

12-31-2020

## Indonesia's Involvement in the Afghanistan Peacebuilding Process

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### Recommended Citation

Farizan, Fabian Nur and Heryadi, Dudy (2020) "Indonesia's Involvement in the Afghanistan Peacebuilding Process," *Global: Jurnal Politik Internasional*: Vol. 22 : No. 2 , Article 4.

DOI: 10.7454/global.v22i2.475

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/global/vol22/iss2/4>

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## INDONESIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFGHANISTAN PEACEBUILDING PROCESS

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Submitted: 29 April 2020; accepted: 24 November 2020

### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memahami dan menganalisis keterlibatan Indonesia dalam perdamaian, khususnya pada upaya peacebuilding di Afghanistan. Hal ini didukung oleh komitmen Indonesia untuk meningkatkan upaya perdamaianya di Afghanistan yang disampaikan oleh Presiden Joko Widodo pada kunjungannya ke Kabul tahun 2018. Penelitian ini menggunakan Model Piramida Peacebuilding Lederach sebagai pisau analisis utama. Model Piramida Lederach mengidentifikasi tiga pendekatan peacebuilding beserta aktor-aktor utama dalam populasi yang terkena dampak berkecamuknya konflik, yaitu top leadership, middle range leadership dan grass-root leadership. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan keterlibatan Indonesia di Afghanistan dalam upaya perdamaian sudah dilakukan pada semua level. Upaya peacebuilding Indonesia pada bagian top level berfokus pada pencapaian Intra-Afghan Talks. Pada middle range level, Indonesia menyelenggarakan program capacity building serta menggunakan pendekatan agama melalui ulama. Terakhir, pada level akar rumput, Indonesia berfokus pada pemberdayaan perempuan Afghanistan sebagai agen perdamaian. Hadirnya Indonesia dalam ketiga pendekatan peacebuilding tersebut menunjukkan hal positif bagi proses perdamaian Afghanistan secara keseluruhan.

### Kata kunci:

peacebuilding, Afghanistan, Indonesia, perdamaian

### Abstract

This article aims to understand and analyse Indonesia's involvement in ensuring peace, especially in peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. Indonesia's commitment to improve its peace efforts in Afghanistan was expressed by President Joko Widodo during his visit to Kabul in 2018. This research used Lederach's pyramid model of peacebuilding as the primary analysis tool. Lederach's pyramid model identifies three approaches to peacebuilding, along with the main actors in the population affected by the conflict—namely top leadership, middle range leadership, and grass-root leadership. The results of the study show that Indonesia's involvement in Afghanistan in peace efforts has been carried out at all levels. Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts at the top level are focused on achieving Intra-Afghan Talks. At the middle range level, Indonesia runs capacity building programs and uses a religious approach through ulama. Furthermore, at the grassroots level, Indonesia focuses on empowering Afghan women as peace agents. The presence of Indonesia in all three approaches to Peacebuilding shows a positive mark for the overall Afghan peace process.

### Keywords:

peacebuilding, Afghanistan, Indonesia, peace

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Relations between Indonesia and Afghanistan have been established since the early decades of Indonesian independence. Afghanistan, as a country with a Muslim majority, became one of the earliest countries to recognise Indonesia's independence in 1949 (Ibrahimi, personal interview, 2020). Afghanistan and Indonesia officially opened diplomatic relations in 1954 and Afghanistan established its embassy in Jakarta. Relations between the two countries became stronger after the signing of the first treaty of friendship between Afghanistan and Indonesia in 1955. The relations continued at the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung and flourished when President Sukarno visited Afghanistan in 1961. However, throughout its history, Afghanistan has undergone a protracted conflict, which caused the country to continue to be torn by conflicts. From the invasion of the Soviet Union, the worsening condition after the fall of the Najibullah regime (Sihbudi & Dhurorudin, 1992), to the rise of the Taliban, conflict and violence persist to this day.

In 2014, the United States (US) announced the end of the US-led combat role mission in Afghanistan (Johnson, 2014). The "defeated" Taliban force then sought refuge in rural and mountainous areas to launch guerrilla attacks. US intervention in Afghanistan became more offensive and was intensified (Susanti & Monika, 2005). Even though the Taliban has been pushed back, the US, which has been in Afghanistan for more than 16 years, still fails to stop violence and stabilise Afghanistan. Like every internal conflict, the state's position became very weak and no longer able to maintain its authority as a national security administrator (Sudira, 2017). Thus, many areas have fallen back into the hands of the Taliban (George, 2020). Until now, Afghanistan still faces various issues, ranging from deep political divisions, weak structural governance, and economic insecurity (Thomas, 2020). These fundamental issues continue to hamper the peace process and sustainable development in Afghanistan. The disruption of peace negotiations with the Taliban and the contested results of the Afghan presidential election created uncertainty for the Afghan people. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported in 2019 that the conflict in Afghan resulted to a total of 10.000 civilian casualties with more than 3.000 death (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2019). In addition to the conflict and the slow pace of peaceful settlement with the Taliban, the presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Afghanistan has increasingly shaken the security situation in some parts of the country.

It does not mean that peace efforts are not carried out, but until now, it still has not brought the desired results. International organisations, such as the United Nations (UN) and countries around the region, have also contributed to peace efforts. One of the countries which also engages in peace efforts in Afghanistan is Indonesia. In recent years, Indonesia has been increasingly present in the Afghanistan peacebuilding efforts. Peacebuilding is not something unfamiliar to Indonesia. According to Alexandra (2017), peacebuilding, in the Indonesian context, is not limited to direct conflict prevention actions, but is rather put into concrete efforts that contribute to the prevention of conflict as well as conflict management. Indonesia focuses its peacebuilding efforts by becoming a facilitator, observer, mediator, and also participant in humanitarian actions that can help the peace process (Alexandra, 2017). Alexandra also adds that Indonesia strives to be a peacemaker, trust builder, and problem solver (Alexandra, 2017). Fully aware of its identity as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia describes itself as a concrete example where democracy, Islam, and modernity can go hand in hand. Thus, Indonesia actively contributes to world peace, including in Afghanistan.

