

Indonesia's Peace Efforts in Afghanistan

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Abstract: Afghanistan, a country with almost 30 million populations, is located at the heart (center) of Asia. This country has burned in the fire of civil war and conflict in the last 40 years. The sustained conflict in this country has damaged the fundamental and core roots of the development. A large number of citizens lost their bodies, injured and immigrated, to foreign countries, especially neighborhoods (Iran and Pakistan). Peace in Afghanistan has seemed like a non-reachable dream in the last four decades. Taliban (a terrorist group) is killing Afghans for religious reasons; however, it has other aspects as well. At the moment, some countries showed a willingness to bring peace in Afghanistan. Among other countries (USA, China, Russia, Germany etc.), Indonesia also showed its willingness to act as a peace broker and mediates the negotiations. According to Indonesia's experience in peace-building and peace-mediation context, this study has found that this country can be a good religious partner for Stable peace in Afghanistan. And this happens when the Taliban accept to negotiate with Afghan officials.

1 INTRODUCTION

After 40 years of sustained conflict and violence, four million Afghan nationals continue to reside in Pakistan and Iran. Afghanistan is simultaneously a country of origin, destination, and asylum (International Organization for Migration, 2018). The sustained conflict has devastated the economic, educational, and social bases in Afghanistan from the 1960s till now. According to the data released by the United Nations, the number of deaths among citizens in 2017 has reached 3,438 people, while those who were injured reached 7,015 people. (United Nations Report, 2017)

During the last 2 decades, Afghanistan government contemporary called the Taliban (the terrorist group which is fighting against the government) to leave the brutal attacks and join the government as the political party and live in peace, but Taliban refused and always emphasized on doing Jihad against the presence of foreign troops in

Afghanistan especially the US military contribution with Afghanistan military forces. However, the Taliban always announced which they are fighting because of religious reasons, but of course, there are many aspects behind the topic as well as the foreigner supports especially the Afghanistan neighborhood countries. By the way, it is almost more than six months that US special representative for peace in Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad is doing the negotiation with the Taliban, but still, there is no visible result. Afghanistan peace process has been ongoing for several years without having made any significant progress. Since 2001, the Afghan government has undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at making peace with the Taliban, mostly designed to convince them to give up their military campaign (Kaura, 2018, p. 5). The 2017 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict is available at <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>

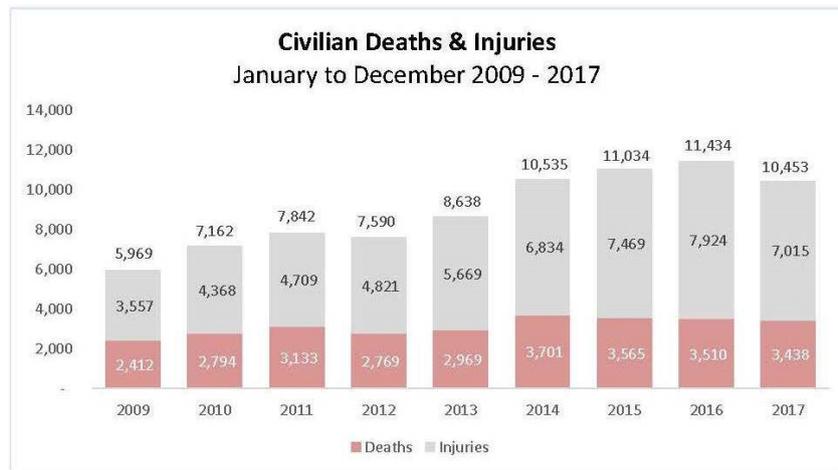


Figure 1: UNAMA annual report about the security situation of Afghanistan from 2005 till 2017

“The annual report by UNAMA shows that the security situation in Afghanistan is on its worst condition. In most of the attacks (bombing, suicide attacks, explosions...etc.), only the civilians are targeted. In this case, the hot and vital situation in Afghanistan requires the support of different countries and the International Community to end up the 40-year conflict in this country”.



The Economist

Figure 2: Map of Afghanistan (controlling area by government and Taliban (BBC Report,2019)

“According to the last survey by the Long War Journal on May 2019, Taliban increased their controlling area in Afghanistan than some years ago. It means a big alarm to the government of Afghanistan and its support partners which involve in bringing peace in this country”.

Indonesia as the world's most populous Muslim-majority country with its bright background in peace-building and peace-mediation is interesting to help Afghanistan for stable peace. This country has kept a very close and friendly relationship with Afghanistan government after the National Unity Government

presence which started its duty in 2014. Indonesia also opened a new chapter of cooperation on a sustainable Afghanistan in the recent four years.



