

Tracing the Evolution of Peace Negotiations with the Pakistani Taliban

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Abstract

It did not take too long after the beginning of the Taliban's armed activities in Pakistan when the need for talks between the Pakistani Taliban and the government became a focal point in the national discourse. A huge support and demand for talks was witnessed but the process was also opposed. Several times, the two sides came close to holding the talks. However, it took many years to bring the two sides across the table. Finally, the talks were held in 2014. There is a need to analyze the ups and downs of the talks process. Identifying two phases, overt and covert, an attempt is made in this study to analyze the whole process of these talks. Various demands and conditions put forward by the two sides are also discussed.

Keywords: Pakistani Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, militancy, peace negotiations

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of religious militancy in Pakistan increased manifold when the Musharraf government conducted a military operation against the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque)¹ clerics and their student followers in 2007 in Islamabad. Taliban in Afghanistan were already fighting against U.S.-led foreign forces. In the wake of the Lal Masjid Operation, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement Pakistan, TTP) emerged in December 2007—Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid's last year in power² under Musharraf presidency—and started its militant activities almost all over the country with Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) being the TTP's stronghold and the main theatre of operations. The state responded both politically and militarily but the problem of militancy continued unabated. Many of the politicians and other citizens seemed to

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believe the talks could present a lasting solution to the conflict. The government held a peace dialogue with the TTP in 2014. The dialogue process generated a lot of debate all over the country and, despite its failure, proved to be a turning point for the nation.

In addition to political parties, several other organizations and groups raised their voice in favour of the talks, including FATA Grand Alliance, Wafaqul Madaris Al Arabia (WMA) (a conglomerate of seminaries of Deobandi school of thought), Difa-e-Pakistan Council (DPC), and Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ). Some of them organized rallies urging the government to initiate the talks. Some of the elders³ from tribal agencies of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) asked the government to hold the dialogue. Among other known figures supporting the talks were former governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Ali Mohammad Jan Aurakzai and Nobel laureate Malala Yousufzai. The governmental decision to hold the dialogue was widely welcomed, particularly in FATA. Several members of the National Assembly and the Senate from Bajaur Agency, for example, appreciated the decision.⁴

But it is only one side of the story. *Opposition* to the talks was also considerable. Leaders belonging to several political parties, religious organisations, members of the parliament, and civil society activists criticized the government for holding talks with the Taliban. Several leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), National Party (NP), and Awami National Party (ANP)—the parties that supported the talks in the parliament as well as in the APCs convened by various parties—opposed the idea of talks.⁵ Quite surprisingly, Bilawal Bhutto, Chairperson of the PPP, was at the forefront of opposing the talks and criticizing the Pakistan-Muslim-League-Nawaz (PML-N) government for doing so. When his party was in power it made efforts—including two all-party conferences convened to seek consensus on the issue—in the direction of holding talks. PPP leaders, Aitzaz Ahsan and Faisal Raza Abidi, also argued in favour of using force against the Taliban rather than holding talks with them. Former interior minister, Rehman Malik, asserted that the government would not hold

negotiations with the TTP until they surrendered.⁶ Nosheen Hameed, a member of the Punjab provincial assembly representing PTI—the party which had been emphatically stressing upon holding the dialogue—participated in a demonstration in Lahore opposing the talks.⁷ An ex-PPP MPA, Sajida Mir, was also present along with civil society activists.⁸

Apart from the political parties and individual politicians, leaders of several groups and organizations—like Sunni Tehreek (ST), Sunni Ittehad Council, Majlis-i-Wahdatul Muslimeen (MWM) and Women Action Forum—opposed the idea of holding talks. Some of them, like MWM, organized several protest rallies in various cities against the talks. In April 2013, then army chief, Parvez Kayani stressed that talks would not be held unless the militants lay down their arms. “There is no room for talks when it comes to dealing with rebellion against the state,” he stressed. Voices of Pakistani Diaspora from abroad were also heard arguing against the dialogue. A group of Pakistanis in Washington and Baltimore, for example, demonstrated in opposition to the talks. On the other hand, there was a strong opposition within the TTP, too.⁹

There are at least twelve distinct reference points that were emphasised by the argumentators in favour of and against negotiations with the TTP: ideology, national interest, constitutionality, legitimacy, patriotism, pragmatism-workability, weakness, tactic, timing, victimhood, violence, and historicity. In addition to the above-discussed, the opposing factors were based on dimensions like legitimacy, patriotism, weakness, tactic, timing, violence, and historicity.

