

From Peace Talks to Operation Zarb-e-Azb - Politics of Consensus Building for Counter-Terrorism

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Abstract

Pakistan faced severe challenges of violent extremism and terrorism after US invasion of Afghanistan. The successive governments pursued both political and military means to bring an end to this problem but to no avail. The war against terrorism was highly unpopular among the people and it was the main cause of failure to combat terrorism. In 2013, the newly formed government led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif decided to give peace a chance after a decision of an All Parties Conference (APC). Consequently, the dialogue process, through the committee members nominated by the government and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ensued that kindled the hope of peace and stability in the country. However, the process was crippled after a few months and government launched a military operation against TTP and other militant outfits in the country. The paper explores the factors that lead the government to start peace talks with TTP and analyzes the challenges that dialogue process faced and ultimately caused its failure. Finally, it highlights the benefits, particularly the national consensus to combat terrorism that dialogue process produced despite its failure to bring peace in the country.

Key Words: Peace, Talks, Terrorism, Taliban, Military, Operation, Consensus, Government.

Introduction

All Parties Conference (APC) convened by the federal government on September 09, 2013 took a consensual decision to start dialogues with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in order to bring an end to unabated wave of terrorism in Pakistan that ensued after US invasion of Afghanistan. The Afghan war had several implications for Pakistan including the terrorism that claimed lives of thousands of people and left many more wounded in hundreds of attacks. The successive Pakistani governments pursued both political and military options to combat terrorism. The war against terrorism was, however, highly unpopular in the

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country. In this perspective, the decision to hold talks with militants kindled a hope of peace among the people of Pakistan. The decision was followed by formation of committees by the government of Pakistan (GoP) and militants united under the umbrella of TTP. The committees from both sides held several rounds of negotiations with mild success. Ultimately, the peace process failed and GoP launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb to root out militancy from the country. However, the factors that led GoP to initiate peace talks with TTP and the causes of the failure of the process are yet to be systematically analyzed. The failed dialogue process also gave some paybacks that have not been highlighted so far. The paper endeavors to address these questions.

The paper contains five parts. After the brief introduction, the second part briefly surveys the factors that effected the decision by GoP to begin talks with the TTP. The third part gives a detailed analysis of the pros and cons of the decisions. The fourth part highlights the challenges to the process and the causes that led to its failure. It also elucidates the payoffs, particularly the national consensus to combat terrorism that the dialogue process produced despite its failure to bring peace in the country. The fifth part bears the conclusion.

Background of the Decision to “Give Peace a Chance”

The decision to start talks with TTP was taken consensually by all political leaders in an APC organized by the central government on September 09, 2013. The leadership of ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had played key role in building this consensus. The parties such as Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), Mutahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Awami National Party (ANP) that strongly wanted military operation against TTP also supported the government proposal to “give peace a chance.” These three parties had remained partners in the coalition government that ruled in the centre in the previous 5 years (2008-2013) and also pursued military means to fight terrorism in this period. Probably it was the reason because of which these parties were the main target of terrorist attacks during election campaign for general elections held on May 11, 2013. Their leaders strongly believed that they were being punished by the militants because of their support to military operations in the past. Still, these parties were seemed determined to fight the militancy till the last drop of their blood (“Terror attacks not,” 2013; “PPP, MQM, ANP say,” 2013).

However, these parties could not win the support of the masses in the elections who gave their mandate to PML-N and Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to form governments in the center and Khyber Pakhunkhwa (KPK), respectively. Both parties along-with their major allies, i.e. Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazal-ur-Rehman Group (JUI-F) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in the Centre and KP, respectively, wanted a negotiated settlement of the problem. The stance of PTI, JUI-F and JI was clear while PML-N also implicitly preferred peace talks over

military operation. The leadership of PML-N had shown its aversion to the military operations in the past. After coming into power, Premier Minister Nawaz Sharif in his first televised address expressed his intent for the negotiated settlement of the problem (“PM Nawaz Sharif calls,” 2013). Both PML-N and PTI played key role in building consensus in favor of peace talks. Apparently, the military leadership also supported the peace process. Purportedly, during the APC session, chief of army staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani strongly dismissed the impression constructed by a segment of the media that military did not support proposal of negotiations with TTP. General Kayani voiced his support for proposed peace process (Abbasi, 2013; “Rare civil-military partnership,” 2013; “APC formally snubbed Washington,” 2013). Thus, not only the political leadership but also the military leadership consensually decided to hold talks with TTP (Text of the APC Resolution, 2013).

