

This research finds that Islamic populism in Indonesian context is defined by the experts in the sense of popular mobilizations which engage popular political narrations as well as confrontation with elites in power who are imaged as authoritarian, corrupt and pro-foreign power and asing (China). Most of the actors and mass involved in these are actions are urban mid-class Muslims of various religious (Islamic) identities and classes. The interests of the proponents of these populism actions are varied and, in some cases, confronting each other, from purely demanding Ahok to be prosecuted for blasphemy, piety expression, Islamization of public space as well as political space (State power), and practice interest (struggle for access to power).

spasi  
BOOK

ISBN 978-602-0708-66-9

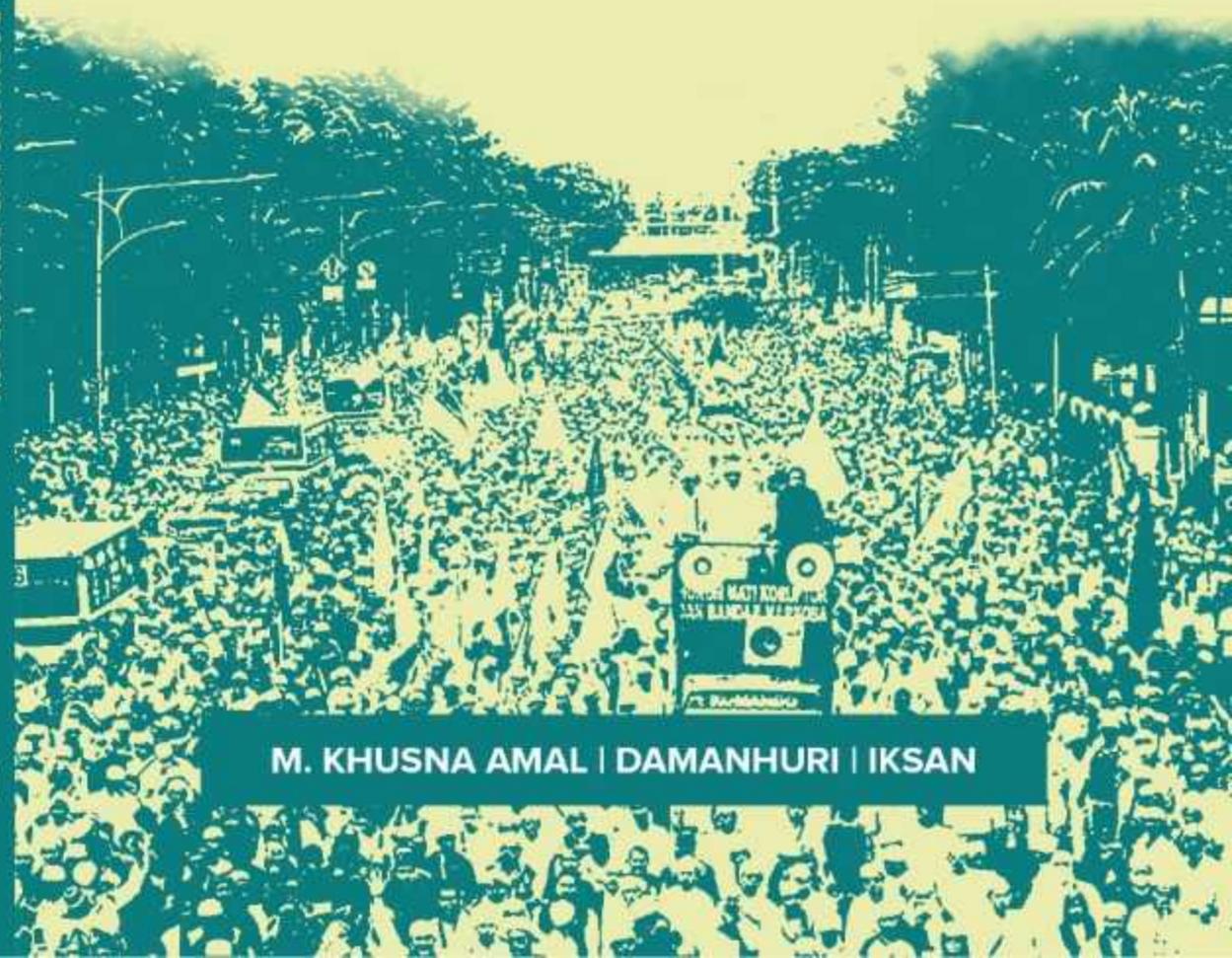


9 786020 708669

M. Khusna Amal | Damanhuri | Iksan

ISLAMIC POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY  
IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA

# ISLAMIC POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA



M. KHUSNA AMAL | DAMANHURI | IKSAN

**ISLAMIC POPULISM  
AND DEMOCRACY  
IN POST-NEW ORDER  
INDONESIA**



# **ISLAMIC POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA**

**M. KHUSNA AMAL | DAMANHURI | IKSAN KAMIL SAHRI**



## **ISLAMIC POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA**

Penulis: M. Khusna Amal, Damanhuri & Iksan Kamil Sahri  
Perancang Sampul dan Tata Isi: Farisi Al

Diterbitkan oleh Spasi Book  
(Kelompok Cantrik Pustaka)  
Email: [naskahcantrik@gmail.com](mailto:naskahcantrik@gmail.com)

Perpustakaan Nasional:  
Katalog Dalam Terbitan (KDT)  
Islamic populism and democracy  
in post-new order indonesia/M. Khusna Amali, dkk.  
—Yogyakarta: Cantrik Pustaka, 2020

ISBN 978-602-0708-66-9

xiv + 173 hlm; 14 x 20 cm  
Cetakan Pertama, Januari 2020



## PREFACE

In the last decade, there is no hotter issue discussed by experts of various scientific disciplines than populism issue. This cannot be separated from empirical reality of emergence of populism, which plays role in the social and political dynamics. The emergence of political elites like Donald Trump in AS, Nharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Narendra Modi in India, Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, Norbet Hoffer and Brexit initiator, Nigel Farage, in Europe, Rodriogo Duterte in Philippines, most of which successfully win votes in Election and even take the seat of State ruler, marks the populism era in the world of global politics.

In Indonesia, the emergence of Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo who are engaged in the power contestation for two consecutive periods (2014 & 2019) also marks the emergence of populism. In experts' opinion, Prabowo represents a right populist political elite figure (ultra-nationalism) since the political narrations he offers are oriented to confirmation of anti-foreign nationalism. Meanwhile, Jokowi is deemed to display modern or moderate populism, since he emphasizes nationalism without

positioning foreign (Western) parties as an enemy to fight with. Differently from the right populism in America, Europe and part of Asia, the variant of populism in Indonesia that successfully makes Jokowi win the power contestation is the moderate populism.

One interesting thing for the Indonesia case is the emergence of Islamic populism initiated by Islamism groups. The mass mobilization movements in the Defending Islam action (411, 412), defending ulama action, reunion 212, to people power are the most popular populism phenomena which draw much attention, including from domestic and foreign experts. The presence of social movement that uses religious label or identity politics is not limited to enliven power contestation both at local (Head of Region Election of DKI Jakarta) and national (Presidential Election) levels. In fact, its presence, more or less, plays an important role in changing the political and Islamic landscapes in Indonesia. Many experts assume that the emergence of the biggest mass mobilization act in Indonesian history after the New Order successfully places the Islamism groups on the public mainstream discussion.

In addition, the impacts of the Islamic populism actions are really serious, such as declining image of Indonesia's moderate, tolerant and pluralistic Islam. This may at least be observed from various literatures of Islamic-social contemporary study which generally describe Islam in Indonesia after the New Order as conservative, intolerant and radical. The literatures state that Islam in Indonesia is, within a relatively long period, known as or identical to –to borrow Martin van Bruinessen's term– *smile Islam*. After the New Order, however, particularly after the populism actions, the smile Islam of Indonesia shifts 180 degree to be angry Islam.

In line with strengthening Islamic populism with its conservative-radical characters or, in global term is known as, right populism, the development of the quality of democracy in Indonesia after the New Order is declining. After a progressive development from 1999 to 2004, the development of democracy in Indonesia is stagnant (2005–2014). In the next period (2015–2019), the trend of development of democracy in Indonesia –and globally in general-- even declines, particularly in terms of civil freedom. In this context, the rise of populism (like Islamic populism at the bottom and like political elite populism at the top) greatly contributes to the deconsolidation of democracy in Indonesia.

This research takes the topic which becomes the experts' attention, discussion and debates. The aspect explored in this research is the discourses of Indonesian Muslim experts and Indonesianists (Western scholars who are concerned about Indonesia) in understanding the Islamic populism phenomena in Indonesia. Although the experts of the two segments have produced discourses or scientific reviews of relevant topic, however, only few of them comprehensively and systematically review the experts' opinions.

This research finds that Islamic populism in Indonesian context is defined by the experts in the sense of popular mobilizations which engage popular political narrations as well as confrontation with elites in power who are imaged as authoritarian, corrupt and pro-foreign power and *aseng* (China). Most of the actors and mass involved in these are actions are urban mid-class Muslims of various religious (Islamic) identities and classes. The interests of the proponents of these populism actions are varied and, in some cases, confronting each other, from purely demanding Ahok to be prosecuted for blasphemy, piety expression, Islamization of

public space as well as political space (State power), and practice interest (struggle for access to power).

The research result also finds that almost all experts assume that the Islamic populism actions promoted by Islamic political groups greatly contribute to the declining quality of democracy in Indonesia. These actions also trigger counter-actions which are not less militant by State agents and moderate Muslims. Instead of responding the Islamic populism in democratic ways, in most of experts' opinion, the State agents and democratic civil society groups of moderate Muslims are even trapped in a non-democratic game model just like how the anti-democratic groups act.

This research is the result of collaboration between-researchers of PTKI (Islamic Religious Higher Education Institution) in Indonesia as well as researchers of the Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, Australia. M. Khusna Amal of the State Islamic Study Institute (IAIN) of Jember, Damanhuri of Instika (Madura) and Iksan of Islamic Study Institute Al-Fitra (Surabaya) are the three researchers of PTKI. The co-researcher as well as supervisor of ANU is Associate Professor Greg Fealy. It is to be acknowledged that Greg's involvement in this research also contributes a distinguished role and importance to the implementation to reporting processes of the research results. Although not directly involved in data collection, but Greg gives many inputs and corrections in the research proposal, serves as a discussion partner in enriching the data and literature, communicates with colleagues at ANU (such as Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, Paul D. Kenny, Thomas Power), facilitates work space during visit at ANU, and also reviews the research results.

With completion of the research reporting, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all parties for their involvement in and contribution to this research, from the initial

process to final phase (reporting). I would like to thank Greg who is the co-researcher as well as the supervisor of this collaborative research. Without his help, including making of LoA (Letter of Acceptance), we will not freely travel to Canberra to meet and discuss with the sources.

We would like to show our appreciation and gratitude to the Director of Islamic Studies Higher Education and staffs (Head of Sub-Directorate of Research, Service and Scientific Publication/Suwendi and Head of Research Division and HAKI/ Mahrus El-Mawa) who have given their trust and opportunity as well as funding assistance for the implementation of this international collaborative research. Without the Directorate of Islamic Studies Higher Education's assistance, through its competitive research program of international collaborative category, we would have never imaged to conduct a cross-countries research.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the leaders of our respective higher education institution, rector of IAIN Jember, rector of Instika, and rector of Al-Fitra, who have given us permission to conduct this research. As a note, this research is held from July to December 2019. Within the period, we had to request for permission to our leaders for discount to leave our campuses and routine activities at the campuses (both as educator and institution management at campus) for the purpose of this research. Without the leaders' permission and support, this research would have not run well and might have failed.

At last, we would also like to thank the informants who have given us opportunity to discuss about the research topic. It is the result of discussion with them that we have systematized into the report of this research. Similarly, we also thank all parties, of which names cannot be written one by one in this preface. May their time and ideas contribution is useful, not only for the re-

search reporting, but also to improve the quality of science and public literacy in understanding issues related to the research's subject matter.

Finally, we expect that the results of this research will greatly contribute to the development of discourses, thinking and science in Islamic populism and democracy studies. Therefore, the results of this research will be published and disseminated through books, journals, book reviews, seminars and various means of publication.

Jember, December 15, 2019

Research Team



# Contents

PREFACE ..... V

## 1

**Introduction** ..... 1

    A. Background..... 1

    B. Research Problem..... 12

    C. Objective..... 12

    D. Significance ..... 13

    E. Literature Review..... 15

    F. Research Method..... 19

    G. Writing Systematics ..... 23

## 2

### **Islamic Populism and Democracy:**

**Paradox Relationship?**..... 24

    A. Populism ..... 25

    B. Islamic Populism ..... 36

    C. Strengthened Islamic Populism ..... 41

    D. Islamic Populism and Democracy..... 50

## 3

<b>Rising Indonesian Islamic Populism in Post-New Order Indonesia</b> .....	59
A. Islamic Populism in the Indonesian Context .....	60
B. The Emergence of Islamic Populism: Some Features.....	68
C. The Causes of Islamic Populism.....	92

## 4

<b>Does Islamic Populism Cause Indonesia's Democracy to Decline?</b> .....	113
A. Dynamics of Indonesia's Democracy: .....	114
From Stagnancy to Regression? .....	114
B. Islamic Populism's Contribution to Democracy .....	121
C. Paradox of Contra-Islamic Populism .....	142

## 5

**Conclusion**

A. Conclusion.....	153
B. Suggestion.....	159

<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	163
---------------------------	-----







# Introduction

## A. Background

Since the presidential election (Pilpres) 2014, the political turbulence in Indonesia is quickly reinforced. The fight between the two president candidates, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prabowo Subianto, involves new political narration popularly known as populism. Prabowo, the son-in-law of Suharto (authoritarian regime), carries poverty, social gap and injustice issues occurring to the Indonesians resulted from the corrupt government system and foreign intervention. In his many statements, Prabowo condemns the existing government, claiming it to be *bobrok* (corrupt) and must be fixed, attacks foreign companies for extracting Indonesia's natural wealth without appropriate compensation, describes domestic elites as foreign parasitic cronies, and, of course, asks the poor, uneducated and rural people for their support<sup>1</sup>.

On the contrary, Jokowi, governor of DKI Jakarta, employs more moderate populism narration which is also oriented to people's welfare improvement in various sectors of social life,

---

1 In Marcus's opinion, the populism used by Prabowo is classical, text book, and ultra-nationalist populism. Prabowo tends to use classical, text book, and ultra-nationalist populism. Marcus Mietzner, *Reinventing Asian Populism: Jokowi's Rise, Democracy and Political Contestation in Indonesia*, Honolulu-Hawaii: East-West Center, 2015, pp. xi.

economy, education and health, without having to behave restrictively towards the rich or foreigners. In this case, first, Jokowi does not promise to change the political system revolutionarily—he offers a change in a democratic status quo framework. Second, he does not target certain actor or group as his enemy, but displays himself as a very inclusive person instead. And third, he refrains from anti-foreign rhetoric to gain support<sup>2</sup>.

However, the fight between the two populist president candidates involves their various supporting elements, not limited to political parties which *notabene* have given political ticket for their candidacy, but also social groups of the civil society. Some elements of the civil society which are actively engaged and play role in the dynamics of power contestation, both at local and national levels, are Islamism or Islamic political groups. The Front Pembela Islami (FPI), Tarbiyah activists affiliated to the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), Forum Umat Islam (FUI), etc. are a number of Islamic groups relatively successfully consolidate and at the same time mobilize the mass to contribute to influencing the course of power contestation. Differently from the Islamism-jihadist that uses physical violence instrument like suicide bombing or other terrorism actions<sup>3</sup>, these groups choose populism approach in struggle for their political agenda.

In line with populism revival in various parts of the world (Europe, America, and Asia), the one getting strong in Indonesia

---

2 Differently from the approach carried by his competitor (Prabowo), Jokowi prefers a more moderate populism approach newly known as the technocratic populism. This type of populism is different from the classical populism concept developing in the world: it is more inclusive than focusing on exclusion of identified opponent, nationalist, not using anti-foreign rhetoric relied on by many people in Asia or Latin America; and it is also more oriented to improvement of government than calling for his substitute revolutionarily. Marcus Mietzner, *Reinventing Asia populism*, 3.

3 Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militansi dan Pencarian identitas di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru*, Jakarta: LP3ES and KITLV, 2008.

is none other than the “right populism” with not only its conservative, but also extremely racist and sectarian characters<sup>4</sup>. Differently, the emergence of right populism in Indonesia is sponsored by the Islamism power. Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Hizbut Tahir Indonesia (HTI), Majelis Intelektual dan Ulama Muda Indonesia (MIUMI), Forum Umat Islam (FUI), dan Wahdah Islamiyah are the actors of the Islamic populism movement. They are known as the Islamic fundamental, conservative and radical groups, which always utilize religion for their objectives and political interests. Therefore, the Islamic populism variant emerging in Indonesia, as shown with the popular movement of Defending Islam Action, is more appropriately categorized as the Islamic populism or political Islam<sup>5</sup>.

The influence and action of Islam populism movement in Indonesia gets stronger, particularly during the 2016–2017 Regional Head Election of DKI Jakarta, which involves incumbent governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok. The Islamists’ resistance finds their strategic momentum when the incumbent governor conducts a campaign in front of the people of the Thousand Islands on September 27, 2016. In the campaign, Ahok

---

4 Donald Trump’s victory in US Presidential Election, the success of Brexit supporters in UK, the glory of Nharatiya Janata Party/BJP and Narendra Modi in India represents the rise of right populism in various parts of the world. Before Trump and Brexit cases stand out, politicians like Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, Norbet Hoffer and initiator of Brexit, Nigel Farage, have entered into populism political flow. Ronald Inlehart and Pippa Norris (2016), as quoted by Ari A. Perdana, state that the votes of parties that carry populist issues in Europe increase from 5 percent in 1960 to 13 percent in this decade. At the same time, their seats increase from 4 percent to 13 percent. Not limited to votes, populist parties and politicians have strong influence at higher level of discourses. In UK, for example, the United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP) is capable of influencing public opinion for Brexit victory. Ari A. Perdana, “Menguatnya Populisme: Trump, Brexit hingga FPI, January 23, 2017.

5 The term political Islam and Islamism are frequently exchanged or used in an overlapping way by scholar. In this case, political Islam is more an activism committed to realize certain political agenda using Islamic symbols, doctrines, Language, Ideas and ideology. The proponents and followers of political Islam are called Islamists, which means Moslems committed to political actions to apply what they call Islamic agenda. Noorhaidi Hasan, *Islam Politik di Dunia Kontemporer: Konsep, Geneologi, dan Teori*, Yogyakarta: SUKA-Press, 2012, 10-11.

suggests the people not to get easily provoked by those who discredit him as a governor candidate on the proposition of al-Qur'an surah al-Maidah. In Ahok's view, many people dislike him and use verses of al-Qur'an not to elect him in the Regional Head Election. Ahok's statement in his speech in the Thousand Islands is more or less as follows.

“In your inner hearts, ladies and gentlemen, you may feel you cannot vote for me, because you have been lied to by the use of Surah al-Maidah, Verse 51. So, if you cannot vote for me because you are afraid of being condemned to hell, you do not need to feel uneasy, because you are being fooled. It is alright.”

Ahok's speech in the Thousand Islands later becomes viral upon uploaded (and has been edited beforehand) by Buni Yani in his Facebook page on October 6, 2016. Buni Yani's video instantly triggers reaction of Moslems who feel insulted by Ahok's statement. At the same time, the Islamist elites who are resistant to Ahok utilize this situation for their political interest. They later manage the people's anger, mobilize and engage them in an action popularly known as the Defending Islam Action. The blasphemy issue is effectively utilized to mobilize a considerable number of Moslems from various parts of Indonesia. Most of the Moslems involved in the mass action are from urban low-class and mid-class<sup>6</sup> who are more interested in their emotional expression than in theological debate<sup>7</sup>.

Moreover, the proponents of the Defending Islam Action demand Ahok, who is justified as committing “desecration of

---

6 Vedi R. Hadiz explains that Islamic populist groups involved in the Defending Islam Action consist of loose coalition between urban poor groups incorporated in vigilant groups, religious mid-class and some elites of religious figures, political and business figures. Read Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam di Indonesia dan Timur Tengah*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 2018.

7 Timo Duile, “Reactionary Islamism in Indonesia”, *New Mandala*, April 17, 2017.

al-Qur'an", "blasphemy", "insult to ulama", and even "insult to all Moslems throughout the world", to be sentenced or imprisoned. The first Defending Islam Action takes place on October 14, 2016 and is followed by around 50,000 people. The second Defending Islam Action is held on November 4, 2016 and followed by more than 200,000 people. At peak, the third Defending Islam Action on December 2, 2016 popularly known as the 212 action serves to be the brand of the Islamist populism action and is attended by over 500,000 people<sup>8</sup>. The proponents of the 212 action claim that the mass is up to 7 million people. The number of people based on Google Map's mathematic calculation is estimated to be 2.3 million people. Regardless of different calculation of the number of action participants, one thing is certain that this mass action is the biggest Moslem mobilization in Indonesia's contemporary history<sup>9</sup>.

In their action, the proponents of the Defending Islam Action or the 212 movement use the Gerakan Nasional Pembela Fatwa-Majlis Ulama Indonesia (GNPF-MUI) as their political medium. Actually, MUI does not acknowledge GNPF-MUI as part of and/or an organization formed by MUI. In Ahok's case, MUI only issues "opinion and religious attitude" (instead of fatwa) that the governor of DKI Jakarta is categorized as (1) insulting al-Qur'an and/or (2) insulting ulama with legal consequence. Moreover, this statement is issued by MUI after it is pressured by the Islamist groups. As commonly known, a number of Islamist figures like Bachtiar Nasir (head of MIUMI), K.H. Fakhurrozi

---

8 Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Groups and the Politics of Accommodation", *Asian Studies Review*, 2018, 1-19.

9 Moch Nur Ichwan, *MUI, Gerakan Islamis dan Umat Mengambang*, *Ma'arif*, Vol. 11 (2) December 2016, 87-104; Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia's Growing Islamist Populism", *Asia Dialogues*, December 19, 2016.

Ishaq (head of Gerakan Masyarakat Jakarta/GMJ and simultaneously FPI version's governor of DKI), K.H. Ahmad Shabri Lubis (general chairman of FPI), Tgk Abdullah Ibrahim (Aceh People's Representative in Jakarta), K.H. Unun Tarunajaya (head of Majelis Dzikir SBY), etc. come to MUI and ask it to issue a fatwa or statement of attitude in response to Ahok's case<sup>10</sup>.

In some experts' opinion, the 212 movement pioneered by the Islamist groups does not only desire to overthrow Ahok, but also farther than that. Greg Fealy, for example, assumes that behind the action, there is an ideological agenda (besides political agenda) intending to delegitimize the status quo and at the same time apply Islamic agenda of state level<sup>11</sup>. In this context, the 212 action does not only target Ahok, but also Jokowi in his capacity as the president and head of the State. This opinion is logical considering that most of actors involved in the 212 action come from the Islamism elements who always carry religious agenda in their political struggle<sup>12</sup> in their alliance with economic-political regime with position *vis a vis* the regime in power<sup>13</sup>.

The emergence of the masses' actions that frequently utilize religious symbols, attributes and sentiments and at the same time position the people *vis a vis*/confront them with the ruler marks what is called the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia. Vedi R. Hadiz, for example, expressly positions the 212 action as, not only

- 
- 10 Moch Nur Ichwan, *MUI, Gerakan Islamis dan Umat Mengambang, Ma'arif* Vol. 11 (2) December 2016, 87-104.
  - 11 Hidden agenda behind lawsuit against Ahok are, among other, desire to change constitution to apply Islamic law, prohibition for non-Moslem leaders in a majority of Moslem community, more implementation of sharia principles, and candidacy of political leaders for executive who sympathize more Islamic objectives. In short, Ahok dismissal is only part of wider Islamization effort. Read Greg Fealy, "Bukan Sekedar Ahok: Menjelaskan Aksi Massa pada 2 Desember, in *Indonesia At Melbourne*, Melbourne University, December 12, 2016.
  - 12 Bassam Tibi, *Islam dan Islamisme*, Bandung: Mizan, 2016, 1-5; Salwa Ismail, "Being Muslim: Islam, Islamism and Identity Politics", *Government and Opposition* 39, No. 4, 2004, 66.
  - 13 Ari A. Perdana, "*Menguatnya Populisme: Trump, Brexit hingga FPI*, *Harian Indoprogres*, January 23, 2017.

an identity politics based social movement, but Indonesia's typical variant of Islamic populism. Islamic populism is not only a marginal low-class movement, but also led by professionals and educated individuals who demand reorganization of power to favor the community more<sup>14</sup>. As a representation of Islamic populism, the 212 action positions itself as a bloc on behalf of ordinary people and regime in power which is labeled as corrupt in antagonistic position. In addition, the 212 action also carries populist narrations (peoplehood, democracy, poverty, and the likes) to be confronted with the ruler or status quo. The proponents of the 212 action generally view the mass mobilization they initiate not only as a political strategy to gain power, but also the expression of the community and people's general desire<sup>15</sup>.

The experts' prediction, that the motive behind the 212 action is not only directed to Ahok, but farther than that, has a point. This is proven after Ahok is defeated in the Regional Head Election of DKI Jakarta and imprisoned for blasphemy, populism actions driven by the Islamist groups still continue. Carrying the 212 spirit, the Islamic populism groups continuously attempt to play a role in the contestation of power in the Presidential Election 2019 momentum. The target shifts from anti-Ahok to anti-Jokowi sentiment. They keep using racist populism narrations by framing the regime in power (Jokowi) as part of foreign power and *aseng* (China), communist, pro-blasphemer, ulama criminalization, corrupt and authoritarian. During the Presidential Election 2019, the Islamic populism actions are realized in various forms from reunion 212, 2019 ganti presiden, ijma' ulama, and

---

14 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam di Indonesia dan Timur Tengah (Islamic Populism in Indonesia and Middle East)*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 2018.

15 Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory Capitalism - Fascism - Populism*, London: NLB, 1977.

even the people power issue. All of these are made by them as a measure to prevent Jokowi from winning in the electoral politics 2019<sup>16</sup>.

However, the increasingly stronger Islamic populism actions, as represented by the 212 action and its various derivatives, both in the context of Regional Head Election of DKI Jakarta 2017 and Presidential Election 2019, are interesting phenomena in the development of Islam and politics in Indonesia after the New Order. Their success in building populist narrations, mobilizing a considerable number of people, and launching pressure to the regime in power, evidently successfully change the map of political constellation in contemporary Indonesia. It must be acknowledged that the popular actions have caused extensive sociological and political impacts. Many assume that the Islamic populism actions successfully raise radical Islamism's influence, force the government to act by reducing law enforcement's independence, and marginalize mainstream Islamism's position such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. As the result of such actions, the image of Indonesian Islam or Indonesia as a nation with most of citizens are tolerant, moderate and pluralist Moslems who are committed to legal sovereignty to degenerate<sup>17</sup>.

Not only Indonesian Islam's image, the development of democracy is also affected. The development of democracy in Indonesia after the New Order, which once progresses from 2000 to 2004, gets stagnant in Susilo Bambang Yudoyono's (SBY) period, and even declines in Jokowi's period (2014-2019). It is also important to note that the variables which contribute to the decline

---

16 IPAC (Institute for Polity Analysis on Conflict), *After Ahok: The Islamist Agenda in Indonesia*, IPAC Report No. 44, 6 April 2018; IPAC, *Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign*, IPAC Report No. 55, March 15, 2019

17 Read Greg Fealy, "Bukan Sekedar Ahok" 2016; Bambang Muryanto, "NU, Muhammadiyah Suffer Setbacks over their Roles in Society", *The Jakarta Post*, January 19, 2017.

of quality of democracy are not only originated from the populism actions launched by the Islamist groups. The counter-populism launched by the Islamic pluralist groups that also use exclusionary logic, particularly against Islamist group like HTI, also contributes to perpetuating religious identity politicization that is not entirely compatible to the pluralism, human rights, and general democracy values. The technocratic populism policy of Jokowi governance is also deemed by the experts to contribute to the reduction of democracy quality in Indonesia. However, the Islamic populism actions are considerably responsible for the reduction of quality of democracy values, particularly related to the guarantee of civil rights of minority groups<sup>18</sup>.

In addition, the phenomenon of emergence of Islamic populism in relation to the development of democracy in Indonesia has also triggered intensive debates among both from domestic and foreign academics, particularly the Indonesianists; Western scholars who are concerned about Indonesian study. Generally, they assume that increasingly stronger populism (including Islamic populism) contributes negatively to the declining quality of democracy in Indonesia, particularly from the perspective of liberal democracy's point of view. In their view, Islamic populism is not liberal power and its presence certainly contributes to strengthening illiberal democracy<sup>19</sup>.

The decline of quality of democracy in Indonesia after emergence of popular mobilization may be observed from the findings of a number of survey institutions. For example, the Central Sta-

---

18 Thomas P. Power, "Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Business*, Vol. 54 (3), 2018, 307-338; Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir, Diatyka Widya Permata Asih and Luqmanul Hakim, "Populisme Islam dan Tantangan Demokrasi di Indonesia", *Prisma*, Vol. 36 (3), 2017, 48-59.

19 Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Face of Democracy", *Political Studies*, 1999, XLVII, 2-16; Cas Mudde, *Populist Raught Radical Parties in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 156.

tistics Body (BPS) notes that the Indonesia's Democracy Index (IDI) slightly increases of 0.28 from 72.11 in 2017 to 72.39 in 2018. The IDI movement is influenced by the development of three aspects, namely civil freedom, political rights and democracy institution. Of the three aspects, only the democracy institution significantly develops of 2.76 points from 72.49 to 75.25. The civil freedom aspect declines of 0.29 point (from 78.75 to 78.46) and the political rights declines of 0.84 point (from 66.63 to 65.79)<sup>20</sup>.

Qualitatively, the experts' assumption is based on a number of variables, particularly related to expression freedom, association freedom and other freedoms. Based on various criteria, religious freedom, freedom to express opinion, association freedom, and the fate of minority groups such as LGBT, Ahmadiyah, Syi'ah, Chinese, Christians, and other minority groups do not get better. Instead of Indonesian democracy getting well consolidated, the one strengthened is what they call illiberal democracy. Intolerant actions and religious sectarianism, as shown by the 212 action, addressed to minority groups like Chinese and Christians (as represented in Ahok) considerably contributes to reducing tolerance, pluralism and human rights (HAM) values. Similarly, Jokowi regime's policy in repressing anti-democratic groups like HTI and proponents of Islamic populism 212 actions and no legal protection for sexually vulnerable group like LGBT, is deemed to contribute to declining quality of democracy in Indonesia<sup>21</sup>.

Although most of the experts deem that the emergence of Islamic populism importantly contributes to reducing the qual-

---

20 <https://www.bps.go.id/pencarian.html?searching=indeks+demokrasi+indonesia&yt1=Cari;https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/bps-indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-2018-tergolong-kategori-sedang-/5019765.html>

21 Thomas P. Power, "Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn", 307-338.

ity of democracy, but a small number have different opinion. In the latter opinion, the populism actions launched by the Islamist groups do not change much the declining quality of democracy in Indonesia. For example, the electoral processes of president and people's representatives (DPR), from central to regional level, are still conducted directly. Democracy institutions such as the General Elections Commission (KPU), the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), political parties, and other democracy institutions still exist (not dissolved) until now. Besides, the populism actions do not successfully struggle for their political agenda, particularly in controlling the State or changing its political system to be *Khilafah*.

Specifically, this research aims at understanding the discourse of experts among the Moslem intellectuals and foreign scholars who are concerned about Indonesia (red: Indonesianists) regarding the rise of Islamic populism and democracy in Indonesia after the New Order. This research does not intend to compare the two opinions of experts who generally have relatively equal intellectual background. Coincidentally, the intellectuals chosen as the research's subjects are scholars who are familiar with and even most of them are graduates of Western education. However, the experts do not entirely have uniform opinion in all respects related to the research's topic. For example, the government's policy of prohibiting the organization HTI is responded differently by domestic and foreign experts. Some experts deem that such government's policy is a form of authoritarianism or non-democratic action, while the remainder deems otherwise. In this context, the study of experts' thinking discourse in the discussion of the rise of Islamic populism and democracy finds its relevance and significance.

## **B. Research Problem**

This research studies the rise of Islamic populism and its impacts on the development of democracy in Indonesia after the New Order from the perspective of Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists. The main problem to be developed through this study is how is the discourse of Islamic populism and democracy in Indonesia after the New Order? More specifically, how Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists explain the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia after the New Order? Is, according to them, the rise of Islamic populism paradoxical for the democratization process in Indonesia after the New Order? These questions will be developed into some more detailed research problems as follows:

1. How is the discourse of scholars from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists in explaining the emergence of Islamic populism in Indonesia after the New Order?
2. How is the discourse of scholars from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists in explaining factors which encourage the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia after the New Order?
3. How is the discourse of scholars from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists in explaining the rise of Islamic populism in relation to the democratization process in Indonesia after the New Order?

## **C. Objective**

This research aims at understanding the view of Indonesian Islamic experts and domestic and foreign political experts of the dynamics of the rise of Islamic populism in relation to the de-

mocratization process in Indonesia after the New Order. More specifically, this research intends to provide a comprehensive overview of these experts' discourse in explaining some important matters as follows:

1. The discourse of scholars from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists of Islamic populism movement and agenda in Indonesia after the New Order
2. The discourse of scholars from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists in explaining factors which encourage the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia after the New Order
3. The discourse of scholars from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists in explaining the rise of Islamic populism in relation to the democratization process in Indonesia after the New Order?

#### **D. Significance**

This research is believed to make a scientific contribution in enriching the discourse on Islamic populism and democracy in contemporary Indonesia. All the time, thinking and knowledge discourses on Islamism are more dominated by the ideas of religious radicalism. Radicalism actors with their terrorism actions actually impress those who study Islam in Indonesia more in explaining the social, political and religious movements of the Islamists. At the same time, Islamist extremist groups through physical violence are deemed more dangerous and deadly than non-physical radicalism actions by Islamic populism agents, while the reality is not necessarily the case.

Meanwhile, studies of Islamist groups who take popular approach indeed once enliven discourses on Islam in Indonesia re-

cently. However, the developing discourses are more dominated by economic-political and identity political perspectives in which the rise of popular Islam, as expressed by the Islamists, is understood more as a form of commodification and seeking for new identity. This type of popular Islam displays itself with devout Islamic identity which is accommodative to modern culture. The new tendency of popular Islamism even results in new terminologies, which is labeled by the experts as post-Islamism<sup>22</sup>. The dynamics of post-Islamism which moves in cultural and public space with its accommodative attitude towards modernity products is deemed not to have negative impact on democracy. Moreover, some of these popular Islamists move in the corridor of democracy, such as their political activism which is realized through political parties or coming to voting booth to express their aspiration during general election.

