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PAKISTAN MEDIA ANALYSIS

May 11, 2011

- **Media following debate in Washington**
- **Last week's unprecedented freedom in Urdu media fading**
- **Consensus forming that OBL raid was a national embarrassment**
- **Media continue seeking culprits – other than the establishment**

Prominent voices in the Pakistani media appear to be coming to a consensus that the U.S. violation of Pakistani sovereignty in the OBL raid was a “tragedy” and national embarrassment, perhaps rivaled only by Pakistan’s defeat by India in 1971. Compared to last week, there are far fewer Urdu voices criticizing the security establishment for “incompetence” or “complicity,” and more attacking the civilian GOP and the US. Commentary in the English media remains more balanced.

This morning’s Geo TV news led with Senator Carl Levin’s statement that the U.S. should not seek to maintain ties with Pakistan at any cost; the second lead story was the announcement that Senator John Kerry would visit Pakistan next week. Vernacular press headlined reports that President Obama had authorized the SEAL team to use force against Pakistani police or military – but reporting was generally more factual than the inflammatory TV tickers on the same issue we had seen yesterday.

Both the English-language and vernacular media are closely following the debate in Washington over whether to continue assistance to Pakistan. The vernacular press also widely reported other statements by U.S. officials questioning Pakistan’s role in harboring OBL. Particularly prominent were Speaker Boehner’s comments that the “U.S. and Pakistan are at a crossroads,” and Senator Feinstein’s assertion of Pakistani official connivance. Several prominent articles, citing unnamed “sources,” claimed that Secretary Clinton had cancelled her upcoming visit to Pakistan. It is our sense that while quotes from USG officials are making headlines, the Urdu news media, and certainly pundits on the influential talk shows, do not grasp the severity of the debate in Washington over the future of bilateral ties, nor are they interested (any longer) in introspection about the validity of U.S. concerns.

Most Urdu dailies also front-paged remarks attributed to Ambassador Muntz during a public event in which he was supposed to have said, “U.S. drone strikes will continue.” (His actual statement was that the U.S. would continue to work with Pakistan against terrorists using all available means.)

After a brief flurry last week of perhaps unprecedented debate in Urdu media as the establishment sought a narrative to explain Abbottabad, the media are reverting to reflexive anti-Americanism – a movement encouraged by the coalescing establishment narrative blaming the U.S. for its lack of trust toward Pakistan, and/or the civilian GOP for failing to stand up for national honor or spinning the story the right way. Leading Urdu daily “Jang” focused its ire on Prime Minister Gilani, noting that he had “neither discussed the details of the operation, nor did he give any satisfactory answers to any such questions.” Second largest Urdu daily “Nawa-i-Waqt” asserted, “the Pakistani nation is fed up with the stand that ‘we will not tolerate any such action in future.’ We always make use of this argument whenever there is a drone strike in Pakistan. Instead we must lodge a strong protest over this incident. But their (civilian GOP) attitude is like that of a wrestler who has lost his fight.” Relatively liberal Urdu daily “Express” invoked fighting words, saying “This is not the time for point scoring or for disparaging the Army, the intelligence agencies or the government; instead, we must evolve a joint strategy to foil the enemies’ designs.”

Tuesday TV talk shows continued to focus on the Abbottabad as a violation of the country’s dignity, honor and sovereignty – with virtually no examination of the “Panetta paradigm” of Pakistan’s incompetence or culpability. Popular host Hamid Mir, of Geo TV, said “this tragedy has exposed the weaknesses of our defense system, and the apologetic attitude of our government to the U.S. authorities has added insult to injury of the nation.” Former Foreign Minister Qureshi said on Kamran Khan’s number-one-rated program that “our civilian and military leadership should understand that the U.S. will again launch such attacks if they have the credible intelligence about the presence of Al Zawahiri or Mullah Omar.” On Express TV, PML-N leader Khuram Dastgir called the Abbottabad operation “cowboy-style justice” and charged that that former President Musharraf, President Zardari and PM Gilani have turned Pakistan into a “banana republic.”

Urdu Editorials:

“PM Gilani’s Address and Some Fundamental Questions,” an editorial in the leading mass-circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/11)

“The primary objective of PM Gilani’s address to the parliament was to take the nation into confidence about the situation which arose from the presence of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, the ignorance of our intelligence about him, the U.S. Special Forces’ unilateral operation and its violation of Pakistan’s land and airspace. But the PM neither discussed the details of the operation, nor did he give any satisfactory answers to any of those questions. Therefore, the nation is still facing uncertainty. It seems that he sought to address the U.S. rather than the Pakistani nation and that is why he made his speech in English. But he did not send a clear message even to the U.S. -- it is not enough to say that we have serious reservations about this operation.”

