[**A treacherous deal**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1734644/a-treacherous-deal)

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TERROR has struck with renewed ferocity, reminding us yet again of the wages of appeasement. The [suicide bombing](https://www.dawn.com/news/1734573) that killed and wounded scores of worshippers inside a mosque in Peshawar raises questions about our flawed counterterrorism strategy.

The bombing that occurred inside a high-security zone demonstrates the rising capacity of the militants to carry out high-profile terrorist actions with deadly effects.

A faction of the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) with links to the so-called Islamic State’s Khorasan chapter has claimed responsibility for the bombing. The emerging nexus of transnational militant groups has rendered the situation more alarming. Militant groups now seem to have regrouped and appear better equipped with the help of their patrons on the other side of the border. The [return of Taliban rule in Afghanistan](https://www.dawn.com/news/1640974) has certainly given a boost to violent militancy here.

But it is the weakness of the Pakistani state and the absence of a clear policy direction that has allowed the militants to regain their space. Monday’s Police Lines mosque attack in an area that houses the offices of various civilian law-enforcement agencies has exposed the failure of our entire security apparatus.

Most alarming are the reports about the possible involvement of some insiders in the attack. It is apparent that such massive terrorist action requires a strong support network.

There has been a marked escalation in terrorist attacks in the troubled province over the past several months following a reportedly dubious deal with the banned outfit that allowed the militants who had fled to Afghanistan to escape the military operation to return home.

According to some media reports, thousands of armed militants have crossed the border and re-established their bases in the region.

The so-called peace negotiations were just used as a cover by the militants to gain time.

Former prime minister Imran Khan, in a recent statement, revealed that his government had [planned to resettle TTP fighters](https://www.dawn.com/news/1731063) in Pakistan’s tribal districts with the help of the Afghan Taliban. He has blamed the latest resurgence of terrorism in the country on the “unwillingness of the current government to abide by the commitments made by the previous regime”.

“When the militants came, they were not rehabilitated or given any proper attention, and no money was spent on them. We were afraid that if we did not pay attention to them, then terrorism would start in different places, which [is what] has happened,” the former prime minister is reported to have said at a seminar recently.

Khan’s revelation gives credence to reports of a deal with the terrorist group that is responsible for the killing of thousands of Pakistani civilians and security personnel. Under that deal, several militant leaders who had declared war on the Pakistani state were also released.

It was yet another act of surrender by the state to the militants who have refused to lay down their arms and accept the state’s authority. The nation is now paying the cost of appeasement with the blood of its citizens.

It’s apparent that the deal had been done with the full approval of the security establishment. There was a public uproar when the state decided to start so-called peace negotiations with the TTP facilitated by the Afghan Taliban regime.

But the protests didn’t stop the then ISI chief from going to Kabul and sitting across the table with the outlawed group. Instead of surrendering, the TTP leaders set out their own conditions for talks that virtually asked the state to hand over its control of the former tribal areas to them.

Despite the fact that the negotiations were going nowhere, the state continued to engage in talks with the globally declared terrorist group. The militants used the negotiations to reorganise themselves.

The so-called peace negotiations and the ceasefire were just used as a cover by the militants to gain time. Meanwhile, the state allowed thousands of militants to return with their arms. Parliament and the nation were kept in the dark on the deal that Imran Khan has confirmed.

Not surprisingly, the TTP called off the ceasefire after regrouping and unleashed a deadly wave of terrorist attacks. The end of a tenuous ceasefire has further intensified the militant violence.

Targeted killings, suicide bombings and other forms of attack on security installations have returned to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with lethal force, taking a huge toll on lives, after years of relative calm. The former tribal regions of Bajaur, North and South Waziristan and adjoining districts have been the worst hit.

The attacks have been getting more brazen in recent weeks, with the TTP extending its lethal activities to other parts of the country. In the past three months, the outlawed terror group has claimed more than 150 attacks in KP alone. The police and other security agencies have been the main target of the terrorist group amid worsening political instability that has crippled the provincial administration.

The civilian law-enforcement agencies seem to have collapsed in the face of the militant assault. The Peshawar mosque attack has been the deadliest in recent years and has shaken the country. It raises serious questions about the state of our preparedness to deal with the renewed terrorist threat. Meanwhile, the worsening political and economic crisis has pushed the country close to anarchy.

It has also led to the weakening of the state authority, providing a favourable environment to outlawed groups with a strong ally across the border. The threat to national security has become more serious with the reported tactical alliance between the TTP and some Baloch separatist groups. Consequently, there has been a tangible escalation in terrorist attacks in Balochistan in recent months.

The National Security Committee last month [vowed to deal](https://www.dawn.com/news/1729555) with the terrorist violence with “the full force of the state”. But there is still no clear strategy in place to deal with this existential threat.

Solemn declarations cannot be a substitute for actions. It is most important that the nation be told about the controversial deal with the militants that the former prime minister referred to. Such underhand dealings have earned the country the dubious distinction of being the epicentre of militancy, undermining not only its own national security but also that of the region.

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