Background

Deals between the Pakistani government and the militant groups in Waziristan in 2005 and 2006 and in Swat in 2009 were merely preludes to the Taliban establishing their “emirates”.¹⁰ Babar Sattar puts the deals and their fate in perspective. In 2004, prior to the TTP’s formation, he explains, fighters led by Nek Mohammad undertook not to attack the state property and personnel when the Shakai Agreement was signed. But they reiterated their allegiance to Al Qaeda, and Nek Mohammad was assassinated in a drone attack. The

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Sararogha peace agreement with Baitullah Mehsud was implemented the next year, and as agreed, his fighters were given amnesty. But they disobeyed it, thus Operation Rah-i-Najat was carried out in 2009 and Baitullah was also killed in a drone assault, explains Sattar. Miramshah peace deal was negotiated with Gul Bahadur in 2006. The deal, nonetheless, remained unsuccessful in ensuring peace in the area. Two years later, peace deals were concluded in Khyber and Bajaur Agencies; with Mangal Bagh of Lashkar-i-Islam and Qazi Mehbub of Ansarul Islam in the former (Khyber) and with Faqir Hussain in the latter (Bajaur) in 2008. Both of the deals did not survive long and Operation Sirat-i-Mustaqeem was conducted in Khyber Agency and Operation Sher Dil in Bajaur, documents Sattar.

The same year, all of the top Taliban commanders were released subsequent to a peace deal in Swat, a district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The Taliban advanced further and annexed Buner and Shangla districts after the withdrawal of the army in compliance with a peace agreement with the government made by Sufi Mohammad and Mullah Fazlullah in 2009. Consequently, Operation Rah-i-Haq was launched to reclaim Swat, Sattar notes.¹¹ Awami National Party commenced its rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2008 with a policy of negotiating peace with the Taliban but had to call in the army the next year. In Islamabad, PPP came into power and negotiated with Sufi Muhammad 13 times but all these efforts went in vain, alleged PPP leader Khurshid Shah, then Leader of the Opposition (2013–2018) in the National Assembly.

The Evolution of the Peace Negotiations

Talks with the Pakistani Taliban can be divided into two phases: covert and overt. The *covert phase* was characterized by on-and-off leakages and claims made by one side, frequently followed by denials by the other. The PPP government responded in positive terms as early as the calls for holding dialogue with the TTP were made from various quarters when the party replaced the PML-Q in the 2008 General Elections. In March 2008, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, for example, made an offer for talks. The PPP government evolved a three

Ds—dialogue, development, and deterrence—strategy to deal with the problem of militancy. At the same time, the government made efforts in the direction of building consensus at the national level. In November 2010, the initial reports about behind-the-scene talks between the government and the Taliban appeared in the media that members of the National Assembly from FATA held talks with the Taliban representatives.¹² Next year, in December, a deputy commander of the TTP, Faqir Mohammad, also claimed that the talks were underway. But the then prime minister, Gilani, and his interior minister, Rehman Malik, denied the reports. A few weeks later, a senior security official was quoted as confirming the exploratory talks did take place, though, without making any headway.¹³

The government urged the Taliban to approach the authorities and lay down the arms. In December 2012, former TTP chief, Hakimullah Mehsud's offer provided the main impetus for the dialogue, followed by an offer next month by the operational head of Al Qaeda in Pakistan, Asmatullah Muavia. TTP's demand, made in February 2013, that three prominent politicians—Nawaz Sharif (President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, PML-N), Fazlur Rehman (President of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, JUI-F), and Munawar Hasan (then *emir* Jamaat-i-Islami, JI)—guarantee the talks was turned down by all of them. The government insisted that it would hold peace talks only if the Taliban first disarmed and surrendered. The TTP withdrew the talks offer when its deputy leader, Waliur Rehman, was killed in a U.S. drone strike in May 2013.

