

INDONESIA'S SOFT POWER STRATEGY IN GUIDING PEACE IN THE AFGHANISTAN CONFLICT

Arief Rachman ¹, Muhtadi ², Kiki Al Hadid ³

¹ Indonesia Defense University, UNHAN Indonesia

^{1, 2, 3} Indonesia Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan

ABSTRACT

The commitment of the Government of Indonesia in carrying out soft power can build the image of Indonesia as a bridge country for peace in the eyes of the international community. It can also build international trust for the national interest. Afghanistan is one of the countries that has been hit by a protracted conflict due to differences in political ideology and interference from other interested countries. This research aims to analyze Indonesia's soft power role and strategy in guiding various meetings with related parties in the context of peace in Afghanistan. The research method used in this research is the qualitative research method, with a naturalistic approach to accurate analysis of the material and strategy of Indonesian soft power in guiding peace in Afghanistan. The results obtained in this research are about matters relating to Indonesia's Soft Power Strategy in guiding peace in Afghanistan in the form of guiding various organizations and stakeholders that play a role in peace in Afghanistan, both Afghan government organizations, party leaders in Afghanistan, US Embassy Special Charge d'Affaires Ambassador, High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) Afghanistan, National Security Adviser (NSA) Afghanistan and Council of Afghan Scholars and other organizations that play an active role in peace in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Soft Power Strategy, Peace Guidance, Indonesia and Afghanistan

I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is a strategy or plan of action made by state decision-makers in dealing with other countries or other international political units, which are controlled to achieve national goals or more specifically for the national interest. One way to understand the concept of foreign policy is to separate it into two components: politics and foreign affairs. Politics and policy are a set of decisions that serve as guidelines for action, or a set of actions aimed at achieving predetermined goals. While abroad is an international system (external environment) that cannot be separated from the domestic political system.

The foreign policy carried out by the Government of Indonesia is a free and active foreign policy that prioritizes soft power, which is contained in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, the fourth paragraph, namely: *"...to participate in carrying out world order based on independence, eternal peace, and*

social justice" This shows that Indonesia emphasizes the importance of active participation in the international world. A safe and peaceful world is certainly the hope for all mankind, including Indonesia. To create a world peace that is lasting, just, and prosperous, the Government of Indonesia takes a strong foreign policy stance, free and active.

The commitment of the Government of Indonesia in carrying out soft power can build the image of Indonesia as a bridge country for peace in the eyes of the international community. It can also build international trust for the national interest. The assistance that has been given by Indonesia to other countries must be reciprocated by that country. This condition is of course very beneficial for Indonesia's role in the world arena, both from the perspective of ideology, politics, economy, society, and culture, as well as defense and security. Soft power is a manifestation of the right diplomatic strategy to establish bilateral and multilateral

relations and to participate in creating world peace and preventing war, according to research by Cohen (2017), in his research entitled *The big stick, the limits of soft power and the necessity of military force*.

Soft power is different from hard power which tends to prioritize military power. Soft power overrides the power of military defense equipment as an instrument. This is following Lee (2009) regarding a theory of soft power. If in hard power, more emphasis is placed on coercive, coercive, and suppressive methods, then in soft power, cultural values, religion, and policies are more important. Indonesia, of course, has all the resources to claim itself as a leading soft power implementer. Indonesia has many advantages when using soft power in its foreign policy. This is following research by Ahmad (2019) in his research on *India's Soft Power and Pakistan's Hard Power Policy in Afghanistan*. This is also by Tsygankov (2013) regarding *Moscow's Soft Power Strategy* and following Wilson (2008) regarding hard power, soft power, and smart power strategy.

Afghanistan is one of the countries that has been hit by a protracted conflict due to differences in political ideology and interference from other interested countries. The conflict not only claimed many lives and injuries as well as the destruction of infrastructure but also resulted in the collapse of trust in others, which is following Fairweather's (2014) research on *The Good War: Why We Couldn't Win the War or the Peace in Afghanistan*. Various efforts have been made to bring these conflicting groups together, although it is still far from the hope of achieving a wave of lasting peace, at least there have been various hard efforts to achieve it. Indonesia is one of the countries trusted by the Government and the people of

Afghanistan to play its soft power role to guide peace in Afghanistan. This is closely related to the research conducted by Akbarzadeh, Ahmed & Ibrahimi (2021) on *Soft power, hard power dynamics, the case of Iran in Afghanistan*.

Indonesia's proximity to Afghanistan is because Indonesia is considered by the Afghan people to have the same identity, namely, the majority of the religion is Islam. Learn to handle conflict, so you can learn from the experience of conflict resolution in Aceh. The Afghan people have been through 40 years of conflict and that is a long period. The Afghan people see that Aceh has also gone through a long conflict process, so the experience used in Aceh can be used in Afghanistan. The conflict in Afghanistan is caused by several factors. One of them is the problem of differences between religious values and political actors who are there. From the Aceh conflict, it can be seen how the former peace negotiators in Aceh went through the process until they were peaceful.

Studying the values of Pancasila, Indonesia and Afghanistan both have a majority Muslim population. The difference is, Indonesia has more than 800 types of cultural diversity and 500 languages that can be unified through Pancasila. In Afghanistan, it is not a matter of religion, but the political and social conditions that divide them. The majority of Afghans love peace, but the entry of foreign countries has made conflicts between groups in Afghanistan never-ending. Even these foreign countries compete for sources of oil and gas fields. Many oil and gas mines have not been explored due to safety concerns.

All components of the Afghanistan nation want an atmosphere of peace and security. Various expressions put forward by group leaders from various organizations as well as Afghan

government officials implied the desire to unite and live together in a peaceful situation. As the official Indonesian Ambassador to Afghanistan, I am always optimistic that unity and peace Inshaa Allah can be realized. According to the promise of Allah SWT in His word *"And if they incline to peace, then lean towards it and put your trust in Allah. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing."* (Surat al-Anfal verse 61).

