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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: OCTOBER 17, 2008

Summary: All newspapers reported as their lead story on Friday that "China has vowed to do what it could to help Pakistan avert financial disaster." Newspapers also highlighted that the "international community has agreed to provide the \$4 billion that Pakistan needs to avoid bankruptcy." Also on the front page were reports that "six people, including two foreigners, were killed in missile attack by U.S. drones in South Waziristan." Reports that nuclear scientist Dr. A. Q. Khan's statement filed before the Islamabad High Court said that "former President Musharraf persuaded him to confess nuclear proliferation" also received wide coverage.

Most major dailies ran editorials on the Taliban's reported willingness to hold a dialogue. The Urdu daily, "Islam," noted that "after the Taliban's offer for negotiation and ceasefire, the

government has no reason to refuse to do so in any terms immediately. If the government does not resolve this issue through peaceful means now, it will support the perception that it (government) is waging this war on the behest of the United States."

Another Urdu daily, "Mashriq," pointed out that "this is a good opportunity to thwart the nefarious designs of the external forces who want to ditch Pakistan with tribulations one after another." The liberal English newspaper, "Daily Times," observed that "after threatening Pakistan from the Tribal Areas down to Karachi and causing hundreds of people to die in suicide bombings, this is hardly credible. In fact it sounds tongue-in-cheek to derail the debate going on in the parliament in Islamabad." End Summary.

News Stories

1. "Beijing To Help Ward Off Crisis" "Dawn" (10/17)

"China vowed on Thursday to do what it could to help Pakistan avert financial disaster as President Asif Ali Zardari continued an official visit aimed at rustling up crucial Chinese investments. The promise came during a meeting between Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and President Zardari."

2. "World Donors' Conditional Pledge Of \$4 Billion" "Dawn" (10/17)

"The international community has agreed to provide \$4 billion that Pakistan needs to avoid bankruptcy, but in return Islamabad will have to undertake a series of painful economic reforms. U.S. and diplomatic sources in Washington told 'Dawn' that Pakistan had started negotiating various arrangements with international financial institutions and friendly nations soon after it realized that it might have to default on its payments if not helped. The United States played a key supporting role in these negotiations, remaining engaged with the Pakistani Embassy in Washington."

3. "Forex Reserves Down To Just \$2.48 Billion In Real Terms" "The News" (10/17)

"Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves on Thursday touched a record low of \$2.48 billion in real terms, barely enough to cater to the needs of one and a half month imports."

4. "U.S. Drones Kill Six In South Waziristan" "The News" (10/17)

"Six people, including two foreigners, were killed and five others injured in the first-ever attack by two U.S. spy planes on the Mehsud-inhabited Saam area, dominated by Taliban Commander Baitullah Mehsud, in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) on Thursday, Official and

5. "Musharraf Persuaded Me To Confess, Says Dr. Khan" "Dawn"
(10/17)

"Nuclear scientist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan on Thursday told the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that General Pervez Musharraf had persuaded him to make the 'so-called confession' about his role in the nuclear proliferation in the name of 'national interest' and on the promise of keeping him a 'free man and a hero.'"

6. "Police Station In Mingora Hit By Rockets, Suicide Blast; Four Security Personnel Killed" "Dawn" (10/17)

"At least four security personnel were killed and 28 others wounded when a police station in Mingora came under a rocket attack,

followed by a suicide bombing late on Wednesday night."

7. "40 Uzbek Militants Held In Kohat" "The News" (10/17)

"The police and the Frontier Constabulary (FC) personnel arrested 40 Uzbek militants at the Gulshan checkpoint and the Kotal Pass in Kohat on Thursday evening, District Police Officer Abdullah Khan told 'The News.'"

8. "Military Claims Killing 7 Militants In Bajaur" "The News"
(10/17)

"The security forces on Thursday claimed to have killed seven militants in the daylong shelling by artillery and gunship helicopters in different parts of the restive Bajaur Agency. On the other hand, the volunteers of the Tribal Lashkar and the officials of the political administration torched several houses of the militants."

9. "Government Offers To Reshape Policy On Terror" "The News"
(10/17)

"As the opposition and the allies of the government severely criticized the official policy on the war on terror, PPP's Mian Raza Rabbani offered during the in-camera session of parliament on Thursday that the government was ready to reshape its policy as per guidelines provided by parliament."

