

View Point

Benazir Bhutto

Collection of Articles, Interviews & Speeches



Compiled & Edited by

Sani H. Panhwar

Member Sindh Council, PPP

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One of the factors which led to throwing Ms Benazir Bhutto out of Power 'The Herald' - June 1997

The two-years battle between US oil company Unocal and Argentinean firm Bidas to build an oil and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, across war-torn Afghanistan and through to Pakistan has intensified after the Nawaz Sharif government signed an agreement with Turkmenistan and Unocal at the Economic Co-ordination Organization (ECO) in Ashkhabad on May 14. Bidas has the clear support of the Taliban who have promised to give Bidas permission to build the pipeline, while Unocal appear to have secured Turkmenistan and Pakistan's support.

Nagging question behind this deal is why Pakistan has sided with one consortium rather than the other. Since 1995, both the Bhutto government and the military did not commit to one oil company. Pakistan's earlier position was that it would allow both companies to compete and then co-operate with the one that built the pipeline first. But the reality is that the US State Department is heavily backing Unocal, and Turkmenistan is desperately keen to garner US support for its oil and gas exports. Bidas' problems with Unocal in Turkmenistan are generally placed at the door of a US desire to monopolise Turkmenistan's energy. So the reason why Pakistan now seems to favour one company over the other is that the Sharif government appears to have bent to US pressure.

The protocol signed by Pakistan is deeply flawed. It makes no mention of the Afghan warlords through whose territory the pipeline would pass and does not involve the Taliban in any decision making in the future. The Taliban are expected to react angrily to this development.

The Sharif government is banking on the ISI making sure that the Taliban dump Bidas and go long with whatever Pakistan wants, a senior bureaucrat in Islamabad explains. But that will not be so easy.

History of Bidas and Unocal's competition in the region is age old. However US interest in laying pipeline through Unocal, was established in April 1995, when Turkmenistan President Niyazov signed our government with Unocal (a 12th largest oil company in the US) and its partner, the Saudi Arabian owned Delta Oil Company to behind a gas pipeline extending from Daulatabad Gas Fields to Multan.

Unocal later signed an even more ambitious agreement for laying an oil pipeline from Chardzhou in Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to an oil terminal on Pakistan's coast delivering 1 million barrels per day.

Bridas also offered to build an oil pipeline but it suffered a setback when President Niyazov banned Bridas oil exports and shutting down its other operations in December 95. Bridas moved the courts and claimed 15 billion US dollars in damages.

Meanwhile, US pressure on Pakistan increased. During two trips to Pakistan and Afghanistan in April and August 1996, US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphael frequently lobbied for the Unocal pipeline, according to Pakistani and Afghan diplomats. In August, Raphael also visited Central Asian capitals and Moscow. "We have an American company which is interested in building a pipeline from Turkmenistan through to Pakistan," Raphael said at a press conference in Islamabad on April 21, 1996. "This pipeline project will be very good for Turkmenistan, for Pakistan and for Afghanistan."

Earlier, in March 1996 another senior US diplomat had a major row with Bhutto when he lobbied for Unocal. "He accused Bhutto of 'extortion' when she defended Bridas, and Bhutto as furious," says a senior Bhutto aide who was present at the meeting. "She demanded a written apology from the diplomat which she got," says another aide. But in Ashkhabad, the Americans achieved their objective. In October, Niyazov gave Unocal-Delta exclusive rights to build the pipeline.

With all the odds stacked heavily against it, Bridas then moved to engage the support of the Taliban. On May 4 in Kabul, Bridas and the Taliban declared that by the end of the month they would sign an agreement to build the pipeline.

Pakistan's agreement endorsement of US oil company Unocal's proposal to build pipelines from Central Asia may bring Islamabad into conflict with the Taliban, who recently cut a deal with a rival company, Bridas.

The reader may now understand the US interest in the laying of pipeline and pressures it applied on Benazir Bhutto's government to grant contractors to a company of its own choosing when she did not succumb to pressures this pipeline turned out to be one of the factors of Benazir Bhutto's downfall.

Ms Benazir Bhutto Defends PPP's Power Policy Karachi - July 28, 1997

Leader of the Opposition and former prime minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto has denounced the Ehtesab Cell's assertion Saturday claiming to have uncovered fraud worth billions of rupees in the PPP government's power policy involving the former prime minister and her husband Asif Ali Zardari and directed her counsel Babar Awan to initiate legal proceedings against the Ehtesab Cell and its chief Senator Saifur Rahman for defaming opposition leader through the charade of media trial.

Benazir Bhutto signed the wakalatname Sunday morning and Counsel Babar Awan is preparing the legal notice to be served on the Ehtesab Cell. In a statement issued in Karachi the former prime minister said that allegations of the Ehtesab Cell with regard to the PPP government's power policy were no more than a drama, political stunt at aimed at victimisation of political opponents and defaming the opposition leader and her husband. She said she was being victimised by a coterie of bank loan defaulters, tax evader and drug pushers because her government had exposed them and decided to tighten the noose around them.

She said the energy policy of the previous PPP government was approved by the cabinet after due deliberations and was described by the World Bank as a role model for the developing countries of the third world. Leading international investors and leaders in the field of energy including U.S energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary had hailed Pakistan's energy policy.

Benazir Bhutto said she was ready for a public debate on the energy policy of the PPP government which she said was her government's singular achievement in the field of infrastructure development and ranked next only to the restoration of peace in Karachi during her second term in office. She said that before endorsing the policy the cabinet and the experts had thoroughly examined and debated the two broad areas of concern and criticism. These she said were i) the relative increase in power tariffs ii) and creation of excess power capacity in the country.

The power tariffs she said are bound to go up whenever new plants are set up because of the higher capital costs required to finance new capacity. The question to be addressed was which of the two systems namely the public sector or the private sector would be economically more efficient. A World Bank study and our own experts reports suggested that the private sector was more efficient. According to these studies, she said the average annual tariff increase required by

the private sector programme was 14.3 percent compared to 18.3 percent required by WAPDA. She said that under the energy policy of her government the tariff increases were so distributed that except for the first two years 1997 and 1998, when the bulk of the private power was to come on stream, tariff increases significantly declined to eventually become negative in subsequent years. This was in sharp contrast with the way tariff increases took place in the Wapda system, where tariff increases are necessary to meet the investment requirements well in advance of the projects coming on stream.

Pakistan's private power programme is competitive relative to other countries as was borne by an IFC study and that was why there was a talk in India of buying electric power from Pakistan, she said.

Benazir Bhutto said that the fear of a glut in power production was also addressed and it was concluded that it was unfounded keeping in view the very low level of electric power consumption in Pakistan *vis a vis* other countries in the region. She said Pakistan had an average per capita consumption of 435 kwh as against 1150 kwh in Turkey, 1100 in Iran and 850 in Egypt. The glut fear, she said, was unfounded when viewed in the backdrop of the fact that against an estimated demand for 3000 MW during the Eighth plan, applications for more than 24000 MW were received. Still, the government restricted the issuance of letters of support (LOS) for only about 6000 MW, with margin for drop outs.

Benazir Bhutto said that she can not recall off hand technical figures but does remember the base scenario prepared by the World Bank at the time of the appraisal of the Ghazi Barotha project in November 1995. According to this report she said, that taking into account the ongoing power projects and the Ghazi Barotha, an additional 5000-6000 Mw capacity still needed to be implemented by the private sector.

Talking about the specific allegation relating to the sale of Kot Addu power plant Benazir Bhutto ridiculed the Redco Cell's allegation. She asked Nawaz Sharif to go through the relevant files more carefully and he will discover that the transparency in the sale was welcomed and appreciated even by the party which had lost the bid. This she said was unprecedented and people like Mian Nawaz Sharif and Senator Saifur Rahman who have known only loot and plunder through underhand deals can not even understand much less appreciate such above board transparency. She said that if her government was to patronise any private party then the WAK power project of Senator Waqar would not have complained of an 'unfair deal' meted out to them and their power project would have been the first to come on line.

Regarding the transmission line (Lahore-Jamshoro) Benazir Bhutto said that her government was proceeding so cautiously in the matter that even the then British Prime Minister Mr. John Major wrote her a letter. The contents of the letter is a sufficient proof to rebut allegation of Nawaz regime that her government was in a hurry to imprudently award the contract. Benazir Bhutto demanded that the letter of John Major should also be shown on the T.V. by the Nawaz regime for putting the record straight.

Benazir Bhutto said she was not surprised with the latest tirade of Ehtesab Cell. Whenever she goes abroad the cell comes out with such fictitious stories to tarnish her image and harass her. She said that on her first trip abroad her political secretary was off loaded from the plane, on the second trip her aid Munawar Suhrawardy was detained and now a 76 year old ex POW was threatened to produce his son, a U.S. citizen, failing which he and his entire family members will be arrested.

Benazir Bhutto said she was not afraid of these tactics and would fight back the looters, the tyrants and the brigands comprising of Nawaz Sharif and his coterie.

BBC Radio Talk Show

7 August, 1997

On August 14, 1997, my country Pakistan, will be fifty years old. As we approach our golden jubilee, my mind wanders over the landscape of the past.

Sometimes people say that very little has changed. But that's not how it seems when we look at the past through the telescope of five decades.

When I was a child, my hometown of Larkana, like many other villages, was a sleepy little place.

Traveling to a village was a real adventure. It took a day and a night by train to Larkana. (Now it takes only an hour by airplane). Larkana did not have Roads, Telephones, Gas or any of the modern amenities, as it does now. When we travelled, we took with us tinned sardines, baked beans, tissue paper, insect spray to help us cope through the long summer days and the hot summer nights.

There was so much poverty in small towns and villages most people were shirtless and shoeless. Faces, feet, legs, caked in mud. Often the only place to bathe was mighty river, Indus, which flowed nearby.

Now the complaint is about unemployment. Then the complaint was about food.

Food was scare. Most families survived on one meal a day. Many did not even have one meal a day.

I remember as a child how the big doors of my father's home in Larkana, Al-Murtaza, would be opened on special occasions to the public. While my father met the men in one part of the house, my mother met the women and children in another. Several women would be pleading with my mother to take their children into our homes in exchange for work. My mother would look helplessly at the pleading women and the hungry children. She did her best to help. But it wasn't always possible to help everyone.

Seclusion was part of the social fabric of the society. Men lived separately in their wing, where women were not allowed. The women lived in the family quarters with the children which only male relatives could enter. Women wore Burqa, or the veil. Marriages in the big, tribal families, only took place between relatives. So,

if there was no male relative available, the women simply did not marry. Or married a much younger or much older cousin. It was a man's world then.

When I see the girl students at Chandka Medical College studying alongside the boys, I wonder if they realize how much life has changed. In the old days, villages did not have colleges. Now there are plenty of places of learning. In the old days, girls stayed at home. Now they work, if they wish too.

In the first decade of its existence, no one could have dreamt that by its 50th birthday, our traditional society would have transformed itself to such an extent that it would twice elect a woman as Prime Minister in fair free and impartial elections.

In 1988, Pakistan became the first Muslim country to elect a woman Prime Minister.

Muslim women everywhere crossed a historic barrier on that December Day.

Today women in Pakistan sit in Parliament, run banks fly airplanes, have their own business.

When America's First Lady visited Pakistan in April 1995, I hosted a modern day her's party for her. We invited over a hundred outstanding women, including judges, police officers, educationists and advocates. We invited a housewife too, to demonstrate that women, and not society, should determine a women's life choices.

When I was growing up, men had often two to three wives. We would visit them all in the women's quarters. Every wife would often be addressed by the name of her eldest son. No wonder the Girl Child was not welcome.

But all this is changing now, particularly in the urban parts of the country. Television has played a key role in opening up people's minds.

In the old days, a woman often had twelve to fourteen children. As a woman politician, women often confided to me about the physical hardship of bearing so many children. They wanted less children but didn't know how to go about it. From these conversations grew the idea in my mind to formulate a population control programme based around women. So, we launched the Lady Health Visitor's Programme, Pakistan's population growth rate came down from 3.1% in 1988 - to less than to 2.8%. It will be 2.6% when the course is completed. It's a record that, and Pakistanis are proud of it.

But we still have to cross the historic barrier when Pakistanis can take democracy for granted. For too long our country has seen the strong establishment unseat governments by overt military coups or by covert intelligence operations.

Fundamental human rights remain a concern. Our former High Commissioner to Her Majesty's court, Wajid Shamsul Hassan, arrested despite a serious heart problem. He is still in hospital due to heart problem. He has been granted bail by the court but he can't leave the hospital under advice of the doctors. Many other languish in prison cells including officials who worked for the democratic government and my family members. My husband Senator Asif Zardari has been held for nine months and the trial hasn't even started.

But then that's the price so many pay as countries all over the world which became independent with the sunset on the colonial era, strive to establish the rule of law.

My own life, like that of Pakistan's, has been marked by tragedy and triumphs. But, despite the slander campaigns, I have resumed my role as leader of the opposition in the Pakistani Parliament.

When I look at my children, I think of all the children in Pakistan, and wonder: what will life be like for them when they are 25?

I remember my Father writing to me from prison and ending with the verse, Ah what shall I be at 50 when I find the world so bitter at 25

What will life be for them and for all Pakistani children, in the year 2020 ?

My generation, which reads books and works with the pen will be old-fashioned, computers will play a key role in every individual's life from reading, working, shopping, learning and even studying.

Perhaps parents will have more time with children. As a working woman I have always felt bad for not. Seeing my children off to school every day or fetching them back. Now in London its such a joy to take them to Trafalgar Square and watch them feed the pigeons as my parents took me Or walk with them to Hyde Park and buy them an ice-cream cone.

I pray that my children, and all Pakistani children live in a Pakistan free from persecution where the peace of family life is not broken by the midnight knock taking a loved one away.

But as we approach the third Millennium Pakistanis need not dwell on the setbacks but on the achievements.

We are a country of 140 million people. The only Muslim country with nuclear knowledge and missile capability. A country at the strategic crossroads to trade in East Asia, the Gulf and Central Asia. The oil and gas reserve of the future are landlocked in Central Asia and the only access is through the shores of Pakistan. As an Asian and Muslim country Pakistan is working for a global understanding between the Christian and Muslim world.

We may have our difficulties. Who doesn't. But men, women, and nations are judged not on the basis of difficulties they face but the dignity and courage with which they seek to overcome them.

As we approach the third millennium it is time for us to fashion a new vision based on the values emerging from the post cold war international situation.

As a Pakistani I feel a special responsibility to make that vision a reality for my country as we move to that moment, less than one thousand days from now, when the sun sets in the black winter sky of one millennium and dawns the next to proclaim the birth of a new one.

I see a Third millennium where human rights are universal, and self-determination unabridged on the planet.

I see a Third Millennium where civil dialogue is restored. Where victimization of political adversaries is ended, where consensus and comity once again guide the national and international debate.

I see a Third Millennium of tolerance and understanding.

I see a Third Millennium where every child is planned, wanted, nurtured and supported.

I see a Third Millennium where the ruthless forces of market politics do not condemn a whole segment of people to live as the discarded forgotten.

And, above all, I see a Third Millennium where the birth of the girl child is welcomed with the same joy as the birth of a boy.

This is my vision. This is my hope. This is my dream.

Afghan Arms Kick-Backs

[An article on Charlie Wilson, the ex-US Representative now formally hired as the lobbyist for the Nawaz Sharif Government (\$30,000/month)]

The article indicates that Wilson and associates are under investigation for kick-backs on arms to the Afghan mujahideen during the height of the war with the USSR. October 21, 1997

Afghan arms inquiry targets friend of ex-Rep. Wilson; Officials investigate whether 2 shared \$ 4 million in kickbacks

BYLINE: Richard Whittle, George Kuempel, Staff Writers of The Dallas Morning News

Former U.S. Rep. Charles Wilson waged a colorful crusade to arm the Afghan mujahideen rebels in the 1980s. The same decade saw one of his Texas friends make millions brokering weapons deals. Now federal authorities are investigating whether the Texas lawmaker and the arms broker split up to \$ 4 million in kickbacks on an Afghan arms deal.

Former state Sen. Joe Christie of Austin is the mysterious "Texas businessman C" referred to in a Swiss court ruling last month that revealed the Justice Department investigation, court documents and interviews show.

A Justice Department spokesman said he could neither confirm nor deny the existence of the investigation. Mr. Wilson, 64, a Lufkin Democrat who retired from the U.S. House last year, has "categorically and emphatically" denied the allegation.

Mr. Wilson remained in Washington after he left Congress and is a lobbyist for the Pakistani government under a contract that pays his firm \$ 30,000 a month.

Mr. Christie, a close friend of Mr. Wilson's since the 1970s and the chief shareholder of a company in which Mr. Wilson owned stock in the 1980s, has owned numerous businesses over the years.

He also made millions brokering arms deals in the 1980s, according to testimony in US court documents. The documents do not describe the nature of those arms

deals or whether they were connected with the Afghan rebels' war against the Soviet-backed government.

The Afghan arms investigation was revealed when Switzerland's highest court rejected an attempt by a Texas businessman to block U.S. investigators from examining his Swiss bank records. The Swiss court's ruling described the Justice Department's investigation.

The ruling identified Mr. Wilson only as "Congressman W" and Mr. Christie only as "Texas businessman C." It said the Justice Department was investigating whether they were paid \$ 3.5 million to \$ 4 million in "commissions " for getting Congress to buy 20 mm anti-aircraft guns made by "Firm X Ltd " for the mujahedeen .

A Swiss source confirmed that the "C" in the court's ruling stands for "Christie" and that "X Ltd." is a division of Oerlikon-Buhrle Holding AG, a conglomerate based in Zurich. U.S. sources said "Congressman W" is Mr. Wilson.

The Swiss court said the acts being investigated by the Justice Department could constitute bribery. Mr. Wilson's involvement in the Afghan issue drew widespread publicity in the 1980s. Mr. Wilson made numerous trips to Pakistan, whose government was funneling arms to the mujahedeen for the CIA. "Goodtime Charlie," as his friends dubbed him, usually took along his girlfriend of that period - a former Miss World USA - one reporter or another and one or more of his Texas buddies.

Fought for weapons

Numerous articles and books have documented the extraordinary role Mr. Wilson played in persuading Congress to earmark \$ 40 million for the CIA to give Swiss-made Oerlikon 20 mm anti-aircraft guns to the Afghan rebels in 1983.

Mr. Wilson lobbied his colleagues in secret sessions of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and the House and Senate Intelligence committees. Those who saw him in action were mystified by his ardor for the Oerlikon gun.

CIA officials also were perplexed by Mr. Wilson's insistence on the cumbersome, expensive Oerlikon. The CIA station chief in Pakistan - who normally made the weapons decisions in the covert aid program - urged CIA headquarters to reject the gun, calling it "tactically stupid"

Documents filed in a recent federal court case show that investigators have been examining Mr. Christie's relationship with a Washington lobbyist. Prosecutors say

the lobbyist, who traveled to Pakistan with Mr. Wilson in the 1980s, shared arms deal fees with Mr. Christie.

Bank deposit evidence

The documents, which include an Internal Revenue Service memo and federal grand jury testimony by Mr. Christie's accountant, also link Mr. Christie to a top official of Oerlikon. And they include testimony that Mr. Christie's arms deal fees were deposited in a Swiss bank.

The accountant, Frederick W. Nelan, told the grand jury that one of several companies Mr. Christie owns, Marine Resources Inc., received about \$ 15 million for brokering arms deals between 1984 and 1989.

Mr. Nelan, testifying under a grant of immunity from prosecution, said the money was deposited in a Swiss account held in the name of Tremona Investments, a company he said had been incorporated in Panama by Interallianz Bank of Switzerland.

Business ties

Public records reviewed by The News make no reference to the arms sales "partnership" between Mr. Wilson and Mr. Christie alleged by the Justice Department. But they do indicate that the two men have done business together.

Financial-disclosure forms Mr. Wilson filed as a House member show that from 1986 to 1988 he owned stock valued at \$ 100,001 to \$ 250,000 in Pine Tree Resources Inc. Texas secretary of state records show that Mr. Christie incorporated the company in 1986 and was its president.

Mr. Wilson sold a block of his stock in the company, whose charter failed to specify its purpose, the day before the company dissolved in April 1988.

Lobbyist convicted

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Christie also have in common an association with Denis M. Neill, 54, the foreign aid lobbyist whose prosecution this year produced the documents describing Mr. Christie as an arms broker.

Mr. Neill was convicted this year of one felony charge of filing a false tax return and sentenced to 15 months in federal prison.

Mr. Neill traveled to Pakistan with Mr. Wilson in the 1980s and saw demonstrations of weapons, including the Oerlikon gun, the court documents show.

Prosecutors in the Neill case said he and Mr. Christie shared \$ 25.9 million in arms deal fees between 1985 and 1988.

Pakistani's theory

In a 1992 memoir of the Afghan war, *The Bear Trap*, former Pakistani Brigadier Mohammed Yousaf complained that the Afghan rebels often were given unsuitable weapons.

"I have strong suspicions that at least one weapon system was forced on us because a U.S. congressman had a lot to gain if the weapons sale went ahead," Mr. Yousaf wrote. Mr. Yousaf cited the Oerlikon, saying the gun was poorly suited for the mujahedeen because it weighed 1,200 pounds, required at least 20 mules to haul it around Afghanistan's mountains and fired shells that cost \$ 50 each at a rate of 1,000 rounds a minute.

John McMahon, who was deputy director of the CIA at the time, said decisions on what arms to provide groups such as the mujahedeen in a covert operation normally were made by agency experts.

CIA officials were surprised by Mr. Wilson's insistence on the Oerlikon, he said. "Our first evaluation of it by our guys in the paramilitary division was that it's not the right gun for the war," Mr. McMahon said. "We used to make comments like, 'It must be Charlie's uncle who owns Oerlikon.' "

South Asian Nuclear Parity Opens Door for Resolving Kashmir June 7, 1998

The nuclear devices detonated by India and Pakistan over the course of the last three weeks finally and without ambiguity achieve a state of nuclear parity in South Asia. Both Pakistan and India are now not only equals but also have equal potential to inflict damage beyond imagination upon each other.

However, achieving nuclear parity does not deter war, it only deters nuclear war. Any further testing, or more unsettling, deployment by either Pakistan or India can only heighten tensions in a region dangerously close to open hostilities.

Unfortunately, both the Nawaz regime and the new BJP government continue to embark down a dangerous road of escalation. South Asia cannot afford a costly arms race, the result of which can be only further impoverishment of our peoples.

South Asians themselves should not allow the tensions to escalate into a full-blown arms race. As a needed and constructive first step, Pakistan and India should immediately sign a "no first use" pledge, cease further tests and refrain from any active deployment.

Washington and other world powers are now considering how to clean up what they see as a nuclear mess, a mess that we feel has been exacerbated by decades of American pressure on the wrong party, Pakistan, and decades of compliance towards India, the hostile aggressor in the region.

This is the time for the international community to put aside its punitive measures (sanctions will not put the nuclear genie back in the bottle), and immediately and with vigour assume a pro-active, constructive and positive role in the worsening South Asian crisis, a crisis triggered by the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute which has cast a fifty year shadow over South Asia.

This is the time for international leadership. For South Asia, and for the world at large, it is not enough to simply express displeasure, put sanctions into effect and walk away. Proliferation is too serious a business to leave to two warring governments that have shown an inability to grasp the horrendous consequences that can flow from their conflict.

South Asia needs an honest broker to mediate a dispute that remains the longest unresolved agenda item of the Security Council.

In the end, the international community must come to see that the South Asian arms race in itself is not the crisis, rather the intractable conflict of Kashmir.

With each passing day, tens of innocent Kashmiris die at the hand of the brutal Indian occupation; hundreds more remain in jail without hope of seeing the light of day, millions more live lives of fear and repression.

Two of the three Indo-Pak wars have been fought over Kashmir. Since 1989 alone, over 20,000 people - a conservative estimate - have died in the struggle for 'Azadi', or freedom. India has stationed over 600,000 troops in Jammu-Kashmir, a territory no larger than the US State of Illinois.

Resolve Kashmir, South Asia's flash point, and we take a great step forward in reducing the need for nuclear arsenals.

There are solutions. Pakistan and particularly India would benefit from active leadership from the world powers. First and foremost, the international community should immediately empower the UN Security Council with a vigorous mandate to find a mediated solution to the half-century conflict, keeping in mind the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

There should be unambiguous commitments by the permanent members of the UN Security Council to fulfill finally and without reservation the existing UN resolutions for Kashmir, and to do so within a multilateral framework that addresses the security of all nations in South Asia.

Specifically, the United States can and should chair, in conjunction with China, Russia and Britain, a peace process for Kashmir. Britain has already indicated its willingness to assist. President Clinton's envoy to Ireland was successful there; it is a model that may also have a salutary affect in South Asia.

No process leading to the fair and equitable resolution of the fifty-year Kashmir conflict can move forward, however, without concrete steps by both Pakistan and India.

