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TAGS: KMDR, KPAO, OIIP, OPRC, PGOV, PREL, PK

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: NOVEMBER 28, 2008

SUMMARY: Reports and photographs of the "Mumbai terror bloodbath" dominated front pages in all newspapers on Friday. Several newspapers reported that the "blame game begins" as "commandos battle to regain Mumbai." President Zardari's reaction to the Wednesday's terror attacks in Mumbai terming them as "detestable act," also received wide coverage. Pakistan Defense Minister Mukhtar's statement ruling out Pakistan's involvement also figured prominently. Newspapers also highlighted reports that "three persons were killed in a U.S. drone missile fire in Wana." Also highlighted were reports that President Zardari in a telephon conversation with Secretary Rice "took up drone attacks issue."

All major dailies ran editorials on the terrorism incident in Mumbai and counseled desisting from indulging in the blame game. Suggesting

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India a review in its "anti-Muslim UNCLASSIFIED" the second-largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," noted that the "Indian media is still pointing finger at Pakistan and it is not difficult to assess that India would put the blame on Pakistan like it did in the case of Delhi bomb blasts." Another center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" noted that "other countries should not be accused of such regrettable and condemnable incidents. The need is to take joint measures to check occurrence of such incidents in future." The English daily, "Dawn," observed that "the latest serial blasts in the Indian financial capital also represent an immediate test for the resolve of the two sides not to indulge in a blame game every time something goes wrong on either side." Another English newspaper, "Daily Times," wrote: "The need is to work out cooperative strategies because all states are under threat from the scourge of terrorism. Unfortunately this is made nearly impossible by domestic political oppositions and their desire for point scoring." End Summary.

 News Stories

1. "Mumbai Death Toll Rises To 125; India Blames Neighbors" "The News" (11/28)

"Indian commandos killed the last three gunmen at the Taj Hotel late Thursday and were sweeping another luxury hotel in search of hostages and trapped people after militants stormed targets across Mumbai, leaving 125 people dead."

2. "Attackers Pakistanis: Indian Army" "The Nation" (11/28)

"Militants, who staged multiple attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai, killing at least 125 people and injuring hundreds more, came from Pakistan, a senior military official claimed Thursday."

3. "Commandos Battle To Regain Mumbai: Blame Game Begins, Allegations Leveled Against Pakistan" "Dawn" (11/28)

"As commandos of India's elite anti-terrorism force, the National Security Guard (NSG), were engaged in fierce battles with terrorists at some places till late Thursday night, officials claimed that terrorists had been flushed out from the five-star Taj Hotel, one of the landmarks of the country's financial and commercial capital."

4. "Zardari Calls It A Detestable Act" "Dawn" (11/28)

"President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani have condemned the terrorist attacks in Mumbai that have left at least 119 people dead."

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5. "Pakistan not involved. Mukhtar." "The Nation" (11/28)

"Defense Minister Ahmed Mukhtar Thursday ruled out any possibility of Pakistan involvement in Mumbai terrorist attack."

6. "Bush And Obama Condemn Attacks" "Daily Times" (11/28)

"Joining other world leaders, both President Bush and Barack Obama have condemned the terrorist attacks in Mumbai."

7. "U.S. Spies Killed In Terrorist Raid" "Daily Times" (11/28)

"Even though the Indian government has refrained from dragging Islamabad directly into the Mumbai terror attacks, insinuations suggest that diplomatic relations between the two countries may

suffer in the aftermath of the attacks. It is believed that the terrorists identified and then killed two senior U.S. intelligence officers staying at the Taj Mahal Hotel."

8. "World Powers Move To Avert Conflict" "The Nation" (11/28)

"Fearing the birth of grave crisis in Indo-Pak relations in the wake of Mumbai terrorist attacks, the U.S., UK and other world players are in constant touch with Islamabad and New Delhi to avert any possible confrontation between the South Asian nuclear neighbors."

9. "Sophisticated Attacks, But Al Qaeda Link Disputed" "Daily Times" (11/28)

". . . Some global terrorism experts with experience in South Asia said that based on the tactics used in the attacks, the group was probably not linked to Al Qaeda, although other experts challenged that assertion."

10. "FM proposes Pak-India Intel hotline" "The Nation" (11/28)

"Expressing shock and horror at the terror attack in Mumbai, Pakistan called for strengthening the joint anti-terrorism mechanism with India and offered to set up a hotline between intelligence chiefs of the two countries."

11. "Zardari takes up attacks with Rice" "The Nation" (11/28)

"President Asif Zardari has made a telephonic contact with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and discussed regional situation and bilateral relations, reported a private TV channel on Thursday."

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12. "Pak, UK agree to break terrorists network" "The Nation" (11/28)

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"Pakistan and UK have agreed to enhance Strategic Communication Cooperation to break the communication network of terrorists and face the future challenges more effectively."

13. "Zardari for Joint Efforts Against Terrorism" "Daily Times" (11/28)

"President Asif Ali Zardari telephoned Indian Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Thursday and said countries of the world should join hands to tackle terrorism."