“Cowardly Decisions Pushed Us Into this Quagmire,” an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily “Ausaf” (cir. 10,000) (05/11)

“The Pakistani nation wants to know who allowed the U.S. to launch drone attacks in our country. Who renewed Musharraf’s agreement with the Americans to continue this blatant aggression against Pakistan? People also are anxious to know what commitments the present rulers have made with Washington for its support?”

“Time To Take Courageous Decisions,” an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily “Islam” (cir. 15,000) (05/11)

“Had our leadership been able to take courageous and timely decisions, the country would not be in the quagmire it is in today. Even at this critical juncture which needs a united nation, both the government and the opposition parties are busy hurling allegations against each other, and issuing conflicting statements.”

“Prime Minister’s Uninspiring Speech,” an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily “Mashriq” (cir. 55,000) (05/11)

“If the government, indeed, wants to take the nation into confidence then it should tell the public how it was possible for U.S. helicopters to enter Pakistani airspace and return to their bases in Afghanistan safely after conducting an operation here. People also want to know why we have reserved our defense capabilities to retaliate only to an Indian aggression.”

Editorials from Lahore:

“Large-scale Indian Military Exercises Near Pakistan Border,” an editorial in the second-largest Urdu daily, “Nawa-i-Waqt” (circ. 150,000) (05/11)

“India has begun large scale military exercises in the Rajhistan desert bordering the Pakistan frontier.... Media reports about these military exercises suggest that these exercises are sudden and unscheduled.... The military exercises were initiated at a time when Pakistan is defensive vis-à-vis the Abbottabad operation and is worried about its security.... No doubt that our government and military leaderships are anxious because of the international pressure and American and Indian questions against the backdrop of the Abbottabad operation, but they should not be oblivious of the country’s defense requirements. Indian military exercises are alarming for our security and sovereignty.”

“Abbottabad Operation: Unity Required,” an editorial in the second-largest Urdu daily “Nawa-i-Waqt” (circ. 150,000) (05/11)

“Nawaz Sharif’s analysis is right in that if incidents like Abbottabad are not taken note of, then the country will face more dangers.... The Pakistani nation is fed up with the position that we will not tolerate such action in the future. We always use this argument when there is a drone strike in Pakistan. The U.S. operation in Abbottabad has badly damaged the independence and honor of Pakistan. Pakistan had to lodge a strong protest over this incident, but its attitude is like that of a wrestler who has lost his fight. We must immediately convene an All Parties Conference (APC) to devise an

effective strategy. And there is a need for all political and religious parties to sit together as this is the time that we should forge unity among our ranks.”

“Investigation by One General not Enough,” an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily “Pakistan” (circ. 10,000) (05/11)

“Prime Minister Gilani, while speaking before the National Assembly, announced the appointment of Lieutenant General Javed Iqbal to head a probe into the Abbottabad incident. Why is a serving general able to head an inquiry into the affairs of the army, air force and intelligence agencies? The sphere of the investigation is larger than the authority of a general.... The Prime Minister should understand the need for a wide-ranging transparent and impartial investigation and should announce the formation of a judicial commission for that purpose.”

“Abbottabad Operation: Nation Awaits Revelation of Facts,” an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily “Express” (circ. 25, 000) (05/11)

“This is not the time for point scoring or for disparaging the Army, the intelligence agencies or the government; instead, we must evolve a joint strategy to foil the enemies’ designs... If there was a security or intelligence failure, we must admit it publicly. There is only one way out of this situation -- we should work to develop our national economy, social uplift, and augment political reconciliation, instill tolerance and democratic spirit in the society. An investigation into the Abbottabad operation should be conducted at the earliest and made public.”

“Politicians Should See Reason,” an editorial in the populist Urdu daily “Khabrain” (circ 50, 000) (05/11)

“The U.S. Ambassador has said openly that the U.S. would like to conduct an Abbottabad-like operation again. This means that the U.S. has decided to carry out such operations, regardless of whether there are any high value targets or not. This trend is wrong; the Pakistani political and military leaderships need to take strong note of such statements if they want to maintain their own and the country’s credibility. The other important issue is the irresponsible, foolish statements made by our politicians: for instance, the Interior Minister’s remarks that Nawaz Sharif brought Osama bin Laden to Pakistan in a C-130 from Sudan and that PML-N has been orphaned after OBL’s death... Such statements are not in the country’s interests and it seems as if Rehman Malik is not a Pakistani but an American who is reading out an indictment against the country. Our politicians should see reason and avoid statements that could add to Pakistan’s woes.”