This was not the first time that political leadership had arrived to this decision. Prior to the 2013 general elections, two separate APCs hosted by ANP and JUI-F had also unanimously urged for starting negotiations TTP. Previously, the parliament in its two different joint sessions held on October 22, 2008, and May 14, 2011, besides an APC hosted by the Premier Yusuf Raza Gilani, on September 29, 2011, also consensually urged to “give peace a chance.” Following its an in-camera combined session on October 22, 2008, the parliament had instituted a “Parliamentary Committee on National Security” (PCNS) that after long deliberations completed its recommendations in April 2009. On April 12, 2012, Parliament in its joint session approved PCNS guidelines. But none of the recommendations, either made by PCNS, Parliament’s combined sessions, or APCs held in the past were ever implemented. Thus, partakers of the APC convened on September 09, 2013, rightly deprecated on it. They also acknowledged the fiasco of the previous policies and vainness of pursuing military operations against militancy. They asserted, “We have been distressed to note that the situation has continued to deteriorate over the last several years and past efforts to control terrorist and extremist elements have not yielded the desired results” (Text of the APC resolution, 2013). It clearly suggested the aversion of the participants of APC towards the military option being exercised to combat terrorism.

In fact, the war against terrorism was highly unpopular in the country till 2013. The leaders of mainstream political parties including PTI chief Imran Khan openly stated that Pakistani forces were fighting American war (“Pakistan forced to fight US’ war,” 2011; “Stop Fighting America’s War,” 2011; Jeffries, 2011). The views of religious parties were similar. In a highly controversial statement, JI chief Munawar Hassan had even refused to accept Pakistani soldiers being killed in their fight against terrorists as martyrs. The statement, however, had sparked strong condemnation from all quarters including top military leadership

(“Controversial Remarks: Army Demands,” 2013). But Hassan was undeterred despite widespread criticism (“Undeterred by ISPR,” 2013).

The war on terror lacked political backing and support among the masses due to which it was not successful. Despite several military operations that LAEs had conducted in FATA and KP there was no respite in terrorist attacks. The data showed that about 10-12 people were being killed every day for the last few years and this state of affairs could no longer be sustained. The situation had angered not only the common people but also the highest level government functionaries. For instance, Premier Nawaz Sharif stated in his speech that he could no longer tolerate to see massacre of scores of people on daily basis. He was, however, determined to root out this menace by every mean (Sharif, 2013). He also wanted to give peace a chance.

The decision to hold talks with TTP was welcomed by and large from all quarters with some exceptions. The critics, however, vehemently opposed the decision, dubbing it as identical to submission before the militants. They voiced their fears over the prospects of peace process (Amir, 2013-a; Amir, 2013-b; Munir, 2013; Mir, 2013). Thus public opinion was divided on the issue.

Talks with TTP: Pros and Cons

Why to hold negotiations with TTP was the main question before the nation. The critics bitterly condemn the government decision and argued that: the decision was equal to surrendering before the militants who were had caused deaths of over 50,000 persons; it would mean a disavowal of the sacrifices rendered by the personnel of LEAs and the civilians; it would give the impression that the government and military had acknowledged their defeat in the hands of those who sought to enforce their mode of lives on the people through violent means; the terrorists keep on carrying out lethal attacks on the military installations, LEAs, civilians and religious places. Thus, the critics argued, there was no rationale of launching dialogue with TTP which must only be dealt with an iron hand. They also referred the fate of several failed peace attempts and agreements concluded with the militants in the past. (Tajik, 2011; Khan, 2013). For critics, “talks” with militants was not an “option” at all.

The supporters of the talks, however, believed that there were numerous merits of starting talks with TTP. They argued that the government had only two options: military operations or dialogue. The first option had been used for the last few years in different places including Swat and others parts of Malakand besides six of the seven agencies in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) but with to no avail. The evidence showed that militancy had rather increased and expanded to most of the parts of all four provinces, federal capital and some areas of Gilgit-Baltistan. In some cases, the military operations were counterproductive and likely reaction of such options in future could not be ruled. The Lal Masjid (Red Mosque)

operation was its best example after which terrorist attacks had risen to unprecedented level. In sum, as a consequence of these operations, the nation had sacrificed lives of over 50,000 people and bore financial damages of over \$ 100 billion (“Under pressure,” 2013). Thus, they maintained, the government must do its utmost to halt the fighting and save the lives of people from becoming fuel of the fatal conflict in the future. Thus, they argued that it was a time to “give peace a chance.” In fact, the Pakistani nation had already given a verdict in the general elections to give peace a chance.