Indonesia's involvement in the Afghanistan peace process has been ongoing since the Yudhoyono administration. This was marked by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Indonesia and Afghanistan to build the Indonesian Islamic Center in Kabul (Santi, 2018). The signing of the MoU in Yudhoyono administration became an initial milestone for Indonesia's involvement in Afghanistan peace process. Indonesia continues to reaffirm its peace involvement in Afghanistan during Joko Widodo (Jokowi) administration. In 2017, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visited Indonesia. During the visit, the two presidents discussed trade, investment, and improvement of Indonesia's peace efforts in Afghanistan (Halim, 2017). The next year, President Jokowi visited Kabul and stated that Indonesia would increase its commitment to building sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

The study of Indonesian peacebuilding is still limited. Not many researchers have conducted in-depth research on Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts, especially in the Afghanistan conflict. Therefore, the authors take a broader scope in understanding literature relating to the theme of the article, namely: (1) Indonesia's involvement in peace processes in other countries; (2) involvement of other countries/actors in the Afghan peace process; (3) Lederach pyramid model application in other peacebuilding activities. In the first scope of literature discussing Indonesian peace involvement, the

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article uses Lina Alexandra's work "Offering Support and Sharing Experiences: Indonesia's Approach to Peacebuilding" (Alexandra, 2017). She argues that there are two main approaches inherent in Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts. First, Indonesia emphasises persuasion to encourage host countries to find ways to create peace in their respective countries. This is achieved through intensive dialogue with local stakeholders. Second, Indonesia emphasises the concept of 'sharing experiences'. In other cases, such as in Myanmar, Indonesia played a role in defusing the conflict by sending a foreign minister to meet Aung Sang Suu Kyi. This diplomatic move was successful in opening assistance access to Rohingya people (Rosyid, 2019). In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Indonesia provides training and capacity building for Palestinians and acts as co-sponsors, facilitators, and mediators (Mudore, 2019).

In the second scope of literature, namely the involvement of states and other actors in the Afghanistan peace process, it can be seen in the emphasis on the use of a religious approach done by the US. According to Ridout (2016), the counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan would not be possible by solely using military force, and such efforts must also be accompanied by peacebuilding through religious actors (Ridout, 2016). The US's religious approach uses tactics such as dialogue, engagement, and education (Ridout, 2016). In addition, NGOs involved in peace in Afghanistan were also present as providers of funds and tools for the systematic rebuilding process in Afghanistan (Monshipouri, 2003). For NGOs to achieve their goals, NGOs must be able to promote social justice through investment in the country's social capital and strengthen the role of the aid community, the rule of law, and civil society organisations (Monshipouri, 2003).

Finally, the last scope of literature inquires how Lederach's pyramid model is also applied to other conflicts. This pyramid model is used in the South Sudan context. The literature applies Lederach's pyramid model as a framework that can be applied to overcome challenges in southern Sudan (Shulika, 2013). Using this model, Shulika (2013) argues for efforts to embrace and coordinate an inclusive peacebuilding process. Lederach's pyramid model is also used to identify actors in the post-conflict situation in Poso (Kristimanta, 2018). The literature states that incorporating women at the grassroots level approach is one of the keys to realising lasting peace (Kristimanta, 2018). The literature is beneficial in bridging the issues of Indonesia's peace involvement, Afghanistan peacebuilding activities, and the implementation of Lederach's pyramid model. However, they do not provide data and analysis on

Indonesia's peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Therefore, this article tries to fill such gap found in previous literature.

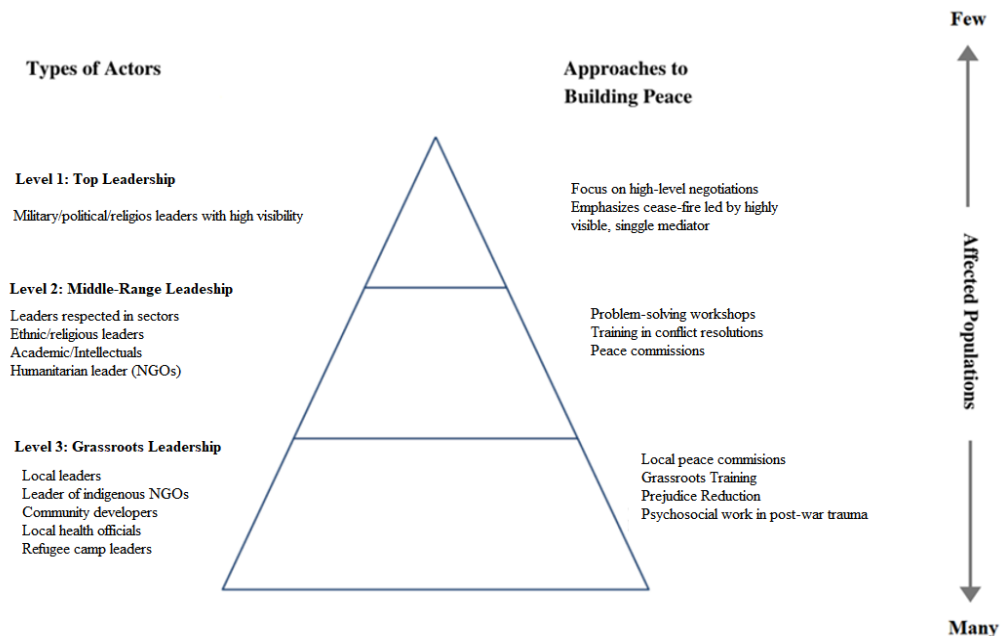
This article aims to explain Indonesia's peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan, especially regarding the approaches and objectives of peacebuilding. Hence, the proposed research question: how does Indonesia conduct its peacebuilding effort in Afghanistan? To answer this question, the article uses Lederach's pyramid model as the analytical framework. By analysing this topic, the article seeks to deepen the study of Indonesia's peace involvement in the world, especially in Afghanistan.