TV Talk Shows:

Program: “Capital Talk” Geo TV (05/10)

Host: Hamid Mir

Participants: Imran Khan (Chairman PTI); Muhammad Malick (Senior Journalist)

Topic: Will We Be Able To Get Rid Of U.S Slavery?

Excerpts:

Host: According to many analysts, the Abbottabad operation was the worst incident in our national history after the fall of Dhaka. Not because Osama Bin Laden (OBL) was killed in this operation, but because this tragedy has exposed the weaknesses in Pakistan’s defense system. The apologetic attitude of our government toward the U.S authorities adds insult to the injury of the nation. In your interview to the Guardian newspaper, you mentioned that Osama’s killing was a cold-blooded murder. Why did you say this?

Imran Khan: After the fall of the Hitler regime in Germany, the allied forces put Nazi war criminals, who were responsible for the killings of millions of innocent people, on trial at Nuremberg. By killing OBL without fair trial, the Americans have violated the principles which they themselves had set after the World War II (WWII). A fair trial, like Saddam Husain, would have made OBL less of a leader.

Host: Today, in an article you termed our Prime Minister and other members of parliament as shameless leaders. Why did you go to such an extent?

Muhammad Malick: I said this because, as a nation, our future is at stake, but during the important session of National Assembly, our leaders behaved like children. Instead of debating any serious issue, they were shouting slogans against

each other.

Imran Khan: Despite our unprecedented sacrifices in the war against terrorism, the international community has started raising fingers at us after the Abbottabad operation. Recent statements by the CIA chief are threats to our national security.

Muhammad Malick: OBL is not our issue. In fact, with this operation, the U.S forces have set a precedent which means that in pursuit of militants, they reserve the right to launch similar operations anywhere in Pakistan. The violation of Pakistan's national sovereignty is not their headache. Our leadership should explore all possibilities in order to get rid of the Kerry-Luger Bill.

Host: If such an operation had taken place in countries, like India, what would be the public reaction?

Imran Khan: The public reaction would have been strong in such a situation. India's democratic government would have fallen immediately. Pakistan is entering a crucial era of its history. We can turn this incident into an opportunity to change the fortune of our people and get rid of the U.S slavery. If we say goodbye to Americans, it will harm only the rulers who are minting dollars in shape of U.S aid. The common Pakistani, on the other hand, will not be affected if the U.S impose financial restrictions on Pakistan.

Muhammad Malick: There is no need to wage a war against any country. Pressure has increased manifold on Pakistan army after the operation in Abbottabad. General Kayani is in precarious position as he has recently got a three-year extension in his service. I reject Prime Minister Gilani's claim that there is no institutional clash in the country. In fact, the political forces are delighted on the humiliation of Pakistan army on the issue of U.S operation. This situation demands national unity to steer the country out of the troubled waters.

Program: "Aapas Ki Baat" Geo News (05/10)

Host: Muneeb Farooq

Participants: Najam Sethi

Topic: OBL Killing; A Reality or Drama?

Excerpts:

Host: Almost everyone is saying that Osama bin Laden's death is a drama. Why has the U.S. not shown any footage of the operation to the media?

Najam Sethi: Our ISI has issued statement quoting Osama's wife. She said that the troops killed Osama and took his body. She has also told that they were living there for the past six years. This was an official statement given out by Pakistani authorities. If we say that Osama was not present there then it would mean that our military was involved in this fiasco. In my opinion it is not right to say that Osama bin Laden was not present in the compound at the time of operation.

Host: Why the U.S. has not shown any photo of Osama's dead body?

Najam Sethi: They will show but the Americans are waiting for the right time. They know that it is quite important to share the picture with the world. The pictures would be gruesome that is why they are not showing it right now.

Host: There is another perception that the killed guy might be a look alike of Osama. What do you think?

Najam Sethi: This is another stupid speculation. If he was a lookalike, then why were the three wives of Osama living with him. Our authorities are saying that they will send these women back to their native countries but these countries don't want them. Sooner or later, the U.S. will demand these women to interrogate.

Host: Why was his body thrown in the sea?

Najam Sethi: They didn't want to keep him. They threw him in the sea for the same reasons he was not caught alive. They didn't want his trial. Where the U.S. would keep him if he was caught alive? It couldn't keep him in Guantanamo

Bay prison because there were already 700 prisoners and sooner or later the U.S. will have to close down this prison. Most of the prisoners were set free. In Aafia Siddiqui's case, the actual charge was of terrorism but the court didn't convict her on terrorism because it is very difficult to prove. In Pakistan, you have seen that the terror suspects are acquitted because there is no physical evidence present. So, they convicted Aafia on another charge instead of terror. Khalid Sheikh is in their custody but they couldn't prove anything against him. In Pakistan, Omar Sheikh is in trial for the past 8 years but nothing has been proved yet. Osama faced the same fate as Che Guevara.

