



Recommendations

Non-militaristic efforts to “narrow down” the Taliban enemy, thereby reducing the cross-border activity and the size of the battleground for US and Coalition forces requires:

- A policy of differentiation based on a detailed understanding of the character of differences in agenda and attitudes towards peace deals and negotiation among the Taliban factions, especially in Pakistan.
- Attentiveness to the important role of local resistance narratives
- Negotiations and peace deals with those Taliban factions who have or who originally had an “only-Pakistan” agenda, even though this potentially collides with the interests of Pakistan.
- The launch of trust-building initiatives among the many small and local Taliban factions by a heavy shift of signals and attitudes that are not backed up by heavy military machinery but rather with a concern for local grievances and development.

Executive Summary

Until now debates on initiating dialogue with the Taliban have mainly focused on the Afghan Taliban, whereas many of the difficulties that U.S. and NATO forces are facing stem from the militant spillover from Pakistan. This brief outlines why it is important to broaden the debate through a disaggregation of the major factions of the Pakistani Taliban and discusses in what sense a “good, bad and ugly Taliban” distinction can be a viable policy option.

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Disaggregating the Pakistani Taliban

Does the good, the bad and the ugly Taliban distinction represent a failed policy?

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BACKGROUND

Before the launch of his new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on March 27, 2009 President Barack Obama proposed (in an interview with the *New York Times*) the controversial notion of reaching out to moderate elements of the Afghan Taliban. Since then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, General David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command and Richard Holbrooke, the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, have endorsed Afghan plans to hold reconciliation talks with moderate Taliban members. The British Foreign Secretary David Miliband has also called for a change in NATO strategy on Afghanistan to facilitate talks with the so-called “good” Taliban.

With the recent elections of August 20, 2009 in Afghanistan the question of reaching out to dialogue-friendly parts of the Taliban has regained relevance. Critics have argued that such an approach could mean the gradual return of a Taliban regime in Afghanistan. With Taliban militants intensifying acts of violence and issuing threats to chop off fingers if they were found with traces of voting ink on them, the whole idea of a distinction between moderate and extreme Taliban has once again been contested.

Those who are sceptical of this approach have pointed towards the difficulties of isolating “the good” from the “bad and the ugly” Taliban and argue that even were it possible to isolate the moderates that this would not stop the violence of less reconcilable groups. Critics also often point to previous “failed” attempts to enter into dialogue with the Afghan Taliban. However, as recently noted by Michael Semple, Former Deputy to the EU Special Representative for Afghanistan, there has been no credible effort at Taliban or insurgent reconciliation since 2001:

“The international actors have largely held back from pursuing their own contacts with the insurgency, on the basis that the Afghan government must lead. But

the official reconciliation program, the PTS scheme run by the venerable Sebghatullah Mujadidi, has made no inroads into the insurgency. Hardly any of the over five thousand people it claims to have reconciled were at any stage active insurgents. In any case the arrangements for taking care of housing, economic, and security needs of any Taliban wishing to reconcile have been embarrassingly inadequate”

(See the full interview at www.cfr.org/publication/18893/six_experts_on_negotiating_with_the_taliban.html).

The main arguments against a negotiation approach are often ideological in nature since the Taliban represents an interpretation of religion that stands in stark contrast to what opinion makers in the U.S. and Europe like to define as “our values and our way of life.” However, the idea of a difference is often misunderstood and needs to be re-interpreted. Critics are right to point out the difficulties of distinguishing between Taliban factions insofar as a distinction is based on the notion that there is a decisive difference in the Taliban interpretation or exploitation of religion. It is also true that a differentiation approach that only reaches out to groups who have not played a part in the insurgency can at best be “only” preventive. A more helpful understanding, and one which can contribute to de-escalating the growing violence, is the idea that “differences” rather relate to the fact that it is possible to differentiate between the various Taliban activists who are fighting for a whole variety of reasons that have nothing to do with the “global jihadist ideology” of Al-Qaida, or even wanting to seize power. As Afghanistan expert Ahmed Rashid has recently explained in an interview with the *Council on Foreign Relations*, the popular mobilization behind the Taliban agenda is also due to the fact that many are fed up with

the lack of progress in their areas because of the destruction caused by American bombing. So, even though they do not deserve to be labeled moderate in a religious sense, there are nevertheless Taliban activists who are fighting for local grievances that can and should be addressed by means other than military.

