



# Indonesia's Role in Strengthening Regional and International Commitments for Peace Process in Afghanistan

**Arief Rachman**, Indonesia Defense University, Jakarta, Indonesia

**Mukhtadi**, Indonesia Defense University, Jakarta, Indonesia

**Muhammad Syaroni Rofii**, Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

**Susilo Adi Purwantoro**, Indonesia Defense University, Jakarta, Indonesia

**Marissa Aulia**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Abstract** - Afghanistan is the most vulnerable country to conflict. This conflict arises from various backgrounds, for example conflicts triggered by ethnic problems and ideological differences. There are various attempts have been made by the Afghan government to resolve the existing conflict. However, none has been successful. Therefore, the Afghan government has approached the Republic of Indonesia to play a role in the peace process in Afghanistan. To bring influence in the peace process in Afghanistan and continue to prioritize its regional and international commitments, Indonesia consistently uses a diplomatic approach with a *Soft Power Currencies* perspective. This study applies a qualitative research paradigm with an inductive theory building type, namely a research approach in which the researcher tries to find a theory through empirical data. The findings in this study are that the role that Indonesia plays in regional and international recommendations for the peace process in Afghanistan is currently more suitable to use a soft power approach, more specifically using a soft power currency. This is because the current conflict cannot be equated with the previous conflict that crippled hard power in the form of war, but the current conflict will be easier to subside or root by using soft power. These Soft Power Currencies have three components in different ways but still with the same goal to attract the attention of Afghanistan to emulate and support Indonesia in world peace efforts.

**Keywords:** Soft Power Currencies, ideological differences, qualitative research paradigm

## I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of world peace, especially in the Middle East, is still ongoing. Mainly the ones that are still being discussed by the public to date are the conflicts in Syria, Israel and also the conflicts that have occurred in Palestine. But don't get lost in the news. In fact, there are also countries from the Central Asian region that look calm and peaceful, but they also have a very complicated conflict, namely the State of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a country most vulnerable to conflict. This conflict arises from various backgrounds, for example conflicts triggered by problems of borders, ethnicity, and even ideological differences. However, the root causes of conflict arising solely are not only due to the seizure of territorial borders, but some have become a colonial legacy. One of them is the conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan, in which the two countries were used as political tools by Britain and the Russian Empire which had interests in the region. The people of Afghanistan have experienced a lot of suffering as a result of conflicts that occurred in a long period of time with a complicated constellation of conflicts, such as civil conflicts, political conflicts, to conflicts that caused the civil war (Cordesman, 2019).

Not a few attempts have been made by the Afghan government to resolve the existing conflict. These efforts were carried out starting from discussions to get the word peace and even the signing of a peace agreement. All these efforts are carried out in the hope of creating peace. However, all that has been done has not been able to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan to date. One conflict is drowned, then another conflict will arise again triggered by new problems. However, new hopes for peace in Afghanistan were born at the same time as the visit of the High Peace Council (HPC) or the High Peace Council for Afghanistan to Indonesia in November 2017. The chairman of the HPC publicly expressed his hope that Indonesia could become a mediator and mediator in resolving conflicts in Afghanistan (Waluyo, 2017).

The perception conveyed by the Chairperson of the HPC was not without reason, because Indonesia is currently becoming an epicenter for world peace where at its peak in 2019, Indonesia received the 2019 Zhenghe International Peace Award for various phenomena of the success of Islam in Indonesia in building intercultural and inter-community dialogue. has distinctive characteristics. This has drawn the world's attention and hopes that Indonesia can become an influencer in world peace, especially in Afghanistan. This represents that Indonesia has a strong regional commitment to maintaining peace in the territory of the country which is inhabited by various ethnic groups with different beliefs (Chenghoo, 2019).

Through this soft power approach, Indonesia is at the forefront in promoting dialogue between religion and civilization, where the dialogue is believed to be able to contribute significantly, not only in overcoming various current international issues, but also bridging various gaps between countries and even within the domestic area (DetikNews, 2011). So, to strengthen Indonesia's role in the peace process in Afghanistan and continue to maintain its regional and international commitments, Indonesia consistently uses a diplomacy approach by referring to the Soft Power perspective. According to Joseph Nye, Soft Power itself is the ability to influence other parties by using attractiveness, not using coercion as happened in previous times (Nye, 2004).