On India's part, there are a number of confidence-building measures to be taken immediately, including:

- A dramatic reduction of the nearly 600,000 troops stationed in Kashmir.
- Ceasing all forms of torture, intimidation and extra-judicial killings.
- Opening Jammu-Kashmir to monitoring by international human rights groups.

Likewise, on the part of Pakistan, it is high time that we consider:

- Providing observer status for the rightful representatives of the people of Kashmir, namely the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, in all deliberations.
- Softening borders in conjunction with India to allow freer movement between families, increasing trade and strengthening cultural ties.

In 1954, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's father Joseph Korb wrote that, "Kashmir has become a veritable powder keg for the whole of Asia." This is even more true today.

The time has come for all South Asians to realise that we cannot bequeath to the coming century the bitterness of the past. Nuclear parity demands a maturity that we no longer have the luxury to ignore.

A Quiet Revolution **November 3, 1998**

Prime Minister of a country is a political leader, not a celebrity. Unfortunately, in my case, charisma and youth and a living legend of triumph and tragedy have blurred the edges of this distinction and I have often been portrayed in the mirror of the media as a celebrity and not as stateswoman.

During the last ten years- 1988-1998 - politics of Pakistan has been dominated by swings of the pendulum between Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League, both of which have been in power twice.

In and out of office, I had been subjected to a relentless media trial. None of the References that relate to my first government could be proved even while I was in the wilderness. Once again a media trial is taking place. I am the target of scandal mongering and character assassination. I am portrayed as a witch from a wicked tale.

As yet there has been no assessment of the performance of Benazir Bhutto as a government leader in statistical and analytical terms.

I twice held the office of Prime Minister - between 1996 and 1990. During these two stints in office, the government of my Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) greatly enhanced the standing of Pakistan both internally and in the eyes of the world. Among other accomplishments, my government projected Islam as a religion of moderation. My speeches at major international conferences - on population planning Cairo and on women's rights in Beijing - united women in the East and the West. I galvanized the economy by encouraging foreign investment and actually paid off some of the principal on the country's huge foreign debts. My programs to eliminate polio and reduce the population growth rate from a staggering 3.1% to 2.6% earned the gratitude of my countrymen. I restored the writ of government in Pakistan, giving the country stability, peace and prosperity, with an economic growth rate that hit 6%. All of this is now forgotten.

The main emphasis of my government was on social sector i.e., supply of gas and electricity, primary education and health.

Give me light:

Pakistan has 80,000 villages. When my government was elected in 1993, the number of villages with electricity was 45,000 that is about 1000 villages per year. It would have taken another 50 years to bring electricity to the remaining villages.

During my 2nd government the rate of village electrification was raised to 5000 villages per year with the result that by the end of the expected tenure of my government in 1998, all the villages of Pakistan would have received the electricity. I quote from the Economic Survey of Pakistan, published by the present government:

ANNUAL TARGET AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF VILLAGE ELECTRIFICATION

YEAR	TARGET	REALIZATION	PROGRESSIVE TOTAL
1991-92	2,793	3,649	40784
1992-93	2,070	4,824	45644
1993-94	4,500	5,283	50927
1994-95	2,000	6,243	57170
1995-96	5,000	4,957	62127
1996-97	5,000	1,912	64039

(upto February, 1997)

Population:

I was the only Muslim Prime Minister to attend the Population Conference held at Cairo, where Vice President Al Gore represented the USA.

Population of Pakistan had quadrupled in 50 years. This is a great strain on our natural resources and environment. The more schools and hospitals which were built can not keep pace with the population explosion. During my government, the rate of population growth declined from 3.1% to 2.6%, the intention was to bring it down to 2% at the end of the tenure of my government.

Restoring Peace:

At the time my government was elected, Karachi was in a state of anarchy and was caught in a vicious circle of violence, flight of capital, and unemployment amongst the educated youth - leading to more violence. My government turned the tide by a mixture of anti terrorism measures and a package for the development of Karachi infrastructure. If it was not for the "Mai Kulachi" Bye-pass, Karachi today would be faced with a massive traffic jam.

Inflation:

The fiscal deficit was brought down during my term in office. At the same time a rate of growth of 6% of GDP was achieved through prudent economic management. In my experience, you cannot defy the iron laws of economic except at its own peril. This is what precisely the present government is doing.

Role of Islam:

I am a believing and practicing Muslim. It is my faith that there is no conflict between Islam and modern technology, modern science, and modern economy. Islam is a religion of moderation, not extremism.

We restored peace to Karachi for a continuous period of six months and, at the time my government was dismissed, an investment of 2 billion dollars was taking place in the Port Qasim Industrial Area alone.

During 1997-98 the system of Checks and Balance in Pakistan has collapsed and the country has witnessed the emergence of a personal absolutism. At the same time the economy is at the verge of meltdown exacerbated by the crises in East Asia. The spectre of Balkanization looms over the horizon. Fifty years after birth, Pakistan is a state but not a nation. A growing sense of disenchantment and despair pervades the country, as power is increasingly concentrated in a one-man rule.

There are two scenarios: The path of Benazir Bhutto is the forging together of a nation state as in the case of Italy after Mazzini while the PML road leads to Balkanization following the collapse of the institutions, including judiciary.

INDIA'S NUCLEAR TEST
An Article for Los Angeles Times on
May 15, 1998

While the world slept, India detonated a series of nuclear tests signaling its determination to threaten the entire non-proliferation regime in the region.

That India chose to detonate nuclear devices on the eve of President Clinton's visit this coming November to South Asia showed its defiance of world opinion in the age of Pax Americana.

The Post Cold War global regime has been predicated on the free flow of information and technology. This, we believed, was a world of markets, not missiles. However, India chose to gamble more than \$ 30 billion of foreign investments on a series of tests that have united the nation behind its weak coalition government.

The Indian explosion is a direct challenge to the American led efforts to arrive at a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and at a regime to control weapons of mass destruction.

To Pakistan, which suffered disintegration at the hands of India in 1971, it is a clear warning to desist from its support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir at the insistence of a nuclear India. China, surely, is uneasy to.

As Prime Minister of Pakistan, I tried to convince Western leaders for over a decade that, in the absence of Western mediation, South Asia was plunging head long into a proliferation race that Pakistan did not want and sought to prevent.

I stressed that the fifty year old Indo-Pak dispute over Kashmir, where an uprising had tied down 600,000 Indian troops was leading to a dangerous flash point in the South Asia region. Alas, my pleadings failed to convince a Western world preoccupied with the Mid-East Peace talks, and the bloodshed in Bosnia, Rwanda and other parts of the world.

Western leaders believed, and told me so, that they preferred India and Pakistan to bilaterally deal with the dispute which threatened a nuclear race. This was a strategic error. It paved the way for India to come out openly as a nuclear power.

What is the Pakistani reaction? Pakistanis believe that the West will impose sanctions for some time but ultimately acquiesce to India as a nuclear power. After a decade the West will reward India, as a nuclear power, with a seat in the UN Security Council along with other members of the nuclear club.

Two years ago when the Chinese and the French tested nuclear devices against the backdrop of the CTBT talks, as Prime Minister of Pakistan, I received disturbing reports.

These reports indicated that a frustrated Indian military wanted to force Pakistan's nuclear hand before taking a decision on a military solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. A segment of the Indian military doubted whether Pakistan had nuclear capability or was bluffing to create a nuclear deterrence which did not exist. An Indian explosion, they believed, would force Pakistan to come into the open. If Pakistan did not have a nuclear capability, India could consider a military solution of the Kashmir dispute.

Pakistan had not actually put together a device, although it could do so, as a signal to the West of its support to a non-proliferation regime unless its security was threatened. An Indian detonation, our experts believed, would threaten Pakistan's security unless we could create an equilibrium through deterrence.

Pakistan decided to pen the option of a test by making the necessary preparations to respond with a nuclear test of its own within 30 days unless the West showed the will to stop India in its nuclear tracks. Pakistan also decided that if it was forced to detonate it would follow up with a unilateral signing of the international agreements aimed at controlling weapons of mass destruction.

This is surely a nightmare situation for the West. What can the West do? Doling out military and economic assistance can shore up Pakistan's security for a decade. But as Pakistan learnt in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, not more. Nor can a West which failed to prevent the Indian test guarantee that a weak Indian coalition government rashly seeking popular support would not equally rashly seek a nuclear war in South Asia.

I am not a military expert. But I believe sanctions are not simply enough. Rogue nations which defy world opinion ought to be taught a lesson. If a pre-emptive military strike is possible to neutralize India's nuclear capability, that is the response that is necessary.

Indian War Games Danger to Pakistan
Statement by Leader of the Opposition
Islamabad - 18 November, 1998

The Leader of the Opposition Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto has expressed grave concern over the massive Indian Military War Games on Pakistan's sensitive Southern Flank. These exercises also include an amphibious landing which shows how dangerous alienating Karachi in particular and Sindh in general can prove for the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan.

The Nation expected that in the light of the series of Indo-Pak talks which have taken place, the undemocratic Nawaz regime would have sought a postponement of the Indian Military exercises, as a measure to build confidence between the two countries. Unfortunately the insecurity driven policies of the Nawaz regime which has made the politics of revenge, the corner stone of its governance, has internally weakened Pakistan and made our borders vulnerable. Last summer we had hot pursuit across Kashmir for the first time since the fall of Dacca. This was followed by relentless Indian firing.

Despite being a nuclear power, thanks to Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's position is considerably weakened by the inability of the regime to formulate proper diplomatic, social or economic policies.

Security is a multi-faceted regime. Simply having nuclear power is not enough. One needs the industrial base to sustain it. By eliminating Quaid-e-Awam, by abuse of the judicial process, Pakistan lost its industrial base and thus the economic strength to make the acquisition of nuclear power meaningful in terms of security. .

Since Pakistan became a nuclear power its position of influence ironically has deteriorated regionally and internationally instead of being strengthened. For many we are perceived as a nuclear threat. Failing to seize the initiative by spearheading the move to sign CTBT on May 28, 1998 and thereby winning the goodwill of international community, the unfit mafia ruling Pakistan seized foreign currency deposits. This injurious action was followed by the crude attempts to brow-beat powerful multinationals by abuse of judicial process. The actions against Hubco clothed in judicial garb, led to the collapse of foreign investment in Pakistan. In the absence of foreign aid, and foreign trade the economy simply collapsed.

Mr. Nawaz Sharif goes to Washington posing as a powerful leader of a nuclear power. In fact he is the weakest leader to ever visit Washington. No great achievements are expected from this visit. Neither a Brown Amendment retrieving US \$ 1 billion to Pakistan, nor the return of the F-16s, nor debt relief nor financial aid nor any movement on Kashmir. Our position on CTBT has already been made known during Nawaz Sharif's address to the United Nations General Assembly and by our delegates at Geneva.

President Clinton is simply being kind to receive Nawaz at Washington. He knows fully well that Pakistan is bankrupt, not due to sanctions, but Pakistan's own economic mess.

Pakistan's position will continue to deteriorate under the leadership of a bully boy from "Gawalmandi" and his team which is good at propaganda but an absolute failure in governance.

The announcement of Indian war games emphasis is the need of fresh election to enable the genuine leadership of Pakistan to defuse external threats and build internal unity through adoption of the Nine Point Programme announced by the Pakistan Peoples Party on November 16,1998.

Instead of responding to concerns raised by the democratic forces in Pakistan, the regime is too busy in diverting public attention from its defaults, money laundering and other failures by cooking up stories against the Opposition and deceiving foreign governments with trumped up and perjured statements.

The country needs more than false accusations to survive. It needs the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party and its allies to steer the country out of troubled waters.

The regime could begin rectifying its colossal mistakes by lifting Governor's Rule in Sindh and permitting the Assembly in Pakistan's second largest province forming its own government. Otherwise history will not forgive it.

A situation similar to the one in Dacca is threatening Pakistan which no patriotic citizen wants to see. The amphibious assault exercises indicate that in the event of conflict, the Indians could consider storming Karachi by sea and terrorist amongst the alienated Karachi-ites might come up as their rear guard defence. Terrorist freed by Nawaz Sharif.

Pictures of a Sindh Assembly shut, with members forced to sit on the ground facing guns, could be played worldwide causing immense damage. It is time that

these senseless policies are given up. If Nawaz Sharif has a shed of patriotism in him, he would resign. Diplomacy with countries in the region can safeguard our borders. That diplomacy has been missing. Only economic progress and justice to the federating units can strengthen the country from inside. That too is missing.

Unfortunately, this regime lacks the vision to recognize a problem leave alone solve it. It is so driven by the fears that its key-members will be hauled up to pay defaulted loans or face prosecution in foreign countries on money laundering charges that it will resort blindly to more propaganda against the Opposition and its allies which alone are in a position to safeguard Pakistan's future.

The Pakistan Peoples Party and its allies in PAI are therefore holding a grand rally in Lahore on November 23 at Minar-e-Pakistan to create awareness amongst the people before desperation drives them into the hands of politicized Mullas or God forbid a revolt in institutions.

Benazir Bhutto for Pursuing 'Open Borders' Policy 15 July 1999

NEW YORK July 15: - Pakistan and India should pursue an "Open Borders" policy to solve the Kashmir dispute, former Prime Minister and Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto told foreign.tv.com's Peter Arnett in an exclusive online interview. In the streaming-video conversation posted at www.foreign.tv.com Tuesday 13, July. She said that open borders would help remove the ongoing explosive issue of land control to allow Kashmiri people from both sides to interact. She mentioned the "open borders" arrangement between Israel and Jordan as an example of how such a policy would work.

If Pakistan and India fail to resolve the Kashmir situation, Mrs. Bhutto warned, "then the international community will be sucked into the crisis." The Pakistan Government has "mishandled" the Kashmir crisis from the start", she said and added that the only way to avoid a larger war is to find a new, approach to resolve the long-time impasse that has brought both nations to all-out war over Kashmir twice in the past.

Benazir Bhutto criticized Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for "the mishandling of the Kashmir crisis from the start.⁹ She said that his "dual policy of bus diplomacy and armed struggle is like having your cake and eating it, too. And during the conflict he tried to pass the blame on to the military, causing division in the country," she asserted.

She also criticized Sharif's recent trip to confer with President Clinton on resolving the crisis. "If he wanted to settle it, then why not in Islamabad, instead of going all the way to Washington? Any self-respecting nation would feel that if you have to withdraw, do it voluntarily rather than have someone else dictate it."

Benazir Bhutto also said that the regime in Pakistan "treats me as a non-person. They are trying to eliminate me from politics. They have not bothered taking me into their confidence at a time when the Indian government is reaching out to the opposition parties to unite their country over the Kashmir crisis"

Bhutto cited her role in introducing the Internet to Pakistan despite objections from traditionalists and the importance of e-mail and online connectivity for staying in touch with her party in Pakistan. "Thank God for the world of modern communications which I introduced in Pakistan. When we brought the email in

everybody said this is going to bring in obscenity and vulgarity. Now that very email and internet is helping me.”

About the charges of corruption against her she said “To be publicly accused of doing it only to line my pockets is hurtful to the extreme. She said her hardcore support within Pakistan remains firm, and that the economic situation is growing worse, and along with that, public discontent. “If free elections were held in Pakistan today my party would win,” she said.

When asked how she was keeping in touch with the party she said “I have a very good political organization. It is a team effort. I am in touch through e-mail, the internet, the fax and the telephone. I have more time here than when I was in Pakistan, going from courtroom to courtroom to defend my self.

She said history will repeat itself’ and expressed the hope that she will once again be turning full circle. I hope the day will come, and come soon, when I can return. I know what my country needs.

Kargil biggest blunder in Pak history: Benazir The News 22-7-1999

LONDON: Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has termed the Kargil conflict between Pakistan and India the biggest blunder in Pakistan's history as "it very nearly led" both the countries to first potential nuclear conflict since the 2nd World War.

Addressing a reception hosted by Lord Nazir Ahmed for her in the House of Lords that was attended by present and former government ministers and prominent members of the Houses of common and Lords including former foreign secretary Douglas Hurd, Bhutto termed the volatility of India-Pakistan relations as "extremely dangerous" for regional and international peace and stability. "There are some people (in Pakistan) who say it was right for Pakistan to have gone in and it was wrong for Pakistan to have withdrawn. But we in the opposition believe that Kargil was the biggest blunder committed in the history of Pakistan".

Without pinpointing who was to blame for the "Kargil blunder", Bhutto said the whole operation had cost Pakistan heavily "It has given the people of Pakistan a sense of humiliation and disgrace because they were forced to withdraw in the face of international isolation and it has led to a deep sense of betrayal on the part of the Indians who believe that the Pakistani regime was duplicitous when undertaking peace efforts in the region".

Repeating the idea proposed by the opposition parties at the Indo-Pak parliamentarians' conference in Islamabad in February, Bhutto said that Pakistan and India, encouraged by the world community, should open up its borders in Kashmir "without prejudice to the Security Council resolutions.

She said the fight in Kargil took world attention away from a very important party to the conflict - Kashmiri people. "Their sufferings and alienation remain and no amount of humiliation in 'Pakistan and no amount of euphoria in India can cover the fact that it is the suffering of the Kashmiri people that has led to a horrendous arms race in the region in which both countries have assiduously sought to acquire weapons of mass destruction including nuclear devices and missiles capable of delivering those nuclear devices.

"It (Kashmir conflict) has led to three wars and it very nearly led both countries to the first potential nuclear conflict since the 2nd World War ended". She said that at a time when the West is no longer willing to subsidise Pakistan's style of living

which included parity with India, its people should take stock of the situation whether “our economy can bear the cost of a policy that is no longer being subsidised”.

Emphasizing that in the over five-decade old Kashmir imbroglio, “it is the Kashmiri people who have been dying, their women becoming widows and their children becoming orphans, the former premier presented what. She called a new approach for solving the Kashmir dispute. Instead of being land-obsessed where India says Muzaffarabad is mine arid Pakistan saying Srinagar is mine and we all forget the Kashmiri people, it is time to say we will build confidence and then come to the land issue”.

In her opinion, both India and Pakistan should take an inspiration from the Middle East peace process and open borders in Kashmir. “In this process Pakistan will undertake to patrol the Line of Control and ensure freedom fighters cannot cross the LoC and Indians will agree to withdraw the 600,000 troops they have put there and release the political prisoners”. She said with APHC and the governments in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad involved, we should allow the people (Kashmiris) to cross the border, to trade, to talk, to open up their hearts and minds and let the opening of border in Kashmir be but a prelude to the opening of trade borders, cultural exchanges, and to greater opening in all of South Asia.

Benazir said Pakistanis will have to decide now if they want to be insulated, introverted and feel threatened by the larger world like Afghanistan’s Taliban or they want to be part of the international community Warning them against choosing for the first option, she said: “Prosperity and progress can only come through international finance and trade and policies of free market. Investment does not go where there is no stability because money is frightened. And as long as the Kashmir dispute continues to linger, it threatens not only the world peace and stability, but the well-being of our own people.

Admitting that she made mistakes during her tenures in government and had “learnt a lesson”, Bhutto asked: “Why should the world go on bailing out Pakistan when it defaults? Why should the world go on giving aid if a country is not prepared to pull itself up?” She said Pakistan needs decentralization, devolution and construction of political society along with regional peace and stability.

Earlier in the day, Bhutto met British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and discussed the recent crisis in Kashmir and British-Pakistan relations.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesman said the meeting was held at Bhutto’s request but gave no further details. Bhutto, however, mentioned the

meeting at the reception, saying she asked the foreign minister to convey her thanks on behalf of the Pakistani opposition to Prime Minister Blair “for his telephonic calls to the prime ministers of Pakistan and India urging them to reduce tension during the conflict and for the interest Britain was displaying to encourage both parties to resume talks and resolve the outstanding issues between them through dialogue”.

‘Government of Defaulters, For Defaulters, By Defaulters’ December 26, 1998

Since the Pakistan Peoples Party Government was dissolved in November 96 and replaced with a regime comprising the top most defaulters of the country, Pakistan’s economic woes have continued to multiply.

While the Prime Minister had promised to break the begging bowl, he has only succeeded in raising the country’s total debt to Rs 3,000 billion or nearly 80% more than the outstanding debt in November 96, without bringing any improvement in the economic and social sectors of the country. Inflation has skyrocketed while the economy is starting to shrink. The latest forecast of the IMF estimates an economic growth for Pakistan during 98-99 of 3% only, almost equal to its population growth. Revenue collections have fallen to record lows barely covering just one item of current expenditure, the debt servicing. The per capital income of the country has fallen to US \$ 400 compared to \$ 490 in 1996 reflecting a drop of over 20% in a period of two years. For the first time in its history, the country defaulted on its debt service commitments and other obligations. Consequently, its sovereign ratings have been lowered by Standard and Poor to CC, which is even worse than the countries that have actually defaulted. The mismanagement of the past 22 months of the Muslim league regime has brought the country to a stage of bankruptcy where we have accumulated debt arrears of over \$ 1.5 billion.

As the economic crisis deepens, the spin-doctors remain busy with their endless bragging and indulgence in skulduggery. The recent statement of Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar in the Senate regarding the recovery of stuck-up bank loans is just one example of issuing deceptive and false statements to cover-up the complete failure in recovering bad debts (the term bad debts, defaulted loans, classified loans and stuck-up loans that are interchangeably used hereunder carry the same meaning).

The Finance Minister’s statement that Rs 34.167 billion has been recovered by the banks and DFIs during the financial year 97-98 is unbelievable as the same amount has been rescheduled or written off rather than recovered. As per his own statement, the amount of stuck-up loans has gone up to Rs 153.93 billion compared to Rs 141.34 billion at the beginning of the year reflecting an increase of Rs 12.59 billion during the fiscal year.

According to an earlier statement of the Governor State Bank of Pakistan, the amount of classified stuck-up loans as of March 31, 1997, the time when Mr. Nawaz Sharif took over as the country’s Prime Minister, aggregated to Rs 127

billion that has now escalated to Rs 154 billion. Thus there is an increase of Rs 27 billion in fifteen months from March 97 to June 98, despite the claim of recovery of Rs 34 billion which clearly indicates the pace of deterioration of the financial sector. The actual amount of bad debts are higher as the above reported figure has been artificially reduced through rescheduling and write off of Rs 34 billion, relaxation of prudential regulations by changing the basis of provisioning and liquidity injection of Rs 25 billion in UBL and HBL by the State Bank.

The cash injection by the State Bank of an amount of over Rs 25 billion to rescue UBL and HBL shows that due to excessive bad debts they were faced with acute liquidity crunch. The State Bank was constrained to substantially lower the liquidity margin requirements of the banks to release an additional over Rs 50 billion to the banking sector. The regime in collusion with the State Bank has indulged in “window dressing” to show an improved picture of the financial sector. A large portion of recovery claimed is nothing but a mere book adjustment with an intent to reduce the amount of classified infected loans to conceal the true state of our sinking financial sector.

But if we ignore the factor of window dressing and assume the amount of recovery to be correct, even then the amount of actual bad debts is much larger than the reported amount of Rs 154 billion as explained below.

The amount of classified stuck-up loans are computed by the banks and the DFIs in accordance with the prudential regulations issued by the State Bank. There are four ways in which this amount could be reduced: (1) through the recovery of these loans (2) through writing off of this amount; (3) through rescheduling; and (4) through changing the basis of computing the bad debts by amending the prudential regulations. Except for the (1) above, the reduction of this amount through the remaining three methods do not improve the financial position of the banks. The write-off of bad debts reduces the amount of defaulted loans but it only indicates total failure in recovery. Rescheduling normally involves revision in the terms of repayment such as the period and quantum of installments, and in Pakistan, it is largely done to show improved financial position. Again, it usually does not have any financial effect, especially when it is used as a tool of window dressing. Fourth method, the change in method of provisioning, through amendments in the prudential regulations also does not change the real financial position of the financial sector. For the first time in several years, large banks were unable to publish their annual reports within the stipulated time owing to unprecedented losses that their balance sheets would have reflected because of rapid increase in the amount of defaulted loans. Consequently, the banks were allowed extended time to prepare their financial statements but many of the prudential regulations were relaxed which resulted in reduction in the required

provision for bad and doubtful debts and the amount of classified advances by approximately 25%. It was after such relaxation in the prudential regulations that the larger Nationalised banks prepared and published their annual financial statements.

Therefore, if we want to ascertain the real amount of bad debts that can be compared with the earlier reported amount of defaulted loans reported by SBP of Rs 127 billion than we should compute this figure after discounting the later three methods that have been used to artificially reduce the figure of defaulted loans, as follows:

	Rs in billion
Reported amount of classified/defaulted loans	154
Add back: the amount rescheduled/ written off that has no financial effect except for reducing the classified amount	34 47
Add 25% of the above amount to discount the impact of relaxation of prudential regulations	188
Real amount of defaulted loans	235

The real amount of defaulted loans as of June 30, 1998 had gone up by Rs 108 billion reflecting a phenomenal increase of 87% in a period of only fifteen months. This means that nearly 40% of all the advances have become bad debts compared to around 25% when Nawaz regime was installed in the government. And these alarming figures do not consider the huge amount of borrowing by the public sector companies and corporations such as WAPDA, KESC, PIAC, Pakistan Steel, and other large corporations to finance their losses. This new borrowing estimated to be over Rs 40 billion in the last 15 months is irrecoverable due to rapid insolvency of these corporations. Very little provision has been made by the financial institutions on the fallacious premise that the government owed debts, including the amounts borrowed by the government corporations, do not become bad.