An outreach approach based on this sort of distinction also seems to be crucial to address the spillover of militant activity from Pakistan to Afghanistan which has been the main problem for the U.S., NATO and ISAF forces in Afghanistan. Reports suggest that the increased military response from the United States, (which has announced 21,000 more troops to Afghanistan and has expanded the warzone into the tribal areas of Pakistan), is making it even more likely for the mushrooming Taliban-affiliated factions in Pakistan to find common cause with the Afghan Taliban with whom they largely share their Pashtun ethnicity and adherence to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. This has in fact already happened to some degree as has been reported by several news media. New alliances bridging the conventional ethnic and sectarian demarcations of the Taliban have also been identified; some Taliban groups have found common cause with Punjabi militants, foreign Salafi militants from Al-Qaida and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) with whom the “original” Taliban share neither culture nor ethnicity and religious school of thought.

FOCUS

Until now the debate on negotiating and initiating dialogue with the Taliban has been centered only on the Afghan Taliban, while many of the difficulties that U.S. and NATO forces are facing stem from the militant spillover from Pakistan. A similar lack of differentiation was characteristic of the early stages of the 2003 Iraq war when the U.S.-led Coalition lumped all anti-occupation activists and transnational militants into one camp which resulted in the creation of unnecessary op-

ponents. The disaggregation of the Iraqi insurgency is partly responsible for the reduced levels of violence in Iraq today.

This brief provides the background for why it is important for the U.S. and members of the Coalition to broaden this debate by disaggregating the Pakistani Taliban and entering into negotiations or peace deals with Taliban factions inside Pakistan. A deeper and more detailed understanding of the character of the differences and the dynamics of resistance is warranted to narrow down both the battleground and the Taliban “enemy.”

This brief:

- Outlines the major Pakistani Taliban factions, their differences and the dynamics of resistance that have led to their joining forces despite their considerable differences.
- Recommends a U.S./NATO policy of differentiation based on awareness about differences in agenda, attitudes towards negotiation and peace deals, local grievances and the dynamics of resistance.

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: TTP AND THE BAITULLAH MEHSUD FACTION

When the Afghan Taliban escaped into Pakistan in 2001 they gradually settled just across the border in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the province of Baluchistan.

In the FATA the powerful tribal leader Baitullah Mehsud replaced Nek Mohammad in May 2004 when the latter was killed in a U.S. airstrike in South Waziristan. In 2007 Mehsud became the leader of an umbrella organization named Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) consisting of around 27 Taliban factions. In FATA the TTP strongholds are in Waziristan, Orakzai, Kurram, Khyber, Mohmand, Bajaur and Darra Adamkhel. In the NWFP the strongholds are in Swat, Dir, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Mardan, Charsadda and Kohat. Some of

TTP Factions

The most powerful and influential TTP factions are: the (former) Baitullah Mehsud faction (South Waziristan), Mullah Nazir faction/Wana Taliban (South Waziristan), Hafiz Gul Bahadur faction (North Waziristan), Maulana Faqir Mohammed faction (Bajaur), Jaish-e-Islami/Waliur Rahman faction (Bajaur), Omar Khalid/Abdul Wali faction (Mohmand), Tehrik-e-Islami and Islami Taliban/Mohammad Tariq (Darra Adamkhel), Hakimullah Mahsud faction (Kurram, Orakzai and Khyber), Kamran Mustafa Hijrat/Mohammed Yahya Hijrat faction (Khyber agency) and the Mullah Fazlullah/Fazal Hayat faction (Swat)

the new TTP members were pre-existing organizations and entities guided by experienced warriors from the Afghan Taliban militia and some have become organized since 2007 around different commanders and areas. With the inception of the TTP the agenda of local groups sympathetic to the ideology of the Afghan Taliban has extended to include a “resistance” agenda against foreign occupation forces in Afghanistan.

Initially, Baitullah Mehsud (accused of being behind the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in December 2007) began his “talibanization” project in South Waziristan by establishing, in May 2005, a Taliban force called the “Taliban Commandos” to ensure the Taliban version of public morality and order. The first task of the Taliban force was to apprehend all kidnappers, joyriders and thieves and the prisoners were then publicly executed. In 2006 Baitullah gave the men of his village three weeks to grow their beards, warning them that no mullah would conduct their marriage or death ceremonies if

they did not follow the *sunnah* of the Prophet. This “talibanization” that had already started when the MMA (an alliance of religious parties) took power in the NWFP in 2002 has meant a ban on beard shaving and playing of music in public places and businesses like music stores, cosmetic shops and Internet cafés; many of which have been more or less forced to shut down. Gradually the local “talibanization” agenda has expanded and in South Waziristan the TTP has set up recruitment offices to organize jihadist warriors who want to fight in Afghanistan.