Public Mandate in the General Election: “Give Peace a Chance”

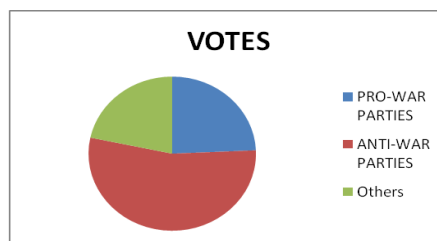
Election results showed that Pakistani nation had given an unblemished decision in support of dialogue process. Though elections were held on different points in manifesto of different political parties but they can easily be differentiated on the basis of their position how to deal with menace of terrorism in the country. The election results remarkably showed that people had disfavoured the “pro-war group” of political parties; those which stayed in government at one occasion or another in the past 11 years, i.e., between 2002-2013, and vigorously used military operations against militants. These include chiefly the following four main political parties which remained, either wholly or partly, in the federal government: “Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) (2002-2007 and 2011-2013), Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) (2008-2013), Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) (2002-2013) and Awami National Party (ANP) (2008-2013).” They also had a sort of understanding in 2013 general elections in the shape of seat adjustment or quasi-alliances etc. Their leaders vowed during election campaign to continue their support to military operations. Meanwhile, the following four leading parties tacitly or implicitly preferred dialogue process over military operations: PML-N, PTI, JUI-F and JI. Thus, on the basis of their stance regarding how to deal with militancy, eight main political parties could be branded into two categories, i.e. pro-talks (PML-N, JUI, PTI, and JI) and pro-war (PPP, MQM, PML-Q and ANP) groups. The seats and votes gained by them in the elections are tabulated below:

Pro-Talks Group of Parties			Pro-War Group of Parties		
Name of the Party	NA Seats	Total Votes for NA	Name of the Party	NA Seats	Total Votes for NA
PML-N	186	14874104	PPP	40	6911218
JUI-F	14	1461371	MQM	23	2456153
PTI	35	7679954	PML-Q	02	1409905
JI	04	963909	ANP	01	453057
TOTAL	239	24979338	TOTAL	66	11230333

Data has been compiled on the basis of the election results shown on ECP website.

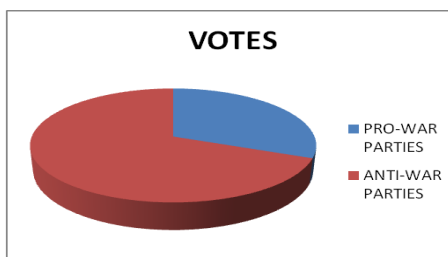
As per the results announced by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), out of the overall National Assembly (NA) votes cast in the elections, pro-talks group of parties gained in combined 54 percent; pro-war group 24.3 percent. Others parties, alliances and groups comprising of religious or nationalist parties and independent candidates etc. took 21.7 percent votes. It shows that over one-half of the total voters gave mandate to “pro-talks group” of parties (this ratio was actually higher if votes grabbed by some other “anti-war” alliances or parties, such as Mutahida Deeni Mahaz, JUI-S and JUI-Nazriati etc. were included). The “pro-war group” could grab backing of faintly less than one-fourth of voters (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2013). A comparison of the votes grabbed by each group is reflected below in a graph:

Types of Parties	Votes
Pro-Talks Parties	24979338
Pro-War Parties	11230333
Other parties / groups	10007811

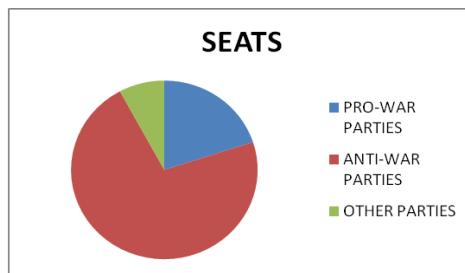


If a comparison is made on the basis of the votes grabbed either by “pro-talks” or “pro-war” groups only, the verdict becomes far more revealing. In this case, over two-thirds of the voters gave mandate to “pro-talks group” and less than one-third of voters supported “pro-war group.” It means that twice the number of voters favored “pro-talks group” than those supported the “pro-war group.” The “pro-war group” chiefly grabbed support in Sind, may be because two of the parties of this group were mainly based in the province and got votes for other reasons) while people of other provinces favored “pro-talks group.”