The same year, the PML-N became victorious in the general elections and came into power. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, formerly North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf emerged as the largest party¹⁴ and formed the provincial government in coalition with Jamaat-e-Islami. Both of these parties had been pressing the successive federal governments for the dialogue. In his campaign for the 2013 General Elections, Sharif himself had made the dialogue with the TTP a specific agenda item to be pursued if the people voted him into power. After the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, Sharif, during his first tenure as the prime

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minister, brokered a peace deal among Afghan Mujahideen. After the 2013 General Elections, with PTI and JI in power in Peshawar and PML-N in Islamabad, peace talks took centre stage in the national political and security discourse to address the issue of militancy. Activities focused on the dialogue gained a much faster pace. Within a span of two years, from 2011 to 2013, at least five all-parties conferences were organized by the government and various political parties (Table 1).

Table 1: All-Parties Conferences Convened for Consensus-Building on the Talks

Date	Convened by
29 September 2011	Prime Minister (Yousaf Raza Gilani)
18 October 2011	Prime Minister (Yousaf Raza Gilani)
14 February 2013	Awami National Party (ANP)
28 February 2013	Jamiat Ulama e Islam (JUI-F)
9 September 2013	Prime Minister (Nawaz Sharif)

Sartaj, then advisor to the prime minister on foreign affairs, announced that the government was developing a 'comprehensive anti-terrorism policy.' The PML-N government took the talks as a part of the overall strategy. Three months after Sharif took charge as the prime minister in June 2013, his information minister confirmed that the government was in contact with two of the Taliban groups at different levels. In August, addressing the nation, Sharif made an offer to the militants for talks. The TTP reacted by removing Asmatullah Muavia as the head of the Punjabi Taliban for welcoming the offer. Muavia, however, brushed off the decision declaring that the TTP Shura had no capacity to fire him because the Punjabi Taliban was a separate group, which had its own decision-making body to decide leadership and other matters. On the other hand, the information minister informed that the government was talking with two of the

Taliban groups, and, if a third group wanted to join the government was ready to welcome.

In September 2013, efforts for peace dialogue came to a standstill when the TTP killed the commanding officer (a Major General) in Swat Valley. In a few weeks, however, the government gathered support from all the parties represented in the parliament for talks. But, the assassination of TTP chief, Hakimullah, in a U.S. drone attack in November, jolted the process of peace dialogue once again. His successor, Mullah Fazlullah, outrightly rejected the idea of peace talks. The government, however, demonstrated a lenient approach. A few days after Hakimullah's death, the prime minister acknowledged that the talks had begun but in an informal way. Despite the fact that the TTP killed 20 soldiers in a bomb blast in Bannu in January 2014, the interior minister reiterated the government's willingness to hold talks, saying, the use of force was not a solution. The interior minister assured that the government would soon start structured formal talks. When, in the same month, the TTP reiterated its offer for talks, the prime minister responded positively.

Both sides wanted each other to announce a ceasefire first. The PPP government had urged the TTP to announce a 30-day ceasefire earlier in February 2013. But, it was a whole year later when the TTP declared a ceasefire for 30 days on the first of March. On the following day, the government halted air strikes against the Taliban fighters.¹⁵ Despite a ceasefire declaration, militant attacks claimed by TTP splinter groups—like Ahrar-ul-Hind—continued. Besides other factors, General Elections in May 2013 and, later, Hakimullah's assassination in a drone strike in the same year were the major reasons behind delays in the dialogue.

