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Singapore | 6 November 2023

From Political Islam to Islamic Lifestyles: The Changing Public Face of Islam in Indonesia

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In the last decade, the emerging trend of Islamic lifestyles has become more popular among Indonesian Muslims than concerns with establishing a more Islamic political system. The Facebook page, Kawasan Halal MUI Jakarta at <https://www.facebook.com/kawasanhalalmui>, actively promotes such a lifestyle.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There is a noticeable change in the position of political Islam in Indonesia's public sphere, especially since the decline of Islamist organisations in the last decade. Concurrently, the emerging trend of Islamic lifestyles has become more popular among Indonesian Muslims than concerns with establishing a more Islamic political system.
- There are two broad categories of Islamic lifestyle. First, the halal lifestyle in consumption and production; second, the Islamic lifestyle in the economy, including finding "pure money" or money which is free from interest. The former is now rapidly increasing due to market trends, and the latter is growing, especially after the establishment of Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI, Indonesian Syariah Bank).
- The prospects of the Islamic lifestyle industry seem bright with the support of mainstream Muslim organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah and Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), among others. These seem to agree with the continued implementation of Sharia through a softer form of Islamisation, such as consumption and production of more halal products.
- Political leaders like Jokowi and Bambang Yudhoyono have supported initiatives to promote Islamic lifestyles because it helps to show that they are good Muslims, while keeping the forces of Political Islam at bay.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia now seems to be witnessing the fading away of political Islam in the public sphere, as observed in the decline of Islamist organisations in the last decade. The definition of political Islam is in its objective of establishing an Islamic political system.¹ The last attempt to revive political Islam was through the mass mobilisation of *Aksi Bela Islam* (Action to Defend Islam) in 2016-2017, but that failed. However, that does not end the struggle for implementing Islam as a societal system. Interestingly, the latter struggle is not only being carried out by those who do not agree with the implementation of political Islam, but is also supported by those who do not wish for the total absence of Islam from the public sphere. This article looks at the changing face of Islam in Indonesia, from a focus on political Islam to a revival of Islamic lifestyles. Two questions addressed here are: firstly, why did the main focus of Islam in the public sphere shift from political Islam to Islamic lifestyles and what factors stimulated that change? Secondly, how do Islamic lifestyles direct the inclusion of more Sharia in the public sphere?

THE DECLINE OF POLITICAL ISLAM IS NOT THE END GAME

Indonesia is neither a theocratic nor a secular state. It is a Pancasila state, according to its constitution. However, since the Muslim population constitutes a majority group, some of them dream of establishing an Islamic state. Historically, Darul Islam (DI)² tried to accomplish this by setting up Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, Indonesian Islamic State) but that failed. More recently, this was the unaccomplished ambition of Jamaah Islamiyyah, HTI, and many others. The Indonesian Islamist groups have also approached Islamic political parties (PKS, PPP and PKS) and Islamic organisations to amend Article 29 of the Indonesian Constitution to accommodate the Jakarta charter in the annual session meeting of MPR (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, People's Consultative Assembly of Indonesia) in 2000, 2001 and 2002.³ The Jakarta Charter was formulated by the committee that also prepared for Indonesia's independence. It contains two controversial articles. The first is the "obligation to practise sharia law for all Muslims" (kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluk). The second is a requirement that the President should be a Muslim.⁴ Be that as it may, the idea of establishing an Islamic state is always present in Indonesian Islamists' thinking. They still pursue Sharia implementation even without the establishment of an Islamic state. The FPI and other Islamist organisations, for instance, have proposed for Indonesia to remain a Pancasila state, but with the state accommodating within it some aspects of Sharia.

Some efforts at reviving a similar idea with the content of the Jakarta Charter re-appeared in 2016 and 2017, riding on the blasphemy case against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok, the governor of Jakarta. The case started with Ahok's comment about the Quranic chapter al-Maidah verse 52, viewed by Indonesian Islamists as blasphemy against Islam. They used this opportunity to consolidate their strength and mobilise for Aksi Bela Islam (Action to Defend Islam, or 212 movement). They organised big demonstrations in Jakarta, and were able to pressure the government and the court to imprison Ahok, which helped Anies Baswedan win the gubernatorial election of Jakarta in 2017.

