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Subject: PAKISTAN MEDIA ANALYSIS - May 9, 2011

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PAKISTAN MEDIA ANALYSIS

May 9, 2011

- The Establishment strikes back: more articles and editorials appear in support of military and ISI.
- Blame America once again a prominent theme in vernacular media.
- Many Urdu dailies mischaracterize Donilon's remarks to absolve the GOP of guilt.

For the first time since the raid on Abbottabad, we are seeing clear signs that military and security establishment is fighting back against domestic criticism, particularly in the Urdu media. Last week, TV commentators and newspapers editorials slammed the security establishment for their failure to protect Pakistan's sovereignty. Direct attacks in the media on the military and intelligence services are virtually unheard of in the Urdu media space, and rare even in English. Today, the counterattack began. There were a number of articles, editorials and even a quarter-page advertisement on the front page of every Urdu daily that attempted to shift attention from Pakistan's failures to the misdeeds of the Americans. Media also widely covered NSA Tom Donilon's remarks that there was no evidence linking GOP leadership to OBL but the vernacular press universally mis-translated these remarks – and headlined them – to the effect that Donilon categorically said that the GOP had no role in harboring OBL. English papers, however, continue running critical commentary, showing once again that the English media are the preserve of elites and foreigners and the Urdu media are what count.

An article in "Jang," the country's largest paper, harped on the past mistakes of various international intelligence agencies such as the CIA, KGB, Mossad and others. The clear

inference was that ISI should not be blamed for not being aware of OBL's presence in the country. Similarly, every major Urdu daily carried a front-page advertisement, which was paid for by a minor, scandal-ridden but wealthy PPP leader. The ad opposed calls for the resignations of Pakistani political and military officials in the wake of Abbottabad. It asked if the U.S. President or CIA Director after 9/11. It also stated that no one called for resignations in India following the 2008 Mumbai attacks. This kind of front-page, full-color ad appearing in every paper is almost unprecedented.

National Security Advisor Donilon's statement that President Obama does not have a Pakistan visit on his schedule for the near future was headlined, but more widely covered in the English language papers than in the vernacular press. All media reported that Prime Minister Gilani would address Parliament this afternoon about the Abbottabad operation. The general prediction is he will rehash the Pakistan Army's line that "no Pakistan intelligence agency, including ISI, had knowledge of OBL's presence in Abbottabad."

The tone and tenor of the editorials and opinion pieces in the Urdu print reflected the shift toward criticizing the U.S. and absolving the Pakistan Army and the ISI for their failures. An op-ed in (relatively) liberal Urdu daily "Express" contended, "We have indeed been dealt a blow -- through unity we must prove that we have stabilized after this sudden U.S. blow. Our anchorpersons should also be cautious and courteous [towards our state institutions]." "Jang" wrote, "There are very strong indications that this drama was staged to present President Obama as the most favorite candidate for the next U.S. presidential elections and to safeguard U.S. interests in this part of the world by exerting more pressure on Pakistan." Popular writer Irfan Siddiqui wrote in "Jang" that, "It has now become crystal clear that the real target of the American forces was not Kabul, but is Islamabad." The pro-Jihadi paper, "Islam," stated, "The wrong and exploitative policies of the United States have plunged the entire world in a virtual state of perpetual instability."

Urdu Editorials:

"Rulers must discharge their responsibilities," in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" editorial (cir. 300,000) (05/09)

"There are very strong indications that this drama was staged to present President Obama as the most favorite candidate for the next U.S. presidential elections and to safeguard U.S. interests in this part of the world by exerting more pressure on Pakistan. The GOP's silence establishes that something is wrong somewhere or else it is not possible that when the entire world is describing the killing of bin Laden as an extra-judicial killing, a violation of human rights and contrary to the independence of a country, the sentinels of this country are tight-lipped on this operation."

"What Is Needed: Self Accountability or Escapism," an op-ed by Haroon Rasheed in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/09)

"It goes without saying that Pakistani military is guilty of negligence of epic proportions as far as the U.S. operation against Osama Bin Laden is concerned, but to blame it of any connivance in this episode is not true. However, we see that Washington is trying its level best

to prove that Pakistan military and the ISI were complicit in providing a safe haven to the Al-Qaeda chief. At the same time, the Americans also vow that they will protect the democratic setup in Pakistan. To protect Zardari and Gilani, as they had protected Musharraf in the past? But the nation wants a credible and transparent investigation into the Abbottabad operation. It is time to for the Pakistani establishment to subject itself to accountability, and take important decisions.”