Mediation offers from several quarters were made. Apart from Sami ul Haq and Fazlur Rehman (leaders of their factions of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam), *ameer* Jamaatud Dawa, Hafiz Saeed, also showed his willingness to mediate. Some of the parliamentarians from FATA¹⁶ offered their services to persuade the Taliban to join the talks. Fazlur Rehman's oft-

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repeated suggestion of peace-through-jirga was neither accepted by the government nor by the TTP.

Conditions, preconditions, demands and agenda put forward by the two sides were tiresome. The government stressed that the talks would be held within the framework of the country's constitution. Sami-ul-Haq and Ibrahim, key figures of the TTP negotiating committee, assured that the Taliban would hold talks remaining within the constitutional confines. To the contrary, Abdul Aziz, another member of the TTP committee, avowed that the Taliban do not accept the constitution and urged the government to remove the condition. Eventually, he refused to participate in the negotiations because his committee failed to bring this point to the agenda. Aziz was side-lined with the consent of the Taliban leaders.¹⁷ The government also demanded that the Taliban renounce violence and lay down their arms. The TTP emphatically demanded an end to drone attacks in Pakistan, pulling out the army from FATA, setting up a "peace zone" to allow free movement of the Taliban, and releasing the Taliban prisoners.

Media also reported that the TTP Shura had finalized a 15-point agenda for negotiations in February 2014. In addition to the demands mentioned above, the 15-point draft asked the government to dissociate itself from the "War on Terror"; restore and remunerate for damage to property caused by drone attacks; and families of drone attack victims to be offered jobs. The draft also called for introducing an Islamic system of education and ending the interest-based banking system. Moreover, it demanded handing over control of the tribal areas to 'local' forces and dropping all criminal allegations against the Taliban. Hakimullah asked for an end to the Pak-America alliance and to rewrite the Constitution "according to Islamic Shariah."¹⁸ Besides, the Taliban unfolded that they will present their terms and conditions when they sit down for dialogue. "What we have already mentioned are not conditions or preconditions, they are steps the government must take to build confidence and prove they have authority," the TTP elaborated. Most of the TTP demands remained unmet. With respect to halting the drone attacks, however, the government made

serious efforts to convince the Americans. As a result, the drone strikes came to a halt for around five and a half months.¹⁹

While preparing for the dialogue, TTP's major demand was the release of prisoners. In mid-March 2014, the TTP handed over a list of about 300 people to the government for their release. At the beginning of May, it came up with another list of 765 non-combatants, including women and children, and demanded their release. But the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) denied any women and children were in the army's custody. The government released 19 non-combatants as a confidence-building measure. And, in response, it wanted the Taliban to release the civilians in their confinement.²⁰ The TTP contested that the released individuals belong to the Maulvi Nazir group who already had signed a peace deal with the government²¹ and the prisoners were not the ones it had demanded to be freed. A spokesman of the Taliban negotiating committee rejoined that the government had so far released "not a single prisoner" of the Taliban and the released individuals were ordinary tribesmen. The government clarified that it had released only non-combatants and that neither the Taliban had made any demand for releasing the combatants nor the government intended to do so. Though a member of the TTP dialogue committee assured that the Taliban were willing to release the civilians in their custody and that they would be released soon, it did not materialize.

A large number of questions concerning the agenda of the talks needed to be answered. What and how many items were there on the agenda? What sort of issues were going to be accorded priority? Had the two sides developed any sort of understanding of those items and issues? At the end of April 2014, in a high-level meeting,²² the government decided to pursue a 'specified agenda' under 'well-defined parameters' to make the process 'result-oriented.' According to media reports, at least two issues—prisoners and polio vaccination—were also among the agenda items. The militants have targeted polio-vaccinating teams for many years.²³ In June 2012, a militant group headed by Gul Bahadur declared a ban on anti-polio campaigns in reaction to drone attacks.²⁴ So, the government decided to put the polio vaccination on the agenda of the talks.