14. "Drone kills 4 in Waziristan" "The Nation" (11/28)

"As many as four people including foreigners were killed in drone attacks on a suspected vehicle of militants near Kharpul area of Wana in South Waziristan on Thursday."

15. "Pakistan Fears War Against Taliban Spreading" "Daily Times" (11/28)

"There are growing fears in Pakistan that the war against Taliban is widening, the BBC reported. It said Pakistan's army was opening up new fronts against Taliban, who were responding by spreading the conflict, destabilizing even NWFP's Peshawar city."

16. "Three Militants Killed In Mohmand" "Dawn" (11/28)

"Three militants were killed and several others injured during a 'clean-up operation' in Badi Kore, Aisha Korona and Qella Shah Beg areas of Mohmand region on Thursday."

17. "Foreign Militants Entering Balochistan Via Pak-Afghan Border" "Daily Times" (11/28)

"Pakistani intelligence agencies have gathered credible information on the influx of foreign militants and sophisticated weapons into Pashtun areas of Baluchistan - with some also headed to Karachi - via the Pak-Afghan border, sources told Daily Times on Thursday."

18. "Pakistan Gets \$3.1bn First Tranche Of IMF Loan" "Dawn" (11/28)

"The much-awaited first tranche from the \$7.6 billion IMF loan has reached Pakistan, according to State Bank's spokesman."

19. "DSP Among Six Killed In Swat Violence" "The News" (11/28)

"Six people, including a deputy superintendent of police, were

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killed in fresh incidents of violence in the Swat Valley on Thursday." UNCLASSIFIED

Editorials/Op-eds

20. "Mumbai blasts: India should review its anti-Muslim policies" an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (11/28)

"Immediately after the Mumbai attacks biased and anti-Muslim Indian media and officials attempted to accuse Lashkar-e-Tayaba, SAMI (?), and Jaish Muhammad. On the other hand, foreign media, especially American and European, openly ascribed the attacks to gang-war and to some local organization.... The Indian media is still pointing finger at Pakistan and giving reports of the arrest of a Pakistani.... It is not difficult to assess that India would put the blame on Pakistan like it did in the case Delhi bomb blasts.... The government of Pakistan should be vigilant in order to protect the country against any possible Indian mischief."

21. "Mumbai blasts" an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (11/28)

"Other countries should not be accused of such regrettable and condemnable incidents. Appropriate step for the countries of the region, especially Pakistan, India and Afghanistan is to jointly ponder over the situation and take joint measures to check occurrence of such incidents in future."

22. "Mumbai Blasts," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (11/28)

"Although one can understand the anger and concern which is widely felt, one would still advise the exercise of constraint in this hour of crisis. There is need for confidence building between the two countries. Other than terrorism, talks have also focused on a host of issues such as disarmament but they sound too optimistic in the current environment. But even a symbolic cut in defense spending on both sides of the border would be a welcome step for it will herald a move towards addressing the major underlying causes of terrorism: poverty and illiteracy. But for the moment the focus will obviously be on how the two countries manage the fallout of the Mumbai blasts. Without apportioning blame on each other they should cooperate in the investigations to make them productive and facilitate effective measures for domestic security in the two countries while promoting bilateral understanding between them."

23. "Terrorism In Mumbai And Its Fallout," an editorial in the

Lahore-based liberal English language daily "The Times" (cir. 10,000) (11/28)

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"The need is to work out cooperative strategies because all states are under threat from the scourge of terrorism. Unfortunately this is made nearly impossible by domestic political oppositions and their desire for point scoring. In India, the Mumbai attacks will give the rightwing parties the stick to beat the government with. The BJP was already getting jittery over investigations that were spreading into the underground labyrinth of the Parivar's terrorism. It will now get the opportunity to accuse the UPA government of being soft on terrorism (read: Muslims). Somewhere along the line it may also throw in the reference to Pakistan. The speech by Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh and his assertion that New Delhi will "take up strongly" the use of neighbors' territory to launch attacks on India could be a reference to Pakistan or Bangladesh or both. At the minimum it seems to be an attempt by Dr Singh to pre-empt criticism from the Hindu right wing."

24. "Mayhem in Mumbai," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/28)

"... This reality is a curse for Pakistan. Whereas we may only be a convenient scapegoat, it is not mere accident that has cast us in this damning role. Already, we are a nation regarded as the most dangerous in the world by some assessors. Foreign missions and agencies have deemed Islamabad too unsafe a place to station the

spouses and children of staff; businessmen hesitate to come to our shores. Sportsmen now rarely visit. Condemnation from around the world is pouring in for what happened in Mumbai. Our leaders too have added their voice strongly to this - but this cannot disguise the fact that in the aftermath of what has happened Pakistan may be cast as the key culprit. The assault on the unsuspecting city of Mumbai, India's business centre and of course the focal point of its film industry comes as the peace process between the two sides was warming up. Just days before Pakistan's president had made a daring set of offers to India. But the terrorist scourge goes beyond this effort at reaching greater accord. It is today the biggest threat to the security and sovereignty of Pakistan itself. While terrorists still lurk in our hills, they will indeed be drone attacks by the U.S.; when it is alleged ships carrying loads of ammunition for militants set sail from our shores there will be attributions of blame. There is no escape from this...."