“Change Yourself Or Quit,” an op-ed by Hamid Mir in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily “Jang” (cir. 300,000) (05/09)

“During my latest visit to the site of the U.S. operation in Abbottabad, I was stunned to observe the growing distance and indifference between our ruling establishment and the common people. Talking with me, the residents of the area expressed their sympathies for Osama Bin Laden, despite the fact that they were completely unaware about his presence in their city. At the same time, they did not miss the chance to show their hatred and opprobrium for the ruling elites. Responding to my queries, almost everyone I spoke to said it was the political and military leadership of the country that brought in the U.S.-led war into Pakistan and received dollars from the U.S. They said that not even a single dollar from the American largesse trickled down to ordinary Pakistanis... It seems that the trust-deficit between our rulers and the masses has entered a phase where the people have begun to consider the enemies of the ruling establishment as their friends.”

“How To Redeem Ourselves,” an op-ed by Irfan Siddiqui in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily “Jang” (cir. 300,000) (05/09)

“It has now become crystal clear that the real target of the American forces was not Kabul, but is Islamabad. According to some reports, at its headquarters in Tampa, the U.S. CENTCOM has conducted special exercises to take out, or dispose of, the defense assets of the country. We should not forget a statement by former U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, in which she had said that ‘we have finalized a contingency plan about Pakistan’s nuclear assets.’ A common Pakistan thinks that President Asif Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, and General Kayani should sit together and evolve a consensual strategy to steer the country out of this precarious situation. A couple of weeks ago Punjab Chief Minister, Shahbaz Sharif, had also proposed such a meeting, but then he was severely criticized for inviting the military into political affairs... The whole world is raising fingers at us, as it did at the time of Kargil debacle. In those days, too, the military and the political leadership were at the extreme ends of their mutually conflicting opinions, which ultimately paved the way for Musharraf dictatorship.”

“International Media’s Propaganda From Pakistani Soil,” an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily “Ausaf” (cir. 10,000) (05/09)

“The international media, reporting from Pakistani soil, is making false and vicious propaganda about the Abbottabad operation, which has become a matter of much concern for the entire nation. We think that the Pakistan government should ask the foreign journalists present in the country to abide by the national constitution and local law, and avoid indulging in negative reporting of the facts regarding this incident.”

“America’s Wrong Policy And Its Results,” an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily “Islam” (cir. 15,000) (05/09)

“The wrong and exploitative policies of the United States have plunged the entire world in a virtual state of perpetual instability. We think that in order to maintain peace on this planet, the international community should devise a strategy, and take united stand, to keep the U.S. within its limits.”

“Troika Meeting And Demands For Resignations,” an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily “Mashriq” (cir. 55,000) (05/09)

“At this critical juncture of the fast-deteriorating U.S.-Pakistan relations, the government needs to take the nation into confidence and, at the same time, all stakeholders should avoid fueling the ongoing blame-game which may further aggravate country’s internal chaos. It is high time for the government, military, and the opposition parties that they get united on the one-point agenda of defending the national security.”

“Extricate yourself from a war of U.S. interests and gain friendly states’ cooperation” an editorial in the second largest Urdu daily “Nawa-i-Waqt” (circ. 150,000) (05/09)

“King Abdullah has given a message of good wishes for President Asif Zardari while saying that Saudi Arabia will not abandon Pakistan.... Notwithstanding venomous western propaganda against Pakistan, neighboring China has expressed the intention to continue supporting Pakistan.... Chinese newspaper the Global Times’ commentary is not only encouraging for Pakistan, but also as good as China’s formal declaration of support for Pakistan.... The current American attitude does not reflect friendship. We should shun our role as the U.S. frontline ally and should increase strategic, defense, economic and trade relations with Saudi Arabia and China. It would be better if we reject puny American assistance and work for self-reliance with the help of China and Saudi Arabia.”

“Shoot down drones now” an editorial in the second largest Urdu daily “Nawa-i-Waqt” (circ. 150,000) (05/09)

“The U.S. Senate Armed Service Committee Chairman has said that Pakistani authorities do not protest over drone attacks and issue statements for the sake of statements.... Pakistan authorities should shoot down every drone that violates Pakistan airspace in order to tell Americans that the protests were real and not mere statements.”

“Demand for PM and President’s resignation” an editorial in the centre-right Urdu daily “Pakistan” (circ. 10,000) (05/09)

“Former Foreign Minister Shah Mahmud Qureshi’s demand for the President and the Prime Minister’s resignation deserves serious attention.... PMLN’s Chaudhry Nisar has also voiced his concern by demanding the President’s resignation. Chaudhry Nisar said that President Asif Zardari, being the Supreme Commander of the armed forces, should come up with the truth on

Abbottabad operation or resign.... It is true that Mr. Asif Ali Zardari is also known as the Supreme Commander. However, every Pakistani and the entire world know that he is not a Supreme Commander of his armed forces like President Obama. So, holding Zardari accountable as the Supreme Commander could only be described as a big joke rather than anything else.... Where even the military authorities came to know about the incident through TV, venting anger on the President and the Prime Minister is nothing more than polemic.”