However, the post-Islamists who tend to be accommodative to democracy are actually not apolitical. However, the Islamists' ideological-political DNA does not disappear at all. When there is a gap, the post-Islamist agents who so far move in public and cultural spaces get into the political struggle arena. They who are on the path of post-Islamism, when come into contact with political practice, have their ideological-political temperament changing to be radical, sectarian and racist, as expressed by the proponents of Islamic populism movement in the defending Islam actions. In various literatures of populism, such variant of Islamic populism is categorized as the black populism or uncivilized populism.

---

22 As stated by Bayat, post-Islamism is not anti-Islam or secular or non-Islam. More than that, it represents the effort to merge religion and rights, faith and liberation, Islam and freedom. It is an effort to reverse the basic principles of Islamism by emphasizing rights instead of duties and obligations, upholding plurality instead of single authoritative voice. It struggles to synergize Islam with individual choice and freedom to achieve what is called by scholars by an alternative modernity. Asef Bayat, *Pos-Islamisme*, Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2011, 20.

## E. Literature Review

The significance of reemergence of Islamism has actually become one subject of experts' study since the September 11, 2001 incident (WTC bombing) and in Suharto's last few years for Indonesian context. Most of discussions on Islamism still focus on its radical social agents. This may be understood considering that the radical Islamism movements still strive in many areas, regionally and globally. Instead of declining, terrorism issues even increase. Even in the West, like Europe and America, the intensity of bombing cases related to terrorism actions increases. Therefore, it is not surprising if Western countries' governments and their scholars are highly concerned about deradicalization or counter-terrorism movement. Australian Government, for example, through ASPI (Australian Strategic Policy Institute) with its wing Counter-Terrorism Polity Centre develops an intensive study program labeled Counter-Terrorism Years Book. Among the scholars' writings focusing on the study of radical Islamism are Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam*, issued by Yale University Press (2012); Oliver Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, issued by Harvard University Press (1996); Peter C. Sederberg, "Global Terrorism: Problem of Challenge and Response", in Charles Kegley (ed.) *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, issued by Prentice Hall (2003), and many more.

On the other hand, some studies of Islamism start to focus on the moderate Islamism phenomena described as non-anti-democracy social groups. In some experts' opinion, the moderate Islamists' struggle for their political agenda is realized through electoral means like forming party and participating in general election. In Indonesia, the *Tarbiyah* movement with its political wing, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), is positioned as the representation of moderate Islamists. Studies of Islamic political

party and Islamic social movement through civil society as the instrument also get experts' attention. Generally, these experts reveal positive developments of moderate Islamism movement. Among the reputable studies are those written by Burhanuddin Muhtadi, *Dilema PKS Suara dan Syariah*, issued by Gramedia (2012); Julie Chernov Hwang, *Umat Bergerak Mobilisasi Damai Kaum Islamis di Indonesia, Malaysia, dan Turki*, Jakarta: Freedom Institute (2009), and others.

Meanwhile, the moderate Islamism actions involved in democratic-political movement in various Moslem countries such as Egypt, Iran and Turkey also become scholars' main attention. Generally, scholars view existing changes to the Islamists' orientation, approach or means of political struggle appreciatively. They also label such new non-anti-democracy moderate Islamism groups as post-Islamism. Asef Bayat is one of the scholars who popularize the term post-Islamism for the Islamists who display new Islamic activism which is, on one hand, accommodative to modernity and, on the other hand, keeps maintaining their Islamic identity or piety. Bayat's notion may be found in his monumental work *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, issued by Stanford University Press (2007). Bayat's Post-Islamism is adopted by Ariel Heryanto to explain similar development not only in political practice, but in media and pop culture. *Identitas dan Kenikmatan Politik Budaya Layar Kaca* is the result of Ariel's research which reviews the rise of religious themed movies, soap operas and novels in Indonesia from the perspective of identity politics. Ariel Heryanto's study also enlivens the hot issue at the time, popular religion.

Discourses on popular religion in Indonesia are frequently correlated with the rise of popular Islam in many media. The emergence of celebrity-*da'i* (like AA Gym), religious movies

(Ayat-ayat Cinta, Ketika Cinta Bertasbih), sharia entrepreneurship (fashion, hijab, and various Muslim/Muslimah garments) marks what is called popular Islam. This populism path is commonly utilized by moderate Islamic groups not to be tempted by violence approaches. Through such popular way of *dakwah*, they may develop their religious mission which is also oriented to Islamization of public and political spaces. However, the economic-political point of view is relatively dominantly used by the experts in understanding the development of popular Islam. Commercialization or commodification is the theory and argument used by the experts to explain the rise of popular Islam. Among the writings are Noorhaidi Hasan's work, *The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere*, issued by Springer (2009); Greg Fealy and Sally White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, issued by ISEAS, Singapore (2008).

In the last decade, serious discussions and studies of Islamic populism start to emerge. Even writings in the form of popular articles, scientific articles, and various products of scientific study on this topic start to dominate academic and political discourses in Indonesia. The increasingly stronger discourses intersect with the global populism phenomena in many countries in Europe, America and Asia. Likewise, Indonesia, --a country with majority of population are Moslems known to be tolerant, moderate and democratic--, is not free from the exposure of populism politics. Fights between political elites both in Presidential Election and Regional Head Election contexts, particularly since 2014, have been enlivened by populism politics. In the fight between Jokowi versus Prabowo, both of them mutually use populism approach. Similarly, the governmental practice of ruling elite and opposing group's resistance also frequently use populism approach. The most

sensational event which draw public attention is the religious identity based Islamic mobilization action, the 212 action, which is identified by some analysts as a form of Islamic populism.

Many studies on populism and Islamic populism, particularly in Indonesia, have been conducted by the experts. Marcus Mietzner, “Reinventing Asian Populism: Jokowi’s Rise, Democracy and Political Contestation in Indonesia”, *Polity Studies* 72, Honolulu-Hawai’i: East-West Center, 2015; Thomas P. Power, “Jokowi’s Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia’s Democratic Decline”, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Business*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2018; Burhanuddin Muhatdi, *Populisme Politik Identitas & Dinamika Elektoral: Mengurai Jalan Panjang Demokrasi Prosedural*, Intrans Publishing; Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam di Indonesia dan Timur Tengah*, Jakarta: LP3ES; Rangga Kusumo & Hurriyah, “Populisme Islam di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Aksi Bela Islam oleh GNPf-MUI Tahun 2016-2017”, *Jurnal Politik*, Vol. 4, No. 1, August 2018; Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir, Diatyka Widya Permata Asih dan Luqmanul Hakim, “Populisme Islam dan Tantangan Demokrasi di Indonesia” dalam *Prisma*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2017.

The studies above review populism, including that in Indonesia, from various perspective from ideational or ideology, social mobilization, political style and strategy, cultural opposition and approach oriented to security. With regard to democracy, the studies have different opinions, some view the correlation of both negatively (populism is toxic to democracy) and the remainder views otherwise (populism is challenge to democracy). The experts’ studies do not provide further explanation of the thinking construction of experts from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists in explaining the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia and counter-populism launched by moderate Moslem groups, as well as its implications for democracy in Indonesia after the New Order.

## F. Research Method

This research does not intend to understand the Islamic populism phenomena in Indonesia as represented by the Defending Islam Action and the likes from the perspective of those who are directly involved in the popular mobilization actions. This research is going to reveal the same phenomena from the scholars' perspective (Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists), who are concerned about, observe and study the Islamic populism phenomena. To have the understanding of the interpretants or theorists from the academics, the research chooses the qualitative-phenomenological method and approach. This approach is deemed relevant considering that a phenomenological research indeed aims at obtaining general understanding or definition of the subjects<sup>23</sup> who have the same concern in response to the Islamic populism phenomena in Indonesia.

Theoretically, the perspective which is included in the constructivism paradigm explains that what they say is the result of how they interpret (understand) the social world. Revealing these individuals' interpretation requires (borrowing Weber's term) *verstehen*, an emphatic understanding or the ability to absorb and re-reveal feelings, motives, and thinking behind what the subjects say. In order to catch the meanings of human behaviors, the phenomenologists attempt to view anything from the person's perspective<sup>24</sup>. In hermeneutic phenomenological works, phenome-

---

23 Joseph A. Maxweel, *Qualitative Research Design an Interactive Approach*, California: Sage Publication, 1996; Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra. 2007. *Paradigma, Epistemologi dan Metode Ilmu Sosial-Budaya, Sebuah Pemetaan*, Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Gajahmada.

24 Alfred Schutz, is known as a figure deemed to have a big role in developing the phenomenological approach that correlates sociology with philosophical phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1970). The main idea of Husserl's thinking is that science always stands on 'experiential'. The correlation between perception and its objects is not passive. Human awareness actively contains experiential objects. This principle then becomes the base for every qualitative research on practice and behavior which form reality. Schutz's phenomenological perspective above is the continuation of Husserl's effort to study the ways the community members arrange and re-form

nology is not only a description, but also a process of interpretation, in which the researcher makes an interpretation (researcher mediates different meanings) of the meaning of such life experiences<sup>25</sup>.

Who are the research's subjects? Experts from Indonesian Moslem intellectuals and Indonesianists chosen as the research's resources derived from various scientific backgrounds, particularly social, politics and Islamic studies. In general, however, the variant of intellectuals or academics chosen is limited to they who are so far known as scholars with liberal-progressive academic view –to distinguish them from scholars with conservative view. Almost all of the intellectuals from Indonesianists represent Western academics who, certainly, have highly liberal-typically orientalist view or thinking. The Indonesian Moslem intellectuals who mostly have Islamic and Western educational background also have relatively the same view (liberal). The difference, however, the latter group lives, resides and is active socio-geographically and academically in their own Country, Indonesia. Although the resources' intersection chosen is relatively homogenous (equally have liberal-progressive academic/intellectual background), but their perspectives and discourses in understanding Islamic populism in Indonesia are in fact not exactly the same. The last point is the attraction of this research in offering the experts' thinking construction of Islamic populism.

---

daily life nature. Schutz also later successfully introduces a set of principles which become the base of the theoretical and empirical frameworks for subsequent phenomenological, ethno-methodological, and constructionist researches. Schutz states that social science should focus its attention on the ways the world/life (which is experiential world which is taken for granted by everyone) is created and experienced by its members. Subjective perspective needs to be maintained so that the world of social reality will not be replaced by fictive, apparent world created by scientific researchers. In this case, the world of subjectivity is the only principle which must not be forgotten when the social researchers define their research objects, Norman K. Denzin: 336.

25 Johan W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset: Memilih di Antara Lima Pendekatan*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2014, 110.

Practically, this research is conducted for about 6 (six) months, from June to November 2019. Within such period, the researcher collects data and information related to the research's topic through bibliographic survey and field, documentation, and literature researches. Visiting and having dialogues and discussions with the experts to gather their view of the research's topic is a technique used in this research to collect data in the form of the resources' information directly. A series of interviews with the informants are conducted in Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Jakarta and Canberra (Australia). The Moslem Intellectuals from PTKI (Islamic Religious Higher Education Institution) and PTU (Public Higher Education Institution) with social, political and religious scientific backgrounds and also various affiliated organizations (generally from intellectuals of NU and Muhammadiyah) are the domestic informants. Meanwhile, foreign informants are social, cultural and political experts or scholars who are concerned about Indonesian Islamic studies, such as Greg Fealy, Paul D. Kenny, Edwards Aspinal, Marcus Mietzner, Thomas Power, Ronald Luken-Bull, and others.

Besides interview, the data are collected by literature and documentation search. Books, journal articles, and opinions published in media, both printed and electronic, are the sources of literature and documentation which are really helpful for data enrichment. These literature sources are really helpful to the researcher to collect the data related to the development of Islamic populism in Indonesia written by domestic and foreign experts. *Google scholar* and *open access* journals are electronic media which is helpful to the researcher in searching for the necessary data.

The empirical data analysis in this research employs critical reflective method which starts from the hermeneutic analysis. As

stated by Mats Alvesson and Kaj Skoldberg, the reflective method is characterized by two things: *first*, method of careful interpretation of a reality in consideration of authenticity, dependence, bias and space and time distance; and *second*, the reflection in this the interpretation is conducted systematically, by always confirming definition of producer, user, community and researcher. By positioning to always be corresponding to the reality studied, this research's analysis is more the researcher's interpretation of the subjects<sup>26</sup>.

Meanwhile, the data analysis process is conducted from field research to post-field data processing. The strategic measure for the purpose of data analysis is performed in two ways. *First*, data mapping and categorization. The collected data or information are mapped, which eventually results in grouping pursuant to the designed staging. Technically, reaching the staging --referring to Lavine as quoted from Huberman and Miles --shall use five phases, which are data formatting, correlating different data and/or integrating the same data, indexation, abstraction, and numbering pursuant to the existing data category<sup>27</sup>. *Second*, data contextualization. After the data are categorized, the researcher attempts to conduct an analysis in order to understand the data in its context using various methods to identify the relation between different data elements, which are part of substance of the effort to build understanding and definition of the existing data and information inductively<sup>28</sup>.

---

26 Mats Alvesson dan Kaj Skoldberg, *Reflexive Methodology New Vistas for Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publication, 2018.

27 Matthew B. Mile and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, London: Sage Publication, 1994.

28 Joseph A. Maxweel, *Qualitative Research Design an Interactive Approach*, California: Sage Publication, 1996.

## **G. Writing Systematics**

The report of this research's result is arranged in 5 (five) chapters. Chapter 1 is regarding the research's background and significance, research's focus, literature review, method, and writing structure of research report.

Chapter 2 contains theoretical review and conceptual-theoretical framework covering discussion of the concept of populism, Islamic populism, Islamic populism in Indonesian context, and relation between Islamic populism and democracy.

Chapter 3 covers experts' discourses of Islamic populism in Indonesia, overview Islamic populism in Indonesia, and factors which encourage the emergence and the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia after the New Order.

Chapter 4 contains explanation of the impacts of the emergence of populism on the development of democracy in Indonesia. This chapter outlines a number of relevant issues, such as the dynamics of the development of democracy in Indonesia after the New Order, the impacts of populism on the development of democracy and paradox of anti-Islamic populism movement for the development of democracy.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusion and theoretical implication of the social-political phenomena studied in this research, which is the rise of Islamic populism and its implication for the democratization process in Indonesia after the New Order.



## Islamic Populism and Democracy: Paradox Relationship?

The relationship between populism, including Islamic populism, and democracy has been massively discussed by experts. Some hold the view that populism, no matter what form it takes, be it inclusive or exclusive, is considered negative for the development of democracy. For these experts, populism is not different from poison which not only reduces, but also destroy the democracy system. The attempts of populist leaders who prefer a corridor beyond the democracy institution to get their political agenda manifest show their distrust to the institution. Some other view populism more like a positive criticism towards the democracy. The populist actions made by elements of civil society, for example, can correct the corrupt political elites' attitude and policy, can serve as a criticism towards democracy which is deemed to have failed in realizing prosperity and justice for all elements of the society. Which one of these two views is truer? This is no longer an important issue to debate about. What is important now is to find a way to elaborate and use these two different views as a theoretical as well as operational basis in studying the Islamic populism phenomenon in Indonesia along with its implication on the democracy.

## A. Populism

Many concepts and theories on populism have been proposed by experts. Cas Mudde, a political scientist whose study on populism has been most referred to, defines populism as a political position which places the people in general and corrupt elites in an opposite or antagonistic direction against each other, and sees the politic as an expression of what people in general wish<sup>1</sup>. Hayward understands populism as a response to democratic elitism which is deemed defective. In this case, the elites tend to take an action not in favor of the public interest and even corrupt and in turn it discredits them<sup>2</sup>. Margaret Canovan interprets populism as an attraction for the people in challenging the established power structure, dominant ideas and values in the people's life<sup>3</sup>. Another opinion suggests that populism is more of a political expression which has some elements, namely, *firstly*, anti-establishment (expression of groups who think they are marginalized), *secondly*, the presence of leader authority both through personal charisma and apocalyptic message, and *finally*, the strong *in-group* feeling as shown in the we vs they sentiment<sup>4</sup>.

Meanwhile, Laclau places a people/elite antagonistic relationship in class relations. However, the relationship between populism and class politics has been criticized for its failure to take into account the heterogeneous nature of 'the people' in popular politics. Laclau's theory has now widened greatly; he now emphasizes that populist discourse 'can start anywhere in a social-institutional structure'. The populism discourse consists of conflict

---

1 Read Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, Vol 39 (4), 542-563.

2 The elites have lost claims and can no longer be trusted to act on behalf of or for the interest of the public. Jack Hayward (ed.), *Elitism, Populism, and European Politic*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

3 Benjamin Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism, Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, 42-45.

4 Ari A. Perdana, "Menguatnya Populisme", 2017.

of interests between a collectivity identified as ‘the people’ against those of the hegemonic elite, whose actions are considered not in favor of ‘the people’s best interests. Laclau stresses that populism arises out of a failure to meet certain demands. When the elite fails to handle a number of demands from different groups, the logic of equality becomes more dominant and thus antagonism arises between the people and the elite. This equality moment that marks the emergence of an instance of populism presupposes the constitution of the subject of global politics which unites a number of social demands. Therefore, populism cannot be found in the content of any particular attraction to the people, rather it is at the level where the logic of equality applies to differences<sup>5</sup>.

The diverse conceptions of populism, as stated above, confirm that there is no single concept that is truly agreed upon by experts. Each expert has a tendency to define populism from the varied points of view of thought or theoretical perspectives. These different views on populism are also closely related to the use of these theories in understanding the equally varied populism phenomena in numerous countries, including in the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. This is not to mention the variants of populism which are also not singular in nature. Based on certain characteristics, experts divide populism phenomena into right, left and middle populisms. Also based on certain characteristics, some experts classify populism into such variants as classical and new populisms. On one hand, these diverse conceptions, however, also enrich the discourse, thoughts and understanding of what populism is and can at the same time provide alternative choices for those studying it. Yet, on the other hand, these plural and various conceptions of populism have

---

5 Ben Stanly, “The thin Ideology of Populism”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, February 2008, 13 (1), 95-110.

made this concept look like a puzzle which can also sometimes presents complexity for those studying it<sup>6</sup>.

There are at least two important approaches to consider for the purposes of this study, namely the ideational approach (populism as an ideology) and the organizational approach (populism as mobilization).

## 1. Populism as an Ideology

The discourse of populism as an ideology has been the dominant academic discussion, especially among social and political scientists in Europe. Cas Mudde, as suggested above, is one of the prominent figures who made important contributions to the discourse of populism as an ideology<sup>7</sup>. Unlike the big ideologies such as socialism, communism, capitalism, ecology, feminism and the like, populism represents more of what Mudde calls thin ideology. Furthermore, Mudde suggests that:

a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonte’ generale* (general will) of the people<sup>8</sup>.

---

6 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage Why Populism Win Elections in India, Asia, and Beyond*, USA-OSO: Oxford University Press, 2017, 1-22

7 In addition to Cas Mudde, other authors who also contribute to the development of idea of populism as a thin ideology include Koen Abts and Stefan Rummens “Populism versus Democracy”, *Political Studies*, 55 (2) 2007: 405-24, Ben Stanly “The Thin Ideology of Populism”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 13 (1), 2008: 95-110; Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser “The Ambivalence of Populism: Threat and Corrective for Democracy”, *Democratization*, 19 (2), 2012: 184-208; and Margaret Canovan “Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy”, in Y. Menny and Y. Surrel (ed.) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, 25-44.

8 By conceptualizing populism as a thin ideology, it can then be understood that populism has no pure form, rather it is present in the iteration of a mixture with other ideologies. Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Rights Parties in Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 23.

To affirm that populism is an ideology, there is a need for a clear statement of ontological assumptions. However, these ontological assumptions are still implicit today. Hay in his argument of material-ideational dialectics argues that ideas play independent roles in causing the creation of political outcomes and are capable of producing demonstrable material effects. The idea is in the dialectical relationship with social and historical conditions, arises and evolves from the cogitations of actors who are under certain material conditions and in turn it also has a material effect on the formation of context through the strategic actions of these actors. Regardless of whether it is noticed or not, these actors adopt and adapt established ideas and they surely also innovate with others, regarding the world they see themselves in. This ontological attitude includes the claim that what these actors do in having these ideas is to interpret the world they find themselves in<sup>9</sup>.

As an ideology, populism is a thin ideology that separates the community into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, a pure society versus a corrupt elite, and which argues that politics must be an expression of the *volonté générale* (public will) of the people. The populist rhetoric takes an opposition character, where people are pitted against the elite, whether the elite is understood in socio-economic or cultural terms. Populism can be attached to both left and right wing economic ideologies, yet in both cases it remains focused on the “people” as the main political protagonists. Thus, for some people, populism is about a conflict between the “high” and the “low,” rather than the traditional left and right divisions<sup>10</sup>.

---

9 Ben Stanly, “The thin Ideology of Populism”, 95-110.

10 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage*, 23-24.

The ideological perspective is not limited to focusing on popular/elite antagonism, as in Canovan's conception, rather on understanding that antagonism plays an ideational rather than structural role in populism: it forms a key element of different political interpretations. In this case, it is important to consider populism as a different ideology because it conveys a certain way of interpreting politics in a specific interactions of its core concepts. However, due to its thin nature, it cannot stand alone as a practical political ideology: it does not have the capacity to put forward a broad and coherent program for solutions to important political questions<sup>11</sup>.

Nevertheless, this ideological view is not without weaknesses. This minimalist definition provides little theoretical guidance on how we can expect the populist movements to apply in their campaigns or positions once they are successful. In this formulation, populism as an ideology is so vague that it only tells us a little about what this populist movement is doing. Therefore, the populist movement, based on this conceptualization, must be further distinguished from one another in such a way that they can be compared in a beneficial manner. There have been several attempts made to develop the taxonomy of the populist movement to overcome this problem, most importantly the difference between inclusive and exclusive populists (sometimes abbreviated as left-wing and right-wing populisms, but this should not be combined with movements, a position in an economic policy per se).<sup>12</sup>

The first variant (inclusive populism) describes a kind of economic populism which tries to unite ordinary people in opposition to the wealthy ruling class. Meanwhile, the second one

---

11 Ben Stanly, "The thin Ideology of Populism", 95-110.

12 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage*, 25.

(exclusive populism) refers to nativist or ethnonationalist populism in which people purely oppose the cultural elite identified with ethnic pluralism. Exclusive populism is widely seen as a threat to immigrants and minorities, and therefore to the democracy itself, although some scholars have also indicated that the list of exclusive populations has reached a high level of support in attracting economic interest in working class societies. Inclusive populism poses greater analytical problems, with scholarship being continually split in debates over whether or not it threatens the democracy. While some observers see the inclusive populist movement as an authentic democracy, identifying, rather than covering up, divisions in which emancipatory political projects can be made, others suggest that nominally inclusive populist movements also tend to engage in the hyper-centralization of power and delegitimation of political opposition, thereby damaging democracy.<sup>13</sup>

Another weakness of it has something to do with the ability of the conception in explaining how ideas turn into political behavior. Ideology cannot be extracted from the substantive conditions that gave rise to it. The lack of an institutionalized support base forces the populists to adopt anti-institutional postures that makes them erode many of the legal and social structures needed for the democracy—even in the minimalist sense.

## 2. Populism as Mobilization

As a mobilization, populism is known as the social movement which involves the mass in great number (particularly from social marginal groups), also known as *popular mobilization*. One of the characteristics of this popular mobilization is its political articu-

---

13 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage*, 25.

lation which is anti-establishment in nature or a resistance to various forms of the dominating social-cultural, economic and political systems. In this case, Jansen suggests that:

mobilization as any sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people<sup>14</sup>.

It is said as an anti-establishment movement because populist mobilization always places the mass (people's representation) face to face with the established power structures, ideas and dominant community values. In a democratic system, populism also means resistance to the established political parties.<sup>15</sup> However, not every anti-system mobilization can in itself be classified as a populist movement. Unlike the social movements in general, the populist mobilization is characterized by not only resistance to established holder of power, but also to dominant elites' values. The hatred of the populists is not only directed towards political-economic establishment, rather to the opinion shapers in academic world and the media as well.<sup>16</sup>

Populism which is deemed as an anti-structural mobilization certainly has unequal content, depending on the type of the occurring establishment in each country. If the dominant economic system is liberal, the populist mobilization is usually related to the resistance to free market hegemony by demanding protectionism from the state. The anti-immigrant sentiment in the US and European countries which became the campaign material of

---

14 Robert S. Jansen, 'Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism'. *Sociological Theory*, 29(2), 2011, 75–96.

15 E.g. J. Haider, *The Freedom I Mean*, Pine Plains, Swan, 1995, 104.

16 Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies*, 1999, XLVII, 2-16.

populist politicians, is one example of populist mobilization directed to criticize the domination of the liberal economic system in the West. Even the ideas and values the populists' resistance is directed also depend on the character of the elite and the dominant political discourse. When the political culture of the elite (as in modern Western countries) is strongly influenced by the values of liberal individualism, internationalism, multiculturalism, permissiveness, and trust in advancement, the populist mobilization will also be related to the resistance to these problems.<sup>17</sup>

As a mobilization, populism is not only associated with the reaction to the establishment of the power structure, rather it is also interconnected with an interest in the recognized authority. The populists claim their legitimacy on the basis that they speak for the people; that is, they claim to represent sovereign democracy, not sectoral interests such as economic classes. Even if the economic complaints are always important in the populist movement, they are always translated into political questions in relation to democratic power.<sup>18</sup> However, claiming to speak on behalf of the people is not as easy as it might look, yet the populists are quite adept at making its rhetoric seem possible.<sup>19</sup>

Populism as a mobilization is also understood as the ability of charismatic leaders in mobilizing the masses to support their political agenda. Following Max Weber's view, leadership authority is distinguished at least into three, they are bureaucratic, patrimonial, and charismatic. As has been widely known, the exercise of authority in bureaucratic parties is bound by rules and procedures, while externally they are built on stable institutional

---

17 Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies*, 1999, XLVII, 2-16.

18 G.S. Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, 96-100.

19 Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People!" 2-16.

relations with their supporters. Analogically, in patrimonial organizations, the authority is traditional and transactional in nature. Leadership is often inherited and privileges are distributed to supporters in return for their loyalty. Externally, such patronage-based parties are involved in a quid pro quo with their supporters in which case their votes are exchanged for certain material benefits. The charismatic authority is otherwise characterized by a concentration of arbitrary control in the person of a popular leader.<sup>20</sup>

It is important to note that charismatic leadership, however, is not exactly the same as populism. Charismatic leaders sometimes rely on material inducements and party organizations and civil society to mobilize voters. For example, in Indonesia, even the most classic charismatic campaigners, Prabowo Subianto, feel compelled to distribute cash and other prizes to voters. While these prizes do not guarantee a vote, it may be the “entry ticket” required by each candidate in the hope of winning the election.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, populist mobilization targets tend not to be bound or floating voters. This is indeed not a defining feature of populism, yet the trends vary from one context to another in their intensity. As research elsewhere has shown, voters can be embedded in party patronage networks at the local level, while still supporting populists at the national level. The difference between populist and non-populist leaders falls on the dimension of charismatic organization, both with respect to internal control over the leader (or party) movement and with regard to external relations with supporters (the masses). A popular leader goes as far

---

20 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism in Shouteasht Asia*, United Kingdom: Crambigde University press, 2019

21 Edward Aspinall, “Oligarchic populism: Prabowo Subianto’s challenge to Indonesian democracy.” *Indonesia* 99 (1), 2015, 1–28.

as relying mainly on charismatic mobilization of mass movements.<sup>22</sup>

Gino Germaini argues that populists are partly determined by the nature of their support base. In his opinion, populists mobilize previously marginalized citizens, including rural migrants, to outperform the established parties. Nicos Mouzelis, in his pioneering research on Latin America, accepts populism as a form of relationship between parties and voters that differs from the clientelistic or patronage-based dominant relationship in the continent. He argues that under populism it is a plebiscitarian leadership rather than a complex patronage network that provides a basic framework for political integration.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Mounzelis suggests that:

As a rule, populist leaders are hostile to strongly institutionalized intermediary levels, whether clientelist or bureaucratic. The emphasis on the leader's charisma, on the necessity for direct, nonmediated rapport between the leader and "his people" as well as the relatively sudden process of political incorporation all lead to a fluidity of organizational forms<sup>24</sup>.

Weyland defines populism as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks for or uses government power based on direct, non-intermediate, and non-institutionalized supports from a large number of followers who are mostly unorganized. In his statement, Weyland emphasizes that:

---

22 K. Weyland, *Populism: A political-strategic approach. The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo and P. Ostiguy (eds.). New York: Oxford University Press. (2017).

23 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage*, 28-29.

24 N. Mouzelis "On the concept of populism: Populist and clientelist modes of incorporation in semiperipheral polities." *Politics & Society* 14 (3), (1985), 329-348.

populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers<sup>25</sup>.

For Weyland, populists always have an organizational structure behind their movements. This organizational level is at the lower end of the institutional scale. While populists sometimes make use of parties, trade unions, and other organizations in their efforts to win and maintain power, they rely more on institutionalized and leader-centric organizational structures than formal and informal institutions or patronage parties. Alberto Fujimori from Peru makes a good example of this. He found that political parties were so restrictive that he effectively ruled without parties, creating only new political vehicles for his re-election campaign. Populist leaders rely greater on personal charisma and the use of media to build one-way connections with the masses of voters. Most importantly, according to this conceptualization, populists appeal to relatively disorganized voters, i.e. a large block of voters who are detached from existing parties and civil society organizations that are aligned, and as such are available for mobilization from above.<sup>26</sup>

The main difficulty with that definition is that it identifies organizational modes or strategies that emerge across the political spectrum in many different articulations which usually never consider the reference of 'populist'; a number of social movements (such as religious or millenarian one) or forms of community politics might fall into such a definition. Likewise, there is no reason to believe that populism only thrives in terms of institu-

---

25 Kurt Weyland, 'Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 34 (1), 2001, 1-22.

26 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage*, 28-29

tionalization or low level organization. The fortune of Le Pen's Front National or Wilder's Partij voor de Vrijheid prove that populism can indeed grow and develop within a strict party discipline and organizational environment.<sup>27</sup>

## B. Islamic Populism

As an ideology and mobilization, populism can overlap with various social, political and even religious groups. In politics, the issue of plural populism is used by politicians, political parties, and governments. Issues about economic inequality, increasing welfare, providing education and health subsidies, are forms of populism that are often used by politicians and governments to draw attract support. The same applies to mass organizations, Ornop and NGOs (non-government organizations)<sup>28</sup> they also use populist issues in their social movements. Such issues as community empowerment, fuel price rise rejection, labor wage increase demand, corruption, collusion and nepotism eradication, as well as demand to change authoritarian regime and the like, as shown during the 1998 reform movement, are often used by NGOs to fight for their socio-political movement agenda. As civil society organs, NGOs basically have a tendency to be critical,

---

27 Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey, "Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatization, and Political Style", *Political Studies*, 62 (2), 2014, 381-397.

28 These terms are sometimes used interchangeably in the same definition, yet at the same time, some have a tendency to distinguish and debate them. Some argue that NGOs are substantially similar to LSM (mass organization), what distinguishes them is their work pattern and movement. Another view states that LSM are those groups established independently and voluntarily by the community. Ornop is defined as an independent organization not coopted by the government, a movement entity established by the society beyond the state, and having its own characteristics as agreed upon by the international world as a voluntary organization beyond the government. Ormas and also Ornop actually share some characteristics, i.e. they both desire to give some space for expressing and appreciating themselves amidst the community and the state. The difference lies in their scope of work where Ornop focus specifically on such issues as corruptions and so forth, Ormas deal with various issues of life as a community. Luthfi J. Kurniawan & Hesti Puspitosari, *Negara, Civil Society dan Demokratisasi*, 44-50.

independent and autonomous in dealing with power and various other dominant forces. Born from outside of the state, corporations, and political parties, NGOs also have a tendency to favor the interests of small communities. In this case, NGOs often present themselves as a countervailing power and even competitors for the state domination.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, it is also important to realize that the existence of NGOs that carry the issue of populism does not show a completely homogeneous character, both in terms of their ideology, scope, orientation of the movement. Borrowing the classification made by James Petras, NGOs (in response to bad regimes/bad government and the threat of global discourse) are polarized into three variants, i.e. *firstly*, NGOs which are willing to serve as agents of the interests of global discourse of neo-liberalism; *secondly*, reform NGOs which seek to criticize and reform the steps of the WTO, World Bank, USAID, IMF, UNDP and the like; and *thirdly*, radical NGOs which loudly and bravely keep on challenging the move of globalization, anti-racist campaigns and carrying the spirit of world solidarity. These three NGO variants have different strategies for selecting their target movements and issues (environment, gender, pluralism, anti-capitalism, etc.).<sup>30</sup>

---

29 M. Dawam Rahardjo, "Gerakan Keagamaan dan Penguatan Civil Society, Kata Pengantar (Religious Movement and Civil Society Strengthening, A Foreword)", in Asep Gunawan and Dewi Nurjulianti (ed.) *Gerakan Keagamaan dalam Penguatan Civil Society, Analisis Perbandingan Visi dan Misi LSM dan Ormas Berbasis Keagamaan (Religious Movement in Civil Society Strengthening, Comparative Analysis of Religion-Based NGO and Mass Organization's Vision and Mission)*, Jakarta: TAF and LSAF, 1999, xix.

30 Mansour Fakhri, Entjeng Sobirin, and Muslim Abdurrahman develop the mapping and summarize it into a number of classification, i.e., *firstly*, Developmentalistic NGOs which serve to extend the government's projects, nevertheless these NGOs sometimes successfully influence the decisions within the government; *secondly*, Grassroots NGOs which opt a strategy to move in the lowest level of community; and *thirdly*, Transformatory NGOs which choose to make their move among the urban middle-class community. Luthfi J. Kurniawan & Hesti Puspitosari, *Negara, Civil Society dan Demokratisasi*, 55-56.