### ***ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK***

For this article, the authors use John Paul Lederach's pyramid model of peacebuilding. Lederach's peacebuilding model falls in the category of transformative peacebuilding. It stands in contrast to liberal peacebuilding, which is centred on the implementation of mainly a liberal project, conducted by Western liberal countries in promoting or enforcing conditions under neoliberal values (Kharisma, 2017). Transformative peacebuilding recognises that peacebuilding activity must be transformational and reflect the interests, identities, and needs of local actors (Cejka, 2003). Peacebuilding, according to Lederach (1997), is "a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships" (Lederach, 1997). The concept of peacebuilding, which Lederach addresses, is inspired by critical views on peace in International Relations (IR) studies. Critical IR theories rejects the idea of negative peace, an idea which is widely shared among proponents of traditional IR theories. Proponents of such perspective views peace more thoroughly and raises issues regarding power and inequality, and the potential of resistance and social agency (Richmond, 2016). Therefore, critical theory envisions an emancipatory form of peace (Richmond, 2016). The peace conceptualised by critical theory is in line with Lederach's concept of peacebuilding, which expresses the importance of transformative peacebuilding that involves all levels of actors.

Lederach uses the pyramid model to analyse the approach towards peacebuilding and determine the main actors in the population that are affected by the conflict. At the top of the pyramid are leaders or top-level actors who are visible to the eyes of the public, such as political and military figures (Lederach, 1997). Beneath them are middle-level leaders who come from fields such as religious leaders, academics, or

officials who are linked both to the top and the grassroots levels but are not bound by top-level political struggle and burdened by the survival condition at the grassroots level (Lederach, 1997). At the very bottom is the grassroots leadership. Grassroots leadership is a group that has the first knowledge of the struggle for survival in a conflict, as well as the rooted hostility between identity groups. Grassroots actors include members of indigenous NGOs who work with local populations, refugee camp leaders, health officials, local activists, and other similar actors. Figure 1 illustrates Lederach's pyramid model.



**Figure 1.** Lederach's Pyramid Model on Peacebuilding.  
Source: Lederach (1997, p. 39)

Level 1 consists of the main political and military leaders in a conflict. In an internal state conflict, these people are the leaders of the government, opposition, or the rebel movement. They are at the top of the pyramid, so they have a responsibility to each of their constituents in producing an agreement with the opposing party. Therefore, publicity and profile are significant to establish the constituency's concerns. Publicity and profile enhance consolidation and maintain the leader's base and legitimacy (Lederach, 1997). On the right side of the pyramid are approaches to peacebuilding. Lederach argues that the peacebuilding approach at the top level or "top-down" has several criteria. First, those who emerge as peacemakers, often seen as intermediaries or

mediators, are prominent figures who have public profiles (Lederach, 1997). Second, peacemakers tend to operate as third parties who bridge the conflicting parties, especially the top figures of each group. Third, the peacebuilding approach at this level is directed to achieve a ceasefire or stop the violence. This was taken as the first step before involving broader political and substantive negotiations, which in turn would lead to an agreement on a mechanism in the political transition from war to peace (Lederach, 1997).

According to Lederach, middle-range leadership can be described by several approaches. The first approach focuses on people who occupy formal leadership positions in various sectors, such as business, education, health, agriculture, and others. The second approach is to consider the leading networks of groups and institutions that are connected to religious groups, academic institutions, or humanitarian organisations. The actor in the middle-range leadership has several characteristics (Lederach, 1997). First, the middle range actor is connected to the top level and grassroots. Second, the positions of middle-range leaders are not based on political or military power. Third, middle-range actors tend to have an established network with elements of the population that cross the conflict line. Lederach (1997) also stated that middle-range level offers a "middle-out" approach to peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997). This is based on the idea that the middle level consists of a group of important actors in conflict and, if properly integrated, can provide the key to creating infrastructure to achieve sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997). Middle-level peacebuilding activities come in various forms, ranging from problem-solving networks, which are directed to change perceptions and construct new ideas among peace actors, to conflict resolution training. Lederach believes that middle-range actors have the potential to help build relationship-based infrastructure and skills to maintain the peacebuilding process.

At the grassroots level, it represents the mass/majority, or the basis of society (Lederach, 1997). Life at this level is characterised by a survival mentality. The leaders here include people involved in the local community, members of indigenous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who carry out relief projects for local populations, health officials, and refugee camp leaders. These people understand very well the fear and suffering that most people have to go through because grassroots leaders witness first-hand the deep-rooted hatred and daily hostility (Lederach, 1997). Strategies at this level can be applied to contact leadership who works at the local and community level.