10. "Fazl Opposes Use Of Force, Offers To Mediate" "Dawn" (10/17)

"Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman has offered to act as an intermediary if the government 'shows sincerity' in holding peace talks with Taliban. Speaking during the in-camera joint

sitting of both houses of Parliament on Thursday he opposed the use of force in tribal areas and the NWFP, calling for an immediate end to military operation."

11. "Qazi Holds U.S., India Responsible For Terror Acts" "The News" (10/17)

"The Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Qazi Hussain Ahmad, has held the United States of American and India responsible for growing number of incidents of terrorism in the country including those in Bajaur and other tribal areas."

12. "Pakistan Irked At U.S. General's Plan To Visit Siachen" "The News" (10/17)

"Pakistan has taken a serious notice of reports that the United States Army Chief General W. Casey will visit the base camp at the Siachen Glacier in held Jammu and Kashmir during his three-day visit to the region, this week. 'Any such visit to an area which is disputed and which is under discussion between Pakistan and India will certainly cast a shadow on the ongoing Composite Dialogue between the two neighbors,' a Foreign Office spokesman told 'The News.'"

Editorials/Op-eds

13. "Negotiation With The Taliban To Resolve Issues," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (10/17)

"After the Taliban's offer for negotiation and ceasefire, the government has no reason to refuse to come to talking terms immediately. However, if the government does not resolve this issue through peaceful means now, it will support the perception that it (government) is waging this war on behest of the United States."

14. "Taliban's Willingness To Talk," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (10/17)

"The government should take the Taliban's offer for talks seriously and make a decision in the larger interest of Pakistan. This is a good opportunity to thwart the nefarious designs of the external forces who want to ditch Pakistan with tribulations one after another."

15. "Taliban Ready To Give Up Arms?," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/17)

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"One hopes that Maulvi Umar of the Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) knows how credible he sounds when he says that the Taliban are ready to lay down arms.... After threatening Pakistan from the Tribal Areas down to Karachi and causing hundreds of people to die in suicide-bombings, this is hardly credible. In fact it sounds tongue-in-cheek to derail the debate going on in the Parliament in Islamabad."

16. "Tehrik-i-Taliban's Willingness For Talks," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (10/17)

"Positive results of the Pakistan Army's continuing operation in the tribal areas are starting to emerge.... One major victory is that the Tehrik-i-Taliban has expressed its willingness to hold talks with the government. Although it is a positive development and will help improve the situation in the tribal areas, the government must approach it with great caution...."

17. "Western Countries' Conspiracies; Why Doesn't The PM Openly Take Names?," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (10/17)

"The PM has admitted in the Parliament that western countries want Afghanistan and India to enter Pakistan, but like a new bride, he has shied away from naming either the U.S. or another country, although it is the U.S. and its poodle Britain which want India to enter Afghanistan under one pretext or the other and to make our north western border vulnerable and to engage our army there forever...."

18. "More Details Needed," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/17)

"The challenge before both the government and the opposition lies in developing a national consensus on the war on terror.... The government has to take the opposition and the public along and present the militants with a unified national response. Dialogue as an option must never be discarded, provided the militants give up arms. Similarly, while sensitive security issues cannot be made public, the irritation in the relationship with America must be sorted out."

19. "Discussing National Security," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/17)

"Even as Al Qaeda and the Taliban threaten us today we are adhering to the program of nuclear deterrence by testing our delivery system."

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The irony becomes unbearable when ~~UNCLASSIFIED~~ by us at great expense takes up the task of deterring the terrorists inside Pakistan and is asked by some politicians to relent and seek other foes such as the U.S. and India."

20. "Pakistan's Make Or Break Challenge," an editorial in the influential English language weekly "The Friday Times" (10/17-23)

"If the war against terrorism is not going to be owned by all sections of the state and society in Pakistan, the economy will melt down and political anarchy will descend over the country, making state failure and dismemberment a self-fulfilling prophecy. A great responsibility, therefore, devolves on the army, opposition and media to back the government unequivocally in the war on terror."