When the country's Prime Minister happens to be the biggest defaulter of the nation, having defaulted on estimated loans of Rs. 10 billion, when the ruling party Ministers, members of the parliament and a large number of their family members and friends constitute the biggest portion of the defaulting segment of the country, this government is truly a "government of defaulters, by the defaulters and for the

defaulters". It is natural that in such a situation no change in the laws, or a selective persecution or repression could lead to any meaningful recovery of bad debts, as has become apparent from the dismal failure of the so called banking sector reforms and the state banks recovery scheme that appears to have been designed with the aim of favouring only the cronies.

One can turn the tide, and the economy around, by making a sincere effort to recover defaulted loans to revive the financial sector and thereby add fresh blood to the sluggish monetary circulation.

Mr. Nawaz Sharif is fond of involving the Military in every aspect of civil life, from collecting Census Data, to looking ghost schools, dispensing justice and checking electricity meters.

A much better way would be to task the Military with the goal of recovering bad debt by going after Bank defaulters. But then Mr. Nawaz Sharif would have to put the interest of Pakistan before that of his own family.

Is he prepared to do that? or must the country suffer?

The Quest for Peace

February 01, 1999

As Pakistan readies itself to greet the high powered delegation from United States led by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot, its lack of a clear foreign policy vision comes into stark play.

Pakistan had an opportunity to take the initiative when India kicked the door and forced its entry into the Nuclear Club-the five permanent members of the Security Council on May 11, 1998. There was much understanding of Pakistan's response. For the first time after the lapse of more than thirty years the P-5 recognized that the Kashmir issue was the root cause that had led to the events of May 28.

Constructive Engagement;

The P-5 resolution at Geneva offered an opportunity for Pakistan to enter into a constructive engagement. Pakistan had everything to gain by making a unilateral gesture of signing the CTBT, which does not come into force in any event until India has signed it. As to the other issues raised in the P-5-the matching of the warhead with missiles, the export of nuclear technology, and the capping of production of fissile material,-these were issues which could have been addressed in the light of Pakistan's policies in the past decade.

In order to make the task of the government easier the Opposition urged it to sign the CTBT as early as May 28, 1998 in the national interest transcending party lines.

Most unfortunately the Nawaz regime did not take up this offer. The CTBT issue was briefly on the Agenda of Parliament but the government beat a disorderly retreat and withdrew the issue from the forum of the Parliament last autumn.

The government has just not done its homework. The CTBT and NPT were both mentioned in the same breath. During this December visit to Washington, the Prime Minister even made an attempt to wriggle out of the commitment made in the UN General Assembly to sign the CTBT but had to eat his own words.

Method in the Madness:

There is a method in this madness. The regime has two faces: a public persona and a thinly veiled hidden agenda. The real agenda of the regime is to establish a totalitarian one-party dictatorship under the banner of Islam. The mask has now been lifted in the imbroglio with the Jang Group of Newspapers.

The real model for Nawaz Sharif is the Taliban. Malakand has been made the foothold of this experiment. It is the slippery slope.

Checks and Balances:

In the two years since the manipulated selection of February, 1997- the Nawaz Sharif regime has destroyed three pillars of checks and balances, stripped the Presidency of all powers, physically assaulted the Supreme Court of Pakistan, and attempted to politicise the Armed Forces. The President, the Chief Justice and the Chief of the Army Staff, who heralded Nawaz Sharif to power, have been forced to make premature and unceremonious exits from the stage. The position of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee has not been filled- a sword of Damocles that hangs over the Military High Command for the last eighteen months.

Having destroyed three pillars of the state, Nawaz Sharif has now made the Press its target. The audiocassettes, that have not been denied, reveal how Nawaz Sharif wants to purge the Jang of fourteen top journalists including three Editors and is using corruption as a tool to achieve collateral targets.

This is a regime driven by a lust for concentration of power, accumulation of wealth and elimination of the Opposition.

A Moderate Muslim Country:

Pakistan is a Muslim country belonging to the crescent of Moderation, which stretches from Indonesia in the South Pacific, through Malaysia, Bangladesh, Turkey, Jordan and Egypt ending in Morocco on the shores of the Atlantic. A single spark from Malakand can stretch like a Prairie fire across the Khunjrab Pass into Sinkiang in China. It will also divide the Country. The Taliban brand of practices have no adherence south of Raiwind. Any attempt to impose such a narrow minded and bigoted system will not be acceptable in a land where the message of Islam was spread by mystics whose songs of love and brotherhood can be heard in the shrine of Hazrat Fareed of Shakerang, the citadel of Multan, Uch Sharif, and the shrines of Shah Abdul Lateef of Bhitai, Sachal Sarmast and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sindh. Pakistan has a plural society unlike the monoliths of Afghanistan and Iran. Any attempt to impose a unilateral brand of bigotry will split the South of Pakistan from the North.

A Failed Regime:

This is a failed regime. Any Government worth its salt has to perform four essential tasks: protect the frontiers from illegal insurgencies, raise sufficient revenues to meet the expenditures necessary for defence and development, protect the life liberty and property of its citizens, and provide justice with equality before

law. The presence of foreign sponsored militants in Pakistan, the deficit and debt trap, the extension of military Courts throughout Pakistan, the handing over of WAPDA to the Army are clear admissions of abdication of the civil Government from these essential tasks.

The Quest for Peace:

A new approach is necessary. The capability displayed by Pakistan in May 1998 calls for great responsibility. A nuclear deterrent is meant to prevent, and not wage, wars. This is a weapon never to be used. As nuclear powers, it would be suicidal for India or Pakistan to resort to the use of force. There cannot be another war between India and Pakistan.

It is time to cool the rhetoric. Pakistan must revise its foreign policy. The first and cardinal principle should be a good neighbour Policy. We must concentrate on putting our fragile economy in order. People who live in glass houses do not throw stones.

It is time that the political leadership in India should assess the high cost of the human right abuses as a result, which India has lost the battle for the hearts and minds of the people of Kashmir. As a prelude to the self-determination, the demilitarization of the Valley would be a confidence building measure.

Pakistan has to convince the world including India and the West that its stability, strength and continued existence is in the global interest of world peace. The past has been a half-century of conflict and confrontation. Let us now be prepared to walk that extra mile in the quest for peace. Let India and Pakistan turn their sights to the common enemy of the poor masses of South Asia - the unfinished war against Poverty.

The Nawaz Conviction **April 18, 2000**

LESS than one year after he convicted his predecessor in office, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif found himself sentenced to life imprisonment by an anti-terrorist court in Karachi. He was found guilty of hijacking and terrorism.

World attention had been riveted on the Nawaz trial in Pakistan, given that the charge carried the death penalty. America's President Clinton led a cacophony of voices calling for clemency. The country's new ruler, General Musharraf, had already declared that he was not a vindictive man. The trial judge saved testing the General on that promise by removing the death penalty from the table. He could not, however, save the country from its time warp.

In four decades, courts have convicted four prime ministers, a record unmatched by any other country. The trials are set in motion by insecure successors seeking to consolidate power by eliminating rivals from the political scene.

Each act of elimination has opened a new Pandora's box that further complicates the impoverished country's future outlook. The first judicial elimination took place in the fifties. The Bengali Prime Minister Suhrawardy was tried for corruption. Accused of influencing the award of a contract, he cried out his innocence but the judicial dice was loaded against him. His disqualification helped embitter the eastern part of the county. It was a significant factor in the disenchantment of the Bengali people that led to the country's disintegration in 1971.

In the sixties, a prime minister-to be escaped conviction. He was called Shaikh Mujibur Rahman. Winning the elections of 1970 proved his undoing. He was charged with treason and was imprisoned. However, before he was convicted, the country broke up. Even then, the ruling General Yahya planned to kill him to deny his leadership to his people. Before he could do so, Yahya was forced out of power by a revolt within the army itself.

His successor, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a compassionate man, freed Shaikh Mujib. As a popular leader with a legitimate mandate, he had no need for external crutches with which to divert the attention of the people. He believed that compassion would heal wounds and build bridges. It did. Despite the genocide that had been committed against the Bengali people, they reconciled with their brothers in the western wing three years later in Lahore in 1974. However, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a humanitarian, fell victim to the insecurity of his

successor General Zia. When General Zia seized power in a coup in July 1977, he charged his benefactor with murder. Murder carried the death penalty.

Zia felt petrified that the popular Bhutto would return to power and he, Zia, would be tried for treason. Treason, according to the Pakistani Constitution, carried the death penalty. He was fond of saying, "Two men, one grave", insinuating one of them would have to die for the other to live. In a butchery of justice and amidst international condemnation, Zia had Bhutto convicted for the murder of a man still alive twenty-one years after the Bhutto assassination. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto proudly walked to the gallows defying death and embracing martyrdom. The Bhutto's judicial assassination polarized Pakistani society. Civil and military institutions were destroyed in an attempt to wipe out Bhutto supporters. Given that Bhutto was a liberal and a democrat, liberal and democratic elements were systematically weeded out of the state machinery.

Bhutto's ghost haunted Zia until his last breath. That brutal and bloody conviction boxed Zia into a corner. Pakistan's political development fell victim to Zia's desperate desire to escape the crime he had committed. As neighbouring India advanced, Pakistan fell prey to collapsing institutions. Drug mafias, ethnic militias, sectarian groups and gun runners held sway as weak administrative institutions bowed before their power.

Nature has its own form of retribution. Zia died in a ball of fire as his C-130 malfunctioned. His death paved the way for elections that saw the Pakistan People's Party return to power with massive popular support.

Given the popularity amongst the masses, the PPP turned its back on the politics of revenge. Secure in its power base, it concentrated on governance.

Introducing the world of modern communications and deregulating the economy through privatization for the first time in South Asia, it gave Pakistan a head start in the new world of emerging free markets. However, the popularity of the PPP amongst the masses was not mirrored amongst the elites that had enjoyed power during the days of dictatorship. Twice, through palace intrigues, the elites ended a government enjoying the support of the parliament and the people. They did it through presidential edicts.

The elites, wiped almost clean of liberal and democratic elements, found it hard to reconcile to the people's will. Using the sword of unsubstantiated scandals, they successfully removed the PPP governments by presidential fiats. The judicial stamp, used to lend legitimacy to an illegitimate act, politicized and undermined the judiciary itself. Although one chief justice was rewarded with the presidency of

the country for legitimizing the PPP overthrow, three other chief justices were sacked in short periods.

In a democratic society, the judiciary is the corner-stone of law and justice. As an independent branch of government, it is critical to the balance of power in civil society. In supplanting parliament with the judiciary as the institution to change governments, that balance has been lost in Pakistan. The result has been repeated collapse and vacuum.

Each time a democratic government elected by the people was dismissed by the presidential fiat, it was followed by an electoral charade. Ballot boxes were fixed to achieve the desired, predetermined results. In a famous phrase, one president actually declared on the eve of the rigged elections: "I have bathed the dead body and all you have to do is bury it". The boast was that the elite's had taken care of the election results and only the formality of the exercise remained. Each time, the beneficiary of the meddling elite's was the man now sentenced to life: Nawaz Sharif.

Lacking a popular mandate and at war with the popular leader, Nawaz Sharif resorted to desperate measures to keep himself in power. The entire financial, coercive, judicial, legislative and information resources of the state were abused in a vain attempt to crush the parliamentary opposition.

Each desperate act exposed the regime's political weakness. Governance was neglected as the regime hounded the opposition. Unemployment and inflation ran rampant. The country went bankrupt forcing donors to reschedule loans.

Such was the state of affairs that one army chief publicly called upon the prime minister to give up his policies of paranoia and political vendetta. He was sacked. That sacking planted the seeds of the quarrel between the army and Nawaz. Unfortunately for Nawaz Sharif, whilst the powerful elite's dominating the country's power structure could win him power, the failure to give stability would erode their support for him. Neither side realized the economic consequences of neglecting governance to obliterate the opposition.

Neither side realized that the pre-requisites of an unjust campaign had serious side-effects: manipulating the judiciary, the legislature, the press, bankers, businessman and foreign investors. Such manipulation had its own repercussions, unraveling the facade of the democratic structure behind which the sequence of events had been staged.

Responsibility over the Kargil operation, which led to fierce border fighting between India and Pakistan last year, forced the final split between Nawaz and the elite's that had brought him to power. In seeking to blame and sack the army chief over the Kargil incident, Nawaz divided his backers. Had the country not descended into financial and political chaos, Nawaz Sharif might have got away with it. But the popular discontent gave the military the public support needed to overthrow the Nawaz regime.

Nawaz had successfully sacked a military chief a year earlier. Then the atmosphere was different. The elite's lauded him for the nuclear detonations which took place in the spring of 1998. The second sacking took place amidst the bitter ashes of the Kargil defeat in 1999. The humiliation of a unilateral withdrawal from Kargil, announced from Washington, giving the impression of dictation, vitiated the atmosphere. The elites divided in their support of him. Nawaz fell when they withdrew their support. The new rulers are as insecure as Nawaz was during his tenure. Whilst the people backed the Nawaz sacking, public support for military rule is lacking.

Threats for the regime abound within the state structure itself. Nawaz Sharif may be behind bars but his political clout is still there within the establishment. As the political son and heir of the late General Zia, he was the establishment's favorite. His ouster is the first fissure in the illiberal constituency built by General Zia during his long tenure. Nawaz may have gone to prison, but Pakistan is still run under the myopic policies of the elite's. They have switched their support to Musharaf. Yet, unless the descent into economic chaos can be reversed, Musharaf is in trouble.

Uncertainty therefore haunts the new rulers. To please the conservative elite's, they need to hound the democratic alternative. To consolidate their grip on the establishment, they need to eliminate Nawaz. Their pursuing of Nawaz and the popular forces is tinged with the same passion as Nawaz's hounding of his Political advertise. It is more troublesome in that they are challenging both political parties and falling between two stools. Given that scenario, they dig the same hole Nawaz did: allowing the country to continue its slide into recession and social upheaval by concentrating on vendetta. The pursuit of political vendetta, and the thirst to seek their rivals' elimination by abusing the judicial process complicates the crisis in Pakistan. It has three political fallout's:

First, it boxes the rulers into a corner. Fear of retribution prevents the development of an exit strategy to take the country back to normality.

Second, it weakens civil institutions further as the army takes over administrative jobs.

Third, it leads to mis-governance and the prospect of popular discontent giving rise to new dangers. Dangers that the rulers might seek an external diversion from domestic woes which may lead to yet another armed conflict between India and Pakistan.

Fourth, in pursuing a child of the establishment, the establishment itself is strained and a revolt within its folds becomes a possibility. The fourth martial law in Pakistan presents General Musharaf with an opportunity to work with the political forces for an orderly transition back to civil society. In his ability to abandon persecution and embrace reconciliation, he can pave a fourth way forward for the military to withdraw. The previous withdrawals leave much to desire. The first martial law dictator, Ayub Khan, withdrew, amidst street riots calling for his hanging, by handing power over to his subordinate, General Yahya Khan. The second martial law dictator, Yahya, was forced to withdraw from power after humiliating the country with a shameful policy in East Pakistan which led to surrender before India. The third clung on to power until he went up in a ball of fire when his military aircraft crashed.

Musharaf, and his colleagues, who planned the coup, will rest better if they plan their exit through political consensus rather than tempt fate. Those who tempt fate, live to regret the day.

'Benazir suggests remedies'
Ms Benazir Bhutto's interview on various issues to 'The News'
dated June 3, 2000
by Mir Jamilur Rahman

Benazir Bhutto can now be counted as a veteran politician for she has been in politics for the last 23 years. Twice she has been the prime minister, which gives her a rare insight into the affairs of the state. However, politics has extracted a heavy toll from her and her family. She saw her father executed, one brother dying in mysterious circumstances and the other slain in cold blood. Since her marriage, her husband has spent more time in jail than with her. A woman of lesser substance would have forsaken politics. But all through these tragedies she has remained undaunted and has become more determined not only to fight her fate but also her adversaries.

Benazir has a great grasp of international affairs. She is an avid reader and her extended exile has given her an opportunity to see the world in a broader perspective. How does she view the present situation in Pakistan and what remedies she could offer? I asked her, courtesy the Internet, and promptly came back the answers to my questions.

Q: The British Foreign Office minister has accused Pakistan of rapidly becoming a threat to world peace. A joint US-Russian statement has asked Islamabad to check the terrorist activities of Islamic extremists. Is the world inching towards declaring us a terrorist state? How should the government of General Pervez Musharraf counter Pakistan's downhill slide to isolation?

BB: There are two types of Islamic extremists: one relies on political struggle and the other on armed violence. The category that relies on armed violence was established during the rule of General Zia. These pro-Zia fundamentalist forces are international in nature due to the Afghan war. They have infiltrated the security apparatus and are a threat to democracy in Pakistan as well as to regional peace. It is of little surprise that the violent groups inducted both Osama bin Laden and Ramzi Yusuf to eliminate the PPP leadership through money and bullets. These pro-Zia elements used corruption as a ruse to con the West and Pakistani liberals to create a political vacuum. They used the Kashmir issue as a pretext for Pakistani governments turning a blind eye to madarissas dedicated to violent training.

The activities of these violent groups using religion to justify violence will be perceived by the international community as a threat. Kashmir struggle led by All

Parties Hurriyet Conference is one matter. Kashmir struggle usurped by Lashkar-e-Tayaba and other organisations like it is another matter.

When I was last in opposition, this matter had reared its head and Pakistan stood on the threshold of being declared a terrorist state. We are heading in that direction unless General Musharraf can get rid of his present set of advisers.

I asked the PDF government (in Punjab) headed by Mr Wattoo to shut down the schools teaching violence and allow the peaceful Islamic extremists to function. My DG ISI gave several briefings on this issue before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. I had the concurrence of all my service chiefs on this issue. But Mr Wattoo, despite promises, did not shut them down. If a PPP government were formed in the Punjab, we would shut down any group recruiting and training members in violence and warfare. Pakistan's constitution does not permit private armies to function. Unless these private armies are tackled, they will one day confront the armed forces themselves and create a civil war.

Islamic zealots believing in violent overthrow are blinded by their extremism and unable to see the dangers posed by their activities to Pakistan, the armed forces and Kashmir. General Musharraf can also move against the armed madarissas. But I wonder whether the MISR (Military Intelligence Survey Reports) will let him. These reports are used to brainwash the armed forces into a particular thinking, which goes from the top to the bottom. Hence the famous reversal by the Musharraf regime on blasphemy law.

During the PPP's next tenure in office, I would like to discuss in the DCC an accountability of the MISR reports in a manner that protects national security and, at the same time, makes those abusing the system accountable. This is something that the present regime could do too.

General Musharraf can counter Pakistan's downward slide by grabbing power back from the pro-Zia fundamentalists who have been using NAB for political purposes since the downfall of the PPP government in 1996. He can release all political prisoners and hold talks with the leaders of the political parties for the restoration of the democratic process. He can play a referee's role in getting the political parties to agree to a code of conduct and viable system which prevents the restored democracy from once again being held hostage by maverick groups committed to abuse of the security apparatus, exploitation of religion and devotion to violence. In return, he can work out an exit strategy different to that of his predecessor's.

Q: Pakistan's current economic plight is attributed to the nuclear test explosions of two years ago. The tests attracted economic sanctions, which still continue, and led to the freezing of the forex accounts. If you had been the prime minister, would you have gone for the tests?

BB: I do not share the view that Pakistan's economy collapsed because of the nuclear blasts. Throughout his terms Mr Nawaz Sharif has been a big spender on non-developmental projects. I predicted in May 1997 that if a national government was not formed, the economy would fall apart and Nawaz would freeze the foreign exchange accounts. The nuclear tests gave the regime a good excuse to do what it was anyway going to do. Later, they were successful in getting a three-year rescheduling which put off the day of reckoning. Now that day will fall into the lap of the Musharraf regime.

As for what I would have done had the PPP been in power at the time of the nuclear detonations, the frank answer is I don't know. As a consensual leader, I would have called the DCC (and all former members of the DCC) to discuss the issue. I would have discussed the options for hot test, cold test and no test. My own inclination would have been for a cold test but whether I would have carried the day would have depended on the consensus formed. However, I know that I would not have detonated six devices. If detonation had to be done, one or two would have sufficed and I would have seen Pakistan sign the CTBT the next day.

Q: Nuclear bombs are a rich man's hobby. Could Pakistan maintain a nuclear arsenal, develop a delivery system and establish control and command mechanism without falling apart economically?

BB: In its present financial situation, it is not possible for Pakistan to build a command and control system unless assisted by other countries. Moreover, Bhutto's bomb was born in the days of the cold war. In the post-cold war period, we need a post-cold war identity to achieve Bhutto's vision of a great country raising its voice over matters of global concern. To do that we need to concentrate on developing our markets. It is time for Pakistan to enter into negotiations on the proliferation issue whilst developing conflict management in the region and expanding markets in South Asia. It is a break with a traditional past for management of a better future in a fast changing world.

Our country has not yet woken up to the information revolution and the rest of the world is poised to enter the biogenetic revolution. It saddens me that the three software parks established by the PPP to commemorate the Golden Jubilee Year were all abandoned. The plans are still there for the regime to pick up the pieces. I had personally negotiated with US Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, Japan's Prime

Minister Hashimoto and Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir for setting up three parks with their top IT business groups.

Q: Considering the public sentiments, could any government in Pakistan gather up the courage to sign the CTBT?

BB: Yes, an elected government has the confidence of the people and can explain directly to them what is in the national interest. Had the PPP been in power in 1998, we would have signed the CTBT on May 29, the day after the blasts. It is my conviction that we could have won the moral high ground and managed to get a good part of our debt written off.

Q: Pakistan's foreign policy has always been India-centric. If India explodes the bomb, then we must also. If India does not sign the CTBT, then we should not too. Can we ever get out of this India-complex?

BB: It is time to get out of the India complex. The cold war allowed us the luxury to fund our India fixation. The West gave us money to fight the communists; we took it to fight India. Now the West is not giving us aid as the cold war is over. All the GST in the world and the hanging of corrupt politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats and feudal lords is not going to save our economy. Let me give you an example. In 1988, the tax base was of 600,000 persons. We doubled that through the PPP policies. In 1993, the tax revenues were seven per cent of GDP. We doubled that to 14 per cent. Since we left, the tax has declined to ten per cent of GDP.

I doubt that Musharraf's team would be able to match our achievement in the tax field. We did it by recruiting more people in the tax department, not reducing the number. Somebody is sabotaging Musharraf regime's efforts by giving wrong advice to sack tax collectors. The decision to terminate the contract with the Swiss pre-shipment firms was also a wrong one. They helped us to increase our income tremendously. The chartered accountants' report shows that for every rupee previously collected through customs, they collected six extra, which is phenomenal.

Since our dismissal, governmental policies have been myopic. Their aim has been to drive away foreign and domestic investment, without which the economy cannot grow. Moreover, the prices of utilities are so high that it is difficult for Pakistan to compete internationally. I have a plan to bring down utility prices but this is dovetailed to a larger post-cold war identity for Pakistan, its people and its armed forces.

I was sorry to hear that Musharaf has been briefed to believe that armed forces personnel harassing small people can make a difference in tax collection. As I said, the PPP made a difference without hounding ordinary citizens and the figures prove it. Pakistan is one of the most heavily taxed countries. The taxes are indirect, rather than direct. For example, the huge petroleum bill is an indirect tax. I disagree that out of 140 million people, 1200,000 are a small number to pay direct taxes. I will give a breakdown. Sixty per cent of our population is under eighteen and not working. That leaves 40 per cent of which one half, the women, do not work. That brings the taxable portion to 20 per cent. Out of this, 60 per cent are poor farmers leaving eight per cent. Out of that, a sizeable number is either unemployed or working as labourers outside the tax bracket. That leaves only four per cent that could be taxed directly.

Out of this four per cent, we can see those with surplus capital through other indicators. For example, the total number of shops earmarked for tax survey is half a million. If there are only half a million taxable shops in a country of 140 millions, it proves how few have buying power. This shows how narrow is the taxation base. Having a national tax number is good, a policy we had devised. Increasing tax revenues is also good so long as it is done in a logical and rational manner. However, the amount cannot bail us out. We have to tackle the issue of debt and defence. There is nothing left to cut in other areas.

Q: How can any government--yours, Sharif's or Musharraf's--could succeed and eradicate poverty when our total revenues cannot even meet the defence expenditure and debt servicing?

BB: You are right. It is an almost impossible situation given the mess created in the last four years. However, I am an optimist and believe that given the prayers of the people, an understanding of geopolitics, a post-cold war identity for the country and its armed forces, we can overcome the present difficulties.