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It is interesting to note that the Taliban's offer for dialogue with the PPP government was conditional and the dialogue could not be held mainly due to the inflexible stances of both sides on preconditions. But, with the change of leadership in Islamabad, the TTP also changed its stance and lifted the preconditions.

The talks entered into the *overt phase* when former Prime Minister, Sharif, announced a four-member committee in January 2014, comprising Irfan Siddiqi, Rahimullah Yusufzai, Amir Shah, and Rustam Shah Mohmand. Chief negotiator, Siddiqi (then an advisor to the prime minister on national affairs), and Yusufzai (1954–1921) are journalists. Shah is a retired army man and former head of the Islamabad office of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).²⁵ Hence, Shah has connections with many of the Taliban groups, including their leaders. But another dimension of Shah's career that might have played even a larger role in his selection for the governmental committee is more interesting. During his intelligence career, reportedly, he tapped then-prime minister, and Sharif's archrival, Benazir's telephone calls to topple her government. Mohmand is a former ambassador to Afghanistan and a PTI member. The existence of a "super committee" for supervising the talks—reportedly comprising the prime minister, the interior minister and an advisor to the prime minister—was also heard. The government, however, denied the formation of any such committee. Women's Regional Network, an association of female peace activists from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India, protested for forming an all-male committee and not including a single woman.²⁶

The TTP nominated five political figures—Imran Khan, Samiul Haq, Abdul Aziz, Muhammad Ibrahim, and Mufti Kifayatullah—for its committee. Cricketer-turned-politician, Imran, who later became prime minister in 2018, refused to participate. Samiul Haq made efforts by contacting Imran himself and by requesting Chief Minister Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to persuade Imran Khan to join the committee. But Sami's efforts did not bear fruit. Imran's party feared that the outcome could undermine his stature and stance.²⁷ Although he had a strong desire, Kifayatullah, a former member of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, was not allowed to participate by his

party chief, Fazlur Rehman. TTP committee's chief negotiator, Samiul Haq, headed his faction of the JUI and is known as the Father of the Taliban.²⁸ Abdul Aziz is the chief cleric of the Lal Masjid in Islamabad. Ibrahim was then *emir* Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber-Pakhtunkha. The TTP regretted Imran's and Kifayatullah's decision to dissociate themselves from the committee.²⁹ The TTP also constituted another 10-member committee³⁰ for monitoring the talks. Both of the committees—governmental and Taliban—were mainly mandated to facilitate communications between the government and the Taliban leaders. Like Yusufzai of the governmental committee, Ibrahim of the Taliban committee clarified his position that he is not a party in negotiations. One of Jamaat-e-Islami's leaders, Farid Piracha, also explained the party's position that their role is only facilitation.

The first governmental committee functioned for roughly one and a half months. Then a new four-member committee was set up in March 2014. Only one of the members of the former committee, Mohmand, was retained. The other three members were Habibullah Khattak (Federal Secretary for Ports and Shipping, leader of the new committee), Arbab Arif (Additional Chief Secretary of FATA), and Fawad Hassan (Additional Secretary at the Prime Minister Secretariat). In Yusufzai's own words, the initial committee registered three successes. It facilitated the establishment of contacts with the Taliban. Secondly, the TTP announced the ceasefire. And, thirdly, the TTP accepted that the talks would take place under the constitution. The government also acknowledged that the committee laid the foundation for more serious and direct engagement with the Taliban. Now it was time to have a committee empowered to make decisions on what could be offered to the Taliban and what would be demanded of it, proclaimed the government.