Included here are Islamic groups which, in their social activism, also frequently intersect with the issue of populism. The peaceful mass mobilization carried out by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization in the *istighatsah Kubra* recently, for example, which raised the issue of nationalism, tolerance and diversity, could be classified as a populist movement which at the same time used popular issues and media. Such a popular movement can be found in Indonesian Islamic organizations in its long history, especially since the era of colonialism and it continues to exist in the post-colonial period. During the era of colonialism, NU even successfully mobilized the masses (their *santri* or students) in large numbers using the spirit or religious issues. *Resolusi jihad* was a kind of populist movement launched by NU in mobilizing the masses (people) to fight against the colonial elite.<sup>31</sup>

In the currently pluralizing environment, it can also be witnessed how a number of religious activists with different backgrounds and interests from the (traditional) scholars emerge. These populist *da'i* (preachers), celebrity clerics, neotraditionalist teachers and Sufi Muslims and new Muslim intellectuals who received secular education, challenge the religious monopoly (authority) that had been enjoyed by the scholars. Coming from outside of the ulema's circle, these new activists orient themselves to a wider public than some religious experts. In some places of esoteric sharia debate, these public Islamic spokespeople present their beliefs in semi-ideological terms, as a source of practical

---

31 Following the perspective of Canovan, Mouffe, and others, what the charismatic traditionalistic Muslim leaders such as K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari did in mobilizing the mass (people) to fight against the Dutch colonial elites could be deemed as a populist politic. For further reference, read Nicos Mouzeles, "On the Concept of Populism: Populist and Clientelist Modes of Incorporation in Semi-peripheral Polities", in *Politic & Society*, Vol. 14, No. 3, September 1985; Robert S. Jansen, "Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism", in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Juni 2011; Margaret Canovan, *Populism*, London: Junction Books, 1981.

knowledge.<sup>32</sup> In this context, the emergence of new activists who help challenge the establishment of religious authority which has been the privilege of the ulema, can be understood as a symptom of Islamic populism in the public domain.

Recently, the issue and movement of religious populism are revived by Islamists for their political struggle. The peaceful action of mobilizing the mass on a massive scale as happened in *Aksi Bela Islam* demanded for justice against Ahok, who was claimed to have defamed religion, was the real form of the populism movement. Therefore, the popular actions driven by Islamists using the flag of Aksi Bela Islam (Defend Islam Action), was known as Islamic populism movements.<sup>33</sup> Just like the character of Islamism groups in general, the popular action carried out by proponents of this Aksi Bela Islam was more representative of right-wing populism that tended to be exclusive, racist and sectarianistic.

Through this Defend Islam narrative, the emergence of popular action represented mainly the language of self-affirmation (Islamist agents) to mobilize people who thought they were marginalized by economic, political and cultural processes in the society. At the same time, those who thought that capitalist modernity and socialist utopia had failed then made the language of morality through religion and wanted a change in the political

---

32 Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 27-30.

33 Defining Islamic populism is as equally problematic as defining what populism is itself. Even the experts are divided in defining the term. Some even go further as making classifications by distinguishing the term Islamic populism and radical Islam or political Islam which make their move in the electoral path. As a new term, it is of course important to study and test it further. However, the existence of *Aksi Bela Islam* at the end of 2016 and beginning of 2017 gave a little picture of Islamic populist group. Vedi R. Hadiz places this group on par with a loose coalition between urban poor groups merged into vigilant groups (such as *Front Pembela Islam*), religious middle class, and some elites such as religious leaders, political and business figures. Ari A. Perdana, "Menguatnya Populisme, 2017.

system.<sup>34</sup> The demand of those actors behind this Defend Islam movement for the government to be firm in giving punishment and ousting Ahok from the seat of the DKI governor because he was considered to have defamed Islam, can be understood as part of the interests of the Islamists in demanding political change. The Sharia-based Jakarta discourse also helped strengthen the interests of Islamists in changing the national political order. It is from this case that we can get a little picture of a populist Islamic group, which is more like a loose coalition between urban poor groups who are members of vigilant groups, religious middle classes and some elite religious leaders, political figures and business.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, the narrative raised by Islamist populism in Indonesia is slightly different from the populism in American and European countries. Even so, what happens in Indonesia in many respects has anatomical and elemental similarities to those in the two continents. There are at least three similarities between Islamist populism in Indonesia and right populism in America (US) and Europe. *Firstly*, both are expressions of groups that are demographically majority, yet they think they are marginalized. *Secondly*, the use of nativism narratives to strengthen the identity of white Anglo-Saxon movements in the US, indigenous people (vs immigrants) in Europe, and Muslims in Indonesia. In this case, racial, religious and anti-foreign sentiments are the dominant tone of the narratives of the right populist. *Thirdly*, both in Indonesia, the US and Europe, the rise of populism is aided by what is referred to as ‘post-truth politic’. The speed and volume of information in this digital age are not kept up with adequate verification mechanisms. As a result, fake news (hoaxes) became

---

34 Asef Bayat, *Post-Islamisme*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2011, 12.

35 Ari A. Perdana, “*Menguatnya Populisme*”, 2017.

an effective way by populist agents to organize and mobilize the masses.<sup>36</sup>

### C. Strengthened Islamic Populism

The success of populist actors in winning political arena in various parts of the world such as the United States, Europe and Asia, has led to the arrival of a new period in the world of global politics known as the populism era.<sup>37</sup> Donald Trump's victory as the president of the US, the Brexit group in Britain, the appearance of Marine Le Pen of the French National Front Party, Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Freedom Party, and Islamists such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and its proponents in Indonesia in mobilizing people for *Aksi Bela Islam*, as mentioned above, are said to be a variant of right populism. The term right populism is used by a number of experts to refer to conservative and fundamentalist ideological character, which is contrasted against the left populism which is described as critical, progressive and even revolutionary one.

Under a circumstance where the power of right populism emerges as an important force in the political landscape in their respective countries, of course, the assumption that there are global issues that contribute to the event inevitably arises. Some experts believe that the increasingly strengthened conservative, fundamentalist and even ultra-nationalist forces coincides with the crisis of liberal democracy in various parts of the world. From corrupt political elites, economic inequality especially between indigenous people and immigrants, exclusionary economic systems siding towards the urban poor and other vulnerable groups, to such issues as prostitution, LGBT, and abortion legalization

---

36 Ari A. Perdana, "Menguatnya Populisme", 2017.

37 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism in Shouteast Asia*, 1-5.

by liberal political elites, all are considered triggers for the emergence of right populism.

The association between the liberal democracy crisis and the rise of right-wing populism seems to be fairly rational. Religious fundamentalists (referred to as conservatives in the United States), in many ways, have a close relationship with ultra-nationalist groups (often referred to as fascists). They want a highly protectionist economic policy, along with increasing intolerance towards other groups, centralization of state policy, and high attention to national security and defense. At the same time, these two groups are often conflicting with the liberals. Religious fundamentalists often declare an open war to capitalism and those they label infidels. Meanwhile, the ultra-nationalists often rob giant corporate's money for their political interests such as the development of the weapons industry and others.<sup>38</sup>

In line with the expert's views above, Inglehart and Norris offer two important hypotheses which can be used to explain the rise of right-wing populism, i.e. economic inequality and cultural conflict. The first hypothesis refers to the fact that the 2008-09 financial crisis had forced the economies in Western countries to look for a new balance. At the same time, economic globalization created many job opportunities, especially in the manufacturing sector, moving to various countries such as Mexico, India and Africa. The same also occurred in the service sector; jobs which previously had to be done in Cleveland or Birmingham, could then be done remotely by workers in Mumbai or Manila<sup>39</sup>.

Even if economic inequality plays an important role in triggering and spurring the right populism, it is not the only determinant

---

38 Bima Satria Putra, "Kebangkitan Global Fundamentalis dan Ultra-Nasionalis: Bukan Akhir dari Sejarah", *Anarkis.org*, 22 February 2017.

39 Ari A. Perdana, "*Menguatnya Populisme*", 2017.

factor. Cultural backlash is considered a factor which cannot be underestimated. Within the last three decades, Western countries have experienced important changes, including the increased support for minority groups (LGBT, blacks, Hispanics, immigrants), feminism, multiculturalism, internationalism, and values identical with political correctness. While these ‘cosmopolitan liberal’ values are accepted by the younger generation, they make the older generation feel insecure. These older generation see it as a threat to the civilization and values they have been upholding. It is therefore not surprising that those elderly give their support to parties, politicians and people they think capable of maintaining their values.<sup>40</sup>

In Indonesian context, the rise of right-wing populism sponsored by agents of Islamism, in addition to its intersection with the rise of fundamentalism and the crisis of liberal democracy at global level, cannot be separated from the long history of Islamization, especially the dramatic rise of Islam in public life in the 1990s, one decade before the fall of the New Order regime (1966-98). According to a number of experts, Islamization has become the single most striking feature that colored the early period of reform (1998-present). Ariel Heryanto, for example, suggests that Islamization to some extent has determined the framework, boundaries, and content of the power struggle in Indonesia. It must be admitted that Ariel’s study of Islam after the New Order focused on popular culture. However, the study of popular Islam also has a direct association with the development of sharia economic ideas, the application of Islamic law (sharia regional regulations), and lately echoed the idea of Islamic government (khilafah).<sup>41</sup>

Populist mobilization can also be interpreted as a response to challenges to the political community which is defined by certain

---

40 Ari A. Perdana, *“Menguatnya Populisme”*, 2017.

41 Bima Satria Putra, *“Kebangkitan Global Fundamentalis dan Ultra-Nasionalis”*, 2017

identities. In Europe, this often manifests itself as an opposition from the “native” populations to non-European immigrants (especially Muslims); in the United States, white nationalist sentiments that rose up against both Latin and African-American immigrants; and in Southeast Asia, such an identity-based mobilization is usually drawn along the lines of domestic ethnic majority-minority divisions. In Indonesia, the Chinese and Christian minorities have become the subject of prejudice in the hands of fundamentalist Muslims. Mietzner (2018: 264) argues that the 2016 Islamist “mass movement” under the leadership of Rizieq Shibab must be understood as a case of populism.<sup>42</sup>

Through a sociological-historical approach, Vedi Hadiz dismantles the roots of the development of Islamic populism deep into the New Order era which made a great contribution in repressing the political expression of Islamic groups. What is certain is that in the early 2000s a number of groups emerged carrying religious (Islamic) flags, acting vigilantly to crack down on activities or places deemed incompatible with Islamic teachings - from discotheques, cafes, nightspots to discussion forums related to communism, LGBT and others. Among these vigilante groups, the most popular and influential one is FPI.

Some experts often includes FPI in Islamist or political Islam groups. However, it’s slightly different from extremist Islamism groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Laskar Jihad (LJ), and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI); with the latter group being more representative of a religious movement based on clear ideology and goals. Gradually, the extremist Islamism movement was successfully minimized, and

---

42 Marcus Mietzner, “Fighting Illiberalism with Illiberalism: Islamist Populism and Democratic Deconsolidation in Indonesia”, *Pacific Affairs* 91 (2), 2018, 261-282.

their radical approach made the basis of support for them never become large enough.<sup>43</sup>

Until the 2010s decade, the main narrative of Islamism in Indonesia was still monopolized by Islamic parties and Islamic politicians. FPI's voice, while still loud, was not seen as a representation of the aspiration of Muslims in general. FPI was also seen as a group of poor and marginal people in urban areas. Therefore, their movements are motivated more by economic interests and the search for social identity, rather than by ideology. Later on, the support for FPI had strengthened along with the development of religious middle class that had been hit by frustration and insecurity in competition in the era of global capitalism. It is in such a context that Islamist populism in Indonesia, like Trump, Brexit and others in the US and Europe, was born as an alternative choice for various cross-class groups.<sup>44</sup>

Another view explains that the emergence and development of Islamist populism in Indonesia is closely related to, on the one hand, the surge in fundamentalism, conservatism and political Islam itself. On the other hand, the fact that progressive or reformist moderate Muslim power and also leftist populism have not risen is considered by some experts to contribute greatly to the presence of this Islamic right-wing populism.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the Islamic populist groups who are strict in fighting for their "*da'wah*" agenda in protecting the main values of life from the influence of liberalism such as in the issues of communism, capitalism, LGBT and the like, moderate and progressive Muslims actually stagnate in consolidating their power to continue the agenda of the reform struggle in various aspects of life. Instead of continuing to show

---

43 Ari A. Perdana, "*Menguatnya Populisme*", 2017.

44 Ari A. Perdana, "*Menguatnya Populisme*", 2017.

45 Bima Satria Putra, *ANARKIS.ORG*. 22 February 2017.

consistency in fighting for its democratic agenda, not a few of the moderate Muslim elements are actually involved in counter-populism actions which frequently contradict the democratic values.<sup>46</sup>

From the perspective of social movement theory, the emergence of Islamic populism cannot be separated from the structure of political opportunities (such as the openness and freedom of the post-New Order era), (social, cultural and financial) resource mobilization and framing processes (issues, discourse and propaganda).

### 1. Political Opportunity Structure Theory

As an important part of the political process approach, political opportunity structure theory focuses its study on the momentum of collective action and the outcome of movement activities. Peter Eisinger, one of the pioneers of political opportunity theory explains that collective action surfaces when political and economic systems, under certain conditions, are exposed and used by challengers to take their aims. Eisinger, by modifying Tocqueville's ideas (that revolution occurs not when social groups were in a depressed condition, rather in a condition of openness), tests it through research into the phenomenon of the United States community protests in urban areas. He is interested in seeing the extent to which the role of political institutions influences the development of collective actions; when political institutions are enclosed, does collective action decrease in quantity or, vice versa, when political institutions are opened, the protests actually increase. In his various studies, he concludes that protests actually develop when political opportunities are opened.<sup>47</sup>

---

46 Greg Fealy, *Reformasi and the Decline of Liberal Islam*, Cornell University Press, pp. 117-134; Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir, Diatyka Widya Permata Asih and Luqmanul Hakim, "Populisme Islam dan Tantangan Demokrasi", 48-59.

47 Peter Eisinger, "The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities", *American Political Review* 67, 1973, 11-28.

McAdam and Tarrow describe the political opportunity structure theory in more detail. Four variables can be used to explain why collective action arises, i.e. *firstly*, when the level of access to political institutions is open; *secondly*, when the political balance is scattered, while a new political balance has not yet been formed; *thirdly*, when political elites experience major conflicts and this conflict is used by agents of change as an opportunity; and *fourthly*, when the agents of change gather support from the elites who are in the system to make changes.<sup>48</sup>

Specifically, Sydney Tarrow reiterates that political tensions increase when the agents of change have the support of external resources to get out of trouble or to achieve the goals they want. In this case, the political opportunity structure theory is always associated with the external resources utilized by the agents of change by opening access to political institutions and divisions within the political elite.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Theory of Resources Mobilization Structure

This theory concerns with informal networks, social movement organizations and resistance groups at the meso level. McCarthy reveals that mobilization structure is a number of ways for social movement groups to merge in a collective action which includes movement tactics and forms of organization of social movements. This mobilization structure also includes a series of social positions in daily life in the mobilization structure at the micro level. In this case, family units, friendship networks, associations of volunteers, workplace units and elements of the coun-

---

48 Read Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998, 15; Abdul Wahib Situmorang, *Gerakan Sosial: Teori dan Praktik*, 34.

49 Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 15.

try itself become the social locations for micro mobilization structures.<sup>50</sup>

In McCarthy's mind, informal structures—in addition to formal structures, of course—are important contributors to local social movements. Later on, this concept develops more broadly when it is connected with the movement mobilization. Woliver emphasizes the importance of memory factors. Meanwhile, Ganson and Scheidler identify several informal structural network factors such as differences in sub-culture and protest infrastructure. Using micro mobilization mechanism, McAdam states that formal and informal relations between people could be a source of solidarity and facilitate communication structures when they collectively identify differences in government policies.<sup>51</sup>

### 3. Framing Process Theory

Whether or not a social movement is successful will be largely determined by, for example, how far the actors of the movement win the battle for meaning. This is a process in which social movement actors create and roll out discourses that can reverberate between those targeted to be mobilized. This relates to the efforts made by the agents of change to influence the meaning in public policy. In this case, these agents of change have an important task of achieving what they are fighting for through the formation of framing of social and injustice issues. This is a way to convince diverse and broad target groups to make them encouraged to push for change.<sup>52</sup>

Framing can also be formulated as an art of communicating messages to persuade the masses and attract support and par-

---

50 Abdul Wahib Situmorang, *Gerakan Sosial: Teori dan Praktik*, 39.

51 Abdul Wahib Situmorang, *Gerakan Sosial: Teori dan Praktik*, 40.

52 Abdul Wahib Situmorang, *Gerakan Sosial: Teori dan Praktik*, 41.

ticipation. Therefore, various issues and symbols are chosen and contextualized to achieve frame resonance, i.e. adequate responses that will turn potential mobilizations into actual ones. This collective action frame resonance serves as the basis for movement actors to create their collective identity, a formulation of interactive action orientation and opportunities and obstacles where the action occurs. A strong sense of identity determines the decisions to be taken by the actors and the way they adjust their activities to the constantly changing situations.<sup>53</sup>

Zald identifies several topics which are not only related to the framing process, but also play an important role in forming framing. The first topic is cultural contradictions and historical lines. For Zald, political and mobilization opportunities are often created through longstanding cultural tensions and contradictions that have been the subject of the framing establishment or formation process such as complaints and injustice, which makes collective action possible. The second topic is related to the framing process as a strategic activity. Cultural cracks and contradictions provide context and opportunity at the same time for movement cadres, namely leaders, core participants, activists and sympathizers. There is an active process of framing and defining ideologies, symbols, events which can serve as icons by moral entrepreneurs.<sup>54</sup>

In order to reach the target group, the movement actors need tools in running the framing, namely the media. The media are one of the main targets for framing process efforts in social movements. In this case, Zald argues that framing contesting occurs in vis-a-vis interactions and through a variety of printed and electronic media, books, pamphlets and so on. Social movement activists use coffee shops, cafes, and meeting rooms as their media

---

53 Noorhaidi Hasan, *Islam Politik di Dunia Kontemporer*, 134-135.

54 Abdul Wahib Situmorang, *Gerakan Sosial: Teori dan Praktik*, 43.

for debate to disseminate issues to convince community groups and make them want to be involved in the movement.<sup>55</sup>

#### **D. Islamic Populism and Democracy**

The consequence of the rise of populism for the democracy development (regime/government) is one of the most discussed topics by experts recently. This cannot be separated from the phenomenon of the rise of populist parties, political elites and movements in a number of countries in Europe, America and Asia. Experts themselves have varied views on this matter. Some experts argue that populism is dangerous and essentially anti-democracy. Others argue the opposite, that populism movement can actually be a reflection of an undemocratic political system. For those who see populism as a way to reframe political space to exert influence on people who were previously marginalized from the reach of government policy, populism has constructive potential. In this case, populism can support inclusive politics that expand democratic participation for groups who were previously marginalized as demonstrated by a wave of left-wing populism in Latin America.<sup>56</sup>

Urbinati emphasizes that populism is a strategy to rebalance the distribution of political power among the emerging and established social groups. She suggests that the tension between liberal democracy and populism stems from the way in which this ideology views the relationship between representative institutions and “the will of the people.” She argues that for populists, the main task of political institutions is not to serve as a system

---

55 Abdul Wahib Situmorang, *Gerakan Sosial: Teori dan Praktik*, 44-45.

56 Nadia Urbinati, ‘Democracy and Populism’. *Constellations*, Vol. 5 (1), 1998, 110-124; Margaret Canovan, ‘Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy’, in Meny, Yves and Yves Surel (eds.), *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. New York: Palgrave, 2002, 25-44.

of checks and balances or as a protector of civil rights, rather as an instrumental tool for translating the majority into political decisions.<sup>57</sup> Canovan also focuses on the tensions embedded in the institutional design of democracy: democracy is an ideology and practice of popular participation, yet at the same time it requires a complex decision system which is often opaque and this in turn encourages populist actors to feel deeply dissatisfied with these representative institutions. As a result, populist ideology seeks to make up for this situation with its “claims of legitimacy based on the popular democratic ideology of majority sovereignty and rule” which is the return of “true” democracy led by “the people” and not by professional political elites.<sup>58</sup>

While, Canovan regards populism as a shadow of democracy, Arditì calls populist thinking as the “specter of democracy.” Arditì argues that populism can be seen as “awkward dinner guests”, who are drunk and ask inappropriate questions, which might actually point to important hidden issues. This colorful metaphor captures well the duality between popular politics and democracy: populism challenges the common sense of liberal democratic practices and may have unfavorable implications for liberal democracy. At the same time, populism can function to identify the ignored political problems and provide a legitimate voice for marginalized groups.<sup>59</sup>

The ability of populist politics to improve the quality of democracy is illustrated by Postel’s analysis of the American Populist Party. Postel explains that the rise of the American Populist

---

57 Nadia Urbinati, ‘Democracy and Populism’. *Constellations*, Vol. 5 (1), 1998, 110–124

58 Margaret Canovan, ‘Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy’, in: Meny, Yves and Yves Surel (eds.), *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, New York: Palgrave, 2002, 25–44.

59 Noam Gidron & Bart Bonikowski, ‘Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda’, *Working Paper Series*, Weatherhead Center, Harvard University, 1–38.

Party is largely in response to economic depression in the late 19th century and technological innovation in transportation, industrial production, communication, and global trade. The Populist movement is a coalition of peasants, breadwinners and middle class activists, who work together to challenge the harsh economic and political realities of their day. Contrary to some accounts, Postel views the populist revival not as a reactionary opposition to modernity or rejection of democracy, rather as a struggle for economic reform through increased democratic participation. In fact, Postel believes that the Populist Party is very democratic, mobilizing millions of citizens who are often marginalized, even if its ideology leaves little room for minority rights.<sup>60</sup>

Kaltwasser and Mudde argue that populism is actually positively related to democracy since it focuses on representing the will of the people. Among the positive effects of populism are the representation and mobilization of marginalized groups, establishment of cross-class political coalitions and an emphasis on accountability of democracy. Both recognize that the relationship between populism and liberal democracy is, in essence, ambiguous; can be both corrective and a threat to democracy. Both recognize that the relationship between populism and liberal democracy is, in essence, dualistic in nature; it can be either corrective or a threat to democracy. Everything depends on two main contextual factors, namely the degree of consolidation of democracy and whether populists sit in the opposition or in the government. In a consolidated democracy,<sup>61</sup> populism in the opposition

---

60 Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

61 Consolidated democracy is defined as “a political regime where the free and fair general election is institutionalized as a mechanism through which the access to political power is determined.” Steven Levitsky and James Loxton, ‘Populism and competitive authoritarianism in the Andes’, *Democratization*, Vol. 20 (1), 2013, 107-136.

is expected to have a small positive impact on the quality of democracy, and populism in the government should have a moderate influence on democracy, be it positive or negative. In an unconsolidated democratic country, on the other hand, populism in the government is expected to have a strong negative effect on democracy while populism in the opposition must play a corrective role to democracy.<sup>62</sup>

Some other experts tend to assess that the relationship between populism and democracy is very contradictory or antagonistic. In general, they believe that populism is non-democracy and even anti-democracy.<sup>63</sup> In fact, some even think that populism serves as none other than a toxic or poison to democracy. A harsh statement, for example, submitted by the president of the European Union, Herman van Rompuy, states that populism was “the greatest danger to Europe”, referring to the rise of xenophobic rights-wing parties in a large number of European countries<sup>64</sup>. Other observers also think populism as a virus that infects the party systems and spreads their epidemic effects.<sup>65</sup>

Levitsky and Loxton also challenge overly optimistic views about the effects of populism on democratization. They argue that while populism may have a positive effect on liberal democracy, in an unconsolidated democracy, populism serves to obstruct further development of democratic institutions—even when it facilitates greater political inclusion. Some reasons can be mentioned for this ambiguous result, they are: firstly, populists are usually outsiders who do not value representative democratic

---

62 Takis S. Pappas, ‘Populist Democracies: Post – Authoritarian Greece and Post-Communist Hungary’, *Opposition and Government*, 2013.

63 Read G. Pasquino, “Populism and Democracy”, in Daniel Albertazzi and Duncan MacDonell (ed.) *Twenty-first Century Populism*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2007, 16; K. Abts and S. Rummens, “Populism versus Democracy”, *Political Studies*, Vol. 55 (2), 2007, 414.

64 Noam Gidron & Bart Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism”, 1-38.

65 Noam Gidron & Bart Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism”, 1-38.

institutions; secondly, populists believe that they have received a mandate from the people to fight political stability, and thirdly, populist leaders often oppose the opposition in parliament, bureaucracy and the Supreme Court, and therefore have strong incentives to weaken this institution. Loxton and Levistky argue that populist leaders in an unconsolidated democracy could contribute in important ways to undermine democratic institutions and, in some cases, even to bring in competitive authoritarianism<sup>66</sup>.

Other experts, such as Pappas and Müller, also tend to identify populism as a serious threat to democracy. This is based on the fact that populism is a form of illiberalism or anti-pluralism. In the (liberal) democracy concept, individual freedom in determining their political choices, freedom of expression, association and speech, and compliance with the rule of law, are the main principles in democracy.<sup>67</sup> As has been widely known, the populism actions themselves tend to make a move beyond the law, contradict the formal political institutional system, and have an interest in creating change through non-democratic mechanisms. Populism, be it inclusive or exclusive (whether economic-based populism or not) or identity (nativist populism), is seen as a threat to immigrants and minorities, and therefore to democracy itself.<sup>68</sup>

While some observers see the inclusive populist movement as an authentic democracy, identifying, rather than covering up, the divisions in which emancipatory political projects can be made, others show that nominally inclusive populist movements also tend to engage in the hyper-centralization of power and delegitimation of political opposition, thus harming democracy. As

---

66 Steven Levitsky and James Loxton, 'Populism and competitive authoritarianism', 107-136.

67 Margaret Canovan, 'Trust the People!' 2-16.

68 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage*, 25;39.

Takis Pappas said, populists are illiberal democrats. Political liberals are committed to the assumption that a society consisting of various cross-cutting intersections and compliance with institutional procedures—especially the rule of law—is the best way to moderate the conflicting interests of the people. On the contrary, the illiberal democrats totally reject the idea of a plural society consisting of legally conflicting interests, thus posing a direct threat to the rights of the minorities.<sup>69</sup>

In relation to the populism actions taken by Islamist groups, in general, their involvement in politics is done in four ways, namely (1) establishing political parties as a formal vehicle in general election, (2) forming alliances to reach the policies in favor of their groups, (3) working through governments (state institution) to pass legislations, and (4) mobilizing through civil society. In this context, Islamist organizations seem to work in great coalitions to give national and regional parliaments some pressure on specific issues. In such a case, political parties mobilize within the parliaments, and Islamist NGOs make some lobby, hold a rally, send some petitions and participate in the hearing.<sup>70</sup>

Simultaneously, the above methods can also be seen in Aksi Bela Islam carried out by Islamists and their proponents. The Islamist civil elements worked together to form a loose cross-class alliance with its main vehicle called the GNPF-MUI. In addition to utilizing their resources to mobilize street rally, they also collaborate with political forces, especially from among Islamist political parties and those who oppose the government. Included in their effort is the pressure they put on the parliament in Senayan to support their political struggle agenda.

---

69 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism and Patronage*, 24–25.

70 Julie Chernov Hwang, *Umat Bergerak*, 113.

In democracy, the right to have different opinions, views and political choices is protected. Everyone, whoever he/she is, regardless of their origin, has the right to be different as their basic right or human rights.<sup>71</sup> In the light of this view, it can be said that expressing aspirations through mass rally as demonstrated by proponents of Aksi Bela Islam, certainly does not conflict with the values and basic principles of democracy. However, the democratic system guarantees the right of every citizen to express his/her opinion in acceptable ways. At the same time, the right to be different (and the obligation to integrate) should never be extreme in the form of separatism and the like.<sup>72</sup>

On the contrary, when the right to be different is expressed through intolerant methods, this of course cannot be tolerated. In this case, Ricoeur sees intolerance as the negativity of tolerance. As a denial, intolerance is intolerable. The main reason lies in its effects. Any intolerance, be it religiously-, culturally- or politically-motivated, is always destructive and, therefore, detrimental to democracy.<sup>73</sup>

In relation to Aksi Bela Islam, the mass rally that aspires the SARA (race, religion, race and intergroup) issues, targeting minority ethnic groups, surely puts democracy to danger. The difference between the desire to enforce the law on the perpetrator of blasphemy (Ahok) and the wish to carry out the Islamization as a whole, can produce short-term and long-term consequences for democracy. Muslim support for similar actions is highly likely not to last long, because their support base in Muslim societies is limited. However, the effects of their SARA political

---

71 Felix Baghi, *Pluralisme, Demokrasi dan Toleransi (Pluralism, Democracy and Tolerance)*, Yogyakarta: Ledalero, 2012, 37.

72 Felix Baghi, *Pluralisme, Demokrasi dan Toleransi*, 37.

73 Felix Baghi, *Pluralisme, Demokrasi dan Toleransi*, 40.

narratives will last long enough. Such SARA narratives as infidels, blasphemers, Chinese, capitalists, Nine dragons, and the like, result in the strengthening of religious primordial sentiment among Muslims.

Without having to play down the impact of demonstrations that have successfully gathered a large number of people (around 500,000 to 750,000), these events still have a negative effect on the progress of democracy, especially on minority rights, and raise big questions for Indonesia's self-image as a tolerant nation which respects security and diversity, and is committed to the supremacy of law. In short, these actions in the name of Defend Islamic in the period of the Jakarta Election, have reduced the claim of Indonesia as a moderate Islamic democratic state.<sup>74</sup>

In religious and democratic discourses, it is also important to consider the opinion that says that freedom (as the core of democracy) can be guaranteed if citizens are tolerant of the different beliefs held by others. Normatively, citizens should have the same opportunity to achieve their respective goals according to their social, cultural, religious and economic interests. These differences will become problematic if tolerance or willingness to accept differences is absent.<sup>75</sup> While it must also be recognized that tolerance, in fact, is not identical with democracy, it is believed that tolerance is an important factor for making democracy work.<sup>76</sup> In this case, tolerance helps the stability of society, which in turn strengthens democracy. On the contrary, intolerance makes it difficult for democracy to survive, let alone develop.<sup>77</sup>

---

74 Greg Fealy, "Bukan Sekedar Ahok", 2016.

75 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 153-154.

76 Sullivan, Pierson, dan Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 5.

77 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 153.

In the view of elitist theory about democracy, it is explained that intolerant citizens usually tend to be apathetic or absent from politics, and therefore they do not pose any threat to the democratic system. While this theory's claim is true, it is also important to criticize that under certain circumstance where violent conflicts occur among the elites, intolerant masses can be mobilized to support conflicting and elite-led groups. Thus, this mobilization surely carries a great potential danger and in turn might threaten the stability of democracy.<sup>78</sup>

---

78 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 156.



# Rising Indonesian Islamic Populism in Post-New Order Indonesia

In the Indonesian context, the discourse on Islamic populism cannot be separated from the existence of Islamism or political Islam. This is quite understandable because an important actor of the mass mobilization movement that carries populist ideology which strengthened in the post-New Order period, is none other than Islamism groups. Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Islamic Community Forum (FUI), Wahdah Islamiyyah (WI), and others, are agents of Islamism that play an important role in conducting popular mobilization at the end of 2016. Is it true that popular mobilization as represented by the Defend Islam Action, also known as the 212 movement, and the like, can be labeled as a phenomenon of Islamic populism in the Indonesian context? The views of experts in explaining this issue are various. Some of them understand it as a portrait of Islamic populism that is strengthening in Indonesia, and some others understand it more as a form of politics of Islamic identity. This chapter will present the discourse of experts from Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and Western scholars who are concerned in studying Indonesia (read: Indonesianist) in reading the phenomenon of mass

mobilization under religious labels and at the same time some popular issues in its confrontation with the ruling regime.

## A. Islamic Populism in the Indonesian Context

When a large-scale demonstration took place in May 1998, which demanded the overthrow of Suharto, the authoritarian regime that had been in power for more than 32 years, the term populism was not so prominent. Experts label the mobilization of the masses who are fighting for a democratic or reform agenda, including Suharto's ouster, more as a reform movement. This movement involves an alliance between student activists, NGOs, and various other elements of civil society, including liberal-progressive-oriented Islamic civil society. In Hefner's note, the latter group (liberal-progressive Muslims) was the backbone of the Islamic civilians who have been instrumental in overthrowing Suharto and at the same time giving birth to the birth of a new period known as the reformation era, the democratic era, and the post-New Order era.<sup>1</sup>

However, the 1998 reform movement which involved large numbers of masses carried the ideology of change by demanding the overthrow of Suharto, the elimination of corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN), and the improvement of a more democratic system of social, political and economic life. This movement also faces the majority of people (people) vis a vis the corrupt regime that has been in power for more than 32 years. Judging from its characteristics, the reform movement which is driven by progressive civil society agents, can actually be categorized as a form of populism<sup>2</sup>. However, there are almost no experts who

---

1 Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Islam dan Demokratisasi di Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2001.

2 Populism has characteristics including, *first*, anti-establishment (the expression of groups who feel marginalized), *secondly*, the existence of authority of leaders through both personal charisma

label the social movement as a phenomenon of populism in Indonesia. Likewise with the involvement and participatory role of Muslims, both from conservative Muslims such as KAMMI and moderate-progressive Muslims such as NU and Muhammadiyah, in the reform movement that is concerned about fighting for a populist agenda such as declining economic resilience of small communities due to economic / monetary crisis, collusion corruption issues and nepotism (KKN), and others, not to bring up the discourse of Islamic populism in Indonesia.

Until the first decade after the New Order, the discourse about populism and especially Islamic populism had not been the subject of academic public or experts. Only in the decade of 2014 did this issue begin to surface and color academic discourse along with the power contestation involving two presidential candidates (Candidates) who shared the discourse of populism as their political strategy. Prabowo used the approach of classical populism or ultra-nationalism by emphasizing the revolutionary improvement of the political-economic system and placing foreigners as his enemies. On the contrary, Jokowi tends to use a moderate populism approach that understands the political system needs to be improved, but not necessarily frontally, and does not criticize the rich and foreign parties as enemies.<sup>3</sup>

In the contestation of power, activism carried out by Muslim groups has not yet given birth to Islamic populism. In the midst of the domination of the two populist figures, the involvement and political activism of Islamic groups seemed to sink and only

---

and apocalyptic messages, *third*, strong in-group feelings as shown in our sentiment vs. them. Read Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 39 (4), 542-563; Jack Hayward (ed.), *Elitism, Populism, and European Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

3 Marcus Mietzner, *Reinventing Asian Populism: Jokowi's Rise, Democracy and Political Contestation in Indonesia*, Honolulu-Hawaii: East-West Center, 2015.

became a sub-ordinate for the dominance of the two populist political elites. In fact, the mobilization of the masses, the use of symbols, and religious sentiment, took place massively, systematically and structured. Issues regarding communism, infidels, foreign henchmen, and other slogans of ethno-religious identity based populism have strengthened. The publication of the “Obor Rakyat”<sup>4</sup> tabloit, which was considered to be very racist and sectarianistic, contained a lot of hoax news and hate speech, because it discredited one of the candidates, was said to also involve actors who liked to politicize religion as a strategy in winning political battles.

