# **Pakistan Touches New Heights**

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#### **Abstract:**

Today Pakistan is found in the midst of new a new Great Game, that seemingly challenging its very existing and survival as an ideological and sovereign state. Pakistan, that was once a front line proxy in cold war against erstwhile communism has been badly embroiled in on going war against terrorism. Pakistan is paying very heavy price because of its geo-strategic location and ideological background & more so because of its ill-defined foreign policy. Presence of occupying forces in Afghanistan, uncalled for drone attacks in Pakistani territories, Indian nefarious activities in Afghanistan, worsening law & order situation, socio-political instability and ever increasing political chaos are adding into the Pakistan's state of turmoil & disarray. Sounding military success in Swat calls for immediate & well thought-out sociopolitical follow up plans aiming to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the area. Islamabad's mishandling of the ongoing insurgency on its soil could even lead to dismantling of Pakistan as a state should it remain unchallenged?

Pakistan was a peaceful country till the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. There were no target killings, no bomb blasts, no suicide attacks, no militancy, no terrorism, and no threat to the writ of the Government. Army was held in high esteem. Law enforcement agencies including Civil Armed Forces were able to maintain law and order in their own areas of responsibility. People in FATA exercised their age-old code of conduct through the time-tested concept of collective responsibility. Tribal Maliks and chieftains exercised tremendous influence over their tribes, and jirgas were an effective tool in the maintenance of law and order and stability in the area. Tribals looked towards the Political

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authorities for help and assistance. Likewise, the situation in Malakand Division was absolutely calm and tourists from various parts of Pakistan as well as foreigners thoroughly enjoyed the calm, quiet and serene environment of Swat valley during summer seasons. The locals of Swat were affable, hospitable and peaceful. No one could imagine of the turbulent times ever afflicting those areas.

Afghanistan had been the scene of battles for decades as a consequence of Russian invasion and subsequently because of infighting between the war lords. The emergence of Taliban was the direct outcome of years of atrocities and injustice. As if by a miracle, they were able to control the highly turbulent Afghanistan in a matter of weeks. Peace was restored, war lords gagged and cultivation of opium poppy was brought down from 3400 metric tons to zero level except 175 metric tons produced in the areas under the control of Northern Alliance. Their manner of governance was simple but uncompromisingly firm. Notwithstanding their undue restraint over the freedom of women, and their lack of passion for promoting education, everything else they did was by & large in accordance with the Islamic and tribal traditions. Mulla Omar and all his governors, administrators and commanders lived extremely simple and austere life and shunned grandeur and pomposity. They did, however, falter on account of inexperience in international diplomacy and isolated themselves from the rest of the world.

Then came the tragic but apparently well-rehearsed attack on the World Trade Centre, which was condemned by all and sundry including the Taliban Government. US and its leaders till then had been hobnobbing with Afghan Government and giving its entourage a red carpet treatment in a bid to broker an oil deal and secure a safe passage to the resource rich Central Asian States. The deal somehow could not

get through and that precisely was the turning point in American policy towards Afghanistan. The Taliban Government suddenly became the mother of all evils and a serious threat to the world peace. They looked for opportunities to invade Afghanistan and 9 / 11 provided the most befitting occasion to exploit. Although several articles and books have been written to prove that the 9 / 11 incident was master minded by the Americans themselves, they used it as a good pretext to blame Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda through an orchestrated propaganda campaign. Going by the old adage of 'Might is right', the US Government was able to garner international support through its lackey organization, the United Nations, for invasion of Afghanistan. The brutal invasion and naked aggression, against all norms of international justice, forced the Taliban to take recourse to a strategic retreat. The untold atrocities perpetrated against the innocent Afghans through indiscriminate bombing and massive human rights violations alienated the people and created anti - US sentiments far and wide. This created an environment of strong resistance against the occupation forces, which has intensified with the passage of time.