Based on the above background, the Problem Statement that can be raised in this research is "What is the role and strategy of Indonesia in Soft Power in guiding various meetings with related parties in the context of peace in Afghanistan. Furthermore, this research aims to obtain an accurate analysis of the materials of Indonesia's soft power strategy in guiding peace in Afghanistan.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this research is a qualitative research method, with a naturalistic approach, where the researcher, who served as the Indonesian Ambassador to Afghanistan at that time, held various meetings with various parties related to and influential in the creation of peace in Afghanistan. The data was obtained from the results of the scouting meetings from 2017 to 2020.

Research related to peace in Afghanistan has been done by many previous researchers. Several research studies and literature related to this research include Rubin (2000), in his research entitled *The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan*. Furthermore, Sergunin, A., & Karabeshkin, L. (2015) with research entitle *Understanding Russia's soft power strategy* and Feizi (2018) which discusses *Discourse, Affinity, and Attraction: A*

Case Study of Iran's Soft Power Strategy in Afghanistan. Then the research by Qadri and Nabi (2019) with a research entitled *India's Geo-Strategic maneuvers in Afghanistan: Soft Power Approach*. This research is then used as the basis and theoretical concept and is the background for the development of the materials in this research.

2.1. Concept Guiding Meetings for Peace in Afghanistan

Peace must exist in Afghanistan. Indicators of the establishment of peace have begun to appear. Dialogue after dialogue through religious and cultural approaches has also been held by many conflicting parties. Indonesia is one of the countries that is highly trusted by the Afghan people to be a peace mediator there. Afghanistan-Indonesia relations refer to bilateral relations between the two countries which are largely based on religious solidarity because Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country in the world and Afghanistan is also a Muslim-majority country. This is following the research conducted by Goodhand and Sedra (2010) in their research entitled *Who owns the peace, Aid, reconstruction, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan*.

Indonesia has expressed its commitment to support and assist the rebuilding of Afghanistan in various sectors, including technical training, infrastructure, empowerment of ulama in peace missions, empowerment of women, higher education, training of diplomats, scholarships for university students, and others. Indonesia has an embassy in Kabul, while Afghanistan also has an embassy in Jakarta. Both countries are full members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of

Islamic Cooperation. When Afghanistan's domestic conditions are unstable in the political, economic, socio-cultural, security, and other fields, Indonesia will help in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan's domestic conditions. Indonesia is making capacity-building efforts to Afghanistan with the South-South Cooperation mechanism and a trilateral scheme in which Indonesia provides places, experts, and technical assistance, with funding from third countries. Many capacity-building programs have been implemented since 2010 until now. These include programs in the fields of economy, politics, government, democracy, health, natural disasters, agriculture, fisheries, and waters. In line with this, McInnes & Rushton (2012) in their research on Smart power, Health interventions for strategic effects in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition, through the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Afghanistan, researchers continue to travel to guide various meetings with stakeholders consisting of interested officials which can be explained as follows.

2.2. Guided Meeting with President Ashraf Ghani

A meeting with the President of Afghanistan, Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani will be held on December 24, 2020, at 5:30 pm. During the meeting, President Ghani expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by Indonesia in supporting the peace process in Afghanistan, including the holding of the Trilateral Ulema Conference in Bogor in 2018 and the Dialogue on the Role of Women in Building and Sustaining Peace in Jakarta on 26-30 November 2019. In this case, Minister of Women's Affairs Hasina Safi in particular

expressed her gratitude to the Indonesian Foreign Minister for initiating the establishment of Afghanistan – Indonesia Women Solidarity Network whose inauguration was held on the occasion of her visit to Kabul on March 1, 2020.

President Ghani also expressed his appreciation for the Indonesian government's remarks during a visit to Jakarta on April 5-6 2017, which was responded to by the visit of the President of the Republic of Indonesia to Kabul on January 29, 2018, and the visit of Jusuf Kalla as Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia on February 28, 2018, which has strengthened the foundation in relations between two Muslim-majority countries. In this regard, President Ghani also expressed his great appreciation for the visit of Mr. Jusuf Kalla's delegation this time and wanted to learn from his experience in leading the peace process in Aceh.

During the meeting, President Ghani conveyed the expectations of the Afghan government to the Indonesian government for the holding of the Regional Ulema Conference with the possibility of virtual implementation considering the COVID-19 pandemic is still not over; and Indonesia's willingness to be one of the hosts for the next round of peace talks (one round of meeting).

The chairman of the Afghan Ulema Council, Maulvi Ataullah Ludin, who was also present at the meeting, suggested holding an Ijma' (joint agreement) between the MUI and the Afghan Ulema Council calling for an end to violence in Afghanistan, and that the ongoing civil war is forbidden in Islamic teachings which "*Rahmatan Lil Alamin*". In this regard, both President Ghani and Maulvi Ludin praised Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and "to some extend Singapore" as countries with moderate, modern, tolerant, and inclusive Muslim

populations who should be examples for Afghanistan.

In his response Mr. Jusuf Kalla, referring to the experience of resolving the Aceh problem, conveyed the need for the Government and the Taliban to continue to carry out serious dialogue to reach common ground, including the possibility of sharing of power. President Ghani agreed on the possibility of sharing power but he emphasized that the Afghan state system has changed too often, so there is no need to make efforts to replace the democratic Republic system.

2.3. Guided the Meeting with former President Hamid Karzai

A joint meeting with the former president of Afghanistan, H.E. Hamid Karzai on 21 May 2017 was very impressive for both parties. H.E. Hamid Karzai, who founded the Karzai Foundation, had such a deep impression on Indonesia. The partial and emotional relationship between the two countries gives a signal that the friendship between the two countries for 62 years will still exist and be sustainable. He then gave a little comment regarding the US MOAB bomb attack which signaled the arbitrariness of the US action on sovereign Afghanistan.