Only in the 2016–2017 period did the issue of Islamic populism come to the surface, becoming the dominant discourse of academic experts and discourse in contemporary Indonesia. The emergence of a series of mass actions that used religious identity, known as the Defend Islam Action (1, 2, and 3), which demanded Ahok to be imprisoned for blasphemy, became a fuel for the debate associated with Islamic populism. Likewise with similar actions post 212 such as reunion 212, munajat 212, 209 replacing the president to the discourse of the people power movement, further strengthening the narrative of Islamic populism. Do the actions labeled Islam correctly represent what is called Indonesian Islamic populism? Not a few views that assess the success of the Islamists in mobilizing the masses, their success in imprisoning Ahok and at the same time defeated him in the Jakarta Election, as a victory of Islamic populism that was strengthening in Indonesia.<sup>5</sup>

---

4 <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1138247/saat-jokowi-cerita-hoax-saracen-dan-obor-rakyat/full&view=ok>; <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190108195628-32-359394/obor-rakyat-kembali-terbit-jelang-pilpres-2019>; <https://www.tribunnews.com/tag/obor-rakyat>.

5 Azyumardi Azra, “Populisme, Politik Identitas dan Demokrasi Indonesia”, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, *Populisme Politik Identitas & Dinamika Elektoral, Mengurai Jalan Panjang Demokrasi Prosedural*, Malang: Intrans Publishing, 2019, xiii–xviii.

Burhanuddin Muhtadi, understanding the mass actions using the label of Islamic defense, is known as the political populism of Islamic identity in Indonesia. It is said so, because in its action, Islamist groups, the main actors of the Defend Islam Action, use religious symbols, sentiments and ideologies in mobilizing the masses to get involved in fighting for their political agenda. The masses involved in this action almost all came from Muslim circles in Indonesia. The dimension of populism is seen in narratives that perceive or place the majority of society, including Muslims, in a confrontational or antagonistic position with the ruling regime that is considered corrupt, authoritarian and siding with religious dissidents<sup>6</sup>.

Strictly speaking, Vedi R. Hadiz called the actions labeled Islam a new form of Islamic populism. Different from the old populism which relies on the working class or peasantry, the social basis of new populism in the context of neo-liberalism is a multi-class alliance which is articulated through an identity as the basis of the fabric of solidarity. If the old populism is associated with figures such as Peron in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil whose main social base is the working class<sup>7</sup>, then the basis of the new populism's political coalition is very complex and internally contradictory. This populism is a specific form of asymmetric multi-class coalition-based social mobilization. These coalitions carry political and economic agendas that are less rooted in and driven by, interpretations of religious doctrines or cultural norms rather than concrete struggles to seize power and material resources in

---

6 Burhanuddin Muhtadi, *Populisme Politik Identitas & Dinamika Elektoral, Mengurai Jalan Panjang Demokrasi Prosedural*, Malang: Intrans Publishing, 2019.

7 See Michael L. Coniff (ed.), *Populism in Latin America*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2012; Kurt Weyland, "Neoliberal Populism in Latin America and Eastern Europe", dalam *Comparative Politics* 31 (4), 1999, 379-401; Paul Cammack, "The Resurgence of Populism in Latin America", in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 19 (2), 149-161.

certain social and historical contexts. This echo of populism resonates and has an allure because the claims made about upholding a morally strong society face the threat of mental erosion caused by what is perceived as shallow materialist values and the hedonic-consumptive lifestyle associated with Western culture<sup>8</sup>.

Different from populism in other countries such as Europe and America, Islamic populism in Indonesia targets non-Muslim (Christian) minority groups, ethnic Chinese or Chinese<sup>9</sup>, and also foreign powers. This populist action carries a narrative about the decline of the Muslim-indigenous majority economically due to corrupt and pro-minority State policies. Whereas in Europe, populist politics has been linked to anti-immigrant tendencies represented by politicians such as Le Pen in France, Fortuyn and Wilders in the Netherlands, and by recent strong right-wing groups in the Nordic countries such as Norway, Sweden and Finland. Likewise in America, anti-immigrant sentiments and narratives to bring back the glory of the United States have been used successfully by populist politicians such as Donald Trump as a political strategy to win the power struggle<sup>10</sup>.

Marcus Mietzner has the view that the 2016 Islamist mass movement under the leadership of Habib Rizieq Shihab can be understood as a case of populism<sup>11</sup>. If Hadiz used the term Is-

---

8 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam*, 40-49; Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir, et al., "Populisme Islam dan Tantangan Demokrasi di Indonesia", *Prisma*, Vol. 36 (3), 2017, 48-59.

9 Activities carried out by a group of young bourgeoisie by positioning the Chinese Ethnic as a "common enemy" became the main thesis as well as the distinctive characteristics of Islamic populism in Indonesia. This continues to be reproduced by the young bourgeoisie for a long time. This is because the business fields cultivated by the Chinese have penetrated areas that have actually been cultivated by the Muslim bourgeoisie for a long time. In addition, the colonial political practices carried out by the Dutch in segregating Indonesian people also contributed to strengthening the thesis. Where ethnic Chinese are suggested as outsiders, rather than as indigenous people (insider). Endi Aulia Garadian, "Membaca Populisme Islam Model Baru", *Book Review, Studia Islamika*, Vol. 24 (2), 2017, 379-393.

10 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam*, xiii-xxvii; 41.

11 Paul D. Kenny, *Populism in Southeast Asia*, 15.

lamic populism, Muhtadi preferred to use the term political identity populism, Marcus tended to use the term Islamic populism<sup>12</sup>. Apparently, the use of this term is based more on the fact that the actors of the mass mobilization actions are none other than groups of Islamism or political Islam. The use of this term is also intended to distinguish between Islamic populism whose connotations are very general (referring to various forms of populism driven by Islamic groups both left, right and center) with specific Islamist populism referring to Islamist groups as actors<sup>13</sup>.

Some experts who tend to see mass actions that carry religious symbols and sentiments as a form of identity politics, are also based on consideration. Among the considerations is that these mass actions are not at all fighting for the real agenda being faced by the community such as rising labor costs, decreasing fuel prices, increasing subsidies for the poor, and the like. On the contrary, these mass actions actually display their elitist character, such as fighting for public space to be more Islamic or shar'i, fighting for regulations that can increase the worship and piety of the people, and others. The rest that is fought by this action is the ideological interests of the Muslim middle class who are being hit by anxiety due to the moral-religious crisis in the public sphere<sup>14</sup>.

Even though some experts tend to understand the Defend Islam Action and the like, more as a form of identity politics, but they also acknowledge the aspects of populism in these actions. According to them, the series of social actions carried out by the

---

12 Marcus Mietzner, "Fighting Illiberalism with Illiberalism: Islamist Populism and Democratic Deconsolidation in Indonesia", *Pacific Affairs* 91 (2), 261-82.

13 Interview with Marcus Mietzner, 12 Sept 2019, also read Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia's Growing Islamist Populism", *Asia Dialogues*, December 19, 2016.

14 Interview with Hairus Salim, 23 July 2019, Najib Kaelani, 25 July 2019.

Islamists, however, also used an ideology that perceived the people and the people in an antagonistic position with the elites who were now in power. They also mobilized the masses as a strategy to fight for their political agenda, starting from the punishment of Ahok, who was considered blasphemous, extending the application of Islamic norms and values in the public sphere, to the most serious one being the Islamization of state power. However, some elements contained in the Defend Islam Action and the like, clearly represent what is called populism<sup>15</sup>.

Based on the discourse of the experts above, it can be understood that a strengthening populism in the context of Indonesia after the New Order is nothing but a populism based on the politics of Islamic identity. In this case, Hadiz asserted that the use of religious (Islamic) identity was intended by Islamist elites to be an allure for Muslims from various circles. The issues of economic and political inequality were, in fact, not on their main struggle agenda, but rather as an effort to attract support from the broader elements of society. Similarly, the anti-immigration narration voiced by populist politicians in various parts of the country both Europe, America and other Asia. These right-wing politicians use populist narratives based on the issue of economic inequality, not as the main agenda of their struggle, but rather as a political strategy to be able to attract public support and ultimately win the arena of power.

From the discourse of the experts above, it can be understood that Islamic populism in the Indonesian context refers to ideology, social movements, and at the same time political strategies of Muslim groups in fighting for or maintaining power. As an ideology, Islamic populism describes and / or perceives the people

---

15 Interview with Hairus Salim 23 July 2019, M. Amin Abdullah 26 July 2019, Muhammad Wil-dan 26 July 2019, Moch Nur Ichwan 24 July 2019.

and society in general to be in a subordinate and antagonistic position with a dominant power (in this case a ruling regime). As a social movement, Islamic populism is not limited to the formation of ideas, discourse and / or thoughts about the plight of the people / people in dealing with corrupt regimes, but also manifested in the form of mass mobilization to counter what they call the corrupt ruling regime. In this case, mass mobilization is a reproduction of popular narratives, based on both religious and popular issues, and large-scale mass mobilization can be understood by the political strategies of Muslim groups in fighting for their political agenda.

It must be acknowledged that Islamic populism in Indonesia is not only identical with discourse and social movements carried out by Islamism groups such as FPI, HTI, FUI, and others. Indeed, these groups are arguably the most familiar and often use populism politics in the form of large-scale mass mobilization such as the 212 action to fight for their political struggle agenda. However, non-Islamic political groups such as NU and Muhammadiyah also often intersect with populism politics. In the 1990s, for example, these two civilian Islamic organizations were involved in ideological battles and at the same time social movements whose interests were not merely to overthrow the corrupt New Order regime, but also to fight for reform and democracy agendas.

For this reason, the picture of Islamic populism is not monolithic, but pluralistic. Populism politics carried out by moderate and progressive Islamic groups, will give birth to a picture of middle populism (*washatiyyah*) and reformation. Conversely, populism politics carried out by conservative Islamic groups, radicalists and/or Islamism, will give birth to a picture of conservative populism or known as right populism. In the discourse of

populism itself, there are various types of populism including right populism (conservative), middle populism (moderate) and left populism (progressive). In the context of post-New Order Indonesia, the type of populism that strengthens is none other than conservative populism or borrowing the term Mietzner known as Islamist populism.

In this study, what is desired with Islamic populism refers to populism practiced by political Islamic groups or Islamism. This reference is based on the phenomenon of popular mobilization in action throughout the 2016-2019 period. During this period, mass actions or popular mobilization were carried out by many Islamist groups in their alliance with political elites who opposed the ruling regime. These dual movements are gaining the attention and attention of Indonesian Islamic scholars and politicians, both from within and outside the country, which are then framed in the discourse of Islamic populism.

## **B. The Emergence of Islamic Populism: Some Features**

At the empirical level, the discourse on Islamic populism in Indonesia refers to the socio-political events that took place after the New Order, especially in the 2016-2019 period. At least there are a number of important events that represent Islamic populism that emerged during the political period. Said to be a political period because the span of this period is in the electoral political momentum starting from the DKI Jakarta Election (2016-2017), Presidential Election and Post Presidential Election (2018-2019). By coincidence or not, the emergence of Islamic populism movements is within the electoral political momentum. Among the aforementioned events can be described as below.

## 1. The Defend Islam Action 212

The Defend Islam Action 212 is touted as the most phenomenal representation of Islamic populism in Indonesia after the New Order. Because the movement - borrowing the term used by Tempo Magazine - mobocracy involving Muslims from various regions in Indonesia succeeded in fulfilling the streets and Taman Medan Merdeka in Jakarta with a fantastic mass<sup>16</sup>. The picture of the drone shows a sea of people with people sitting on a prayer rug in the rain. It is estimated that the masses who are members of the Defend Islam Action III reached around 500,000-750,000 people<sup>17</sup>. This number has doubled compared to the Defend Islam Action I (4 November 2016) which was followed by around 50,000 people and the Defend Islam Action I with a number of participants around 150,000-250,000 people<sup>18</sup>.

There is an interesting debate related to the number of masses who took part in 212 Action. The proponents of the 212 Action claimed that the number of masses penetrated the numbers above 5 million people. The GNPf-MUI who organized the action claimed that the action was attended by around 7.5 million people. This claim is considered rather excessive, especially by groups that are counter-action 212 or analysts who estimate the number of participants of the action not more than 500,000 thousand people. An estimation using Google maps estimates the mass reaches 2.3 million<sup>19</sup>. As a result of these differences, each group was involved in a debate that led to curses, insults, satire or

---

16 Greg Fealy, "Bigger than Ahok: Explaining the 2 December Mass Rally", *Indonesia At Melbourne*, December 12, 2016.

17 Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Group, and the Politics of Accommodation", *Asian Studies Review*, 2018

18 Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation", 2018

19 <https://indopress.id/eksklusif-misteri-jumlah-massa-aksi-super-damai-212>.

*nyinyir* on social media<sup>20</sup>. Apart from the debate over numbers, one thing is certain that the 212 action led by Islamism groups is considered by observers to be the largest religious action in the history of Muslims in Indonesia, especially after the New Order<sup>21</sup>.

However, the presence of 212 actions which succeeded in mobilizing the masses in large numbers, did not just appear. It is true that this action emerged as a response or rather the reaction of the people to Ahok's controversial statement regarding the Al-Maidah letter. However, the presence of this action cannot be separated from the previous actions, carried out by Islamist groups targeting Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok (the governor of DKI Jakarta, a Chinese and Christian) whose memorandum bene they hated. Indeed, the hatred of the Islamists, especially the FPI, was not only related to Ahok's Chinese and Christian status, but also in his capacity as governor. As is known, Ahok is known as an effective governor, focused on governance, anti-corruption and has a high commitment to pluralism. This kind of condition which has been dispelled has made many parties, especially economic brokers and politicians and Islamist groups dislike Ahok.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to note that the resistance of Islamist groups in their alliance with political-economic brokers, against Ahok, had actually been going on for quite a long time, not only when Ahok was governor of DKI Jakarta, but also during the 2012 Jakarta Election which was won by Jokowi-Ahok. Their protection was not only expressed through political actions such as being involved in the elections, but also in street politics such as

---

20 Read the BBC Indonesia reporter Cristine Franciska "seven million or 500,000? When social media debated the number of participants in 212 actions at Monas in <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/trensosial-38204802>

21 Interview with Greg Fealy 9 Sept 2019, Thomas Power 8 Sept 2019, and Burhanuddin Muhtadi 8 Sept 2019.

22 Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Indonesia's Islamist Mobilization*, pp. 15-21.

demonstrations and various other ways. The inauguration of a rival governor by FPI, for example, can be understood as a form of resistance by Islamist groups in their efforts to delegitimize the governor in power. It's just that the actions of resistance they did, did not get broad public support. Habib Rizieq's propaganda which carries religious (Christian), ethnic (Chinese), ideological (communist) sentiments, was not sufficiently successful in massively provoking the masses to delegitimize Ahok. In fact, this action also received support from opposition groups in parliament and political parties who did not respect the governor in power<sup>23</sup>.

The Islamist resistance movement really found its strategic momentum when Ahok experienced a tongue sprain in his speech in the Thousand Islands on September 27, 2016. In his speech, Ahok told residents in the Thousand Islands not to be easily fooled by people who used the verse Al- Quran (Surah Al-Maidah: 51) for political purposes. The situation became more problematic when posting Ahok's speech video with the heading "Defamation on Religion?" Which was slightly processed was spread by Buni Yani through her Facebook account on October 6, 2016. This video posting later triggered a strong reaction from Muslims who demanded that Ahok be tried immediately and imprisoned. Even more than a dozen Islamic organizations then reported governor Ahok to the police over the blasphemy case.<sup>24</sup>

On October 11, 2016, a number of non-mainstream Islamic figures such as Bachtiar Nasir (MIUMI chairman), K.H. Fakhurrozi Ishaq (Chair of the Jakarta Community Movement),

---

23 Discussion with Abdul Mughis during a coffee moment in Canberra, 6 Sept 2019.

24 The 212 actor must thank Ahok because thanks to Ahok as he slipped his tongue when quoting the Al-Maidah chapter, the 212 rally really gained momentum which he did not have to painstakingly create. If there were no such trigger, it would be impossible that 212 rally would be that big. Excerpted from the results of discussions with Burhanuddin Muhtadi and friends, 7 Sept 2019.

K.H. Ahmad Shabri Lubis (FPI Chairperson), Tgk Abdullah Ibrahim (Chairperson of the Majelis Dhikr SBY Nurus Salam), and others, came to the central MUI. In their hospitality, they asked MUI to issue a statement or fatwa related to the Ahok case. On that same day, the MUI then held a meeting and then issued an “opinion and attitude of reluctance” which in essence that Ahok’s statement was categorized as insulting the Qur’an and / or insulting scholars who had legal consequences. The MUI’s religious opinion and attitude in its recommendations also obliges the government and law enforcers to, among other things, “prevent any desecration and defamation of the Koran and the Islamic religion by not paying any attention to these acts” and “cracking down on those who commit the blasphemy and defamation al-Qur’an and Islamic teachings and insults to scholars and Muslims in accordance with applicable legislation “and” proactively enforce law enforcement in a strict, fast, proportionate and professional manner with due regard to the sense of justice of the community so that people have confidence in the enforcement of law<sup>25</sup>.

Not long after the MUI issued its religious attitude, a popular alliance called the National Movement to Defend Fatwa MUI (GNPF-MUI) was immediately formed with Rizieq Shihab (FPI High Priest) occupying the position of Trustees and Bachtiar Nasir (MIUMI/Muhammadiyah/MUI) as its chairman. Misbahul Anam (FPI) was appointed as Deputy Chairman I, Zaitun Rasmin (Wahdah Islamiyah/MUI) as Deputy Chair II, Muhammad al-Khaththath (FUI/former HTI senior official) as Secretary General, and Munarman (FPI) as Field Commander. The GNPF-MUI played an important role in mobilizing the masses and

---

25 Moch Nur Ichwan, “MUI, Gerakan Islamis dan Umat Mengambang”, *Ma’arif* Vol. 11, No. 2, December 2016, pp.1-104.

organized a series of demonstrations to demand that Ahok be jailed because he was considered to have defamed Islam. In the name of the Defend Islam Action, GNPF-MUI succeeded in mobilizing a sizable mass of around 50,000-100,000 people on October 14, 2016. Next, on November 4, 2016, the Defend Islam Action was followed by no less than 350,000 people<sup>26</sup>.

The climax, on 2 December 2016 (212), the Islamist group which had consolidated itself into the GNPF-MUI, succeeded in mobilizing a massive mass to carry out the Defend Islam Action III. As mentioned above, there are no less than 700,000 people involved in the Defend Islam Action. Many experts are of the opinion that a mass of this size, driven not to the extent of members of Islamist organizations which are the main proponents of the Defend Islam Action. However, members of MUI, FPI, FUI, MIUMI, Wahdah Islamiyah, HTI, and the Defend Islam Action organs, are certainly not many in number compared to members of mainstream Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah. It was predicted that many NU and Muhammadiyah people were involved in the Defend Islam Action. In his statement Nur Ichwan said that

“... .. not a few Muslims both in urban areas and especially in the countryside, from modernists and traditionalists, who are innocent and pious, who believe very well that Ahok has defamed their beliefs. Because of that, they voluntarily came to Jakarta to defend their religion”<sup>27</sup>.

The same thing was also stated by M. Amin Abdullah. According to him, it is impossible for such a large mass, only coming

---

26 Moch Nur Ichwan, “MUI, Gerakan Islamis dan Umat Mengambang”, 1-104; IPAC (Institute for Polity Analysis on Conflict), *After Ahok: The Islamist Agenda in Indonesia*, IPAC Report No. 44, 6 April 2018, 2.

27 Interview with Moch Nur Ichwan, 24 July, 2019.

from the membership of FPI, HTI, PKS and the organization that drives Islamic Action. There is no doubt that many members of the two mainstream Islamic organizations (Muhammadiyah and NU), especially those who are conservative or sympathetic to the agenda of the Defend Islam Action struggle participated in the action. In fact in Muhammadiyah itself figures such as Bachtiar Nashir were also involved in organizing mass actions. Outside of all these organizations, it is very possible that there are also new Muslims who have been stricken by religious violence or religious euphoria, participating in the Defend Islam Action<sup>28</sup>. Borrowing the term Nur Ichwan, the floating ummah and the floating ummah are many who are involved in praxis to do what is known as jihad to defend their religion<sup>29</sup>.

Not limited to the success of mobilizing the masses in large numbers, a series of the Defend Islam Action also succeeded in forcing the government to pay serious attention to the power of Islamist groups. In the Defend Islam Action III, for example, President Jokowi even had to be willing to meet with a mass of protesters led by FPI's high priest (Rizieq Shihab) to give a speech even if only for a short time. The court's decision which sentenced Ahok to 2 years in prison on blasphemy charges on May 9, 2017 was cited as a prestigious achievement of the Defend Islam Action. Meanwhile, Anis Baswedan's victory in the second round of the Jakarta Regional Election (April 19, 2017) with 58 percent

---

28 Interview with M. Amin Abdullah, 27 July, 2019.

29 According to Nur Ichwan, the floating congregants are people who are not affiliated to any Islamic organization or movement which may agree on certain issues with certain organizations or movements and on other issues agree with others. Whereas the floating people are people who are affiliated to certain Islamic organizations or movements and in many ways follow the perspectives of those organizations or movements, but in certain issues they become embroiled, in the sense of leaving the official views of the affiliated organizations or movements and agreeing and choosing opinions or organizations or other Islamic movements. Read Moch Nur Ichwan, "MUI, Islamist Movement and Floating Muslims", 1-104.

of votes compared to 42 percent for Ahok, also cannot be separated from the influence of the Defend Islam Action<sup>30</sup>. This fact further affirms the authority and legitimacy of political Islamic groups, as represented in the Defend Islam Action, in the constellation of power in Indonesia<sup>31</sup>.

## 2. 212 Reunion

The populist actions that were driven by Islamist groups incorporated in the GNPf-MUI did not stop only in the case of blasphemy by the governor of DKI Jakarta (Ahok). Greg Fealy's analysis which revealed that the 212 action had a far greater agenda than just imprisoning Ahok, had a point<sup>32</sup>. Evidently, after the 212 action successfully led Ahok to prison for 2 years, as a court decision, and at the same time making this incumbent governor must accept the harsh reality of defeat in the Jakarta Election, the 212 exponents kept trying to continue to inflame his populist movement. The actions they take are also projected to target political actors who occupy positions of power higher than Ahok, who else if not president Joko Widodo (Jokowi).

Why Jokowi? One of the reasons is because Jokowi, in addition to serving as president and having partnered with Ahok when he was governor of DKI Jakarta, he is also the most potential presidential candidate and at the same time disliked by Is-

---

30 Some post-Local elections (Pilkada) investigations showed that most of Jakarta's population, especially Muslims, did not vote for Ahok, especially in the second round because they were: (1) afraid of a recurrence of the anti-Chinese/Christian riot tragedy, (2) it was feared that it would violate the rules in Al-Qur'an and get God's punishment, (3) worried if they know their family member died, no one is willing to pray and bury their bodies, and (4) want to obey the "Al-Qur'an command" which obliges believers to support Muslim candidates for political-government leadership. This fact affirms that Islamic religion and identity have an important role in the election of the governor of Jakarta. Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Indonesia's Islamism Mobilization*, 15-21.

31 Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilization", 2018; IPAC (Institute for Polity Analysis on Conflict), *After Ahok: The Islamist Agenda in Indonesia*, IPAC Report No. 44, April 6, 2018, 2-3.

32 Greg Fealy, *Bigger than Ahok: Explaining the 2 December Mass Rally*, December 7, 2016.

lamists. Not much different from Ahok, Islamist's dislike of Jokowi was more due to the president from civil society, known to be very concerned with government and development, and notorious for not being friendly enough to groups identified as radical. Different from the era of SBY who was more accommodating towards Islamists, Jokowi actually took an exclusionary attitude<sup>33</sup>. Instead of accommodating, Jokowi instead took a non-compromising attitude towards the agents of conservatism-radicalism. This attitude is seen in terms of, for example, the issuance of Perpu No. 2/2017 signed by president Jokowi on July 10, 2017 which contains a ban on HTI organizations<sup>34</sup>.

Not long after the issuance of the Perpu, on 19 July 2017 the Indonesian government officially suspended the legal status of HTI and officially banned it. As stated by Wiranto, Menkopolkam, the prohibition of HTI is because this trans-national Islamic organization has an ideology that is contrary to the state ideology (Pancasila), the constitution and at the same time poses a real threat to the unity and diversity of Indonesia. The government believes that the existence of HTI does not contribute to national development and does not help the State to achieve its goals. For the proponents of the 212 action, the HTI ban was considered as an attempt by the government to hit supporters of the Defend Islam Action which had successfully blocked Ahok from being elected in the DKI Jakarta Regional Election in April 2017. As stated by Ismail Yusanto, the ban and freezing of HTI had been planned by the government because This organization is all out in support of the Defend Islam Action which demands governor Ahok to be

---

33 Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation", 2018

34 "Ini Alasan Pemerintah Bubarkan Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (These are the Reasons Why the Government Disbands Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia)", <http://nasional.kompas.com/2017/05/08/14382891/ini.alasan.pemerintah.bubarkan.hiznut.tahrir.indonesia>.

sentenced for his blasphemy. Others understand this policy as Jokowi's strategy to win the presidential election in the second period in 2019 by suppressing his enemies, especially conservative Muslims<sup>35</sup>.

On the other side, Jokowi established intimacy and intimacy with moderate Islamic groups such as NU and Muhammadiyah who had relatively similar national visions in affirming the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Jokowi's familiarity with moderate Muslims, especially NU, has increased especially after the mass mobilization of the Islamists against Ahok. On several occasions, Jokowi came to PBNU to have a dialogue with the leader of this largest Islamic organization. As a result, NU then gave full support to the Jokowi government, especially in combating radical Islamic groups. At the same time, Jokowi also supported the NU program in promoting the Islamic archipelago, encouraged the Minister of Religion to build cooperation with NU in designing various strategic programs, providing state-owned land grants as part of the land redistribution program and access to microcredit schemes for pesantren, known with Sharia Micro-Finance Institutions or LKMS. In short, NU has enjoyed a variety of contributions to the generosity of the Jokowi government<sup>36</sup>.

The fact that Jokowi is getting closer to moderate Islamic groups and his potential to win the 2019 Presidential Election, has created concern among Islamist groups who are proponents of the Action for the Defense of Islam 212. Because of that, they then tried their best to be able to block and if possible thwart Jokowi's victory at April 2019 Presidential Election. To realize this wish, they inevitably have to collaborate with its ultra-nationalist Jokowi

---

35 Buya Syafi'i: Isu Perpu Ormas Digoreng untuk Pemilu 2019, <https://news.detik.com/berita/3562829/buya-syafii-isu-perppu-ormas-digoreng-untuk-pemilu-2019>.

36 Greg Fealy, "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics Trap", 11 July 2018.

competitor, namely Prabowo Subianto. However, it is difficult to cover up, if in fact their worries about Jokowi's victory are far greater than their doubts about the candidate he supports, Prabowo<sup>37</sup>.

Actually, Islamists really hope that Jokowi can be defeated in the 2019 Presidential Election. But they are well aware that realizing it is not easy. As an alternative, they want as many elected legislators as possible both nationally and locally to press the agenda of upholding the morality and orthodoxy of the state. They see a good prospect of being able to create a significant Islamist bloc in the national House of Representatives (DPR), investing the next election in 2024. They also intend to mobilize their grassroots base in the case of Prabowo's defeat to protest what they have seen as cheating election system. However, this will be another show of force, demanding the support of Jokowi and his vice-president, old cleric Ma'ruf Amin, for a new law that reflects the principles of conservative Islam<sup>38</sup>.

In this context it is clear how the evolution of the Islamic populism movement launched by Islamists from before was oriented towards the overthrow of the then Jakarta governor, Ahok, into an anti-Jokowi campaign. Although the populist actions they carried out were not as phenomenal as the 212 actions, they remained a serious threat by Jokowi's camp. As is known, the forces of the Defend Islam Action 212 began to decline both due to internal conflicts and divisions as well as the effects of political intervention by the ruling regime<sup>39</sup>. Ma'ruf Amin, Ali Mochtar

---

37 IPAC, *Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign*, IPAC Report No. 55, 15 March, 2019.

38 IPAC, *Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign*, IPAC Report No. 55, 15 March 2019.

39 According to informants the decline in strength of 212 was closely related to the internal division of the group 212. This was because there were no more common enemies or someone who was made a coming enemy like Ahok. While related to the direction of practical political support

Ngabalin and Yusuf Mansur who previously were in the 212 stronghold, in their development were actually closer and were eventually embraced by Jokowi. Habib Rizieq, who is a high priest and has always been at the forefront in carrying out acts of resistance against the ruling regime, must leave Indonesia due to the snare of police law on pornography charges. Meanwhile, the 212 proponents were split between the 212 Alumni Association (PA) led by Slamet Maarif, the 212 Presidium Alumni led by Aminuddin and Garda 212 under the leadership of Ansufrif Idrus Sambo<sup>40</sup>.

In various reports it was mentioned that the split of the 212 alumni because it was triggered by a change in movement direction from the previous purely religious or Shari'ah struggle to a struggle that was more oriented towards practical political interests. In this context, Usamah said that the initial enthusiasm of the 212 movement was to uphold the law of Allah SWT who had been flicked by the former Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok. According to him, at that time Ahok offended Muslims in Indonesia and even around the world by quoting Surat Al-Maidah verse 51 which obliged Muslims to be led by Muslim leaders. In his statement, as reported by CNN Indonesia, Osama said that:

---

(Pilpres) they are no longer solid, some of them want the figure of Habib Rozieq as an Islamist figure to be challenged with Jokowi, while others prefer to propose Prabowo Subianto. At the same time, the politics of accommodation carried out by the Jokowi government by taking several figures who had previously been activists in 212 actions such as K.H. Ma'ruf Amin, Yusuf Mansur, Ali Mochtar Ngabalin and others proved to be effective in breaking the strength of strength 212. Interview with Edward Aspinall, 12 Sept 2019, Greg Fealy, 8 Sept 2019, Nur Ichwan 24 July 2019, Hairus Salim 23 July 2019.

40 <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181128064816-32-349787/perpecahan-212-jelang-reuni-akbar-di-tahun-politik>.

“Pure saw when the spirit of building unity of the people, defending Al-Maidah verse 51 about Muslim leaders. Single, one issue, there is no other issue only defending religion,” said Usamah<sup>41</sup>.

The same thing was expressed by Ali Mochtar Ngabalin who now holds a position as one of the presidential expert staff. According to him, after Ahok who was the main target had been thrown into prison, the 212 action was over. There is no longer any strong reason to continue the Defend Islam Action. Jokowi who was criticized or targeted was none other than a Muslim. The desire to continue to turn on the post-Ahok 212 action is just romanticism with no essence at all. In his statement, as quoted by CNN Indonesia, he said that:

“It’s more romanticism because there are no more enemies. Which is always heralded Ahok. Now there are Mr. Ma’ruf Amin and Sandiaga Uno as running mate. Candidates are Mr. Jokowi and Mr. Prabowo. All Muslims obey, no problem,” Ngabalin said, Tuesday (11/27)<sup>42</sup>.

Despite the divisions, the 212 anti-Jokowi proponents continue to fight against the ruling regime. In an effort to consolidate their power, they then initiated the implementation of 212 reunion activities centered on the National Monument (Monas) area, Central Jakarta, on 2 December 2018. In fact, the masses involved in the 212 Reunion were not as large as the masses at the Defend Islam Action 212. Many proponents of the Defend Islam Action are not involved and are present in the 21st Reunion. Not a few people consider that Reunion 212 has lost its

---

41 <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181128064816-32-349787/perpecahan-212-jelang-reuni-akbar-di-tahun-politik>.

42 Meanwhile, Kapitra also made a statement with the same tone. Movement 212, he said, was over when Ahok was convicted. He considered that the 212 alumni movement had deviated from its initial enthusiasm, namely guarding the case of blasphemy by Ahok. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181128064816-32-349787/perpecahan-212-jelang-reuni-akbar-di-tahun-politik>.

religious orientation orientation. Instead of remaining grounded in the khittah struggle for the enforcement of religious teachings, Reunion 212 is considered loaded with nuances of practical political struggle ahead of the 2019 Presidential Election.

However, Reunion 212 was still flooded with hundreds of thousands of people from the proponents of action 212. Unlike the Defend Islam Action 212, the actors who were present and seen in the reunion 212 were dominated by political party leaders, especially PKS, Gerindra and PAN. Zulkifli Hasan, chairman of PAN and also chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly, who was present from the beginning and participated in a series of activities ranging from tahajjud prayer and dawn prayer in congregation, described the 212 reunion as a form of peaceful, polite and tolerant action. Through this kind of depiction, it seems that Zulkifli wants to counter various stereotypical views on the 212 movement which is often perceived as a form of radicalism. In his remarks, Zulkifli said that

“The 212 reunion was always peaceful, clean and safe. Therefore I invite 212 alumni to be the pioneers of peaceful elections, happy elections and elections that bring progress to Indonesia”<sup>43</sup>.

### 3. 2019 Change President

Despite the splits, some proponents of the 212 action continued their actions. In the context of the Presidential Election, the populist actions they carried out were of course closely related to the affairs of the constellation of power in 2019. The main target was none other than how, first and foremost, frustrated Jokowi to win the Presidential Election again. In March 2018 they made a

---

43 <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/3798455/zulkifli-hasan-ingin-massa-reuni-212-jadi-pelopor-pemilu-damai>

quite popular and viral hashtag named # 2019 Change the President (Change the President 2019). This hashtag was also made as a reaction to the hashtag created by the pro-Jokowi group which reads # Jokowi2Periode (Jokowi 2 term). Hashtag war became inevitable and at the same time marked a new round of polarization between the anti-Jokowi group and the pro-Jokowi group. In a number of media reports, hashtag #2019GantiPresiden is becoming more popular and is said to have succeeded in defeating hashtag #Jokowi2 Periode<sup>44</sup>.

Apparently, the hashtag war which is part of cyber war is inevitable in the contestation of power in the internet era as it is today. Not a few experts who say that the two contestants in the 2019 Presidential Election, both use buzzers<sup>45</sup> - famous people and have many followers who are usually paid to spread propaganda through social media - and cyber soldiers to win public opinion. In general, the communication strategy that they are working on is to disinform and apply messages in social media through the hashtag creation or accelerate the circulation of disinformation. They make new social media like Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook, as a new propaganda tool to spread disinformation and misinformation to the public<sup>46</sup>. In fact, it is not uncommon for them to create fake or robot accounts for the benefit of propaganda.