Types of Parties	Votes
Pro-Talks Parties	24979338
Pro-War Parties	11230333



Types of Parties	Seats
Pro-Talks Parties	239
Pro-War Parties	66
Other groups / parties	26



People’s verdict in favour of “pro-talks groups” becomes more pronounced when calculated in terms of the overall NA seats won by them. Of the total 331 NA general seats whose official results were officially notified immediately after the elections, “pro-talks group” won 239, “pro-war group” 66 and other groups, parties and independents 26. It means that the “pro-talks group” grabbed faintly less than three-quarters (72%) of the overall NA seats; the “pro-war group” about one-fifth (20%) while eight % of the NA seats were won by others (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2013).

The above assessment of the 2013 general election results strongly manifested that the huge majority of Pakistani population had disliked the military solution of the problem. Instead, they gave their clear message to “give peace a chance” and address the issue through dialogue. They rejected the “pro-war group” in the elections and brought “the pro-talks group” into government in Center (PML-N and JUI-F) and KP (PTI and JI).

Logic of Pursuing Dialogue Process as a First Option

The decision to give peace a chance had some additional benefits. There existed scores of militant organizations operative for diverse motives in different areas of the country. Some of them could be mainstreamed through dialogue and inducement. If any of them could lay the weapons and accept country’s law, it could help save lives of hundreds of people from both sides. Military operations put huge load on national economy that could not withstand it too far. The country was virtually at the “verge of economic collapse” threat of default was looming large, with no foreign investment coming to the country. In fact, many of the local investors had already moved their wealth outside mainly because of poor law and order situation and energy crises in the country. Peace and stability was vital for economic growth, social progress and national development that in turn were crucial for national security. The economic resources being drained for war against terrorism could be used for the socio-economic development and providing people basic amenities of lives such as quality education, better healthcare, clean drinking

water etc. Besides, the scarce economic and military resources could be used far more effectively and efficiently against the most obstinate militant organizations.

Dialogue process could also assist isolating the most fanatic and obstinate groups having malevolent agenda from comparatively modest and reconcilable militant organizations. Hopefully, the latter could welcome the peace initiative while the formers would reject. It would help identify the real enemies and also produce discord among their ranks that could eventually be helpful to the government. Reportedly, the rifts in the ranks and files of TTP had already started appearing (“TTP Mohmand Agency Ameer,” 2013).

The dialogue process could also be used to muster much-needed public support against the militants. The war against terrorism was highly unpopular among the masses many of whom including leaders of some mainstream political parties perceived it an American war that Pakistan was fighting. In fact, militants had many sympathizers among the common people and political parties and it was important to deprive them of the sympathies of the people. Thus, APC’s decision to pursue dialogue as an option and willingness to address TTP grievances could help attract public support. If militant groups did not help make this process successful, they would be exposed before the people and lose latter’s support and sympathies. Most, if not all, of the people would then certainly side with GoP against the militants and this support would be vital to win final war against TTP.

Finally, the GoP had still the option of use of force as a final resort. Dialogue process could isolate most obstinate, inflexible, and extremist elements from others, comparatively moderate, sensible and reconcilable. The former could be left secluded, fractured, debilitated and exposed to the more efficient, precise and effective actions by LAEs. Most importantly, the talks could give LAEs enough time to prepare for the military operation against the militants to root them out once for all. This strategy, thus, could be far more effective in combatting militancy (Ahmad 2013, pp.27-32).

The Failure of the Peace Talks

The peace talks faced difficulties from the onset and ultimately failed because of various reasons. In fact, critics had already cast their doubts over the possibility of success of dialogue process. Meanwhile, the supporters of the move were also of the view that the dialogue process would be an uphill task and could confront obstacles from all sides. Apparently, there were a few “potential spoilers” capable of doing anything anytime to spoil the process. At minimum, four such types of actors could be categorized; two each from “combatants” (GoP and militants) and “non-combatants” (internal and external).