Q: Where did Nawaz Sharif go wrong? He had the heaviest of mandates, a president, COAS and chief justice of his choosing and yet he lost everything including democracy?

BB: There is a dispute as to whether Nawaz had a mandate or was a prisoner of the pro-Zia fundamentalist forces who had brought him to power. The PPP and I believe that Nawaz never had a mandate. General Hameed Gul gave him one in 1988, General Asad Durrani gave him one in 1990 and the generals who gave him that mandate in 1997 are in too powerful a position today for me to make more enemies by naming them. As part of that mandate, he had to eliminate the threat posed by the liberals under the leadership of the PPP. As quid pro quo, he had to

take on the PPP and to take it on he had to take on the judiciary and the press. Now that he is in prison and facing hardship, it will provide him time for reflection and it is hoped that that reflection can help him learning about the politics of those who take on the 'establishment'.

Q: The politicians as a class have been condemned as the source of all evil in Pakistan. Even democracy has been declared wanting. Would the PPP agree to join hands with the Pakistan Muslim League for the restoration of democracy considering that it has suffered terribly at the hands of the PML government?

BB: The politicians have been condemned by a segment of the elite but are loved by the people. Hence the desire to have democracy after eliminating the people's choices. This is a contradiction in terms. The elite is confused. It wants democracy and dictatorship and it can't have both. We need to cultivate tolerance. We need to accept leaders we may not like if they are elected by the people in a free exercise. Some people think that democracy failed because politicians were corrupt. Other people believe that democracy failed because the powerful security apparatus refused to bow to the people's will.

As far as an alliance with the PML is concerned, they have yet to take a decision to join the opposition. The statements of Begum Kulsoom Nawaz are at divergence with that of the PML. The PML has not decided to join hands with other political parties for the restoration of democracy. Hence the question is academic. As far as the PPP is concerned, we put principles above personal traumas. We would keep our doors open for all political parties that wished to fulfil the principles of the Quaid-i-Azam for a democratic, federal Pakistan with provincial autonomy and working for the progress of the downtrodden people.

Q: A newspaper has reported that Asif Ali Zardari has one billion US dollars stashed away in foreign banks. Would you like to comment on it?

BB: Yes, I would. I can categorically repudiate the allegation. Once I got a message from a general in 1997 that if my husband paid 100 million dollars, he would be left free. I got other offers of a similar kind. If I had money of that kind, I would have paid it for the father of my children to be free but neither he nor I have recourse to such huge sums. My party has written to General Amjad asking him to provide evidence of illicit money or foreign bank account with evidence under the Evidence Act of Pakistan. But he has not responded.

I am not a fundamentalist but I am devout. I pray every night to God to either make my enemies into my friends or do to them what they are doing to me. I believe in Allah, in His mercy, His forgiveness, and His blessings. I have full faith

that Almighty Allah will punish those who have tortured us and the poor people of Pakistan.

Benazir hopes for victory if polls are fair

By Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah

June 18, 2000

Benazir Bhutto caught the world's attention in 1988 when she was elected prime minister of Pakistan, the first woman to rule a modern Islamic state. Educated at Harvard and Oxford Universities, her rise to power paralleled Pakistan's turbulent, chaotic history. Her father, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was deposed in 1977 and hanged. Benazir Bhutto returned from her studies abroad and was put under house arrest until 1984. She went into exile and returned in 1986 to lead her Pakistan People's Party to victory two years later. But now, more than a decade later, she lives in self-imposed exile in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, while her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, sits in a Pakistani jail. Bhutto could face a similar fate. Bhutto, 46, was ousted from office in 1996 amid corruption allegations and convicted in absentia for taking kickbacks. In Chicago last month, she denied the charges and discussed the October military coup that removed rival Nawaz Sharif from office.

Q: How do you explain to your children, now in England, why their father is in jail and why their mom can't be with them?

A: My children were even smaller when this happened. They were 3, 6 and 7. It's difficult to explain to little children why their mother and father can't be with them. But I tell them that their father is being held a political prisoner and I point out the example of South African President Nelson Mandela and of my own father and others in history who suffered so that the society would improve and be a better place. I try to spend as much time as I can with my children, but working women everywhere have obligations and responsibilities to their work as I do.

Q: You've been criticized for defending your husband, who many believe is at the heart of your problems. Why stand by him?

A: Because my man is innocent. And because he's suffering due to me. When my government was overthrown, one of the generals went to my father-in-law and said, 'Tell your son to leave her, and he'll walk out a free man.' When my husband found out about it, he said, 'No. This is wrong. I'm an honorable man. I will never commit dishonor.'

If he's innocent, imagine the grave injustice that has been dealt to a young man to separate him from his wife, to separate him from his children. He's sick. He's got

spondylitis [inflammation of the vertebrae]. The regime says it's treating it but obviously they're not doing a good job because his height has shrunk due to nerve compression.

Q: Which regime are we talking about?

A: Actually there's only been one regime since I was overthrown in 1996. They just have different masks that change. I'm talking about those generals that supported the Afghan jihad [Islamic war against the former Soviet Union] and could not reconcile to democracy. Twice they destabilized my government. Twice they rigged the elections and are presently playing a game of musical chairs between [former Pakistani President] Farooq Leghari, Nawaz Sharif and Gen. Pervez Musharraf. Who knows if by the end of the year they will bring somebody else? Their policies are all the same: opposed to liberalism, pluralism and economic growth.

Q: Many believe that the allegations of corruption against you led to the downfall of democracy in Pakistan.

A: I never heard I was to blame for the fall of democracy. I've heard my government was overthrown due to charges of corruption. I've come into power with democratic means and been removed through undemocratic means.

Q: But the corruption charges marred the whole idea of democracy.

A: No. I don't think democracy failed because of trumped-up charges of corruption. I think democracy failed because of constitutional corruption, because of constitutional sabotage. Twice my removal [in 1990 and in 1996] led to fiscal bankruptcy. Twice my removal led to heightened tensions with India. Twice my removal led to Pakistan being on the threshold of being declared a terrorist state. I can get elected if there are fair elections, but unless this mafia is exposed, Pakistan isn't going to make progress and I want Pakistan to make progress.

Q: Why are you using the term 'mafia'?

A: When a group of people abuse power, it's called a mafia in my book. I refer to jihadi elements. They are the ones who want to have a Taliban style of government. They want to destroy democracy. They want to create a vacuum which clerics can fill.

Q: But what about the charges of corruption and money laundering that were leveled against you and your husband?

A: The problem is we have these sweeping statements, saying billions of dollars were earned in corrupt deals. After the entire witch hunt, they've come up with one contract of \$6 million which they say I influenced. I didn't influence it. Not a single witness says I influenced it. Despite all the propaganda they have not been able to provide any proof because there isn't any. They provided a set of papers that were basically computer forgeries and they have based an entire case against us on this set of papers. Now it becomes wrong if I influenced the award of a contract to benefit my husband, which I did not do. My husband, who is a businessman, was not the consultant on this contract.

Q: And what of allegations that your husband had ties to Pakistani drug lords?

A: They were all trumped up. The drug charges were made on the basis of a statement by [a man] who later testified that he never met my husband, how he was picked up on a theft case and tortured, and his thumbprint taken to make a confession that he never gave. I'm also saying the judge who tried us was biased. His father had sentenced my father to death. He should never have sat on my case. He didn't allow me a single defense witness.

Q: Many Pakistanis believe military rule is better for the country than democracy.

A: Well, I disagree with that totally. Our people have never supported martial law. Our people have always risen against military dictatorship and last October, the people were happy that the military's puppet, Nawaz Sharif, went. Gen. Musharraf made a mistake in thinking they were happy over him. See, they were happy over Nawaz going but they didn't support military rule. And the euphoria has evaporated. I've told Musharraf, 'Call the political parties together. Let's all sit down and come up with a law for corruption.' You can't have people prejudged as guilty; you can't have a political agenda. That's not law; that's murder of law.

Q: Do you plan to return to Pakistan soon?

A: I just have to wait for the situation to be right. I can go back tomorrow, but they won't let me out of the country again. I've got three small children.

If my husband was free, perhaps I'd go back. But with my husband behind bars, it's very difficult for me to leave my children like that.

The other reason is that I spent three years in Pakistan from '96 to '99 and I regretted it. Those were such barren years. I was shuttled from city to city from

courtroom to courtroom from morning to night. I was mentally exhausted, physically exhausted and emotionally exhausted. I wouldn't prepare a defense.

Q: As a woman how were you able to come into power and rule an Islamic country?

A: No. 1, because my father was a popular leader. So when he was arrested, imprisoned and assassinated, his followers looked toward me to continue his mission.

Second, I earned my own position in their eyes through the long years of imprisonment [after her father's execution].

Third, when I came into office, my government concentrated on poverty alleviation programs. And also in our own Islamic culture, those who fight for justice, they have to face many hardships. So people also say that we are following in the footsteps of Islamic history by fighting the usurpers of today.

Q: Do you think it was because you are a woman that you faced opposition and allegations of corruption?

A: I found that being a woman, while it invoked great hatred, it also invoked great respect because in Muslim society, women are also treated as daughters and as sisters.

So while from one social class I received a lot of dignity, with another social class I frightened them, especially the people who are old-fashioned, who keep their women behind closed doors. They were frightened.

I think the great opposition that I invoked--bitter, venomous, vicious--has also to do with fear.

The Rise of the Intelligence Officer and his Friends

August 28, 2000

On August 15, 2000, President Tarrar administered oath of office to four new cabinet ministers. The cabinet reshuffle came less than one year after General Musharaf seized power through a coup de tat.

The cabinet reshuffle showed the rise of the intelligence officer in the politics of Pakistan. This rise began under the last military dictator.

The Afghan occupation by a foreign power in 1979--two years after General Zia seized power--changed the dynamics of politics in Pakistan.

It led to the revival of the dying dictatorship, then a pariah for savagely hanging the elected Prime Minister and brutally whipping thousands of young men opposing dictatorship.

With the foreign occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan became a front line state in the battle faced by the Free World. This brought the intelligence operatives of many countries, including that of the United States, to Pakistani soil.

Books have been written about how the American Central Intelligence Agency, (CIA), funneled billions of dollars in suitcases into the country. The CIA made its own generous donations, encouraged rich Muslim countries to do the same along with their rich families and turned a blind eye to the incomes flowing from the drug trade and the sale of ammunition. There were more important tasks to tackle.

One book alleges that the CIA chief regularly arrived in Pakistan with a briefcase of dollars to keep General Zia in a sweet mood.

It was certainly a sweet time for General Zia and his clique of intelligence officers. The progeny of some have now become super rich. The money came in cash. The cash was free of audit. Bundles would be handed out wherever necessary--and even where unnecessary.

The role of the army gradually decreased as the municipal corporations looked after local affairs and the intelligence looked after security. The Afghan War, and

the over four billion dollars of aid that officially came in--excluding the cash payments-- constituted the foreign, defense and internal policy of the country.

It is rumored that the intelligence knew that Zia would die in August. That it reported so to the General--that he would die on 8.8.8. Having survived August 8, 1988, General Zia boasted to the newspaper Nation in an interview that he had survived the dreaded date.

Nine days later, on 17 August 1988 (8.8.8.) Zia was dead. And when his body was found after his funeral, the intelligence ordered that it be buried secretly without postmortem. All in the name of national interest, the country having just held a state funeral at Islamabad.

Once General Zia died in a plane crash, the intelligence became even more active. In a hurriedly called Corp Commanders meeting the intelligence gave the briefing proposing that the Chairman of the Senate be made the President in line with the Constitution. It was the intelligence which drew up the cabinet for the then President, formed a political party of the pro-Zia forces and tampered with about ten percent of the parliamentary seats to ensure a hung parliament.

When the PPP won a majority despite the tampering, the intelligence went into over gear. It offered PPP leaders who could break ten votes from their group the prime ministership. None in the PPP obliged.

To the dismay of the intelligence officers, the PPP chose to pick a retired General as the head of the powerful Inter Services Intelligence. A retired general was free of threats that could otherwise be made to serving officers into reporting to the General Head Quarters.

A way was soon found around it. The military intelligence under the army chief was re-designated into a larger outfit to serve the purpose.

And the outfit has certainly grown. In 1971 when Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took over the country, the Inter Services Intelligence was headed by a Brigadier. The head of military intelligence was a Colonel. Soon thereafter, the head of ISI became a Major General and the head of MI became a Brigadier.

By 1990, when the PPP government was ousted, interim Prime Minister Jatoi sanctioned an entire Corp for intelligence work. Now the ISI was headed by a Lieutenant General and the MI by a major general.

Even more drastic was the logistical spread of intelligence. Whereas the intelligence had previously been confined to the divisions, they now spread down to the districts and the sub districts known as tehsils. Soon other intelligence began cropping up. Corp intelligence under the corps commanders became larger and more influential. Field intelligence Units and Field Intelligence Teams were constituted. At last count, there were some seven different intelligence organizations right down to the sub district level.

All this meant more pay, more administrative costs, more maintenance--and more influence.

It also meant that the intelligence now formed the thinking of the armed forces and through it of large parts of the country.

In 1990, the intelligence corps backed the first Nawaz regime. However, Nawaz Sharif and the intelligence fell out when Nawaz failed to make the prince of intelligence, the General Hameed Gul, the Chief of Army Staff. Nawaz paid for it with the loss of his first regime.

Since that fateful day, the intelligence loyal to the Zia dream, more extended than the past, has been in search of a new political leader.

They thought they found it in President Leghari. After all, he had studied at Oxford, came from a tribal family bordering Balochistan, Punjab and Sindh and had connections to Ichra the seat of the Muslim Brotherhood. He attended meetings by the religious organization called the Tableeghi Jamaat, was quite docile and prepared to play ball.

However, the Leghari light began to dim when Leghari had qualms about postponing the elections of 1997. Stung by criticism that he was another General Zia--Farooq ul Haq--Leghari sealed his fate by insisting to hold the elections.

One does not insist with the intelligence. One does what they say--or pays.

With a repentant Nawaz ready to make amends, and the Opposition Pakistan Peoples Party refusing to boycott the elections, the mantle of hope once again fell on Nawaz Sharif.

However, Nawaz Sharif never trusted the intelligence and sought to make his own base. In so seeking, he lost their support and found himself out of office.

The new ministers that were sworn in during August all had intelligence links. Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, an otherwise fine lady, had worked with General Zia and was familiar to his apparatus. Dr. Ghazi, again an otherwise fine man, could be trusted because of his links to the Zia era. General Javed Asraff Qazi was an old school boy having headed the ISI itself. Colonel Tressler was another good old boy from the Zia days when he served in the Foreign Service.

If the cabinet was dominated by the intelligence, so were the ambassadorial postings. General Asad Durrani, Ambassador designate to a Gulf country had been head of ISI. General Shujaat, planned for a North African posting, also had ISI background as the head of ISI internal as did other Ambassadors.

Zia's ghost continued to echo in the corridors of power that Musharaf now sought to walk. Its a difficult walk between a ghost that fought a jihad and a general who dreams of the Turkish Reformer Ataturk.

Surrounding the Pakistani Attaturk, to make sure he takes the right steps, are other Zia favorites. Sharifuddin Pirzada, Zia's law minister is back. Zia's Attorney General Aziz Munshi is back as Attorney General Munshi. A Captain made sure one Chief Justice stayed at home to pave the way for a new Chief Justice. By coincidence, Zia's law secretary is now the new Chief Justice. He is an intelligent man widely liked in the country.

To make sure that all works well in the frontier province, home to many of the madrassas and bordering Afghanistan, another ISI officer has been made the Governor. He is the likeable General Ifthikar from Kohat.

An old Nawaz favourite, another ISI chief, General Javed Nasir now heads the lucrative Property Trust. Discreetly handled, this could bring in big sums for extra state activities. Additionally, Musharaf has asked him to look after the Sikh places of worship in Pakistan. Anyone who thinks that the God fearing General Javed Nasir could use Sikh contacts to hotten up yet another Indian border with Pakistan, is a traitor working for India's RAW.

Other intelligence officers have risen to key positions too. General Gulzar, Corps Commander Tenth Corp, bit his teeth in the ISI. Governments rise and fall on the Brigade sent out by the Tenth Corp to take, or protect, a government. The Chief of General Staff has double credentials. He served as a staff officer to General Zia and served in the ISI. General Ghulam Ahmad, Chief of Staff controlling access to General Musharaf, has an intelligence background.

Other old hands of the Zia era have been re-inducted, some at plush salaries. One now controls all governmental postings and transfers. Other intelligence officers man the National Accountability Bureau or the Investigative cell in the ISI. They determine who shall be prosecuted and who shall be let off.

And in case the civilian bureaucracy feels in need of the tender ministrations of ISI officers, more intelligence officers are on hand. Even the Inspector General Prisons in Sindh, who has the arduous task of looking after the former Prime Minister's spouse, is an ISI officer. There are many others who have been posted in the police, administration and monitoring jobs.

And if anyone thinks that all these ISI appointees owe a greater allegiance to the pro Zia Generals who fought the Afghan War and now form an undeclared king maker party, we know they are "traitors" on the pay roll "of foreign masters".

Following the debacle that came with the victory of the Pakistan Peoples Party in 1988, the pro Zia ISI officers are finally in command. Martial Law has been declared once again. They can change any rule, which is inconvenient. They can go back to the drawing boards to build another political party and find another "Nawaz Sharif". Achieving power is only one aspect of governance. Exercising power is another aspect.

The exercise of power, for many who fought the Afghan Jihad, is too sacred a duty to be left to the people. In their outlook, power needs exercising by a Muslim leader with the rest swearing allegiance. It also means that Jihad, or the Holy War, takes precedent over economic emancipation.

The last time the pro Zia intelligence officers fought a jihad, in Afghanistan against the infidels, Uncle Sam picked up the bill.

The question now is: who is going to pick up the bill. And, if the bill remains unpaid, will the people acquiesce. Or will the people rise up as they did in the past against previous military interventions.

On that answer depends the fate and future of the pro Zia officers that romanticized the notion of Jihad. They won half the battle in demolishing the two party nature of Pakistan's post Zia decade. They won it even though the price paid was the collapse of democracy, economy and governance in Pakistan.

But they still have to win the other half.

Might can crush, it cannot conquer 'The News' dated 17 October 2000

The Oslo peace process lies stained with blood in the dusty streets of Ramallah and Jerusalem. The excessive use of force by the Barak regime against Palestinian protesters has sparked anger across the Muslim world. Too many human lives have been lost, including those of Palestinian children.

The recording of the brutal death of a small child nestled in the father's shadow, whose protection he sought, was cruel and inhuman. For many, it shocked and symbolised the senseless violence that has gripped the Middle East for more than half a century.

The inability of the Israeli regime to order an inquiry into that brutal murder, or to reign in the security forces, reinforced old stereotypes and led to the lynching of Israeli soldiers.

The inability of the world community to step in quickly enough to prevent the loss of almost 100 lives, mostly Palestinian, in two weeks shook the peace process. It also re-ignited memories of the killings of Muslims in Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya played, and replayed, on television screens.

Once again, the international community was found slow in responding to a crisis that could lead to far and wide ramifications. To many, it appeared that the unfortunate lynching of the two Israelis soldiers was the catalyst that moved the world community to finally seek to politically intervene.

The perception within the Muslim community, whether right or wrong, that the lives of two Israeli soldiers are more valuable than the lives of ten score Palestinians is what feeds anger and fuels extremist movements across the Muslim world.

The United Nations, Washington and the foreign capitals of the G-8 are too far away. Most people vent their sentiments on their own rulers, seeing them as weak and inept. This undermines the politics of moderation.

The Cold War world was built on the structure of two superpowers. Countries, and people, who felt aggrieved could look for solace and hope towards one of the superpowers. The end of the Cold War has led to a unipolar world. That unipolar world is still to construct the pillars upon which the foundations of redress can be

laid. Most of the international community looks towards America. The United Nations, or even the Security Council, is still to come into its own.

Global institutions for conflict resolution and conflict prevention are necessary to enable quick responses. Otherwise the danger is that the politics of blood will feed the politics of hatred. The politics of elections, and of ratings, also determines the ability of governments to respond. Or not respond. America, caught in a presidential election, was less focused on international affairs. Electorally, the weight of the American Muslims was too weak to pressure a stronger response in the face of the early killings.

Meanwhile, the violence curve provoked by the visit of controversial Israeli leader Ariel Sharon to Jerusalem had profound electoral results. The sagging political fortunes of Prime Minister Barak more than doubled. His ratings went up from 20 per cent to 50 per cent.

More and more, in the world of Gallup polls and influential groups able to articulate their views effectively, leaders respond to ratings. Statesmen are too few and far between. Yet, a peaceful world needs more states people, those leaders able to look beyond today to take decisions that may be unpopular but necessary.

Changing the status quo requires courage. It also requires the capacity to absorb a momentary loss of support for a permanent place in history.

Perhaps the recent wave of violence will lead to a review of the geographical unit and religious composition that can better police peace. The segregated, and non-contiguous Palestinians enclaves, surrounded by Israeli-controlled borders, has kept tensions running high. It might have been right at the time when the Palestinian Authority had yet to be established. Now a better rationalisation seems in order.

The road to peace is difficult. Extremists on both sides demand too much. And inflame passions. President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin both demonstrated courage in moving towards peace. In a world of instant information the expectation is of instant solutions. Yet, the world is based on human passion. Human Passion has yet to allow for instant political solutions. Yes, there are unresolved issues. It takes time to deal with each one.

Pakistan and Bangladesh, both Muslim countries, are yet to resolve the outstanding issues springing from their separation in 1971.

Those who blame President Arafat for accepting a less than perfect initial resolution are harsh. The foot has to get in the door before the house is accessible. In accepting a torn and tattered peace, President Arafat opened the door to a solution. To expect that was the solution is simply short-sighted.

There are one billion Muslims in the world today. The demographic pressure creates a power of its own. But many within the Muslim community are caught in a cycle of cynicism and bitterness. That cycle began with the Palestinian dislocation in 1948. It deepened into frustration when large numbers of Muslims perceived themselves as caught between injustice and helplessness. Violence was a by-product.

As we enter the twenty-first century, the peace process that promised so much in the last century, is in danger. It rests on the ability of the ailing President Arafat and the intractable Barak regime to move forward. The use of helicopter gunships and heavy artillery hardly helps. It gives the impression that, rather than seek peace, the Barak regime is seeking to intimidate a surrender.

Israel is militarily more powerful with a suspected nuclear arsenal. That military might ought to give Barak the security to surmount fear and take steps to reach out to the Palestinians. In the ageing Palestinian leader, peace has a chance. It ought to be taken. Otherwise, the danger is that the past ghosts will come back to stalk the Middle East again. If history has a lesson, it is that might can crush but it cannot conquer.

Benazir lashes out at ISI, Foreign Office

May 2, 2000

WASHINGTON: Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto on Monday blamed some elements in Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Military Intelligence for working against the PPP governments and damaging Pakistan's interests at international level. "ISI and MI in both my terms started to destabilize my governments when they did not like my policy," Benazir told Washington-based Pakistan Voice magazine in an interview. "But they did this under cover and clearance from the presidents whom they managed to dupe and use as pawns." Agreeing to the perception that the ISI dominates Pakistan foreign policy decisions, Benazir, however, did not absolve civilian leaders of responsibility of pursuing an isolationist policy. "ISI cannot be blamed for this alone. Civilian leaders should have the courage to lay down what needs to be done."

She said ISI has strong views and as an institution, it should have the right to have its own interpretation of security. "However, it is for the government, after listening to the ISI and the Foreign Office to decide. As prime minister, I sometimes listened to the ISI and sometimes to the Foreign Office and sometimes worked out a consensus."

She said the "rogue elements" had sympathies and their own agendas ... ISI mostly adhered to clear order "although they may have tried to drag their feet about it in the hope that I would forget." Benazir said the ISI, as well as the Foreign Office, were under strict orders to ensure that the Taliban did not unilaterally cross into Kabul.

"Until my brother was killed and the government lost authority, this was maintained. I gave ISI orders to arrest some individuals suspected of kidnapping Western tourists in occupied Kashmir and after much foot dragging this was done.

"Sometimes, I went along with ISI proposals although I did not agree with the strength of the argument. For example, I wanted to accept Soviet foreign minister Schevernadze's proposal for the peaceful political solution of Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal, which was due. ISI did not agree, wanting to give the Mujahideen the taste of victory by marching into Kabul as conquerors." Having studied the Vietnam war, she said, she did not buy that the Mujahideen would be able to do this. "However, I did not have the heart to stop them from trying because they were so convinced they could do it and had paid such a heavy price fighting for freedom." Benazir said she found that many officers, including

ambassador rank, wanted to keep on the good side of ISI thinking they were the permanent government and "the PPP a temporary guest." She said ambassadors generally respected would report to ISI on an unofficial level and seek briefings from them. They would then argue the ISI line from the Foreign Office. Barring a handful of ISI members whose actions damaged the country's standing and led to the ruination of the country by destabilizing the PPP government, Benazir said most of its officers were pure professionals. "They worked long hours, neglecting their families to implement decisions. They risked their lives and went into war zones. Throughout they kept acts of heroism secret taking satisfaction in doing their duty." Benazir said Pakistan is facing isolation because it is defying democratic concerns of the outside world.