Host: But they showed complete execution of Saddam. Why?

Najam Sethi: Saddam's case was completely different. He was caught from a cell and he was portrayed as a rat hiding in an underground cell. He was humiliated and then killed. Now, the U.S. has decided not to take prisoners. It is a strategy of counter terrorism to kill the terrorist instead of capturing him alive.

Host: Another speculation or we might say conspiracy theory is that the President of the U.S. wanted to increase its rating keeping in view the coming elections in 2012 that is why he staged this drama. What do you think?

Najam Sethi: This might be true. The U.S. was monitoring this compound since last August. They wanted to do something before but the Raymond Davis issue happened. They were exerting pressure on Pakistan to resolve Raymond issue because they were afraid to lose Osama. There is no doubt that they wanted a success story. It cannot be a mere coincidence that the operation was carried out on the same date when eight years back former U.S. President Bush announced mission accomplished. This was a dangerous and tricky operation. It is Obama's luck that he was successful in this operation. His ratings increased by 11 points.

Host: It is being said that this operation is done to shift the war zone to Pakistan. Is that true?

Najam Sethi: This operation was not required to bring the war to Pakistan. There are many other options for them to do this. If this was a drama then it means that the military was involved in it. The children found in the compound suggest that some of them were born in this compound. Our intelligence sources have recovered some medical receipts of the clinics. If this was a drama then these kinds of items would have not recovered. This is why I am saying that it was not a drama. The only question is that how could he hide here for so long. People who suspect the nuclear arsenal safety should know that our nuclear arsenal is not present in some room somewhere. Our nuclear arsenal is highly protected and scattered across Pakistan. Neither the U.S. nor any other nation can find our arsenal and steal it. Our military is not a bunch of fools.

Host: Another speculation is that this operation was carried out by pentagon to avoid budget cuts. Do you agree?

Najam Sethi: This might be true. You might know that the Congress has approved 15 % budget for the fiscal year. This cut also includes the expenses in Afghanistan. Any such operation could have given Pentagon an edge to avoid budget cuts.

Program: "Aaj Kamran Khan Kay Saath" Geo TV (05/10)

Host: Kamran Khan

Participants: Shah Mahmood Qureshi (Former, Foreign Minister)

Topic: What will The next action of U.S in Pakistan?

Excerpts:

Host: Will America increase pressure on Pakistan in coming days? Can our government resist that pressure?

Shah Mahmood Qureshi: Our civilian and military leadership should understand that the U.S will again launch such attack inside Pakistan if they get intelligence information about the presence of al-Zawahiri or Mullah Omer in our country. We need to be mentally prepared for such an eventuality, and take immediate measures to step up national reconciliation which is the need of the hour. I heard Ambassador Munter talking, in your show, saying that there were

some questions which Pakistan needed to answer. I say Pakistan, too, has some queries that need answers from the United States. I am not foreign minister of the country at this moment, but being a Pakistani citizen, I ask Ambassador Munter and other U.S officials that our both countries have mutual understanding according to which there will be no American boots on Pakistan's territory. Why have you violated our sovereignty? Why did you not take us into confidence? You consider us a friend and claim that we have shared objectives and common interests, but you don't trust us, why?

Host: The American point of view is different. The CIA chief has said that the U.S. had not informed the Pakistani intelligence agencies about the presence of Osama in Abbottabad, because they would have alerted him. Did you ever realize, during your tenure as Pakistan's foreign minister, that Americans do not trust us?

Shah Mahmood Qureshi: As for as the CIA chief is concern, as a foreign minister I had no interaction with him. He interacts only with his Pakistani counterpart. Hence, his Pakistani counterparts must have any knowledge about his mindset? I mainly worked with the State Department, where I never felt such mistrust toward Pakistan. For the first time, I had to witness awkward attitude from the State Department on the issue of Raymond Davis when they were adamant that the arrested American official enjoyed diplomatic immunity. Today, our foreign secretary has urged the U.S officials that, instead of issuing public statements, the Americans should use diplomatic channels for dialogue with Pakistan.

Host: What will be the way forward?

Shah Mahmood Qureshi: Confrontation is not in the interest of both the countries. To defeat the menace of terrorism, both Pakistan and the U.S. must be on the same page. We need to trust each other if we want to achieve our common goals.