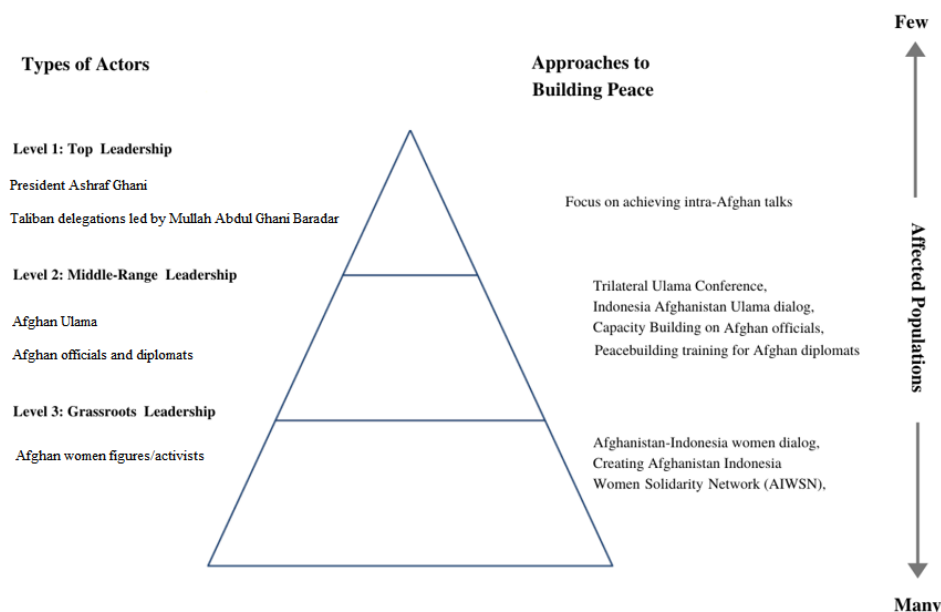
The grassroots level approach is also characterised by their efforts to deal with the extraordinary trauma caused by war (Lederach, 1997).

### ***RESEARCH METHOD***

This article uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are used to analyse and explore the objects of this research, which involve perspective and perception. With the focus of research being the involvement of Indonesia in building peace in Afghanistan, especially in peace efforts in the form of peacebuilding, it is necessary to have, collect, merge and present data that are relevant to the research. The data collecting techniques primarily use literature study from books, scientific journals, documents, official statements, and online media related to Indonesia's peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. Afterward, the author triangulated the data with other literature and compared it with the results of interviews with the Afghanistan Ambassador to Indonesia, H.E. Faizullah Zaki Ibrahimi, and officials from the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, the article could construct a holistic analysis of Indonesia's peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan.

### ***DISCUSSION***

In this section, the article will focus on Indonesia's efforts to implement peacebuilding in Afghanistan. What are the focuses of Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts and why Indonesia is taking these peacebuilding approaches? To be able to understand Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts, this article will use Lederach's pyramid model which provides a model on peacebuilding. Lederach's pyramid model will provide a more holistic analysis on each actor and peacebuilding approach that Indonesia has done. The application of Lederach's pyramid model to Indonesian peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan is depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Indonesia Peacebuilding Involvement Using Pyramid Model  
 Source: adopted from Lederach (1997, p. 39)

From the figure above, it is evident that Indonesia is present in all three levels of Lederach’s pyramid model. With the presence of Indonesia in all three levels, it shows that Indonesia's involvement leaves positive impacts in the peace process in Afghanistan because Indonesia has given concrete forms of peacebuilding efforts, and the approach Indonesia has taken is comprehensive and touches various levels of actors in Afghanistan. Further explanation of Indonesia's peacebuilding at each of the levels will be discussed further in this article.

### Indonesia's High-Level Approach

Just like other countries and actors working on the Afghan peace process, Indonesia also contributes to the reconciliation process at the international level. From the international contact group that discusses the Afghan conflict to the Kabul peace process, Indonesia is always present and provides support for conflict resolution. Recently, at the signing of the US-Taliban Peace Deal, Indonesia was also present and expressed its commitment to continue to contribute to bringing peace to Afghanistan. This approach is consistent with Lederach’s model. As previously explained, Lederach (1997) states that the peacebuilding approach at the top level is focused on efforts to achieve a ceasefire or stop the violence. The peace agreement (wherein Indonesia serves as one of the co-facilitators) includes the issue of withdrawal of American troops and eradicating violence. The Taliban and the US agreed on a temporary reduction in violence and said

that a ceasefire would be implemented between the US and Taliban forces while a prolonged ceasefire with the Afghan government would be part of the intra-Afghan negotiations.

In the high-level or top-down approach, Indonesia focuses its peacebuilding efforts to achieve Intra-Afghan Talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). Efforts to conduct the Intra-Afghan Talk were also expressed by Retno Marsudi during her visit Qatar by suggesting bilateral meetings with other countries involved in the Afghanistan peace process (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2020). Indonesia encourages both parties to hold a dialogue and negotiations by conducting shuttle diplomacy. Shuttle diplomacy is carried out by continuing to send envoys in order to establish intensive communication to persuade both parties to begin the Intra-Afghan Talks (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). This is also in line with Lederach's argument, in which peacemakers in the high-level approach play their roles as third parties to bridge the conflicting parties. To achieve this, Indonesia tried to approach the two conflicting parties. In order to achieve that goal, Indonesia's peacebuilding activity is directed towards the actor who has the highest visibility. The actor with high visibility is undoubtedly an actor who has a high profile and publicity. From the Afghan government side, Indonesia has repeatedly established a dialogue with President Ashraf Ghani. This was done both during Ghani's visit to Indonesia and Jokowi's visit to Kabul, as well as a meeting with Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in Indonesia. Meetings with heads of government are essential to bridge the two conflicting parties and create trust-building; of course, it is not enough to establish relations with only one party. In addition to meeting with the Afghan government, Indonesia also makes contacts with Taliban representatives. Indeed, this is quite difficult considering the Taliban tends to rule out dialogue with the Afghan government, which they consider a puppet state of the US.