The latest reports point to the development of closer ties between the more “classical” Taliban factions and sectarian anti-Shia movements such as Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ), which also belong to the Deoband school of thought but which have followers among the Punjabi segment of Pakistan’s population (thus are sometimes labeled the “Punjabi Taliban”). Other alliances have been identified between the Taliban and, among others, the anti-Shiite movement Sipah-e Sahaba and the Ahl-Hadith movement Lashkar-e Taiba, which was originally active in Kashmir. Mehsud is believed to have died in August 2009 after a missile strike on his father-in-law’s house in South Waziristan. On August 25 Hakimullah Mehsud—another member of the Mehsud tribe—was appointed as the new leader of the Pakistani Taliban. However, Pakistani sources tell that despite the announcements of the new TTP head another powerful commander from South Waziristan, Waliur Rehman remains the real authority within TTP ranks.

Deoband, Barelvi and Ahl-Hadith

Together with the Barelvi (constituting approx. 60% of the Pakistani population) and the Ahl-Hadith (constituting approximately 4%), the Deoband (constituting approx 15%) is one of the well-known Sunni schools of thought in Pakistan. The name Deoband originally designates a city in India where an influential *madrassa* (religious seminary) tradition was established. The theological position of the Deobandis has always been heavily influenced by the 18th century Muslim reformer Shah Wali Allah giving it a very orthodox outlook. Like the majority of the Pakistani population, the Deobandis follow the Hanafi school of law. A key difference between the Barelvi and Deobandi schools of thought is that the Barelvis believe in intercession between humans and Divine Grace. This consists of the intervention of an ascending, linked and unbroken chain of holy personages (*pirs*) reaching ultimately to the Prophet Mohammad, who intercede on their behalf with Allah. The Deobandis reject Sufism (mysticism) and claim that Barelvis are guilty of committing innovation (*bid'at*) and that therefore they are deviated from the true path. The Ahl-e hadith ("the people of prophetic narrations") are the Pakistani Salafis since they reject law schools, and consider themselves free to seek guidance in matters of religious faith and practices from the narrated traditions (Hadith) which, together with the Quran, are in their view the only worthy guide for Muslims. The principal tenet of Salafism is that Islam was perfect and complete during the days of Muhammad and his companions, but that undesirable innovations have been added over the later centuries due to materialist and cultural influences.

NORTH-SOUTH WAZIRI ALLIANCE

Two tribes in South Waziristan have historically been rivals: the Mehsud tribe and the Ahmedzai Wazir tribe. Mehsud is the biggest tribe in South Waziristan constituting 60 per cent of the population of 700,000, while the Ahmedzai Wazir tribe constitutes 35 per cent. However the Ahmedzai Wazir tribes are the richest in the area and control about 70 per cent of local businesses. The Taliban followers among the Mehsud tribe were, until his recent death, largely led by Baitullah Mehsud whereas the Taliban followers among the Ahmedzai Wazir tribe are led by Mullah Nazir. Beginning in early 2007, a dispute broke out between the two leaders over their different views on protecting foreign Al-Qaida fighters as well as those from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Interestingly, the Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) ties to the Baitullah Mehsud faction have been

important in this, since LeJ forged an operational relationship with the IMU in Afghanistan when both groups were fighting the Northern Alliance in favor of the Taliban. Reports also tell that Aziza, a female cadre of IMU, has been imparting fidayeen ("self-sacrificing"/suicide attack) training to the LeJ.