Pakistan shares a long, treacherous and porous border with Afghanistan which is difficult to seal. While the coalition forces in Afghanistan, mostly garrisoned around major population centres, failed to control the resistance struggle inside Afghanistan largely due to their ineptitude, they conveniently shifted the onus of their failure on cross border movements and blamed Pakistan for inaction and so-called duplicity. While looking for lame excuses, they ignored the large-scale operations of Pakistan Army in FATA and its resultant adverse consequences for our own survival. The Americans incessant demands of 'Do More' deeply embroiled the Pakistani security forces, and earned the ill will of the tribes who till then had admired and adored their Army.

Of late, the US think tanks and media, in concert with the State Department and Pentagon, have launched an orchestrated propaganda campaign to project Pakistan as the most serious threat to world peace. This propaganda is misconceived, overblown and far from truth just as it was in the case of Iraq. The Americans have come here with strategic designs, which are as clear as a day light. They are here to stay for which they will continue to fabricate conditions to justify their presence. It is widely believed that insurgency in Swat and Bajaur etc has been masterminded by the US intelligence agencies to dilute the intensity of resistance struggle in Afghanistan. India and Afghanistan are the two cohorts aiding and abetting the Americans in their plans. The continuous supply of arms and ammunition, and infiltration of paid insurgents bear ample testimony to their nefarious game plan. Unfortunately, Pakistani Governments, past and present, largely dependent on US goodwill for petty favours, such as, small aid packages have knowingly kowtowed the American game plan. Notwithstanding the fact that this peanuts aid is nothing compared to the hefty aid packages doled out to Israel, Egypt and Jordan, and the huge costs in terms of heavy losses in men and material, and the mess created in our Country. Since September 11, 2001 when Pakistan was coerced to be a frontline state in the US-led war on terror, Suicide bombers have struck at least 150 times in different parts of the country<sup>1</sup> and terrorist violence has inflicted over fifteen thousands causalities since 2003.<sup>2</sup>

## **Annual Fatalities in Terrorist Violence:**

## 2003-2009

Year	Civilians	Pak-Security	Alleged	Total	
	Pakistan	Force Personnel	Terrorists		
2003	140	24	25	189	
2004	435	184	244	863	
2005	430	81	137	648	
2006	608	325	538	1471	
2007	1523	597	1479	3599	
2008	2155	654	3906	6715	
2009*	756	254	1085	2095	
Total	6066	2119	7415	15580	

Data till April 28, 2009

Year	US	Other	Total
2009	52	48	100
2008	155	139	294
2007	117	115	232
2006	98	93	191
2005	99	32	131
2004	52	7	59
2003	48	9	57
2002	49	20	69
2001	12	0	12
Total	682	463	1145

The forced abduction, detention, torture and disappearances of over 4000 Pakistani citizens on suspicion of terrorist activity and transfer of over hundreds to Guantanamo Bay is another cost that Pakistani people have borne for the last seven years.<sup>3</sup> Such forced disappearances are not only a gross violation of Pakistan's constitution

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and its extradition and criminal laws, but also a blatant disregard to international law. A simple comparative analysis of the last seven years causalities shows that Pakistan has suffered more human fatalities than all the coalition forces operating in Afghanistan. A glance over the opposite tables<sup>4</sup> and graphs would suffice to serve as an eye opener for those who are constantly embroiled in '*Do More Syndrome*':



Another nefarious attempt on the security and sovereignty of Pakistan was by the infamous article titled Blood Borders<sup>5</sup> (or Redrawing of Maps) published in Armed Forces Journal issued by Pentagon. The article hypothetically redraws the boundaries of Muslim World in general and Pakistan in particular on the basis of ethnic affinities and religious communalism. It terms Pakistan an unnatural state, and calls for ceding its Baloch territory to form greater Balochistan and Northwest Frontier tribes to be merged with Afghanistan. The remaining "natural" Pakistan would lie entirely east of the Indus, except for a westward spur near Karachi.<sup>6</sup> Publishing of this article should have raised alarm bells in the Government circles but not even an eye brow was raised. Such is the state of apathy and callous indifference to our territorial integrity. (And

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the same goes for some of the other leading Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey etc.)

The US State functionaries tire themselves unceasingly with expressions of sincerity towards the stability of Pakistan but have they ever shown a visible resolve to stop India and Afghanistan from destabilizing Pakistan. On the contrary, they have stepped up insurgency movements in Balochistan, FATA and NWFP presumably with American blessings. The situation was serious enough to warrant intense lobbying by Pakistan at diplomatic level, but there seems to be complete apathy and lack of seriousness on the part of the Government to work in that direction. We are at present a rudderless nation resigned to our fate.