Nevertheless, the Taliban still tries to have dialogues with external actors, one of those actors being Indonesia. The meeting of the Taliban delegation, led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar as the Deputy Leader of the Islamic Emirate, with Jusuf Kalla, then Vice President of Indonesia, discussed a lot regarding the future of the peace process. The meeting showed that various Afghan parties still trusted Indonesia as a mediator. Jusuf Kalla's meeting with Mullah Abdul Ghani was a good milestone to reach Indonesia's high-level peacebuilding target, namely the start of the Intra-Afghan

Talk. The Taliban delegation also met with several Indonesian ‘*ulama*’ (Muslim clerics). While meeting with the Taliban, Indonesian *ulama* urged all warring factions in Afghanistan to sit at one table and agree to make peace based on the spirit of Islamic brotherhood. The existence of Taliban dialogue with Indonesia is necessary because, on this occasion, Indonesia can provide experience in establishing peace despite Indonesia's multi-cultural demographic conditions. On this occasion, Indonesia, through MUI, shared ideas about how to respond to various social, economic, and cultural problems faced by Muslims. Such Islamic approach is necessary because the Taliban itself builds its movement by using religious foundations.

### **Peacebuilding through Capacity Building**

At the middle level, Indonesia focuses on capacity-building efforts. According to Lederach, actors at mid-level leadership are focused on people who occupy formal leadership positions in various sectors. Here, Indonesia gives much training to those occupying positions in formal sectors in Afghanistan. According to Hallward and Tarkhani (2019), training aimed at civil society organisations, diplomats, conflicting parties, the military, police and security forces, or stakeholders, has been widely implemented in the context peacebuilding and development. Therefore, training and capacity building are essential in peacebuilding activities. Diamond (1997) also argues that training has three main objectives: to develop new skills; to explore attitudes, values, behaviours, and interactive patterns; and to consider how participants can receive learning materials and implement them. In the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Annual Press Briefing 2019, Retno Marsudi stated that Indonesia had carried out capacity building in various sectors.

In the infrastructure sector, Indonesia held the "International Workshop on Infrastructure Development for Afghanistan: Sharing the Best Practices to Achieve SDGs." The activity was attended by nine Afghan engineers who are middle-level officials and a policymaker. The workshop aims to encourage and enhance friendship and solidarity between the two countries and be a platform to share experiences that can contribute to the development of roads and public settlements in Afghanistan (Kementrian PUPR, 2018). In the workshop, Indonesia shared its experiences and methods in infrastructure development, especially in the fields of roads, policies, construction management, and business mechanism in road construction.

Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts in strengthening Afghan institutions can also be seen in its involvement to improve Afghanistan's anti-corruption institutions. One of the problems which still undermines the internal body of the Afghan government is corruption. UNAMA reports that corruption is a severe problem in Afghanistan (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2019). This condition is not without any reason. In the context of Afghanistan, corruption has real impacts in all levels of the society (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012). Many Afghans are required to pay bribes in almost every aspect of daily life, and experience injustices in economic opportunities and employment as a result of widespread nepotism and patronage (Rahmani & Tytarenko, 2018). More fundamentally, the perception of corruption has undermined public confidence towards public institutions, which in turn impedes the pursuit of broader targets, such as domestic political stability and the ongoing peace process. The level of corruption and lack of attention given to this matter will have legal, financial, and even social consequences (Rahmani & Tytarenko, 2018). Corruption eradication efforts are also crucial to create a friendly investment climate. Thus, addressing the problem of corruption is vital in order to achieve sustainable peace. Even though Afghanistan still ranks as the fourth most corrupt country in the world, efforts to eradicate corruption have been commenced and start to show promising results. This is shown in the increase of Afghanistan's score in the Corruption Perception Index, curated by Transparency International, in which Afghanistan moved from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the lowest position in 2012 to the 15<sup>th</sup> to the lowest position in 2016 and 2017 (Rahmani & Tytarenko, 2018). The Afghan government has developed a national anti-corruption strategy. One of them is the establishment of Afghanistan's anti-corruption institutions.

To answer these challenges, Indonesia, through the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, hereinafter referred to as KPK), has provided opportunities for constructive dialogues with its Afghan counterpart. The first meeting was held in 2017, when an Afghan delegation visited KPK to study the corruption eradication model adopted by KPK. The next meeting took place in 2019 between the KPK and the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC). The meeting, according to MEC's Executive Director, Maiwand Rohan, was held to learn from each other and also build international cooperation that would be beneficial for both KPK and MEC (Rachman, 2019). Furthermore, follow-up meetings were also held in February 2020 between KPK and the Asset Registration and

Verification Authority (ARVA). In a meeting with ARVA Afghanistan, KPK delivered information on its experiences in carrying out efforts to eradicate and prevent corruption, especially regarding the management of the Report State Assets (KPK, 2020). ARVA, tasked with managing the assets of more than 22,000 Afghan civil servants, faces challenges with ensuring that no misuse would damage the country's finance. On that occasion, KPK provided a way to maximise the handling and compliance of state spending through Public Official's Wealth Report (*Laporan Harta Kekayaan Penyelenggara Negara* or LHKPN). According to KPK, to improve reporting mechanisms on state assets, it needs collaboration with various parties (KPK, 2020).

