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WHEN THE MIDDLE CLASS COINCIDES WITH ISLAMISM: A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF ISLAMIC POPULISM IN RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF INDONESIA

Akh. Muzakki
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya
akh.muzakki@uinsa.ac.id

Abstract

The growing number of Muslim middle class has turned public attention not only to their economic capacity but also to their religious orientation. The recent developments in Indonesia have witnessed that the Muslim middle class not only come up with the change in public life due to their increasing socio-political and economic influence but also brought about the shifting set of religious and ideological inclinations in their political orientation. This preliminary study contends that the Muslim middle class in Indonesia has increasingly engaged with Islamic populism in recent developments, while simultaneously, their evolving activism has contributed to the emergence of Islamic populism as a novel manifestation of Islamism. It, hence, places the theory of Islamism and the Muslim middle class in a complementary position to sufficiently comprehend the rising Islamism in new faces and expressions among the Indonesian Muslim middle class. In the first part, this article examines the concept of the middle class, including its relation to Muslims in Indonesia. The focus of this debate is the diversity of Muslim middle-class formation in Indonesia and the emergence of Islamism within various segments of this social class. The subsequent analysis focuses on Islamism and the shift of the Muslim middle class towards Islamic populism.

Keywords: *Muslim Middle Class, Islamism, Islamic Populism.*

A. Introduction

"Now everyone can fly" is the popular slogan of AirAsia, an airline operating in Indonesia, despite its heavy Malaysian base. However, this catchphrase, in reality, also serves as a symbol for the growing number of Indonesians who utilize air travel for social mobility, particularly for the *Hajj* and *Umrah* rituals, which are essentially forms of pilgrimage. The number of pilgrims and Umrah enthusiasts is increasing day by day. In several regions, the queue list for Hajj registrants has spanned more than 30 years. This type of religious ritual-based mobility is not a singular occurrence. This view is followed by other Muslim practices, ranging from matters related to Muslim fashion styles and so-called religious tourism to motorized vehicles, which point to a higher level of economic establishment for Muslim individuals. This phenomenon has remarkably emerged, especially in the last ten years. Indeed, the urban Muslims mark a segment of the agents of this new trend. However, this tendency is not merely the domination of urban Muslims but has begun to be increasingly commonly practiced by Muslim individuals in rural areas.

The increasing number of Muslim individuals with a higher level of economic establishment above shows the bigger portrait of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia, making it a crucial concept for understanding this emerging phenomenon. However, in fact, the emerging phenomenon of middle-class Muslims can be identified not only from the trends in their production and consumption patterns in their daily life, including their practice of charity and giving (Triantoro et al., 2021) but also from their religious expressions in responding to the phenomena around them,

especially in political matters. Not a few of them, for example, have become the main proponents of political Islamism, a concept briefly defined as a social movement encouraging Islam not only as a normative guide for their daily life but also as an ideological basis for political power movements by making Islam its political base (Bubalo & Fealy, 2005; Roy, 1994).

The movements of the so-called *Gerakan 212* (the 212 Movement), which dominated the 2017 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election (see Syahputra, 2020), and the *Kesatuan Aksi Menyelamatkan Indonesia* (KAMI, Action Coalition to Save Indonesia), which emerged in the aftermath of the 2019 General and Presidential Election (RRI, 2020), have significantly contributed to the rise of Islamism in Indonesia's current developments. This phenomenon persists despite the effective suppression of the Islamist narrative through the dissolution of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) on 19 July 2017 and *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI, Islamic Defenders Front) on 30 December 2020. What is even more interesting is that the advocates of Islamism have also begun to shift the issues of their movement developed in their campaigns from just being oriented towards making Islam the political basis for the power of the bureaucracy and the state to day-to-day problems as the basis of the movement such as poverty, corruption, and social injustice, popularly known as populism. The emergence of groups such as those who called themselves the children of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI, *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*) after the shooting of six paramilitary personnel affiliated with FPI on 6 December 2020 and the imprisonment of Riziq Shihab after the crowd

case of thousands of people in the Petamburan complex of FPI headquarters and the Megamendung Sharia complex in Bogor in late December 2020 (Detikcom, 2020), increasingly shows how Islamist supporters are now starting to build their public self-image by promoting Islamic populism, briefly defined as Islamism which tangles Islamic social and political movement by campaigning "against an elite characterized as being immoral and rapacious" (*Hadiz*, 2016).

