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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MAY 17-19, 2008

SUMMARY: Reports and photographs of President Bush and Prime Minister Gilani meeting at Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt) dominated front pages in all newspapers on Monday. All newspapers quoted President Bush saying that "Kashmir issue is ripe for solution." Also highlighted were reports that the "U.S. president assured to offer another economic package to Pakistan to help fight poverty." Afghan President Hamid Karzai's statement made during his meeting with Prime Minister Gilani that "the newly elected Pakistan government would put up a joint fight against terrorists and extremists in the region" also received prominent coverage. Also front-paged were reports that a "suicide attack on a military-run bakery in Mardan killed 12 including four soldiers." Reports on the alleged desecration of Holy Quran by an American soldier in Iraq and

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subsequent apologies by U.S. military also highlighted in all newspapers. All newspapers also ran a "Washington Post" story quoting a Pakistani Presidential spokesman as saying that "President Musharraf may quit when situation stabilizes."

Some major dailies ran editorials on the Pak-U.S. relations in the light of Ambassador Patterson's recent meeting with Prime Minister Gilani. Other newspapers commented on the recovery of kidnapped Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan. The English daily, "Dawn," noted that "it has long been known that much of the aid offered by western countries never reaches the people who need it the most. Just as American taxpayers have a right to know how their dollars are spent overseas, the Pakistani public expects the government to routinely provide a detailed breakdown of all expenses met through foreign aid." Another English newspaper, "Daily Times," observed that "after 60 years of a hostile mindset against the U.S., India has proceeded smoothly in mending and expanding its relations with the U.S. Each nation consults its advantage while formulating foreign policy. Pakistan too must continue to do that." The Urdu daily, "Jang," wrote: "The new government must make it clear to Washington that Pakistan has gained less, and lost much in its blind pursuit of the U.S.-led war on terror. Moreover, if the U.S. doesn't respect Pakistan's independence and sovereignty, Pakistan should part its way with the U.S. immediately." Another Urdu daily, "Islam," noted that "the Government has definitely come across some unusual ground realities during its efforts to broker release of Ambassador Tariq Azizuddin from militants. Now, it must work out its national security policy in the light of those ground realities and try to settle other issues as well through peaceful means." End Summary.

News Stories

1. "Kashmir Issue Ripe For Solution, Says Bush: Gilani Assured Of Help To Fight Poverty" "Dawn" (05/18)

"US President George Bush said in Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt) on Sunday that 'Kashmir issue is ripe for solution' and he saw major and significant developments in Pakistan-India relations. The President made the remarks during an hour-long meeting with Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani. Briefing newsmen after the talks, Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Finance Hina Rabbani Khar said that the US President had assured to offer another economic package to Pakistan to help fight poverty which was rising due to unprecedented rise in food prices."

2. "Karzai Hopes New Govt. Will Fight Terrorists" "Dawn" (05/19)

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"Afghan President Hamid Karzai said here on Sunday he was confident that the newly elected Pakistan government would put up a joint fight against terrorists and extremists in the region. Mr. Karzai was talking to Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani during a meeting on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum."

3. "Suicide Attack On Military-Run Bakery in Mardan: 12 Dead"
"Dawn" (05/18)

"At least 12 people, four soldiers among them, were killed and 23 others injured when a suicide bomber struck a military-run bakery near the Punjab Regiment Centre, Mardan on Sunday."

4. "US Commanders Apologize Over Sacrilege" "Dawn" (05/18)

"US military commanders have apologized to community leaders in Iraq after an American soldier used a copy of the holy Quran for shooting practice, fearing an outburst of anger among US-allied tribesmen. The swift apology by the US commanders appeared aimed at avoiding similar violence in Iraq."

5. "Musharraf May Quit When Situation Stabilizes" "The Nation"
(05/19)

"President Musharraf's spokesman has indicated that the President might leave the office when the situation in Pakistan stabilizes, but ruled out such a possibility for the time being, Rashid Qureshi told The Washington Post."

6. "US Concerns Over IPI Plan Conveyed To Government" "Dawn"
(05/19)

"The US government continues to oppose the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline while US experts argue that the project is infeasible in the foreseeable future, said a US State Department official when asked to explain Washington's position on the pipeline."