Actually, the Indonesian Islamist groups had expected to use the momentum of their movement (Aksi Bela Islam) for the rebirth of political Islam, but the expectation was dashed. Their failure was compounded by the issuance of State Law No 16/2017 on mass organisations, which

banned two proponents of political Islam, FPI (Front Pembela Islam, Islamic Defenders Front) and HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia). There are, of course, Islamist organisations that remain active, such as the alumni of the 212 movement and the new FPI, but their resonance is not strong. Rizieq Shihab, as a symbolic figure of the Islamist movement in the last decade, for example, has been keeping a low profile. In comparison, the mainstream Muslim organisations especially Nahdlatul Ulama and MUI (Council of Indonesian Ulama) have appeared more in the public sphere, and are playing a stronger role in strengthening Islamic normativity and public morality. Usually, Nahdlatul Ulama's role features instilling Islamic values and substance instead of Islamic formalism, while MUI endorses the inclusion of Sharia in the legal and public sphere.

However, the decline of political Islam in the public sphere does not mean that the importance of Islam and Sharia is fading. It is not the end game for those who want Islam to play a significant role in the public sphere of Indonesia. This can be seen in the recent resurgence of Islamic lifestyles among Muslims.

THE REVIVAL OF ISLAMIC LIFESTYLES

Political Islam is not only the representation of Islam. Outside political Islam are other important aspects of Islam such as lifestyle, morality, and *mu'amala* (business). An Islamic lifestyle often refers to customs, traditions and cultures in the Muslim community.⁵ Therefore, the Islamic lifestyle here often relates to the practice of Islam in daily life. An Islamic lifestyle influences how people eat and drink. This then leads to a massive emergence of halal-certified products. An Islamic lifestyle is also reflected in how people travel to prevalent sites of Islamic tourism. Also, the ways people find, use and save money in Islamic finance and banking are also expressions of an Islamic lifestyle. Fashion and dress are two other important areas of emerging Islamic lifestyles among Indonesian Muslims. Like other lifestyle types, Islamic or Sharia lifestyles have also adapted to new trends in consumption, production, dressing and tourism.

An example of Islamic lifestyle implementation is the inception of Law No 33/2014. This Law makes halal certification mandatory in Indonesia. The responsible institution to certify is no longer Lembaga Pengkajian Pangan dan Obat-obatan dan Kosmetika (LPPOM, The Assessment Institute for Foods, Drugs and Cosmetics),⁶ but Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal (BPJPH, The Halal Assurance Organizing Body).⁷ This law was passed under the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) government. Jokowi then strengthened it through the State Law on Job-Creation (UU Cipta Kerja), and Government Regulation No 39/2021 on *Jaminan Produk Halal* (Halal Product Assurance).

The emergence of concern about the Islamic lifestyle in Indonesia was triggered by an incident in which a popular dairy product was found to be contaminated with non-halal ingredients. It was related to a milk product of DANCOW, which was mixed with pork ingredients in East Java. Muslim consumers were affected due to the widespread use of this milk product in the province. Then-President Suharto asked MUI (Council of Indonesian Ulama) to mitigate the issue. As a response, MUI established LPPOM-MUI in 1989. The LPPOM was designed as an institution under MUI to oversee halal products, and was responsible for investigating halal products and issuing halal certificates. Although halal certification was not mandatory under

the LPPOM, Indonesian producers and consumers sought to comply. Halal certification is important among Indonesian Muslims and will influence their consumption behaviours.

Under Joko Widodo's government, the role of LPPOM ended when the lawmakers agreed to establish BPJPH, giving halal certification prominence. Under the Jokowi government, Indonesia aims to become an important player in the global halal industry. Jokowi took two important policies. First, his government issued Government Regulation to State Law No 33/2014 which provided legal legitimacy for halal product certification. Second, he gave a special mandate to Vice President Ma'ruf Amin to promote a halal economy, including Sharia finance and banking.⁸ All these actions have been taken as Jokowi wants Indonesia to become an international hub of the halal industry by 2024.