On the other hand, it is time to allow NUG to stand alone in realizing peace through dialogue. The Afghan people hope that Indonesia can help in the context of education in Afghanistan and agree with what Indonesia has done with the exchange of Ulama. In its development, the former President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai commended all efforts to bridge peace that have been carried out by the Government of Indonesia by being willing to host a trilateral meeting which was

held at the Bogor Presidential Palace, West Java, on May 11, 2018.

The meeting the event was attended by scholars from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Indonesia. Although the attempt at the meeting was opposed by the Taliban, the meeting continued. Hamid Karzai is an Afghan leader with a unique personality. He was born on December 24, 1957, in the village of Karz, near Kandahar, Afghanistan. His grandfather, Khair Mohammad Khan, served during the Afghan War of Independence and was Deputy Speaker of the Senate. His father, Abdul Ahad Karzai, was a tribal elder (Popalzai) and one of Afghanistan's most important national figures, serving as Deputy Parliament during the 1960s.

2.4. Guiding the Meeting with the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, H.E. Salahuddin Rabbani

In a meeting on May 1, 2017, the Afghan Foreign Minister said that the overall development of Afghanistan was positive and peaceful. We are happy with the arrival of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in Kabul. We also encourage the Leaders of the groups to come and unite in Kabul.

Afghanistan in particular, I hope that the Indonesian Minister of Women Empowerment, Mrs. Yohana Susana Yembise can attend as Keynote Speaker at the symposium entitled "*Afghanistan Women Messengers of Peace*". Indonesia's support is always expected because as a friend of fellow Muslim countries and friends of fellow Muslim brothers. In addition, because of Indonesia's strategic and important position, it is hoped that Indonesia can help the "*Negotiation Table*". We also encourage neighboring countries to take a positive role and together with the Government

of Afghanistan to solve the killing of innocent civilians.

The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, will send a peace delegation to share experiences, such as when the Indonesian government applied methods of resolving conflicts in Aceh & Papua. Through sharing the experiences of the Indonesian government in dealing with social conflicts in Aceh and Papua, it is hoped that the Afghan government can also try the effectiveness of similar soft power methods. In the next month preparing Advance Peace Delegation. Then in October, a Consultation Meeting was held in Kabul, Afghanistan.

On 15 May 2017, the Indonesian Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Ms. Yohana Susana Yembise will come. His arrival will reveal that Kabul is a safe city. This makes a good signal for the two countries, especially on security issues. Afghanistan has had 2 visits from the Minister of Women in the last 2 weeks. They were Ministers of Women from Tajikistan and Iran. Despite this, there have been several attacks outside Kabul, but Kabul's security situation is safe.

Recently the Pakistan Parliament came to Afghanistan, visits like this should be continued. We hope Pakistan will continue by stopping the Taliban's attacks on the Afghan people, its support for the Taliban including their training. Regarding the Ulama Meeting, on 15-16 May 2017 from Nahdatul Ulama Afghanistan (NUA) which was held by Indonesia. The Afghan Foreign Minister is very grateful and very supportive of the efforts that Indonesia has made for Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister also suggested contacting Dr. Kashaf, a high scholar who is close to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Afghan government, should also

be involved. This event was attended by Ulama from all provinces which previously only attended from 21 Provinces, while Ulama from Jakarta also came to Kabul as many as 2 people.

The Afghan Foreign Minister also informed about one of their agendas related to Ulama, namely the MoFA held an e-conference on Peace and Security in Kabul by MoFA in June. Those who attended included the European Union, NATO, and the US. The proposal of the Kabul Ambassador, if so, then Indonesia can invite with the permission of the Afghan Government Mr. Jusuf Kalla to attend. However, this event is for Deputy Minister Level. If there is a high-level meeting immediately reported.

Reports about the Indonesian Islamic Center (IIC) have been fenced off. Insha Allah the next development is the Clinic. However, the Government of Indonesia needs a Development MoU because after the construction of a 4-story hospital with a focus on mothers and children; internal disease; and Mental Disorders are completed, submitted on a "Grand" basis. Grand is the construction and supply of operational equipment from Indonesia and when it is completed the operational responsibility will be handed over to the Afghan government. Related to this, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sent a draft MoU which was sent last February 2019.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research using the Qualitative Research method, with a Naturalistic approach, where the researcher who served as the Indonesian Ambassador to Afghanistan at that time, held various meetings with various parties related and influential in the

creation of peace in Afghanistan which subsequently obtained the results of Indonesia's Soft Power strategy. for peacekeeping in Afghanistan.

3.1. Strategy Meeting with Hezb-i-Islami Party Leader, H.E. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar

At a joint meeting with the Leader of the Hezb-i-Islami Party, H.E. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, on May 25, 2017, we discussed the issue of regional resolution. We as the Indonesian Ambassador to Afghanistan in Kabul call on the Afghan people to be patient in all forms of disaster because only Allah SWT can help solve our problems. H.E. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (GH) said Indonesia has a sacred place in Islamic history and among Muslims. GH was still very impressed when he visited Jakarta during the Suharto administration and prayed at the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta. GH added, if Indonesians pray in their mosques, it is enough and very helpful for us. Our goal is to end the ongoing conflict.

The leader of the Hezb-i-Islami Party, H.E. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar stated that: "Your spiritual support is enough for us". Like at the time of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, when your people prayed for all Afghan Muslims and Allah helps the oppressed Afghan nation. The war has taken everything from us. Insecurity, poverty, and social problems dominate our nation. Unfortunately, this war has been imposed from outside our nation. Nobody in our country wants war. Our people are tired of fighting. We fought ten years against Soviet troops, which killed one and a half million of our citizens. The war made six million of our people refugees in neighboring countries and other countries. It destroyed almost the whole country, luckily our religious

and patriotic citizens miraculously managed to exist in this tragedy. But unfortunately, the war has not finished and reached the threshold of the Islamic system and it was put as a barrier by some internal and external conspiracies. Our people continue to fight under different names at war with the US and NATO.