21. "Suicide Attacks: Joint Ulema Board's Edict And Taliban Reaction," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (10/17)

"Reacting to the Muttahida Ulema Council's fatwa on suicide attacks, the Taliban have said that they carry out 'fidayee' [sacrificial] attacks, not 'suicide' attacks. They have also said that they target the U.S. and its allies. They have also said that before terming suicide attacks 'Haram' the Ulema should have visited Swat. While it is true that the people in Swat and FATA are facing grave difficulties, these difficulties are a result of the activities of those calling themselves Taliban. The situation can improve if they

work for peace instead of killing their opponents."

22. "Strategic Partnership," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/17)

"The visit has taken place when America's position as an economic superpower has been badly damaged due to the ongoing financial crisis and fears of an impending recession. Islamabad meanwhile finds itself under increasing pressure from the U.S. to carry out its orders. Closer economic cooperation with Beijing through enhanced Chinese investments and greater access for Pakistani goods to the extensive Chinese market can play an important role in reducing Pakistan's dependence on U.S."

23. "Visit To China," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/17)

"The fact that despite grim realities China has extended offers of help in so many areas. It demonstrates the value of Pakistan's warm ties with Beijing and also the success of President Zardari's first major overseas trip. But, friendship should go beyond the signing of documents or the hosting of elaborate banquets. Friends, after

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all, should learn from each other - ~~UNCLASSIFIED~~ and China has much it can teach Pakistan.... Much time has been lost. Pakistan today faces what seems like collapse. But even now, Pakistan perhaps needs to look at what lessons it can learn from China."

24. "Coming Closer," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (10/17)

"There was also one unspecified agreement signed on the occasion on economic cooperation. The press note issued after the signing ceremony elaborated that the two leaders stressed the need for reinforcing efforts for 'deepening the Pakistan-China strategic partnership in new circumstances.'"... Mr. Jintao reiterated China's support for Pakistan's efforts to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity - a point which Pakistan has been emphasizing that no military action by NATO, or U.S. marines on her soil is acceptable."

25. "11 Agreements With China," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (10/17)

"The signing of 11 agreements with China must be welcomed. Similarly, we hope China will sign a civil nuclear agreement with Pakistan; which we need urgently to meet our defense and energy needs."

26. "Unique Opportunity To Review Policies," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (10/17)

"President Zardari's trip to China will yield results only when the government implements policies made by the parliament and gives up the policies of Pervez Musharraf in order to restore peace in the country."

27. "Our Priceless Talent For Wasting Time And Money," an op-ed by Ayaz Amir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/17)

"Today even American and British commentators are coming round to the view that there is no military solution to this conflict but we in Pakistan, as always behind the times, are still parroting the lesson the Americans have pushed down our throats, that this is our war and we must own it. This was the gist of the two briefings parliament had to sit through. It's a strange world our bonzes inhabit. Is it too much for us to read and understand the chronology of events? There was no insurgency in FATA in 2001, no Taliban, no Nek Mohammad, no Baitullah Mehsud. In 2004 when the Americans realized that the Taliban in Afghanistan far from being

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defeated were regrouping and attacking western forces, they turned the heat on Pakistan."

28. "Sorting The Confusion Over Extremism," an op-ed by Shafqat Mahmood in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/17)

"Will a possible American departure from the region, unlikely though it is, bring an end to the link between Al Qaeda and local groups and thus reduce the internal conflict in Pakistan? Unlikely, because our homegrown extremists were active before American intervention in Afghanistan and their departure will make no difference to their agenda. If anything, it will embolden them and make them more aggressive. Unless we recognize the challenge we face and come together to fight it, we will have a hard time surviving."

29. "A New Afghan Policy," an op-ed by Najmuddin A. Shaikh in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/17)

"Donors have found reassuring the government's statements that this is Pakistan's own war. They appreciate the determination with which the Bajaur operation is being pursued. From the government's point of view, it would be fatal to its goal of garnering domestic public support if the 'owning' of the war were to be seen as flowing from our need for assistance. We must be able to emphasize that international support is a bonus but pursuing the goal of eliminating extremism is something dictated by our own needs."

30. "An Unsatisfactory Briefing," an op-ed by M.A. Niazi in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/17)

"The agreed rules of engagement were not stated, and the government restricted itself to the statement that this was 'our war,' as clear an admission as it permitted itself that Pakistan was busy prosecuting another's war. Our own war would be prosecuted in our own way, for our own objectives. In this war, we have not even been told the objectives, and so our government does not appear confident before the people's representatives."

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