While the Baitullah Mehsud group has seemingly been fighting a "larger jihad" that is also oriented toward the Pakistani government, the Mullah Nazir group has only advocated the legitimacy of fighting against foreign troops in Afghanistan. This "division of attention" is arguably also one of the reasons why reports state that the Afghan Taliban leadership was dissatisfied with Mehsud. According to news sources the Mullah Nazir group—often labeled the "soft" or pro-government Taliban, even though they share the former group's interpretation of Islam—has been

approached by the Pakistani government to fight the “hard” Taliban. The Baitullah Mehsud group has also had clashes with a rival in North Waziristan: Hafiz Gul Bahadur who belongs to the Torikhel Waziri tribe and who was formerly the deputy leader of the TTP. Their disagreements emerged when Mehsud, despite objections from Bahadur, carried through an attack on Pakistani security forces in the North Waziri town of Razmak. Since Bahadur had signed a peace deal with governmental officials he also refused to help the Mehsud faction when the Pakistani army in South Waziristan subsequently attacked them in the winter of 2007-08. According to Pakistani news reporting, Bahadur is now leading a larger faction of Taliban commanders, including Mullah Nazir and his followers and the followers of the movement *Amr Bil Maruf Wa Nabi Anil Munkar* (“Command the Good, Forbid the Evil”) based in the Khyber Agency. They have been trying to build an alliance of 14 groups (sometimes labeled the Muqami Tehrik-e Taliban) that do not want to engage in conflict with the Pakistani central government. Furthermore, the North Waziri Taliban are known to have good historical relations with the Deobandi political party Jamiate Ulamae Islam (JUI), and also with clerics of the affiliated Deobandi *madrassas* (religious seminaries) because of tribal kinship and the fact that many of their activists come from the JUI *madrassas*.

The Baitullah Mehsud faction of the TTP has been the most open to cooperation with foreign fighters and non-Deobandi movements, which has caused ideological friction within the umbrella organization following the case of Mullah Nazir who fought the Uzbek salafists of the IMU. In the Mohmand Agency of Pakistan the Taliban Commander Abdul Wali, also known as Omar Khalid, in July 2008 started attacking militants affiliated to the “Shah Group” – a local Salafi/Ahl Hadith movement originally led by activists from the Lashkar-e Taiba operating in Kashmir – and killed its leader, Shah Khalid. According to Pakistani news sources, Mehsud was

extremely dissatisfied with the actions of the TTP commander of the Mohmand Agency and these tensions, together with the targeting of the Pakistani government, have led many observers to speculate that the Mehsud network has become an Al-Qaida franchise. Some observers are of the opinion that the Shah group, due to its ties to Lashkar-e Taiba, is a proxy of the Pakistani security agencies seeking to influence the newly formed Taliban alliance led by Gul Bahadur and Mullah Nazir against the anti-government network of Baitullah Mehsud.

However, Baitullah Mehsud, Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur met in February 2009 to put aside their differences. Mullah Omar, the leader of the Afghan Taliban, had allegedly requested them to bury the hatchet and unite. Consequently they made an announcement designating Mullah Omar as their “supreme” leader and they seemingly formed a new 13 member council, *Shura Ittihadul Mujahideen*, to run the affairs of the new alliance. The latest reports about new leadership rivalry following the alleged death of Baitullah Mehsud have, however, made it clear for many observers that the Pakistani Taliban has continuing difficulties operating as a unified entity.

THE SWATI TALIBAN AND TNSM

The Swat district of the Malakand Division in NWFP is a stronghold of *Tebrike Nifaze Shariate Muhammadi* (TNSM), which was created in the name of implementing *Sharia* in the early 1990s. Former president Pervez Musharraf banned it in 2002 following the U.S. overthrow of the Taliban regime in November 2001 when around 5,000-10,000 TNSM followers including their leader, Sufi Muhammad, crossed into Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban against the U.S.-led Coalition. The TNSM lost most of its cadres during U.S. raids in Afghanistan and only a handful of people, including Sufi Muhammad and his son-in-law Mullah Fazlullah (whose real name is Fazal Hayat), were able to return safely to Paki-

stan. However, the Pakistani government arrested both Sufi Muhammad and Fazlullah.

Fazlullah was released shortly afterwards and he soon sought to revive the TNSM. Fazlullah is also known as “mullah radio” because he preaches through an illegal FM radio channel, enabling him to spread his message throughout the NWFP. Fazlullah established a Sharia court that handed down sentences according to the Taliban interpretation of Islamic law in areas such as theft and fornication. Like Mehsud, Fazlullah also set up an armed police force, the *Shabeen Commandos*—the TNSM version of a public morality corps.

The security situation in Swat moved out of control after the Pakistani government initiated the military operation – *Operation Silence* - against the Red Mosque (*Lal Masjid*) in Islamabad in July 2007. Expressing his support for the Taliban-loyal imam brothers of the Red Mosque in broadcasts on his FM channel, Fazlullah declared war against the Pakistani security forces. After this incident Fazlullah reportedly formed a new organization, *Tehrik-e-Tulaba wa Talibat Barae Nifaz-e Shariat*, with other religious leaders in Pakistan for the enforcement of Sharia in the country. He also joined the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in December 2007, presumably to strengthen his capabilities against Pakistani government forces.