Scholars have extensively examined Islamism in recent Indonesian developments, particularly its connection to extremism. However, fewer studies have focused on how it manifests as Islamic populism in the public domain. Scholars such as Barton (2005), Bubalo and Fealy (2005), Rijal (2005), Lim (2011), and Carnegie (2013), as well as Sakai and Fauzia (2014), discuss the phenomenon of Islamism in recent developments in Indonesia while placing it in the context of extremism and conservatism, whether in ideologies or practical acts. Other scholars, including Platzdasch (2009), Osman (2011), and Harmakaputra (2015), have also penned similar articles on Islamism, albeit with distinct perspectives, tying them to party politics and/or the role of Islamic politics in the evolution of democracy in Indonesia. Apart from these, there is research work by Aspinall (2007) that relates Islamism to the nationalism movement.

Some other research has also been done to assess the influence of the Indonesian Muslim middle class on socio-political, cultural, and even economic changes in the country. Writings by Hasan (2011) and Heryanto (2011), for example, suggest the tendency of academic studies to view the Indonesian Muslim middle class concerning socio-

political developments. However, there is a slight difference in focus between the two scholars. Hasan highlights the use of religious symbols displayed by Islamism among middle-class Muslims to meet their practical political purposes rather than strengthening their Islamist religious understanding. Heryanto identifies economic success accompanied by Islamic political accomplishment as facilitating the rise of the middle class, opening space for the Muslim middle class to enter and create the so-called Islamic popular culture.

Other scholarly works have also explored expressions of the Indonesian Muslim middle class, but their focus is oriented only to matters of daily consumption, such as those related to religious culture, fashion styles, and marriage. Scholarly works such as those by Rinaldo (2008), Hasbullah (2000), Situmorang et al. (2017), Beta (2014), and Soekarba and Melati (2017) fall into this category. The collaborative work of Rozak et al. (2019) focuses more on the phenomenon of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia from an economic perspective. They emphasize that the increasing number of Muslim middle-class members in Indonesia is a logical consequence of a combination of three factors: pro-market government economic policies, robust market mechanisms within social transactions in the public sphere, and the development of information technology. These factors have led to a stronger preference for modern lifestyles that their earlier traditional traditions could not provide. Similar to the collaborative work of Rozak et al. (2018), they also focus on the Indonesian Muslim middle class from an economic perspective. However, they link the financial establishment that facilitates the development of the Muslim middle class

with their consumption patterns and self-presentation of popular piety.

An important note must be made here that, apart from the related works above, no work examines the involvement of middle-class Muslims towards Islamic populism as a new face of expression of Islamism in the latest developments in Indonesia. This article explores Islamic populism as the new face of the Islamist movement in the latest developments in Indonesia. It argues that the emergence of Islamic populism is an expression of the new look of Islamism in the public sphere as a strategy to channel Islamist values and spirits into the real problems of the community so that the Islamism movement is inseparably included in the cognitive basis of the public. Furthermore, it argues that a certain category of the Muslim middle class has moved to be the driving force and, at the same time, the agent of the shift of Islamism to Islamic populism.

In order to develop the aforementioned arguments; this article conducts a preliminary study of Islamic populism as the new appearance of Islamism in Indonesia through the activism of the Muslim middle class. For this reason, it places the theory of Islamism and the Muslim middle class in a complementary position to sufficiently comprehend the latest developments regarding the phenomenon of the gradually rising Islamism in new faces and expressions among the Indonesian Muslim middle class. The study of these two theories will serve as an important entry point to discuss the emergence and development of Islamic populism among the current Indonesian Muslim middle class. In the first part, this article will discuss the concept of the middle class, including

its relation to Muslims in Indonesia. What follows after that is the examination of the concept of Islamism as well as the shift of its tendency towards Islamic populism.