The main challenge to the dialogue process might emanate from GoP side. The fate of the process chiefly rested on both sides’ sincerity especially the government’s and any artificially and half-hearted effort on its part could severely

undermine its credibility and so the dialogue process. Disgruntled elements within its ranks or the LEAs, for different reasons, could act catastrophically for the process. In fact, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, the Federal Interior Minister, had already cautioned about it. Nisar warned that “certain forces were bent on sabotaging the peace process.” He further stated that these forces had “vested interests” and held “sway in the power corridors.” He maintained, these elements had “spun into action against the government initiative to negotiate a ceasefire with Taliban so that they could use the prevailing anarchy to their advantage” (“Some forces want to sabotage,” 2013). It was, however, not clear as to whom Nisar had referred to. However, a section of media recurrently reported that the military high command was opposed to the dialogue process. They construed some statements of the army chief in the similar perspective. Contrarily, a few media men reported that General Kayani had instructed the army not to do anything harmful to dialogue with TTP. In the meantime, it was also noted that troops had significantly reduced its combat operations against TTP in FATA. It was a manifestation of the fact that the military leadership under General Kayani supported civilian government’s decision. However, the shift in the command after retirement of General Kayani could change the situation.

Another probable spoiler of the dialogue process was TTP or any of its affiliates whose unceasing attacks could disrupt the peace initiative. Practically, TTP had heightened its attacks after the APC and took responsibility for it including the one that killed Major General Sana Ullah in Upper Dir. In a series of three deadly attacks in a week time, militants killed over one hundred civilians in Peshawar that severely undermined the dialogue process from the onset. The critics rightly stated that these attacks were the demonstration of Taliban’s true intentions. They maintained that TTP did not intend peace and instead was resolute to kill the security officials and civilians indiscriminately. If TTP did not stop its attacks future of peace process was certainly doubtful especially in the wake of any big incident. Nonetheless, a few experts were of the view that TTP actually wanted peace but such attacks were part of its strategy to put pressure on the government to start negotiations, declare truce and consent their demands (“Pakistan attacks spell gloom,” 2013). It was, however, clear that some of the TTP affiliated groups did not favor dialogue with the government and thus, could spoil the process.

Besides the two “combatant” parties, two “non-combatant” groups or outsiders could also ruin the dialogue process. They potential spoilers were internal and external. Among the “internal non-combatant potential spoilers (INCPS)” were the some elements within civil society organizations, media, political parties, sectarian groups, and powerful lobbies, all having more or less capability influence decision-makers through pressure tactics and propaganda etc. These elements on their own behest or those of their internal or external masters could put pressure on the government after some terrorist attack forcing it to abandon the dialogue

process. The sectarian and ideological dynamics of insurgency also complicated the issue. Interestingly, many of the people from the INCPS had vested interests in prolongation of the war and they could do anything to put pressure on the government in order to spoil the dialogue process.

The last but not the least kind of potential spoilers were the foreign elements who did not like dialogue between TTP and GoP. The “external non-combatant potential spoilers (ENCPS)” were, in fact, the most powerful and important potent spoilers because of their influence and power both regionally and globally. Among many countries in this list, the United States (US) could be the most important one. It was not more a secret that the US had opposed the dialogue process. Though its ambassador to Pakistan declared her US support the process but the evidence suggested otherwise. In fact, a few of US leaders had opposed any possible move of such dialogue in the past. Actions speak louder than words and US actions were manifestation of its stance. Previously, the US government took various actions ostensibly to ruin the peace agreements between GoP and TTP. The death of Naik Muhammad following the Shakai peace agreement (2004) and that of Wali-ur-Rehman, a key TTP leader who supported negotiations with GoP, after a peace proposal by TTP in May 2013, in a drone attacks, were the far more visible instances of US actions (“Peace talks: PML-N, PTI,” 2013). Later on, the US troops in Afghanistan arrested Latifullah Mehsud, the deputy leader of TTP and a supporter of dialogue process. His capture was apparently made to frustrate the prospects of dialogue process (“Latif Mehsud’s capture,” 2013; “Confusion persists over,” 2013). Thus, the US could murder any key TTP leader supporting the peace initiative to derail the process. The policy regarding continuation of drone attacks was, thus, a determining factor for the fate of dialogue. TTP leadership had clearly conveyed that no ceasefire was possible until drone attacks were stopped suggesting that TTP would unlikely to stop terrorist activities until the US halted drone attacks.

This situation was an indication of the fact that Washington would continue to yield its veto in the dialogue process. The part of underground agencies of foreign states was also important one. The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Afghanistan’s Research and Analysis Milli Afghan (RAMA) and India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) besides others important actors in the entire game and some of them even sponsored terrorism in Pakistan (“RAW, RAMA join hands with CIA,” 2011). They wanted to inflame the war to advance their ulterior designs. Any of them, could plan and execute a major terrorist attack to blame TTP and sabotage the dialogue process.