Figure 3: The position of Indonesia in Afghanistan peace (no connection with Taliban)

Indonesia still does not have direct connection with Taliban. However; this country is trying to bring Taliban in face to face negotiation with Afghan officials, but Taliban did not answer this calling yet.

1.1 The Paper Main Objectives:

The main objective of this study is finding the exact role of Indonesia in ending up 40-year sustain conflict in Afghanistan. Also, the paper aims to answer this question; can Indonesia be a peace broker in Afghanistan?

1.2 Hypothesis

According to the great background of Indonesia in peace-building, peace-keeping and also acting as a

peace-mediator in some other countries seems its efforts for stable peace in Afghanistan as a peace-mediator will work out.

1.3 Research Methodology

It is a qualitative study. The type of research used by the author is a descriptive-analytic type, namely research that uses patterns of depicting empirical facts accompanied by relevant arguments. Then from the results of the description continue with an analysis that will lead to conclusions that are analytic in nature. In this study, secondary data is used.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Peace-building and Peace-mediation

Peace-mediation has become a prominent activity in the post-Cold War world (Waelisch, Lanz, Kirchhoff, & Siegfried, 2012). Today, a large number of International and Regional actors (organizations) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become involved in avoiding conflicts and ending wars (Civil Wars) through dialogue and negotiations. Nowadays, peace mediation has risen up as a very crowded field characterized by various initiatives resulting in growing competition between different actors. Most of the mediators have a very visible and valuable role in contributing to the transition of communities from war to peace.

Johan Galtung originally popularized the term "peace-building," distinguishing it from peacekeeping and peace-making. As he uses it, peacebuilding is geared toward moving a society recently experiencing violent conflict in the direction of "positive peace." Positive peace is contrasted with negative peace. The latter generally refers simply to ending violent conflict. The peace sought after via peacebuilding, meanwhile, is much broader and more inclusive. (Coy, 2014)

The sustain conflict which has continued over 40 years in Afghanistan, besides political negotiation with Taliban, requires a third player that acts as a peace mediator and of course an Islamic country can do this duty better. Indonesia, as the world's most populous Muslim-majority country is interesting to act as peace-broker/peace-mediator in Afghanistan.

2.2 Afghanistan – Indonesia Relationship

Afghanistan and Indonesia relationship are mainly based on common religious believes and solidarity. According to the history records, both nations had a commitment to keeping this relationship based on mutual-respect and mutual-understanding. The two factors helped the two nations which find more similarities in religious and culture aspects. As far as Indonesia is known as the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and as well as Afghanistan that is called the Islamic Republic, therefore; more than any other common aspects, Islamic believes closed these two nations to have more contributions (Detiknews, 2018).

Indonesia has continuously concentrated on its commitments to support and assist Afghanistan in different aspects which include; rebuilding/reconstruction in different sectors, technical training, infrastructure, women's empowerment, higher education, diplomatic training and at the moment this country is interested in playing a visible role in peace process in Afghanistan as a peace-mediator.

Afghanistan was one of the first countries which recognized the Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia. But the country only officially opened an embassy office in Jakarta in 1954. A year later, Afghanistan played an active role in the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, 1955 (Detiknews, 2018).

On November 10th 2012, a new alliance of good friendship was signed in the aim of promoting corporation in political, economic and trade, academic, education and cultural sectors (The Jakarta Post, 2018). By signing this agreement, Indonesia has started its contribution to Afghanistan. First of all, Indonesia provided more educational chances (opportunities) to Afghan students to get scholarship and study in different Indonesian Universities. Later on, Indonesia has helped Afghanistan in capacity building and women's empowerment as well.

2.3 The Historical Visit of President Sukarno to Afghanistan in 1961

For the first time, President Sukarno, as the top official of the Republic of Indonesia, visited Afghanistan in 1961. He was warmly welcomed by the King of Afghanistan (Zahir Shah) at the international airport of Kabul. This visit opened the formal and close relationship between the two countries. At that time, Afghanistan was still in the form of a kingdom led by Mohammad Zahir Shah,

who was in power from 1933 to 1973 (Detiknews, 2018). In his speech, Sukarno stated that the global political situation at that time still had to be struggled by countries in Asia and Africa. Because of that, among them, they need to unite and work together closely in order to face the cold war between the two Superpower countries.

2.4 Steps for Stable Peace in Afghanistan

The National Unity Government in Afghanistan was elected by Afghans in 2014. Afghanistan government on its first days of work announced to the nation which bringing peace is a top agenda of the government in the next five years. Afghan officials directly called on Taliban in face to face Afghan peace negotiation, but the Taliban refused to talk with the government. The United States of America as the biggest military and economic partner of Afghanistan, started the negotiation with the Taliban behind the closed doors in Qatar. After passing more than six months negotiations of Zalmi Khalilzad, the special representative of the US to peace in Afghanistan with the Taliban, the result is still unclear. In this case, the Afghanistan government tried some other ways as well as finding a religious partner that has a great background in peace mediation to act as a peace-mediator, and Indonesia was a good option.

