are not perceived as sources of conflict or division but, on the contrary, as essential elements enriching the diversity of social life.

Attaftazani (2023) also points out that achieving this level of tolerance requires changes at the level of social norms, education, and upbringing. He stresses that social programmes and policies should promote respect for religious diversity, with the primary aim of such initiatives being the creation of a cultural environment where every individual can freely express their religious affiliation without fear of discrimination or exclusion. According to Attaftazani (2023), this approach can help reduce tensions between religious groups and ensure more sustainable social harmony in multicultural societies.

Riyanto (2021) in his study focuses on the role of the organisation "Jam'iyyatul Islamiyah" in strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia. The author underlines that, in order to maintain religious tolerance, it is essential not only to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect but also to actively promote the development of moderate views among religious groups. Riyanto (2021) highlights that this organisation plays a crucial role in promoting the principles of moderation across various religious communities, which helps maintain a balance between social harmony and the protection of minority interests. This approach is particularly significant for the development of sustainable democratic structures in countries characterised by religious diversity. Such initiatives facilitate a deeper understanding of the interaction between religious groups in the process of preserving stability and peace in society. Furthermore, this perspective correlates with broader views on the role of the state as an arbiter and guarantor of freedom of religious choice.

Marcus (2021), in his article, addresses the importance of educational programmes for fostering religious tolerance. He proposes a model course, "Religions 101", which aims not only to introduce students to various religions

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but also to promote critical thinking about the challenges of religious tolerance. According to Marcus (2021), education serves as a vital tool for advancing the idea of religious tolerance, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the diversity of religious practices and worldviews. This, in turn, encourages mutual respect among different cultures and religions.

The integration of religious studies into the educational curriculum can form the foundation for establishing a stable social environment that avoids conflicts and fosters peaceful coexistence among various religious and cultural groups. In examining the Indonesian context, Faidi (2021) highlights the role of shared cultural traditions in promoting religious tolerance. He points to the practice of joint celebrations, such as "Halal Bihalal" and Christmas festivities, as significant cultural mechanisms for fostering religious understanding. In the city of Salatiga, these practices contribute to developing mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians, thereby creating a platform for the peaceful coexistence of diverse religious groups. Faidi (2021) argues that such traditions not only enhance religious tolerance but also deepen social integration, helping to forge strong social bonds based on shared values and mutual respect. This analysis underscores the critical importance of cultural interaction and integration in maintaining social stability within multicultural societies.

Thus, religious tolerance, as a concept, possesses a multifaceted nature and requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account various dimensions of social life. It is not merely a matter of accepting religious differences at the institutional level, but also involves a deeper socio-cultural understanding that permeates everyday practices and interpersonal relationships. It is crucial to recognise that religious tolerance is shaped not only by formal laws and norms but

also by social practices formed through education, cultural initiatives, and the political will of the state. Without an integrated approach that addresses these diverse aspects, it becomes difficult to ensure sustainability and stability in societies characterised by cultural and religious diversity.

The role of the state in ensuring religious tolerance is of paramount importance. The state should act not only as a guarantor of the religious rights and freedoms of its citizens but also as an active participant in the process of building social harmony. This may include initiatives aimed at integrating various religious groups, supporting interreligious dialogue, and implementing policies that promote not only peaceful coexistence but also constructive mutual understanding among communities. State neutrality, combined with active mechanisms that foster interaction among religious groups, forms the foundation of a stable and cohesive society. At the same time, it must be emphasised that the state should neither restrict freedom of religion nor impose a single religious ideology, but is obliged to ensure equal opportunities for the expression of religious beliefs in the public sphere.

Conclusion

The study of the role of religious tolerance in modern democratic societies has enabled a deeper understanding of the significance of this concept for ensuring stability and social harmony in the context of globalisation and cultural pluralism. The findings of this research confirm that religious tolerance not only guarantees freedom of conscience, but also constitutes a necessary condition for strengthening social cohesion and the functioning of democracy. The analysis of theoretical approaches to religious tolerance has made it possible to identify

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common trends regarding the crucial role of religious tolerance in achieving social justice and harmony in multicultural societies.

It has been established that religious tolerance is not solely a moral imperative, but also a political task, requiring the active involvement of the state in creating conditions for the peaceful coexistence of diverse religious groups. The results of the study demonstrate that the role of religious tolerance in society lies in integrating religious diversity without infringing upon fundamental human rights. At the same time, the study acknowledges that tolerance has its limits, which necessitates further research, particularly in relation to religious practices that may violate the rights of other citizens. Another key aspect identified is the role of interreligious dialogue, which can serve as an essential tool in reducing social conflicts and promoting intercultural understanding.

Further research should focus on identifying effective models of interreligious dialogue and intercultural integration across different regions of the world. It is important to examine how religious tolerance is realised in specific social contexts, and how existing mechanisms for the legal protection of religious minorities can be improved. Additionally, future research should explore the impact of emerging social and political challenges – such as migration, digitalisation, and religious extremism – on the formation and sustainability of religious tolerance in democratic societies.

The limitations of this study include the absence of empirical data that would allow for a more detailed assessment of the level of religious tolerance in specific countries or regions. Furthermore, the study does not account for all possible factors influencing religious tolerance, particularly cultural and economic aspects, which require further investigation.

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