"In the last decade Pakistan has veered from being a respected and valued partner in the international community to being a pariah. The fact is that when the PPP, and through it the people, were in power, Pakistan's respect within the international community was at an all-time high." Benazir said Pakistan was receiving huge assistance packets or it was receiving huge inputs of foreign investment. "The US assistance package of \$4.6 billion sanctioned in 1989 was jeopardized due to the overthrow of the PPP government in 1990. In 1995 Pakistan got the Brown Amendment and a billion dollars in cash and supply. Pakistan's support of the Kashmir movement was recognised and respected."

She said the denial of a democratic political system is at the heart of Pakistan's political crisis. "It has brought to power puppets of mavericks who fought the Afghan war. They have spawned the politics of terrorism, narcotics and lawlessness. They have used the axe of false scandals to bring political and economic ruin to the country."

At present, she said, Pakistan's foreign policy is an isolationist one. "We are defying international trends towards openness, transparency, human rights, women's rights, minorities' rights and as such becoming marginalized." She said the inability of the post-PPP regimes to deal with important issues pertaining to conflict management, terrorism, proliferation; consensus building in Afghanistan has led to international frustration.

"Until and unless Pakistan begins addressing concerns of the outside world, its isolation will continue. There are those that believe nuclear blackmail will make us stronger and more secure. In fact, the reverse is happening and we are imploding from within after having detonated the nuclear devices."

She said that there was a clear shift in the US policy towards South Asia. "Western countries which during the Cold War were suspicious of India's friendship with

the Soviet Union are now drawing closer to it. Even (the prime minister of) Pakistan's close friend Turkey visited India and snubbed the regime in Pakistan. These actions flow from the isolationist policies followed by Pakistan which in the past remained a key western ally."

She said this also have to do much with a changing world where markets are replacing missiles as the measure of a country's strength.

"China and Iran, two other key Pakistani allies, are also drawing closer to India." Benazir said unfortunately there is a perception that our foreign policy is based on blackmail. "We keep acting like naughty boys threatening to use bombs and missiles if the rest of the world does not kow-tow to us. The rest of the world has decided to move on and ignore us. This can change if fair elections are held which will bring the PPP to power. The PPP is a liberal party and its liberalism is supported by forces of liberalism everywhere." She said it is important to inculcate the spirit of tolerance, to accept a political party if this is what the majority of people want. The defiance started in 1988 when certain elements decided to prevent the PPP from gaining power in Punjab and subsequently destabilized the government and rigged the elections, she said.

She said regrettably some self-proclaimed messiahs have declared that the PPP is corrupt even though no such allegation has stood the test of independent scrutiny. "These so called messiahs therefore want desired results which can only deepen the crisis in the country." She said since the ouster of PPP government, Pakistan's Kashmir policy has taken a turn for worse. "Three crucial changes took place in the Kashmir policy. First, the leadership of All Parties Hurriyat Conference was effectively replaced with Harkat ul Mujahideen and Lashkar e Taiba. "Second, the arena of conflict was expanded beyond the disputed area. Third, non-military targets, that are civilians, were also included as targets. This has led to a sea shift in the perceptions with regard to the Kashmir dispute." She called for putting the All Parties Hurriyat Conference back in the centre of the policy. The PPP leader reiterated her call for opening borders with India while engaging it on the Kashmir issue. "We need to engage India in a dialogue wherein, whilst we disagree on Kashmir, we also move in uniting Kashmiris by having safe and open borders. Once talks lead to opening of the borders where people can travel freely to see friends and family, to worship and to trade, it will lead to the opening of hearts and minds and the resolution."

Benazir also lashed out at the "demoralized and out-of-date" Foreign Office, saying there is quite bit of grouping and infighting in the FO. "There are many fine officers still there but the Foreign Office needs a revamp. The Foreign Office resents political appointees but needs to understand that foreign offices lacking the

continuity of the British Foreign System do need fresh blood and fresh ideas through fresh political inductees. "However they also resent the generals being sent in as ambassadors and perhaps fewer generals ought to be sent as ambassadors. The problem is that the generals themselves retire in the prime of their life when they still have much to contribute. The defence ministry needs to take a fresh look at this problem to find a solution.

The General as President The Dawn - June 28, 2001

On June 20, 2001, Pakistan's coup leader declared himself the president. Since he made little secret of his ambition to become president, his assumption of office was expected. He became the fourth military commander to march into the presidency with his boots and guns.

The presidency, a seat of constitutional power envisaged by the country's founders, was instantly transformed. The civilian President refused to resign and was shown the door with a salute. He refused to salute back.

The general proclaimed himself president. With more than half a million men under arms to back his self-declaration, General Musharraf casually changed from khaki to mufti.

Musharraf was careful not to consign the khaki to the old clothes disposal store. Conscious that his power flows from his military post, the general declared that now he was the president and the Chief of Army Staff. Never mind that the Constitution says that presidents must be elected by the Parliament. The Constitution, as an earlier general-president said, 'is a booklet of twelve pages that can be torn'.

In countries where constitutions are the basic law, the Musharraf presidency was greeted with shock. America, Britain and the European Union were quick to express their dismay. Even the Chinese endorsement was missing. For China it was "an internal matter". The only country that welcomed the oath taking in the rich and splendoured halls of the Pakistani presidency on Islamabad's hill was the old foe India. India must have its reasons for doing so.

The country's two largest political parties and their allies were quick to denounce the move as "anti-democratic and unconstitutional". The general ignored them. State television produced a never elected cricketer turned politician to "endorse" the Musharraf presidency.

The senior generals were out in force in the controversial halls of the ill-fated presidency. It is called the ill-fated presidency because none of its occupants left with honour. General-president Zia went up in a ball of fire. Presidents Ishaq, Leghari and Tarrar were forced out before their terms ended.

But the ill-fated ghosts of yesteryear were far from the minds of the brass sitting under the rich chandeliers of the poor country. Perhaps their minds were more on their own promotions. Speculation is rife as to which of the duo that brought him to power Musharraf plans blessing as his military successor. They include General Mahmood and General Usmani. The first put the ousted premier into prison and the second safely brought the hijacked Musharraf plane down on the fateful day of the coup. Musharraf's own military term ends in October. It is likely that he will benefit himself with an extension but promote another three-star general to four-star status and ask him to act as the vice chief.

As ceremony and power united in the ornate halls of the presidency, the speculation grew as to why the General sprung the presidency a surprise keeping his allies in the dark. Neither the cabinet nor the National Security Council was consulted. The powerful body of corps commanders was reduced to a rubber stamp, hearing the news a few hours after rumours swept the country. Even US Secretary of State Colin Powell, with whom the Pakistani foreign minister was meeting when the general declared himself president, was kept ignorant. The foreign minister was exposed and embarrassed. He came across as a propagandist of the regime rather than a substantive player whose assurances carried value.

In the predominantly Muslim country which believes that "God loves not the arrogant", the general declared, "In all sincerity, I believe I have a role to play and a job to do". Such musings brought to mind dark moments in history of earlier dictators. Those dictators left the country disintegrated, lost wars, territories and bequeathed a barren landscape of a demoralized and divided nation.

It was hoped that General Musharraf would be different from his predecessors. But in twenty months, he made wrong moves at the wrong time and reached the wrong conclusions based on wrong advice. Each politically motivated action of his lost him support when the platform for gaining it was available.

When generals seize power, hubris seizes them. They rhetorically ask: "Who will throw us out?" The answer is obvious in contemporary history, littered with examples of fallen generals. This is an age where Pinochet and Suharto are dragged to court as their former juniors watch.

It was obvious that the protocol of his coming India visit bothered Musharraf. Here was the general who sent three thousand Pakistani soldiers to their martyrdom in the icy peaks of Kargil. More often than not, as post-mortems of grass in empty bellies showed, they died of hunger rather than cold. Lines of supply were cut. The soldiers still fought, ready to die rather than retreat. Indian casualties were equally heavy.

And then there was the Indian premier's visit to Lahore in 1999. Then army chief Musharraf, along with the other service chiefs, was conspicuous by his absence. Musharraf, who refused to salute Vajpayee on home ground, was faced with the dilemma of saluting him on Indian territory, after the shedding of much blood in the interim.

Swearing himself in as president earlier than planned was Musharraf's answer to the awkward salute. Protocol could rank him higher than the Indian premier. Now the president of India will lay out the red welcoming carpet for the Kargil architect. Many Indian soldiers lost their lives in the Kargil fighting until America directed Islamabad to unilaterally withdraw.

In declaring himself president, Musharraf showed little consideration for the group of politicians that hoped to ride to power on his coat-tails. Promised power through the revival of the assemblies, they woke up in a cold sweat to the news that they were now redundant. But power is a strange creature without friends or foes - only vested interests. In this case, those vested interests came to the fore ruthlessly, rapidly and without niceties or courtesies.

The dissolution of the assemblies showed the vulnerable side of the Musharraf regime. The dismissal of the assemblies was evidence that Musharraf lost confidence. He no longer believed that the old parliament could elect him or give him the vast powers desired.

Given the pressure for fair and free elections, and the inability of the Musharraf regime to deliver so far, it appears unlikely that the next elected parliament, due in 2002, will please Musharraf any better. So where does that leave the man who said "God has been very kind to me" when he declared himself president?

There are four options that the generals now have to acquire legitimacy. First, an extension from the Supreme Court for the term allocated so far. But this will stir up misgivings amongst the international community. Second, a manipulated referendum could confirm legitimacy but is a double-edged sword. The people could boycott, making it difficult to fill the ballot boxes. Third, election through the local councillors, but that too is double-edged. Strong-arm tactics could backfire. Fourth, an understanding with the opposition alliance. Since the last option causes military hearts to verge on near fatal attacks, that leaves three substantive options for them.

None of the preferred options are clean or tidy. Excluded political parties will resist those options, making the international strategic factors critical. Ironically,

such external support now hinges on the benevolence that nemesis Vajpayee is willing to bestow.

Clearly, reducing tensions between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan is the unanimous strategic compulsion of the international community. The question being asked is whether Vajpayee can do business with Musharraf? They will get to know each other when the two men meet in the retreat. The non-papers they exchanged in the follow-up to the meeting remains secret. New Delhi is playing on the local boy comes home theme. The Indian home where a two-year old Musharraf played before the family migrated to Pakistan in the Indian capital is being done up. And, as the Clinton visit showed, the Indians know how to wine and dine a dignitary. That can be intoxicating.

The downside is that any agreement between the two will be disputed. Musharraf goes to New Delhi without the support of the people. He is not on speaking terms with his elected predecessors. Besides, much as Musharraf may wish to win a Nobel Peace Prize, it is a poor compensation for the rest of the Pakistani army. And he knows it. Lacking legitimacy and representation, it is unlikely that Musharraf can do more than regurgitate old agreements on nuclear confidence, trade or gas pipeline.

Pakistan's Supreme Court gave the generals a mandate to govern until October 2002. Given that so little time is left to that date, uncertainty has increased with the sacking of the assemblies and the ouster of the previous president.

If there is a silver lining in the dark cloud of the self-declared Musharraf presidency, it is that the declaration outlines political succession. The provisional constitutional order provides for an acting president of Pakistan should the president be absent.

Other than that, there is little to cheer about. Whether Musharraf calls himself president, prime minister or the Chief of Army Staff, he is the man running the show. He is responsible for the political and economic situation in Pakistan. Given the political polarization in the country, the lack of freedoms, development and economic progress and the representative nature of the military regime, it makes little difference what Musharraf calls himself.

The Dynamics of a Political Marriage

July 9, 2001

On the sixth day of July my interview to BBC's Hard Talk Pakistan was broadcast. I knew the Generals who seized power two years back would dislike what I had to say. But I also knew that the democratic principles for which my Party and Family sacrificed so much, called upon me to speak out.

Musharaf has no mandate to represent Pakistan", I told the BBC. "The trip to India is geared to take pressure off from Afghanistan where sanctions are making life difficult for Islamabad. It's all tactics. Moreover, as an unelected dictator, he lacks the mandate to represent my people and my country."

Three hours after the Hard Talk interview was broadcast, the telephone rang. It was midnight. I picked up the phone. I learnt that my husband was kidnapped from his Islamabad hospital bed, where he is kept in solitary confinement. The windows are blackened to prevent him looking out at the blue sky and the green grass. Often there is a closed circuit camera monitoring him around the clock.

"They have taken him away and we do not know where," I was told. My children were asleep and I could make phone calls without worrying about them listening in to the conversation. Young minds are easily affected.

Several calls followed to find out Asif's location from Party supporters in the government. I learnt that Asif was being flown twelve hundred miles away to a city called Hyderabad, a city whose people have always shown great affection to me. I quickly asked Party officials to alert our supporters in Hyderabad and many were woken up in the early hours of the morning. They responded with enthusiasm. By the time Asif was produced in court, a large crowd of lawyers and the public had gathered. They shouted slogans calling for Asif's release and vociferously declared his innocence.

The action of my interview to BBC, and the reaction of the regime on Asif, is a clear glimpse into the workings of a political marriage in a traditional Muslim society. If my own role of a working woman in a Muslim society was new, so was the role of my spouse. Too many in Muslim societies see a woman as a piece of property owned and possessed by men. A woman is viewed as an entity without the right to life, custody of her children or choice in the husband she marries. These are the "serious" issues that men alone are given the wisdom to decide.

Women, therefore, can be forced into marriages, killed if they walk out on abusive marriages and denied custody to children in the event that divorce is permitted. Women are debased and seen as mere extensions of husbands and Fathers and Brothers.

The modern Muslim woman believes otherwise. She sees Islam giving her the right to choice, to equality and to opportunity. Many of the modern males concur. There are now more working women across the length and breadth of the vast Islamic world. But the traditionalists are still to accept the modern role of the Muslim woman in the twenty-first century. Even as more Muslim countries allow women entrance to Parliament, and women turn to professions, the implacable opposition of the traditionalists remains.

My husband Asif is a victim to traditional thinking, conscious and unconscious, in too many male minds unable to come to terms with the changes that my lifestyle signifies. He is the hostage to my political career. Viewed as the man who failed male expectations in treating his wife as a piece of property, anger is vented on him. He is blamed for “permitting” her to walk and work outside the four walls of the house and the four confines of the Chador. The Chador is the full-length cloth with which traditional women covered themselves. In the poisoned chalice of the extreme male thinking, he is to be punished for what I do.

To his credit and courage, Asif bore every indignity, punishment, humiliation and torture without a word of complaint. He accepted, from the day we married, that we are two different legal entities. He never interfered in my work and I never interfered in his. He had his profession and I had my profession, as do so many in the West. Back at home in the evenings, from our separate work schedules, we shared the joy of our family as others in modern communities do. This was a relationship contrary to centuries of male behaviour.

Male honour, for extremists, dictates that men are responsible for the action of women folk. My husband is the horse that is flogged every time I speak or write or live my life. I am seen as his extension and so to punish me, they must punish him. And in punishing him, they hope to force him to tell his wife to behave, to contain her behavior and conform to his, and their, dictates.

Last December, when I was considering returning home, Asif was snatched from his sleep and shifted suddenly and without warning to Islamabad. Despite his painful spondylitis and court calls to release him on medical bail, he was denied freedom. He was to be punished. He was taken in an armoured personnel carrier to the far-flung area of an old British fort in the northern part of Pakistan.

During one proceeding at Attock, after another statement of mine, the roof fell down on Asif. He was saved by the plank hitting the fan and hurtling out of his direction. Apparently, one of the military guards was walking on the old roof when it collapsed straight on where Asif was sitting. I am still waiting to hear how the guard escaped falling in with the collapsing roof.

I have three children. My eldest daughter is eleven. For eight years of her life, she has lived without a Father held to punish her Mother. For eight years, in two spans of opposition since 1990, my husband lost his liberty, lost the right to see his children grow or to share with them each exciting new moment of their childhood. Even their grandfather was arrested and remains in prison.

Despite a mountain of charges, each more incredible than another, God's Mercy was upon us. Despite politically motivated investigations, handpicked judges, motivated prosecutors and a billion rupees spent in government funds on detectives, law firms and propaganda, not a single charge was proved.

Often cases are dismissed when pre-trial publicity prejudices the public mind. In our case, the pre trial publicity prejudiced the public mind, but the cases still continued.

The revenge for my BBC Hard Talk interview is a classic illustration of the murder of justice in my country.

My husband was picked up and taken to a destination unknown to him. He was denied sleep through the night. He was flown in a private helicopter belonging to a charity known as the Edhi Trust before being produced before Judge Solangi in the Anti Terrorist Court in Hyderabad.

The Hyderabad murder trial is the fourth case, since the military backed the overthrow of my government in 1996, which carries the death sentence. The military wants to remind me that it hanged my Father, Premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in 1979, for conspiring to kill a man still alive in 2001. They want to tell me that after that brazen act which went unpunished, they could be equally brazen about my husband.

But as a person with Faith, I believe that the time of birth and death are written. I know that time passes, realities change and it's important to face life's challenges with dignity and courage. That's what both my husband and I try to do.

Kidnapping my husband from his hospital bed three hours after my BBC interview in violation of the orders of Pakistan's Supreme Court was brazen.

Equally brazen was the handpicked judge in the special anti terrorist court. Asif explained to Judge Solangi that he was flown into Hyderabad after a sleep deprived, nightlong-unexpected journey from state-to-state without legal notice and his production was illegal. He expected the court to provide relief to him. The Judge refused to allow him time and right to hire a defense counsel although the right to defense is guaranteed under law. The Judge proceeded to record witness testimony without Asif even knowing the case material against him or the purpose of the prosecution witnesses' testimony.

Ironically, the case relates to the murder of a man who died while Asif was locked up in a high security prison some four years back.

The actions of Judge Solangi cast a deep stain on growing controversies regarding the rule of law in Pakistan. Pakistan's judiciary moved recently to clear up its image. Two judges resigned amidst public hopes that justice in Pakistan could be strengthened. The actions of Judge Solangi showed the deepness of the rot in parts of Pakistan's justice system. It also highlighted the need to reform the judiciary to ensure that the rule of law could prevail in the country.

I do worry for my husband. He is ailing and in need of medical treatment. Three years back, the courts called for his release on medical grounds. But the regime challenges this hoping to squeeze us further. They want Asif to do a deal with them. They want to rid politics of the Bhutto factor and they want to "prove" that their false accusations are correct. In old days, highwaymen robbers stopped carriages and held people ransom for money. So too with the Generals.

In a duel of unexpected strengths, the regime has the force of might with it. We have the force of right. Might and Right are on a collision course in a marriage where the husband is a hostage to his wife's political fortune. In Pakistan, we have a saying that victory and defeat are in God's hand. The weapon in the individual's hand is the personal conduct. Despite the odds, we know that our struggle is writing the history of the future direction of our country.

And so we take the unusual events in our stride, although it is easier for me. I am free and with the children. Asif is in prison. Eight years of his life snatched since 1990. But the thirst of the persecutors is unquenched. He's had the courage to bear the prison, entanglement in a mountain of serious and life-threatening cases, tortured mentally and physically, nearly killed under torture, without a conviction. Asif is ailing. I am proud of his dignity and courage.

But his fight for due process and justice is more than a lone persons struggle. It is the struggle of each one of us that believes in human dignity, the rule of law and the majesty of justice.

In this modern Muslim marriage, I travel the world promoting democracy never knowing when I will see my husband again. My children ask, as the almond trees in our garden grow bigger, when they can see their Father. I tell them I do not know but that their Father is a special man for facing the wrath of those that want to punish their Mother. I tell them they must be patient for God rewards those who are patient.

In the Muslim world, there is a growing recognition that Muslim women need to cross extra barriers of prejudice to succeed. Yet, even as more Muslim women enter the work force, its important to recognise that prejudice against working Muslim woman walks hand in hand with prejudice against the husband of the working Muslim woman. Therefore the challenges that modern Muslim marriages face are greater than those faced in the West. And these are the challenges the young Muslim couples, better educated than their Parents, and with higher ambitions, will face as they cross the threshold into the world of today.

I wish them well.

Military Regime Has Failed To Revive Pakistan Economy

10 July 2001

When coup leader General Pervez Musharraf seized power in October 1999, he promised to revive the economy. Those dreams of revival lay shattered as an ashen-faced Finance Minister confessed that national growth fell to its lowest levels. Only the Musharraf regime was surprised by the dismal performance.

Political observers had predicted the economic fall when last year's budget was announced. Those who fail to learn from history, repeat its mistakes. The second Federal Budget for 2001-2002 announced by the military regime will further deteriorate Pakistan's economy.

The story of the budget is the story of a country where economic recession bites, the huge debt is a monstrous burden; there is low investment and an alarming rise in poverty. Just four years back in 1996, Pakistan's economy was booming as the country economically stood at the cross roads of Central and South Asia.

The dismissal of the democratic government, and its replacement with one fascist after another, brought a precipitous economic fall in a country which has detonated nuclear devices and has 750,000 men in uniform. In four years, Pakistan went from enjoying GDP growth rate of 6.76 percent, the second highest growth rate in the developing world, to amongst the lowest at 2.8 percent.

The fall of the growth rate directly relates to poverty. As the growth rates falls, with it falls the purchasing power. The drop in purchasing power paralyses the economy further. Shops remain empty of shoppers and houses remain empty of tenants. Money stops circulating forcing a rise in poverty and misery. In 1996, total investment amounted to 19 percent of GNP. Now it stands at nearly half that figure. This amounts to a reduction of roughly Rs150 billion in investment. Given that investment is the fuel that propels the economy, the drop in its figure is alarming. Yet, Pakistan is a country that can attract investment.

Four years back, the average direct foreign investment was above \$1 billion with promises of over 22 billion dollars in the short term. That massive inflow dried up as soon as democracy was derailed by presidential order. Even the medals on the Generals chest failed to dazzle investors as he spoke of order, transparency and stability in countries as far off as Vietnam, Baghdad and Tripoli and as near as Burma. Now foreign investment still trickling in from old MoUs have fallen to below \$200 million. Domestic investors are choosing to invest in countries as near

as the Gulf and as far as Canada. Their hard earned money is safe in countries where there is the rule of the law and honest government. Consequently, not a single new company was listed on Karachi Stock Exchange for three years in a row. This is a harsh indictment in the court of the people against the non-democratic values giving birth to a rising clerical movement across the breadth and length of the country.

An alarming decline in foreign exchange reserves forced Islamabad into a new financial arrangement with the IMF last November. Given that Pakistan's Finance Minister [Shaukat Aziz] is a private banker with experience in public relations, it was unsurprising to see Islamabad choose an ill-suited, high-cost, short-term stand-by program. An experienced minister, versed in budgetary affairs, and the workings of international financial institutions, could have chosen a more attractive package. The IMF does offer a poverty facility program. The stand-by paved the way for a second re-scheduling of Islamabad's debts with the Paris Club. This was paraded as a great accomplishment in ignorance. The Paris Club has several debt relief packages with different terms and conditions. Pakistan's debt was rescheduled under the more modest Houston terms.

The second rescheduling of debt took place on the same terms as the earlier package negotiated by Premier Nawaz Sharif when Islamabad stood close to default. It indicated that the Paris Club saw little reason to treat the military regime any differently than its predecessor. All Islamabad achieved was a small, short term breathing space before a heavier burden landed in its lap in the form of even more difficult debt-service obligations. At the end of the stand-by period, the rescheduled debt will be added back with compound interest. Islamabad will actually be worse off than before, once again, facing the spectre of default.

The international financial agreements sent a clear message: the international community lacks confidence in the present dispensation. While Islamabad was kept afloat, the leash was tight. It looks unlikely that the leash can loosen unless Islamabad responds to the deafening calls for a return to democracy. The agreements with the international financial institutions are yet to translate into an improved balance of payments. The flight of capital continues as does the downward spiral of the Pakistani rupee. Foreign exchange reserves cover a fortnight of imports despite unconventional means to prop them.

The Generals promised to strengthen the institutions and restructure public enterprises. More than half way down their tenure, none of the institutions showed improvement. The induction of army officers in the police, education system, civil service and tax administration pleased the army officers, but demoralised the civil servants. The much touted privatisation program ran into

controversies and allegations of corruption. Not a single entity is yet privatised despite potential Fortune Five Hundred companies in the telecommunication and gas sector going for peanuts.

First, the people lost their Constitution, then the judges lost their oaths and now the budget has taken away their right to hope. There is little in the budget than a repetition of last year's over optimistic revenue figures and understated expenditures. A severe water shortage is threatening parts of the country with famine. The budget addresses the issue by declaring certain water projects. Yet, with ongoing projects starved for cash, its improbable that priorities can be changed drastically. Nor are we told where the finance is to come from for such projects. One can conclude that this is a public relations ploy.