So, social media has become an important weapon for agents of Islamic populism under the umbrella of the GNPF-MUI, to streamline its political struggle agenda. Even though their

---

44 “#2019GantiPresiden Kalahkan #Jokowi2Periode”, *viva.co.id*, 11 April 2018.

45 Buzzers can be human, computer-generated bots that are designed to amplify messages - or a combination of humans and bots. Because it is not surprising that the presence of buzzers continues to increase in number because social media platforms do allow anonymous or fake accounts. Read “Buzzer” and the Narrative Fight, *Kompas*, 11 October 2019; “Buzzer” Social Media and Public Trust, Opinion, *Kompas*, 14 October 2019.

46 Interview with Nur Ichwan, 24 Sept 2019 and Martin Slama, 22 Sept 2019.

struggle in imprisoning Ahok was successful, in reality they still used the same fuel, namely the politicization of religion. For example, to subvert the ruling regime (Jokowi) and thwart it to win back the power contestation in the 2019 Presidential Election, Islamic populism agents brought up the issue through WhatsApp Messenger regarding the Jokowi's regime's position which was not pro-Muslim. The issuance of the Perppu of Civil Society Organizations, the regime's tendency to defend Ahok the religious blasphemers and, most recently but actually irrelevant to the struggle of the ummah, boycotted presidential and legislative candidates proposed by the PDI-P, Nasdem, PPP, PKB, Hanura and Golkar for agreeing to presidential thresholds. (Presidential Threshold) of 20%. This, especially number three, is a political message which, when observed, is full of the interests of the political elites who are members of the Defend Islam Action<sup>47</sup>.

Not limited to war hashtags and cyber warfare that rely on buzzers (buzzers) and their cyber troops (cyber army) through social media, the two groups are also involved in the war of door to door campaigns and mass mobilization. Regarding the latest strategy, the anti-Jokowi group spearheaded by the action proponents of 212 chose Neno Warisman as his main spokesperson in campaigning for the 2019 Presidential Change. Since May, thousands of people have joined the 2019 long march to replace the president in Jakarta, Solo, Lampung, Makassar and other major cities. At first glance, it looks like a spontaneous movement that is growing rapidly and organically, but in reality the leaders rely on existing mobilization machines through the WhatsApp network that they used successfully in the past when anti-Ahok reported<sup>48</sup>.

---

47 Endi Aulia Garadian, "Membaca Populisme Islam Model Baru", 379-393.

48 Interview with Thomas Power 8 Sept 2019, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, 8 Sept 2019, Edward Aspinall, 12 Sept 2019.

With hashtag # 2019 to replace the President, the Islamists are trying to launch a movement and at the same time an anti-Jokowi campaign. Three issues were used in the campaign, firstly, the issue of increasing injustice triggered by the imprisonment of Islamic leaders on the charge of controversy or “criminalization of the ulama” as it is widely known. Second, the politicization of labels such as “intolerant” and “radical”, which is believed and felt by the leaders of 212 aimed at stigmatizing dissent and providing the basis for repressive measures such as the banning of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Third, the controversy over the large number of foreign workers especially from China<sup>49</sup> who were brought to work on infrastructure projects funded by China. These issues revive a deep fear of the “latent threat of communism”, a legacy of the Suharto era that proved successful in mobilizing Muslim paramilitary groups against suspected members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI)<sup>50</sup>.

In its development, the 2019 Movement to Change the President must be stopped due to government policies that do not give permission for activities that are considered to divide the community. true that #2019GantiPresiden is increasingly viral in cyberspace. Likewise with the various program activities initiated by the proponents of the 212 actions, such as healthy walking, grand recitation, and the like, always succeeded in drawing interest and broad public involvement. Many people consider that such government policy was taken because the government panicked about the potential of the 2019 movement to change the President. This policy is considered as a political strategy for Jokowi

---

49 The Islamists also use the issue of foreign workers to show that Jokowi prioritizes the construction of grand infrastructure that depends on foreign loans for poverty alleviation and the development of Muslim-owned companies. PAC, Anti-Ahok to Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign, IPAC Report No. 55, 15 March 2019.

50 Interview with Marcus Mietzner, 12 Sept 2019 and Greg Fealy, 9 Sept 2019.

who wants to move forward again in the 2019 Presidential Election.

In the view of experts, the policy taken by Jokowi was very counter-productive with the spirit of democracy, especially related to freedom of expression and opinion. What was done by the proponents of 2019 Change the President is legal and does not conflict with law. The argument that this movement leads to treason or is a source of polarization and social division, is considered too excessive. In this context, the government (Jokowi) has used the State instrument (power) to delegitimize and suppress opposition groups<sup>51</sup>. In a statement, Thomas Power said that

2019 replace the president because this is not a purely Islamist group even though it may depart from the Islamist because the aim is not to establish the Islamic caliphate, not that. When they are prohibited from gathering to make declarations, the impact is very negative because the government has used State apparatus to repress as the 2019 group replaced the president. The consideration might be that if they (the government) lose the election, it would be better if we suspended it<sup>52</sup>.

#### 4. *Ijma' Ulama*

The involvement of the exponents of action 212 in the practical political arena is increasingly apparent. A number of Islamist scholars who are still consistent in being on the anti-Jokowi side, continue to try to play an important role in the constellation of power. On 27-29 July 2018, the GNPf-MUI then held an *ijma' ulama* (gathering of religious scholars) to determine presidential and vice presidential candidates in accordance with Islamic criteria. There are at least two criteria desired by Islamist scholars

---

51 Interview with Burhanuddin Muhtadi 8 Sept 2019, Greg Fealy 9 Sept 2019, Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, 12 Sept 2019.

52 Interview with Thomas Power, 8 Sept 2019.

for the presidential and vice presidential candidates, namely political protection and greater access to policy making in order to strengthen the principles of Sunni orthodoxy<sup>53</sup>. The main conversation during the *ijma* 'is not related to the issue of which candidates have the most Islamic criteria, but who has a great chance of winning the battle and implementing their agenda<sup>54</sup>.

Before the implementation of *ijma*, political lobbies had been intensively carried out by Islamist groups. On May 29, 2018, PA 212 organized a national congress which was attended by 21 provincial branches, mostly based on the FPI branch, to discuss national political developments, especially the 2019 election. Congress recommended 5 names that could be proposed as presidential candidates, namely Rizieq Shihab, Prabowo Subianto, TGB Zainul Majdi, Zulkifi Hasan and Yusril Ihza Mahendra. Whereas PKS-based figures such as Ahmad Heryawan and Hidayat Nur Wahid were nominated as vice presidential candidates. Gatot Nurmantyo, who had been predicted by a number of Islamists, was eventually eliminated by PA 212 because he was considered an opportunist figure<sup>55</sup>.

Although not too fierce, competition among Islamist groups in the context of determining presidential and vice presidential candidates is quite dynamic. Habib Rizieq himself is still a magnet and a central figure in determining the direction of the congress policy that was held both by PA 212 and *ijma* 'ulama. Evidently, many elites from political parties and Islamic scholars from Amin Rais, Prabowo Subianto, Salim Jufri Assegaf and Slamet Maarif, visited

---

53 IPAC, *Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign*, IPAC Report No. 55, 15 March 2019.

54 Discussion with Thomas Power, Burhanuddin Muhtadi and Irsyad, 8 Sept 2019.

55 In the end Zainul Majdi was also eliminated by PA 212 because it anchored to Jokowi's camp. IPAC, *Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign*, IPAC Report No. 55, 15 March 2019.

Habib Rizieq in Mecca to discuss presidential candidates. Ijma 'ulama themselves on the last day of July 29, 2018 finally agreed and decided Prabowo as a presidential candidate to be accompanied by Salim Segaf al-Jufri and Ustadz Abdul Somad. The GNPF claims that the two figures offered as vice presidential candidates accompanying Prabowo are based on the results of an internal survey where Salim al-Jufri has high electability compared to Zulkipli Hasan, while Ustadz Abdul Somad is the most popular da'i figure at the moment<sup>56</sup>.

Ijma 'ulama which were held by Islamists received criticism from various Muslim groups, especially the ulama from among mainstream Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah. Nasaruddin Umar, the high priest of the Istiqlal Mosque, for example, quipped the results of the *ijtima ulama* of the Fatwa Guards National Movement (GNPF). According to him there has been no precedent for *ijtima ulemas* in Indonesia which gave birth to political-practical *ijma* (decisions). Nasaruddin said that if there was an activity called *ijtima ulama*, the legitimacy of the *ijtima* results would certainly be determined by who the ulemas were present. According to him only *mujtahid* scholars with the understanding of qualified jurisprudence can produce an *ijma*. However, if some of the participants are not scholars, that cannot be called *ijtima ulama*. The so-called ulama who understand religion. Nasaruddin saw that the GNPF Ulema *Ijtima* did not fully represent *mujtahid* scholars who came from major Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia. So the decision or *ijma* 'of the *ijtima* only binds the people involved. That is also a note if the decision-making

---

56 IPAC, Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign, IPAC Report No. 55, 15 March 2019.

process is carried out with the argument of a solid religious argument<sup>57</sup>.

## 5. People's Power

The term people power is actually not a new phenomenon in the history of Indonesia. In 1966 and 1998, the mass movement also came out with a sharp criticism of the government to demand the fall of the regime. At the international level, the term is often identified with the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) Revolution, the name of a street in Metro Manila, Philippines. This was a mass demonstration without violence for four days in 1986 to end the authoritarian regime of President Ferdinand Marcos. The form of people power can also be seen from the community movement in Iran in 1977, the 1988 Burmese pro-democracy movement, 1989 China, 1998 reform, to the 2011 Arab Spring<sup>58</sup>.

This term then echoes back in Indonesia in a different context, namely the contestation of power in the 2019 Presidential Election involving the incumbent (Joko Widodo) and incumbent challenger (Prabowo Subianto). In the 2019 Presidential Election process, Islamist groups who had contributed greatly to mobilizing the masses to overthrow Ahok in the DKI Jakarta Election, which again carried the political power narrative of the people. In line with the fraudulent Election discourse, Islamists also produce people power narratives in response to the results of the Presidential Election which are considered unaccountable. The main objective is none other than to build public opinion and at the same time delegitimize electoral political results<sup>59</sup>. Some con-

---

57 <https://tirto.id/sindiran-imam-besar-istiqlal-soal-hasil-ijtima-ulama-gnpf-cQqg>

58 Mouliza K. Donna Sweinstani, "People Power dalam Dinamika Elektoral", <https://kolom.tempo.co/read/1208766/people-power-dalam-dinamika-elektoral>

59 The Executive Director of the Indonesian Public Institute (IPI), Karyono Wibowo, said there was a correlation between the accusations of election fraud and the discourse of people power or mass

sider that the use of these issues, primarily people power, is the last weapon or bullet owned by the Prabowo-Sandi faction which is fully supported by Islamist groups<sup>60</sup>.

Approaching the period of the determination of the presidential election results by KPU (May 22, 2019), the Prabowo-Sandiaga camp continued to echo fraudulent elections and mobilize people power. Most recently, thousands of people, both young men, women and adult men demonstrated at the Election Oversight Body (Bawaslu) on Friday (11/5). They escorted the Prabowo-Sandiaga National Election Agency (BPN) when reporting the alleged 2019 election fraud. Both of them ordered their team to use the existing legal loopholes to expose the alleged fraud in the 2019 election. Sandiaga Uno, Sufmi Dasco said that:

“In accordance with the message of Pak Prabowo, our president, that we must use any legal loopholes to expose the alleged fraud that occurred in this election”<sup>61</sup>.

Actually, the narrative of election fraud had been blown away by Prabowo-Sandi’s camp well before the voting. Before the voting, Prabowo-Sandi’s camp also spread the discourse of people power or mobilizing the power of the masses because the election was considered cheating. Prabowo’s sister, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, who first expressed allegations of election fraud. On March 11, 2019, Hashim complained about the potential of a double

---

mobilization. “The fraud was associated with people power brought up by certain parties to cancel the election results”. Katadata.co.id with the title “People Power Movement, Prabowo’s Last Strategy Towards May 22”, <https://katadata.co.id/berita/2019/05/13/gerakan-people-power-siasat-terakhir-prabowo-jelang-22-mei>

60 Interview with Muhammad A.S. Hikam, 31 Sept 2019 and Tomas Power, 8 Sept 2019.

61 [Katadata.co.id](https://katadata.co.id) entitled «Gerakan People Power, Siasat Terakhir Prabowo Jelang 22 Mei (People Power Movement, Prabowo Final’s Tactic as May 22 Draws Closer)», <https://katadata.co.id/berita/2019/05/13/gerakan-people-power-siasat-terakhir-prabowo-jelang-22-mei>

Permanent Voter List (DPT) of around 17.5 million to the General Election Commission (KPU). Later, the KPU verified and stated that there was no double DPT.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the BPN Steering Board Prabowo-Sandiaga, Amien Rais, since April 1, 2019 has threatened to encourage people to move in droves when there is fraud in the election. Amien said the action plan was part of a social uprising or social revolt of the people to the authorities. "If there is fraud, we will push the people to Monas," Amien said. The narrative of election fraud was reheated after the voting day on 17 April. A few hours after the voting, a number of pollsters had announced the results of the quick count. Most of the results of the quick count also showed Jokowi-Ma'ruf ahead of Prabowo. As a comparison, Prabowo claimed to win the Presidential Election based on the results of his own calculation with a figure reaching 62%, on the same day as the results of the quick count<sup>62</sup>.

The action that carried the people power discourse ran aground when the government, in this case the police, responded to the discourse by setting a number of political elites such as Kivlan Zen, Eggi Sudjana and Permadi, who were involved in it on treason charges. The police set Permadi on charges of treason and Kivlan Zen on charges of possessing illegal and treasonous firearms. Kivlan Zen, in a short video spread on social media, invited people present to come to the General Election Commission (KPU) building and the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) with the aim of disqualifying Jokowi-Ma'ruf from the 2019 Presidential Election contest.

---

62 [Katadata.co.id](https://katadata.co.id/berita/2019/05/13/gerakan-people-power-siasat-terakhir-prabowo-jelang-22-mei) entitled "Gerakan People Power, Siasat Terakhir Prabowo Jelang 22 Mei (People Power Movement, Prabowo Final's Tactic as May 22 Draws Closer)", <https://katadata.co.id/berita/2019/05/13/gerakan-people-power-siasat-terakhir-prabowo-jelang-22-mei>

“On the 9th we are independent. Follow me to the Banteng Square on the 9th we will be free. Whoever prevents us from fighting,” said Kivlan<sup>63</sup>.

While Permadi, cited the path of revolution as the only way to solve the problem in which “China and its two billion inhabitants” he called parties “that would invade Indonesia”.

“I said earlier, what you said is all true, but it cannot be resolved through negotiations and the constitution, except with a revolution. Because of that the victims must have been large<sup>64</sup>.

While Eggi was named a suspect on the basis of speeches on Wednesday (17/4) when Prabowo declared the victory claim based on his own calculation results in Kertanegara, Jakarta. Following fragments of Eggi’s speech at the time:

“So, if all these cheats continue to be accumulated, I heard earlier, God willing, around 7 o’clock, 8 o’clock, it will be officially announced whether there is really serious fraud. So the analysis that has been done by our leader is also the father of Prof. Dr. Amien Rais, the power of people power is must be done. Agree? Dare? Dare? “If people power happens, we no longer need to follow the context of the stages, because this is the people’s sovereignty. Maybe even this is God’s way to speed Prabowo inaugurated. Do not have to wait October 20. This is the power of people power. Insha Allah. But we hope that Indonesia’s unity must be maintained. We must not break up between nations<sup>65</sup>. “

Not a few scholars rate that the government’s actions in responding to demonstrations that carry the discourse of people

---

63 <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-48244103>

64 <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-48244103>

65 [Katadata.co.id](https://katadata.co.id) entitled «Gerakan People Power, Siasat Terakhir Prabowo Jelang 22 Mei (People Power Movement, Prabowo Final’s Tactic as May 22 Draws”, <https://katadata.co.id/berita/2019/05/13/gerakan-people-power-siasat-terakhir-prabowo-jelang-22-mei>

power, is appropriate. However firm action taken by the government can close the gap for the possibility of wider socio-political conflicts which in turn can threaten the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. In their view, people power is a continuation of Islamic populist actions that clearly have a high-level ideological and political agenda to (not just delegitimize legitimate government) to replace the state ideology. Actors involved in people power remain the same as previous popular actions, namely Islamist groups, some of whom want the establishment of the sharia system in Indonesia<sup>66</sup>.

Some other experts have the opposite view. According to them the attitude shown by the government by capturing the actors involved in the action of people power, as a reactive and excessive attitude. If the arrest is based on the enforcement of the rule of law (rule of law), but why the main actors behind the action were not arrested, so their views. Some even consider that what the government does represents its authoritarianism. It is said so because what the government has done is considered counterproductive to the spirit of democracy, especially with regard to freedom of expression and opinion<sup>67</sup>.

### **C. The Causes of Islamic Populism**

There are at least two main stream views that explain the things that drive the rise of right populism, namely economic inequality and cultural conflict. The first hypothesis refers to the fact that the 2008-09 financial crisis has made economies in Western countries looking for a new balance. At the same time, economic globalization created many jobs, especially in the

---

66 Interview with M. Amin Abdullah, 26 July 2019 dan Muhammad A.S. Hikam, 31 Sept 2019.

67 Greg Fealy, 9 Sept 2019, Thomas Power, 8 Sept 2019, Edward Aspinall & Marcus Mietzner, 12 Sept 2019, Nur Ichwan, 24 July 2019, Sunarwoto, 26 July 2019.

manufacturing sector, moving to various countries such as Mexico, India and Africa. The same thing happened in the service sector which previously had to be done in Cleveland or Birmingham, now it can be done remotely from workers in Mumbai or Manila<sup>68</sup>.

Whereas prostitution, LGBT, and legalization of abortion by liberal political elites, are considered aspects that can bring about cultural opposition (cultural backlash) and at the same time trigger a revival of right populism. In the West, in the last three decades, it has experienced important changes such as increasing support for minority groups (LGBT, blacks, Hispanics, immigrants), feminism, multiculturalism, internationalism, and values that are identical with political correctness. These ‘cosmopolitan liberal’ values are indeed accepted by the younger generation, but make the older generation feel insecure. They see it as a threat to civilization and the values it has been upholding. Therefore, it is not surprising that those who are older give their support to parties, politicians and people who are considered to be able to maintain their values<sup>69</sup>.

What about the phenomenon of the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia with its conservative character? Does the issue of economic inequality and cultural conflict contribute to the emergence of Islamic populism as represented in the case of anti-Ahok or anti-Jokowi actions? This issue has been a long debate among Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and at the same time Indonesianists from various perspectives. In general, they refer to Islamic populism in Indonesia on a number of important events, the most important of which is the 212 movement or popularly called the Defend Islam Action. Not a few of them are of the view

---

68 Ari A. Perdana, *"Menguatnya Populisme"*, 2017.

69 Ari A. Perdana, *"Menguatnya Populisme"*, 2017.

that the main trigger (main trigger) of mass mobilization of Muslims in various regions in Indonesia, is none other than Ahok's remarks related to Al-Maidah verse 51 which was then framed by Islamist elites as blasphemy religion. In framing theory, what the Islamists do is a way to convince diverse and broad target groups so that they are motivated to engage in mobilization actions in pressing demands against Ahok's trial<sup>70</sup>.

According to media reports, the main meeting point that unites Islamist groups to consolidate themselves, organize the masses and carry out demonstrations is nothing but the issue of defamation of religion addressed to Ahok. If there were no Ahok controversial remarks which were later justified as blasphemy, certainly, it was not easy enough for anyone to be able to mobilize the masses on a large scale<sup>71</sup>. The economic crisis that took place in the decade 2008-2009 also did not lead to mass demonstrations like the Defend Islam Action. This fact confirms that religious issues proved to be enormously used by political Islamic elites to ignite the emotions of religious people. Islamist shrewdness in using - borrowing the term George McTurnan - religion as an ideological weapon is actually more an effort to stir up emotions and public understanding both dogmatically and psychologically regarding worldly and ukhrawi affairs<sup>72</sup>.

The Ahok case is reminiscent of large-scale demonstrations in a number of countries in the Middle East known as the Arab Spring in 2011. The second event began with the self-immolation of Mohammad Bouzaizi, a Tunisian fruit trader before a Regional Council Office Sidi Bouzid. As a result of this action, a

---

70 Abdul Wahib Situmorang, *Gerakan Sosial: Teori dan Praktik*, 41.

71 Sumanto Al-Qurtuby, *Indonesia's Islamist Mobilization*, 15-21.

72 George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970, 67-68; Wasita Raharjo Jati, "Trajektori Populisme Islam di Kalangan Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia", *Prisma*, Vol. 36 (3), 2017, 19-27.

wave of massive demonstrations for months took place not only in Tunisia, but spread to a number of neighboring countries such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen and others. Demonstrations spread so quickly and massively through the help of social media. In general, mass protesters demand the overthrow of regimes that have long been in power, are corrupt and undemocratic. In its action, the mass of the Muslim community also uses religious sentiments, in the interests of mass mobilization. The difference with the 212 Action case in Indonesia, the masses involved in the Arab Spring revolution were not only dominated by Islamists, people of various classes, cultural-religious identities, also many were involved. When the 212 action took the fight against a government regime that was portrayed as corrupt and not pro-people or people, the Arab Spring movement was oriented towards reform and democratization<sup>73</sup>.

According to a number of experts, the Ahok problem is actually purely political and not a religious problem. Ahok's remarks about Al-Maidah in front of the citizens of the Thousand Islands, it might not be possible to contemplate the controversy and at the same time the emotions of Muslims when he conveyed it not in the context of the elections. Because it was spoken by Ahok who was a non-Muslim memorandum, came from ethnic Chinese and at the same time held the status of a governor and incumbent governor (incumbent) who was involved in power contestation, it was not surprising if his words became controversial<sup>74</sup>. The justification of blasphemy that was pinned by the reli-

---

73 Shafira Elnanda Yasmine, "Arab Spring: Islam dalam Gerakan Sosial dan Demokrasi Timur Tengah", *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2015, pp. 106-113; "Revolusi yang Berawal dari Media Sosial", <https://tirto.id/revolusi-yang-berawal-dari-media-sosial-cqNP>.

74 Interview with M. Amin Abdullah, 26 July 2019; Nur Ichwan, 24 July 2019; Greg Fealy, 9 Sept 2019; Paul D. Kenny, 11 Sept 2019; Edward Aspinall & Marcus Mietzner, 12 Sept 2019; Muhammad A.S. Hikam, 31 Sept 2019.

gious elites to Ahok was actually not a legal product produced through *ijthad*. Likewise, the terminology of the Defend Islam Action used by Ahok protesters who are members of the GNPf-MUI ranks, is also purely a political movement because it is oriented towards practical political interests and not religious movements. In this case, religion is limited to being used as a tool or means for Islamists in their efforts to fight for power<sup>75</sup>.

In today's media era, Ahok's words alone will not have a significant social impact without involving the role of the media, especially social media. As it is understood that Ahok's controversial remarks have received public attention from Muslims in various regions and even around the world, after a person named Buni Yani, who memorized a colleague and at the same time supported Anis Baswedan in the Jakarta Election, edited and uploaded the video on the page You Tube and Facebook. Cash, the results of this Buni Yani upload became viral, successfully influencing and shaping Muslim public opinion that Ahok truly blasphemed religion. Habib Rizieq Shihab, for example, the head of FPI is one of the important actors who is directly involved in creating propaganda through social media and at the same time mobilizing the masses to carry out massive demonstrations on behalf of Bela Islam. According to Martin Slama, Rizieq is a trigger media who has expertise in utilizing social media for the sake of propaganda. With the help of his cyber army and its buzzers, Rizieq was quite successful at reproducing and simultaneously spreading his political narratives in the framework of influencing public opinion to get involved in the mass demonstrations<sup>76</sup>.

It is well known that political narratives reproduced by buzzers (buzzers) and cyber soldiers 212 are loaded with various ex-

---

75 Interview with Sahiron Syamsudin 22 October 2017

76 Interview with Martin Slama, 21 July 2019.

pressions of hatred, lies (hoax), disinformation and misinformation. Video edits uploaded by Buni Yani are the most vivid examples of how disinformation is so easily accepted by the public as a truth. Likewise, Rizieq Shihab's propaganda which continued to say that Ahok had blasphemed religion, tarnished the sanctity of the Qur'an, disbelieved, and dragged him to prison or tried was a jihad or part of a defense of Islam, accepted by the public as a fact of truth. Even though such narratives are reproduced and framed in such a way that their main purpose is to influence public opinion. According to Nur Ichwan, hoax is the basis for the success of the Islamists to mobilize the masses as the Defend Islam Action<sup>77</sup>.

In the Indonesian context, the strengthening of populist actions carried out by Islamist groups, however, cannot be separated from the development of variants - borrowing the term James Fox - a new Islam<sup>78</sup> with a conservative (or fundamentalist and radicalist) character that is increasingly popular after the fall of the regime The new order. In Islamic discourse, this new Islamic variant is often contrasted with the old Islamic variant which has a long historical roots in the archipelago and is well known for its accommodative, inclusive, liberal and progressive character<sup>79</sup>. Different from the old Islamic variants, this new Islam carries the spirit of purification and even the application of Is-

---

77 Interview with Nur Ichwan, 24 July 2019.

78 Interview with James Fox, 22 July 2019.

79 In Islamic literature, liberal Muslims refer to Muslims who in their struggle are concerned with promoting religious and community renewal through the reinterpretation of Islamic texts. The aim is nothing but to achieve greater freedom and justice in people's lives. Democracy, separation of religion from practical politics, upholding human rights, including gender justice and people with different sexual orientations, ethnic and religious minorities, environmental protection and community empowerment, are a number of specific issues on the agenda of liberal Muslim struggle. Likewise with progressive Muslims, this group also has a high commitment in advocating for the realization of an open and inclusive socio-political life and universal enforcement of human rights. See Greg Fealy, *Reformasi and the Decline of Liberal Islam*, Cornell University Press, pp. 117-134.

lamic teachings in various realms of life as a kaffah (totality) and not even a few which are oriented towards the creation of an Islamic State. FPI, FUI, MMI, Wahabi Salafi, and HTI, for example, are a number of new variants of Islam that are more oriented towards orthodoxy affirmation than heterodoxy or plurality of diversity in Indonesian Islam<sup>80</sup>.

Even a number of organizations that are often labeled radical both in ideology (thought) such as (HTI) and actions such as Jema'at Islamiyah (JI) and JAD, consistently fight for the Islamic political system in lieu of the secular political system. These new variants of Islam, which are quite plural, are then known by various names such as conservative Islam, fundamentalist Islam, radical Islam and various similar designations. Considering the character of this new Islam is not only literalist, textualist and dogmatic in understanding religious teachings, but also ideological and even political, many experts have gathered it into one cluster known as Islamism or political Islam - ideas, ideas, discourse and movements that bring Islamic principles into all aspects of life<sup>81</sup>.

Not a few experts are of the view that the strengthening of conservatism which is rooted in the new Islamic variant is what contributed to the important whip of Islamic populism in Indonesia. M. Amin Abdullah, for example, believes that the mass mobilization action as represented by the 212 movement, is the culmination of the development of what is popularly known as the conservative turn and religious intolerance that has occurred

---

80 Al Makin, "Homogenizing Indonesian Islam: Persecution of The Shia Group in Yogyakarta", *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1-31.

81 Literalism, as the most prominent characteristic of Salafism, has the potential to bring Indonesian Islam to be more conservative and even tends to lead to Islamism. Muhammad Wildan, "Islamism and Democratization in the Post 411 and 212 Rallies of Indonesia", in *Thinking Asean*, Issue 19 / January 2016, pp. 2-5; Greg Fealy, *Reformasi and the Decline of Liberal Islam*, Cornell University Press, pp. 117-134.

in Indonesia especially in the last ten decades<sup>82</sup>. Amin Abdullah stressed that Indonesia is currently surrounded by an extraordinary number of trans-nationalist Islamic schools, ranging from HTI, JI, Taliban, Al-Qaeda, ISIS and its interests. In the 212th action, the variants of conservative-radical Islamism were considered to have an important role in supporting the Defend Islam Action. Without the basis of conservatism, fundamentalism and radicalism which in reality are developing rapidly in Indonesia, the actors of the movement, will find it difficult to be able to mobilize the masses in such large numbers<sup>83</sup>.

However, the strengthening of conservatism in Muslim communities in Indonesia cannot be separated from the long-standing Islamization. This Islamization underwent a dramatic resurgence in the 1990s and continues to grow rapidly and has even become the single most striking feature that colored the early decades of reform (1998 - present). According to Ariel Heryanto, Islamization in a certain degree has determined the framework, boundaries, and content of the power struggle in Indonesia. Ariel's study of Islam after the New Order was indeed associated with popular culture. However, the rise of hijabisasi, religious films and soap operas, and the like, in fact have a direct relationship with the development of sharia economic ideas, Islamic law, and Islamic government<sup>84</sup>. Even though these urban middle class Muslims no longer contradict the dimensions of religiosity and modernity, or in the language of Asef Bayat they are known as the post-Islamism generation<sup>85</sup>, but their dominant religious views remain conserva-

---

82 Kikue Hamayotsu, *Moderate-radical Coalition in the Name of Islam: Conservative Islamism in Indonesia and Malaysia*, pp. 1-7.

83 Interview with M. Amin Abdullah, 26 Juli 2019 dan Muhammad Wildan, 26 July 2019.

84 Ariel Heryanto, *Identitas dan Kenikmatan: Politik Budaya Layar Indonesia*, Jakarta: Gramedia, 2015, p. 37-40.

85 Asef Bayat, *Post-Islamisme*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2011.

tive rather than progressive. Even these people remain actively involved in the 212 movement even though the agenda is no longer a matter of Islamization, but rather towards pietization<sup>86</sup>.

Lutfi Assyaukani also expressed his views on the important role of conservatism in encouraging the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia. According to him, the protest movement labeled Islam is the tip of the iceberg of Islamic conservatism that emerged since 15 years ago. Referring to the influx of Middle Eastern values as a consequence of the opening of democracy after 1998, Assyaukani believes that the large number of Indonesian Muslims who are trying to adopt the Saudi Arabian lifestyle is the fruit of the Wahabi campaign's success<sup>87</sup>.

However, the view that argues that the emergence of Islamic populism is a logical consequence of the strengthening of conservatism, is quite relevant if related to the results of a number of survey institutes. Almost all survey institutions reported that the trend of conservatism and radicalism in Indonesia tended to increase in the post New Order period. Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace noted an increase in violence with 144 cases in 2011 and 264 in 2012<sup>88</sup>. The latest picture was delivered by the National Human Rights Commission which reported 74 cases in 2014 and experienced a surge of 78 cases in 2015, and reached almost 100 cases in 2016<sup>89</sup>. The Wahid Foundation in 2016, showed that 11 million of the 150 million Muslim population in Indonesia were ready to take radical action. Of that amount, 0.4 percent have committed radical action. This number reaches 7.7 percent of the total Muslim population in Indonesia.

---

86 Interview with Najib Kailani 26 July 2019

87 Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation", 1-19.

88 Kees van Dijk and Nico J.G. Kaptein (ed.), *Islam, Politics and Change, the Indonesian Experience after the Fall of Suharto*, Leiden University Press, 2016, p. 14.

89 Kompas.com, 05/01/2017.

The development of conservatism can not only be understood as the fruit of Islamization carried out by Islamist agents in a fairly long period of time. Nor does it relate to the ability of this group to survive and at the same time promote its ideological diversity. These groups can continue to survive and thrive because they generally have a close relationship or special relationship with the military, especially retired generals and their supporters. FPI, for example, this paramilitary organization is said to have closeness with Prabowo, Wiranto, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono and other influential generals. Some argue that they are often partners and even an arm of the security apparatus (TNI and Polri) who don't want their hands to be dirty again due to bad report cards on human rights violations. In many ways, both of them often appear in tune in dealing with communism and other issues<sup>90</sup>.

Even though the trend of conservatism continues to increase in Indonesia after the New Order, the position of Islamist groups (agents of conservatism) remains a minority when compared to mainstream Islamic groups. However, they are relatively successful in raising alternative Islamic discourse into the public Islamic religious discourse. Ideology that led to efforts to build this Islamic order - including establishing an Islamic State, applying Islamic law (shari'a) and certain religious moral standards for Muslim communities - succeeded in spreading and attracting the attention of the wider community through various media and ways such as books, magazines, pamphlet, internet, religious studies on campus, school, youtube, and training<sup>91</sup>.

---

90 Bima Satria Putra, "Kebangkitan Global Fundamentalis dan Ultra-Nasionalis: Bukan Akhir dari Sejarah", *Anarkhis.Org*, 22 Feb 2017.

91 Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jibad: Islam, Militansi, dan Pencarian Identitas di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru* Jakarta: LP3ES & KITLV-Jakarta, 2008.

Meanwhile, some experts argue that the rise of Islamic populism is not merely understood as a phenomenon of strengthening conservatism among Indonesian Muslims<sup>92</sup>. One of the reasons that made them doubt the effect of conservatism in encouraging the emergence of the Islamic populism movement was related to their academic tradition in seeing the election results as a benchmark in understanding the rise of Islamist sentiment. Himayotsu, for example, argues that when Islamic parties were not sufficiently successful in getting enough convincing votes in the 2009 elections, he concluded that the fate of political Islam was over. A similar view was expressed by Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle who saw the results of the 2009 Election as evidence that Muslim voters had turned away from Islamic law as their political priority. However, when Islamic political parties succeeded in increasing their votes in the 2014 elections, an international television network anxiously asked whether political Islam had risen in Indonesia<sup>93</sup>.

Greg Fealy saw the mobilization of Islamists as a unique phenomenon that reflected the specific situation of the Ahok case. The special situation that arises in the Ahok case is not a signal of the widespread trend of community support for the Islamist agenda in Indonesia. Based on his observations during the demonstration, he claimed that for most participants, this was a religious event, rejecting attempts to Islamize the law and limit the rights of non-Muslims<sup>94</sup>. In his statement, he explained that

---

92 This view was expressed among others by Lindsey, Jones, Assyaukanie, and Varagur, as well as various international media such as The Wall Street Journal. Read more about Tom Lindsey, Blasphemy charge reveals real fault lines in Indonesia deomcracy, Indonesia at Melbourne, 25 November 2016; Sidney Jones, Why Indonesian extremists are gainig ground, The interpreter, 1 November 2016; Lutfi Assyaukanie, “unholy alliance: ultra-conservatism and political pragmatism in Indonesia”, *Thinking ASEAN*, 19, January 2017; K. Varagur, “Indonesia’s moderate Islam is slowly crumbling”, *Foreign Policy*, 14 February 2017.