As the Indonesian ambassador to Afghanistan, he said that both success and failure are tests of worship to Allah. We know that Afghans are suffering from this war for the last 40 years. It has affected many factors and sectors, but rest assured that as much as the Muslim nation is pursued they remain patient and impartial, the results will be good and positive. Inshaa Allah, Allah will give you peace, serenity, and blessings of eternal prosperity. You will be known as a strong and united nation in the world and no rude party will dare to show aggression.

3.2. Strategy Meeting with the US Embassy Special Charge d'Affaires Ambassador, H.E. Hugo Llorens

Meeting with the US Embassy Special Charge d'Affaires Ambassador, H.E. Hugo Llorens on 13 May 2017. Hugo Llorens asked about Indonesia's relations with Afghanistan. We say that Indonesia's relations with Afghanistan began when Afghanistan supported the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia and continued with the State visit of President Soekarno in 1961. We stated that when we first visited the city of Kabul in 2002, during Loya Jirga and when we were in Athan, the city of Kabul was not yet have anything and it's lonely, but now after 15 years, Afghanistan especially Kabul city has been very developed, especially in the field of Economy. The security that is worried about right now is only terror,

which can happen anywhere including in the US and Indonesia.

The peace of the city of Kabul is described when the wife travels with the domestic helper to shop at the traditional market and it turns out that nothing happened. There is nothing to worry about as in the news so far. Maybe we need time to confront their morals towards anti-corruption beliefs, culture, and education. Indonesia wants to share with the US Ulama's approach to Ulama as well as cultural issues. How can you share with Muslims who are tolerant, balanced, moderate, brotherhood, and justice as the 5 principles in the pillars of Islam run by Muslims in Indonesia? We also talked about having exchanged Ulama with the US as well as with Afghanistan. This year we held the 5th Annual Meeting of the Afghan Nahdatul Ulama (NUA). Until now, Alhamdulillah, all have received well, there is no resistance from the Ulama in various provinces in Afghanistan. No one interfered with our activities because we only discussed tolerance and peace.

Hugo Lorens on that occasion said that Indonesia has an important role in Afghanistan peace because many efforts have been made for Afghanistan peace. Afghanistan's problem is not only domestic but has become a global issue. The US government is ready to help in any way you need. At that time, we asked Hugo a question, do you think that peace in Afghanistan is still far, medium, or near? Hugo replied, "I think Afghanistan has come a long way from all events starting from Mujahideen, Taliban, 911, armed groups, Pakistani insurgents. We have a hard time predicting Pakistan, it's good sometimes it's bad and they are related to the Taliban." President Trump's foreign policy at that time was not to take the

interests of Afghanistan. If we can influence Pakistan together, maybe we can hold it to bring about peace. Including Troop support for the Taliban. The US Government supports the Democratic transition of the Afghan Government to the Afghan People. According to Hugo, Indonesia has a better role. Because Muslim countries that can be role models include the approach from Ulama to Ulama that Indonesia is currently doing. Again We said to Hugo, "Okay, we will play the role of Ulama to Ulama and tell Pakistan to change, don't use violence. Why do you have to resort to violence? Why not sit down together at the negotiating table." Hugo also strongly agreed that if Pakistani Ulama could talk to Pakistan, this would be a message to the world. It's like the Ulama in Istanbul, Turkey.

3.3. Strategy Meeting with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of UNAMA, H.E. Tadamichi Yamamoto

On April 26, 2017, a meeting was held with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of UNAMA, H.E. Tadamichi Yamamoto. He is a Japanese diplomat born in 1950. He served as the Japanese Government's special representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2010 to 2012. Yamamoto has also coordinated a ministerial-level international conference on Afghanistan development held in Tokyo Japan in July 2012.

At the meeting, information was given about development progress in Kabul since leaving Kabul 15 years ago. Development in Kabul is very fast and even modern. The meeting conveyed optimism about the coming and realization of Peace in Afghanistan. Hope for the cooperation of all parties, not only in physical development but also social,

psychological, and spiritual, along with time for peace for Afghanistan.

3.4. Strategy Meeting with Director-General of NDS, H.E. Amrullah Saleh

We had a meeting with the Director-General of the NDS, H.E. Amrullah Saleh on May 6, 2017. During the meeting, he said, *"If there are difficulties and we find it difficult, then Allah will bring difficulties but if we don't think so (difficult) then there will be no difficulties"*. He further said that if there was no war in Afghanistan then the situation would not be like this. Everyone knows Afghanistan. Afghanistan is like a lighthouse. Afghanistan's role in the world must be increased because fellow Muslims are brothers and their people also live in a harmonious atmosphere.

In 2004 with the Minister of Communications of Afghanistan, UNDP, and regional organizations, Amrullah visited Indonesia before the tsunami. Amrullah and his entourage had time to visit the mosque, and the market, our food is not much different may be from the same origin. In the past, traders to Jakarta came through Afghanistan. From Greece, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Britain, Arabia, and the Islamic Caliph Usman could rule the world, even Afghanistan is also a vast empire. People's lives are very easy, our faces are even similar.

Meanwhile, with England and America, they brought everything home. Everyone wants to have an interest in Afghanistan. Amrullah said that *"This is one of the reasons why we fought so long"*. Amrullah also said about Indonesia's involvement in Peace: *"I have many ways, we are just starting right"*. The problem we face between Islam is different from extremism in some countries. Only a few

percent want how to be a Muslim and a modern person, to be tolerant according to Islam or the Koran.