B. Revisiting the Theory of Middle Class in an Indonesian Context

The middle class in Indonesia has been experiencing a definite increasing trend. The 2021 Macroeconomic Framework and Fiscal Policy Principles (KEM-PPKF) report entitled "Percepatan Pemulihan Ekonomi dan Penguatan Reformasi" [Accelerating Economic Recovery and Strengthening Reform] by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, it is explained that this growing trend of the portion of the middle-class population in the productive age is a contributing factor for the rise of the demographic bonus. In 2002, the proportion of the middle class was only 7% of the total population or 14.1 million people. Then, in 2019, it tripled to 21% of the total population or 57.3 million people. The Ministry of Finance assesses that the increasing number of the middle class significantly impacts the Indonesian economy, as seen from their consumption contribution. In the same period, the share of middle-class consumption increased from 20.6% to 43.3% of total consumption (CNBC Indonesia, 2020).

However, the increasing influence of the middle class pertains to the economy and the nation's social policies. Experiences in a number of developed countries, such as Europe since the late eighteenth century (Kocka, 2004), America (Samuel, 2013), and Australia (Barcan, 1955; Butler et al., 2017), have also confirmed this argument. In France, for example, the middle class, as such, actually strengthens

democracy. The same thing also happens in Australia, where recent developments show that the middle class is not only related to democracy but also deals with issues of population migration in that country. Indonesia is also no exception. The existence of the middle class is increasingly making a positive contribution to political expressions in the public sphere, including in relation to democracy (Rozak et al., 2019). Therefore, the middle-class formulation in Indonesia deserves a thorough analysis of the universal concept of the middle class, as discussed below.

Various perspectives have emerged in identifying and simultaneously measuring the concept of the middle class. Upon simplification, these viewpoints can be classified into two principal schools of thought: Marxian and Weberian. The Marxian school deserves to be mentioned earlier in this context than the Weberian because this perspective is indeed more dominantly and widely used by observers in delineating the conceptual framework of the middle class. This perspective uses economics as the main measure, and it is in this context that the middle class, in this Marxian perspective, is framed in terms of economic meanings and indicators. On the other hand, the Weberian perspective does not become the dominant school in delineating the concept of the middle class, but it remains interesting and appropriate in discussing the notion of the middle class. This is particularly pertinent when the notion of the middle class is contextualized within the framework of the social structure that underpins a group of individuals.

As a basic characteristic, the middle-class group has a typical character as the social group that is much less tolerant

than others when seeing various kinds of socio-political and even economic depravity. Criticism is indeed a word that can represent the most "fussy" and "intractable" power of the middle class in question. This is what makes the middle class enriched with very high bargaining power in the eyes of the political and economic rulers. Historical experiences in several regions, such as in Europe (Lane, 2010), America, including Latin America (Cadet, 2018), and Asia in general (Hanna, 2003; Lange & Meier, 2009), especially Indonesia (Tanter & Young, 1999), prove that change often originates from and is initiated by the middle class.

The question interesting to raise here is, where does the source of the emergence of the middle class come from? What criteria can be used to identify and measure the middle-class group at the same time? If a Marxian perspective is used, the answer is immediately known as economics. This aspect distinguishes the middle class from the rest, especially the lower class. The class analysis built into the relations between social classes is carried out in the framework of economic power and capacity that distinguishes the middle class from the lower class. The index of income and expenditure is often used as a basic principle for illustrating the construct of the middle class.

When viewed from an economic point of view as popularly delineated by the Marxian perspective in general above, the measurement tool for gauging the middle class seems to be very clear. If, for daily consumptive needs, a person spends less than 50 percent of his monthly formal professional income, and the rest is for leisure and life savings, then they fall under the middle-class category. However, if all

of his monthly income is used up for daily consumptive needs (or even minus in many cases), they cannot be considered middle class. This analysis scheme is developed following the theoretical framework Gerke (2000) produced in her writing entitled "Global Lifestyles under Local Conditions: The New Order Middle Class" in Beng-Huat's edited anthology, Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities.