7. "No Withdrawal From South Waziristan: ISPR" "The News" (05/19)

"Maj. Gen. Tariq Khan, GOC 14 Division on Sunday said Mahsud area of South Waziristan has totally been evacuated from the miscreants. He said this during a detailed briefing to foreign and local media personnel during a tour of the area arranged by the ISPR. Gen. Tariq said that law and order situation in Bannu, Tank, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan and other areas adjacent to South Waziristan had greatly improved."

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8. "Qaeda Not Using Tribal Areas To Plot Attacks On US: Pakistan"
"Daily Times" (05/19)

"Islamabad 'disagreed' on Sunday with the United States intelligence assessment that Al Qaeda is using Pakistan's Tribal Areas to plot attacks on the US as 'Operation Zalzalaa' continues in South Waziristan. 'No Pashtun is a terrorist,' 14 Division GOC Maj-Gen Tariq Khan told journalists while showing them the forward positions of the army in a former stronghold of Baitullah Mehsud. He also disagreed with the US allegation that the Pakistan Army was being lenient with Al Qaeda and the Taliban."

9. "Holbrook Says Pakistan Not a Dangerous Nation" "The News"
(05/19)

"Former US Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrook while addressing the House Foreign Committee hearing on, 'The US Foreign Policy on Pakistan,' said Pakistani was not the most dangerous nation of the world since Pakistanis rejected Islamic parties in the February 18 elections."

10. "Pakistan Keen To Expand Bilateral Ties With US: PM" "Pakistan Observer", "The Post" (05/18)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Saturday said Pakistan was keen to further expanding its strategic relationship with United States in its efforts to promote peace and security in the region and across the world, while talking to US Ambassador Anne Patterson at PM House."

11. "US Offers Help In Fighting Inflation" "Daily Times" (05/18)

"The United States is committed to helping Pakistan's coalition government overcome the challenges posed by oil and food price inflation, United States Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson said on Saturday. In a meeting with Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at Prime Minister's House, she said that the US was committed to extending full support to the new government."

12. "Washington Offers Mobile Power Plant For Karachi Port" "The Post" (05/17)

"United States has offered Pakistan setting up a 200MW mobile power plant at the Karachi port. Sources said that this plant would be installed on a ship and could reach Karachi from the US within few days. US Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson and other US officials made this offer of setting up floating power plant in their recent meetings with the Prime Minister, Yusuf Raza Gilani,

Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif."

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13. "US To Give Aid For Judicial Reforms" "The News", "The Post", "Daily Times" (05/17)

"The United States would provide financial assistance for implementation of the judicial reforms being conceived by Pakistan's ministry of law and justice, US Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson said on Friday. The Ambassador called on Law Minister Farooq H. Naek and discussed various issues of mutual concern, particularly terrorism and strategy to curb it."

14. "USAID To Work With Pakistani Parliament" "The Post", "Daily Times" (05/17)

"USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Assistant Administrator Michael Hess Friday said his organization would work with the Pakistani parliament to enhance skills of parliamentarians, so that they can better serve their constituents," Michael Hess said during a meeting with NA Speaker Fehmida Mirza."

15. "USAID Launches Family Planning Awareness Program" "The Post", "The Statesman" (05/17)

"The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Friday launched the NWPf component of its five-year, \$60 million nationwide program on children titled 'Family Advancement for Life and Health' (FALAH).

16. "US-Pak Ties Should Move To Long-Term Partnership: Haqqani" "The News" (05/17)

"The US-Pakistan relations have been about security but now it needs to become a strategic partnership, incoming Ambassador to the United States Husain Haqqani emphasized in an interview with The Washington Post."

17. "US Not Behind Changes In Pakistan, Says Haqqani" "The Post" (05/17)

"Ambassador designate to the United States Hussain Haqqani has denied the impression that changes in Pakistan took place under the will of the US, while speaking in a TV program."

18. "No Pullout From SWA, Kayani Briefs Gillani" "The Post" (05/18)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani Saturday appreciated the efforts of the Army in improving the security situation in South Waziristan Agency (SWA). The COAS informed the Prime Minister that the Army was not withdrawing from South Waziristan, it is only

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consolidating its position after a ~~UNCLASSIFIED~~ Long appears in the area."