## II. METHODS

This research applies a qualitative research paradigm with the type of inductive theory building research, which is a research approach in which the researcher tries to find a theory through empirical data. Invalid source specified. The empirical data used is empirical data obtained through case studies. Invalid source specified. Researchers used several data collection methods. The data collection methods used were: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) observation, and (3) search for archived documents. Selection of in-depth interview informants using theoretical sampling. Data analysis was performed using interpretative qualitative data analysis, through the stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on data from The Guardian in 2014, Afghanistan became the second country prone to conflict with a score of 3.42 which is one position behind Syria (Khurun'in, 2016). Many countries are involved as actors in it, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and also the involvement of the United States (Khurun'in, 2016). The conflicts that occurred in Afghanistan are complex and prolonged, causing suffering to the people of Afghanistan. The civil conflict in Afghanistan has been recorded since 1978 until today. In 2001, Afghanistan signed the Bonn Agreement which is a peace agreement to end the civil war. However, the conflict in Afghanistan did not end, it was still continuing coupled with the security and political stability of Afghanistan which was still very low (Khurun'in, 2016).

In history, Afghanistan has several times changed the shape of its country which was affected by political conflicts. Starting from the Republic of Afghanistan (1973-1978), Military Government (1978), the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (1978-1987), the Islamic State of Afghanistan (1992-1996), the Islamic Union of Afghanistan (1996-2001), the Islamic Transitional Republic of Afghanistan (2001- 2004), and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004-present) (Anonymous, 2020). The political conflict does not stop there. Instead, a new conflict emerged which was getting heated with the postponement of the inauguration of the President in Afghanistan. The president of Afghanistan was elected Ashraf Ghani with his rival Abdullah, who claimed to be the elected president following a controversial election held in September 2019. The conflict escalated several days after the United States and the Taliban signed a US-led international troop withdrawal agreement. The postponement of the inauguration ceremony gave Ghani and Abdullah time to hold negotiations with the United States' special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, who was trying to cross the two opposing parties (Mustaqim, 2020).

Ghani and Abdullah played a significant role in the previous administration with a multi-power agreement with US mediators after the 2014 elections. Western diplomats in Kabul said it was unclear how the situation could be resolved. Until finally, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) on February 18, 2020 announced that Ghanilah was the winner of the election (Mustaqim, 2020).

A series of conflicts continues to roll with the emergence of new triggers and various new actors. Not infrequently it will have effects that appear and sink in a variety of ways, from the arising of suspicion between the two allied parties, strength, demonstrations, to fear among the people. The conflict in Afghanistan arose because there were certain groups who benefited from the war and wanted to continue the war. Thus, it is hoped that Afghanistan will never have peace. Which, these conflicts will arise with various factors behind it. In 1992, Afghanistan was declared an Islamic state as well as a new, complicated and prolonged conflict. Many rejections from community groups led to civil war. In 1996, a militia group funded by the United States called the Taliban focused on politics and religion that controlled the Afghan government by implementing strict religious and social norms (Rahmad, 2019). The conflict in Afghanistan has continued to escalate until it started in 2001 with the issue of international terrorism which was the reason for the US attack on Afghanistan. President George W. Bush accused Osama bin Laden of being the mastermind behind the terrorism issue. The attack was carried out to overthrow the power of the Taliban who are suspected of protecting Al-Qaeda and to arrest Osama bin Laden. The

Taliban asked the US for clear evidence of the allegations made against Osama bin Laden. However, the US refused and considered the Taliban just stalling for time.

In the end, the US armed forces and the Northern Alliance held Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2014) then changed its name to Operation Freedom's Sentinel (2015-present) with the aim of bringing peace to the area, establishing an accountable government, rebuilding development in Afghanistan, ending the opium trade and securing Afghanistan's rights. The goal of the US itself is not solely to get and arrest Osama bin Laden, but the US has a large oil and gas pipeline project in Central Asia. So, there will be many benefits for the US from the ongoing conflict with Afghanistan to support the success of the project (Rahmad, 2019).