Such an economic-based analysis perspective is not always relevant when describing the reality of Indonesia. In this country, academics, for example, are a unique social entity from the standpoint of class analysis, as they constitute a middle-class group following the power of their ideas that can potentially bring about changes not only at the government level but also at the social base level. There is an intellectual power that points to the breadth and depth of the substance of the ideas held by academics. However, this is not the case from an economic standpoint, as in their position as university teaching staff *per se*, for example, they cannot be categorized as middle class if the analysis scheme used refers to economic capacity with a calculation mechanism framework such as the one mainly developed by Gerke above. This wide-ranging picture applies to the condition of Indonesian academics in general. However, the situation may be different for academics working for higher education institutions, especially those under the category of universities with the legal status of either *Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Berbadan Hukum* (PTNBH, Legal Entity_Based State Universities) or *Badan Layanan Umum* (BLU, Public Service Bodies), as they get paid mostly higher than other academics in general as a result of the relatively high self-sufficient fiscal of this kind of universities.

As a case, the paradoxical reality concerning the condition of academics in Indonesia raises a crucial question: Is this the typical character of the Indonesian middle class? Indeed, in several pieces of literature, such as by Robison (1990) and Lev (1990), it has been suggested that the Indonesian middle-class formation does not have a clear definition. There are two contributing factors. *First*, class formation in Indonesian society has not yet reached the point where society can direct attention to class consciousness or build movements based on class solidarity. *Second*, most people only recognize two strata of social class, *wong gede* (lit. rich or influential people) and *wong cilik* (lit. poor or ordinary people) or *orang gedongan* (lit. rich-urban people) and *orang kampungan* (lit. poor-rural people), without any clear and definite differentiation (Mahasin, 1990).

Observers disagree in getting a better sense of the socioeconomic characteristics of the Indonesian middle class. As described earlier, a number of observers, such as Tanter and Young (1990) and Mackey (1984), maintain that this peculiarity indeed occurs in Indonesia, compared to middle-class formation in Europe, for example. Other observers, as represented by Wahid (1990) and Heryanto (1999), suggest that the paradoxical reality above is not typical of an Indonesian social phenomenon but rather a contradictory condition.

If Wahid's and Heryanto's argument above were expanded, for example, the possible sentence that may come afterward would be as follows: paradox remains paradoxical, and it does not need to be interpreted with any of such a spirit of Indonesia's peculiarity, and typicality. This is because Indonesia is a small part of the multicultural

world community. Suppose the arguments for Indonesia's peculiarity and typicality are based on Indonesian culture, generally categorically included in Malay culture. In that case, they soon appear to be groundless because Malaysia, which shares a common cultural base with Indonesia, has a much more fortunate academic reality. Muslim academics in Malaysia are the middle class, both in intellectual aspirations and economics.

Such a particular socioeconomic reality of Muslim academics appears to be the same for all their fellow Indonesian academics in general. As one source of the middle class, what is experienced by Muslim academics as part of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia is no different from their colleagues of non-Muslim academics. Their socioeconomic conditions all tend to be alike (for further discussion about the salary structure of Indonesian academics (Hill & Wie, 2012). They, as suggested by Welch (2007), on average, "have not traditionally been terribly well paid." This is mainly due to the fact that the salary system that is implemented does not consider the performance and productivity of research, so those with high and low research productivity tend to be given equal income (Rakhmani & Siregar, 2016). More than that, the low index of mobility of academics across tertiary institutions and the salary structure that gives bureaucratic administrative authorities so much power that academics and researchers rely heavily on them also tend to be another cause of the socioeconomic portrait of academics in Indonesia (for further details, see Guggenheim, 2013), except for academics who are involved in the political processes of power contestation as consultants and/or advisors to bureaucratic politics which gives them excessive access to financial resources.