Program: "Kal Tak" Express TV (05/10)

Host: Javed Chaudhry

Participants: Ahmar Bilal Sufi (International Law Expert); Khurram Dastagir (PML-N); Aitezaz Ahsan (PPP)

Topic: U.S Operation in Abbottabad: Was It a Violation of International Law?

Summary: In this program, the participants debated the legal status of the U.S operation in Abbottabad. Legal expert Ahmar Bilal Sufi said that the U.S. operation in Abbottabad could become a precedent for other countries to launch similar attacks inside Pakistan. He said that according to international laws, this operation was illegal and was a clear violation of our national sovereignty, and that Pakistan has every right to raise this issue at the U.N. PML-N leader Khurram Dastagir said his party has condemned the Abbottabad operation. He termed the operation "cowboy justice," saying "like Pervez Musharraf, the policies of the Zardari-Gilani duo have turned Pakistan into a banana republic. We demand the government to institute an independent parliamentary and judicial commission to probe the Abbottabad incident and whosoever responsible for negligence must be punished. "

Editorial Cartoons

"The News" (05/11)



“Daily Times” (05/11)

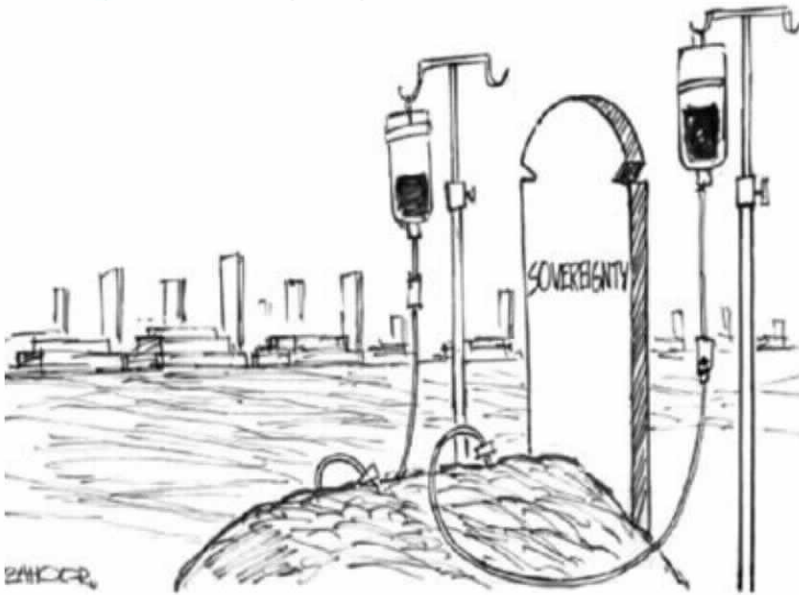


“The Nation” (05/11)

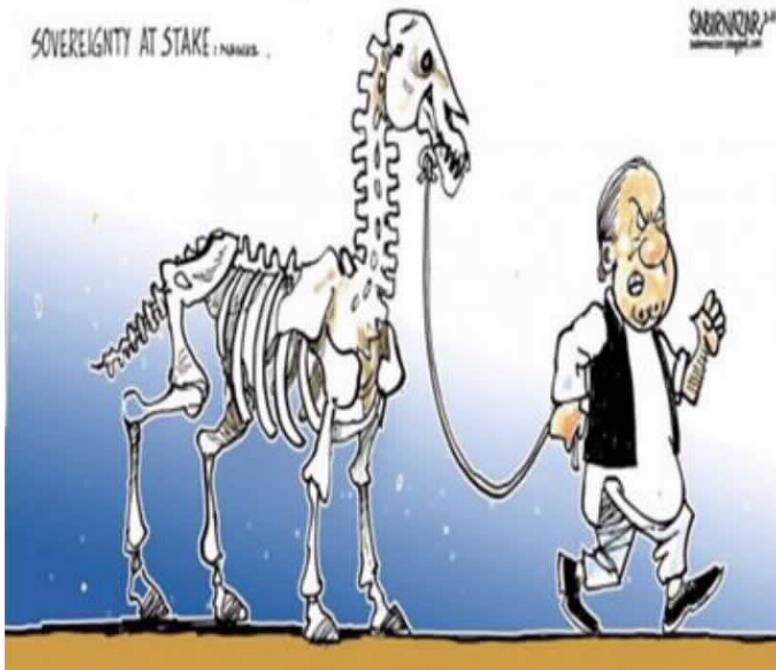


*Stay awake and be careful, don't rely on government

“The Express Tribune” (05/11)



“Pakistan today” (05/11)



“The Frontier Post” (05/11)

US fails to Find any
evidence..



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