25. "[Mumbai] Pay attention to inquiry, instead of making allegations" an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (11/28)

"If India does not accept Pakistan's offer of a joint investigation

and heaps all the blame [for the Mumbai Tragedy] on Pakistan, there will be no doubt that it is actually the Indian agencies that are involved in the blasts and they want to achieve their nefarious objectives through these acts."

26. "Dealing with India," an op-ed by Shafqat Mahmood Ali Bhutto in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/28)

"... The problem is that one-sided love does not get anyone very far. There is little or no reciprocity from a similar slice of Indian society. The result is that despite pious intentions and much mouthing of the right clichs over the last ten years, we are not very far from where we were after the bad days of Kargil. The Indian occupation in Kashmir and egregious human right abuses continue with equal ferocity. Soldiers of both countries continue to die on Siachen and the visa regime continues to be tight. If anything new tensions have cropped up. The stoppage of Chenab river waters after the commissioning of the Baghliar Dam has highlighted the tricky issue of sharing river waters...."

27. "Results of Pak-U.S. friendship" an editorial in the Lahore-based Urdu daily "Waqt" (cir. 5000) (11/28)

"To make matters worse, U.S. officials even today insist that Al Qaeda leadership is present in Pakistan's tribal areas, not Iraq. CIA Chief Michael Hayden has said that the biggest threat is from Pakistan's tribal areas, where the terrorist leadership is holed up. Only time will tell what the reality of this propaganda is yet the motives behind it are not hidden from anyone... U.S. Admiral Mike Mullen also said recently that junior officers of the Pakistan army hate the U.S. and support the Taliban. Does he have any evidence to support such statements? Certainly not... Keeping in view the background of Pak-U.S. relations we have to take steps and adopt a strategy in line with the changing global scenario which helps [us] recognize friends from foes, and also protects national honor and sovereignty."

28. "Untenable Justification," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (11/28)

"As agreed, Washington should be sharing intelligence about the hideouts of militants with Islamabad and strengthening its operational capabilities by making available to it the required equipment that it has been asking for without success. Knowing the local conditions and terrain, Pakistan would thus be able to take the militants out without much collateral damage, and, at the same time, its sensitivities would not be hurt. Thus, the U.S. aerial raids are not the only way to "keep them (Al-Qaeda activists) on the run" as General James Conway, head of the Marine Corps and member of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff told The ~~Wall Street Journal~~ **UNCLASSIFIED**; they are counterproductive..."

29. "Obama's Afghanistan strategy" an Op-ed by Najmuddin A Shaikh in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (11/28)

"...The Americans view Pakistan as part of the problem because they

do not think that Pakistan views the Talibanisation of its tribal areas and the spread of this influence into the Pakistani heartland as an existential threat to its own survival as a moderate Islamic state. They further think that Pakistan is intent on somehow harnessing the Taliban to maintain its influence in Afghanistan after the departure of foreign forces.

They also view Pakistan as part of the solution because without using transit facilities through Pakistan, logistic support for coalition forces in Afghanistan would become difficult if not impossible; and because without Pakistan's support, the Taliban cannot be denied the logistic and other support they enjoy in the borderlands of Pakistan..."

30. "Karzai's Frustration," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (11/28)

"The statement is ludicrous - President Karzai threatening to shoot down American planes bombing Afghan villages. An expression of his frustration over the way the U.S.-led war on terror has been going on in Afghanistan, the statement nevertheless gives an indication of Karzai's predicament. After seven years of war led by an international force which has the world's best weapons systems, the Taliban have not been defeated. Helmand in the south-east continues to remain a Taliban stronghold, and the militants have managed to get a foothold even in other provinces, like Ghazni, Nuristan and Wardak. During a meeting with a UN Security Council delegation, Karzai accused the foreign governments and private security agencies of running a parallel government and employing Afghans with a criminal record...."

31. "Puppet Karzai's protest, why?" an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (11/28)

"Criticizing America and its allies, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said that these countries have established a parallel government in Afghanistan.... Our rulers should seriously ponder over recent stand and statements of Karzai and should take effective measures to stop U.S. air and ground attacks on our soil. To start with we should stop the supply of foodstuff to the allied forces."

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32. "Lethally simple" an Op-ed by Ejaz Haider in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (11/28)

"All states and societies today are vulnerable to such acts. But precisely for that reason there is need to take modernity from technological advancement to the next level: making the world more equitable"

33. "A Painful Comedy Of Errors," an op-ed by Sardar Muntaz Ali Bhutto in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/28)

"... Ministerial and advisory positions, assistantships, roving ambassadorships, appointments to high bureaucratic posts and simply grant of official hospitality to all and sundry have not only been a backbreaking burden on the depleted the public exchequer but also created a stink which has become politically damaging. The stature and image of the government has sunk to rock bottom and its writ reduced to nothing...."

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