Indonesia also provides peacebuilding training to Afghan diplomats (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). According to Lederach (1997), conflict resolution training generally has two objectives, namely raising awareness (educating people about conflict) and providing skills to deal with conflict. In terms of developing skills, training has more concrete objectives, as it seeks to teach people specific techniques and approaches to deal with conflict, often in the form of analytical, communication, negotiating, or mediating skills. This is in line with the material discussed in training, such as the basic ideology of Pancasila, tolerance, plural society, Islam, and democracy in Indonesia. The participants were also given materials on peacebuilding in conflict resolutions in Aceh and Ambon (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). Focusing on Indonesia's experiences in Aceh and Ambon is important because Indonesia's experience in resolving conflicts in the two regions can be a lesson for conflict resolution in Afghanistan. For example, in resolving the Aceh conflict, the importance of a robust civil society, economic strengthening, ongoing support for women's empowerment in political life, and the continued development of a healthy and informed security sector were notable (Crisis Management Initiative, 2012). Meanwhile, in settling the Ambon conflict, there was a natural social integration and continuing initiatives to revitalise the values of local wisdom as a bridge to connect the people. After the training, the participants were also invited to experience the life of religious tolerance in Indonesia through visits to the Istiqlal Mosque, the Cathedral Church, and seeing the lives of Ambonese people. In Ambon, the participants interacted directly with local officials (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). They saw first-hand the latest developments in the city of Ambon, which showed the strengthening of an active harmony model marked by the process of social interaction between religions that were

more active, fluid, and full of dialogue (Ernas, 2018). Therefore, peacebuilding training was developed to provide Afghan diplomats with an understanding on how conflict operates, the general patterns, the dynamics that follow, and the process of resolution.

Thus, all these capacity programs are targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing conflict by strengthening national capacity at middle-range levels for conflict management, as well as to lay the foundation for peace and sustainable development.

### **Peacebuilding Approach through *Ulama***

Religion is very influential in Afghanistan. Islam plays an important role in the daily life of Afghan people and the politics of the state (Borchgrevink, 2007). In the post-2001 peace and reconstruction process, the religious approach was rarely included in peacebuilding strategies and practices, and little attention was paid to the religious factor in Afghanistan (Borchgrevink, 2007). The vital position of religion in all dimensions of life is strengthened by the use of religion as a medium for resistance throughout Afghanistan's history (Barfield, 2010). Calls for Jihad to fight external enemies were made on various occasions, from a revolt against the British Empire to the Soviet Union's aggression in the 1980s (Borchgrevink, 2007). Religion became a significant force in the resistance against "the godless Soviet," as many *mujahideen* echoed at that time. Religion even remained a pretext of civil war between various *mujahideen* factions in 1992. Thus, it is not surprising that Islam became an important pillar and even became the basis of a strong identity. Identity as a Muslim remains to be held by the majority of Afghans, even when the communist regime came to power (Borchgrevink, 2007). Other identities inherent in Afghan society, such as ethnicity and language, compete with each other, but none of these identities can match the identity of being a Muslim in both its influence and magnitude (Borchgrevink, 2007). Thus, it is not surprising that Muslim identity has long been used by Afghan rulers to unite their very heterogeneous populations.

From this, we can see that the religious approach has strong potential in achieving peace. Indonesia, as the largest Muslim country, has the capability to use the religion-based approach. Indonesia has much experience in matters of diversity. Furthermore, Indonesian *ulama* are well respected and have the necessary expertise, especially regarding the implementation of '*Islam Rahmatan Lil'Alamin*', which means blessing for the universe or, alternatively, the state of being peaceful and tolerant. *Ulama* in Afghanistan have strong enough influences because they issue *fatwas* for

every religious problem, both moral and political. Therefore, *ulama* can be agents of peace, but on the contrary, *ulama* are also able to be driving forces for the violence and expansion of the conflict. This can be seen in the Taliban regime. The Taliban places the *ulama* as one of the pillars of the country, ban secular and traditional laws, and introduce strict *Sharia* interpretations. The Taliban regime gives religious leaders high status, and many traditional religious leaders and conservative clerics join the Taliban movement. Despite this, opposing *ulama* were also present. *Ulama* who disagreed with the regime were threatened—some were killed, and others were forced to flee (Borchgrevink, 2007).

Many *ulama* were involved in the war, as well as in the politics and violence of the Taliban regime (Qane & Ishan Jan 2019). Religious leaders are involved in jihadist and resistance parties at the national and local levels, some as political leaders, and some as commanders (Borchgrevink, 2007). These *ulama* have become teachers for many *madrasas*, spreading radicalism as well as recruiting many combatants, including child combatants. Cases of recruiting children from religious schools to become combatants have continued in Afghanistan since the uprising against the Soviet invasion (Qane & Ishan Jan, 2019). From 2015 onwards, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) has published several reports on the increasing incidence of recruiting and using children for fighting from Afghan *madrasas* (Qane & Ishan Jan, 2019). HRW also found a group of boys, belonging to one family, who had been sent by the Taliban into battle (Qane & Ishan Jan, 2019). The high incidence of recruitment of children is directly correlated with a period of increased combat attacks. In 2015, when the Taliban increased their armed conflict activities against the government, it was recorded that some districts, such as Chahardara District in the province of Kunduz, as well as in the provinces of Takhar and Badakhshan, the Taliban recruited more than one hundred child soldiers, some of them were even younger than thirteen years old (Qane & Ishan Jan, 2019).