The Red Mosque, and its two affiliated *madrassa* institutions, Jamia Hafsa and Jamia Faridia, are ideologically affiliated to the Taliban since their leadership shares the same interpretation of Islamic law and governance. The Red Mosque was built in 1965 and has thousands of regular visitors on a weekly basis. The first imam of the mosque—the father of the imam brothers Abdur Rashid Ghazi and Mohammed Abdul Aziz—was well-known for his fierce speeches advocating jihad against the Red Army and, later, for his friendly relations with Usama bin Ladin and the leadership of the Taliban, when the call for militant jihad was instrumental against the Red Army.

Imam Ghazi was killed during the military operation, while his brother was jailed after being caught during an attempt to escape the raids wearing a *burqa*. He was released on April 15, 2009 and at his first Friday sermon following his release he proudly stated that the implementation of Sharia in Swat and the tribal areas “is the result of the sacrifices at the Red Mosque: the students, the people who were martyred” (*Dawn*, April 17, 2009). This refers to the fact that, following a period of great drama, President Asif Ali Zardari had endorsed the *Nizam-e-Adl* regulation on April 14 2009 as part of a deal envisaging the enforcement of *Sharia* in Swat.

Soon after the victory of a coalition government comprised of the secular Awami National Party (ANP) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in February 2008, the ANP-led government had initiated peace talks with TNSM. The government released Sufi Muhammad from prison in April 2008, and he subsequently returned to Swat and advocated an end to militancy in the region. The peace talks with Fazlullah culminated in the signing of a peace agreement on May 21, 2008. According to the terms of the peace agreement Fazlullah agreed, among other things, to cease attacks on Pakistani security forces and other government installations in the area, to deny shelter to foreign militants in the Swat region and to dismantle his militia. The Pakistani government agreed to release Swat militants from jail, to implement *Sharia* in the entire region, to establish an Islamic university in Iman Dehri and to withdraw troops from the Swat region. Neither of the parties fulfilled their parts of the agreement and eventually the Pakistani government launched a new military operation in the Khyber Agency and arrested leading TTP militants in NWFP on June 28, 2008. This led the Swat militants to increase their attacks on government installations and girls’ schools during the summer of 2008 and they managed to destroy more than 125 girls’ schools that year. Most recently the situation in Swat escalated further after an attempted takeover of Buner situated close to the capital of

Pakistan and the fighting between government forces and the Swati Taliban led to nearly three million internally displaced persons. The Pakistan army claims that close to 1,600 militants and 90 soldiers have been killed since fighting began but, in the absence of full civilian and humanitarian access to the conflict zones, no independent verification of the military's accounts is yet available. Even though the Swati Taliban has been pushed out of the area there are reports that tell that the Taliban have been active in advancing their agenda in the refugee camps.

The situation in Swat moved out of control – not simply because of peace deals as critics have argued – but also because of the lack of effective police efforts in Swat. Many members of the Swati Taliban are known to be “thugs and bullies” and the parallel administration set up by Fazlullah has obviously been illegal. Besides giving police training priority in the area it would be helpful to promote those clerics who adhere to the religious interpretations of the Deoband tradition to reform attitudes towards the use of violent means and suicide bombings; not least in order to prevent future recruitment. It is helpful to recall the traditional Deobandi stand on the question of suicide attacks. When Lashkar-e Taiba and Jaish-e Muhammad were the first movements in Pakistan to start to launch suicide attacks in 1999, it was the religious authorities affiliated to the Deoband madrassas of Pakistan that were the most clear and outspoken critics of the trend, then categorized as “un-Islamic” in religio-legal rulings (*fatawa*) issued by them.

RESISTANCE UNITES

Analysts have repeatedly explained the cross-border cooperation between Taliban and Al-Qaida activists as a result of the Pashtun code of honor, protection and hospitality, as well as of the split loyalties of the Pakistani Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). This assessment, however, leaves out any consideration of the im-

portant role of the appeal of local resistance narratives.