What about after the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. There must be an agreement from Russia then we must be in the Muslim movement so that the whole country comes to Afghanistan. Let them come and make a movement or organization. That is the need of Islam including Ulama and unity. Is it Jihad or not? Should we carry a flag and say I'm a good Muslim? As a foreign policy, Islam must be based on Islamic theory and not propaganda. If Indonesia wants to help bring about peace then I agree and the main thing is to invite the importance of Ulama. This war must be ended together.

In my opinion, the Mufti of Afghanistan should seat them together. There is a responsibility of Muslims as Ulama to end violence. To start with understanding context with a clear message. Ulama, Diplomats and We (NDS) must sit together. Meanwhile, someone has to work behind the scenes. I will introduce the right people they will respect and listen to. As smart as Ulama, if they don't have credentials, Ulama is not followed by the people. Mr. Duta, We need 2 of you to attend, just to observe the event.

We can discuss, Indonesian Ulama have more knowledge and can share experiences such as the Imam of Mecca also presented by Muslim Friends. We (NDS) have a Council of Ulama, Sheikh Halimi Qassouf without Ideal Strong Diplomacy Support does not succeed. Amrullah: *"I think Afghanistan has welcomed all countries to participate. For example starting with Ulama, a good way and many impacts. Then if we invite the big Ulama to participate with other organizations."* "I have no problem

with the Taliban. Other countries have interests and it is even more complex if all interests are united without the intervention of other countries. Let's start with the Ulama. Togetherness will come by itself depending on the good relationship with each other. Our relationship (Indonesia-Afghanistan) has been around for a long time, both state to state and individual to individual.

3.5. Strategy Meeting with Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, Mohammad Qasim Halimi

The meeting was held on December 23, 2020, which was also attended by Plt. Chairman of the Council of Ulama Maulvi Ataullah Ludin. At the opening, Minister Halimi expressed his appreciation for the holding of the Trilateral Ulema Conference on 11 May 2018 in Bogor which was the beginning of the peace process in Afghanistan, as well as bringing closer relations between Afghan and Pakistani Ulama. Noting the success of the Bogor conference, he hoped that Indonesia could hold a second conference on a regional scale by involving in particular neighboring countries Afghanistan or other countries were chosen by Indonesia. Regarding this proposal, Halimi proposed 4 topics that need to be discussed, namely:

- a. First**, that the war has harmed the security and stability of Afghanistan and countries in the region so that it must be stopped.
- b. Second**, that war is an unjustified way of solving problems in Islam.
- c. Third**, that both parties need to explain the concept of post-peace Islamic governance in Afghanistan, what is wrong with the current conditions, and how it should be done to prevent people's misunderstanding of Islam?

d. Fourth, so that Indonesia is willing to be a mediator in the negotiations between the government and the Taliban about the desired future direction of Islamic governance in Afghanistan.

Regarding the implementation of the Hajj pilgrimage, Minister Halimi stated that he had received a recommendation from the Saudi Arabian government to implement a policy for the management of Hajj pilgrims as implemented by Indonesia. In this regard, Halimi hopes that Indonesia can provide special training on the management of the Hajj for the organizing agencies in Afghanistan. Finally, Minister Halimi also hopes that Indonesia can increase socialization about tolerance in religious life, including facilitating visits to the Afghan media for special coverage of Islamic values in modern life in Indonesia to be implemented in Afghanistan. Adding statement Halimi, Afghan Ulema Council chairman Maulvi Ataullah Ludin said at least 2,300 clerics had died in wars in the last 10 years and against their families, the government had distributed land and facilitated education for children. However, both facilities are not fully accessible due to their poverty. Maulvi Ludin hopes that Indonesia can help provide scholarships for the children of religious scholars who have been victims of the war and help build houses for them on land allotted by the government. In addition, Maulvi also hopes that Indonesia can facilitate Afghan Ulama to learn about Islamic moderation in Indonesia. In his response, Mr. Jusuf Kalla stated that from the beginning Indonesia had affirmed its commitment to peace in Afghanistan so that it would consider the idea of holding a Regional Ulama Conference or even facilitating a dialogue between Afghan clerics and the Taliban about the concept of a

desired Islamic government. He underlined three important things in enhancing bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Indonesia, namely in promoting peace in Afghanistan, education for youth, and increasing trade. Regarding the harmonization of religious life, he stated that the concept of Islamic life in Indonesia is following internationally recognized Islamic norms so that the harmonization of religious life in Indonesia can also be applied in Afghanistan. The most important thing is the readiness of Afghans to apply it in life.

3.6. Strategy Meeting with the Chair of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR)

Meeting with the Chairman of HCNR Dr. Abdullah was held at Sapedar Palace on December 23, 2020, attended by members of the HCNR Leadership Council, Minister Halimi, and Chairman of the Council of Ulama Maulvi Ataullah Ludin. At the opening, Dr. Abdullah gave a glimpse of the progress of the peace talks in Doha and hoped for Indonesia's input in the dialogue with the government's negotiating team in preparation for the second round of peace talks on January 5, 2021. He expressed his appreciation for the initiation of Afghanistan peace talks through the Trilateral Ulema Conference and greatly appreciated the visit of President Joko Widodo in January 2018 and the visit of the Indonesian Foreign Minister to Kabul in March 2020. Abdullah emphasized that Afghanistan needs to learn from Indonesia in handling internal conflicts. Regarding this matter, Abdullah also expressed his appreciation for Minister Halimi's report on Indonesia's willingness to consider proposals for holding the Asia Regional Ulema

Conference. Abdullah hopes that the conference can issue a joint call for an end to violence in Afghanistan, realize a ceasefire and a resolution to the conflict through negotiations that are implemented and owned by Afghanistan. Abdullah stated that in this case, Afghanistan needs to learn from Indonesia's experience in resolving the conflict in Aceh and has played a role as one of the active facilitators for peace in Afghanistan. Abdullah hopes that Indonesia will continue to increase its role to help stop the violence towards a permanent ceasefire in Afghanistan and a political settlement through negotiations. He underlined Afghanistan's desire for Indonesian clerics to deliver a firm message to encourage the Taliban to be willing to stop violence and carry out a ceasefire.