The first meeting of the two committees was held on 6 February 2014 in Islamabad when the government committee put forward five points including the demand that the scope of the talks would be limited to insurgency-affected areas.³¹ The demand was accepted by the TTP when the Taliban committee met the Taliban leaders in Waziristan Agency, FATA.³² The

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two committees held only one more meeting in the first month of the initiation of the peace talks and just three days after the second meeting, the news of the beheading of 23 Frontier Constabulary personnel—who were taken hostages in 2010—by the TTP torpedoed the talks process. The government suspended the talks. However, in the first week of March 2014, it decided to resume.³³

A couple of meetings culminated in the climax of the whole exercise of the process i.e. the government team held direct talks with the Taliban Shura after travelling to a secret location³⁴ in Waziristan Agency, FATA, on 26 March 2014. It created quite a spectacle. Reportedly, issues of extending the ceasefire and release of prisoners held by the two sides were discussed. The ceasefire was extended for ten days by the TTP. This extravaganza of direct talks kindled hopes to somewhat unrealistic heights. But all the hopes were dashed in a few weeks when the TTP refused to extend the ceasefire beyond 10 April. Ibrahim expressed the helplessness of the committee for not being able to convince the Taliban leaders to extend the ceasefire further. After the direct talks with the Taliban Shura, probably, just one meeting of the government and Taliban committees was held in Islamabad in the presence of the federal interior minister in April.

At the end of the 40-day ceasefire, the TTP presented two conditions for further progress: immediate release of non-combatant prisoners and declaration of a “peace zone.” Within three months of its initiation, the peace dialogue, which already had begun with fits and starts, became a story of the past. In the last days of the ceasefire, TTP and the government both showed their disappointment. The TTP accused the government that it did nothing to meet its demands. A lot of energy and time was spent on materializing the talks. The issue remained at the top of national discourse for several years. However, the process did not produce any results. However, it did play an important part in the shaping and reshaping of governmental policy and strategy in the days ahead.

The negotiations failed mainly due to (a) antithetical stances, (b) divisions and infighting among the Taliban, (c) discord

among the ruling elite, (d) the indirect character of the negotiations, and (e) the non-existence of trust. The factors which caused delays and deadlocks in the negotiations encompass (a) the intricate process of consensus-building, (b) the constitution of negotiating committees, and (c) the ever-evolving landscape of preconditions, conditions, demands, and counter-demands (PCDCs), (d) the baleful spectre of assassinations and violence, (e) the ebbs and flows of leadership changes on both sides and (f) the inimical influence of spoilers.

Conclusion

The negotiations held with the Pakistani Taliban were a positive activity in the sense that a peaceful way of ending violence was tried. Building consensus at the national level was a tremendous challenge because various leaders and political parties vehemently expressed their opposition to holding talks with the Taliban. Apart from a joint session of the parliament, several multi-party conferences were convened. Though the government-TTP talks did not yield peace, they proved to be a milestone on the journey to address the issue of militancy. In this paper, an effort is made to document and analyse various dimensions of the peace negotiations identifying overt and covert phases. The role and participation of various political parties and actors are examined.