Since the United States intensified drone attacks within the Pakistani tribal areas in an effort to eliminate Taliban-affiliated and Al-Qaida leaders, Pakistani factions of the Taliban have been further encouraged to organize around a common slogan of resistance. For instance, in September 2008 when four American missiles struck in southern Waziristan at a time when people in the villages were breaking their daylong Ramadan fast in September 2008 a *New York Times* correspondent reported that thousands of Waziris met that evening and swore that they would raise an army of volunteers to fight against the NATO forces in Afghanistan if the Americans continued their raids within Pakistan.

Another contributing factor has been the 2007 Pakistani Army operation against the Red Mosque in Islamabad. The heavily armed deployment ordered by former president Pervez Musharraf demolished the adjacent Jamia Hafsa, the largest *madrassa* for girls in Pakistan. The uncensored part of Pakistan's news media showed images of crying mothers who had lost their young daughters during the operation and the bulldozed ground where children's clothes and shoes stuck out of the earth which quickly enraged segments of the population who attributed the government action to the “West's War on Terrorism”.

Some analysts have argued that the recent reunion between the three most powerful Pakistani Taliban leaders - Baitullah Mehsud, Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur - makes a nonsense of the idea that it is possible to differentiate groups, and that the good/bad/ugly Taliban distinction is a failed policy. However this alliance was formed only following the announcement of more U.S. troops to Afghanistan and, as we have seen, the groups have historically been shown to disagree fiercely over key issues such as the protection of foreign fighters, the targeting of Pakistani security

forces and the legitimacy of making peace deals with the Pakistani government.

TOWARDS A U.S./NATO POLICY OF DIFFERENTIATION IN PAKISTAN

New Taliban affiliated groups have been appearing and pre-existing religious movements have become “talibanized” since U.S., NATO and ISAF forces went into Afghanistan. One of the latest upshoots which appeared in March 2009 is reported to be the “Tehrik-e Taliban Balochistan” (TTB) whose spokesman has claimed that it has no link with the TTP, and that it is opposed to fighting the Pakistani security forces and law-enforcement agencies and turning Pakistan into a battlefield. Remarkably the announcement of TTB came shortly after Baitullah Mehsud, Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur decided to unite and thus merged the “only-Afghanistan” oriented militants with the “also-Pakistan” oriented militants again. Another new group, announced in April 2009, is the Tehrik-e Taliban Peshawar (*Daily Times*, 27 April, 2009).

For Pakistan, history has shown that peace deals and negotiations with the Taliban are possible though not always as lasting as initially hoped for. The content of the agreements since the 2004 deal with Taliban Commander Nek Muhammad reveals that the main incentives behind the Pakistani government’s negotiation approach have been to prevent the Pakistani Taliban from forming alliances with foreign fighters affiliated to Al-Qaida and IMU, to prevent the Pakistani Taliban from targeting Pakistani security forces and to prevent the formation of parallel administrations such as the Talibani *Sharia* courts and police forces. Critics have argued that the short-lived peace deals just give the militants a break and an opportunity to reorganize. However, and as Pakistani observers have evaluated, they do also give innocent Pakistanis an important breathing space and reduce the violence and civil casualties, albeit for short periods of time. The deals were also helpful in the campaign against the Uzbek mili-

Peace deals with the Pakistani Taliban

The Shaikai Agreements, April 2004 (Nek Mohammad, South Waziristan), Truce with Ahmedzai Waziris (October 2004), Sra Rogah Peace deal, February 2005 (Baitullah Mehsud, South Waziristan), Miranshah Agreement, September 2006 (Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Maulvi Sadiq Noor, North Waziristan), Peace deal with Sufi Muhammad, April 2007 (Sufi Muhammad, TNSM, Swat), The Swat peace agreement I, May 2007 (Mullah Fazlullah, Swat), The Swat peace agreement II, May 2008 (Mullah Fazlullah, Swat), Peace deal with Sufi Muhammad, February 2009 (Sufi Muhammad, TNSM, Swat).

tants and have periodically reduced the level of violence within Pakistan.

However, as other analysts have pointed out, Pakistan’s military has had security reasons to keep good relations with potential proxy warriors among *jihadi* organizations that go back to the very birth of Pakistan and its geopolitical position between India and Afghanistan. From a Pakistani military point of view, religious nationalism/islamism is instrumental in fighting ethnic pressure from Pashtun groups who do not recognize the Durand line (the nineteenth-century border set by Britain separating Afghanistan and British India; a line traditionally opposed by Afghanistan) or who aspire to an independent Pash-tunistan. For the same reason the Pakistani army has an interest in preventing the Taliban movement from becoming a solely Pashtun movement.