Regarding the role of women, Abdullah also praised the role of female Ulama in the development of religious life in Indonesia and hoped for support for capacity building and knowledge of Afghan women Ulama. In other words, Abdullah wants Indonesia to provide scholarships and training for Afghan women Ulama to learn the application of Islamic principles in modern life, including in politics, economics, and other fields. In his response, Jusuf Kalla stated that Indonesia views Afghanistan positively about the proposal for a Regional Ulema Conference to unite the views of the ulama on peace in Afghanistan. Referring to his experience in resolving the Aceh problem, he admits that the road to peace is difficult and requires sacrifice. He stated that to realize peace, however, the role of the ulama was very important.

Regarding the regional ulema's call for peace, he stated that the most important thing is how the community is ready to accept and fill

peace. There must be an agreement to refer to comprehensive Islamic teachings and not only prioritize one school or view to unite. Adding Mr. Jusuf Kalla's response, a member of the Indonesian delegation, Mr. Hamid Awaluddin, explained his experience as the leader of the negotiation team in resolving the Aceh problem and stated that in the peace negotiation process, talks must be based on similarities and common interests, avoiding differences as much as possible.

3.7. Strategy Meeting with Government Negotiation Team

The meeting was held on 24 December 2020, attended by the head of the negotiating team Mohammad Masoom Stanikzai, the special envoy of the President / Minister of Peace Affairs Abdul Salam Rahimi, Deputy Minister of Peace Ghulam Yahya Abbasi, and some members of the negotiating team including political activist Fawzia Koofi who recently survived an assassination attempt. by Taliban militants. Minister Halimi and Chairman of the Ulema Council Maulvi Ataullah Ludin were also present at the meeting.

In the opening, Stanikzai outlines the course of peace talks with the Taliban since September 12, 2020, which have progressed by reaching an agreement on the agenda of the talks and are currently on a pause until January 5, 2020. Stanikzai stated that from the beginning the talks had experienced problems because there were no parties involved. be the middleman. In addition, the composition of the delegation was also different, where the government team represented all the diverse interests of the people, while the Taliban only represented one interest, namely the Ulama.

Stanikzai said the government team in these talks put the issue of a ceasefire as a top priority, while the Taliban wanted a ceasefire as the last priority. In this case, Stanikzai expects Indonesia's assistance in three main matters, namely first, to conduct mediation to ensure that the Taliban have a clear concept of the desired form of Islamic government; second, mobilizing the voices of regional or international clerics to call for a cessation of violence towards a ceasefire and a lasting peace in Afghanistan; third, encouraging agreement among the five co-host countries on the location for the next round of negotiations.

3.8. Strategy Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan

The meeting with Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar was held at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs building on December 24, 2020, which was also attended by Minister Halimi and several officials within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the opening, Foreign Minister Atmar expressed his appreciation for the visit of the delegation which was considered to bring new enthusiasm for peace efforts in Afghanistan, especially among the people. The Minister of Foreign Affairs underlined the positive role of Indonesia in the framework of cooperation with co-host countries, especially from the perspective of scholars, which was not done by other co-hosts. In this regard, Foreign Minister Atmar expressed his support for Minister Halimi's proposal so that Indonesia could initiate the holding of the Asia Regional Ulema Conference, and facilitate a meeting between the delegation of the Afghan Ulema Council and the Taliban Ulema. In particular, the Foreign Minister also hopes that Indonesia can resume direct talks with the Taliban's political office in

Doha. For the record, Mr. Jusuf Kalla at a meeting with Abdullah Abdullah on December 23, 2020, said that according to the plan all delegates had scheduled to meet Mullah Baradar in Doha after the visit to Kabul. But on the last day, it was canceled because Baradar was still in Pakistan. In this connection, Mr. Jusuf Kalla promised to arrange another meeting with Baradar at the first opportunity.

Regarding the peace process, Foreign Minister Atmar proposed three things that Afghanistan hoped for from Indonesia, namely:

a. First, for Indonesia to take a special and direct approach (direct talk) with the Taliban so that they are willing to carry out a ceasefire and convince them to realize peace in the spirit of Islamic brotherhood. According to him, the Taliban appreciates Indonesia and its unwillingness to carry out a ceasefire is due to distrust and considers the ceasefire to be a sign of defeat in the war against the government.

Regarding the meeting with Baradar, a member of the delegation, Mr. Hamid Awaluddin stated that Mullah Baradar had absolute power in the Taliban's line of command, and he and Bp. Jusuf Kalla has a special relationship with Baradar so it is believed that a meeting plan with Baradar is very possible.

b. Second, Indonesia initiated the constant call by international scholars for a cessation of violence and war in Afghanistan and emphasized that acts of violence are not the only path that Islamic teachings justify in achieving their goals. The Foreign Minister expressed his belief that Indonesia is the only Islamic country that can be expected to mobilize the voices of international scholars. In this regard, the Foreign Minister hopes that Indonesia can help provide training for Afghan

Ulama in expanding their understanding of universal Islamic teachings.

c. Third, Indonesia has been actively involved since the beginning Indonesia is also the only Islamic country that has consistently encouraged peace efforts in Afghanistan, through the Trilateral Ulema Conference in 2018. In that regard, the Foreign Minister hopes that Indonesia can take an active role in facilitating the round of subsequent Intra-Afghan negotiations.

Regarding the war in Afghanistan, the Foreign Minister stated that 20 percent of the militants hostile to the Afghan government are foreign militants, mainly from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan. The Minister of Foreign Affairs expects input and assistance from Indonesia to expel these foreign militants from Afghanistan through regional diplomacy.

