



PAKISTAN AND TALIBAN PEACE PROCESS - DOOMED TO FAIL?

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Is Taliban in Pakistan getting strengthened by Pakistan government actions especially with the peace agreements? Recently, Nawaz Sharif's government organized an all party meeting on 09 September 2013 to rationalize the situation of violence created by Taliban by collecting all political leaders' opinion in favor of "Peace talks" with them. On Eid-uladha, the Khyber Pakhtunwa law minister was killed among nine other people in a suicide blast at his residence in Dera Ismail Khan.

The statement from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Imran Khan in a recent press conference was that, "Dialogue is the only way to eradicate this issue and only dialogue will solve the issue." He also requested Pakistani army chief Kayani to withdraw troops from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region.ⁱ

The dialogue is a not a new strategy to deal with the Taliban. Past governments have already tried to make an agreement with Taliban most of them ended up in failures. If we look at the history of the peace process between Taliban and Pakistan government it gives us a clear view about the consequences of peace agreements with the Taliban.

The Shakal Peace agreement (2004)ⁱⁱ was the first agreement signed between the army and the militant commander Nek Mohammad at Shakal on April 24, 2004. In this agreement, the Taliban agreed to stop supporting foreign militant in South Waziristan and in exchange, the Pakistani government released the captive militants. But immediately after signing of the agreement they refused to surrender foreign militants and began to

assassinate tribal elders who facilitated the negotiation. The deal broke down after the death of Nek Muhammad by U.S. drone attack.

The Srarogaha Peace agreement (2005)ⁱⁱⁱ was with Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan where Pakistani government arrived at an agreement not to target Baitullah and his supporters and also financially compensated the militants for the damage caused by military operations against militants. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) agreed to stop sheltering foreign militants and to stop destroying government properties and personal. Clashes between Taliban and military increased in the subsequent month, proving the peace deal served no purpose. Later, another agreement called as the North Waziristan agreement (2006)^{iv} was introduced in September which was similar to the Srarogaha agreement.

Under the North Waziristan Agreement, the Taliban agreed to stop migrating to the Afghan border. All foreigner militants agreed to leave Pakistan and indigenous militant agreed to be peaceful. Sararogha and North Waziristan Peace Agreement stayed intact for a while but both of the agreements completely failed when the Taliban attacked the military in aftermath of operation Lal Masjid in August 2007.

Swat Peace agreement (2008), after the violation of all the peace agreements, Sufi Muhammad (Founder of a military organization vying for implementation of Sharia) instance of implementing Sharia law took a violent turn which made Khyber Pakhtunwa government to reach a peace agreements, some of the points in the agreement were^v-

1. Sharia law (Shariat-e-muhammadi) would be implemented in Malakand Division which includes Swat Valley and Kohistan District.
2. Army will gradually withdraw its forces from the region.
3. The government of Pakistan will release prisoners after reviewing cases against them.
4. Taliban would accept the writ of the government of Pakistan and cooperate with security forces.
5. Taliban would halt attacks on barber and music shops and market visited by women.

6. There would be a complete ban on display of arms by militants in public.
7. Taliban will cooperate with the health team's administrating vaccination of children against diseases like polio.
8. No attack on Government installations and machinery. No suicide attacks and blasts in personal or governmental buildings.
9. Government will compensate the deserving people affected by the operation in Swat.

After a few days of agreement, disagreement begins Taliban started destroying video shops, government offices, schools and flogging people for alleged crimes.

The failures of these agreements between government and Taliban shows, that the Taliban are considered as equals by state. There are no concerns about extremist ideology Taliban posses and their treatment of minorities and women. There should be no doubt that by giving compensation to them Pakistani government is funding the extremist ideology and making them richer to be able to hire more youth and buy new weapons.

By these agreements Taliban leaders immediately get status of undisputed leaders. All Peace agreements have been proved as nothing but a Pro-Taliban propaganda which describes terrorists as powerful heroic tribesmen with a sense of honor who have been wronged by state. Taliban aims are clearly to implement an extremist Islamic ideology, which is authoritarian, anti-democratic and militaristic and are carefully hidden in anti-establishment rhetoric. To expect any positive outcome from a peace agreement is a vague idea because the history of Taliban's persistent violent activities are proof of their failures.

The debate should be placed on how and why the Pakistan Military operation is getting failed to counter the Taliban? What is making the Taliban powerful day by day? Are there soft corners among army or in the government itself? It's a demanding task for Pakistan's government to make army accountable for the persistent mishandled situation. Recent claims of Pakistan's Army Chief Ashfaq Ali Kayani about being capable of effectively using army against Taliban^{vi} and their talk about peace processes again and again, raises doubts about the camouflaged division of pro and against Taliban within the army. The mixed

response towards the Taliban among civilians and army is creating obstacles to achieve any peaceful result, by a peace agreement or any military operation.

(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies CAPS)

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Endnotes:

ⁱ“Imran Khan Urges Nawaz Sharif to Use Dialogue Option”

See- <http://www.pakistantribune.com.pk/6103/imran-khan-urges-nawaz-sharif-use-dialogue-option.html>

ⁱⁱ Reviewing “Pakistan’s peace deal with Taliban”

see- <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/reviewing-pakistans-peace-deals-with-the-taliban>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v “Text of government Agreement with Taliban.”

see -http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C05%5C22%5Cstory_22-5-2008_pg7_22

^{vi}Pakistan's army chief, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani says, “the country's powerful military is capable of effectively using force against the Taliban.”

See- <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/10/12/329033/pak-army-capable-of-ending-militancy/>