The recent US visit by President Zardari during which the American administration took pains to convince him that India did not pose any treat to Pakistan is a case in point. Moreover, the US involvement in arranging (rather forcing) a Transit Trade Agreement between two sovereign states is incomprehensible; the underlying motive presumably is to facilitate trade between India and Afghanistan. It needs no brains to understand that affording transit facility to India would deprive Pakistan of its exports to Afghanistan, which stands at approximately 2.5 billion US dollars, and accounts for nearly 13 percent of its total exports. Pakistan markets are already flooded with contra band items pouring in from Afghanistan. This, coupled with the most certain possibility of Indian goods filtering back to Pakistan, would bring our industry to a grinding halt; the obvious consequences being a sick economy rendering jobless millions of people. Indians would also gain access to the Central Asian States at the cost of Pakistani goods causing further dip in our export graph. This is a fiercely competitive world in which nations strive to explore new vistas of export by gaining access to more and more markets. On the contrary, we are deliberately shrinking foreign markets for our exports in a bid to appease US and its cronies for personal gains. It is high time our Government views the situation more objectively and dispassionately, purely in keeping with our national interests. Giving transit access to India is not in our national interest and must, therefore, be denied. India undoubtedly emerges as the major beneficiary of this trade agreement. While Pakistan must strive to improve relations with India, it must constantly review threat perception along western borders and take adequate safeguards to meet that threat. Mere verbal assurances of America must not lead us to lower our guards like in 1971 when we vainly kept waiting for the US 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet to come to our rescue.

The American drones continue to violate our sovereignty, killing innocent civilians at will and fuel more violence in the country. Of the 60 drone attacks carried out in Pakistan between January, 2006 and April 8, 2009, only 10 were able to hit 14 alleged al-Qaeda members, remaining 50 drone attacks were misdirected perishing 687 innocent Pakistani civilians.<sup>7</sup> Americans must understand that by doing ...lose they stand in line with the terrorists, and do not uphold civilized values by killing innocent people through bombs and missiles. Having total disregard to Pakistan's concerns over violation of its sovereignty, loss of civilian lives, and suicidal retaliations by the victims, Americans have planned to extend their drone attacks even deep inside the Pakistani territories. It is difficult to fathom how with the available technology and surveillance capabilities, the Americans have thus far not been able to locate Baitullah Meshed giving strength to the speculations that he is their man. Mute Government voices against drone attacks have emboldened Americans besides causing extreme resentment and anguish

amongst our people who perceive these attacks as being tacitly approved by our Government. Retaliation against our security forces immediately after the drone attacks is a consequence of this perception. To remove this perception, any more drone attacks must evoke strong action such as the shooting down of drones, denial of air bases to US and disruption of supply lines to the coalition forces.

One fast emerging school of thought insists with convincing arguments that the Americans have created their own brand of Tailban to embroil Pakistan in settled areas, and that the legacy of so called anti-US Taliban using FATA as safe haven is no more in existence, and being used only as a propaganda ploy to pressurize 'Pakistan'. The mere fact that operations against coalition forces in Afghanistan are conducted deep inside and far away from the Pak-Afghan borders amply testify that the struggle there is purely indigenous. Afghanistan and American Government's unwillingness to allow Pakistan to fence the border to put to rest the propaganda and even the possibility of cross border movements is a case in point. While the coalition forces try to broker peace deals with Afghan Taliban in their respective areas of operational responsibility, they start crying hoarse when Pakistan Government does the same in its own area. On the contrary, the Americans have on numerous occasions sabotaged our peace accords through aerial strikes.