RESPONSES TO HALAL LIFESTYLES

In the last decade, halal lifestyle has gained traction among Muslims and non-Muslims. It is evident in the increasing concerns of the world in both responding to and adopting the halal lifestyle. The global market indicates that halal lifestyles will further shape the world market. According to the Dinar Standard's State of Global Islamic Economy, Indonesia ranks fourth in the international halal market.⁹ Importantly, those who jumped on the bandwagon were not only Muslims but non-Muslims as well. This was evident in the increasing interest of non-Muslim countries such as Australia, China, Canada and others to expand their halal product market share in Indonesia.¹⁰

In Indonesia, the increase in halal lifestyle is reflected in a survey conducted by the Indonesia Studies Programme of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute and Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI).¹¹ When asked about their preference to buy halal products and services, 90% of Indonesian Muslims preferred halal food and only 8% of them said “No”. The survey also finds that 47% of Indonesian Muslim respondents send their children to Islamic education institutions such as pesantren, madrasah, Islamic integrated school and others, while 28% of Indonesian Muslim respondents prefer to get service from Sharia banks or finance institutions. The findings indicate a substantial interest among Indonesian Muslims to comply with Sharia.

“PURE MONEY”: LIFESTYLE IN ECONOMY

Besides stricter halal adherence, finding “pure money” has been an interesting trend among Indonesian Muslims since 1990. The term “pure money” means money which is free from interest (Arabic: *riba*). Indonesian Muslims have different perceptions on *riba*, whether it is allowed or not. Nahdlatul Ulama allows interest income in conventional banks partially because its percentage is very small. During the Abdurrahman Wahid leadership, NU established a conventional bank called NUSUMMA.¹² Under Syafi'i Ma'arif's leadership, Muhammadiyah established another conventional bank, Bank Persyarikatan. Although both NUSUMMA and Bank Persyarikatan were not successful, they reflected an acceptance of bank interest among Muslim organisations. Yet, MUI states that bank interest is not allowed (haram). This ulama organisation promotes Sharia finance and banks.¹³ MUI and Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI) established “a new Islamic lifestyle-bank, Bank Muamalat Indonesia (BMI), that used non-interest system.”¹⁴ The BMI faced difficulty surviving as a healthy bank due to chronic problems such as non-performing financing and the decrease in capital adequacy

ratio (CAR).¹⁵ Despite the challenges, MUI continued its effort to strengthen and advance Islamic finance and banking.

A more visible success of Islamic finance and banking can be seen in the formation of Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI) during the second term of Joko Widodo. The BSI is now among the largest Indonesian banks, backed by reliable capital and operation. It is used by government ministries. Many civil servants, students and lecturers have become customers of this bank. In the province of Aceh, BSI is very dominant and has become the largest bank.¹⁶ Nationwide, the BSI ranks as the sixth largest national bank.¹⁷

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Islamic lifestyles will continue to thrive in Indonesia, running concurrent with the apparent decline of Islamist organisational discourses. There are some reasons for this. First is the continuing support for it from the ruling regime. Both pillars of Islamic lifestyle, Islamic finance and banking and halal products, have a strong legal basis in state law. In addition, the government has been directly promoting halal products. Both Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko Widodo paved the way for the Islamic lifestyle industry. Two state laws on Islamic finance and banking (State Law No 21/2008 on Syariah Banking) and halal products were registered in SBY's era.¹⁸ Joko Widodo came with strong support for both Islamic finance and halal products and provided a strategic plan for international expansion as a halal industry hub. In addition to that, halal products are now fully under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Second, mainstream Muslim organisations like Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, MUI, Persatuan Islam, al-Wasliyah and many others are more comfortable with Islamic lifestyle trends instead of political Islam. After the decline of radical Islamist groups, mainstream Muslim organisations expanded their role in strengthening the meaning and practice of Islam through the Islamic lifestyle. It is in line with the vision of most mainstream Muslim organisations that want to commit to Pancasila on the one hand and apply Islam in daily life on the other hand. This vision is fulfillable with the Islamic lifestyle.