“Osama operation: need for investigation” an editorial in the populist Urdu daily “Khabrain” (circ. 50,000) (05/09)

“America says that stun bombs were used in the operation against Osama bin Laden which render the human body temporarily paralyzed. If these bombs were used, there was no justification to kill him as it would have been impossible for him to offer resistance. Why was he not captured alive? The CIA chief has also added to the suspicion by saying that President Obama neither ordered the killing, nor did he see Osama being killed because there was no live footage of the main part of the operation. It is quite possible that the CIA kept the U.S. President in the dark about the operation. No one is aware of what happened in the 25 minutes in between, there is just speculation. The Pakistan government should also launch its own investigation instead of simply following U.S. information because it is quite possible that this is a conspiracy to defame Pakistan. The U.S. has staged such dramas in the past too.”

“Meeting of big three: vow to ensure country’s security” an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily “Express” (circ. 25,000) (05/09)

“A senior U.S. intelligence official has said that Osama was still the main Al Qaeda leader and was supervising his organization from his compound. We feel that there is nothing new in these videos, in fact some sources are also saying that these are old videos that have been re-issued. In the current scenario, it would not be wrong to say that these videos are an attempt to further complicate matters. Instead, the U.S. would have cleared several misperceptions by issuing videos of Osama’s body and the Abbottabad attack. The U.S. should consider doing this so that the international community can believe that it has really been rid of a great scourge.”

“U.S. offense: what should be done next?” an op-ed by Tanweer Qaiser Shahid in the liberal Urdu daily “Express” (circ. 25,000) (05/09)

“This unilateral U.S. offense has increased anti-U.S. sentiments in Pakistan manifold and has dealt a severe blow to Pak-U.S. joint campaigns against terrorists and ‘Al Qaeda’. If – God forbids – such an action takes place again, Pakistan would be justified to withdraw its cooperation from the U.S. forever... U.S. helicopters, by killing their most-wanted person, pushed their ideological well-wishers into the opposite camp overnight... We have indeed been dealt a blow -- through unity we must prove that we have stabilized after this sudden U.S. blow. Our anchorpersons should also be cautious and courteous [towards our state institutions].”

“Debate on [Osama’s] martyrdom” an op-ed Hameed Akhtar in the liberal Urdu daily “Express” (circ. 25,000) (05/09)

“The debate on whether Osama should be called a martyr or not has intensified to such an extent that it has eclipsed other related issues -- for instance the un-Islamic portion of his alleged will that stops his widows from remarrying. Islam has given this right solely to the widow and no husband is allowed to stop his widow from remarrying... Not only this, Mr. Osama had also asked his children to stay away from Al Qaeda. I am surprised that those who criticize our religious leaders for sending other people’s children for jihad and their own to America and Europe for education have not expressed their views on this portion of the will... Osama seemed to be following the trend of our religious parties that use religion to acquire power. It is for this reason that today, several clerics and media persons are trying to glorify Osama by talking proudly of their meetings with him... If Osama was a martyr, what then will you call our thousands of soldiers and innocent citizens who died at the hands of extremists fanatics? Can the killer and the killed both be martyrs?”

Editorial Cartoons

“Daily Times” (05/09)



“The Nation” (05/09)



“Pakistan Today” (05/09)



“The Express Tribune” (05/09)



“The Nation” (05/08)



“Daily Times” (05/08)

HOW TO DIVERT PUBLIC ATTENTION
FROM BIN LADEN ISSUE ?



“The News” (05/08)



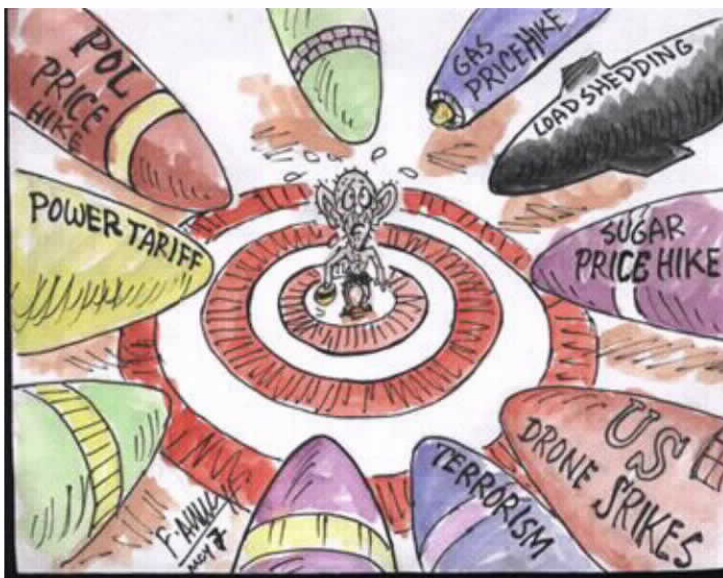
“The Express Tribune” (05/08)



“The News” (05/09)



“The Statesman” (05/09)



TV Talk Shows:

On Saturdays and Sundays, television in Pakistan airs entertainment and sports programming.

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