America is the sole super power and every effort may be made to maintain good relations with it. American aid may also be welcomed, but while doing so, the conditionalities or strings attached with it must be viewed critically; any conditionality that tantamount to barter our sovereignty with the aid package must be out-rightly rejected. American motives could be easily understood through critical evaluation of its grand designs. Simply put, the US designs revolve around maintaining

economic domination to expand its sphere of influence, preserving military hegemony, containing the rising might of China, EU and reemerging Russia, and forcing the non-conforming states (such as Iran) into submission. India, with whom it has forged strategic partnership & has also signed joint defense pact, is being used as a surrogate power to act as a counter weight to China and in the longer term to Russia. While India is hilarious on its new found strategic partnership, it has turned a blind eye to the India specific US deployment which is aimed at checkmating any India moves outside the ambit of US designs.

Pakistan's FATA is being portrayed as a safe haven for Al-Qaeda posing a serious threat to the world peace and more specifically to the US mainland. To further compound the gravity of the threat, a false bogey of nuclear weapons falling into their hands has been created to fabricate America's vulnerability to the possibility of a nuclear threat. Both the assumptions are largely misconceived and misleading given the fact that America is too far away (approximately 11,000 km) from Pakistan which has only a handful of guided missiles none of which can reach America. Moreover, Taliban and Al-Qaeda lack the desired wherewithal to gain access to the tightly guarded nuclear facility; not to mention their lack of skill, know-how and expertise to use them. It is intriguing to note that America can live with the nuclear China, Russia, France, England, Israel and even North Korea. But she finds it increasingly difficult to live with nuclear Pakistan and possibly nuclear Iran.

Having known the American intentions and that of its cohorts, should we still follow their diktat blindly, or seriously ponder at this grave situation at national level and review our policies? The option is pretty obvious and needs no genius to understand it. A simultaneous

action, however, is to involve all the international stakeholders such as Russia, China, Iran, CAS and even EU and persuade them to stop Americans from persisting with a unilateral approach. They must be convinced that a non stoppable America gaining total control over world resources will strangulate their economies as well and force them into pliant states with no independent foreign policies of their own.

Lastly, if history is any guide, Americans would do well to learn lessons from it. Replete examples testify to the fact that nations at the height of their glories made a mess of their might and finally crumbled. Horrifying tales of Vietnam and USSR's misadventure into Afghanistan and its consequent demise thereof must shake the American think tanks and policy makers before it is too late. The recent recession in America, it may be understood, is the direct outcome of huge spending on global misadventures. How long can they resuscitate their economy with the temporary bail out plans; for a decade or two? Certainly not indefinitely. US is a conglomeration of 50 states, and any further dent in their economies could lead them to think of dissociating themselves from the centre causing the demise of United States (as we have already witnessed in case of the former Soviet Union). Sooner the American policy makers realize that the better it would be for its cohesion and solidarity. Most importantly, the Americans must understand that its sole super power status has afforded it a Godsend opportunity to ameliorate the poverty, deprivation and sufferings of the people of the world. It must act as a bridge between North and South and aim at equity and fair distribution of wealth and resources. It must facilitate peace rather than taking sides and resolve all disputes amicably. Needless to mention that the outcome of such efforts would be a stable and prosperous world living in peace and

harmony. It is strange, indeed bizarre and unfortunate, that the Americans have never worked towards achieving that goal.

Finally, our Government must constantly review our foreign as well as domestic policies to muster vast international and public support. Military actions should not be undertaken in void and must be backed up by sound socio-economic measures. And our Army, which has tremendous fighting prowess, must also demonstrate thoroughly efficient expeditionary skills to wipe out the militants without getting inextricably involved in a protracted war. To fight the wars of this character, we require whole-hearted support of the entire nation and that can be acquired only by keeping all segments of our society on board. If we succeed in binding our nation behind the actions being undertaken by the armed forces in tribal areas including Swat, then the victory is forthcoming. And without the support of the people, without involving the whole fabric of society in the war, prolonged military operations against the militants are bound to result in stalemate and consequent failure.

#### **Post Operation Strategy**

Military operations are well on their way to success. Large parts of Swat Valley have been purged of the militants and given the intensity and speed of operations, it is hoped that the entire Valley shall soon be brought under control. However, it may be understood that the success of military operations alone shall not restore peace in the turbulent region unless the Government takes immediate follow up actions to establish its writ.