Indonesia has proven its commitment to maintaining world peace, one of which is by taking part in efforts to bring about peace in Afghanistan. The role that Indonesia has played is manifested in several foreign visits, several forms of Indonesian assistance to Afghanistan, and several collaborations between the two countries. Indonesia's role in peace in Afghanistan is described as follows: First, The Visit of Retno Marsudi as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia to Afghanistan on November 6, 2017. During the visit, Afghanistan hoped for Indonesia's willingness and seriousness in 'peace building' in Afghanistan. In addition, Indonesia is seen as a country with good credibility, considering that Indonesia is capable of handling conflicts in its country, especially the conflict in Aceh. With that, Afghanistan hopes to learn the ways or steps taken by Indonesia in dealing with the conflict.

Second, President Joko Widodo's State Visit to Afghanistan on January 29, 2018. During the visit, there were serious discussions between the two leaders of the country to formulate ways to bring peace to Afghanistan. President Joko Widodo said "Without peace there will be no prosperity. Without prosperity, peace will not last. Therefore, when we work together to build peace, economic cooperation must be increased in parallel ". With that, development efforts in Afghanistan must be in line with economic development in that country. This was done in order to create prosperity in Afghanistan. Indonesia's role in realizing peace is also realized by increasing human resources in Afghanistan through the Indonesian President who promised to provide scholarships for Afghan students. "Indonesia is also ready to provide 100 scholarships for Afghan students," concluded President Joko Widodo.

Third, Working Visit of Vice President Jusuf Kalla and Kabul Peace Process II on 28 February - 1 March 2018. Jusuf Kalla as Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia was delegated by the President of the Republic of Indonesia to participate in the Kabul Process II Conference in Kabul on February 28, 2018. During the conference, Jusuf Kalla said that Indonesia was committed to supporting the peace of Afghanistan and would share Indonesia's experiences in handling its internal conflicts through soft power approach. Some of the roles that Indonesia has played are reflected in a concept of Soft Power Currencies, which will be described in the following framework.

Indonesia and Afghanistan, where the majority of the people are Muslim, believe that Islam is a religion that loves peace and love. Even though they are both Muslims, it cannot be denied that everyone has the same thoughts. With the existing differences in thought, it will lead to conflict among the people, even many certain sects have emerged in the name of Islam, which carry out terror with threats and bombings. For the sake of realizing this peace-loving and loving Islam, Indonesia resolves its regional problems such as the problem of terrorism by using a soft diplomacy approach. This means that Indonesia is not taking steps to fight, but rather by placing religious leaders to maintain conditions in the local community to make it more conducive. Indirectly, Indonesia has set an example for Afghanistan through the realization of its regional commitment that Afghanistan can emulate to achieve the same goal, namely to create a state that loves peace. This action is also in line with the theory of soft power currencies, which in solving problems tends to use subtle steps, avoids violence and threats, tends to take actions to attract public attention and trust.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion from Indonesia's role in the peace process in Afghanistan and continuing to maintain its regional and international commitments, Indonesia consistently uses a diplomacy approach with a soft power perspective, especially referring to the perspective of soft power currencies. These soft power currencies have three components including beauty, brilliance and benignity. With these three components, Indonesia can show its soft power to Afghanistan in order to attract attention and sympathy from Afghanistan. The beauty component is manifested by Indonesia which has several similarities with Afghanistan. These similarities include common ideas, common goals, common causes of conflict causes, and shared vision. By having these similarities, Afghanistan is interested in studying and imitating the policies and methods that Indonesia has used in dealing with conflicts in its region to be applied in dealing with conflicts in Afghanistan. The brilliance component, manifested by Indonesia by demonstrating its

ability and success in handling conflicts that occur in its regional areas. Seeing Indonesia's success, Afghanistan has a sense of admiration for Indonesia, which hopes to identify itself and adopt Indonesian culture and behavior. Everything is done with the hope that Afghanistan can gain success in dealing with conflicts like Indonesia. Benignity component, realized by Indonesia by providing goodness in the form of assistance to Afghanistan in peace efforts. This assistance is realized by providing economic assistance, mental assistance, and assistance to strengthen human resources by providing scholarships and sending 80 students to Indonesia, training 100 mining workers, training for MSMEs, training for diplomats and comparative studies for elections and the formation of the Nahdatul Ulama Afghanistan (NUA). For the assistance provided, Afghanistan's gratitude and sympathy for Indonesia is willing to continue to support Afghanistan in its peace efforts. The three components of soft Power Currencies have different ways but still with the same goal of attracting Afghanistan's attention to emulate and support Indonesia in world peace efforts. Thus, Indonesia can maintain its regional and international commitments in world peace efforts.

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