References

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- ¹ Lal Masjid made headlines in media in 2007 when Musharraf government carried out a military operation against its clerics and students. The baton-wielding burqa-clad female students occupied a children library in Islamabad to protest the demolition of some of the illegally built mosques in the capital, kidnapped policemen, launched an anti-vice campaign and kidnapped an alleged operator of a brothel, raided a Chinese massage centre and kidnapped Chinese masseurs. At least 58 people, including troops, seminary students and the mosque's chief cleric, Abdul Rashid Ghazi, were killed in the operation. Khaled Ahmed, "What Really Happened at Lal Masjid," *Friday Times* XXIV, no. 45 (December 21, 2012), <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/article.php?issue=20121221&page=3>.
- ² It is widely believed that Musharraf rigged 2002 General Elections in PML-Q's favour.
3. They included Malik Khan Marjan (leader of the FATA Grand Alliance), Malik Abdul Aziz, Malik Sha Tar Khan, and Malik Mohammad Ayaz.
4. Among the elders are the names of MNAs Shahabuddin Khan and Bismillah Khan, Senator Hidayatullah Khan, PML-N leader Rahat Yousaf, former Member of the National Assembly (MNA) and JUI-F leader Mohammad Sadiq, former senator Abdur Rasheed, All Bajaur Political Alliance president Guldad Khan, JI leader Wahid Gul, Women Rising of Pakistan chairperson Rania Gul, Haji Sultan Khan, Malik M. Ayaz Khan and Malik M. Younas Khan.
5. Hasil Bazenjo of the National Party, Javed Ashraf Qazi, a former senator, Babar Ghauri of MQM and Haji Adeel and Abdul Nabi Bangash of the ANP were also among the opponents despite the fact that their parties favoured the talks at various occasions.
6. Pakistan Times, "Govt. Won't Hold Peace Talks with Pak Taliban until They Surrender: Rehman Malik," December 12, 2011, www.pakistantimes.com/2011/12/12/govt-won't-hold-peace-talks-with-pak-taliban-until-they-surrender-rehman-malik-25283.html.
7. The demonstration was organized by a civil society organization, Peace and Tolerance Partnership, in July 2014.
8. Imtiaz Alam, president South Asian Free Media Association, and retired Justice Nasira Javed Iqbal were among the activists.
9. Asad Mansoor, a spokesman of a TTP splinter group Ahrarul Hind, and Ahmadullah Ahmadi, a leader of the Taliban Shura in North Waziristan led by Hafiz Gul Bahadur, were very vocal in their opposition to the dialogue.
- ¹⁰ Peter Bergen, "Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Other Extremist Groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Testimony Presented before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," May 24, 2011, 11, www.newamerica.net.
- ¹¹ Babar Sattar, "Talking Peace Again," *Dawn*, March 2, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1084592>.

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- ¹² Independent members of the National Assembly from FATA, Sajid Hussain Turi (NA-37, Tribal Area-II, Parachinar, Tehsil Upper Kurram Agency) and Munir Khan Orakzai (NA-38, Tribal Area-III) held discussions with Qari Taj, the commander of the Haqqani Group in Kurram Agency, and Karim Mushtaq, TTP commander for Kurram and Orakzai agencies, in a guest house in G-6 area, Islamabad, in November 2010. Uzair A Khan, "Kurram Elders Hold Talks with TTP, Haqqani Commanders," *Dawn*, November 30, 2010, <https://www.dawn.com/news/587336/kurram-elders-hold-talks-with-ttp-haqqani-commanders>.
- ¹³ "Government Denies Talks with Taliban," *Dawn*, December 12, 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/news/679932/pakistani-government-denies-talks-with-taliban>.
- ¹⁴ PTI won 37 out of 99 contested seats. In addition, PTI got 10 out of 25 seats reserved in the provincial assembly—22 for women and three for non-Muslims. Election Commission of Pakistan, <http://ecp.gov.pk/overallpartypositionPA.pdf>, accessed on June 20, 2016.
- ¹⁵ The halt was confirmed two weeks later by Ibrahim, a member of the TTP committee for holding talks.
- ¹⁶ For instance, Bismillah Khan, an independent member of the National Assembly (NA-43, Tribal Area-VIII, Tehsil Nawagai, Bajaur Agency) offered for mediation.
- ¹⁷ Cyril Almeida, "Analysis: Pursuing Peace through Committees," *Dawn*, March 14, 2014.
- ¹⁸ Mureeb Mohmand, "'Truce Offer': PPP Proposes Jirga for Talks with Taliban," *Express Tribune*, January 4, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/488712/truce-offer-ppp-proposes-jirga-for-talks-with-taliban/>.
- ¹⁹ The first drone strike in 2014 in FATA was reported in the month of June. Associated Press, "Pakistan: 13 Killed as US Resumes Drone Strike Campaign," *The Guardian*, June 12, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/12/pakistan-us-drone-strikes>.
- ²⁰ Civilians in Taliban's detention included Ali Haider Gilani (son of former prime minister Gilani), Shahbaz Taseer (son of former governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer), and Ajmal Khan (Vice Chancellor Islamia University Peshawar). Reportedly, the TTP denied that Ali and Shahbaz were in its custody. Some media reports suggested that the Taliban refused to release Ali and Shahbaz but agreed to set Ajmal free. Ajmal was recovered in August 2014 by security forces from Waziristan Agency, FATA; Shahbaz was released in March 2016; and Ali was recovered in Ghazni, Afghanistan, in May 2016.
- ²¹ Iftikhar A. Khan and Khawar Ghumman, "19 Taliban Freed as 'goodwill Gesture'," *Dawn*, April 4, 2014.
- ²² The decision was made in a meeting attended by then Interior Minister Nisar, Army Chief Raheel, Director General Inter-Services Intelligence