Writ in simple term means maintenance of law and order. This calls for good governance through extremely efficient administrative measures such as the re-organization of law enforcement agencies,

district administration, establishment of Qazi Courts for speedy dispensation of justice and quick rehabilitation of the displaced persons. Any lapse or delay in the implementation of these measures shall create a vacuum allowing the miscreants to once again stage a comeback. That indeed would be a horrible scenario, which would most certainly erode the credibility of the Government and result in total despair and loss of hope for peace returning to the area.

One would hate to spread despondency or cast doubts on the final outcome of operations. However, it needs more than just lip service to bear the fruits of success. Mere rhetorics and sloganeering would not serve any purpose. While the military is engaged in mopping up operations, the Government must constitute committees to devise follow up plans on emergency basis unlike its inadequate response to the mass exodus of the IDPs which clearly reflected lack of foresight and forward planning. The Committees so formed for the purpose must draw up plans to ensure the following: -

- Areas cleared of militants must be immediately handed over to the administrative set up including Law enforcement agencies and Qazi Courts, which must start functioning forthwith. All actions must be closely coordinated with Army to ensure actions in total synch with each other.
- Return of IDPs to the cleared areas must be facilitated through an efficient and organized Rehabilitation Plan. The plan must include prompt restoration of civic facilities to provide enabling environments for comfortable living.
- Reconstruction work on the destroyed infrastructure and schools etc must get underway immediately.

- The IDPs could not harvest their wheat crop and would require material support for sustenance for atleast one year. Programme to that effect must be evolved and implemented. Their return must also be facilitated well in time so that they could grow vegetables and potatoes etc before the season runs out. Agricultural loans on easy terms and conditions must also be provided to them.
- Lot of people depend on the sale of their fruit orchards. Their return must be facilitated before they lose that crop also.
- The Government must organize a local civil defence system by way of forming village / town defence committees to meet any possible threat in future. If deemed appropriate, large number of weapons (small arms only) recovered from the miscreants must be distributed to these committees. However, a great degree of caution must be exercised to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of the miscreants for self-defence.
- The Frontier Corps must reinforce the civil police for a period of 6 months. Army, however, may be pulled out and garrisoned around major population centres only as a back up support.
- Levies force must be raised, trained and equipped as a permanent force to augment civil police. This will create job opportunities also.
- The presence of concrete fortifications and elaborate tunnels constructed by the militants amply speak of the failure of intelligence agencies. It is difficult to fathom how such

elaborate works could be undertaken in complete secrecy. Intelligence agencies must, therefore, be made more proactive to provide timely warning against the revival of militants. All out efforts must be made to dry up the sources of supply of weapons and ammunition to the militants. Simultaneously, borders must be sealed to prevent the infiltration of foreign militants.

- The free and open use of FM radio stations for 6-7 long years, spreading venomous propaganda and misleading the innocent population, was an act of gross negligence and indifference. Government must, therefore, react promptly to any such development in future.
- It must be understood that all elements with a certain agenda initially work on popular themes such as the enforcement of Shariah, quick dispensation of justice, ban on gambling, kidnappings and sale / purchase of drugs etc with the sole aim of winning over the support of the local population. Having achieved their aim, they start indulging in precisely the same nefarious activities and by the time the people realise that they have been misled, these elements have already gained unbridled power and authority. These elements find space and continue to expand it only in the absence of good governance. The essential lesson learnt is to deny any space to such elements by ensuring good governance.
- The problem of IDPs needs to be tackled much more efficiently. IDPs do not only mean those living in few designated camps. A larger number of IDPs are living in

schools and with their relatives. A mechanism must be evolved to approach them also to address their problems. The interviews of IDPs on electronic media largely carry complaints of inadequate administrative support. The IDPs, having lost their properties and some dear and near relatives feel aggrieved. They are highly sensitive and need extremely caring and sympathetic handling. This is the time to win over their hearts and minds. Any failing on the part of Government could once again revive their sympathies for the militants or worse still even incite them to join the bandwagon of the militants; a horrifying scenario to reoccur which must be prevented at all costs.