Textile might get a breather because of the World Trade Organisation agreement where reduction in duties is envisaged. However, it is unlikely to boost production in a meaningful way. Agriculture, the mainstay of the Pakistani economy, failed to find mention. From a growth rate of over seven percent under democracy, it is now sliding towards a negative growth rate. Government employees were thrilled to learn about a 50 percent increase in wages. When they go to collect their pay checks, they will find this another public relations exercise. All past ad hoc relief over four years will be subtracted bringing the raise down by three-fourths.

Last year, the Generals involved the army in a massive survey and registration exercise promising to raise revenues. That exercise failed as revenues remained low. The crucial tax reforms promised last year are yet to be promulgated. That report was to be released to the public last December. Six months later, the public is still waiting. Then there is the claim of fiscal adjustment. The Generals targeted a budget deficit of 4.6 percent of GDP for the current fiscal year. The revised figures in the budget, indicate the actual deficit is 5.3 percent of GDP, 0.7 percent higher than the target deficit. That means a higher deficit next year too than announced. Market response to the budget was one of apathy and disappointment.

The economy is in shambles, the country on the verge of slipping into an abyss. Low growth, low revenue, low investment are adversely affecting Pakistan's standing in the international community while rapidly increasing poverty levels at home. Yet, as Pakistan's experiment with democracy showed in 1996, Pakistan can emerge from its low growth-high debt trap. But it seems unlikely that the Generals are in any mood to give up derailing democracy. At least until the plummeting economy bites into the army.

INDO-PAK SUMMIT 2001 July 12, 2001

As General Musharaf and his delegation prepare to leave for New Delhi airport, my thoughts go back to another airport and another tarmac.

I recall Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Islamabad on a chill December day as the sun shone warmly. The hope for peace and freedom filled the air as the band struck the music and the Pakistan Army Guard smartly marched passed.

The military and its political supporters sabotaged that spring in Indo Pak relations. It is with a sense of personal moral vindication that I watch the army chief, twelve years later, realize the wisdom of my politics and seek to follow my footsteps in defusing tensions with our larger neighbour.

I do feel a sense of national loss. Twelve years, and many thousands of deaths later, Islamabad begged for a meeting "any time and any place" when a dignified opportunity was available earlier.

The Musharaf visit is controversial for three reasons: legitimacy, military history and Kashmir history.

As an unelected and unrepresentative leader, Musharaf lacks legitimacy. The very army he leads can turn around tomorrow and make this argument when he joins the ranks of former chiefs. Moreover, he lacks the moral and political authority to co-opt the people.

Pakistan's military history bodes ill for his visit too. Each military dictator was anxious to offer a no war pact to India which India rejected. Both countries believe that Islamabad can afford an insurgency but needs to avoid war. True to military history, Musharaf made the same offer.

Then there is recent Kashmir history. Musharaf was the architect of the Kargil crisis where thousands of Pakistani soldiers and Kashmiri militants lost their lives. Musharaf, like Lady Macbeth, finds it difficult to wash the stains of their blood from his hands. When he flies into Agra with his seventy-man delegation, the ghosts of three thousand Pakistani soldiers, buried secretly, fly with him. He will see their faces as they starved to death in the icy peaks of Kargil when supply lines stopped.

There are the faces of the living, those forced to retreat when America ordered the unilateral withdrawal from Kargil. Can Musharaf offer something to compensate the earlier humiliation? For what the martyrdoms, for what the operation and unilateral withdrawal, for what the refusal to salute if the conclusion was an embrace two years later in Delhi.

A new, elected, government is free of the constraints of the burden of Kargil. And Kargil was a heavy burden. That is why, it is argued, that peace was better left to an elected and representative government. That is why, it was argued, far better for Musharaf to focus on the democratization process. But it seems “making up with Vajpayee” was a better option than “making up with the Opposition”.

Much of the debate on the Musharaf visit focuses on the intentions of the man as he makes his way to Agra. His accommodation overlooks the famous Taj Mahal, the monument of love built by a Muslim Emperor for his Queen. New Delhi hopes the vision can inspire a fresh romance between the two countries.

But are such hopes well founded?

There is a thinking in New Delhi that more is squeezed from a dictator than a democrat. Pakistanis may believe that democrats pioneered the lasting peace moves between the two countries but Delhi hears other arguments. They remember Zia who defended the loss of Siachin posts as “worthless ice where flowers cannot grow”.

Premier Vajpayee can lose little in sounding out a Musharaf who pleaded from every platform for “a meeting, any time and any place”. There is much that Premier Vajpayee can gain. Entertaining Musharaf to tea and pastries, showing him his old home, the shops and the shrines, pausing to mention Kashmir and moving on, morally vindicates Vajpayee. His policies bring the Kargil architect to his door on his terms.

What of Musharaf?

Four explanations come to mind for the Musharaf visit. First, that Musharaf was reborn the day he seized power from Premier Nawaz. The commando, who refused to salute the hated Indian enemy, and masterminded Kargil to highlight Indian impotence, died the day the coup took place. Instead, like a butterfly emerging from the chrysalis, a soldier for peace was born yearning to replace the medals on his chest with a Nobel Prize.

The difficulty in the “rebirth” theory is that Musharaf’s base is the military Establishment and the religious parties. We are yet to see signs of change in a military establishment smarting from its Kargil retreat after winning the peaks and facing Indian pounding.

The second explanation is that the Musharaf visit is a tactical move on the lines of Kargil deception. Catching the enemy unawares is the name of the game.

The third explanation is that the hourglass is ticking away for Musharaf. The way to win international approval for his continuation in power, Musharaf needs to show he is a man the Indians can do business with.

The fourth explanation lies in Pakistan’s Northern Front. Embroiled with the Taliban, under pressure from UN sanctions, Islamabad desperately needs to release the international pressure from the Afghan front. What better way to mitigate the bad cop image than tactically playing good cop in New Delhi?

The press speculated on the agenda of the talks between the two leaders when they hole up in the Retreat together. Islamabad’s press speculated on non-papers, of far reaching and secret understandings reached by both sides.

That appears doubtful. More likely are continuation of the PPP led agreements.

The PPP agreements that could be taken up in New Delhi include:

- First, a continuation of the non-attack on each others nuclear facilities agreement. Given the nervousness of the international community over nuclear affairs, nuclear risk reduction measures can come under discussion;
- Second, the re-deployment to Kargil negotiated in the summer of 1989 can be considered.
- Third, the expansion of trade for which much work was done by Commerce Minister Mukhtar.
- Fourth, greater travel facilities between the two countries in the light of the PPP proposal at SAARC conference in December 1988 for visa relaxation.
- Fifth, mutual reduction of troops that was discussed by the two sides during the 1989 talks and for which much progress was made by the intelligence chiefs of both sides.

- Sixth, the Iran Pakistan India pipeline project sanctioned by the second Benazir government.

The Middle East Peace talks and the Good Friday Agreements on Northern Ireland sparked a flurry of speculation that the Pakistan's military dictator could make a dramatic breakthrough on Kashmir. That appears unlikely. However, the foundation for a continued dialogue at the highest levels between the two countries could be laid. The regional association SAARC was to provide that opportunity to India and Pakistan. But its meetings were irregular.

Musharaf goes to New Delhi as Islamabad's weakest ruler. Lacking legitimacy, internal unity and fiscal manoeuvrability, his visit to New Delhi is full of pitfalls. Lacking good advice, or foreign policy experience, he failed to build the internal consensus that was so necessary to ensure a better base. Some tested his will to build internal consensus, but he found it hard to swallow the release of ten political dissidents and a date for elections in exchange for political support on his perilous New Delhi journey.

And if its difficult to swallow the release of ten political dissidents, we can imagine how much more difficult it is to swallow the death of three thousand innocent soldiers who gave their lives in the mountainous glaciers for their Motherland's honour on the Commanders orders.

The Agra Summit July 16, 2001

General Musharraf flew into the Indian capital to a resplendent red carpet welcome. He tried not to smile. I remembered my father's words when we flew into Chandigarh to begin the Simla Summit in 1972.

"Do not smile", my father said. "Remember our soldiers who died and are imprisoned. And do not look grim, otherwise the Press will say the talks are doomed".

Yet, it was difficult to look unhappy as our Indian hosts smilingly and happily met us. The warmth of their reception was infectious, even if Indian Premier Gandhi was more aloof.

Airports can be windy. My father wore a suit. General Musharraf, who often wears suits in Pakistan, chose to wear a Sherwani. The Sherwani flapped in the wind as the General tried to inspect the guard and meet the VIPs standing in line.

The awkwardness of the flapping Sherwani summed up the awkward arrival. There was the Indian military presenting a guard of honour to the man who started a war in which so many of their colleagues died. In turn, the General saluting those who fought back in Kargil killing men he led in the Pakistan army.

Simla was different. Islamabad's rulers, who presided over the fighting in Dacca, had gone. A new leadership with new hopes came to India to build a new relationship. Its arrival was not an insult to the memory of the slain nor was it burdened with complexes over operations gone wrong. The Simla Agreement, child of the seventies Summit, gave birth to the longest lasting peace between the two countries, even when conflict came perilously close.

The Simla Agreement's strength lay in that it was an agreement between two democratically elected leaders. They had a mandate and they used it effectively.

Musharraf's lack of mandate is the major impediment in the Agra Summit providing an understanding of the strength and durability of Simla.

And Premier Vajpayee is a leader already bitten once. Can he take a risk, and be bitten twice?

Even as the General arrived in New Delhi, the drums of death echoed in the disputed Kashmir Valley. Five Indian soldiers and seven Kashmiri militants died in a grim reminder of the violence that shadows the Summit.

Much is at stake in this Summit between two leaders who meet in Agra, the city of the Taj Mahal, a monument of love and a symbol of Muslim power.

South Asia is one of the most dangerous places in the world. Two nuclear equipped powers stare each other eyeball to eyeball. Their leaders meet after a gap of two years and with much behind the scenes prodding.

The Indian Foreign Office plans well. American President Clinton was bowled over by the reception he received on his visit to the world's largest democracy. General Musharraf's itinerary is one that can make the hardest hearts melt. On Indian soil he was received as the undisputed President of Pakistan, an honour his own people have yet to grant him.

The Indian Foreign Office route took Musharraf to the Mahatma Gandhi shrine. There he threw roses in tribute to the ascetic who preached non-violence. He was feted at a lunch where a galaxy of Indian stars turned out to bedazzle him. Next he visited his old home, receiving the gift of the original sale deeds with his Father's signature. At night, he feasted on a sumptuous banquet while the naval band played, Meri Awaz Suno (Listen to my voice).

The Taj Mahal, the Gandhi Memorial, the old home and the star-studded lunch give a clear message of "love, peace, welcome back home and you can be a star too". The first day was the day the diplomats dedicated to creating a warm ambiance for the two leaders to meet.

Simla was different. It was business from beginning to end. Ninety thousand prisoners of war were in the camps and the Bengali leader was threatening war crimes for the genocide perpetuated in Bengal. As a teenager, I was the light relief for the international Press. Taken to a convent, to the bookshops, to a tinned fruit cottage industry, I was surprised by the number of Indians who turned out to greet me. The huge crowds and smiling faces showed a people to people desire to improve relations as their leaders holed up for serious dialogue.

For the Musharraf visit, gun-totting commandos replaced the crowds that lined the main streets. Fears of hardliners taking extreme measures forced police vigil at key points. The Black Cat elite commandos and the deserted streets sent a message of their own. Even if the diplomats did their best to create warmth, the talks could be tough. The Indian Air Chief refused to salute Musharraf.

Much depends on the chemistry the Summit leaders build up when they meet in the Retreat without aides. As a trained commando versed in the game of camouflage, Musharraf walks a tight rope between peaceniks and warmongers. The Indian politician and the Pakistani commando meet alone as the whole world watches.

At Simla, with sub-continental prejudice, the bureaucrats decided on a code word to determine the success or failure of the talks. "If it's a success, we will say a boy is born and if a failure, we will say it's a girl".

South Asia, and the larger world community, waits with bated breath to see the offspring of the Musharraf-Vajpayee talks at Agra, the city of love.

Declarations are difficult for generals **“The News” - July 18, 2001**

It was drama at high noon when General Musharraf sped towards Agra airport even though the clock struck midnight on. After much expectation, and courtship, the so-called “historic summit” collapsed like a pack of cards. Even the cynics criticising Musharraf for making the journey to Agra without mandate expected a joint declaration. There wasn't even a joint statement.

Blaming Pakistani politicians for succumbing to army pressure, some in India believed it better to do business with the army instead. They found a self-confessing powerless army chief who claimed he'd have to live in India in his old neharwali house if he signed a declaration. The civilian leaders signed Simla, Islamabad and Lahore. All honourable agreements.

Diplomacy is the art of the possible. Political leaders are trained in the art of give and take. General Musharraf is a military dictator. When he speaks, others jump to attention. If they don't, they are locked away. Surrounded by unelectable yes men, Musharraf, despite proclaimed good intentions, stumbled at each key test: date for elections, political victimisation, economic revival and now foreign policy.

It was startling to witness the puerile brinkmanship where the Indians called the bluff. Time was always running short and then extended. First came the breakfast press ultimatum. Next delay after scheduled time for talks ended. The visit to Ajmer Sharif was postponed too. Islamabad got angry when, having called wolf once too often, Indian sources leaked that the talks would continue the next day. The minute preparations for the Summit came to nothing. Even the ancient knowledge of spicing food with special mood enhancing herbs failed to deliver.

Musharraf made key errors in the trip. He failed to build an internal consensus of legitimate political forces. He went to India on the props of Pakistan's extremist parties, posing with them before his visit. He relied on an inefficient team which failed him previously. Had they given good advice, he would have stayed an extra day, matching Indian patience with greater patience of his own. Exhausting the other side is a pretty elementary diplomatic trick. Instead he left in a huff.

Apparently Islamabad was keen for a declaration and New Delhi knew it. This was revealed by a Pakistani delegate who told the Gulf News, “I went up to Jaswant Singh and told him he could write what he wanted, we would accept it”. This is extraordinary. It is stunning in its crumbling of political will under

pressure. It is little wonder that Foreign Minister Jaswant wanted another day of talks to put in his wish list given the accommodation offered by Islamabad. It is also a case study of why Generals should look after borders and let politicians deal with diplomacy.

Kashmir is central to Pakistani thinking but the Indians have a different view. Narrowing the gulf was the purpose of the visit. If there is an legacy to this Summit, it is that Musharraf allowed New Delhi to match Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmir Dispute with an equally shrill and high profile repetition of "cross border terrorism". Since 1993, when the diplomat Dixit offered Pakistan Kashmir as a separate agenda item at the Cyprus Commonwealth Conference, the Indian side was willing to include Kashmir as the bone of contention. But the interpretation of that contention is different to Pakistan's. The lack of continuity in Pakistan's governments and foreign office allowed for ignoring this significant development.

Narrowing the focus to the words on a draft statement, usually successfully manoeuvred by diplomats, overlooks the larger picture. That picture involves tense relations between two nuclear capable states that have fought three wars and are daggers drawn at the Line of Control in the disputed Kashmir Valley. A nervous world community pushed both leaders towards the negotiating table to lessen tensions dangerous for a South Asia housing one-fifth of humanity.

Some hoped that Musharraf in sherwani would be a born again peacemaker. But he was hampered by his past and his dependence on a military constituency wedded to militancy since the Afghan Jihad days. He lacked a popular mandate and desired his Nation's highest constitutional posts. He carried the costly burden of the death of three thousand soldiers who died in the Kargil operation. Given his agenda, ambitions, army, America and Afghanistan, Musharraf played his cards well, except for the late night departure.

Camouflage is second nature to the commando and the camouflage came in handy. Landing in his sherwani, he hid the soldier who personally fought in two front lines with India courting death with every breath. Soon the sherwani was replaced with the informal short sleeved and tieless look. The message was, "I am at home and relaxed. You can trust me".

The President of India did just that. In his banquet speech, he called the General "one of its (India's) distinguished sons on his first visit to the city after nearly half a century". This was an amazing turnabout. The man, whose Kargil operation resulted in Indian soldiers losing their lives two years back, was quickly adopted

as one of its “distinguished sons” when he indicated an overt willingness to transform.

Given the opportunity, Musharraf played both constituencies. He met with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in a show of solidarity. He also flattered the Indian premier emphasising “the respect and honour for his dignity and statesmanship”. He said he was “prepared to go forward” and show “flexibility”. Lacking internal support, under international financial pressure to play good cop in Delhi and with the UN sanctions heating the Afghan front, the General played the full gallery until his patience ran out at night. He bought international time and good will in the run up to the Summit. He used that goodwill to seize the Presidency, assume draconian powers under the National Security Council, get another tranche of the IMF loan and victimise his opponents.

In New Delhi, he extended an invitation to Premier Vajpayee which was accepted. The promise of another Summit helps his attempts to choreograph a domestic political scenario by October 2002. The potential Summit diverts attention from the growing Talibanisation in Pakistan and the sinking economy. The Indian Foreign Office planned well. But Musharraf beat them at their own game except at the last moment. They went out to woo him but he initially wooed them instead. He hogged the press headlines changing suits several times a day. A different man for every occasion. Disarmingly portraying himself as the “frank and simple soldier.”

But the Summit revealed fatal flaws in the personality and background of the General who today commands the fate of 140 million Pakistanis. First, his dramatic and impetuousness midnight departure for Islamabad. Second, the deep wounds he evokes in both India and Pakistan. The Indian Air Chief, representing his three armed forces, refused to salute him repaying the earlier Lahore refusal to salute Vajpayee and demonstrating solidarity with Indian troops in Kashmir.

In Pakistan, the ghosts of Kargil watch Musharraf. Kargil was Pakistan’s biggest setback since Dacca’s fall in 1971. Having conquered Indian held peaks, borne the relentless pounding of Indian guns, paid the ultimate sacrifice in lives when supply lines cut and soldiers starved to death, the unilateral withdrawal insulted the soldiers. There is something undignified and unsavoury about Musharraf, the architect of the operation, scorning the lives lost. Therefore it was argued, far more dignified and honourable for the new government, unburdened by the cruel Kargil legacy, to enter negotiations after elections conclude in October 2002.

Musharraf had tea and cakes in Agra and posed at the Taj Mahal. Vajpayee’s coming next to have tea and cakes and pose at the Quaid-e-Azam’s Mazaar. These tea parties are yet to stop men and women dying in the blood soaked Kashmir

valley. So what were the gains and losses? That two leaders from two nuclear capable states finally broke their silence was an achievement in itself. They sized each other up. They agreed to meet again. But the price was heavy. Two ceasefires broke: the unilateral Indian ceasefire in the Kashmir valley and the Indo-Pak ceasefire between the two countries. Even as Musharraf declared, “a military solution is not an option” at the grand presidential dinner where his delegates feasted, more than eighty people lost their lives in renewed violence. The sound of bullets never stopped. It was a grim reminder of the real dangers South Asia poses to peace and security.

The failure of the Summit reinforces calls by Pakistani politicians for restoring democracy so representative governments can deal with diplomacy. More tellingly, the Summit showed that Politicians can come up with agreements but declarations are difficulties for Generals.

Megawati - Is She the One to Solve Indonesia's Mega Problems? The Nation - August 9, 2001

The rise of a woman Muslim leader in a fourth Muslim country, Indonesia, reflects the enormous changes taking place in the Muslim world as it enters the twenty first century.

The role of Islamic women is changing as more women leaders break glass ceilings to assume power for themselves. In so doing, they empower other women in other professions to break free of the prejudices of the past and compete for respect in their own right. They also send a powerful message of repudiation to those propagating a return to the past.

The rise of a woman leader as president in Indonesia contrasts sharply with the Taliban treatment of women in Afghanistan. The two contrasting images mirror the debate in the larger Muslim world where one billion Muslims stand at the crossroads. They choose between the oppression of women preached by the Taliban and the order of equal rights preached by the rest.

As the Muslim world churns between the challenges of modernity and the political crisis in the Middle East, East Asia dictates its own pattern of politics.

The rise of two East Asian women vice presidents in the wake of disgraced, elected presidents, is significant. It heralds an untraditional model of change in countries with a bitter history of military rule.

Elected presidents facing corruption allegations found power slipping from their hands. The key role in the power play came from the pillars of past dictatorships: the military and the police. Affected by the public outcry, the powerful institutions of state tilted towards the vice presidents. They defied the orders of the president and enabled the constitutional change to take place.

The changes in Indonesia and the Philippines indicate the social shifting of power. Increasingly, well organised groups and the media emerge as key political determinators. In both countries, the well organised anti president groups effectively delivered messages paralysing presidents. Both presidents fumbled in convincingly replying to corruption allegations amidst public outrage.

That outrage ultimately affected the allegiance of state functionaries.

Indonesia's Megawati and Philippines Arroyo share other similarities too. Both hail from political families and grew amidst political debate. They benefit from old networks of political allegiance to powerful males in their families. Certainly, Megawati's rise vindicates her Father, President Sukarno.

The charismatic, popular and nationalistic founding Father of the Indonesian islands was overthrown in a 1965 military coup d'etat. A blood bath followed. So many were killed that the rivers filled up with dead, bloated bodies. Megawati's family dropped from the pinnacle of power becoming political outcasts.

Megawati showed determination in defying a dictatorship which stitched parliament and stifled opposition. She heroically carried on her Father's legacy finally capturing the public imagination with her struggle. Following the elections that brought President Wahid to power, some thought Megawati was out manoeuvred by the wily Wahid, that she let the prized presidency slip from her hands. But events turned full cycle when Megawati became the constitutional rallying point for disgruntled political groups encouraged by Wahid's inability to meet modern demands of government.

Her road to the pinnacle of power was a rocky one. The military dictator succeeded in ousting her from the chairmanship of the Indonesian Democratic Party in 1996 and banned her from contesting elections that year. But Megawati, with the poor and the faithful supporting her, launched the Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party. Her standing grew and her party swept the polls winning the largest number of parliamentary seats three years later. Now General Suharto was the prisoner, and she the vice president.

With President Wahid's fall, Megawati's biggest challenge is the office of the Presidency itself. The road ahead will test her abilities as political manager and leader. The mystique of the great Sukarno name favours her, although she also inherits her Father's political foes. Her most serious challenge is meeting the economic expectations of the poverty stricken masses who supported her as the Indonesian economy nose-dived. They need job opportunities and inflation stabilisation to prevent fervour turning into disillusionment.

Indonesia is similar to Pakistan in that its powerful military undermined the democratic aspirations of its people. It is unlikely that the cornered General Suharto will give up that easily particularly since his family is endangered. He may appear weak and ill, but his family ruled for thirty decades putting down roots of its own. His long tenure retarded the growth of other political institutions that underpin democratic rule. Therein lies the trap-door of the Megawati presidency presenting the new leader with a formidable challenge.

Multi- ethnic countries coddled by the Cold War face similar challenges from Europe's Yugoslavia to Asia's Pakistan and Indonesia. Militant and armed groups challenge national cohesion. Pent up parochial sentiments push for expression against a collapse of political systems and end of economic assistance. One party systems in over centralised military dictatorships suppressed ethnic diversity while institutionalising discrimination. Now the chickens come home to roost as alienated ethnic groups jostle for more political space.

First Indonesia grappled with East Timor. Now the Aceh separatists are raising their voices. Borneo, Papua and West Timor are other areas where Indonesia's national fabric could strain. The new president needs all her skills to stop Indonesia's slide into anarchy and balkanisation.

While Megawati may be an untried and untested leader, she has the backing of Indonesia's powerful army--atleast for the present. The people and parliament support her too. The territorial integrity of her country--and its democratic aspirations-- rest on the shoulders of a lady brought up in tumult and turmoil. Her serenity in the face of storms could give Indonesia the stability it seeks.

Indonesia's first female president wrote history in becoming President. Now she shapes history as its new leader.

Restore Pakistani Democracy Monday, September 24, 2001

My run-in with Osama bin Laden began before he achieved international infamy. He supported the pro-Taliban forces in Pakistan in their bid to control Islamabad as the center for their battle against the civilized world.

In 1989 bin Laden poured more than \$10 million into an unsuccessful no-confidence move to bring down my government. Years later, after the attack on New York's World Trade Center in 1993, the bin Laden-backed mastermind, Ramzi Yousef, fled to Pakistan. Working with the FBI, my government's law enforcers apprehended Yousef near Islamabad. Before we extradited him, we learned the bin Laden apparatus had made two unsuccessful assassination attempts against me in 1993.

During the tenure of my democratic government, we closed an important paramilitary training university in Peshawar and disarmed other forces. We arrested militants; they were on the run. We extradited wanted terrorists.

They hit back by bombing the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, burning the National Assembly and hijacking a school bus. Of course, they were too busy fighting democracy to fight the world. But when my democratically elected government fell in November 1996, the range of the militants increased. With oversight and constraint gone from the halls of government in Islamabad, the fanatics turned their attention to their agenda of international terrorism.