93 Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, “Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation”, 1-19.

94 Interview with Edward Asspinal 12 Sept 2019 and Greg Fealy 9 Sept 2019

There are good reasons to doubt that (the December demonstration) does mark some conservative surge. To begin with, only a minority appeared to be affiliated with known Islamist groups or drawn to the more ideological Islamist message in the rally<sup>95</sup>.

According to Greg Fealy, there are a number of compelling reasons to doubt that popular mobilization marked a surge in conservatism. First, only a few participants in the action were affiliated with Islamist groups or were interested in Islamist ideology in the demonstration. For example, when the speakers called for Ahok to be arrested, the crowd immediately shouted “hold, hold, hold!”. But when the Islamist leader declared that God’s law was superior to man-made Indonesian law, there was absolutely no response from the participants in the action. For most participants in the action, the event was basically a religious event, both in the sense of defending their faith from insults and also to expressing their piety through mass prayers in symbolic national locations. They are not very interested in the fundamental change in the role of Islam in the State<sup>96</sup>.

Second, the feelings of anti-China and anti-Christianity were manifested in Ahok, a politician who spoke straightforwardly and aggressively, and had achieved many things as governor, but also disappointed many voters in Jakarta. Slander about race and sectarians openly against Ahok has become commonplace. As a miss, the Muhammadiyah and PAN chairmen, Amin Rais, described Ahok as “The Chinese Infidel” and commented with hatred towards Ahok. The GNPF-MUI is also smart enough to use this racism sentiment in mobilizing the masses<sup>97</sup>.

---

95 Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, *Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia* 2018.

96 Greg Fealy, “Bukan sekedar Ahok: menjelaskan aksi massa pada 2 Desember”, *Indonesia At Melbourne*, December 12, 2016, interview 9 Sept 2019.

97 Greg Fealy, “Bukan sekedar Ahok” 2016, interview 9 Sept 2019.

Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi asserted that the emergence of Islamic populism in Indonesia was more closely correlated with the exclusion of Islamist groups such as FPI from the realm of power rather than the strengthening of conservatism in the lives of Muslims. In the era of president Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, his political policies tended to be accommodating towards Islamist groups. For example, SBY tends to be tolerant in responding to attacks by FPI and other militant groups against sects and religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya and Shi'a. When SBY condemned such incidents of religious violence, he also described the violence as a horizontal conflict between two antagonistic social groups, rather than an attack on law by an Islamist against a minority<sup>98</sup>.

The results of research conducted by survey institutions such as LSI, also showed that conservative and radical sentiments in the Indonesian Muslim community in general, showed a declining trend between 2010 and 2016. For example, a number of Muslims who objected to non-Muslim religious events in neighboring life decreased from 51.6 percent in 2010 to 49.6 percent in 2011 and 39.6 percent in 2016. Likewise, the percentage of Indonesian Muslims who objected to the establishment of places of worship in their neighborhoods decreased from 63.8 percent in 2010 to 60.6 percent in 2011 and 52 percent in 2016. Similarly, respondents who said that those who had made donations to organizations committed to implementing Islamic law reached 37.4 percent in 2010, 25 percent in 2011 and 13.7 percent in 2016. Attacks on non-Muslim places of worship was at the position of 1.3 percent in 2010, 1.8 percent in 2011, and 0.4 percent in 2016<sup>99</sup>.

---

98 Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia", 2018.

99 Interview with Marcus Mietzner 12 September 2019 and Burhanuddin Muhtadi 8 September

Based on the facts above, it is not doubtful to say that the mobilization of radical Islamists is only as an intermediary to pursue ideological-political-economic goals. Religious narratives and ethnic identities are merely tools used to achieve political and economic interests. Anti-Aseng (Chinese) and anti-Foreign sentiments, for example, as campaigned by Islamic populist elites, cannot be separated from the development paradox which places most people, including Muslims, in a subordinate position. In the criticism of experts, development in Indonesia mainly since the New Order era, known as the era of modernism-developmental-ism, which was sponsored by the State was limited to providing benefits for a small group of political-economic elites. Chinese ethnic who are concerned in the economic-business sector, appear as a minority that dominates the national economic sector. However, the strengthening of the economic gap which is dominated by ethnic Chinese minorities and oligarchic economic elites over the majority (indigenous) community, has become one of the variables for the rise of populism in Indonesia. The involvement of the urban poor, in the mobilization of Islamists, can not be separated at all from their subordinate position in the economic field which is a legacy of colonialism and the post-colonial state especially the New Order era<sup>100</sup>.

The action of Islamic populism as in the case of 212, has made the issue of the economic marginality of the ummah due to the influx of foreign workers, especially from China, the leakage of the country's wealth due to the domination of foreign companies such as Freeport, as one of the narratives that contributed sig-

---

2019. See also Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia" 2018.

100 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam*, 2019; Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation", 1-19.

nificantly to mobilizing the masses in large numbers. In this case, Vedi R. Hadiz said that the systematic narrative about the marginalization of the people became one of the main variables that contributed to the promotion of anti-Ahok and anti-Jokowi mass mobilization. This narrative has long been prominent in the trajectory of modern Indonesian history with the perception that ethnic Chinese minorities are social groups that have benefited from economic development since the era of colonialism<sup>101</sup>.

According to Hadiz, the strengthening of Islamic populism in various countries including Indonesia in the anti-Ahok and anti-Jokowi cases, cannot be separated from the response of Islamists to the paradox of neo-liberal modernization and globalization. Almost the same as the actions carried out by Islamism groups in various forms, this act of populism also interspersed with their ideological and political zeal in criticizing and suing the social, economic and political system of the modern world which is dominated by the principles of secularism and capitalism. Such a political system not only creates a crisis of morality<sup>102</sup>, but also the deterioration of the people and social injustice in various fields of life, especially economics. For this reason, these circles always wage a counter against the system of secularism-capitalism and offer a format of political and economic systems based on Islam<sup>103</sup>.

Other experts see the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia with its racist and sectarian style, as in the West, in relation to the paradox of democracy. On the one hand, democracy is increas-

---

101 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Behind Indonesia's Illiberal Turn*, this an adapted version of the author's paper presented at the 2017 Indonesia Update Conference at the Australian National University, 1-11.

102 The allure of Islamic populism is partly because of claims made about the upholding of a morally strong society facing mental erosion caused by what is perceived as materialist, consumptive, and hedonic values associated with Western culture. Vedi R. Hadiz, *Islamic Populism*, 49.

103 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam*, 39-94.

ingly developing as characterized by freedom of the press, freedom of expression and expression of opinions, and the holding of elections which takes place relatively free. But on the other hand, more and more citizens are trying to openly declare their religious identities, make a difference, and open new public spaces that are in accordance with religious demands and Islamic lifestyles by consuming Islamic symbols that occur simultaneously with increased intolerance and radicalism. In this completely open situation, it is also possible for political elites, both Muslim and oligarchic, to play all kinds of ways to gain constituent support and dominate political power by manipulating religious symbols<sup>104</sup>. The presence of popular mobilization as the 212 movement can be understood as part of the process and even the consequences of democratization where public space is very open to various groups, and conservative groups are no exception<sup>105</sup>.

Azyumardi Azra also considered that Islamic populism can only blossom, grow and develop if the socio-political situation is supportive. In other words, Islamic populism can emerge and rise to resistance against the ruling regime because of the availability of political opportunities. Citing the opinion of Peter Eisinger, one of the pioneers of the theory of political opportunity, protest actions arise when a political system that under certain conditions is exposed and used by challengers to take the fight<sup>106</sup>. Openness

---

104 Noorhaidi Hasan, "Tantangan Islam Politik dan Krisis Legitimasi Ulama (Political Islam's Challenges and Ulema's Legitimacy Crisis)", in Noorhaidi Hasan et.al (ed.) *Ulama dan Negara-Bangsa: Membaca Masa Depan Islam Politik di Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: PusPIDeP and Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2019, 47-65.

105 Interview with Muhammad Wildan 26 Juli 2019; read also his writing in Muhammad Wildan, "Islamism and Democratization in the Post 411 and 212 Rallies of Indonesia", in *Thinking Asean*, Issue 19/January 2016, pp. 2-5.

106 Peter Eisinger, "The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities", *American Political Review* 67, 1973, pp. 11-28.

of the era of democracy is considered by some experts as an important political opportunity factor for the emergence of Islamic populism that is driven by Islamism groups. On the contrary, populism will be difficult and will not even be able to surface in a political system that is authoritarianism. Indonesia's experience shows that during the 32 years of authoritarian New Order rule, it proved to not provide space for the emergence of socio-political activism that was contradictory to the government such as the current Islamic populism<sup>107</sup>. The experience of other countries whose political regimes are very authoritarian such as in North Korea, it is very unlikely for the growth and development of counter-power movements such as right populism.

In addition, the emergence of right populism in various countries, including Indonesia, is not merely facilitated by the openness and freedom as a consequence of democracy. In general, right-sided populism emerged as a response to the crisis of liberal democracy. Vedi R. Hadiz explicitly revealed that the development of populism in Islam cannot be separated from the people's disappointment in democracy. Different from conventional populism which aims at curative and constructive democratic processes to be sensitive to the demands and aspirations of the wider community, populism in Islam actually takes a somewhat different path. First, the word *ummah* is used as a proxy for *demos* (people) who exclusively fight for the interests of Muslims. Secondly, instead of supporting democracy as the main way to form a government, Islamic populism tends to support a system of democratic interfaith governance such as the *khilafah* or *shari'ah*-based government. Third, Islamic populism emphasizes

---

107 Azyumardi Azra, "Populisme, Politik Identitas, dan Demokrasi Indonesia, Pengantar Ahli, dalam *Burhanuddin Muhtadi, Populisme Politik Identitas & Dinamika Elektoral*, xiii-xviii.

the aspect of strengthening identity based on the symbol of religiosity<sup>108</sup>.

For almost 20 years, Indonesia entered the era of democracy, public trust in the course of democracy has slackened along with institutional and procedural practices which gave birth to a new oligarchy. The power of this oligarchy can be read from, for example, a number of data that shows that the control of assets by the 40 richest people in Indonesia exceeds 580,000 times greater than income per capita. This figure clearly shows the large imbalance between a small handful of the rich economic and political elites (oligarchs) who are both wealthy and in power at the same time with mostly poor people. This kind of socio-economic inequality provides a gap for the emergence of identity-based populism in identity politics as demonstrated by the 212th movement<sup>109</sup>.

On the other side, aspirations from the grass roots are often choked up and held hostage because regeneration and political communication are not going well. These conditions have also contributed to the public's disappointment with democracy which has demanded that they look for alternative gaps in building representation of power at the elite level. In this context, acts of populism in Islam, offer an alternative way with a kind of romanticization back to the meaning of the people as demos, the holder of the highest power over the institution of trias politica<sup>110</sup>.

In European countries, for example, the emergence of right populism and its success in fighting for public sympathy and ac-

---

108 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 4.

109 Otto Gusti Madung, "Populisme, Krisis Demokrasi dan Antagonisme", *Jurnal Ledalero*, Vol. 17, No. 7, June 2018, 58-78.

110 Wasito Raharjo Jati, "Trajektori Populisme Islam di Kalangan Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia", *Prisma*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2017, 19-27.

cess to power at the same time, cannot be separated from critical liberal democracy which fails to create prosperity and justice for all citizens without exception. The anti-immigration syntax mentioned by populist politicians as the root of economic injustice and inequality also overlaps with the socio-economic situation in these countries. Likewise, political narratives campaigned by right-wing political elites in criticizing the country's liberal policies (such as abortion, prostitution, and LGBT), as well as their promises to bring Europe and America back to economic prosperity, proved to be successful in attracting public support and in the end can deliver them to win the contestation of power.

Likewise, in Indonesia, the clash between Islamists and liberal, pluralist and pro-democracy groups has been going on for a long time. In the Monas tragedy, for example, an Islamist group driven by FPI clashed with a group in the name of diversity. What happened at the 212 action could also be understood as the peak of the accumulation of tension between the two groups. Consistently, Islamist groups continue to wage war against liberals who often speak out for freedom and protection of human rights for all groups including LGBT. In its fight with liberal groups, Islamists often build alliances with other right groups including ultra-nationalists. Both of them want economic policies that are very protectionist and at the same time are at odds with the liberal group<sup>111</sup>.

---

111 According to Timo Duile, between Islamism and ultra-nationalism have almost the same characteristics, first, leadership has absolute authority, Islamists want Islamic government while ultra-nationalists want the absolute obedience of citizens to authoritarian leadership, second, the destruction of enemies that are constructed in a conspiracy frameworks such as the PKI and LGBTIQ as the influence of the spread of liberalism, third, the importance of militarism, and fourth, based on identity politics, ultra-nationalists foster a high sense of patriotism and Islamists rely on scripture verses about sacrifice to God such as the doctrine of jihad. Bima Satria Putra, "Fundamentalist and Ultra-Nationalist Global Awakening: Not the End of History", *Anarkhis.Org*, 22 Feb 2017.

Representative democratic dislocation is seen as playing an important role in encouraging the emergence of conservative Islamic populism. In Indonesia, the representation-based political crisis was caused by depoliticization, including a floating mass policy which was a legacy of the New Order authoritarian regime. On the other hand, the dominance of Chinese domestic capitalist business class which has limited entry into the political arena due to anti-Chinese narratives - along with anti-communism narratives - which are continuously reproduced, making political parties that do not have a strong capitalist class on ultimately it must depend and negotiate with Chinese entrepreneurs to form predatory alliances in electoral competition. These two things are what marked the occurrence of a representation crisis in Indonesia that continues to this day. In this condition, the path taken to gain votes in the electoral contestation is none other than money politics, political violence, thuggery and the politicization of narrow religious and regional sentiments<sup>112</sup>.

Another view says that the strengthening of Islamic populism in the context of democracy in Indonesia is a logical consequence of the absence of progressive political movements. Not limited to Indonesia, the weakness of progressive politics also occurs in various countries, especially Europe<sup>113</sup>. The weakening of this progressive force coincides with the consolidation of the left

---

112 Read Vedi R. Hadiz, *Localising Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

113 In Western European and Scandinavian countries, the leftist political project is not consolidated as a progressive movement in the era of neo-liberalism, mainly due to post-conflict conditions, namely when left political articulation builds consensus by moving to the center which directly perpetuates neo-liberal hegemony. This tendency arises in response to the bankruptcy of the welfare state due to the swelling of the non-productive middle class demographics and the strengthening of individualization and the growing role of the State in providing social security to citizens as a product of neo-liberalism. As the left parties move to the center, these parties have made neo-liberalism not an antagonism, but rather supported its agenda. Abdil Mughis Mudoffir et al., *Islamic Populism*, 48-59.

forces in a fairly long period of history. In Europe this condition was born as a consequence of the hegemony of neoliberalism and the bankruptcy of the welfare state, whereas in post-colonial countries such as Indonesia, communist parties (symbols of left power) were generally repressed by vicious authoritarian regimes during the Cold War era. The mass slaughter of PKI sympathizers in Indonesia in 1965-1966 and the banning of these political parties during the New Order era, was a momentum that marked the end of leftist political traditions while providing a way for the consolidation of New Order State capitalism. In practice, the slaughter of the PKI was not only carried out by the military, but also civilians who used Islamic and nationalist-secular identities. Propaganda which placed communism as a threat to the state ideology (Pancasila) and at the same time a threat to religion, also contributed to mobilizing civilian groups in carrying out massacres of hundreds of thousands of people suspected of being PKI sympathizers<sup>114</sup>.

---

114 Vedi R. Hadiz, "The Left and Indonesia's 1960s: The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting", in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7 (4), 2006, 554-569.



# Does Islamic Populism Cause Indonesia's Democracy to Decline?

Experts' discourses --both of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and Indonesianists-- of the relation between Islamic populism and democracy are interesting to criticize more thoroughly. A small number of experts argue that the rise of Islamic populism does not sufficiently implicate in declining democracy in Indonesia. The remainder, which is the experts' mainstream view, argue otherwise, that the strengthening Islamic populism promoted by the conservative-radical Islamist groups causes declining quality of democracy in Indonesia. Strengthening intolerance, polarization, delegitimation of democracy institution and regime, and the likes are a number of variables taken as the benchmark to assess the declining quality of democracy in Indonesia. This chapter will present the experts' discourses in assessing the rise of Islamic populism actions related to democracy development in Indonesia after the New Order, particularly in Joko Widodo administration era.

## A. Dynamics of Indonesia's Democracy: From Stagnancy to Regression?

Twenty years after the reform 1998, the dynamics of Indonesia's democracy development always attract and are highlighted by the experts. Generally, they argue that Indonesia's democracy is still on track, particularly in comparison with Countries with a majority of Muslim population. When the Countries with a majority of Muslim population --such as Egypt, Turkey, Senegal, Pakistan and Nigeria-- return to authoritarianism, Indonesia is in the democracy corridor. In comparison with its neighboring Countries in South East Asia --such as Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia and Burma-- Indonesia's democracy condition is still better. Although it faces serious challenges like corruption, enforcement of rules of law, sectarianism, social gap and economic imbalance, Indonesia may still be stated as successful in organizing General Election freely and democratically<sup>1</sup>.

Although it displays more positive image than Countries with a majority of Muslim population in Central Asia or Countries in Southeast Asia, but critical valuations are also given by the experts related to the depth of Indonesia's democracy for the 20 years after reform. Many analysts assume that in its initial period of reform (1999-2004), although Indonesia's democracy is full of governmental instability and social conflicts with ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relations resulting from weak State, but the quality is deemed relatively good. This is at least marked with the birth of various democracy institutions (such as political parties), direct General Election as a means of competition in struggle for power, etc. Even in the end of 2000s, Indonesia's

---

1 Jeremy Menchik, "Moderate Muslim and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia", *Asian Studies Review*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, 1-18.

democracy is consolidated and becomes the only democratic country with a majority of Muslim population and free political competition (liberal) in the world. Based on the report of the Freedom House (2009), almost all Countries with a majority of Muslim population score “*Not Free*” or “*Partly Free*”, but Indonesia and Mali are two Countries of exception. The two countries are classified as Muslim democratic countries with relatively high political freedom<sup>2</sup>.

Entering the next period (2005–2014), the quality of Indonesia’s democracy is deemed by the experts to be insufficiently improving. Instead of smoothly landing towards consolidation phase in the transitional period, Indonesia’s democracy is at a stagnant position and even leads to regression. After developing in 1998, 1999, and 2005, the Indonesia Democracy Index, particularly in terms of civil freedom and people’s political rights, is at stagnant position, at about 2 and 3. The *Freedom House* detects declining civil freedom, minority’s rights and accountability of public governance, between 2006 and 2010<sup>3</sup>.

Examined further, the development of the Indonesia Democracy Index (IDI) from 2009 to 2015 is dynamic instead of static. In the period, the development of Indonesia’s democracy tends to be fluctuating. The report of the Central Statistics Body (BPS), for example, shows that in 2009, IDI is 67.30 point, declining to 63.17 point in 2010. IDI then rise to 65.48 in 2011, and return to 62.63 point in 2012. In 2013, it slightly rises to 63.72 point and

- 
- 2 What makes Indonesia seem different is not only competitive election with regular change of power—which classifies Indonesia as democracy in minimalist term—but also competitive ideological environment which allows political parties in Indonesia to compete by campaigning freely, particularly between Islamic and non-Islamic parties. Thomas B. Pepinsky, R. William Liddle, Saiful Mujani, *Kesaleban dan Piliban Politik: Memabami Kebangkitan Islam-Politik dari Perspektif Indonesia*, Prenadamedia Group, 2018, 14.
  - 3 Marcus Mietzner, “Indonesia’s democratic stagnation: anti-reformist elites and resilient civil society”, *Democratization*, 19 (2), 209-229.

rises to 73.04 point in 2014, or increasing 9.32 points. We may state that the index in 2014 is the best in the next six years after 2009<sup>4</sup>.

Increasing religious labeled violence committed by intolerant groups against minority groups such as Chinese, Christian, Ahmadiyah, Shia and others is deemed as a variable which makes the quality of democracy not to get better. In addition, the attitudes and behaviors of political elites who are chosen through politically democratic electoral mechanism also significantly contribute to creating democracy deconsolidation<sup>5</sup>. For example, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono's (SBY), the 6<sup>th</sup> President, too accommodative attitude towards intolerant groups encourages increasing violence against civil rights (particularly minorities' right). In many cases, SBY often makes policies which benefit Islamic conservative groups. For example, when MUI issue fatwa on groups suspected to be misguided in 2005 –first years of SBY administration— assaults on minority groups increase<sup>6</sup>.

The experts' attention to the Indonesia's democracy development is directed to the last five-year period (2014–2019). They generally deem that the trend of democracy development is regressive instead of progressive. Instead of getting consolidated better, Indonesia's democracy is even deconsolidated compared with that in the previous period. Democracy is at stagnant position during Susilo Bambang Yudoyono's (SBY) administration,

---

4 <https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2015/08/13/337/1195643/indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-2014-terbaik-sejak-2009>

5 Edward Aspinall, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton, "Elite, Masses, and Democratic Decline in Indonesia", *Democratization*, Routledge, Taylor & Farncis Group, 2019, 1–22.

6 More ironically, SBY only condemns that incident and describes it as horizontal clash between two antagonistic groups of society, instead of an assault in violation of law by the Islamist group on minority. Aan Suryana, "Discrepancy in State Practices", 2017, 71–103; Marcus Mietzner & Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Expalining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia", 1–19.

but it is set back or regressive in Joko Widodo's administration era<sup>7</sup>. In their terminology, Indonesia's declining democracy is labeled as *democratic deconsolidation*, *illiberal democracy*, *regressive democracy*, and the likes. In the note of a number of survey institutions such as *Polity IV Index* and *World Bank*, Indonesia's declining democracy takes place in some fields, including civil freedom, minority rights, public governance accountability, etc.<sup>8</sup>.

According to the experts, Indonesia's democracy tradition in the last few decades has actually ended and led to democracy stagnancy period and even to the democratic initial regression. This regression has been listed in the global democracy index, in 2018, for example, the Economist Intelligence Unit gives Indonesia the highest declining rating in the Democracy Index from the 2006 score. With a score of 6.39 out of 10, Indonesia is moving downwards from the index category "defective democracy," on the verge of crossing into the "hybrid regime" category<sup>9</sup>.

Sharp criticism of declining quality of Indonesia's democracy is not only made by external experts (Indonesianists), the Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, particularly those liberal-progressive<sup>10</sup> also have relatively the same opinion. According to them,

---

7 Discourses of stagnancy and regression are the leading issue among the academic analysts written in the second term of SBY administration. Read, for example, Edward Aspinall, "The Irony of Success", *Journal of Democracy*, 2010, 21 (2), 20-34; Greg Fealy, "Indonesian Politics in 2011: Democratic Regression and Yudhoyono's Regal Incumbency", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 47 (3), 2011, 333-53; Dirk Tomsa, "Electoral Democracy in a Devised Society: The 2008 Gubernatorial Election in Maluku, Indonesia", *South East Asia Research*, 17 (2), 2009, 229-259; Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner and Dick Tomsa, eds., *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2015.

8 Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia's democratic stagnation: anti-reformist elites and resilient civil society", *Democratization*, 19 (2), 209-229.

9 Edward Aspinall, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton, "Elite, Masses, and Democratic Decline in Indonesia", *Democratization*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, 1-22.

10 In general, ulama or Muslim intellectuals are divided into two groups, namely: liberal intellectuals or ulama, that produce variant of liberal Islam and Islamist intellectuals/ulama, that produce Islamism. The difference between the two, one of which, may be observed from the two groups' view of the relation between religion (Islam) and the Nation. The first group views Islam and the

that Joko Widodo (reformist power representation) wins the competition against Prabowo Subianto (oligarchic representation) in Presidential Election 2014 is expected to give high opportunity for democracy consolidation process. The full support of most agents of progressive civil society, including human rights and democracy activists, in winning the power contestation is, partially, based on reformist interest. However, Jokowi is in fact unable to completely realize the reform agenda. In the note of human rights and democracy activists, Jokowi's low attention to big cases of human rights violation (cases of Munir, victims of blooded tragedy of G 30 S PKI, and the likes) is an example of Jokowi administration's failure in guiding and completing reform agenda<sup>11</sup>.

The result of Presidential Election 2019 that once again assigns Jokowi as the President (and Ma'ruf Amin as Vice President) does not give much expectation for improvement of democracy quality. In the experts' opinion, Jokowi in the second period shows populist and authoritarian governmental characters. On one hand, Jokowi remains concerned about carrying popular programs like Jamkesmas, but on the other hand, he also restrictively treats groups which confront his administration. For example, Jokowi's policy in response to his political rivals (on one hand, accommodative by embracing some of his political rivals such as Prabowo Subianto and, on the other hand, repressive by striking some of his political rivals, such as HTI and FPI), ignoring public aspiration that rejects Law which weakens KPK, and others, are a number of cases which represent authoritarian lead-

---

nation not as an integral part, while the second group tends to understand the two groups (Islam and the Nation) as an integral part. Baca Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 54-61.

11 Usman Hamid, Moch. Nur Ichwan, July 24, 2019.

ership<sup>12</sup>. Marcus Mietzner describes the approach taken by Jokowi with a term “*fighting illiberalism with illiberalism*”<sup>13</sup>. It is because of his illiberal political choice that Thomas Power labels him as *Jokowi’s Authoritarian Turn*, which significantly causes Indonesia’s democracy regression<sup>14</sup>.

In the experts’ opinion, Jokowi’s unsuccessful attempt (also previous presidents) in improving the quality of Indonesia’s democracy after the New Order is caused more by oligarchic elites’ dominant influence on his governmental structure. Quoting Vedi R. Hadiz’s opinion, democracy institutions infiltration by oligarchic elites from the New Order is the main variable and the most important to inhibit the transitional process<sup>15</sup> towards democracy consolidation<sup>16</sup>. In his opinion, the state power’s institutional framework after the New Order may have changed, but the relation of powers that support it still persist in new institutional context. In this case, the concerned power relation is that attached to a kind of *predatory capitalism*<sup>17</sup>.

The trace of declining quality of Indonesia’s democracy is also illustrated in BPS report of IDI in the period 2015 onwards. Civil rights or freedom remain the aspect to cause declining index rating annually. For example, the index rating declines from 73.04

12 Thomas Power, 8 Sept 2019; Edwards Aspinall & Marcus Mietzner, Sept 12, 2019.

13 Marcus Mietzner, “Fighting Illiberalism with Illiberalism”, 261–282.

14 Thomas P. Power, “Jokowi’s Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia’s Democratic Decline”, 307–338.

15 At least, the transitional process may be stated as complete if it has produced (1) mutually agreed rule and (2) new authoritative government through open, honest and fair election. Juan J. Linz & Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Shoutern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 3.

16 Democratic consolidation certainly needs long time and requires the prerequisites: (1) free civil society, (2) relatively autonomous political society, (3) law which protects people’s freedom, (4) effective government, and (5) economic society. Juan J. Linz & Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Shoutern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press., 7–15.

17 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Dinamika Kekuasaan Ekonomi Politik Indonesia Pasca Soeharto*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 2005, xxv; 253. Michele Ford and Thomas Pepinsky, eds. *Beyond Oligarchy: Wealth, Power, and Contemporary Indonesian Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.

point in 2014 to 72.04 point in 2015.<sup>18</sup> The development of IDI in 2017 is 72.11 point, slightly increasing from previous year (70.09 point). In 2018, the index rating is 72.39 (medium = 60-80), slightly increasing from 2017 (71.11 point). However, the freedom of speech variable declines. The index decline (2014-2015) is influenced by civil freedom aspect, declining 2.32 points (from 82.62 to 80.30) and democracy institutions aspect, declining 8.94 points from 75.81 to 66.87 point. Similarly, the index decline from 2017-2018 is influenced by declining civil freedom aspect of 0.29 points from 78.75 to 78.46, declining political rights aspect of 0.84 points from 66.63 to 65.79<sup>19</sup>.

In general, the civil freedom aspects often get serious attention and used by the experts as the main benchmark in assessment of declining quality of democracy. In their opinion, the development of Indonesia's democracy leads to formation of illiberal democracy format. In many cases, the practice of democracy displays its contradictive side with liberalism as the basic values to support it; political attitude and behavior which highly respect individual freedom. Non-declining violence against minority groups (such as Christian, Ahmadiyah, Shia, LGBT) in Jokowi administration era is a concrete example of illiberal democracy practice. Once again, this problem is deemed to significantly contribute to leading to current declining quality of Indonesia's democracy<sup>20</sup>.

In addition, the trend of declining democracy index—which is the world phenomena, not only the case of Indonesia<sup>21</sup>—is not

---

18 <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/2568262/indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-2015-turun-ini-penyebabnya>

19 Read complete article "BPS: Indeks Demokrasi Indonesia Tahun 2018 Masih di Level Sedang", <https://tirto.id/efeU>

20 Interview with Greg Fealy, Sept 9, 2019; Thomas Power, 8 Sept 2019; Edwards Aspinall & Marcus Mietzner, Sept 12, 2019.

21 The world is experiencing democratic regression. After what is called the "third wave" of democratization from mid 1970s and its culmination in the beginning of the twenty first century, the

only caused by extra-systemic actors (like military and rebels) whose political attitudes and behaviors are often contradictory to democracy principles. Political elites who are chosen democratically are the main actors who significantly contribute to democracy violation. Some Countries such as Hungary, Russia, Turkey, and, of course, Indonesia are prominent examples, of which leaders are responsible to democracy erosion. In the Countries, politicians and populist-authoritarian parties gain people's strong moral support<sup>22</sup>.

Although experts' opinions differ, but they generally acknowledge that Indonesia's democracy after the New Order (particularly period 2014-2019) is still relatively competitive, especially from the perspective of its direct General Election system. Through this system, however, the people may directly participate in determining the administrative leader and representatives at the parliament. It is also through this system that the political parties may freely compete in winning power contestation. As acknowledged by Allain Norrin, General Election in Indonesia is still relatively competitive as a means to choose leader or regime of democracy. However, we should also acknowledge that the space of Indonesia's democracy gets narrower<sup>23</sup>.

## **B. Islamic Populism's Contribution to Democracy**

The declining quality of Indonesia's democracy in the period 2014-2019 is related to many factors, one of which is the presence of Islamic populism. According to the experts, the emergence of

---

international index has traced consecutive decline in the amount of democracy, and in aggregate value of global democracy. Edward Aspinall, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton, "Elite, Masses, and Democratic Decline in Indonesia", 1-22.

22 Edward Aspinall, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton, "Elite, Masses, and Democratic Decline in Indonesia", 1-22.

23 Edward Aspinall, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton, "Elite, Masses, and Democratic Decline in Indonesia", 1-22.

a series of mass mobilization actions promoted by Islamist groups significantly contributes to leading not to deepening, but shallow democracy instead. There are a number of reasons presented by the experts in assessing logical correlation between the emergence of Islamic populism and declining democracy.

## 1. Not legitimize Democracy

To what extent may democracy in a Country be consolidated? Of course, it depends on many things, one of which is whether or not the citizens' behaviors are democratic. People's acts may be stated as democratic when they conform to the values, norms and principles of democracy. At the same time, such acts may strengthen legitimacy (values, norms and institution) of democracy<sup>24</sup>. In this case, Adam Przeworski states:

Democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions; when all losers (in general election) want to do is to try again (re-participation) within the same institutions under which they have lost. Democracy is consolidated when it becomes a system which may confirm itself, that when all relevant political strengths find that continuously submitting (the future of) their interest and values to uncertain inter-institutions relation remains the best choice<sup>25</sup>.

The question is whether the Islamic populism actions by the Islamist groups are a form of democratic actions and citizen's political participation which lead to strengthening democracy legitimacy? Almost all experts argue that the Islamist groups involved in the defending Islam action and other various populist

---

24 Democracy legitimacy is public acceptance of democracy as a governmental system desired by majority of the population in a political community. Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 222.

25 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 222.

actions are not of democratic group or –borrowing Hefner’s opinion— *civil Islam* of which political struggle is oriented more to Islamization instead of democratization. HTI, for example, is an Islamic trans-nationalist group that strongly opposes the democratic political system that it considers as *togbut* and its concern to struggle for *khilafah* agenda<sup>26</sup>. In this context, struggling for *khilafah* agenda is clearly contradictory to strengthening state-nation, which is a prerequisite of democracy consolidation<sup>27</sup>.

Similarly, FPI, FUI, Wahdah Islamiyah (WI), and other proponents of Islamic populism under GNPf-MUI are variants of conservative-radical Islamism of which struggle does not conform to reform and democratic agenda. Although these groups’ religious ideologies are not exactly the same with that of HTI, but in practice, they also express enforcement of Islamic principles in social and political life. The *NKRI bersyari’ah* expressed by FPI for Indonesia’s future development explains how this Islamic paramilitary organization legitimatizes (formalize) Islam more than democracy. Indeed, FPI accepts the state-nation concept, but its acceptance is under sharia interpretation<sup>28</sup>. In this case, FPI is very concerned about making Indonesian nationalism more Islamic, or known in Menchik’s term as *Godly nationalism*<sup>29</sup>.

In addition, the popular mobilization actions by the proponents of Islamic populism cannot be understood as a form of democratic political action or, more exactly, participation<sup>30</sup>. It is

26 Interview with Thomas Power, Sept 8, 2019

27 Interview with M. Amin Abdullah, July 26, 2019. Some literatures also explain that the support of State-nation is important for governmental consolidation of any kind, particularly democracy. Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 27.

28 Interview with Sunarwoto, July 26, 2019

29 Jeremy Menchik, “Productive Intolerance: Godly Nationalism in Indonesia”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 56, Number 3, (2014): 591–621.

30 Political participation is the central concept in democracy. Even public participation becomes – to borrow Verba, Scholzman, and Brady’s term—the heart of democracy. It is unimaginable that democracy is without members of society’s capability to participate freely in governmental process. Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 25.

said so, since their mass mobilization does not intend to influence decision/polity making or give constructive input and criticism to the government. Their insistence on imprisoning Ahok who is justified as committing blasphemy is clearly not part of reform and democratic agenda. On the contrary, what they struggle for (like in Ahok case) reflects an act which is called by the Indonesianists as illiberal<sup>31</sup>.