Media has been partly, albeit inadvertently, responsible in projecting and even glorifying the militants thereby enabling them to gain popularity amongst the innocent population. It may be understood that terrorists thrive on projection. The oft repeated and overblown images of casualties and blood splashed on the TV screens not only created fear and feelings of insecurity but also provided militants with the sadistic pleasure of their success in creating havoc. The media's stance of independent reporting must be carefully weighted against national interests. Any tendency to compromise on national interests must be strictly curbed. The media can now redeem its past mistakes by launching a counter propaganda campaign against the militants. The religious seminaries and the ulema with a clout must be incorporated in the campaign to thoroughly discredit the militants and isolate them from the general populace.

- Handling of FATA requires deep thinking considering the enormous size of various lashkers operating in difficult terrain. These lashkers are operating under different agendas; some of them are Pro-Pakistan while few others have openly defied the writ of the state. These groups need to be identified, separated from each other and handled differently. While the Pro-Pakistani militant groups can be motivated to stop cross border operations in the larger interest of Pakistan, those against the state can also be offered an olive branch in the form of general amnesty and negotiations to allay their misgivings and fears. This, however, must be done in all sincerity to give peace a lasting chance. In order to remove the trust deficit, Pakistan Army may be pulled out and garrisoned around major population centres or deployed along the Pak-Afghan border. Frontier Corps, however, may be tasked to apply force selectively and carry out confidence building measures such as development / rehabilitation works.
- Revival of judiciary is a welcome step. It is hoped that its new-formed spirit of prompt dispensation of justice shall permeate down to the lowest courts. However, the judiciary must be guarded in its activism to ensure that it does not unnecessarily create impediments in the administrative functioning of the Government. While dispensing justice, the judicial systems all over the world take great care to ensure that their judgements do not hurt the national interests. Most of these judicial systems look the other way in cases where the individual human rights clearly impinge

on the social rights of society at large or are detrimental to the national interests. This however, should not be taken as giving carte blanche to the Government to use oppressive measures indiscriminately under the garb of national interests. It is here that the role of judiciary in keeping a proper check on any indiscretion by the Government assumes greater significance.

There are some other issues of national significance which must be addressed at priority. A sound strategy needs to be worked out to overcome the grave issue of ethnic and sectarian divide which has kept the nation from being united as one strong entity. The concept of Islamic ideology and promotion of one common language must be strengthened to cement bondage and ensure greater cohesion and integration. The minority provinces hold grievances against inequitable share in resources and power structure. Insurgency in Balochistan is a direct outcome of such inequity. Grant of provincial autonomy, a long outstanding demand, has unfortunately gone unheeded due to the misperception of a strong centre. A strong federation can emerge only by having strong provinces. Concurrent list must, therefore, be reviewed to afford greater autonomy to the provinces. Pakistan has long been having popular but non-delivering leadership and weak institutions. This trend needs to be reversed to increase reliance on institutions instead of individual leaders. Leadership on the basis of family cults do not exist in true democracies. We must

follow the same to shape up democracy in its true sense and essence.

Lastly, it is extremely important to highlight even at the cost of being repetitive, that the Government must seriously engage itself in winning the battle of hearts and minds. This is the 'Scarlet Thread' of the entire operation without which no durable peace can return to the Valley. Indeed, a successful battle of hearts and minds here shall have far reaching positive effects felt in other troubled areas as well.

#### **End Notes:**

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Usman Manzoor, "Major suicide attacks in Pakistan since 9/11", *The News*, March 30, 2009. Available at: http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\_detail.asp?id=169849
<sup>2</sup> South Asia Terrorism Portal, Available at: <u>http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/bombblast.htm</u>. (12-5-09)
<sup>3</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission, "Pakistan: Government issues false statements about missing persons", May 06, 2008. Available at:

http://www.ahrchk.net/statements/mainfile.php/2008statements/1503/ <sup>4</sup> .Source: Figures are compiled from news reports and are provisional

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ralph Peters, "Bloodborders: How a better Middle East would look", Armed Forces Journal, June, 2006. Available at: http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/06/1833899

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Amir Mir,"60 drone hits kill 14 al-Qaeda men, 687 civilians", *The News*, April 10, 2009. Available at:

http://www.thenews.com.pk/top\_story\_detail.asp?Id=21440