The September 11 terror attacks, and their grim toll, climaxed in a call to end international terrorism. As America leads this fight, I caution that Pakistani democracy not be sacrificed at the altar of Afghanistan. It is Pakistani democracy that earlier contained the kind of terror and tragedy we witnessed in New York and Washington on Black Tuesday. It is democracy that can help contain fanaticism and terror in the future.

It is right for America, as it battles international terrorism, to sow the seeds of stability. Democracy and debt reduction are two pillars on which the edifice of a political structure promising peace and stability can be raised. It is also right to rescind the discriminatory Pressler sanctions, which soured relations between our countries for a generation.

It is also important for America and the rest of the world to keep their commitment to democratic values by continuing to press for party-based elections in Pakistan

next year open to all candidates and all parties. Democracies oppose terrorism. Democracies do not start wars. Democracy is the best safeguard against the Talibanization of Pakistan, a nuclear power.

Two of the most important long-term goals for our region should be the formation of a broad-based government in Afghanistan that gives confidence to the refugees to return to their land and, equally important, the restoration of true democracy to Pakistan. We must ensure that the military and security apparatus of Pakistan that fought in the Afghan jihad in the 1980s come under civilian control. The militarization of Pakistan must end.

Just as I once cautioned President George H. W. Bush's administration about "creating Frankenstein," today I caution his son about the same danger. Save Pakistani democracy from dictatorship in the name of anti-terrorism. Ultimately an anti-democratic Pakistan can become an anti-Western, fanatic threat to world peace.

The Terror Attack September 25, 2001

The long arm of terror struck deep in America's heart. Its reach and extent was astounding, unprecedented and worse than Pearl Harbour. The two mightiest symbols of global US economic and military might were savaged. President Bush described the ghastly tragedy as the first war of the 21st century.

The terror attacks were a crime against humanity. Most Muslims mourned with the USA as it grieved for the innocent dead and missing. Muslim countries condemned the terrorism.

The finger of suspicion pointed at Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi dissident sheltered by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. He, and those who harbour him, are in the dock. This makes it a matter of concern and introspection for the entire Islamic World.

It is wrong to suspect the entire Islamic World of being complicit in the crime of a few. Of nearly 1.2 billion Muslims on this planet, most condemned the attack. Only a small fraction of Muslims can be called militant. But Islamic states share a collective responsibility to keep their societies free from the stigma of militancy.

With few exceptions, Muslim countries oppose the use of terror to redress even what are perceived as legitimate grievances in the Middle East or elsewhere. They too are victims of international terrorists bent on destabilising the world order. The terrorist crime of epic proportions on US soil hurt Muslims individually and it hurt the image of Islam. Muslims will mostly pay the price of the colossal political fallout as the crescendo rises to exact revenge for this brazen strike at the heart of America. The expected Western backlash could be devastating.

It is doubtful that the conspirators predicted the swift and robust reaction of the Bush Administration in support of freedom. Nato, spanning the western world, threw its weight behind the US. Even Russia rapidly came on board.

A formidable alliance was quickly formed. The sheer scale of it is staggering, bringing together the US, Nato and Russia. The rallying point was the 'menace' of 'militant Islam'. Battle lines were quickly drawn to prepare for a real showdown with Islamic militants.

The Muslim world, in contrast, was in disarray, demonstrating an absence of direction in its camp. The inability of the Muslim world to deal with challenges

arising out of it showed its disunity. It was unable to stop two devastating fratricidal wars in the last two decades. The first was the Iran-Iraq War and the second the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq. The tussle for supremacy between the Taliban and their opponents was another debilitating bloodletting. The bottom line, as the terror acts in America showed, was an Islamic world that is unable to safeguard its own interests and image.

Militancy in the ranks of Muslims is as much a threat to Islamic societies in the world as it is to western values. Sadly, there is little concern in the Islamic countries to address the problem. We are yet to come to grips with what prompts a Muslim to become a radical, embrace violence and give up his life. We are yet to come together in guiding young, aggrieved Muslims on the responses possible as meaningful and acceptable forms of protest. The act of terror, of suicide bombing, is abhorrent. It is also an act of desperation, pessimism and of surrender.

The unipolar world has thrown up its own power parameters. The bi polar world allowed militarily and politically weaker countries to exploit the rivalry to their benefit. Now they can no longer do so, they appear to have gone into a shell shock. The vacuum created is being filled with the suicide bombers and the practitioners of terror.

After the human cost of the suicide bombings for humanity, comes the political cost for the Islamic world. The first casualty is the Palestinian. The second is the Kashmiri freedom struggle. India will use the terror attacks to bolster its own political position. The third casualty will surely be the Taliban although few tears will be shed for them. The fourth casualty is the image of Islam and the effect on Muslims living in the western world.

Perhaps the terror attacks in America are a wake up call to the Muslim community to build a consensus on basic issues. This includes promoting the image of Islam as one of peace disassociated with acts of terrorism. Second, that Islam emphasis sanctity to right to life. Third, that Muslims respect fundamental rights and are tolerant to those of other faiths and sects.

Living in the United Arab Emirates, it gives me great joy as a Believer to see the tolerance allowed religious worship. People of different faiths built places of worship even though they are not citizens. This is true of other Muslim countries too. Here people worship without fear. Sadly, this is no longer true in Pakistan.

Even as I write, Muslims of the Shia faith are gunned down in the streets of Karachi in the name of militancy. Those of minority faiths, as the Christians,

worship in fear. The schools which teach Pakistani Muslims to hate grow, when, for me, the message of Islam is of peace, love and tolerance.

Those of us who believe in peace, love and tolerance find it hard to reconcile to the Taliban message. This is a movement where cultural heritage is destroyed and the way a woman or a man dresses is dictated. This is a movement that cares little for its children starving in refugee camps. It is a movement that can risk its soil, endanger its friend Pakistan and destabilise the region in the name of giving sanctuary to one man who is not even an Afghan.

America reacted quickly when confronted with a threat to its citizens. Now it is time for Pakistan, to react to the threat to its society from armed groups and their supporters instilling fear in society

Los Angeles Times
Reproduces three year old interview of Ms Benazir Bhutto
vindicating her vision
September 23, 2001

The prestigious Los Angeles Times has printed an interview with former Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto taken three years back in October 1998. The interview gives the causes of Muslim alienation in the following words, "I can say for myself that part of the Western actions that perhaps inadvertently fed into the militancy was the handling of Muslim conflicts, for instance in Bosnia, Kashmir, Azerbaijan and other areas. There was a feeling that if Western powers had been involved the world would not silently have watched, but that this was Muslim blood that was being shed. So the inability to resolve Muslim disputes, particularly when they were resulting in outrages shown on television, was a factor"

The second significant portion of the interview relates to her call for Islamabad to distance itself from the Taliban as early as 1998. Following is the text of the interview.

The West and Islam: An interview with Benazir Bhutto Harvey Morris (Oct. 21 1998)

In an exclusive interview in London with Foreign Wire, the Pakistani opposition leader and former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, spoke about Islam's relations with the West, the Afghan crisis, the role of the renegade Saudi Osama bin Laden, and her aspirations to act as a focus of resistance to the "Talibanisation" of her country.

Q. The late Ayatollah Khomeini used to refer to "American Islam", by which he meant a conservative current of fundamentalism in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere which the West exploited to serve its own purposes in the Cold War. Now even that conservative Islam appears to be turning against the West. What is the nature of the crisis between Islam and the West and what can be done to solve it?

A. I have heard many people say to me that we have defeated one superpower and we can defeat another superpower. I have turned round and I have said that the reason the Soviet Union was defeated was that satellite information was coming into Pakistan, money was coming into Pakistan, arms were coming into Pakistan. So it was a collective global effort to defeat the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It wasn't the effort by a single one nation.

I can't really say what is the desire of this (fundamentalist) class, other than that they do dream of establishing a theocratic state. And they say that it's better to have peace than to have freedom. And they say its better to live in poverty and pride than to live in openness and what they term vulgarity. Certainly there's a certain reaction against the openness of Western society where sexual mores are discussed far more openly than in traditional societies.

I cannot speak for them because I am not one of them, but I can say for myself that part of the Western actions that perhaps inadvertently fed into the militancy was the handling of Muslim conflicts, for instance in Bosnia, Kashmir, Azerbaijan and other areas. There was a feeling that if Western powers had been involved the world would not silently have watched, but that this was Muslim blood that was being shed. So the inability to resolve Muslim disputes, particularly when they were resulting in outrages shown on television, was a factor. The fight is still continuing inside Pakistan and inside the larger Muslim world. Do we want the more open models of Southeast Asia, or do we want the examples of Iraq or Libya where you accept sanctions, or Iran where you say you don't mind if you have sanctions because you're going to stand on our own two feet?

So do we want the closed model or do we want the open model? Do we want the introverted model where we turn in on ourselves and then say it's all right if our people suffer because it's for the pride of the nation? Or do we want the more outward model which says that already we are living as part of a global community and these are the global values and we're going to compete according to these values. This is the debate that is really going on right now.

Q. A representative of this conservative but fiercely anti-Western current in Islam is Osama bin Laden, the man said to be behind the US embassy bombings in east Africa. What do you know about him?

A. There was a no confidence move against me in 1989. At that time the same Ziaist (former military dictator Zia ul-Haq) constituency saw me as an obstacle in the path of Islamisation of the country. They offered half a million dollars each to 14 of my legislators to defect so the no confidence would be a success. Some of these came to me and I said 'Take the first instalment and pretend you're with them.' So when the no confidence vote came they were my Trojan horses.

We heard at that time that the Saudi government had funded this operation, so I sent a minister to the Saudi government and the minister came back having been assured it was not the Saudi government but philanthropist Arabs who had played a part in the Afghan war and had sympathy with those who had worked with General Zia's government, and had therefore done it individually out of their own

personal finances. And that was when we first heard this name of Mr Bin Laden. We wondered who it was and we were told it was a very big construction family. But I don't think he did it so much against me, he did it more because he knew the people involved and they must have asked for a donation. Subsequently there were many such link ups.

Q. Afghanistan under the Taliban is rapidly overtaking Iran as the West's main bogeyman in the Islamic world. How has the Taliban succeeded in enforcing its will in Afghanistan and what is the part played by outside forces? Why is the fate of this poor, landlocked state now so vital, not only to Pakistan but to the wider region?

A. When we were growing up we used to learn in our classes on history that the Kashmir dispute formed the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. But it seems to me that ever since the seventies it is Afghanistan that has dominated Pakistan's foreign policy, first through the Soviet occupation and subsequently in the attempt to find a broad-based and representative government within Afghanistan. Part of it may be the legacy of the old Ziaist constituency which believed that the conquests into the sub-continent had always been from central Asia. The moguls had come from central Asia to Kabul and from Kabul into Delhi. So some of the people in the Ziaist constituency had viewed that Pakistan in its truest Islamic identity would be stretching all the way up to Kabul. This is their dream.

I remember during my first term as prime minister, when we established the Afghan interim government, there was talk of it declaring a confederation with Pakistan and then the confederate government would call upon Pakistan for military assistance in overthrowing the Kabul regime where (President) Najibullah still sat. I vetoed that plan, but it seems that Afghanistan remained a temptation for the Ziaist constituency. It was during my second time as prime minister that I first heard of the Taliban. And I was told that these were Afghan veterans who had returned to the madressehs to teach Islam but they now felt that peace needs to be restored; that there been too much fighting. So it was a movement for peace. There were accusations that Pakistan was supporting the Taliban. But in fact, to my knowledge, our support was limited to diplomatic and political initiatives and under those we always tried under my leadership to work for a broad-based government recognising that the Russians in central Asia had certain concerns and recognising that Iran had certain concerns.

In September 1996, my brother was killed and the government became paralysed, and taking advantage of that paralysis the Taliban walked unilaterally into Kabul. That was a break with everything that Pakistan under my government had been advising them. Subsequently the Taliban began a unilateral climb for total control

of Afghanistan. I felt this was more in keeping with the old Ziaist constituency which always dreamed of Pakistan having strategic depth through Afghanistan, although I don't understand how Pakistan can have strategic depth through Afghanistan because it is a landlocked country. I can understand us having strategic depth through Iran and I think that given the civil war in Afghanistan and the tension with India it is imperative for Pakistan not to close the avenue on the one neighbour that can give it access in the case of a blockade on the country.

So anyway, when the Taliban began their unilateral assault, I as leader of the position spoke against it in the parliament and people often said to me that I supported the Taliban in the past. We did not support the Taliban. We had a hands-off policy and gave the Taliban a role. We sought to advise them and during my tenure that advice prevailed. There was no Taliban domination of Afghanistan during my tenure. The situation was very different when I was prime minister of Pakistan than what occurred after we left. Subsequently serious and significant events occurred. Osama bin Laden has taken refuge in Afghanistan and has set up bases for training people who reportedly have been to other countries and are reportedly involved in an attack on Western installations and diplomatic centres in Africa. Secondly the Taliban are reportedly responsible for the kidnapping of Iranian diplomats. Now they've been killed. What I said in the assembly when I led the debate on foreign policy was that I was tired of hearing that we don't have any influence on the Taliban. I said the fact of the matter is that we may not have any military influence or financial influence but we do have diplomatic and political influence and we must tell the Taliban that we have recognised you and so the world is watching us. If you are not going to return those Iranians, we are going to have to break our diplomatic relations because we can't be seen to be recognising a regime which is fast taking on all the appearances of a rogue state. Subsequently came the news that the Iranian diplomats had been killed.

I would have liked to see Pakistan being much more forthright in its condemnation of what the Taliban is doing and my party believes that relations with Iran, central Asia and Russia must take precedence. Pakistan cannot repeat the Soviet error of becoming bogged down in Afghanistan by being overly identified with the Taliban, who do not qualify in criteria that is acceptable by global values, with democratic rights, women's rights or anti-terrorism efforts.

Q. What of your own political future in the face of the increasing Islamisation of Pakistan and the corruption charges laid against you by the Nawaz Sharif government?

A. I am very glad that with the rise of these theocrats our allies have grown within the parliament. For the first time there is a credible political alternative. Nawaz

wanted to lead the country without a credible political alternative. He wanted to isolate me by involving me in case after case. As he has had to fabricate most of this evidence he hasn't got very far, even though nearly two years have passed. These two years have given us time to put our own house in order and build up our allies and come together in a common programme, which I think is a positive development in Pakistan. I think there is a sea change in our supporters

Democracy vs. Terror - Islamic Countries Deserve Freedom Too
From The Wall Street Journal Editorial Page
Tuesday, September 25, 2001

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates--I feel America's pain. Four of the happiest years of my life were spent at Harvard, where I learned of America's freedom, tolerance, pluralism, openness and equal opportunity for all citizens. The microcosm of America that was destroyed on Sept. 11--people of all races and religions--is everything the extremists fear. These were educated men and women working side by side as equals. They were busboys and window washers earning money to send their children to college to have a better life than their parents. There were Muslims, Christians, Jews and Hindus, together and indistinguishable, building world-wide trade and communication. Modernity and diversity are the fanatics' worst nightmare.

At this time of crisis, the American people must remember that those who use violence and terror in the name of Islam are hypocrites. Their goal is to establish theocracies of ignorance that they can control and manipulate for their own political ends. They oppose Western values. They also oppose Islamic principles.

Samuel Huntington of Harvard wrote of an inevitable clash of civilization between the West and the Islamic world. The clash is not inevitable. The precepts of Islam are consistent with those of the Judeo-Christian world which preceded it.

In the Muslim Holy Book, Abraham is our father, just as Moses and Jesus are our prophets. There will be a clash of cultures only if we allow ignorance and fanaticism to take control. Those who would use commercial airliners as bombs against cities to provoke the clash of cultures strive to destroy peaceful coexistence. They want this to be West, not of the civilized world against terror. Those in the West who would target and beat innocent Muslims as a response only jump at the fanatics' bait, and advance the fanatics' goals.

As prime minister of Pakistan, I stood up to, and battled with, many of these same people, including Osama bin Laden. I closed their universities that taught violence and disarmed their madrassas, or religious schools, that turned children into fanatics and criminals. I tried to restore law and order to our cities under incessant assault from terrorist attack. My government extradited terrorists, like Ramzi Yousef, who exported death and destruction to New York in the 1990s.

They struck back at me and my allies. They destroyed the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad. They burned our National Assembly, hijacked a school bus, gunned down diplomats and businessmen in the streets, and organized and financed schemes to topple my government. Despite the political price paid, my regret is that our democratic government fell before they brought more terror to Pakistan and then to America.

As the international community prepares an effective response to the most monstrous terrorist attack in history, we can remember the lessons of history and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

In the closing days of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, during a state visit to Washington, I cautioned the U.S. administration that our joint policy to defeat the Soviets had empowered the most extreme elements of the Afghan mujahideen at the expense of the moderates. The overall policy of standing against Soviet aggression in Afghanistan was right. Yet the early decisions by the CIA and its Pakistani counterpart at Inter-services Intelligence to arm, train, and supply the most extreme fanatics unknowingly sowed the seed for the 21st-century terrorism now unfolding around us.

In our governments' combined zeal to defeat the Soviets, we failed to plan a postwar Afghanistan built on coalition, consensus and cooperation. The fundamental mistake, contributing to a long-term historical calamity, was our inability to uphold in Kabul the values of freedom, democracy and self-determination that ultimately undermine the basic tenets of terrorism.

Just as democracies do not make wars of aggression, democracies also do not sponsor international terrorism. The Pakistan Peoples Party that I am proud to lead has given support to Pakistan's military regime at a time of internal crisis. As the extremists took to the streets, we put aside partisan considerations in supporting Islamabad's decision to assist the American-led international effort against terrorism. There is no large-scale violence in Pakistan's cities, because the democratic parties of my country have rallied round the administration in confronting terrorism. And, as we proceed, together, to combat the immediate threat, let us keep sight of the long-range threat, and the long-range opportunity.

This is the time to promote reconciliation by encouraging moderation and compromise among Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir, Muslims and Jews in the Middle East, Muslims and Christians in the former Yugoslavia. Let us remember that building a moderate, stable and democratic political structure in Afghanistan could have marginalized the Taliban and the Osamas of this world well before

they unleashed their terror war against the people of Afghanistan and of New York.

The goal of U.S. policy must be to promote stability and to strengthen democratic values. Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's military ruler, has made the right decision to stand with America at this moment of crisis. He has also promised elections in 12 months. South Asia's regional security depends upon a democratic Pakistan. The U.S. and its allies need to ensure that these elections are free, fair and open to all parties and candidates.

A democratic Pakistan is the world's best guarantee of the triumph of moderation and modernity among one billion Muslims at the crossroads of our history. The alternative of a long-term, nuclear-armed Pakistani dictatorship has consequences that could make Sept. 11 look like a mere prelude to an even more horrific future for the civilized world.

Ms. Bhutto was prime minister of Pakistan, 1988-90 and 1993-96.

Interview of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto
by Ralph Joseph-Mirani,
United Press International
Toronto, Canada - 19 November 2001

1. You say in your article in the Globe and Mail that there is a danger the situation in Pakistan will quickly deteriorate into an Islamic fundamentalist revolution if Gen. Pervez Musharraf does not seize the “window of opportunity” and set a course for a return to democracy by October 2002. Were you thinking about a military coup led by fundamentalist generals or a street-level revolution led by radical clerics?

Ans 1: I believe that Pakistan does face dangers of a fundamentalist backlash. General Musharraf heads an unelected and unrepresentative military regime. He relies for his support on the military security apparatus where sympathy for the extreme Mujahedeen groups run high. After the World Trade Center bombings, the democratic parties gave political support to the coalition against terror . That marginalised the demonstrations by the religious parties to a few areas. Had the democratic parties with-held that political support, there could have been more turmoil. General Musharraf’s military regime has a window of opportunity to prevent the slide down. That window of opportunity is offered by the restoration of democracy, revival of constitutional rule and taking into confidence the representatives of the people through their political parties. The Western governments have a stake in Pakistan’s stability too. A democratic government, enjoying the support of the people of Pakistan is better positioned to counter the religious parties at the grass roots level and through public debate. Moreover, the third model of a democratic society is necessary to the two models of Taliban backed dictatorship and Military dictatorship.

I am concerned that the military regime may exploit western sympathy for it into an attempt to marginalise the democratic political leadership of the country. That could result in manipulating the election results. My Party has called upon General Musharraf’s regime to release political prisoners, allow exiles to return safely to the country and implement a series of steps to ensure that the next elections are indeed fair, free and impartial. The meetings are yet to bear fruit.

In my view, undemocratic governments provide an ideal breeding ground for extremism and fanaticism. Disgruntled youth turn to the armed religious groups to bring change rather than putting their faith in peaceful means of change.

Once extremism and fanaticism are allowed to breed then a social and political disaster is not far behind. That is what I mean by saying that the situation threatens to quickly deteriorate in the country. It could result in a street agitation forcing change as happened with President Ayub Khan in 1968.

2. Do you believe that the bigger parties, including the PPP, the Muslim League and the MQM would join the clerics in a street-level revolution, if Musharraf does not restore democracy by next year? (You are no doubt aware that the secular parties joined the clerics in the 1978-1979 revolution against the Shah of Iran, and were later themselves crushed by Ayatollah Khomeini).

Ans 2; I am unaware as to what the bigger parties, including the PPP, the Muslim League and the MQM, would do were General Musharraf to postpone or rig the elections promised for October 2002. That situation has still to develop. The point to keep in mind is that bitterness and resentment increases in an atmosphere of political suffocation. And when a people denied freedom feel suffocated then disparate political groups can join hands against the common foe. The example of Iran when secular parties joined the clerics in the 1978-1979 revolution against the Shah of Iran is one which we need to try avoiding by ensuring that free elections are held.

3. You have rejected responsibility for the rise to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan, which occurred while you were prime minister of Pakistan. Are you saying that even though you were the head of government, the ISI generals were acting on their own initiative to nurture the Taliban, supply them with weapons and equipment, and set up a client government in Kabul, with the civilian authorities having little or no say in the matter?

Ans 3: The Taleban were confined to Qandahar during my second tenure as Prime Minister. They rose to take over Kabul single-handedly only when my political star diminished. There is a perception that my government created the Taliban. That perception is wrong.

The Taleban came into power on their own. They were then a different breed. They promised peace and ended war lordism. They were prepared to negotiate with the Northern Alliance and build a broad based government. They did not harbour terrorists nor allow their territory to be used for Al Qaeda or other struggles. They were subsequently hijacked by the Al Qaeda and the extremist elements in the Pakistani Establishment. These same elements sponsored the overthrow of my government. As my government disintegrated, the Taliban went it all alone in Afghanistan. They adopted a harsh attitude towards women and practiced cultural

terrorism. Most significantly, it appeared that Al Qaeda took over the country through the Taliban leadership. My Party called upon Islamabad to break relations with the Taliban in 1998. Regretably, the pro Taliban elements in the Establishment ensured that Islamabad maintained relations with Taliban, through one excuse or another, even after others broke ties. These same elements want the military regime to go on a collision course with the democratic forces.

4. It is widely believed in the Pakistani media (though never overtly said in print) that a group of faceless generals in the ISI were in fact acting as a “state within a state,” giving orders to the Foreign Ministry and the Interior Ministry, and that the decision to recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan came from them, not from the civilian government. Do you believe that these same faceless generals, acting behind the scenes, played a role in your removal from office in November 1996 (three months after setting up the Taliban in Kabul), and that the then president of Pakistan was acting under pressure from them when he (illegally) interfered to dismiss your government?.

Ans 4: Yes, I believe that a group of retired generals, acting through supporters in intelligence conspired to overthrow the two governments I led. In the first overthrow, they took money from Osama Bin Laden and brought him back from Saudi Arabia (where he had gone after the Soviets withdrew) to continue the “struggle for Islam”.

In 1993, Ramzi Yousaf, the man who bombed the world trade center, made two failed assassination attempts on me. He was unsuccessfully used to stop my electoral return in 1993.

These retired Generals are behind my judicial persecution as well as the continued incarceration of my husband and difficulties of my other Party colleagues. They have their creations in the judiciary as well as in the political field and parts of the press. They are well organised but they lack political support.

Incidentally, none of the major attacks of global terror took place when I was Prime Minister. The two attacks on the World Trade Center, the bombings of the Embassies in Nairobi and Kenya, the attack on the USS Cole as well as the Bombings in New Delhi and Bombay took place when I was in Opposition. Safe access across Pakistan is important to those hiding in Afghanistan who believe in acts of terror. Pakistan was not safe for them when my government was in power. Today, every critical appointment and decision is made by the faceless retired Generals through their appointees in the civil and military administration. Their control is complete. It makes me concerned for Pakistan’s future.

My Party has called for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as reform of the military apparatus. First, we want the victims of state terror acknowledged. We want the officials who perverted justice to expose the hidden hands at whose behest the fundamental rights of the elected representatives was systematically violated. Secondly, we need reform of the military apparatus so that it becomes a professional, non political body free of the drive to implement a ideological or political vision in the country and elsewhere. Today most of the junior officers are brought up to hate the civilians and the elected representatives. They are kept in the dark about how military rulers led the country from one debacle to another.