ENDNOTES

¹ This definition refers to Western literature on political sciences, for instance Olivier Roy's *The Failure of Political Islam*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1996.

² Chiara Formici, *Islam in the Making of the Nation: Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam in Twentieth-Century Indonesia*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012.

³ The demand was to reinsert the seven words of the Jakarta Charter into the first verse of Pancasila, Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa, with "dengan Kewajiban Menjalan Syariah Islam bagi Pemeluk-Pemeluknya." The second demand was to amend the title of Agama (Religion) in Article 29 with Ketuh, see Arskal Salam, *Challenging the Secular State: The Islamisation of Law in Modern Indonesia*, Honolulu: University of Hawa'i Press, 2008, p. 89.

⁴ R.E. Elson, *Two Failed Attempts to Islamize the Indonesian Constitution*, November 2013, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 379-437.

⁵ Faegheh Shirazi, *Brand Islam: The Marketing and Commodification of Piety*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016, p. 10.

⁶ On LPPOM, see <https://mui.or.id/lembaga-pengkajian-pangan-obat-obatan-dan-kosmetika-lppom/>, viewed on 22 September 2023.

- ⁷ Syafiq Hasyim, *The Halal Project in Indonesia; Shariatization, Minority Rights and Commodification*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2022. Regarding BPJPH, see <http://bpjph.halal.go.id/>, viewed on 20 September 2023.
- ⁸ In a book, "*K.H. Ma'ruf Amin Bapak Ekonomi Syariah Indonesia*", written by Saifuddin A Rasyid, Rahmad Syah Putra and Arkin, Ma'ruf Amin is the first initiator of Islamic economy, see : <https://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20230330/15/1642266/jokowi-sebut-maruf-amin-berperan-kembangkan-ekonomi-syariah-di-indonesia>, viewed on 1 September 2023.
- ⁹ See <https://ekonomi.republika.co.id/berita/r9lzfj457/indonesia-pertahankan-posisi-keempat-dalam-sgie-2022>, viewed on 1 September 2023.
- ¹⁰ <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/18-negara-bahas-kerja-sama-internasional-jaminan-produk-halal-gu5lve>, viewed on 20 September 2023.
- ¹¹ Burhanuddin Muhtadi, Hui Yew-Foong, and Siwage Dharma Negara, *The Indonesia National Survey Project 2022, Engaging with Developments in the Political, Economic and Social Spheres*, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak: Singapore, 2023. This is a national survey conducted in 21 – 28 July 2022, covering 1,620 randomly chosen respondents aged above 17 years old. The margin error of this survey is more or less 2.5 %.
- ¹² Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting, Indonesia's Stability*, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000, p. 188.
- ¹³ See FATWA MAJELIS ULAMA INDONESIA Nomor 1 Tahun 2004 Tentang BUNGA (INTEREST/FA'IDAH). According to this fatwa, bank interest is totally prohibited in Islam.
- ¹⁴ Adam Schwarz, p. 189.
- ¹⁵ See <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/market/20191115093424-17-115443/terungkap-ini-penyebab-masalah-kronis-di-bank-muamalat>, viewed on 20 September 2023.
- ¹⁶ In a very short time, the operation of BSI in Aceh has added 2 million-clients to this Bank, see <https://www.tribunnews.com/bisnis/2022/08/20/bsi-kini-jadi-bank-terbesar-di-aceh-nasabah-nambah-2-juta-karena-qanun>, viewed on 1 September 2023.
- ¹⁷ In 2022, the profit of BSI increases 40,68 year on year, while the total asset of this bank in the fourth quartal of 2022 increases 15%. See <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/market/20230221140316-17-415671/hebat-bsi-melesat-jadi-bank-terbesar-ke-6-di-indonesia>
- ¹⁸ See <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/564192/uu-halal-diberlakukan-jelang-sby-lengser>, and <https://www.kemenag.go.id/nasional/presiden-sistem-syariah-menonjolkan-aspek-keadilan-kejujuran-dan-etika-gepsse>, viewed on 1 September 2023.

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