Therefore, religious leaders have the potential, on one hand, to contribute to reconciliation and peace and support peacebuilding but, on the other hand, can trigger further hostility, conflict, and division. Henceforth, starting the process of peacebuilding, especially in the context of Afghanistan, requires an approach that includes *ulama*. Again, using Lederach's pyramid concept, the middle level consists of a group of important actors in conflict and, if properly integrated, can provide the key to creating the necessary infrastructure to achieve sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997). Here, the *ulama* fulfil the criteria mentioned by Lederach. Indonesia's peacebuilding



approach that incorporated ulama took place at the “Trilateral Ulama Conference of Afghanistan-Indonesia-Pakistan on Peace and Stability in Afghanistan.” Through the conference, the ulama carried out dialogues and exchanged ideas about how Islam, as a religion of peace, could serve as a basis to resolve conflict. The conference produced the *Bogor Ulama Declaration for Peace*, which contains a call for peace in Afghanistan, as stated in the third and fourth verses of the declaration (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2018):

“Peace is the commandment of Allah, and Muslims have an obligation to follow this injunction in their lives in letter and spirit. All conflicts and disputes among Muslims should, therefore, be resolved in the light of the Qur’an and Sunnah. We, the Ulama, therefore appreciate and support the offer of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as announced by President Ashraf Ghani during the Kabul Peace Process, February 2018, for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. We also appreciate regional countries, the Islamic world, and the international community for expressing their full support to Afghan Peace Process.”

“We take note of conducive environment for peace in Afghanistan and call upon all sides to join direct peace talks, as peaceful deliberation is enshrined in the Holy Qur’an, titled “The Consultation” (As-Shuraa’) (Ar.), and as hinted in the verse 38th that Consultation is among the virtues of the faithful believers.”

The call for peace is important because it uses the perspective of the *ulama*. The results of the conference showed that there were dialogues and consensus produced by the *ulama*, even though the *ulama*, who were present at the conference, could not necessarily represent all *ulama* in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the *Bogor Ulama Declaration for Peace* was able to be an important step in bridging very different interpretations of Islam in Afghanistan. *Ulama*, as agents of peace, can make a significant impact because in Afghanistan, legitimacy is often obtained from religious authorities and traditional practices rather than democratic processes (Borchgrevink, 2007). From here, Indonesia, through Nadhatul Ulama (NU), also supported the creation of Nadhatul Ulama Afghanistan (NUA). NUA itself is an independent institution that has proximity, but nevertheless structurally separated from the main body of NU in

Indonesia. Although structurally separated, NUA still shares the same values with NU, namely moderate, tolerance, and peaceful. NUA also maintains a close dialogue with NU and Indonesian *ulama*. NU, as the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia, upholds the Islamic foundation of '*Islam Rahmatan Lil'Alamin*'. Dialogues between these scholars have opened up broader insights for peace in Afghanistan. NUA, which was established in 2014 through close cooperation between Indonesian *ulama* and many prominent Afghan *ulama*, such as Dr. Fazal Ghani Kakar who later became the first chairman of NUA. NUA operates by building a network and conducting training for many *ulama* and *imams* in Afghanistan. Many *ulama* and *imams* who have undergone training by NUA preach their messages to their respective followers or communities. Many Afghans are also eager to learn from NUA-affiliated *ulama* and *imams*. For example, Nisar Ahmad, a member of NUA and an *imam* in Jalalabad, has many followers who accept and are interested in progressive ideas that he has brought (Liuhto, 2017). Most people come to hear his sermons to learn about women's equality and the importance of peace in Islam (Liuhto, 2017). However, NUA also faces various challenges. In their efforts to spread peace, NUA *ulama* also compete with others who preach radicalism and extremism. Furthermore, at an extreme level, some of NUA members receive death threats, as represented by the murder case of Abdul Ghafoor, who was tragically murdered by some extremist (Liuhto, 2017). Continuing its past milestones, NUA, with the support of Indonesia, continues to grow. According to Fathoni (2019), NUA has expanded to more than 22 provinces in Afghanistan and involved more than 6000 Afghan *ulama*.

Such progress is useful as *ulama* are not only crucial in local conflicts because they are respected among the majority of the population, but they also have the capability to form opinions and provide moral guidance. Thus, they have the potential to become agents of change. This cannot be separated from the relations between *ulama* and mosques because *ulama* will undoubtedly be very active in each mosque in their respective areas. Even in the most challenging locations and localities in Afghanistan, there will be one or a few mosques. Therefore, *ulama* are crucial because their *message* can reach people from all corners of the country (Ibrahimi, personal interview, 2020).

Mosques are public spaces for ritual activities and are also an essential place for social and political activities. Mosques have traditionally been one of the central institutions in rural Afghanistan (Borchgrevink, 2007), not to mention that most villages have one or more mosques (Ibrahimi, personal interview, 2020). Religious activities in

these mosques, such as Friday prayer, enable *ulama* to preach peaceful messages to the audience. Other than that, many Afghan children who are unable to continue their formal education get their primary education from mosques. Some Afghan children may go to school at different ages, depending on their families' economic and social situations, but all of them go to mosques from childhood (Ibrahimi, personal interview, 2020). Henceforth, the basis of education or pre-school education in Afghanistan starts from mosques. Thus, mosques are significant in sustaining character education for Afghan children, especially where mosques serve as the only source of education for these children (Ibrahimi, personal interview, 2020).