Where Pakistan’s military seems to have an interest in being on good terms with some of the Taliban groups, the United States and the Coali-

tion are mainly interested in reducing the cross-border activity, which demands a strategy of differentiation and non-militaristic efforts within Pakistan. The U.S. and members of the Coalition need to initiate trust-building initiatives among the many small and local Taliban factions with the aim of creating alliances. Such a development will allow the weeding out of the foreign militant salafi-groups through allowing a ceasefire with those groups that primarily have a local Pakistani agenda. A dialogue should be entered into with Pakistani groups who are fighting in Afghanistan due to what they interpret as a resistance cause. This does not necessarily require the U.S. or the members of the Coalition to give in to any demands or vice versa beyond that of non-violence against each other, but it does require alliances with groups that represent ideas of governance, law and public morality that might not be particularly attractive.

When President Obama announced his “Afpak” policy back in March 2009 he was right in narrowing down the core goal of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. Here he specified what the main reason for the U.S. presence in Afghanistan was in the first place: not nation-building, not democracy export nor ideology, but to hunt down the kingpins behind the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. A next step for both the U.S. and the Coalition is to narrow down the Taliban enemy, in other words to “de-talibanize” those Pakistani groups that originated with an agenda other than that of fighting foreign troops. Many of the groups and commanders who joined the TTP in 2007 have local agendas and are under pressure from their tribes and communities not to transform their areas into warzones.

As long as the U.S. and the Coalition do not follow a policy of differentiation towards the Taliban groups the military presence in Afghanistan will continue to foster new generations of Taliban. Diplomats need to put themselves into the position they are educated to be in: to stay seated around the same table with people who represent

a radically different point of view. The main challenge for the U.S. and the Coalition is to avoid further mobilization around the armed factions of the Taliban and to minimize the reasons for potential Pakistani recruits to choose the path of militancy.

This challenge can only be met by a heavy shift of signals and with attitudes that are not backed up by heavy military machinery but rather with a concern for local grievances and development. This task is not, however, an easy one since the image of the U.S. and the countries supporting it has been widely damaged through the two last wars. Even segments of the Pakistani mainstream are starting to show solidarity with the *jibadi* activists who, according to one popular view, are fighting in defense of freedom of choice and the principle of sovereignty. A June 2008 poll found that in spite of increasing terrorist attacks within Pakistan around three quarters of Pakistanis opposed U.S. military action against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and 44 per cent of Pakistanis pointed at the United States as the greatest threat to their personal safety (India, the conventional enemy of Pakistan, is next with 14 per cent). By contrast, only 6 per cent identified Al-Qaeda, 4 per cent identified the Afghan Taliban, and 8 per cent identified the Pakistani Taliban as the biggest threat (*Center for Public Opinion*, New America Foundation, 2008).

In the summer of 2008 when the newspaper *Daily Times Pakistan* first reported a story about the terrorism-charged Aafia Siddiqui who reportedly had lost her mind after being heavily mistreated during five years in U.S. custody, the Taliban was immediately used as the counter-example to contrast with immoral U.S. war acts by Pakistani news broadcasts. Pakistani analysts repeatedly referred back to the incident from 2001 when the Afghan Taliban captured the British journalist Yvonne Ridley, because she – impressed by the behavior of her capturers – converted to Islam after her release. This tendency to relate to the Taliban as a symbol of resistance is unfortunate since the religious interpretation that

they represent constitutes a minority view. The average Pakistani often finds herself in the dilemma of being forced to choose between what is seen as resistance and combating a rigid interpretation of *Sharia*. As it looks now, more and more are choosing to support the resistance cause. The task in relation to the Pakistani context is to free the Pakistani people from this dilemma in order to make their fight against the blend of extremism, criminality and reductionist interpretations of religion efficient.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- A policy of differentiation based on a detailed understanding of the character of differences

in agenda and attitudes towards peace deals and negotiation among the Taliban factions, especially in Pakistan.

- Attentiveness to the important role of local resistance narratives
- Negotiations and peace deals with those Taliban factions who have or who originally had an “only-Pakistan” agenda, even though this potentially collides with the interests of Pakistan.
- The launch of trust-building initiatives among the many small and local Taliban factions by a heavy shift of signals and attitudes that are not backed up by heavy military machinery but rather with a concern for local grievances and development.

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