The populism activism launched by the Islamists cannot be understood as a form of critical-democratic attitude towards the government. Their criticisms such as blasphemous, infidel, foreign, *aseng* and communist addressed to Ahok, Jokowi and those deemed in line with them are clearly not a form of substantive criticism of the ruler. However, the governmental practices conducted by leaders like Ahok and Jokowi, however good they are, must have weaknesses which need to be criticized. However, when criticism is not supported by authentic data, or even based on hoaxes, it will not constructively and democratically lead to transparent, credible and accountable governance, or known as good governance. Hairus Salim states:

The 212 people are also insolent, they do not criticize substantially, only stating that Jokowi a son of PKI, Chinese, and so on. What I meant is, what if he is a descendant of Chinese and PKI? It is not him who is PKI. In my opinion, the two (PKI and Chinese) are incorrect, he does not speak English and so on, they are not substantial to me<sup>32</sup>.

Many experts argue that the main agenda behind the popular activism is not Islamization. The religious issues are used as a political strategy of the Islamic populists in struggle for power.

---

31 Greg Fealy, Sept 9, 2019, Thomas Power, Sept 8, 2019; Edwards Aspinall & Marcus Mietzner, Sept 12, 2019.

32 Interview, July 23, 2019

In other words, this popular activism capitalizes religion for the purpose of political practice, contestation for power. As commonly known, some of the actors of Islamic populist actions, such as FPI, have ever been and are continuously involved in power contestation in Head of Region Election of DKI Jakarta. It is coincident that the candidates they support are defeated in power contestation. When the opportunity comes, these groups reappear with new packaging (popular mobilization) to make their candidates win.

Similarly, in power constellation at national level (Presidential Election 2019), they are practically involved in making their candidates win, even with non-constitutional methods. The popular mobilization actions they launch are not limited to influencing public opinion, but also –if possible— to change the ruler non-constitutionally. Large-scale demonstration (known as *mobocracy*) is not a constitutional means to convey political aspiration. It is correct that they are once hurt for their political defeat in supporting their candidates in Presidential Election 2014 and are involved once again in power contestation through a democratic mechanism (regular General Election). However, at the same time, they also use mass power to suppress and, if possible, overthrow the ruler through their extra-parliamentary actions. In this case, the Islamic populism actors show ambiguous and even contradictory attitudes that, on one hand, they are involved in regular political participation (in support of democratic consolidation), but on the other hand, they commit political actions beyond the democratic rule corridor (democracy deconsolidation)<sup>33</sup>.

---

33 Civic engagement in political engagement such as in regular General Election is one important factor for democratic consolidation. Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 27.

## 2. Serve Oligarchy's Interest More

One problem in democracy consolidation is oligarchic domination in Indonesia's political system after the New Order. The economic-political power which –according to Vedi R. Hadiz-- is the legacy of the New Order regime is evidently not only able to adapt, but also survive in dominating the new power structure after the New Order. Not only at national level, the oligarchic elites have also successfully instilled their domination in local power domain, especially after decentralization. The success of oligarchic elites, both new and old, in various power stages, both at regional and central levels, cannot be separated from the long established patronage network of economic-political regime. The oligarchic elites' capability to infiltrate the democratic political institutions forces other groups involved in political contestation, whether willing or not, to negotiate with the dominant regime<sup>34</sup>.

Differently from the New Order era where oligarchic powers are centralized around Cendana family and its cronies, oligarchy after the New Order era is decentralized, as marked with formation of new factions which always compete in fight over natural resources and state power. In this intra-oligarchic contestation climate, the presence of Islamic populism –social-political actions that use conservative morality calls— promoted by (Islamic) religious elites is clearly not the competitor of oligarchic domination, both inside and outside power circle. Instead of competing with oligarchic domination that has infiltrated democracy, their presence is even driven by economic-political regime which is ambitious whether to fight over or maintain the power. Many assume that the Islamic populism is merely a Trojan horse for

---

34 Vedi R. Hadiz, "Indonesian Politics in 2017. Indonesias Year of Democratic Setback: Towards a New Phase of Deepening Illiberalism?", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2017, p. 261.

oligarchic-predatory parties in their political track record which is always oriented to fighting over natural resources and State power<sup>35</sup>.

The thorough involvement of oligarchic faction in Islamic populism actions may also be observed from the economic-political regime's support, both morally and financially, in mass mobilization actions. Although it is difficult to prove, but populist actions which involve a considerable number of people (150-750 thousand people) will be difficultly realized without a big funding, one of which is believed to come from oligarchic elites<sup>36</sup>. It is undeniable that most of the mass of Muslims enthusiastically and voluntarily participate in the defending religion actions. It is also undeniable that many non-mainstream religious groups and organizations support them with drinks, foods, vehicles and various supplies for the demonstration. Martin Slama states:

“.....such a mass demonstration of that quantity will be impractical without any funder. I don't know who the funder is. It needs a thorough research to reveal it. However, I believe that there will be funder in each of such big mass actions .....”<sup>37</sup>.

The aligning of Islamic conservative-radical moralist agents with ultra-nationalist agents from oligarchic faction outside *ruling elites*, both in the cases of Head of Region Election of DKI Jakarta 2017 and Presidential Election 2019, affirms that Islamic populism actions are not intended to struggle for democratic agenda. For the Islamists, their involvement in the mass mobilization actions is related to pragmatic and ideological

---

35 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

36 Interview with Thomas Power, Sept 8, 2019 and Liam Gammon, Sept 11, 2019.

37 Interview with Martin Slama, July 21, 2019.

purposes. The pragmatic purpose, the Islamist groups alienated in Ahok and Jokowi administrations era will be accommodated again in the power just like in SBY era<sup>38</sup>. The ideological purpose, many proponents of the Islamic populism actions desire the application of sharia principles and demand to realize public life to be more accommodative to Islamic norms and teaching<sup>39</sup>.

Meanwhile, for the oligarchic ultra-nationalists, their purpose to join or, more correctly, get involved in driving the popular mobilization is not other than fighting over the access to natural resources and State power which since 2014 is under control of the *status quo*. Besides getting involved in Islamic populism actions, this oligarchic faction also intensely launches similar right populism actions. In their populism actions, the ultra-nationalist generals frequently narrate *NKRI harga mati* and cultivation of Pancasila ideology. With such narrations, the ultra-nationalists oligarchs deem Indonesia as a closed community which must be protected from any foreign influences, such as socialism, communism, liberalism, capitalism and others. Prabowo Subianto, for example, in his many populist political speeches and campaigns emphasize Indonesia's natural wealth leakage because of looting by foreign and *aseng* (Chine) parties<sup>40</sup>.

Such sectarianism narrations are not only narrated by ultra-nationalist factions outside the power circle, but also inside state power circle, as may be observed from the statement of Minister of Defense, General Ryamizard Ryacudu, of the danger of materialistic ideologies of liberalism, communism, socialism and reli-

---

38 Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Group, and the Politics of Accommodation", *Asian Studies Review*, 2018

39 Greg Fealy, "Bigger than Ahok: Explaining the 2 December Mass Rally", *Indonesia At Melbourne*, December 12, 2016.

40 Marcus Mietzner, "Reinventing Asian Populism", 2015.

gious radicalism. This three, without any clear distinctive explanation, are deemed foreign ideologies which are contradictory to Pancasila and, therefore, must be rejected. At the same time, the ultra-nationalist faction also continuously narrates fight against any kind of fundamentalism, radicalism and extremism in the name of religion. On the other hand, however, this faction also frequently cooperates with religious conservative-radical agents in the name of religious moral purity to discriminate and persecute minority groups such as LGBT, Chinese, Christian, Ahmadiyah, Shia and others.

However, the two right populism groups (Islamists and ultra-nationalists) provide exceptional cultural resources taken as the basis of ideological legitimacy for oligarchic elites in competition. More surprisingly, secular parties such as PDI-P and Golkar also frequently play religious narrations and, at local level, politicians of the two parties frequently support regional sharia regulations<sup>41</sup>. Marcus Mietzner, in some occasions of PDI-P congress, does not deny it. PDI-P which is *nota bene* not a religious-based party often supports enforcement of regional sharia regulations<sup>42</sup>. In this context, it is not surprising that there is a view that the presence of right populism only serves oligarchs and weakens civil society's opposition and criticism in attempt to realize more inclusive Indonesia's democracy and social justice<sup>43</sup>.

That the right populism practices conducted by religious conservative-radical groups or ultra-nationalist groups are not subject to sanction is contra-productive to the substance of democratic values. In the concept of liberal democracy, it is im-

---

41 Michael Buechier, *The Politics of Shari'a Law: Islamist Activists and the State in Democratizing Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

42 Interview with Marcus Mietzner, Sept 12, 2019.

43 Otto Gusti Madung, "Populisme, Krisis Demokrasi dan Antagonisme", *Jurnal Ledalero*, Vol. 17, No. 7, June 2018, 58-78.

possible to build democracy without acknowledging liberalism (individual rights). Similarly, in the conception of socialism democracy, it is difficult to enforce democracy without considering public justice. Without these two principles (acknowledgement of liberalism and socialism), democracy will only create Tyranny of the majority and social gap between the rich and the poor. Even in Pancasila democracy, the liberal (humanity) and socialism (social justice) principles are upheld<sup>44</sup>.

### 3. Intolerant to Minority Groups

Tolerance is not identical to democracy, but tolerance is believed to be an important factor to make democracy work<sup>45</sup>. However, democracy will work well if the community has certain culture, which is citizens and political elites' acceptance of principles on which freedom of speech, association, religion, and the likes are based. Such freedoms will be guaranteed if the citizens are tolerant to different beliefs followed by other citizens and any purposes to be achieved by other citizens. In democracy, every citizen must normatively have the same opportunity to achieve their respective purpose pursuant to their social, cultural and economic-political purpose backgrounds. However, differences will be problematic if there is no tolerance<sup>46</sup>.

Democracy is built on the fact that there is conflict of interest between citizens. The fact of the presence of difference is a source of conflict in the society. In a democracy system, difference which leads to conflict must be eliminated. Peaceful management of difference and conflict of interest is a choice deemed to be

---

44 Otto Gusti Madung, "Populisme, Krisis Demokrasi dan Antagonisme", 58-78.

45 John L Sullivan, James Piereson, and George E. Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 5-6.

46 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 153-154.

democratic. This arrangement requires every citizen to be tolerant to any difference and agreement or disagreement. A citizen may dislike or hate others, as long as such attitude does not prevent others. For example, it is alright when a Muslim hates a Christian, but he will be deemed intolerant when he prevents the Christian from performing his religious activities, becoming neighbor, becoming governmental official, and others<sup>47</sup>.

In the context of Islamic populism actions, almost all experts agree that the popular mobilization launched by the Islamist groups do not reflect tolerant attitudes, behaviors and values. In Ahok case, for example, the proponents of the defending Islam action that demand Ahok imprisonment on the reason of “blasphemy” do not only represent their theological hatred –claiming to represent Muslims-- towards an individual deemed to commit blasphemy. Moreover, the masses actualize their theological political hatred in a non-democratic way by suppressing the government to sanction Ahok, demanding the government to disqualify Ahok from his candidacy of governor of DKI Jakarta, and attempting to prevent Ahok from reassuming the governmental position (governor), and others<sup>48</sup>.

However, the intolerant actions of the proponents of the defending Islam action have led to violence. Production of hate speech and hoaxes (by labeling Ahok as blasphemer, ulama insulter, infidel, Chinese, Christian and others), provoking the society not to choose Ahok in Head of Region Election, and discrediting Muslims who support Ahok by not praying for them when they die, are real forms of intolerant acts as well as violence. Many experts assume that the anti-Ahok campaign which in-

---

47 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 153-154.

48 Interview with M. Amin Abdullah, July 26, 2019; Moch. Nur Ichwan, July 24, 2019; and Greg Fealy, Sept 9, 2019.

volves hate speech and act is the most brutal intolerant action in the history of Indonesia, particularly after the New Order<sup>49</sup>.

Similarly, in the case of Presidential Election 2019, various popular mobilization actions by the Islamist groups are laden with intolerant attitudes and behaviors. Reproduction of sectarianism discourse like Jokowi the protector of blasphemer, despot (criminalize ulama), part of foreign and *aseng* parties, son of communist, and the likes, is only a few of the intolerant actions by the Islamist groups. Practically, these groups also often commit violent acts in demonstrations in rejecting the result of Presidential Election 2019.

In the experts' opinion, the mass mobilization actions by the proponents of Islamic populism, both in anti-Ahok and anti-Jokowi cases, significantly contribute to weakening Indonesia's democracy<sup>50</sup>. The argumentation is that such intolerant actions are clearly contradictory to the democratic principles, particularly tolerance to differences in citizen's ethnicity, religion and political interest. The absence of tolerance has made minority groups like Ahok unable to compete fairly in a democratic political system. This fact affirms that the development of minority's rights and civil freedom –as the variable of democracy-- in Indonesia after the New Order remains stagnant and is even regressing. Intolerant attitudes and actions are one of its main factors<sup>51</sup>.

In fact, intolerance itself does not influence declining democracy when the intolerant actors are not active in politics. The elite theory of democracy explains that intolerant citizens are not a threat to democracy as long as they are apathetic or absent from

---

49 Interview with Hairus Salim, July 23, 2019; Edward Aspinall & Marcus Mietzner, Sept 12, 2019.

50 Jeremy Menchik, "Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia", *Asian Studies Review*, 2019, 1-18.

51 Interview with Muhammad Wildan, July 26, 2019; Hairus Salim, July 23, 2019; Greg Fealy, Sept 9, 2019; and Thomas power, Sept 8, 2019.

politics. This theory also explains that even if the masses are intolerant and at the same time the political elites are tolerant, the stability of democracy may still be maintained, since the elites are the ones to determine political policies<sup>52</sup>. In the case of Islamic populism actions in Indonesia, intolerance is not only strengthening among the masses (people) –or, in van Bruinessen’s term, is conservative turn—, but it also occurs to the religious and political elites. Among the political elites, for example, ultra-nationalism is strengthening. Conflicts at the level of political or oligarchic elites are suspected to be the main cause of emerging intolerant mass mobilization actions, like that in the defending Islam action, in support of political elites in fight<sup>53</sup>.

#### **4. Not Competitor to Regime in Power**

Populism emerges in response to weaknesses in the electoral or representative democracy held formalistically, legalistically and procedurally. In its process, electoral democracy indeed gives the people opportunity to get involved in election process, both legislative and executive. However, in practice, public participation in the electoral process of representative and governmental leader is not entirely held based on their rational aspiration and choice. Money political intervention still dominates political electoral processes at all levels from Head of Region Election and Legislative Election to Presidential Election. Therefore, it is not surprising if the people’s representatives and executive leaders produced by electoral democracy are not popular. In many criticisms, electoral democracy has produced legislative and executive leaders dominated by oligarchic groups<sup>54</sup>.

---

52 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 156.

53 Vedi R. Hadiz, *Populisme Islam di Indonesia dan Timur Tengah*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 2018.

54 Vedi R. Hadiz, “Indonesian Politics in 2017”, 261.

Although money politics are still dominant in political process in Indonesia, it does not mean that public participation in determining their leaders is entirely based on it. It does not mean that there is no public participation which is based on rational awareness and choice in democratic electoral political process at all. In the case of Presidential Election 2014, and probably also Head of Region Election in many regions, Jokowi's victory in the power contestation is because of, one of its crucial factors is, popular populism narrations as well as support from reformist civil society elements for him. Similarly, in the second period, although the pro-democracy and reform groups start to be divided, but many of these groups still consistently support Jokowi in contestation against Prabowo Subianto, that is fully supported by right populism power<sup>55</sup>.

Substantively, the electoral democracy practice in Indonesia still displays paradox dimensions. Besides leadership electoral process with intervention of oligarchic elites' power, the governmental practice cannot also be separated from the hand of such elite power. Although Jokowi successfully wins the power competition with his populism agenda, but when he has occupied the presidential position, it is not easy for him to realize his reformist-democratic populism agenda. The existence of non-democratic powers which are mostly from oligarchic elites in his power is suspected by the experts to be a serious constraint for Jokowi to implement his reformist policies. For example, there is no progress of severe cases of human rights such as 1965 tragedy, activists kidnapping during 1998 reform, Munir murder case, and the likes, since there

---

55 Interview with Paul Kenny, Sept 11, 2019 and Edward Aspinall & Marczuk Mietzner, Sept 12, 2019.

are expectedly elites involved in the severe cases of human rights around Jokowi<sup>56</sup>.

The paradox of electoral democracy does not emerge only in Jokowi era. The government also faces almost the same problem in previous periods. The state or government itself is filled with political parties of which democratic spirit is not always above the individual or sectoral spirit. The balance between governmental or state agents that are responsive and irresponsible to public interest is always disturbed. This occurs since Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) administration, that is overthrown resulting from the *bullog gate* scandal issue. In SBY administration, the government seems to be far more stable and normal, but is controlled by oligarchic parties. The effort to realize the balance is also made by Jokowi. In his early administration, Jokowi's actions seem to bring good results. However, over time, the political parties and oligarchic elites' domination makes the movement to seem less progressive<sup>57</sup>.

According to the experts, such electoral democratic crisis also contributes to encouraging emergence of populism. This anti-establishment movement gets spreading when the relational gap between the government (governing society) and the public (non-governing society) gets wider. In fact, there is substantial democratic spirit carried by populism as a curative and corrective action for electoral democracy, which is mostly dominated by oligarchic power. When responded positively, populism may also be deemed as a constructive criticism and even become vitamin for the government to correct its governmental system pursuant to the democratic corridor. In this context, populism may be deemed as

---

56 Moch. Nur Ichwan, July 24, 2019 and Usman Hamid

57 Interview with Muhammad AS Hikam, Sept 31, 2019.

the mirror of democracy which observes the other side as an objection of alienation and discrimination<sup>58</sup>.

May Islamic populism actions be deemed to be a civil society movement which positively contributes to power check and balance in order not to be dominated by oligarchic power or status quo? Almost all experts argue that the mass mobilization actions by the Islamist agents do not represent civil society movement at all, of which struggle agenda is oriented to democratic social-political change. Instead of pursuing change and democratization agenda, the Islamic populism actions are more oriented to pragmatic (power struggle) and ideological (enforcement of sharia) interests<sup>59</sup>. As a political strategy to struggle for power, these Islamic populism actions are clearly contra-productive to the democratic values and norms, which emphasize fair methods pursuant to rule of law in power contestation.

What is performed by the Islamic populism agents like FPI is also far from the civil society spirit in the definition of group, association, civic organization, which is known as Non-Government/State Organizations (NGOs) which uses civil or civilized methods in their social movement. As non-government organizations, the groups which consolidate into the 212 movement and the likes may indeed be categorized as civil society. However, from the perspective of the methods they use and their struggle orientation, what is performed by the proponents of Islamic populism is far from the civil society category. As commonly known, the Islamic populism agents tend to choose non-civilized methods,

---

58 Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Trajektori Populisme Islam di Kalangan Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia", *Prisma*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2017. 19-27.

59 In this context, Islamic populism develops towards Islamic revitalization in public space and Islamic capitalization in social space. Islamic revitalization based populism carries disappointment to formal political practice which is dominated more by new elites. Unclear ideology plus declining role of Islamic based political parties makes such political sentiment gets stronger, bigger and wider. Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Trajektori Populisme Islam", 19-27.

such as using sectarianism, racism, and hoaxes issues in effort to realize their political agenda<sup>60</sup>.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of struggle agenda, the Islamic populism actions are not oriented to change and democratization at all; an agenda which is struggled for by civil society. As an association and organization that does not *underbow* State, civil society plays its function and role as communicator, facilitator and catalyst which is able to mediate public interest and the government and also the market. In addition, civil society also frequently serves its role as control and even competitor to fight tyranny and arbitrariness of regime in power or the government. At the same time, civil society also plays an important role in strengthening civil norms in the society which emphasize tolerance, togetherness and participation in facing mutual problem<sup>61</sup>.

In democratic principle, the existence of civil society and also political society (parliamentary/DPR/MPR and government) may be stated as the main component of democracy. It is important to note that political society must pay attention to and be controlled by civil society. The pattern of power relation between the two democratic elements will, in turn, ensure that democracy runs healthily and strongly. In this case, Muhammad AS Hikam affirms:

“healthy democracy requires balance between political society and civil society, thus the government will be able to run responsively to what the society or citizens desire. Whether citizen’s rights and obligations are fulfilled or get reduced and defeated by political parties, the government and parliament or otherwise. This is important to be ascertained”<sup>62</sup>.

---

60 Interview with Muhammad AS Hikam, Sept 31, 2019.

61 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 20.

62 Interview with Muhammad AS Hikam, Sept 31, 2019.

From the perspective of character, function and role, we may state that the mass mobilization actions by the Islamic populism agents may be included into civil society category, but a corrupt civil society and even undemocratic civil society. In this case, Hikam states:

FPI is a corrupt civil society, even undemocratic civil society. If a civil society serves as the backbone of democracy, then it is a democratic civil society. If otherwise, you will handover democracy to the groups of HTI, FPI, robbers, no way. You may hand it over to groups of civil society like media, professional groups, intellectuals, and others who also believe and uses democratic principles, including rule of law<sup>63</sup>.

More ironically, such corrupt groups of civil society grow rapidly in the period after the New Order. They are groups that use caliphate (HTI), Wahhabism, Salafism, and Jihadism (Jema'at Islamiyah/JI, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia/MMI), and Vigilantism (FPI) identities. As undemocratic organizations of civil society, of course their populism actions do not constructively contribute to strengthening democracy at all. Instead of contributing to strengthening democracy, particularly in terms of check and balance, Islamic populism even reduces the dignity of democracy<sup>64</sup> and emphasizes illiberal characteristics of Indonesia's democracy after the New Order. Muhammas A.S. Hikam states

“.....what have HTI and FPI contributed to democracy? Even their words clearly oppose Pancasila, oppose democracy, and even

---

63 Interview with Muhammad AS Hikam, Sept 31, 2019.

64 It is said to reduce the dignity of democracy since populism aims at cheating constitutional channel by negating various phases and procedures which should be passed through. This may become a bad precedence to the indicator of democratic achievement of a State with distrust in public institutions. Read Wasisto Raharjo Jati, “Trajektorii Populisme Islam”, 19-27.

manipulate the opportunity given by democracy. In my opinion, they are more evil than anything.....”<sup>65</sup>

### 5. *Deepening Polarization*

In a plural society like Indonesia, the political aspiration of every citizen will certainly not be single, but plural and complex. In a democracy system, diversity and differences in social, cultural, religious and political aspiration backgrounds may be understood as a certain reality. Normatively, diversity itself may be positioned as a social capital which plays an important role in confirming democracy. This diversity will really serve as a social capital when there is a mutual understanding (mutually understand and even tolerate differences) among citizens. Mutual understanding may be built when citizens trust one another. In Putnam’s term, mutual trust between citizens (interpersonal trust) may be categorized into a vital social capital<sup>66</sup>.

One thing to note is that democracy may develop firmly in the society of which social interaction is very complex. Cooperation and coordination in such a society will be almost impossible when it is based only on rational knowledge and calculation among society members individually. Mutual trust and helping each other solve any problem they face will be practical in case of collective cooperation, even if rational knowledge is insufficient. In this case, Inglehart states that mutual trust among citizens is a form of political culture and serves as a factor to determine democracy stability<sup>67</sup>.

---

65 Interview with Muhammad AS Hikam, Sept 31, 2019.

66 Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 170.

67 Ronald Inglehart, “Trust, Well-Being and Democracy”, *Democracy and Trust*, edited by Mark E. Warren, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

The populism actions, like the 212 action in the context of Head of Region Election of DKI Jakarta, may be understood as a group's distrust in and even hatred towards individual or other social group of different ethnic and religion. All this time, Ahok is known as the governor of DKI Jakarta who is firm about rule of law, transparent, accountable, and does not compromise with corruption, collusion and nepotism. Ahok's weaknesses are that he speaks harshly (red: *ceplas ceplos*), non-Muslim (Christian) and Chinese. According to the experts, these make some people to dislike (instead of distrust) him. Moreover, Ahok is also exclusionary towards intolerant groups such as the drivers of the defending Islam action.

The same occurs to the Islamic populism actions in the context of Presidential Election 2019. Many assume that the opposition of the Islamist groups in their alliance with the ultra-nationalist groups is caused more by dislike (instead of distrust) of some elements of the society (particularly among Islamists) to Jokowi administration. Almost similarly to Ahok, Jokowi is also known to be exclusionary towards radical Islamist groups which are sufficiently accommodated by the power in the previous period.

Actually, the distrust in the government may also be the characteristic of citizen's criticism for the state administrators. Citizen's constructive criticisms of the government may even serve to strengthen democracy consolidation. However, when the distrust is not based on critical thinking, but emotion instead, it may change to hatred which will, in turn, cause collective reactionary actions to each of government's policies. The experts deem what the proponents of the Islamic populism actions express in the anti-Ahok and anti-Jokowi cases as a reactive, instead of critical, expression of "disappointment", which will not implicate in governance improvement.

In practice, primordial disappointment expression of the Islamists to both Ahok and Jokowi will, in turn, cause polarization which will eventually lead to sectarianism conflict. Many experts assume that the power contestations 2014-2019 are marked with extraordinary polarization among citizens resulting from difference in political choice. The emergence of religion or ulama defender groups versus blasphemers or ulama insulter supporting groups, Pancasila groups versus anti-Pancasila/NKRI groups, pluralist groups versus anti-pluralist groups, pro-democracy groups versus anti-democracy groups, and *kampret* versus *kecebong* marks political polarization in the power contestation in contemporary Indonesia. Moreover, as the result of polarization, conflict between the two groups involved in the power contestation unavoidably becomes reality. Conflict which involves physical clash or violence occurs in the protest action of the Islamic populism faction in rejection of General Election result and in guiding the siding of General Election dispute in the Constitution Court.

In many facts, harsh conflict enlivens the dynamic of power contestation in Indonesia, as between the Islamists versus pluralists, which may be understood as part of ethnical and religious diversity instilled so early and in-depth into everyone. In this conflict, the enemies often transform to “they, who grow and justify their violence and barbarity, are not human”<sup>68</sup>. In Indonesia, religionism has occurred everywhere and for a long time. Everyone’s religious passion is pumped up every day through various channels, televisions, mass media, social media, schools, and others. Consequently, conflicts which use religious label are unavoidable<sup>69</sup>.

---

68 Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat*, 23.

69 Interview with Hairus salim, July 23, 2019.

## C. Paradox of Contra-Islamic Populism

It has been stated above that Indonesia's current declining democracy (and also in the world) is not only correlated with the populism actions promoted by the conservative-radical groups. The political elites which control the state power also significantly contributes to reducing the quality of democracy. In the experts' opinion, the political elites' actions are categorized into illiberal<sup>70</sup> and deemed to be the main factor to cause democracy deconsolidation. In Indonesia case, these illiberal actions are often displayed by the political elites, including Jokowi administration. Jokowi's policy in issuing *Perpu ormas* (Government Regulation in Lieu of Law of mass organization), his intervention in political parties, "criminalization" of opposition actors, and others later cause what is known as *Jokowi's authoritarian turn*. Differently from Suharto's authoritarianism, Jokowi displays varieties of populist authoritarianism<sup>71</sup>.

Meanwhile, the experts' discourses of Jokowi's choice of response to the Islamic populism actions cause interesting debate. Some of them argue that the government's firm attitude in preventing as well as countering the populism sponsored by the Islamist groups is deemed appropriate. Among the government's firm policies are dissolution of HTI, restriction of licensing for mass mobilization activism in the name of religion such as joint prayer, prosecuting legally religious elites who spread hate speech, and the likes, that what is conducted by the government is none other than maintaining unity of NKRI as well as the dignity of

---

70 Liberalism (as an anti-thesis of illiberalism) here is not in economic and social contexts, but in political context, which is whether there is freedom of expression, freedom of association. This is needed so that voters have maximum opportunity to contribute in democracy, instead of only minimum. Interview with Thomas Power, Sept 8, 2019.

71 Thomas P. Power, "Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline", 2018.

democracy itself. They assume that such government's firm attitude is even too late, as stated by M. Amin Abdullah:

In such a case, the government must be present, if otherwise, it will be over, and it is too late for about 20 or 30 years. In the past, this is part of their weapon, like *Pamswakarsa*. When TNI is weak because of NGOs, the state is weak, it will be over, we must cooperate to create a group of *Pamswakarsa*. It is from such *Pamswakarsa* that HTI, FPI, and the likes are formed<sup>72</sup>.

According to M. Amin Abdullah, the government's firm attitude to dissolve radical groups that are anti-Pancasila and NKRI is deemed to be ideal. However, he acknowledges that such government's measure is harshly criticized by human rights and democracy activists. He states:

These must be corrected. They are wrong. Even if people don't like cancellation or banning of HTI, but when it has actually challenged the existence of the nation, then the nation must act, otherwise, it will be over. Even if many parties say there is no evidence that HTI rebel? Well, if we are waiting for rebellion, it will be over. We will be the next Syria. In Konbes in Jogja in '70s or '80s, they clearly stated *against nation-state, against democracy*. It was their proclamation, their manifesto. Will we wait for a Syria-like incident to happen for evidence?<sup>73</sup>

Still according to M. Amin Abdullah, not only the activists, the government's policies are also harshly criticized by Western experts and scholars. In his opinion, it is alright, but he says that the policies taken by the government is correct, since it prioritizes security (preventive measure) instead of waiting for the nation to be destroyed to act. He states:

---

72 Interview July 26, 2019.

73 Interview July 26, 2019.

It is alright. If the government did not do it, Indonesia will really be the next Syria. In my opinion, it is not the government's fear or phobia of radical groups like FPI. They are really a threat. But the 212 is real. When the nation gets threatened, then stop human rights, stop democracy, *al-aman qabla iman* (security takes precedence over faith), instead of *al-iman* taking precedence over *al-aman*, but the otherwise, this is a must, the nation must dare to say it. When the existence of the nation is threatened, in the sense of harsh statements, not only during 212, during general election, it was them, even if they use others' hand, the 02. They have done so even in the early stage, then what if they win? I mean the radical groups, instead of Prabowo, the groups that benefit from him. If they are so violent, if they win, it is possible that Indonesia will be like Middle East. The point is we must be careful, Islamic civil societies like NU and Muhammadiyah should re-think of their cultural strategy<sup>74</sup>.

Similar view is presented by Muhammad AS Hikam. In his opinion, the government's or nation's policy to dissolve HTI in response to Islamic populism is deemed correct and may be stated as democratic. He says, there is nothing wrong in dissolving HTI through government regulation (Perpu), since what is conducted by the government –as the state's representation— aims at protecting itself and maintain the unity of NKRI, ad its right to protect the state's sovereignty is not contradictory to the international law. Moreover, he states:

.....moreover, the people assume that what is conducted by the government in dissolving demonstration as anti-democracy. On the contrary, I see it strange. What is undemocratic from the dissolution of HTI? What they commonly say is not stated through the court, and the argumentation is just like that. But the government also has argumentation that, as the representation of the nation, it has the right to protect itself and maintain the Indonesian territory. That right is acknowledged by the international law and HTI clearly is not only

---

74 Interview July 26, 2019.

contradictory to, but also aims at destroying NKRI. Therefore, the law or processes like criminal law cannot be used like those in the Law. Therefore, rendering Government Regulation valid does not only take legal formal perspective<sup>75</sup>.

On the other hand, many experts of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and Indonesianists see the response of the government and civil society of moderate Muslims to the Islamic populism actions, in some cases, as something paradoxical to the democratic principles. HTI dissolution is one policy mostly criticized. According to Moch. Nur Ichwan, the government's policy to dissolve HTI is clearly contradictory to democracy (in the sense of liberal democracy). He says in his complete statement:

The government's policy to dissolve HTI is contradictory to democracy. However, in some democratic countries, such banning is made. The United States, as the biggest country of human rights, make a list of banned movements, and how many are those in our country? They are incomparable<sup>76</sup>.

A relatively harsh view is presented by Sunarwoto, that the contra-populism actions made by the government and Islamic moderate organizations are reactive response. Even what they have done to the intolerant and anti-democratic groups, in his opinion, is also something undemocratic. He states:

In my opinion, it is their response when (as if) they are struck by wave. Our way shouldn't be this brutal. Just divert them, Islamize them by instilling democratic elements, I think it will be better. Give them just a little opportunity, but following democracy is a must. Making them quit from their ideology will be better than dissolving them. Ideology will never change, it is fact. The current HTI is under young generation,

---

75 Interview, Sept 31, 2019

76 Interview, July 24, 2019

that is not as ideological as previous generation. Their ideology is market ideology, they are unfamiliar with Nabhani reading and others, their readings are from third source<sup>77</sup>.

Similar view is expressed by Hairus Salim, that the action of the government or Islamic moderate organization in dissolving HTI is contradictory to the democratic freedom principle. In (liberal) democracy, freedom of speech, association, and religion is fundamental. When the principle is abandoned, the quality of democracy of a nation will, certainly, decline. Salim states:

Referring to the liberal view, it is unacceptable, I mean freedom. Therefore, it is not the organization that should be removed, if you violate something agreed upon, if it (HTI) violates violence, it must clearly be removed by law. Or, if HTI control an office, that is the actual problem, our **citizenship** is incomplete, thus an individual's ideology may influence an office. For example, you are an HTI and become the head of BKKN office, then obligate all subordinates to do *shalat jama'ah*, that's it. Or, you hold a *Maulid* event, weekly teaching by Basalamah, it cannot be resisted, since friends from NU also do so, it is incomplete citizenship. I think we were wrong from the start, giving religion too big space which should be national. At the end, we cannot control it, then we cut it at the end, ban the organization<sup>78</sup>.

Further, he adds:

.....therefore, our view of democracy is limited (limited democracy), HTI members may say that our Pancasila is substantial Pancasila, we will always enforce divinity, humanity, unified Indonesia and so on. It is alright that they says so, and when they tries to replace Pancasila, they will be responded legally, not the organization. Organization is the core, part of freedom of speech. The dilemma of democracy is that

---

77 Interview, July 26, 2019

78 Interview July 23, 2019

people take advantage of it to fight democracy. Let us see, when they are treated inappropriately, they call for human rights, but they treat others to their heart content. How can our citizenship education be good, while (in fact) religion takes priority<sup>79</sup>?