However, academics, in general, take in a nice way the role of the middle class, who are still respected, and even cherished, in Indonesia due to their relatively preserved personal independence along with the strong, influential power of their ideas in the long passage of time in Indonesia's development. Using the term "intelligentsia" in the Indonesian experience across history, Dick (1985) suggests that educated people or those who are literally academics have often played an important role in changing Indonesia following their position as the middle class. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to explain, as previously delineated as well, that academics represent a middle-class group in terms of aspirations. Criticism is very closely related to the character of academics, as is the middle-class group in general. Social-public morality appears to be the main consideration for the emergence of criticism in a number of academic circles. The public finally perceives the strength of academics as a moral force. In recent developments, Indonesian academics have contributed to the strengthening of the processes of democratic governance, especially in local politics. To illustrate the so-called noble socio-academic position of academics or campus scholars in this regard, Kusman (2015) argues that intellectuals have played a pivotal role in governance process and democratic practices not only in relation to their position as knowledge-producers but also socio-political activists, both in society and bureaucratic politics.

The paradoxical reality among the middle class of academics tends to be inseparable from the contradiction between the socioeconomic conditions and the socio-political standpoint played by academics. In this context,

the movement of several academics to become political consultants and/or advisors to the bureaucracy of power, as mentioned above, on the one hand, importantly provides them with access to financial resources that are greater in number than their academic peers in general, but on the other hand, has an impact on requestioning of their positioning and independency as a middle class that is basically critical against political authorities. Regardless of such conditions, the public perceives academics as a trusted, independent middle class.

Thus, as explained above, Wahid and Heryanto's arguments appear to be self-affirmed, suggesting that paradox remains the same, showing contradiction and not peculiarity. This is exemplified by the case of middle-class academics; indeed, further instances beyond the academic sphere can substantiate this thesis. However, an important point that can be made in this context is that the concept of the middle class formulated by several observers so far has tended to be ethnocentric by basing itself on a treasury of social structures that are different from the same socio-cultural formation in Indonesian local communities.

Therefore, the Marxian perspective cannot be used as the one and only theoretical scheme to explain the Indonesian middle class. The Weberian perspective is then important to be included in developing and, at the same time, interpreting the concept and structure of the middle class in this country. Re-interpreting middle-class theory, especially in relation to the Indonesian context, seems to be increasingly necessary when connected with the latest phenomenon that has recently enlivened the Indonesian political scene in the form of Islamism in a number of circles of this social class.

Following the paradoxical reality of the Muslim middle class, like others in general above, this latest development further encourages the need to re-examine the concept of Islamism itself, as outlined in the following section.

C. From Islamism to Islamic Populism: Reconfiguring New Expressions of the Indonesian Muslim Middle-Class

The phenomenon of Islamism, which casts Islam not just as a religion but also as a political, ideological basis for state power, as reflectively defined by Tibi (2012), Martin and Barzegar (2010), and Bayat (2013), is not exclusively peculiar in Indonesia. Similar phenomena and movements also emerge in many countries (see the different practices of Islamism in a range of countries, from Malaysia, Turkey, to Iran in Hale & Özbudun, 2010; Liow, 2009; Rajaee, 2007), irrespective of the number of Muslim populations in them. However, this Islamism phenomenon is more expressively persistent in countries where the Muslim population tends to be quite large while the state's grand narrative is not formally built on Islamic normative clauses (for further discussion, see Saeed, 2003). The population numbers become the distinctive context for the ideological movement of Islamism. The institutional name of the movement may differ from one country to another, but the spirit tends to be the same: it wants to cast Islam not only as a guide for daily life but also as the basis for state political ideology.

The diversity of Muslim middle-class formation in Indonesia is no different from the country's fellow middle class. However, the diversity of socioeconomic structures

makes the socio-political expression of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia heterogeneous. Not all Muslim middle-class individuals are the primary source and support for Islamic moderatism in Indonesia, which is able to bring together religion and state relations in harmony, including with regard to their religiosity, as has so far been conveyed by scholars such as Ali and Purwandi (2017) and Rakhmani (2019). Some of the Muslim middle class have even become supporters and initiators for the development of ideas and practices of Islamism in this country (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018). They not only come from an economic class with a well-established occupation profession in the economic sector but also from academics and/or community leaders who may not be economically as well-established as other Muslim middle-class groups, but they come with the ideas and practices of Islamism in Indonesia.