2.5 Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's Visit to Jakarta, Indonesia

A new chapter of the relationship between Indonesia and Afghanistan has opened after 2014, the time which the National Unity Government came on power in Afghanistan. On April 2017, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the president of Afghanistan visited Jakarta for the first time after his presidency. He was welcomed by President Jokowi, and both sides talked on important issues including peace-building, capacity-building, as well as trade and investment. President Jokowi also welcomed the Afghan government's efforts to create stability and peace, and he declared that his country is ready to share its experience in peace-building and reconciliation. (Jakarta Globe, 2017)

2.6 President Jokowi's Visit to Kabul, Afghanistan

A year later, in January 2018, President Jokowi visited Kabul (the capital of Afghanistan) and met with his counterpart Mohammad Ashraf Ghani (Jakarta Globe, 2018). Both presidents agreed to further cooperation in peacebuilding in Afghanistan at a meeting in Kabul on January 29th, during the first visit by an Indonesian leader to Afghanistan in nearly six decades.



Figure 4: What President Jokowi promised in his visit to Afghanistan (Jakarta Globe, 2018 & photo courtesy of the Cabinet Secretariat 29/01)

2.7 Three Countries Uluma Meeting in Indonesia to Talk on Peace Process in Afghanistan

The Indonesian Council of Uluma (MUI) hosted a Trilateral Uluma Conference of Indonesia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan on May 2018, having the title "Islam as Rahmatan Lil Alamin, Peace and Stability in Afghanistan," at the Istana Bogor Palace, in Jakarta (Qureshi Arif, THE FORETREES NEWS, 2018). Among the six Presidential Palaces, the Istana Bogor was specially chosen for this meeting, as this palace had played a vital role in brokering peace in the past. That palace hosted three famous peace initiatives in the past, as Jakarta Informal Meeting between factions of Cambodia in 1988, Mediation of Thai-Cambodian Conflict in 2011, MILF-MNLF special session in 2012 and now a Trilateral Uluma Conference of Indonesia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, 2018.



Figure 5: Uluma’s meeting achievements which was held in Bogor, Indonesia on May 201(Ayaz Gul, VOA, May 2018)

2.8 Indonesia’s Experience in Peacebuilding and Peace Mediations

Indonesia’s active contribution to United Nations peacekeeping since 1957, not too long after its independence, has often been showcased as one of the country’s greatest achievements in the maintenance of international peace and security (Alexandra, 2017). Indonesia concentrates its peacebuilding efforts on sharing its experience and knowledge in democracy as key factor to sustaining peace, playing a huge role as mediator/facilitator/observer and also

implementing humanitarian actions which can help as relevant connection on peace process.

Indonesia absolutely has owned the good experience of acting and being involved in mediation activities for decades, but the peacebuilding role in this country developed more than any times between 2004 to 2014 while President Yudhoyono’s administration (Alexandra, 2017). The transition of an authoritarian regime to the democratic government led toward trustful stability, pointed by the ability of the government to initiate peace process that navigated the settlement of different civil conflicts, and in another case the implementation of the first direct presidential election in the country.



Figure 6: Indonesia’s peacebuilding context (Alexandra, 2017).

At the moment, Indonesia is interested in sharing its experience and knowledge regarding the peace-mediation and peace-building, and it's a big part of Indonesia's soft power policy. Through this, the country wants to be recognized in the regional and international level to achieve its vision of becoming a middle power. Indonesia has gradually transformed itself from an aid recipient into an emanating donor or development partner, peace-building has become

as one of the main key factors in which the government assists other countries that are struggling to rebuild their core political and economic infrastructures in order to achieve sustained peace. Currently, Indonesia is interesting to play as a peace-mediator in Afghanistan to show its soft power and Islamic Diplomacy effectiveness to the region and the world.

Australian diplomat Greg Moriarty, for example, argued that the Indonesian democratic transition served as a good example for the 'Arab Spring' countries that Islam and democracy can be compatible (Alford 2011).

According to the Indonesia history, the role of this country as a mediator, facilitator and observer is nothing new. During the Cold War era, Indonesia was highlighted for its visible and active role in the Cambodian peace process, holding the Jakarta Informal Meeting I and Jakarta Informal Meeting II. In the early 1990s, Indonesia has played a very active role in brokering peace in the Southern Philippines.