Similarly harsh criticisms are given by the Indonesianists. The government's contra-populism action in its alliance with Islamic moderate groups, particularly NU, is deemed as reactive response; a response which does not only effectively stop radicalism from growing, but also often contradicts to democratic principles. Even many states that what is conducted by the government in eliminating the Islamic populism power as "arbitrariness"<sup>80</sup>. However, contra-radicalism or populism activism with undemocratic methods will eventually lead to revenge by the deradicalized group. In this case, Greg Fealy states:

If the government systematically, thoroughly thinks of the consequence of its policy, to me, anti-radical is just reactive. There is no comparative study with other nation to observe whether this reactive-discriminative program is effective or not. In UI, for example, since BNPT conducts a research on renowned state universities exposed to radicalism, the rector gets depressed. He then starts a program to harshly fight against Islamism, until he himself visits Imam of UI mosque to filter all potential *takmir* (administrators). In UI Salemba, Imam in mosque Salemba that is indicated as an Islamist is replaced with a professor from NU, and so are the *takmir*, all speakers are from NU. The number of students that come there then decreases about 60-70 percent, making the mosque empty. Thus, even if the rector informs Jokowi that "I have successfully

---

79 Interview July 23, 2019

80 In contemporary period, most of the decline in democracy is not encouraged by ideological motivated authoritarianism. In previous periods, fascist, militarist, corporatist, organicist, communist, and other ideological varieties explicitly confront the core principles of representative democracy and democratic liberalism; today, erosion of democracy is often driven by populist leaders such as Viktor Orbán in Hungary or Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turki, who rule and promise to represent democratic principles, but actually undermine them to maintain their power. Edward Aspinalls, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi and Eve Warbuton, "Elites, Masses and Democratic Decline in Indonesia", 2019.

cleared up the campus from groups which may endanger the nation and so on” but it is in fact only ‘cosmetic’ (camouflage). There is no polar change, and I believe that it is only to conceal the existence of Islamist movement or it has more underlying impacts. For example, when a staff or student knows that his career will be blocked because of his movement or political affiliation, he may remain active in that organization, or he may conceal their attitudes and behaviors or PKS/HTI identity. Maybe, 5-10 years ahead, he will reemerge and be more persistent in his Islamization and revenge on those who prevent his struggle<sup>81</sup>.

An interesting note is also addressed to NU and Muhammadiyah, to Islamic moderate organizations that are actively involved in deradicalization movement. Greg states:

Both NU and Muhammadiyah are involved, but the impact is only small. For Muhammadiyah, there is resistance to get involved in the deradicalization program. Deradicalization means de-Islamization or de-Islamism, de-PKS-ization, etc. Only few Muhammadiyah figures are involved in that program. PP Muhammadiyah are clearly reluctant to get involved together with NU that drives that government to ban HTI. A very trusted source says that NU is the one that strictly encourages Jokowi to ban HTI. Therefore, according to Jokowi, the source of idea to ban HTI it not the police, military, but the strongest pressure is from NU. Thus, I think NU has very high anti-Islamism spirit, but not so is Muhammadiyah. I met the secretary of Muhammadiyah, Abdul Mu'ti, at that time, Helmi Faesal, Secretary General of NU tried to persuade Muhammadiyah figures to participate in the press conference to state that they support HTI banning and Muhammadiyah rejected it. They said that if HTI really commit treason, then bring the case to the court. To the best of my knowledge, there is no single case committed by a HTI member, no one has ever been detained by the police for a treason case. And I think Muhammadiyah members say that the government should not auto-criticize such groups. Muhammadiyah's willingness in the anti-radicalization campaign is very limited<sup>82</sup>.

---

81 Interview, 9 Sept 2019.

82 Interview, 9 Sept 2019.

In contra-radicalism (including populism) activism, moderate groups such as NU fights back with no less militancy. They state HTI, often HTI-PKS, as enemy which may endanger pluralism, democracy and NKRI. They also try to sterilize governmental bureaucracy from those supporting, affiliated with and members of HTI-PKS. There is a concern that this condition will cause never-ending revenge, particularly from the opponent (HTI-PKS), since they know how to feel as the opposition. What is conducted by NU is clearly contra-productive to its identity as an Islamic moderate organization<sup>83</sup>. In this case, Thomas Power, for example, states:

even though NU is involved in advocacy of minority groups (ethnic, religion, sex, etc.). But the Islamist groups like PKS and others are quantitatively minorities. If, as legal organizations (acknowledge by the government) that follow the governmental system and participate in general election, they are repressed, including, by state apparatus, what will happen next? Will they still use formal way or informal methods which are far more extreme, anti-system, anti-democracy, etc.? We do not know it. If these groups are not given with democratic space, they will then find undemocratic way which may endanger democracy itself<sup>84</sup>.

A different view is presented by Muhammad AS Hikam, who understands the measures made by NU and Muhammadiyah in countering radicalism, including encouraging the government to issue the Government Regulation in Lieu of Law of mass organization to ban HTI. What is performed by the two Islamic moderate organizations –that have completed their statehood--, particularly NU, is in their capacity to protect the diverse ways of

---

83 Interview with Greg Fealy, Sept 9, 2019; Thomas Power, Sept 8, 2019; and Sunarwoto, July 23, 2019.

84 Interview, Sept 8, 2019.

life violated by the Islamic radical groups like HTI, Wahabi and Salafi. In addition, what is performed by NU also conforms to the purpose of protecting the unity of NKRI. In his opinion, the state is off guard for a long time, as proven that HTI has successfully taken control over campuses and BUMN, and State Civil Apparatus (ASN) as well as TNI personnel are exposed to it. In this context, what NU has performed is clearly reactive attitude or action. He states:

It cannot be reactive, since HTI has grown for 20 years in Indonesia and gets reacted just now. In my opinion, it is the government's weakness that it cannot control how extensive the influence of HTI and the hardliners is. NU has been aware since long ago but is limited since it is not the state, the government or the authority. NU has complained so many times, announced its view and made fatwa that this is a threat, certainly a threat to its life world. But after it is exposed that the radicalism desires to destroy Indonesia, it is a threat to the nation. Thus, the argument that it is reactive is incorrect, except snap short, like the event that FPI made a parade and was dissolved by Banser in Semarang. Such snap sort must be placed in the context of democracy<sup>85</sup>.

Meanwhile, the delegitimation by the government is no less strict. HTI dissolution, imprisonment of a number of opposition individuals accused for violation of IT Law or hate speech, restriction of permit for the opposition groups to implement their social activities like the *2019 ganti presiden* case, and the likes, are the government's restrictive policy in its effort to deligitimate the opposition power. This policy is taken since the government does not wish to take risk (not merely potential social vulnerability to be caused by the Islamic populism actions that often spread hate

---

85 Interview with Muhammad AS Hikam, Sept 31, 2019.

narrations) of the opposition group's strengthening potential, which may politically lead to the defeat of status quo, like the case of Head of Region Election of DKI Jakarta. It seems that the regime in power (and so is the opposition group) tends to prioritize how to win the 2019 power contestation without considering further the health of democracy. In this case, Thomas Power states:

“Ideally, we should make preference, like we win and democracy remains operating. We are defeated, and democracy also remains operating. *The essence is healthy democracy is to be prioritized more than whether we win or lose. What we see as good of the government or opposition is that the two want to win, regardless of whether democracy is healthy or not. The point is we win it first, whether democracy will operate or not, be healthy or not, just let it be.* It is how each party behaves in contestation”<sup>86</sup>.

In addition, the contra-populism actions launched by the government also cause deligitimation issue which involves state power instrument. In this case, the government often utilizes the state power or instrument as a means to repress the opposition. The issuance of Regulation of Law in Lieu of Law of mass organization, for example, cannot be separated from the role of Attorney General. This legislative institution's role may also be observed from its intervention over the opposition parties. Many of the regional incumbents, for example, are forced to join the Nasdem Party and support Jokowi. In the experts' criticism, the government's act to utilize the Attorney General is clearly contradictory to the democratic spirit. In this case, Thomas Power states:

---

86 Interview with Thomas Power, Sept 8, 2019

It is certain that, in a state, there is opposing group, and it is also certain that there is anti-democratic group. In developed countries like Europe, there are right group, left group and center group. But the problem is how the state responds anti-democratic groups? What method is to take to dissolve them, whether by transparent method, legal-judicial method or executive order, all of which are important to consider. If it is only the executive without any check and balance like the issuance of Presidential Regulation in Lieu of Law of mass organization, it will be deemed undemocratic<sup>87</sup>.

---

87 Interview with Thomas Power, Sept 8, 2019



# Conclusion

## A. Conclusion

The dynamics of emergence of Islamic populism and its consequence for democracy in Indonesia after the New Order have become a discourse intensively discussed, debated about and reviewed by experts. Indonesian Muslim scholars (intellectual, academics and activists) and Western scholars who are concerned about the study of Indonesian social, political and Islamic issues (Indonesianists) are recorded as the intelligent group –to borrow Yudi Latif’s term— who actively and productively discuss and review such matters. However, reviews of this issue continue and various academic works they produce continuously contribute to the dynamics of thinking and Indonesia social, political and Islamic studies.

This research is one part of the academic studies which discuss the rise of Islamic populism or –to borrow Marcus Mietzner’s term—Islamist populism as well as any consequences it causes in the development of democracy in Indonesia after the New Order. Although many literatures have described Islamic populism and how such social-political phenomena which use religious label emerge, but there are matters which are not completely described yet. Is it appropriate to state the popular mobilization in the name

of defending Islam action, defending ulama action, reunion 212, people power, and the likes, which are strengthening in the period 2016-2019, as Indonesia's typical Islamic populism, as such populism phenomena is rising in some parts of the world?

With regard to the matter, the result of this research confirms that the experts' discourses, both from Indonesian Muslim scholars and Indonesianists, vary. Generally, they understand the mass mobilization phenomena initiated by Islamist groups as Islamic populism. The argumentation is that the popular actions involve ideology and political narrations which places the mass (particularly the people) in a position *vis a vis* the regime in power which is described as corrupt, *dzalim* (authoritarian) against the people, and part of foreign and *aseng* (Western and Chinese) powers and great mass mobilizations as a strategy to struggle for their political agenda. This experts' perspective confirms populism experts' opinion like Cas Mudde and Margaret Canovan who define populism as an ideology or more precisely a thin ideology. Like ideational perspective in general, populist ideas (which positions the people *vis a vis* the power structure and dominant value) take an important position in constructing reality (political interpretation) and simultaneously encourage social practice (mass mobilization) to realize their political agenda. However, because of its thin character, it cannot stand alone as a political-practical ideology: it has no capacity to promote any extensive and coherent program for solution to important political questions.

Some experts deem that the popular mobilization actions promoted by the conservative-radical Islamist groups represent identity politics more. The mass actions do not carry or struggle for populous agenda which are directly related to their life improvement in the social, economic, educational and political aspects at all. The agenda carried by the Islamist groups are prag-

matic (struggle for power resources) and some are undeniably ideological (enforcement of Islamic principles or Islamization of public space). The agents of Islamic populism capitalize religious and populous symbols as their political strategy to gather mass support. The driving actors and the masses who participate in the Islamic populism actions are mostly of Muslim mid-class, in which they desire (not only economic improvement) improvement of public space pursuant to religious (Islamic) norms. Therefore, these groups are concerned more about secularized public spaces than poverty issue which burdens the people and Muslims.

Meanwhile, some other experts see the popular mobilization phenomena which use religious and popular issues as a representation of Islamic identity political populism in Indonesia, since in the action, the Islamist groups, the main actors of the popular mobilization, uses religious symbols, sentiment and ideology to mobilize the masses to participate in their struggle for political agenda. The populism dimension may be viewed in the narrations which perceive or place the people, including Muslims, in an antagonistic position against the regime in power which is imaged as corrupt, authoritarian and pro-blasphemer. In addition, the narration of adversity experienced by Muslims, especially in economic-political aspect, as caused by domination of foreign and *aseng* parties also marks populism driven by poverty issue. In this perspective, the experts view Islamic populism as a mixture of identity and social class issues; the latter is typically economic-political perspective.

With regard to factors which play important role in driving the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia, the experts have different views. There are at least four variants of experts' view, *first*, Islamic populism emerges and rises in the context of political

elites' confrontation, particularly oligarchy, in struggle for and preservation of power. In the context of Presidential Elections 2014 and 2019, the power contestation is full of confrontation between two groups of oligarchic political elites which carry ultra-nationalist populism figure, Prabowo Subianto, against moderate populism, Joko Widodo. The confrontation and conflict among the oligarchic political elites later drag civil groups (particularly conservative-radical) into the fight for power. Many view that the mass mobilization launched by the Islamist groups as political elites' means in their struggle for and/or preservation of power.

*Second*, a view that the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia emerges in line with strengthening religious resurgence with its conservative and radical characters. In Martin van Bruinessen's terminology, the Indonesian era after the New Order is in the religious conservative turn or illiberal turn in other Indonesianists' term, such as Marcus Mietzner, Edwards Aspinall, Vedi R. Hadiz, Paul Kenny and Greg Fealy. The strengthening conservatism and various illiberal actions marked with many intolerant and violent attitudes and actions with religious labels by both political elites and religious elites drive Islamist groups to rise and perform mass mobilization to struggle for their political agenda. At the same time, strengthening conservatism and illiberalism also intersect with the absence of progressive powers (including among Muslims) in public space. Besides fragmentation resulting from difference in organization and political agenda, the weakening progressive powers in Indonesia cannot be separated from the New Order regime's legacy, which greatly contributes to destroying these groups.

*Third*, the view that the rise of Islamic populism is caused more by exclusion of Islamist groups from power domain. All this time, the Islamist groups like FPI get privilege from regime in power

even since the early reformation in 1998. As commonly known, the emergence of Islamic paramilitary organizations like FPI are facilitated and utilized by certain political elites. Therefore, it is not surprising that when the patron holds power, these paramilitary organizations also get free access to power. Until Susilo Bambang Yudoyono era, the Islamist groups receive promising space and access to power. The condition changes during the change in power after SBY. Instead of accommodation in power, the Islamist groups are even alienated and marginalized. The exclusion of Islamist groups in Jokowi era drives them to rise and show their strength by mobilizing the masses. The Ahok case is deemed only to be an access door for these groups to draw the attention of and negotiate with the ruler for accommodation.

*Fourth*, a view that the emergence of Islamic populism in Indonesia is the consequence of democracy. Generally, right populism emerges in response to liberal democracy crisis. Vedi R. Hadiz explicitly states that the development of Islamic populism cannot be separated from the people's disappointment at the democracy. Differently from conventional populism with curative and constructive purpose for democracy process to be more sensitive to people's demands and aspirations, Islamic populism takes different path. People's words are used as *proxy demos* (people) to exclusively struggle for Muslims' interest. Instead of supporting democracy as the main path to shape governance, Islamic populism tends to support other than democratic governmental system like *khilafah* or sharia based government.

This research also finds evidences that the popular mobilization actions, in almost all of experts' opinion, significantly contribute to declining quality of democracy in Indonesia. Among the Islamic populism's contributions are, *first*, Islamic populism does not significantly contribute to strengthening democratic

legitimation. Instead of deepening democratic legitimation using democracy institution and rule of law as a means to struggle for their political agenda, the Islamic populism actions even delegitimize them. The street actions which involve a great number of people (mobocracy) to influence the government's decision making, as in Ahok case, and influence regular power contestation in an uncivilized way are a small part of the form of democratic delegitimation.

*Second*, Islamic populism does not represent reformist or progressive civil society movement, which is oriented to social change and democratization in its struggle. Instead of democratizing power and facilitating the people's interest with the State, Islamic populism is oriented to Islamization and service of oligarchy. In experts' opinion, the Islamist groups are inappropriately included into part of civil society organization, since their actions are far from being civilized, which are the most important characteristic of civil society. Even if they are included into civil society, the Islamist organizations such as HTI and FPI are to be included into bad civil society or anti-democratic civil society category. Not only non-democratic method, their agenda is (like establishment of caliphate) also far from democratic category.

*Third*, Islamic populism is evidently intolerant to social, political and religious diversity and differences. The mass mobilization action that demands Ahok to be disqualified from his candidacy of governor of DKI Jakarta and imprisoned proves that Islamic populism is greatly intolerant to minority like Ahok. The other intolerant attitudes and actions are reflected in response to Muslims' different choices, both in Head of Region Election and Presidential Election. In the context of power contestation, the proponents of Islamic populism often spread propaganda of not to pray for late Muslims who are pro and choose the blasphemer

(Ahok), to label Ahok and his supporters as infidel, Chinese, Christian and any other discriminative labels. Similarly, during the Presidential Election, the Islamic populism group frequently spreads hoaxes related to Jokowi's status justified as pro-blasphemer, a regime which criminalize ulama, communist descendant, and a regime which is pro-foreign and *aseng* parties.

Not limited only popular mobilization by non-state actors of the Islamists, the declining quality of democracy in Indonesia is also contributed to by State and non-State actors of the moderate Muslims. Many experts criticize Jokowi's policy in handling the Islamic populism movement. On one hand, Jokowi attempts to reconcile with religious and political elites who are the supporters and even important actors of the Islamic populism movement like K.H. Ma'ruf Amin and Prabowo Subianto by making them part of his administration. This strategy is deemed effective in deconsolidating the Islamic populism movement. At the same time, Jokowi takes an exclusionary attitude towards Islamic populism elements such as FPI (along with Habib Rizieq), HTI, and others. Jokowi's policies to "criminalize" of Islamic populism and opposition elites and the issuance of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law of Prohibition of HTI are deemed as a form of Jokowi's populist authoritarianism, which are against to the values, norms and principles of democracy.

## **B. Suggestion**

Although many experts have had many discussions in various perspectives, the topic of Islamic populism and its consequences for the development of democracy in Indonesia will remain interesting and actual to explore. Many predict that Islamic populism has ended along with the end of Presidential Election 2019 and defeat of these anti-democracy groups in power contestation.

Contra-populism movements are still launched by the State and non-state actors of the moderate Muslims. However, the contra-populism movement will seriously implicate in the development of Islamist groups in religious political activism. The implication which is not less interesting than contra-populism is democracy development in Indonesia. When the State in its alliance with moderate Islamic groups gets more powerful in control and management of public (including political) space, will democracy in Indonesia be more consolidated?

Some studies have discussed this topic and explained that the contra-populism actions in fact contribute to declining quality of democracy in Indonesia. This argumentation is based on temporary finding related to the character of illiberal or democratic militant but anti-pluralism contra-populism movements. In the past few years, the trend of contra-populism movement are likely to have interesting developments, which will also have interesting implications for the process of democracy in Indonesia. Many predict that if the militancy of moderate Muslims gets stronger, it is possible that liberal-progressive moderate Muslims will remain marginalized, which will lead to worsening quality of democracy in Indonesia.

This research restricts its scope of study on discourses and interpretations of experts of Indonesian Muslim scholars (academics and intellectual cum activists) and Indonesianists in understanding the rise of Islamic populism phenomena and its implications for the development of democracy in Indonesia after the New Order. Although the sources are domestic and foreign scholars, but this research cannot compare the two views of the experts. Therefore, we suggest the next researchers to explore these experts' discourses with a comparative approach or study. Although they have rational and liberal scientific traditions,

but the further social, cultural and scientific traditions of the scholars who live in different part of the world will make it challenging to explore their thinking construction comparatively.

In addition, there is still high opportunity to continuously explore Islamic populism in Indonesia both in macro (national) and micro (local) scopes. However, many things related to the populism phenomena have not been explored, deepened and revealed by the reviewers. Intersections of information from the groups that are so far involved in Islamic populism actions, for example, have not been successfully touched. As commonly known, the proponents of Islamic populism are not only from the mainstream Islamists such as HTI, FPI, FUI, Wahdah Islamiyah (WI), and others, but also conservative elements of NU, *pesantren*, Muslim traditionalist elites and also Muhammadiyah. It is certainly interesting to explore and deepen information of these Islamist groups, as well as their connection with mainstream Islamist groups.

In the context of competition for Islamic religious authority and public space in Indonesia, plurality, polarization and internal contestation of conservative-radical Islamist groups and between moderate Islamic groups are also interesting issues. In the context of deradicalization and depopulism, the moderate Muslims have no similar religious attitudes and actions. Some of them understand the contra-populism movement as the representation of Islamic ultra-nationalism, which is not less dangerous than transnationalism. Similarly with the Islamist internal groups, their power gets more consolidated and polarized, both because of internal conflict and intervention of external power.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abts, Koen and Stefan Rummens. 2007. "Populism versus Democracy", *Political Studies*, 55 (2), 405-24.
- Arditi, Benjamin. 2007. *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism, Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Aspinall, Edward. 2015. "Oligarchic populism: Prabowo Subianto's challenge to Indonesian democracy." *Indonesia* 99 (1), 1-28.
- Aspinall, Edward, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton. 2019. "Elite, Masses, and Democratic Decline in Indonesia", *Democratization*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1-22.
- Aspinall, Edward. 2010. "The Irony of Success", *Journal of Democracy*, 21 (2), 20-34
- Aspinall, Edward, Marcus Mietzner and Dick Tommsa, eds. *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2015.
- Assyaukanie, Lutfi. 2017. unholy alliance: ultra-conservatism and political pragmatism in Indonesia, *Thinking ASEAN*, 19, Januari.
- Azra, Azyumardi. 2019. "Populisme, Politik Identitas dan Demokrasi Indonesia", dalam Burhanuddin Muhtadi, *Populisme Politik Identitas & Dinamika Elektoral, Mengurai Jalan*

- Panjang Demokrasi Prosedural*. Malang: Intrans Publishing.
- Bayat, Asef. 2007. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. *Post-Islamisme*. Yogyakarta: LKiS.
- Biaghi, Felix (ed.). 2012. *Pluralisme, Demokrasi dan Toleransi*. Yogyakarta: Ledalero.
- Bogdan, Robert dan Steven J. Taylor. 1993. *Kualitatif Dasar-dasar Penelitian*. Surabaya: Usaha Nasional.
- Bruinessen, Martin van (ed.). 2013. *Contemporary Development in Indonesian Islam Explaining the Conservative Turn*. Singapore: ISEAS.
- Buechier, Michael. 2016. *The Politics of Shari'a Law: Islamist Activists and the State in Democratizing Indonesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cammack, Paul. "The Resurgence of Populism in Latin America", *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 149-161.
- Canovan, Margaret. 2002. "Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy", in Y. Menny and Y. Surrel (ed.) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Canovan, Margaret. 1999. "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies*, XLVII, 2-16.
- Creswell, John W. 2014. *Penelitian Kualitatif dan Desain Riset*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Coniff, Michael L. (ed.). 2012. *Populism in Latin America*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Dijk, Kees van and Nico J.G. 2016. Kaptein (ed.), *Islam, Politics and Change, the Indonesian Experience after the Fall of Suharto*. Leiden University Press.

- Eisinger, Peter. 1973. "The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities", *American Political Review* 67, 11-28.
- Fealy, Greg. 2016. "Bukan Sekedar Ahok: Menjelaskan Aksi Massa pada 2 Desember", dalam *Indonesia At Melbourne*. Melbourne University, 12 Desember.
- Fealy, Greg dan Sally White. 2008. *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*. Singapura: ISEAS.
- Fealy, Greg. 2011. "Indonesian Politics in 2011: Democratic Regression and Yudhoyono's Regal Incumbency", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 47 (3), 333-53.
- Ford, Michele and Thomas Pepinsky, eds. 2014. *Beyond Oligarchy: Wealth, Power, and Contemporary Indonesian Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Garadian, Endi Aulia. 2017. "Membaca Populisme Islam Model Baru", Book Review, *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 24 (2), 379-393.
- Gidron, Noam & Bart Bonikowski. "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda", *Working Paper Series*, Weatherhead Center. Harvard University, 1-38.
- Hadiz, Vedi R. 2005. *Dinamika Kekuasaan: Ekonomi Politik Indonesia Pasca-Soeharto*. Jakarta: LP3ES.
- Hadiz, Vedi R. 2017. "Indonesian Politics in 2017. Indonesias Year of Democratic Setback: Towards a New Phase of Deepening Illiberalism?", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 3.
- Hadiz, Vedi R. 2016. *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hadiz, Vedi R. 2010. *Localising Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Hadiz, Vedi R. 2006. "The Left and Indonesia's 1960s: The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting", dalam *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7 (4), 554-569.
- Haider, E.g. J. 1995. *The Freedom I Mean*. Pine Plains, Swan.
- Hasan, Noorhaidi. 2008. *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militansi, dan Pencarian Identitas di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru*. Jakarta: LP3ES-KITLV.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2012. *Islam Politik di Dunia Kontemporer: Konsep, Genealogi, dan Teori*. Yogyakarta: SUKA-Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. *The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere*. Springer.
- Hasan, Noorhaidi. 2019. "Tantangan Islam Politik dan Krisis Legitimasi Ulama", dalam Noorhaidi Hasan dkk (ed.) *Ulama dan Negara-Bangsa: Membaca Masa Depan Islam Politik di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: PusPIDeP dan Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Hayward, Jack (ed.). 1996. *Elitism, Populism, and European Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hefner, Robert W. 2001. *Civil Islam, Islam dan Demokratisasi di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: LKiS.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton University Press.
- Heryanto, Ariel. 2015. *Identitas dan Kenikmatan: Politik Budaya Layar Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Hwang, Julie Chernov. 2009. *Umat Bergerak Mobilisasi Damai Kaum Islamis di Indonesia, Malaysia, dan Turki*. Jakarta: Freedom Institute.
- Ichwan, Moch Nur. 2016. "MUI, Gerakan Islamis dan Umat Mengambang", dalam *Ma'arif* Vol. 11 (2), Desember, 1-104

- IPAC. 2018. *After Ahok: The Islamist Agenda in Indonesia*. IPAC Report No. 44, 6 April 2018, 2-3.
- IPAC. 2019. *Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence on Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign*. IPAC Report No. 55, 15 March.
- Ismail, Salwa. 2004. "Being Muslim: Islam, Islamism and Identity Politics", dalam *Government and Opposition* 39, No. 4.
- Jati, Wasisto Raharjo. 2017. "Trajektori Populisme Islam di Kalangan Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia", *Prisma*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 19-27
- Jansen, Robert S. 2011. 'Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism'. *Sociological Theory*, 29 (2), 75-96.
- Jones, Sidney. 2016. Why Indonesian extremists are gaining ground, *The interpreter*, 1 November.
- Jones, G.S. 1983. *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Kaltwasser, Cristobal Rovira. 2012. "The Ambivalence of Populism: Threat and Corrective for Democracy", *Democratization*, 19 (2), 184-208.
- Kahin, George McTurnan. 1970. *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press,.
- Kenny, Paul D. 2017. *Populism and Patronage Why Populism Win Elections in India, Asia, and Beyond*. USA-OSO: Oxford University Press.
- Kenny, Paul D. 2019. *Populism in Shouteasht Asia*. United Kingdom: Crambridge University press.
- Kolig, Erich. 2001. "Modernisation Without Secularisation?" Civil Pluralism, Democratisation and Re-Islamisation in

- Indonesia, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 3, 2, December.
- Laclau, Ernesto. 1977. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory Capitalism - Fascism - Populism*. London: NLB, 1977.
- Lindsey, Tom. 2016. Blasphemy charge reveals real fault lines in Indonesia democracy, *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 25 November.
- Madung, Otto Gusti . 2018. "Populisme, Krisis Demokrasi dan Antagonisme", *Jurnal Ledalero*, Vol. 17, No. 7, Juni, 58-78.
- Makin, Al. 2017. "Homogenizng Indonesian Islam: Persecution of The Shia Group in Yogyakarta", *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 24 (1), 1-31.
- Maliki, Zaenuddin. 2004. *Agama priyayi, Makna Agama di Tangan Elit Penguasa*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Marwa.
- Mietzner, Marcus. 2016. "Indonesia's Growing Islamist Populism", dalam *Asia Dialogues*, 19 Desember.
- Mietzner, Marcus. Indonesia's democratic stagnation: anti-reformist elites and resilient civil society, *Democratization*. 19 (2), 209-229.
- Mietzner, Marcus & Burhanuddin Muhtadi. 2018. "Expalining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Groups and the Politic of Accommodation", *Asian Studies Review*, 1-19.
- Mietzner, Marcus. 2018. "Fighting Illiberalism with Illiberalism: Islamist Populism and Democratic Deconsolidation in Indonesia." *Pacific Affairs*, 91 (2), 261-282.
- Mietzner, Marcus. 2015. *Reinventing Asian Populism: Jokowi's Rise, Democracy and Political Contestation in Indonesia*. Honolulu-Hawai'i: East-West Center.

- Menchik, Jeremy. 2019. "Moderate Muslim and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia", *Asian Studies Review*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1-18.
- Moffitt, Benjamin and Simon Tormey. 2014. "Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatization, and Political Style", *Political Studies*, 62 (2), 381-397.
- Mouzelis, N. 1985. "On the concept of populism: Populist and clientelist modes of incorporation in semiperipheral polities." *Politics & Society* 14 (3), 329-348.
- Mudde, Cas. "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, Vol 39 (4), 542-563.
- Mudde, Cas. 2007. *Populist Radical Rights Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,.
- Mudhoffir, Abdil Mughis, dkk. 2017. "Populisme Islam dan Tantangan Demokrasi di Indonesia", *Prisma*, Vol. 36 (3), 2017, 48-59.
- Muhtadi, Burhanuddin. 2012. *Dilema PKS Suara dan Syariah*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Muhtadi, Burhanuddin. 2019. *Populisme Politik Identitas & Dinamika Elektoral, Mengurai Jalan Panjang Demokrasi Prosedural*. Malang: Instrans Publishing.
- Mujani, Saiful. 2007. *Muslim Demokrat: Islam, Budaya Demokrasi, dan Partisipasi Politik di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Muryanto, Bambang. 2017. "NU, Muhammadiyah Suffer Setbacks over their Roles in Society", dalam *The Jakarta Post*, January 19.
- Levitsky, Steven and James Loxton. 2013. 'Populism and competitive authoritarianism in the Andes', *Democratization*, Vol. 20 (1), 107-136.

- Linz, Juan J. & Alfred Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Pappas, Takis S. 2013. 'Populist Democracies: Post – Authoritarian Greece and Post-Communist Hungary', *Opposition and Government*.
- Pasquino, G. 2007. "Populism and Democracy", in Daniel Albertazzi and Duncan MacDonell (ed.) *Twenty-first Century Populism*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York.
- Pepinsky, Thomas B., R. William Liddle, Saiful Mujani. 2018. *Kesalehan dan Pilihan Politik: Memahami Kebangkitan Islam-Politik dari Perspektif Indonesia*. Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group.
- Perdana, Ari A. 2017. "Menguatnya Populisme: Trump, Brexit hingga FPI", *Harian Indoprogres*, 23 Januari.
- Postel, Charles. 2007. *The Populist Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Power, Thomas P. 2018. "Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 54 (3), 307-338.
- Putra, Bima Satria. 2017. "Kebangkitan Global Fundamentalisme dan Ultra-Nasionalis: Bukan Akhir dari Sejarah". *Anarkis.org*, 22 Februari.
- Rahardjo, M. Dawam. 1999. "Gerakan Keagamaan dan Penguatan Civil Society, Kata Pengantar", dalam Asep Gunawan dan Dewi Nurjulianti (ed.) *Gerakan Keagamaan dalam Penguatan Civil Society, Analisis Perbandingan Visi dan Misi LSM dan Ormas Berbasis Keagamaan*, Jakarta: TAF dan LSAF.

- Ritzer, George. 2009. *Sosiologi Ilmu Pengetahuan Berparadigma Ganda*. Jakarta: Radjawali Pers.
- Roy, Oliver. 1996. *The Failure of Political Islam*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Sirry, Mun'im A. 2003. *Membendung Militansi Agama, Iman dan Politik dalam Masyarakat Modern*, Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Sidel, John T. 2006. *Riots, Programs and Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Sederberg, Peter C. 2003. "Global Terrorism: Problem of Challenge and Response", dalam Charles Kegley (ed.) *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*. Prentice Hall.
- Stanly, Ben. 2008. "The thin Ideology of Populism", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, February, 13 (1), 95-110.
- Sullivan, John L., James Pierson, dan George E. Marcus. 1982. *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tarrow, Sydeny. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Tibi, Bassam. 2016. *Islam dan Islamisme*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Tomsa, Dirk. 2009. "Electoral Democracy in a Devided Society: The 2008 Gubernatorial Election in Maluku, Indonesia", *South East Asia Research*, 17 (2), 229-259.
- Varagur, K. 2017. Indonesia's moderate Islam is slowly crumbling, *Foreign Policy*, 14 February.
- Weyland, Kurt. 1999. "Neoliberal Populism in Latin America and Eastern Europe", *Comparative Politics* 31, No. 4, 379-401.
- Weyland, Kurt. 2001. 'Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 34 (1), 1-22.

- Wildan, Muhammad. 2016. "Islamism and Democratization in the Post 411 and 212 Rallies of Indonesia", in *Thinking Asean*, Issue 19/January, 2-5
- Yasmine, Shafira Elnanda. 2015. "Arab Spring: Islam dalam Gerakan Sosial dan Demokrasi Timur Tengah", *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik*, Vol. 28, (2), 106-113

### **Mass and Social Media:**

- <https://www.bps.go.id/pencarian.html?searching=indeks+demokrasi+indonesia&yt1=Cari> <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/bps-indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-2018-tergolong-kategori-sedang-/5019765.html>
- <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1138247/saat-jokowi-cerita-hoax-saracen-dan-obor-rakyat/full&view=ok>
- <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasion-al/20190108195628-32-359394/obor-rakyat-kembali-terbit-jelang-pilpres-2019>
- <https://www.tribunnews.com/tag/obor-rakyat>.
- <https://indopress.id/eksklusif-misteri-jumlah-massa-aksi-super-damai-212>.
- <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/trensosial-38204802>
- [http://nasional.kompas.com/2017/05/08/14382891/ini-alasan-pemerintah-bubarkan-hiznut.tahrir.indonesia](http://nasional.kompas.com/2017/05/08/14382891/ini-alasan-pemerintah-bubarkan-hiznut-tahrir-indonesia).
- <https://news.detik.com/berita/3562829/buya-syafi-isu-perppu-ormas-digoreng-untuk-pemilu-2019>.
- <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasion-al/20181128064816-32-349787/perpecahan-212-jelang-reuni-akbar-di-tahun-politik>.

- <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181128064816-32-349787/perpecahan-212-jelang-reuni-akbar-di-tahun-politik>
- <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/3798455/zulkifli-hasan-ingin-massa-reuni-212-jadi-pelopor-pemilu-damai>
- <https://katadata.co.id/berita/2019/05/13/gerakan-people-power-siasat-terakhir-prabowo-jelang-22-mei>
- <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-48244103>
- <https://tirto.id/revolusi-yang-berawal-dari-media-sosial-cqNP>.
- Kompas.com, 05/01/2017
- <https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2015/08/13/337/1195643/indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-2014-terbaik-sejak-2009>
- <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/2568262/indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-2015-turun-ini-penyebabnya>
- <https://tirto.id/efeU>