Nonetheless, all potential spoilers played their role in failure of peace process. The most significant fatal blow to talks came from the US which killed the TTP chief, Hakeemullah Mehsud, in a drone attack on November 01, 2013 (Sherazi, 2013). Both government and opposition party PTI termed killing of TTP leader as an attack on the peace process (“Peace Talks: Nisar Terms,” 2013; “Imran

Accuses US of,” 2013). Meanwhile, the US continued drone strikes to hit the TTP leaders while the latter vowed to take revenge. TTP not only put forth preconditions for the success of dialogue process but also intensified its attacks throughout Pakistan. TTP main demands included: withdrawal of troops from FATA and imposition of religious law (Shariah) in the region, stop NATO supplies and support to the US-led war in Afghanistan and the drone attacks; to release about 4000 TTP militants under GoP custody, and; to let militant outfits operate in FATA. Some of these demands were not acceptable to either military or the civilian leadership.

Meanwhile, TTP unleashed a wave of terror and carried out attacks on LAEs, civilians, places of worships, military installations. They killed Lieutenant General Sanaullah Niazi in Malakand, and beheaded 23 FC personnel and played football with their heads which angered people from all walks of life in Pakistan particularly military leadership. Those opposed to peace talks within and outside Pakistan were provided the opportunity to criticize the peace process and put pressure on the government for a military operation. The terrorist attack on Jinnah International Airport, Karachi on June 8, 2014 proved a final blow to the peace process after which GoP decided to shelve the talks and use military mean. Thus, with the approval of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the armed forces launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb to root out sanctuaries of all militant groups from North Waziristan on June 16, 2014. All political parties and people from all walks of life welcomed and support the decision of launching military operation against TTP which understood only the language of force. It was the first time that war on terror had achieved the political support of the people of Pakistan and political leadership has the credit to muster this much needed support to back the efforts of armed forces of Pakistan to make country from the scourge of terrorism (Javaid, 2016; Javaid, 2015).

Conclusion

Pakistan faced severe challenge from various terrorist groups particularly in the post 9/11 period. TTP, formed in 2007 posed serious threat to the people and state of Pakistan. It unleashed a wave of terrorism in all cities and parts of the country that took lives of about 10-12 every day in average. Pakistan had used both military and political means to combat terrorism before 2013 and both of the options were not successful resulting into loss of lives of more than 50,000 people and financial damages of more than US\$ 100. Despite huge losses that Pakistani nation had suffered in the hands of terrorist, the war against terrorism was unpopular and lacked public support. Some elements including leaders of mainstream political parties believed that Pakistan was fighting American war. Under these circumstances, it seemed impossible to combat terrorism militarily. The newly formed political government led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif strove to give

peace a chance. According to various circles, the option of dialogue was preferable because: GoP had already used military option that could not produce significant results; dialogue process could help protect or lessen the losses of human lives and save scarce economic resources to be used either for socio-economic development and / or more competently and effectively to eliminate the remnant militant groups. The negotiations were expected to produce disunity, discard and divisions among the TTP ranks that could be helpful in the final showdown against the most stubborn and hardcore terrorist outfits. In fact, some of these benefits the government was able to successfully reap through the peace process. The dialogue process was, however, not an easy path and faced various challenges. It was susceptible to threats from several potential spoilers including mainly two elements from among “the combatants” (TTP and GoP) and two elements from “non-combatants” (internal and external). Any or all of them could do anything or act anyway that could sabotage the entire peace process. There were various factors that contributed to failure of the peace process but most important were the US opposition to the process and stubbornness on the part of hardcore elements in TTP that continued to unleash wave of terror against civilian and LAEs in all parts of the country. Its attacks on top military officers, beheading of FC personnel and attack on Karachi airport crippled the peace process. Angered by these attacks and unrealistic demands put forth by TTP, GoP decided to launch decisive military operation named Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The exercise of peace talks was not fruitless. In fact, the peace process exposed the militants before the entire nation which, thus, stood united to support the armed forces of Pakistan in its efforts to combat terrorism. The peace process gave some time to the forces to prepare for the decisive action as well as helped muster political support from all quarters and mainstream political parties to give final blow to the militants of all kinds in the country. This support could not been achieved if GoP had not exhausted the option of peace talks and showed its flexibility during the talks. The process convinced the entire nation that the militants only understood the language of force and no other option could be helpful in combating terrorism. The consensus among the nation with regard to how to deal with terrorism is vital to achieve the durable peace in the country. Thus, the failure of the dialogue process opened the window of success for Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the harbinger of peace and tranquility in the country.

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