In the field of economy and trade, Foreign Minister Atmar proposed the establishment of a special bilateral commission to explore trade opportunities, including sharing knowledge in the form of scholarships and training for Afghan business actors and investment by Indonesian entrepreneurs in the food industry in Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister stated that Afghanistan has abundant raw materials for the food industry, but has not been able to develop them to meet the demands of neighboring countries.

At the closing, Foreign Minister Atmar once again expressed Afghanistan's hope that Indonesia could approach the Taliban for a reduction in violence towards a lasting ceasefire in Afghanistan, a political settlement through sharing of power, and listening to the people's aspirations for the future of Afghanistan. Mr. Jusuf Kalla promised to discuss this with the Indonesian government for follow-up.

3.9. Strategy Meeting with the Minister of State for Peace Affairs of Afghanistan, Sayed Sadaat Mansour Naderi.

On Monday, 7 December 2020, a meeting was held at the Afghan Ministry of Peace Affairs, led by the Afghan Minister of Peace, Sayed Sadaat Mansour Naderi, together with the Permanent Representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Ambassador Huseyin Avni Botsali and Turkish Ambassador Oğuzhan Ertuğrul. This meeting essentially discussed the progress of the peace process in Afghanistan, especially regarding the progress of the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN) in Doha which has entered the second round of talks, namely the preparation of the agenda discussed at the IAN.

In the opening of the meeting, Minister Naderi apart from explaining the progress of the peace talks in Doha, in particular, expressed his highest appreciation for the support of partner countries regarding Resolution no. 4/47/POL on the situation in Afghanistan and no. 5/45-POL on regional initiatives to support peace in Afghanistan adopted at the 47th OIC Foreign Ministers Council meeting in Niamey, Niger on 28 November 2020. The resolution, among other things, expresses the OIC's condemnation of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, urges the Taliban to reduce violence and agreed to an immediate ceasefire, and called for cooperation among Ulama and Religious Institutions in all member countries to promote peace and declare war and violence against the country and people of Afghanistan unjustified Islamically.

In line with the statement of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 29, 2020, Minister Naderi also emphasized that the

OIC Resolution is a reflection of the international Islamic community's collective support for the Afghan government and the peace process, both through negotiations and through efforts to fight terrorism, as well as support for regional infrastructure initiatives to enhance cooperation. Afghanistan's economy with neighboring countries.

In his response, Ambassador Botsali reaffirmed OIC's readiness to continue actively mobilizing support from Islamic countries for the peace process in Afghanistan and ensured that the Resolution could be implemented. Ambassador Botsali suggested that the ongoing talks in Doha could involve international partners who have close ties to both the Afghan government and the Taliban. The OIC realizes that these efforts are not easy, but must be seriously considered so that the goals of peace led and owned by the Afghan nation and state can truly be realized.

In particular, Minister Naderi expressed the hope of the Afghan government to Indonesia to continue initiating support for peace, especially through the Ulama route, which also involves Women Ulama in pushing for a peace agreement in Afghanistan. He also hoped that Indonesia's participation as a co-facilitator or like-minded countries with Qatar, Uzbekistan, Norway, and Germany would actively facilitate the peace process in Afghanistan, including the willingness to host the next round of negotiations. In response to this request, we expressly convey the commitment of the Government of Indonesia to ensure the success of the Intra-Afghan Negotiations through a process owned, run, and led by the Afghan people in an impartial and balanced manner for all parties involved. We underline that the step towards peace and

stability in Afghanistan is not only in Afghanistan's interest but also in the interests of Indonesia and the region around it and for world peace in general.

Indonesia as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world fully believes in the important role of the Ulama in promoting the values of peace. In this regard, Indonesia has taken various initiatives, including the holding of the Trilateral Ulama Conference in May 2018 and the Dialogue on the Role of Women in Building and Sustaining Peace in November 2019 in Jakarta to promote the significant role of Ulama and women in peace in Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Retno in a meeting with President Ashraf Ghani on March 1, 2020, submitted a proposal for holding the Indonesia-Afghanistan Ulama Conference as part of Indonesia's ongoing commitment to promote the role of Ulama in bringing about peace in Afghanistan. During his visit to Kabul, the Indonesian Foreign Minister also inaugurated the establishment of the Afghanistan-Indonesia Women Solidarity Network (AIWSN) as well as dialogue with Afghan women leaders discussing the role of women in peace.

3.10. Strategy Meeting with Afghanistan's National Security Adviser (NSA)

A meeting with the NSA Dr. Hamdullah Mohib was held on August 24, 2020, where at its opening, NSA Mohib stated that on January 5, 2021, the peace talks of the negotiating team of the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban would enter a critical stage where negotiations on the future of Afghanistan would face more obstacles than the first round. NSA Mohib said the Taliban remained adamant on the demand for an Islamic government in Afghanistan, without being able to explain what

was wrong with the current government of the Islamic Republic and what kind of system of Islamic government it wanted. According to him, the Taliban never explained its concept in detail about the desired Islamic government by referring to one of the Islamic countries in the world. But the Taliban only stated that the desired Islamic system of government does not imitate any of the countries in the world. He emphasized that the current Republican system of government is following Islamic values, compared to the Taliban rule before 2001, where almost all government institutions were not functioning except the Ministry of Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar.

Chairman of the Afghan Ulama Council Maulvi Ataullah Ludin, who was also present at the meeting with Minister Halimi, emphasized that Afghan clerics wanted an immediate ceasefire and hoped for cooperation between Indonesian clerics and Afghan clerics to issue a fatwa that war is a way that is not allowed in Islam.