In another side, Indonesian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also played vital and significant facilitation roles. Muhammadiyah, an international non-governmental organization (INGO), has tried its best to act as mediator. This organization which is based in Indonesia, also has participated in the International Contact Group and asked to provide support to the parties (Alexandra, 2017). Indonesia also appeared to act as a mediator in Southern Thailand as well.

Indonesia had played a leading role in reaching the military Junta in Myanmar. Indonesia opened access to outside humanitarian aid to help the victims in Myanmar. Later on, Indonesia had the experience of handling the impact of the tsunami disaster that hit Aceh in December 2004, after that the peace negotiation between the Indonesian government and the Aceh secessionist movement summarized immediately after the tragedy took place. Recently, In December 2016, the government of Indonesia once again has taken the invention to send humanitarian aid to the Rakhine state to ease the suffering of the people, especially the Rohingyas.

3 DISCUSSION

The armed conflict in Afghanistan does not involve religious reasons directly. But this conflict has taken lots of casualties among security forces, Taliban militia, and Daulah Islamiyah jihadists as well as civilians. The presence of foreign parties in Afghanistan on the grounds of securing the situation does not seem to solve the problem.

The conflict in Afghanistan continues to occur not only because of the political reason but also due to the difference in ideology or sects related to Islam which is the religion of that State. From the aspect of ideology or religious approach, it seems that the role of Indonesia as the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and its Uluma's efforts for stable

peace in Afghanistan needs to be optimized. In this perspective, although not necessarily solve the problem instantly, this inter-clerical meeting can be one way of realizing peace in Afghanistan. The clerics in Afghanistan and Pakistan can see the condition in Indonesia as well as observing the role and position of uluma in maintaining a conducive situation in this predominantly Muslim countries.

The results of the discussions and agreements of the Indonesia government could be a new starting point for further dialogue in Afghanistan, which will discuss technical issues and tactical strategies in realizing peace. Indonesia's credibility and experience in pioneering peace have been proven. In Cambodia, for example, Indonesia succeeded in initiating peace talks that eventually were realized. In addition, the role of Uluma in Indonesia in maintaining a conducive and united situation can also be a concrete example of how the uluma playing their roles.

By the way, If Taliban agree to negotiate with Afghanistan government, on that time the role of Indonesia to act as a peace-mediator will be very useful and visible, because Indonesia has very good experience in peace-building and peace-mediation. As it seems which Afghans do not trust too much in Saudi Arabia's role in peace negotiation and the only reason is a very bad experience of an old peace agreement in that country which was not stable. In this case, Indonesia is one of the most trusted countries for Afghanistan to act as peace-mediator and facilitator. Indonesia can also grantee the peace agreement between the Taliban and Afghanistan government if the Taliban agree to start negotiation with and inter-Afghan dialogue.

4 CONCLUSION

The current conflict in Afghanistan is proven not to have a military solution. After the 18 years presence of international community forces, especially USA troops in Afghanistan, this issue is internationally proven to stop fighting against the Taliban and start negotiations. At the moment, besides the will of the Afghanistan government and the citizens, a collective decision from regional and international level is made to bring peace in Afghanistan. Of course, each Regional, Western, and European country wants to play its roles in the peace process in Afghanistan, but some countries are in the core of the concentration. One of the main countries in this topic is Indonesia. Afghanistan government and Indonesia government both have the commitment to put efforts in peace.

According to the great background of Indonesia in peace-building and peace-mediation, this country can be a good help for Afghanistan in the peace process. But, still, the Taliban did not accept to negotiate with Afghanistan government and also they refused the role of Indonesia to act as a peace-mediator. By the way, still, Indonesia and Afghanistan government are optimistic about satisfying the Taliban in face to face negotiation with the Afghanistan government.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

No	Recommendations
1	International Community with the support of USA should obligate the Taliban to start face to face negotiation with the Afghanistan government, and Indonesia hosts these negotiations as a peace-mediator.
2	The role and efforts of Indonesia for peace in Afghanistan should continue till the Taliban get ready for face to face negotiation, because Afghanistan government besides having a political partner (USA), needs a trusted religious supporter as well.
3	Indonesia better to use its past experience in how to satisfy the Taliban for peace negotiation with the Afghanistan government, because of Taliban besides being in power, looking for a country which grantees the peace process.
4	Afghanistan and Indonesia governments need to work on a long-term Islamic policy to decrease extremisms in Afghanistan even after the peace with the Taliban.
5	The great relationship between Indonesia and Afghanistan will play a big role in the region; therefore, both countries should support one another in a different aspect, especially in capacity-building and economy investment.
6	It will be better if Indonesia signs a long-term agreement with Afghanistan to grantee peace-making in this country even after peace with the Taliban because peace-making in Afghanistan is also a vital issue in the future.

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