19. "Army Supports Government's Peace Initiatives" "The News"
(05/18)

"Corps Commander Peshawar Lt-Gen Muhammad Masood Aslam has said the Army is fully behind the democratically-elected government's peace process in the tribal areas. The Army is a part of the government and is fully on board in the peace process now under way in the tribal areas and Swat, he stressed."

20. "Azizuddin Is Home After 97 Days" "Dawn" (05/18)

"Militants released Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Tariq Azizuddin, on Friday night after holding him in captivity for 97 days. His release came after protracted negotiations between the government and militant leader Baitullah Mehsud."

21. "Govt. Claims Credit For Envoy's Release" "Dawn" (05/18)

"The Prime Minister's Adviser on Interior, Rehman Malik, claimed on Saturday that Tariq Azizuddin was freed as a result of an 'action' taken by security forces in South Waziristan, but not under any deal with the militants."

22. "More Prisoners Swapped In South Waziristan" "The News"
(05/17)

"Undeterred by the Damadola attack in Bajaur, the government and Baitullah Mahsud-led militants continued the peace process by swapping prisoners while the Pakistan army troops started withdrawal from the Mahsuds-inhabited areas of South Waziristan Agency on Friday, sources told 'The News.'"

23. "MNA From Bajaur Demands Expulsion Of US Ambassador" "The Post"
(05/18)

"The MNA from the Bajaur Agency, who belongs to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Syed Akhundzada Chattan, on Saturday demanded of the government to expel the US Ambassador from Pakistan and lodge a strong protest against the missile attack."

24. "Kabul Urges Islamabad To Abandon Talks With Militants" "Dawn"
(05/18)

"Afghanistan has joined the growing chorus in Washington against Pakistan's peace efforts in the tribal areas, urging it to abandon its talks with militants. Afghan Ambassador Said T. Jawad said Pakistan's attempt to arrange a 'separate peace' with militants was

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25. "US Admits To Striking In Bajaur" "The Post" (05/17)

"US officials in Washington said the predator strike in Bajaur on Wednesday killed a handful of Qaeda militants, including one they described as a 'significant leader.'"

26. "Pakistan Protests US Strike In Bajaur" "The News" (05/17)

"The Pakistan Army lodged a formal protest on Friday to "allied forces" in Afghanistan over a suspected US missile strike this week that killed 14 people in Bajaur Agency. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director-General Maj-Gen Athar Abbas said Pakistan concluded that Wednesday's attack on a house in Damadola village was launched by drones from Afghanistan."

27. "Preventing Attacks In Afghanistan Is NATO's Job, US Told" "Dawn" (05/17)

"Pakistani officials are reported to have made it clear to the United States that they are more interested in ending suicide bombings and militant attacks in their own country than in preventing attacks by militants in Afghanistan. They are also reported to have said that Pakistan would take care of its problems while it was the job of the US to take care of its problems in Afghanistan."

28. "Bajaur Attack Draws Widespread Condemnation" "The News" (05/17)

"Different political parties, civil society activists and student organizations on Friday staged protest demonstrations in the provincial metropolis and elsewhere in the Frontier Province to condemn the missile attack on Damadola village in Bajaur Agency that left several people dead on Wednesday night."

29. "Anti-US, Israel Day Scores Of Protesters Vent Spleen On US" "The Post" (05/17)

"A large number of people turned up at the rally arranged by Imamia Students Organization (ISO) Wednesday in front of Press Club, Islamabad to mark anti-US and anti-Israel day in Pakistan. The protesters, holding banners and placards, chanted slogans against US double standards regarding its treatment of Israel and Arab states."

30. "Militants Behead Soldier To Avenge US Strike" "The News" (05/17)

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"The body of a soldier, kidnapped from the area a week ago, was found near Pusht Bazaar in Bajaur Agency on Friday. He was identified as Aftab Gul of Bajaur Scouts. A note left on the body warned tribal elders against supporting the government or opposing 'Mujahideen,' otherwise they would face the same fate."

31. "'Pakistani Culture Open House' In US Attracts Many Visitors"
"The News" (05/19)

"Mayor of Washington DC was among thousands of visitors who thronged a cultural extravaganza at the Pakistani Embassy on Saturday as its compound turned into a market-place of traditional costumes, jewellery, cuisine and music. Deputy Ambassador Muhammad Aslam Khan thanked Cultural Tourism DC and Major Adrian M. Fenty and his office for their support in making the event a success."