Several cases can be quoted in this context. The National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT, *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme*), for example, has released astounding data that in 2017 there was 39 percent of Indonesian students from well-known universities in 15 provinces in Indonesia exposed to radicalism (CNN Indonesia, 2018). Furthermore, the State Intelligence Agency (BIN, *Badan Intelijen Negara*) has also stated that 24 percent of the students have agreed to carry out jihad for the establishment of an Islamic state (CNN Indonesia, 2018). All of this means that the diversity of the sources of the Indonesian Muslim middle class also has implications for the diversity of their ideas and practices against the state, including their current movement through Islamism. The so-called 212 movement, which was

mostly driven by one of the Muslim middle-class variants, has also become another face of the Islamism movement in recent developments of the Indonesian Muslim middle class.

The expression of Islamism, in its early development, tended to use the "underground movement" as a struggle strategy to the public sphere. The central part of this development is the transmission of ideas driven through social and political networks in the non-formal form of the *dakwah* (Islamic preaching) scheme. This so-called non-formal form results from the fact that the movement mode Islamists have carried out does not use formal political vehicles in the political party structure but maximizes *dakwah* channels and activities. There is a tendency for them to make use of *dakwah* as an essential political instrument for the growth and spread of Islamism as well as the recruitment of followers from the grassroots level.

The emergence of Islamism on the surface of formal politics is then just waiting for momentum. When conditions allow, Islamism will reveal its face to become and take the form of a political party. The *Partai Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS, the Malaysian Islamic Party) in Malaysia (Zain, 2014) and PKS in Indonesia (Machmudi, 2008), along with their own historical dynamics, are particular examples in this regard. However, when conditions are not possible or enabling for an extended period of time, the expression of Islamism takes the form of political violence, one of which is through extremism. Therefore, in this development, Islamism appears to be very close to intolerant ideologies (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018) and practices of radicalism and even terrorism. Indeed, Islamism in its normative sense, is not extremism. However, following

the development of expressions of extremism that have marked the growth of Islamism in certain areas, Islamism itself tends to be synonymous, even though it does not appear to be highly identical, with radicalism and even terrorism (for further discussion about such a relationship between Islamism and terrorism, see Fair et al., 2019).

The expressions of Islamism that are close to radicalism and even extremism above then lead the face of this ideological movement to lose favorable political incentives in the public sphere. This is especially so when what can be identified as secularism keeps its capacity firmly to demonstrate its political power (Assyaukanie, 2011; Elson, 2012). In this development, the supporters of Islamism are faced with strong resistance from the general public. Even at a certain point, the social, religious, and political expressions are considered by its proponents to be detrimental to Islamism itself because the level of public acceptance of it tends to decline. Of course, this condition is not at all favorable for the strengthening of Islamism in the public sphere on the one hand and the continuation of the ideological movement referred to in subsequent times on the other hand.

For the sake of sustaining its socio-political existence in the midst of its unceasingly declining public image, ideologues and supporters of Islamism then try to strengthen their presence in society by addressing popular issues throughout their campaign and providing assistance to the agenda and concrete needs of society in general. Issues such as good governance, anti-corruption, and the so-called drug-free life consumption have become important concerns in this new trend of Islamism. There is a strong will among ideologues

and supporters of Islamism to change their self-image by solidifying their attendance and dealing with concrete public issues faced in everyday life. The agenda of making Islam the basis for the country's political power remains the main basis of the movement, but the expression of Islamism is manifested in the form of advocating measures against the real-concrete problems faced by society at large.

In this new trend, the concept of Islamic populism has begun to emerge. Islamism has started to appear through the face and expression of Islamic populism in daily public life. The supporters of Islamism seek to manage the real problems faced by the community through proper and adequate assistance and facilitation by means of introducing and solidifying the optional offerings of Islamic concepts while keeping the campaigning of the so-called mismanagement of public space by secularism. The advocates of Islamism capitalize on the poorly-managed practices of the existing public space by secular parties as momentum to strengthen their ideology of Islamism through solid advocacy on the real needs of society, which the state or government tends to fail to fulfill. They are further inclined, at the same time, to make use of such a bad condition as an opportunity to strengthen the ideology of Islamism into the cognitive base of society. The public then indirectly feels the presence of Islamism with a particular solution to the real problems of their lives.