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- Zaheerul Islam and Fawad Hassan, a member of the second governmental committee for the talks. Baqir Sajjad, “Govt to Pursue Specified Agenda in Talks with TTP,” April 29, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1102956>.
- ²³ From July 2012 to October 2013, militants launched 24 attacks on the vaccinators and killed 24 health workers and policemen protecting them and injured 14 others. *Dawn*, 25 Oct. 2013. According to another report, at least 89 people—including vaccinators and police personnel—had lost lives in such attacks from July 2012 to April 2016. Ninety percent of the polio cases in the country in 2013 were reported from FATA. “Pakistani Taliban Kill Seven Police Officers Guarding Polio Workers,” *The Guardian*, April 20, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/20/pakistani-taliban-kill-seven-policemen-guarding-polio-workers>.
- ²⁴ In this situation, a focal person at the prime minister’s Polio Eradication Cell Secretariat, Shahnaz Wazir Ali, wrote to the then governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Masood Kausar to talk to the Taliban through the political agent of North Waziristan.
- ²⁵ Amir Shah is the son of a cleric, Maulana Tahir, who also founded a seminary. Many Taliban are said to be Tahir’s students and followers or associated with the network of seminaries run by his brother, Maulana Tayab.
- ²⁶ “Women’s participation in peace talks urged,” *Dawn*, 7 March 2014.
- ²⁷ “TTP Offers Security to Negotiators,” *Dawn*, February 3, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1084532>.
- ²⁸ Sami is known as the Father of the Taliban because many of the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, including several Taliban leaders, graduated from his Darul Uloom Haqqania seminary in Akora Khattak, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.
- ²⁹ The TTP considered columnist Orya Maqbool Jan and journalist Ansar Abbasi to replace Imran and Kifayatullah but they were not included in the committee. “Imran, Fazl Refuse to Represent Taliban,” *The Nation*, February 4, 2014, <http://nation.com.pk/national/04-Feb-2014/imran-fazl-refuse-to-represent-taliban>.
- ³⁰ The TTP monitoring committee included Shakil Haqqani, Umar Khalid Khurasani, Qari Bashir, Azam Tariq, Asmatullah Muavia, and Shahidullah Shahid. “Taliban Form 10-Member Team to Monitor Peace Talks” (Samaa TV, February 3, 2014), <https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2014/02/taliban-form-10-member-team-to-monitor-peace-talks/>.
- ³¹ “Govt, Taliban Committees Raise Points for Peace Talks” (Geo TV, February 6, 2014), <https://www.geo.tv/latest/69187-govt-taliban-committees-raise-points-for-peace-talks>.
- ³² “Taliban Responded Positively to Govt Initiative, Says Prof. Ibrahim” (Dunya News, February 10, 2014),

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/211622-Taliban-responded-positively-to-govt-initiative-s>.

³³ The decision was taken at a meeting of the four-member government negotiating team with the prime minister. The meeting was also attended by the interior minister. Syed Irfan Raza, "Govt Decides to Resume Talks with TTP," *Dawn*, May 3, 2014.

³⁴ Direct talks with the TTP Shura were held at Biland Khel area of Shawa Tehsil, North Waziristan Agency, on the border of Orakzai Agency. The talks continued for seven hours. AP, "First Round of Direct Talks between Govt, TTP Concludes," *Dawn*, March 26, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1095687>.