### **Empowering Afghan Women**

It cannot be denied that women are one of the most affected populations by the conflict (Ibrahimi, personal interview, 2020). Women in general often endure specific experiences in conflict linked to their 'secondary' status in societies (Timur, 2016). Conflict in Afghanistan dramatically affects the lives and welfare of Afghan women in fundamental ways. Under the Taliban regime, there were deprivations of women's fundamental rights, ranging from the rights to education, to voice opinions, and even to leave home without a male escort (World Economic Forum, 2019). Despite gradual improvements, women's rights in Afghanistan remain a serious concern. Violence against women still happens due to the lack of women's rights protection measures. Illiteracy and feelings of insecurity felt by women are still commonplace (International Crisis Group, 2013). According to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index, which provides a measure of various indicators on women's rights, welfare, and empowerment, Afghanistan is ranked 166<sup>th</sup> out of 167 countries (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2019). As such, excluding Afghan women in the peace process will lead to perceptual regressions, and the days of the Taliban's oppression towards women can return if the authorities do not guarantee women's rights in future constitutions. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate efforts to involve women in the peace process. According to Lederach (1997), grassroots leadership are people who understand the fear and suffering that most residents must go through because grassroots leaders witness first-hand the rooted hatred and hostility in daily life (Lederach, 1997). It was definitely felt by many Afghan women who live in fear even in their daily lives. Not only are they worried about the return of oppression by the Taliban, but they also suffer from constant abuses towards their rights.

On this basis, Indonesia made peacebuilding efforts by participating in the empowerment of Afghan women. Empowering women is an excellent step to increase women's participation in peace (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). Many Afghan women often do not have direct access to mediation and negotiation table, as well as the lack of official mechanisms capable of accommodating women's aspirations in the peace process. Therefore, it is necessary to empower women so that women's access to the peace process can be achieved. Other than that, according to the interviewee and her dialog experiences with Afghan women, it was said that in Afghanistan, women have essential roles in improving the character of the nation. Because in the smallest units, such as family, mothers and women are the ones who educate the children. Thus, Indonesia believes that if Afghan women are successfully empowered, they will have the ability to determine the future of Afghanistan (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). A growing body of evidence shows a positive correlation between broader participation from women with sustainable peace (Cardona et al., 2012). The exclusion of women is also an indication of the lack of broader inclusiveness in the peace process. In realising women's empowerment, Indonesia has had many dialogues with Afghan women activists. In 2019 Indonesia held the "Dialogue on The Role of Women in Building Peace: Women as an Agent of Peace and Prosperity." The dialogue focuses on the issue of women's empowerment. Through the dialog, Indonesian and Afghan women expressed that education and capacity building are needed to increase women's empowerment and must be supported by families, communities, and governments through policies. Continuing said dialogue, Indonesia established the Afghanistan Indonesia Women Solidarity Network. This network serves the purpose of identifying future steps to create a conducive environment for women to be able to increase their roles in the peace process (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020). This network also functions as a platform for Afghan women to be able to increase their roles in peace with the support of Indonesia. The involvement and participation of women in the peace process are also beneficial because it includes a gender perspective in the peace process.

The exclusion of women in the peace process has a severe impact on women's rights after the conflict. However, especially in Afghanistan where women's rights remain critical, failure to consistently address women's opportunities and rights will strengthen gender inequality. Thus, putting women on the negotiating table is an essential step towards sustainable peace in Afghanistan. This reiterates the idea that the

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purpose of the peace process is not only to end the violent conflict, but also to build lasting peace (Official from the Indonesian MoFA, personal interview, 2020).

### **CONCLUSION**

Indonesia has shown its commitment to realising Afghan peace since the meeting of the two leaders. This article shows that Indonesia's involvement in peacebuilding in Afghanistan covers several sectors and actors by using Lederach's pyramid model. At the top level, Indonesia focuses on eliminating violence and forming the Intra-Afghan Talks. To achieve such targets, Indonesia approached two conflicting parties, namely the Afghan government and the Taliban leader. By conducting discussions with the Taliban, Indonesia tries to support trust-building between the two parties. Without trust-building, the two parties would find it difficult to negotiate, and the peace process would be halted.

At the middle level, Indonesia conducts capacity building program. Capacity building in the form of training aimed at various sectors, such as infrastructure and corruption eradication. Capacity building in these sectors is essential, given that the country's economy will depend heavily on the quality of human resources in realising good infrastructure, while corruption can hamper the peace process. Indonesia also provides peacebuilding training for Afghan diplomats, where diplomats can later implement peace values from conflict resolution experiences in Indonesia. Moreover, at the middle level, Indonesia also uses a religious approach through the roles of *ulama*. Afghanistan is a country dominated by Islamic values in all aspects of life. Therefore, religious approaches will significantly influence the peace process. By holding the trilateral *ulama* conference that produced the *Bogor Ulama Declaration for Peace*, an Islamic view of the conflict and a call to stop the conflict within the Islamic frame were put forward. The formation of NUA also allowed for dialogues between *ulama* in both countries. At the grassroots level, Indonesia conducts empowerment activities which target women. Afghan women are central to the Afghan peace process. By organising women's dialogues, Indonesian and Afghan women can share experiences and learn from one another to support Afghan peace. The establishment of the Afghanistan Indonesia Women Solidarity Network is also one of Indonesia's ways to increase the participation of Afghan women in the peace process.

Although the scale of Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts are not as large compared to the US or the European Union, Indonesia's participation in peacebuilding

in Afghanistan is beneficial for the overall Afghan peace process. As the largest Muslim country where Islam, democracy, and multi-ethnic society can stand side by side, Indonesia can provide a new perspective for the Afghan peace process—bearing in mind that Afghanistan conflict revolves around issues on Islam, ethnicity, and human rights. Thus, Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts at each of these levels demonstrate Indonesia's comprehensive approach to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We are sincerely grateful for our research supervisor, mentor, and colleagues for giving us guidance and support during this research. We would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and input for this article. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Department of International Relations, Universitas Padjadjaran.

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