So, Islamic populism is the new face of Islamism, and this does not happen exclusively in Indonesia but also in many countries (Hadiz, 2013, 2016, 2020). In Indonesia, for example, many supporters of Islamism have begun to shift the issue of their campaign from merely vulgarly propagating

Islam to becoming the ideological basis of the state, or at least to constitute the counter-ideology against Pancasila, to developing practical practices in coming to terms with concrete problems facing the broader community as the basis for the movement (Jati, 2013). They have raised currently striking issues (such as the increase in fuel oil, which is considered not pro-poor, the never-reduced level of corruption acts as a form of harm to the conscience and public morals, and the endlessly poor governance of the government bureaucracy) as an impetus to send messages to the public about the pockmarked face of the country when secular forces led it. Integral to this kind of strategy is their agenda to remind the public of the need for an alternative ideology based on Islamic normativity that could be a driving force for improving public space. Included in this scope is the political movement of the supporters of Islamism through utilizing religion to mobilize the Muslim community to go against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, popularly known as "Ahok," and his political vehicles in the case of "Ahok"'s controversial statements regarding the intended meaning and interpretation of the Qur'anic verse on the Chapter al-Ma'idah number (51) throughout 2016-2017 in relation to the march towards the 2017 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election (Amal, 2020).

In Egypt, the poor performance of the public space governance also triggers the growth of Islamic populism. Al-Ikhawan al-Muslimun (or IM; see Bayat, 2007) is an example of an Islamist group that has changed the movement's strategy from carrying out the Islamic caliphate as a concrete form of Islamism in the Egyptian national political field to developing Islamic populism. Apart from the motive behind

the strategic change meant for the sake of winning national political contestation, the change in strategy by promoting Islamic populism is manifested in, among other things, the democratization movement to invite the public to restore people power and the anti-corruption movement that has harmed the interests of the people at large due to the corruption acts by the ruling regime. IM leaders carried out such a change in strategy in the aftermath of the Egyptian People movement, better known as the "25 January 2011 Revolution", in the political race toward the 2012 Presidential Election. Although the main agenda remains on the establishment of the Islamic caliphate, IM leaders capitalize on Islamism through a strategy of developing popular issues that fall under the category of Islamic populism in order to gain broader public sympathy (Purnomo, 2019).

Through the promotion and advocation of populist issues above, the proponents of Islamism then sublimate or subtly insert the message of Islamism into popular agendas in public life. Because the message of Islamism is not developed and transmitted into society in a very vulgar manner, the community is gradually becoming fascinated by the agenda of Islamic populism conveyed by the pioneers of Islamism above. It is at this point that Islamism begins to find fertile ground for its development in the eyes of today's society amidst the poorly managed public space by the existing so-called secular political rulers. Islamic populism starts to become an important entry point to strengthen the presence of Islamism through its new face in the life of the wider community. The fact that the public does not tend to be fully aware of the socio-political agenda of Islamism propagated behind Islamic

populism makes them less responsive to the aforementioned socio-political plans of Islamism brought by the Islamic populism movement. Instead, they appear to consider that Islamic populism is the answer to the underprivileged governance of public space as being carried out by the so-called secular government.

Following the poor management of the public space, which paves the way for Islamic populism as a new form of Islamism to proliferate considerably. It can be said that Islamic populism is the so-called "biological child," referring to the logical consequence of the stuttering power of secular ideology groups and/or supporters of religious moderation in anchoring the substantive values of religion, especially Islam, to the public sphere in Indonesia. The bureaucracy as a system of administrative organization is a field of public space contestation that is very effective in realizing and guaranteeing public space management. Islamic populism does not find its significance within society if the governmental bureaucracy is able to show its best performance in managing, regulating, and creating a public space that is good for the lives of all citizens.