3.11. Strategy Meeting with the Afghan Ulama Council

The meeting with the Afghan Ulama Council was held on December 25, 2020, in two sessions, namely a meeting with female Afghan clerics and a meeting with male clerics. The Indonesian delegation in a meeting with Afghan women clerics led by the Chair of the Central MUI Women's Empowerment Commission, Prof. Dr. Murniati Mukhlisin and was only attended by members of the delegation from the MUI and the Indonesian Embassy in Kabul. Meanwhile, from Afghanistan, there were members of the Council of Ulama and Afghan women political activists led by a member of the

HCNR Leadership Council, Ms. Zia Gul Rezaee.

At this first meeting, the Afghan Delegation conveyed some of the progress of Afghan women which were considered far behind compared to the progress of Indonesian women, especially in the role of advancing religious life, including in education and teaching of the Islamic religion. They consider Indonesia to be a role model for Afghanistan. According to them, currently, Afghan women continue to be victims of conflict, excluded from economic and political activities, access to education remains limited so they do not have a bright future. Meanwhile, Indonesia is considered to have made extraordinary progress in implementing Islamic community life. Therefore, they hope that Indonesia can pioneer a ceasefire and peace in Afghanistan so that women's rights can be guaranteed.

In this regard, Afghanistan hopes that Indonesia can provide cooperation in the field of Islamic education, especially in the form of long-term scholarships at the postgraduate and doctoral levels, as well as religious education at the high school level for girls, the construction of special madrasas for women in various provinces, and training programs. another long term specifically for Afghan women. They also hope that a Joint Committee of the Ulema Council of the two countries can be formed to exchange information and experiences and to improve religious education for women. They admire the Indonesian government's policy on gender equality so that they can stand on equal footing with men while still paying attention to Islamic principles. Therefore, they hope that MUI can cooperate with the Afghan Ulema Council in protecting women's rights in politics

and various other fields of life according to Islamic sharia.

The meeting with Afghan women Ulemas ended with the agreement of the Afghan women's Ulema Council to arrange a program to visit Indonesia. At the second meeting with the Afghan Islamic Ulema Council led by Bp. Jusuf Kalla and Minister Halimi, the Afghan side again expressed their hope that Indonesia would provide support for Islamic education for young Afghans so that in the future young intellectuals can be produced who can voice and create peace in Afghanistan. They stated that Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world and is considered the "light of Islam that illuminates the world" and is expected to help modernize Islam in Afghanistan through education. They also hope that Indonesia's role will be more significant in promoting the peace process in Afghanistan.

In the meeting, Mr. Jusuf Kalla conveyed that Indonesia had several times provided scholarship and training programs to the young generation of Afghanistan, and reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to continue to support the peace process in Afghanistan. He also invited the Ulama to continue to pray and strive for the achievement of lasting peace in Afghanistan. Also reminded of the role of the Ulama as guardians of faith in society and as equal partners who must dare to advise the Government if they make a mistake, and assist the Government's policies for the progress of the Afghan people.

4. CONCLUSION.

The conclusions obtained in this research are about matters relating to Indonesia's Soft Power Strategy in guiding peace in Afghanistan.

This is in the form of guiding various organizations and stakeholders who play a role in peace in Afghanistan, including the Afghan State Government organization, Party Leaders, US Embassy Special Charge d'Affaires Ambassador, High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR), National Security Advisor (NSA) Afghanistan and the Afghan Ulema Council and other organizations that play an active role in peace in Afghanistan.

All meetings and scouting with the Indonesian Soft Power Strategy were carried out smoothly without a hitch. By looking at the uniformity of the material presented in each meeting, it seems that this visit has been specially prepared to encourage Indonesia's role in garnering cooperation between scholars both at the bilateral and regional levels in promoting the peace process through religious channels in the conflict country of Afghanistan. Soft power is a manifestation of the right diplomatic strategy to establish bilateral and multilateral relations and to participate in creating world peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors greatly acknowledge the support from **Indonesia Defense University, UNHAN Jakarta Indonesia, and The Indonesia Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan** for providing the necessary resources to carry out this research work. The authors are also grateful to the anonymous reviewers and journal editorial board for their many insightful comments, which have significantly improved this article.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, P. (2019). India's Soft Power and Pakistan's Hard Power Policy in Afghanistan. *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 4(5), 1520-1524.
- Akbarzadeh, S., Ahmed, Z. S., & Ibrahimi, N. (2021). Soft power, hard power dynamics: the case of Iran in Afghanistan. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 1-20.
- Cohen, E. A. (2017). *The big stick: the limits of soft power and the necessity of military force*. Hachette UK.
- Feizi, H. (2018). *Discourse, Affinity, and Attraction: A Case Study of Iran's Soft Power Strategy in Afghanistan*. The University of South Florida.
- Fairweather, J. (2014). *The Good War: Why We Couldn't Win the War or the Peace in Afghanistan*. Random House.
- Goodhand, J., & Sedra, M. (2010). Who owns the peace? Aid, reconstruction, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. *Disasters*, 34, S78-S102.
- Lee, G. (2009). A theory of soft power and Korea's soft power strategy. *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, 21(2), 205-218.
- McInnes, C., & Rushton, S. (2012). Smart power? Health interventions for strategic effect in Iraq and Afghanistan. *International Political Sociology*, 6(3), 328-331.
- Qadri, S., & Nabi, M. B. (2019). India's Geo-Strategic maneuvers in Afghanistan: Soft Power Approach. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 9(5), 1-13.
- Rubin, B. R. (2000). The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan. *World Development*, 28(10), 1789-1803.
- Sergunin, A., & Karabeshkin, L. (2015). Understanding Russia's soft power strategy. *Politics*, 35(3-4), 347-363.
- Tsygankov, A. P. (2013). Moscow's Soft Power Strategy. *Current History*, 112(756), 259.
- Wilson III, E. J. (2008). Hard power, soft power, smart power. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 110-124.