Editorials/Op-eds

32. "Accounting For Aid," an editorial in the English daily, "Dawn"
(05/19)

"It has long been known that much of the aid offered by western countries never reaches the people who need it the most. Just as American taxpayers have a right to know how their dollars are spent overseas and, the Pakistani public also expects the government to routinely - and without prompting - provide a detailed breakdown of all expenses met through foreign aid. This should apply also to the billions of dollars the country has received in the form of military-related Coalition Support Funds and for which there is little or no documentation."

33. "America And Pakistan," an editorial in the English daily,
"Daily Times" (05/19)

"After 60 years of a hostile mindset against the US, India has proceeded smoothly in mending and expanding its relations with the US. There is no dearth of critics there who think India has adopted a wrong course, but the strategic enclave in New Delhi continues to base its projections on pragmatism. Each nation consults its advantage while formulating foreign policy. Pakistan too must continue to do that."

34. "I Beg To Differ, Madam Ambassador," an op-ed by Alizeh Haider
in the English daily, "The News" (05/18)

"Let us be very clear. Pakistan shares no such commonalities with the US, nor has our relationship over the years developed on the

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basis of equality, equity or respect. The respect of United States, as reflected in its lethal foreign policy, is purely US-centric. It would be naive for America to expect us to believe that in some way Pakistan's national interest is accounted for in American policies. If America genuinely wants to help Pakistan, then it must show respect for the will of the people of this country. This can only be done if America distances itself from the governance of the country and alleviates the feeling of alienation and helplessness amongst the people by allowing them to play their rightful role in the political process."

35. "Convincing Bush," an editorial in the English daily, "The Nation" (05/18)

"One hopes Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani would be able to convince President Bush of the futility of Washington's policy of resolving the complex issue of militancy through use of force alone. Prime Minister Gillani is well aware of the sentiments of the people as well as the coalition partners. One hopes he would try his best to drive home the fact that militancy can best be tackled through talks, rather than use of relentless force."

36. "Bajaur Tragedy - Parliamentary Debate Is Essential," an editorial in the Urdu daily, "Jang" (05/17)

"The new government must make it clear to Washington that Pakistan has gained less and lost more in its blind pursuit of the U.S.-led war on terrorism. Moreover, if the U.S. doesn't respect Pakistan's independence and sovereignty, Pakistan should immediately part its way with the U.S. on the war on terror."

37. "Release Of Pakistani Envoy To Afghanistan," an editorial in the Urdu daily, "Islam" (05/19)

"The Government has definitely come across some unusual ground realities during its efforts to broker release of Ambassador Tariq Azizuddin from militants. Now, it must work out its national security policy in the light of those ground realities. If it can succeed in getting release of its envoy through peaceful means, some other issues can also be settled through the same method."

38. "Troop Withdrawal From Tribal Areas: Pakistan's National Interests And U.S. Pressure?," an editorial in the Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt" (05/19)

"The dialogue process is moving towards success; the release of Maulana Sufi Muhammad and the recovery of Pakistan Ambassador Tariq Azizuddin are being described as the a success of this strategy. Keeping the Army in the tribal areas only to appease America is not prudent."

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39. "Tariq Azizuddin's Release: What Is The Truth?," an editorial in the Urdu daily, "Waqt" (05/19)

"There is obvious contradiction in the Taliban and government statements on the release of Tariq Azizuddin; this proves that one of the parties is not speaking the truth.... Even the statements of the Interior Minister and Home Secretary do not match, with one saying that the release was the result of an action, while the latter rejecting an operation.... The nation deserves to be told the truth."

40. "Release Of Kidnapped Envoy," an editorial in the Urdu daily, "Jang" (05/19)

"There are controversial views regarding reasons behind the release of Pakistan's envoy after three months. Some believe that his release is part of the four-point agreement with local Taliban. ANP chief Asfandyar Wali has also expressed similar view saying 'peace agreement with local militants is in its final phase, ambassador's release is part of it". Whatever means government of Pakistan used to get the ambassador released is its own domestic issue. It has right to use all available means for resolution of concerns and as such others should not be concerned and interfering in internal affairs".