Inclusion is an important keyword often mislaid in many bureaucratic service deliveries. While providing limited bureaucratic services and, moreover, based on group interests, the poor practice of inclusion in governmental bureaucratic services has led the common people to experience similar problems. More ironically, civil society also experiences a certain kind of so-called nihilization of the principle of inclusion in social life, with a considerably decreasing religious tolerance index (Hasani, 2009). What is later known as the term "social

inclusion," which provides expansive space for all components of the nation to enjoy equal public space services, is often absent from their social, political, economic, and even religious expression and experimentation in the public sphere.

The fact that the principle of inclusion has been considerably absent from any of both governmental bureaucratic services and communal expressions of civil society has led Islamic populism to become a new hope for the life of society at large. There is a tendency in society to yearn for a public space that can provide equal space for expression to anyone, regardless of differences in socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, to enjoy equally. When they do not find this reality in life, both in governmental bureaucratic services and communal expressions of civil society, the introduction of Islamic populism to the public by the supporters of Islamism will be immediately considered an oasis in the midst of the aridity of inclusivism in public space and at the same time a kind of "tranquilizer" for the growing social anxiety over the pockmarked face of the common public space.

D. Conclusion

The emergence of the Islamic populism movement among the Indonesian Muslim middle class in recent developments has made a re-examination of the concept of the middle class and Islamism, as described above, increasingly of high academic and socio-political significance. The reason is that this socio-political tendency is led or driven not only by those who have been pioneering changes from among the people who can be identified as the middle class in terms of ownership of economic income and expenditure alone but

also by the social groups that have considerable influence and changeability due to the social impact and ideas they have developed. The Marxian and Weberian perspectives, as discussed above, can be said to be both present in this discourse, and it is, therefore, essential to be used together in pairs as an analytical tool to explain the phenomenon of Islamic populism in relation to the connections between the middle class and Islamism in this country.

As a new expression of middle-class Islamism in the latest developments in Indonesian Islam, Islamic populism has not received significant attention from observers; however, even though the tendency of this new model of Islamism is not only starting to strengthen in the Muslim middle class in general but also specifically approaching several Muslim middle-class individuals who have a strong background of traditional Islamic education such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). The involvement of a number of individuals with pesantren backgrounds in the Islamic populism movement recently, such as the 212 Movement, FPI, KAMI, and the so-called "children of NKRI" as described at the beginning of this paper, explains that Islamic populism is not the domination of the Muslim middle-class in general, but has also penetrated the Muslim *santri* middle-class. This means that the phenomenon of Islamic populism as a new model of Islamism has emerged in a number of components of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia, regardless of their initial social base as well as their respective quantity.

The portrait of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia is, in principle, not singular. There are many layers of the middle class, including even Muslim ones, who are an important part of the dynamics of life and/or the current public space in this country.

There is a part of the big picture of the middle-class layer of Indonesian Muslims who are found to be tending towards the ideology and movement of Islamism, including through Islamic populism. Apart from them, there are several layers or other components of the Muslim middle class that have diverse ideological tendencies and orientations to different directions, either moderatism of Islam or liberalism of Islam. The former refers to the moderate expression of Islam in dealing with both religious and state life towards the point of equilibrium, which is beneficial for the diversity of social life in Indonesia. The latter means that the ideological tendency towards glorifying Man's power against the Gods' authority in dealing with social life appears to be considerably strong.

In short, even though there is a new trend of Muslim middle-class Islamism through Islamic populism, one important point has to be made here: the portrait of the ideological tendencies of the Muslim middle-class groups in Indonesia as a whole is quite layered and considerably varied. Apart from that, the growing phenomenon of Islamism among some middle-class Indonesian Muslims moves along with the increasing number and establishment of middle-class formations in general in recent developments of the country. Revisiting theories of the middle class and Islamism plays an important role, therefore, in delineating the Indonesian Muslim middle class on the one hand and in having a better sense of Islamic populism as a new face of Islamism in recent developments of Indonesian Muslim middle class on the other hand.

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