41. "Deal That Freed Envoy," an editorial in the English daily, "Pakistan Observer" (05/19)

"At times, one has to make compromises for a noble cause and even if it was a deal the safe release of Tariq Azizuddin is a welcome development. However, this shows that Taliban have a formidable presence in the area and they are capable enough to dictate their terms to the Government."

42. "Heartening News," an editorial in the English daily, "The Nation" (05/18)

"The return of an able and experienced diplomat (Tariq Azizuddin) would give a sigh of relief to his family and friends as well as the entire nation. The incident also underlines a national malady: Pakistanis appear to be the least security-minded people while the country's active cooperation with the US in its War On Terror has brought them right to the midst of a danger zone and rendered our milieu wild with extremist sentiments that could burst out with unpredictable consequences."

43. "Why Is Blood Of Pakistanis So Cheap?," an editorial in the Urdu daily, "Ausaf" (05/18)

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"The newly elected government should come under the pressure of the United States, and continue negotiations in tribal areas. However, we should suspend transit trade facility for Afghanistan as the attack was launched from Afghan soil, and we must summon the Afghan and American Ambassadors to the Foreign Office, and lodge strong protest on this incident."

44. "Another U.S. Attack - Does Verbal Protest Suffice?," an editorial in the Urdu daily, "Islam" (05/18)

"There is no apparent motive of the U.S. latest aggression against Damadola except that it (U.S.) wants to disrupt the ongoing reconciliation and peace process between the Government of Pakistan and the tribesmen. Therefore, Pakistan should refuse to succumb to the U.S. pressure, and take serious note of these U.S. attempts which are being made to subvert Pakistan's efforts to establish peace in the volatile tribal strip."

45. "Lectures From The Blind," an editorial in the English daily, "Dawn" (05/17)

"Spin it any way you like, no one is willing to believe that Wednesday's missile attack in Damadola was not carried out by a US drone. If the US is indeed responsible for the attack, it is guilty of gross folly. It is doing nothing to heal the wounds, it has learned nothing from history and before lecturing other countries it should revisit its role in making the world a more dangerous place."

46. "Bleak Prospects," an editorial in the English daily, "The Nation" (05/17)

"One finds it hard to knit the statement of the Prime Minister condemning the US missile attack with the Foreign Office expressing its unawareness over what really happened doesn't really chime in with the sentiment on the street. The orders to minimize the military operation in the tribal area and release missing persons have also failed to materialize. However, the damage done to the people's confidence in the elected leadership can still be fixed provided immediate measures are taken to make up the leeway."

47. "Dangerous Deals?," an editorial in the English daily, "The News" (05/17)

"The US has made clear its displeasure over ongoing attempts to reach deals with militants in FATA areas. US intervention in Pakistan's affairs, as this is a good example of, is almost always resented by most Pakistanis. To a very considerable extent such interference over the years has damaged Pakistan's interests, rather than having helped the country. Having said that, the fact of the

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matter is that it is in Pakistan's own interest to ensure that if at all a peace deal is to be considered with the militants, then the latter should be made to stick to their end of the bargain."

48. "Feigning Ignorance About Bajaur Attack," an op-ed by Rahimullah Yusufzai in the English daily, "The News" (05/17)

"As the US air strikes in Pakistan would continue in future until its troops are withdrawn from neighboring Afghanistan, wouldn't it be prudent for the democratically-elected PPP-led government to tell the nation about the terms of engagement with Washington in the latter's 'war on terror' as agreed by General Musharraf? It seems there is some kind of a secret arrangement under which the US has been given permission to launch air strikes in Pakistani territory as well as the right of 'hot pursuit.' If true, it makes it easy to understand how painful it has become for the Pakistan government to properly react to the US air strikes on its soil."

49. "Indo-Pak Talks," an editorial in the English daily, "The Post" (05/19)

"It seems that whenever both countries come closer to any accord and any untoward incident happens, the blame of that incident is put on the other in order to foil the peaces process between the two countries. There are elements present in both India and Pakistan that do not want normalization of relations between the two South Asian neighbors. The two sides must hold talks in the light of the confidence building measures (CBMs) and remove hurdles in the resolution of all issues."

Patterson

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