Incidentally, Army officers are under oath not to take part in politics but the military is the country's biggest political party having ruled it for half the country's existence. Two senior generals associated with this security apparatus have publicly admitted to having formed political parties and doled out state funds stolen from public sector banks to keep my Party out of power.

I believe President Leghari fell prey to the machinations of the retired Generals. He should have known better.

5. Can you name some of these ISI generals, and can you say that they have all been purged from the military by Gen. Musharraf? Do you believe they should be put on trial for treason, for putting the country and the region, if not the world, into an extremely dangerous situation by acting without authority from an elected civilian government?

Ans 5: The conspiracy to overthrow my first government was led by Army Chief General Beg, Director General Military Intelligence General Asad Durrani--Musharaf's present Ambassador to Saudi Arabia-- and Corp Commander Multan General Hameed Gul aided and abetted by their close subordinates. The conspiracy to overthrow my second government was led by General Mahmud then DGMI and Musharaf's DGISI recently removed, General Shujaat, then ISI Internal now Musharaf's Ambassador to Morrocco. They were aided and abetted by others.

The Chief of Army Staff General Beg, General Hameed Gul and Ambassador General Durrani admitted to forming a political party in 1988 and 1990 to stop my success. Two of them admitted to taking funds from public sector banks to prevent my re-election in the general elections of 1990 and making pay outs to numerous political leaders for that purpose. Under Musharaf, General Mahmud as head of ISI, with his subordinates, formed a political party headed by Mian Azhar in Punjab and Imtiaz Shaikh in Sindh. The new DGISI has just taken charge and it is too early to say what he would do. A handful of Military officers openly

campaigns for favourite candidates in the local elections held this August. The constitution bars the military from taking part in politics yet our complaints against such officers fell on deaf ears.

The National Accountability Bureau and National Data Research body (NADRA) are front organisations for the so-called Islamists. Brigadier Saghir, who was accused of genocide in 1983, controls the National Accountability Bureau since my overthrow in 1996. He is still there under General Musharraf to take care of my Party and me through false cases. NADRA is to fix the electoral rolls so that the elections can be manipulated through computers being set up as command and control wing in the presidency. I know this from our supporters in the government.

We have called for accountability of officers who broke the law but they enjoy positions of power in the military apparatus. We also do support a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine state-sponsored perversion of justice and state-sponsored electoral fraud.

At the end of September 2001 two colonels, Javed and Manzoor, of NAB arrested and tortured to death a party worker of ours known as Mian Arshad. No action was taken against them. General Maqbool was caught by US authorities (around 1994-1995) with counterfeit dollar bills. Amazingly, he was made head of the anti-corruption drive and is now the Governor of Punjab. The military officers are above the law and this is wrong.

6. It seems that interference by faceless ISI generals in the civilian government has become a serious disease in the body politic of Pakistan, and that if Musharraf does restore democracy, the same kind of thing could happen again a few years later. Obviously, the purging of one set of generals may not solve the problem. The disease in Pakistan's body politic is now under intense scrutiny by the world democracies, and will continue to be for some time, in view of what happened in Afghanistan. Do you have any thoughts on how the disease can be cured, or would you say a commission of enquiry should be set up by the next civilian government to look into the problem and make recommendations? As prime minister, would you follow their recommendations to the letter, as the heads of democratic governments often do?

Ans 6: The faceless Generals control Pakistan today. Electoral change will not make them accountable. A real transition to democracy is needed for that where power passes from the military through the President to Parliament and the cabinet. Then the faceless Generals will be largely curtailed. The reason they had power was because constitutional tinkering gave the President the power to dismiss the Prime

Minister. Presidents were manipulated by the extremist Generals well versed in the art of intelligence and subterfuge. As Prime Minister I was unable to constitutionally transfer, investigate or hold accountable the officers who were violating their oath of office and conspiring against the government they were sworn to obey. I would personally support my Party considering a commission of enquiry set up by the next civilian government to look into the problem and make recommendations. As prime minister, I would follow their recommendations as democratic governments do.

7. You have called for Musharraf to hand over power to an interim government before holding general elections. Could you please elaborate? Are you calling for an all-party government, or an administration made up of technocrats with affiliations to none of the political parties? Who would lead such a government? What role would the military play (since there would still be need for security in the streets while elections are being held). What role, if any, would the judiciary play?

Ans 7: The Opposition Alliance of which my Party is a member has called for the establishment of an interim political government made up of all political parties to supervise the elections. To my own view, this is important but far more important are the modalities for ensuring a fair election. I have seen elections robbed by the retired Generals under the nose of the caretaker governments in 1990 and 1997. I would like to see the military regime accept our suggestions to ensure fair play in the next elections. The role of the military should be out of the polling booths. Their establishment of command and control centers was abused in the past to electronically enter every precinct and electronically change the results. Some Military officers openly canvassed for candidates in the recently held local elections. Complaints against them fell on deaf ears. That must not happen again. Moreover, at present the key appointees in the civil administration, including the Governor Punjab, home to more than half the future parliament, are highly politicised appointees opposed to the front runners in the elections. We need substantive changes in personnel and law to ensure that the faceless retired Generals are unable to abuse the electoral process for their own ends. I speak less out of concern for partisan benefits and more out of concern for the future direction of my country and its impact on the region.

8. Considering Pakistan's past record of election-rigging and voting fraud, do you believe that an international team of observers should be allowed into the country, with perhaps well-known figures from such places as Canada, the United States, South Africa and the European Union taking part. Observer teams of this kind have successfully overseen recent elections in South America, where several countries had similar records of election-rigging.

Ans 8: Yes, I believe the presence and monitoring of elections by international observers has been a plus factor and we would encourage it. In addition to this we have proposed some specific measures to ensure fairness and transparency and to minimise the chances of electoral fraud. One such measure is the authorisation to local election officers to declare the election results rather than wait for the centralised count taking place with post voting fraud as happened in the past elections. I would like to see well known figures assist the Election Commission of Pakistan as the South African Election Commission was assisted. Its important to come before the elections and stay after the elections.

9. Do you believe that constitutional changes should be made, perhaps after the next election, to ensure that a future president cannot dismiss a prime minister if he or she has the support of a majority in the National Assembly?

Ans 9: I am in favour of the Parliament making constitutional amendments as mandated by the constitution. This can be done only by the Parliament when it is in place. I believe the power to dismiss a prime minister led to the turmoil of the last decade. Bangladesh has a good system where power is transferred before the General Elections to an interim set up to conduct elections. Perhaps Pakistan can consider something similar.

10. Do you believe that Pakistan should have a French-style directly-elected president to ensure stability, but without the power to dismiss a prime minister who has the support of a majority in Parliament, or indeed without the power to arbitrarily dismiss the National Assembly? No doubt these questions need to be thoroughly thrashed out in public.

Ans 10: I prefer Parliament to have the power to take foreign policy and domestic decisions. Ours is a federation and the federal system suits us best. Parliament could consider a French style President dealing with foreign policy rather than give the President right to dismiss the Prime Minister but it would want the President elected by the Senate rather than directly. This should be decided by Parliament.

11. What role do you believe Gen. Musharraf can plan in Pakistan's future politics, if indeed he keeps his pledge to restore democracy? Could he, for example, run for president, to be either directly elected, or indirectly elected?

Ans 11: General Musharraf has still to talk to me or my Party about his future role. If indeed he keeps his pledge to hold fair elections in an atmosphere free of political persecution and wishes to run for elections, he needs to talk it with the

political parties. The constitution spells out the procedure for the election of President.

12. In the United States, the president is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. In Canada, the governor-general (appointed by the queen after being chosen by the prime minister) is the c-in-c. Do you have any thoughts on how the power of the civilian head of state or government in Pakistan can be consolidated vis-à-vis the military, to avoid repeated coups d'états? Or would you say, again, that a commission of inquiry should thoroughly examine the issue and make recommendations?

Ans: The power of the civilian government can be consolidated when the military is answerable to the Parliament. My power rested the mood of the military to obey or disobey the constitution. The intelligence concocted stories and created crises to turn the corps commanders against the government. An intelligence sponsored whispering campaign would start maligning the government spreading the word that the military was getting rid of it.

I learnt around October 1995 that the ISI was working against me. In January 1996 I knew Director Genreal Military Intelligence was pushing the movement to overthrow my government. In my assessment, the army chief was pressured into believing the President wanted me removed and would remove him if he disagreed. The President believed that the military wanted me out and he would be removed if he disagreed.

The army chief sent the Director General of ISI to me in August 1996 with a report. That report minuted a former General telling the Army Chief that the President wanted my removal and was concerned over the army chief's cordial relations with me.

I returned to Islamabad and met the President's relative. The Military Intelligence had told him, "Tell the President he sacks the Prime Minister or we remove both of them".

I saw first hand how the faceless retired Generals played a machiavellian game of bluff, playing to the insecurities of the key players. I have stayed the course out of a commitment to democracy and future democratic leaders.

I want my people to know that the elected leaders may have made mistakes but Pakistan's democracy failed because of the military establishment. I know there are many good Generals but a few played dangerous politics.

I love my country and want to see the military and political leadership agree to resolve this power struggle which is harming society. I do support a commission to examine how future direct and indirect military coups can be stopped. Pakistan needs stability to build its political institutions, develop economically and to enable political parties to modernise themselves.

Musharraf's three awesome assignments **DAWN - 24 December 2001**

President George W. Bush wants President General Pervez Musharraf to stop the fleeing Taliban and Al-Qaeda leadership from entering into Pakistan. Prime Minister Vajpayee wants him to stop the Jihadis belonging to Lashkar-i-Tayyaba and Jaishe Mohammad from crossing over the Line of Control (LoC) into the Indian held Kashmir. And he has assigned to himself the task of stopping former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from coming back to power in Pakistan. Since Pakistan is a member of the US-led coalition against international terrorism, Gen Musharraf can hardly refuse to oblige President Bush. So he has, according to a newspaper report, moved over 50,000 soldiers and 150,000 paramilitary troops to the border with Afghanistan in order to stop infiltration of anti-Afghan warriors into the tribal areas. He would, however, very much like not to oblige Mr Vajpayee but by plugging the Durand Line, he is in effect doing exactly what the Indian prime minister desires.

While preparing the roadmap to democracy which he announced on August 14 this year the President naturally could not have made any allowances for the September 11 tragedy and its after-effects on global, regional and domestic politics. Pumped up by so much world attention with so many high profile visitors coming all the way from the four corners of the world to meet him and the number of telephone calls he received from the world leaders during this period, the President, perhaps, believes that he needs not worry about his democracy roadmap. He, perhaps, believes that the map would remain untouched in the aftermath of the global war against terrorism.

That is why of and on he keeps on talking about his determination to keep Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from coming back to power. And perhaps that is again the reason why the redoubtable Tanveer Naqvi, the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) chief sounded so smug while being interviewed on BBC's Hard Talk. The two want to restore 'genuine' democracy in the country by making irreversible transfer of power to civilians through the undemocratic method of pre-poll rigging.

According to information gathered from various informed and inspired sources, the roadmap to democracy envisages the General to remain president for two terms after the 2002 elections which he would not contest. He will also head the National Security Council as its chairman with the majority of the NSC members coming from the armed forces.

For the job of prime minister he has a number of names on his list including Omar Asghar Khan, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Hamid Nasir Chattha, Aftab Shaban Mirani and Makhdoom Amin Fahim. And he believes that the newly-elected parliament will okay any constitutional amendment that he will introduce before and after the elections. He does not consider the PML(N) to be of any threat to his plans as under the infamous deal he struck with Nawaz Sharif in December last year, the former PM is not expected to return home in a hurry. He has assigned the job of taking care of the PML(N) remnants to Mian Azhar and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain in the Punjab, to the Shiekh brothers in Sindh, to about-to-return Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao in the NWFP and to, perhaps, Zafarullah Jamali (not yet final) in Balochistan.

The PPP, however, continues to remain intractable so far. Attempts to cut a deal with Benazir Bhutto have not yet borne any fruit. And Ms Benazir has also made it very clear that she would accept no intermediary whatever his rank shuttling between her and the President to fine tune the deal. She wants a direct one-on-one negotiations with the President. She has also made it clear that she was not prepared to accept any deal in return for the release of Asif Ali Zardari. She wants him to go through the entire process of law and get his name cleared from the courts. That is why with Asif having been given bail in the cases pending against him, he is still not being released and the NAB is leaking stories to the press creating the impression that he would be arrested soon on some still-to-be-concocted charges.

What Gen Musharraf wants from Benazir is her party's complete support for his roadmap to democracy, his constitutional amendments, two terms for his presidency, her consent to remain out of electoral politics for the next two elections and a name for the post of prime minister in case her party wins the elections. Here too Musharraf has confined her to only three choices (Hamid Nasir Chattha, Aftab Shaban Mirani or Makhdoom Amin Fahim).

The regime has sent word to BB that she could meet the President only if she returned to Pakistan. But BB does not want to take the risk. She fears that if she returned she would either be arrested and put behind the bars and forgotten or her meeting with the President would be so arranged that after it is over it would be given a distorted interpretation by the government's spin doctors to malign her costing her politically. Musharraf does not want to meet her in Dubai. That is where, informed circles say, the talks are stuck. One more thing, before any such meeting could be arranged the regime wants the PPP to start recognizing him as the President of the country. It is, however, not known if Musharraf actually met BB, would she be willing to give into all the demands of the military regime or to

what extent she would like to go and in return for what? The question of his tenure as the COAS is also to be sorted out in the negotiations.

But as they say man proposes and God disposes, and God seems to have disposed of Musharraf's roadmap to democracy by arranging the September 11 tragedy. It would be too naive on his part and on the part of his NRB chief to still press on with their roadmap to democracy. This map was prepared when the religious right was on the side of the military regime and it was enjoying a high political pre-eminence in the country by successfully managing two low intensity wars, one on its northern borders and the other on its eastern borders. Today the religious right is in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the regime and one of the two wars has vanished in thin air threatening to extinguish the other war too. This is not the right environment to try to do what Aslam Beg and Hamid Gul tried to do in 1988 and succeeded.

Attention! About Turn January 21, 2002

During his address to the Nation in January, General Musharaf ostensibly abandoned the policy of the Establishment in backing the religious parties.

The rebirth of General Musharaf from Godfather of Taliban and Terrorism to Man of Moderation was externally driven. It was mid wifed through the ministrations of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and U S Secretary of State Colin Powell in a bid to save South Asia from war.

In abandoning the three year policy of cosying up to the pro Jihadi forces, the military regime vindicated the stand of the political forces that it had long derided as “anti national security threats”. The political forces called for a crackdown against private militias long before the military regime woke to the gathering clouds of war and the international isolation its policies landed Pakistan in.

Now Pakistan has two Musharaf’s. The pre 2002 Musharaf whose plane landed safely to the throne of power piloted by hardline Generals. During those three years, General Musharaf built up a civilian structure to safeguard the rights of the pro jihadi forces in Pakistan. Most of his key lieutenants were picked from intelligence background.

The 2002 Musharaf, without apology for bringing Pakistan near a military war it least wanted, adopted peaceful co-existence principles that his opponents proclaimed all along.

In offering friendship to India, Musharaf chose the foreign policy directions of Pakistan’s first directly elected Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto signed the Simla Agreement in 1972. His Party signed the Islamabad Declaration of 1988 where India and Pakistan agreed not to attack each others nuclear facilities.

The September 11 bombings in the U S changed the contours of the world, but it took time for the Musharaf regime to see it. Pakistan’s political leaders insisted Musharaf distance Islamabad from the Lashkar e Tayyaba and Jaish e Mohammad. Sadly, he ignored sound advice until New Delhi, London and Washington rapped the regime on the knuckles. Then General Musharaf announced on television his new found opposition to militias and militants.

The threats to India to “lay off” emanating after the war on terror began last October, were missing from the speech. Homilies about fighting “bigger evils” with “smaller evils” were also missing. Musharaf confessed that under him the writ of government had seized to exist. This raised questions on how he could perform better henceforth. Under Pakistan’s Constitution a government which fails to run the country according to the provisions of the Constitution must cease to exist. Musharaf did not offer his resignation nor that of his cabinet.

Musharaf’s speech was a somersault on some of the Establishment’s most cherished policies. He criticised the concept of a theocratic state, the right to private militias to exist and conduct politics from the soil of Pakistan as well as force as an instrument of foreign policy with neighbour India. However, the apparatus that General Musharaf set in place when hard line Generals brought him into power, continued in place.

The inability to revamp the governmental bodies responsible for the failure to enforce the writ of state raised questions about General Musharaf’s real agenda. Analysts wondered whether the new declarations were tactical or strategic in nature and whether another somersault could come later.

General Musharaf needs to do more than please New Delhi, London and Washington. He needs to dwell on the principles of a society that can breed a violence free generation.

Such a challenge can be difficult for a regime which has gone from one crisis to another. Hardly had the noise of guns thundering on the Afghan border died down than arose the thunder of guns between Indo Pak troops. These troops still stand eye ball to eye ball threatening confrontation between two nuclear capable states.

In jumping from crisis to crisis, Musharaf is fulfilling the legacy that history dons military dictators with. War is always historically avoided under Pakistan’s democratic leaders, in contrast to its military leaders.

The military dictatorship of General Ayub embroiled Pakistan in the 1965 war followed by the much criticised Tashkent Declaration. General Yahya Khan’s military dictatorship surrendered East Pakistan in 1971. General Zia’s dictatorship lost the Siachen Glacier in 1984. He also presided over Islamabad’s involvement in the Afghan war. General Musharaf was the architect of the Kargil conflict in 1999. His inability to persuade the Taliban to extradite Bin Laden led to the World Trade Centre bombing in 2001 and the subsequent war against terror. His failure to build

peace at Agra led to the biggest mobilisation of troops in 2002 since the Second World War. No one in the regime was held accountable.

The Pakistani people have rights too. The most fundamental right is the right to hold rulers accountable through fair elections. If elections are unfair, under partisan administrations, with computer hacking into the election commission to cast votes in ghost polling stations, the internal crisis in Pakistan could worsen.

An internal crisis in Pakistan could get uglier if public unhappiness is hijacked by extremist forces.

Surprisingly, General Musharaf talked about the rise of “a state within a state” in Pakistan. Political forces use that phrase to describe military intelligence agencies. Civilian leaders call them a state within a state for a reason. The reason is that civilians lack the constitutional power to promote, demote, hire, fire or court martial military officers. However, as Army Chief, Musharaf enjoys these powers. There can hardly be a “state within a state” under him. He needs to clarify what he means by the statement. If there is a disconnect between stated policy and rogue policy, the country could land between two stools.

Under democratic governments, the Pakistani soldiers earned praise in peace keeping missions. They came under criticism on three counts. First, insisting their geo strategic vision be thrust on the Parliament, second destabilising elected leaders refusing to implement their geo strategic vision and third for assuming civil duties like collecting gas bills.

Moreover, the Mujahideen did not come out of thin air. They were the children blessed by the establishment. When parents devour children to escape retribution there is public revulsion, even if a child got out of hand.

There is great sympathy with the Kashmiri people in Pakistan even if there is criticism of the infiltration of non Kashmiris in many groups. The establishment parents sent the Mujahideen to die in the icy cold of Kargil. They sent them to die in the harsh climate of a bombed Afghanistan. Perhaps a word of apology is due to past friends and foes. To those used and abused, or those persecuted, at the alter of a wrong Establishment policy. A policy that motivated young men from poor families to pick up guns while destabilising democracy and terming patriots, “traitors”.

The dangers of policies unquestioned are inbuilt in the nature of a military regime born to dictate or capitulate rather than coalesce. The danger of a war with India is hopefully averted but still far from over. Other challenges knock on the door

including the rise of ethnicity that the Afghan war brings to the mountain passes of Pakistan.

A pro India government replaces a pro Pakistan regime in Kabul signalling a possible revival of Pakhtoon nationalism in the two key provinces of Balochistan and Frontier. These provinces are home to hundreds of thousands of bitter Pakhtoon Afghans as well as to disgruntled tribes.

The job of a leader is to devise policies which assess the objective condition properly and promote the well fare of the country. This the military regime was unable to do. General Musharaf addressed the Nation in September 2001 to announce joining the “lesser evil” (US) in the war against terror to get support against the “larger evil” (meaning India).

Those words were out of touch with the emerging world realities. Both the forces he called evil got together to press him to act against the militias and militants (that a crackdown against them was necessary is another matter).

General Musharaf had opportunities to build peace before the threat of war. One such opportunity was Agra. There he was pictured at the Taj Mahal and his old home rather than with an agreement in his hand. Another opportunity came and went when India and Pakistan joined the war against terrorism.

Instead New Delhi was provoked in the miscalculation that thought Uncle Sam needed Islamabad at Tora Bora and would bail it out in Kashmir. Other miscalculations included the insistence to cling on to the Taliban even after the fall of Kabul and to expect the war to continue during Ramadan when the Northern Alliance was knocking on the door of Kabul.

The last three years are a sorry saga of a sordid story gone sour.

The Establishment turned a blind eye as their surrogates in the private militias printed posters, hired trucks, established camps and exhorted young people to “join the jihad” for the “ground war” in Afghanistan. Thousands of young Pakistanis crossed over. Their dead bodies were abandoned in Afghanistan for eagles to eat without a word of remorse. Those taken prisoner are held hostage. Their captors are demanding ransom from families so poor that they sent their sons to Madrassas to get free food and clothing.

It is this callous indifference to the human and political price paid by Pakistanis for the wrong policies followed by the military regime since it seized power in 1999

that is unacceptable to ordinary Pakistanis. The attempt to escape culpability simply does not wash.

The West accepts Musharaf for his post September 11 and January 2002 policies. The Pakistanis see his pre September 11 and pre January 2002 policies and the sufferings inflicted as a consequence.

It was the Musharaf regime that failed to get Bin Laden and prevent the World Trade Centre bombings or the B-52 daisy cluster and oxygen sucking bombs that followed in retaliation. Musharaf was the architect of Kargil as well as the architect of the failed Agra Summit. His regime is saddled with the baggage of strategic somersaults bringing with it the tar of unreliability.

The Generals expect the West and India to reward them by allowing their continuation in office given their promise to crackdown on militants. The West and India could oblige them. It would be at the cost of the Pakistani Nation.

The Shah of Iran was the policeman of the region for the free world. His policies of sidelining the democratic forces led to the Iranian Revolution from which the world has still to recover. The continuation of the military regime on the pillar of a Kings Party at war with the democratic forces plays into the hands of the religious parties. Their very clandestine nature and linkages to the military and security apparatus gives them an edge in non democratic societies.

The one scarlet thread that runs through Islamabad's military regime is its propensity to jump from the cooking pan into the fire. Its inability to show flexibility to its own people while bending backwards to please outside forces robs it of credibility in the country. Its confrontation with the values of peace, democracy, human rights rule of law and justice erodes civil society. It is a regime born in violence, breeding violence and succumbing to violence. It could well find its death throes in violence.

Pakistan deserves better than a dark dictatorship repressing its Nation whilst fawning over foreign powers to cling to a power that it least deserves.

Musharaf in Japan

March 20, 2002

Last month General Musharaf travelled to Washington to bask in the limelight given the leader of a key Nation in the global war against terrorism. This month he travelled to Tokyo to receive accolades for the role Islamabad played in the fallout to the events of September 11.

There were dinners and toasts and warm words. Yet the flower bouquet the General most yearned for remained outside his reach. He failed in his bid to derail Pakistani democracy.

The General hoped that by joining the war against terror, he could keep himself in power and deny the will of the people. The General has said he is interested in democracy “as a label”.

In Washington he surprised audiences by declaring, “you want the label of democracy. Okay. I will put a label” making it clear that dictatorship would continue under re-labelling. His Foreign Secretary advised discretion. But the General, being “forthright” when needed, made the same statement at his next meeting.

“My Foreign Secretary”, he said, “doesn’t like me saying this but you want me to put the label of democracy. Okay, I will put it”.

Since then, he repeatedly labels dictatorship as “democracy”. In the new language, engineered elections are labelled “fair elections” and “military will” is labelled as the “peoples will”.

Musharaf was met with much fanfare in Tokyo as befits the leader of a key country in the international alliance. His own role in guiding Islamabad to join the international alliance was appreciated and acknowledged. However, Japan, committed to democratic values as a global foreign policy made it clear that it supported the restoration of Pakistani democracy through the holding of fair and free elections.

The insistence on the restoration of Pakistani democracy is critical to the global democratisation structure put in place after the fall of the Soviet Union. There are many other countries out there, and many other ambitious Generals and Politicians watching Pakistan to see if they too can come out of the wings and

impose tyranny. The world can ill afford a community where the choice is between the military dictator and the taliban dictator.

This places General Musharaf in a quandary. Fair elections, according to political indicators, mean the return of the popular Pakistan Peoples Party and its leadership. This the General has, rather unwisely, sworn to oppose-- and boxed himself into a corner.

He has threatened to lock up the key Opposition. He showed how when arresting over one thousand peaceful activists agitating a water issue on March 15. However, locking up the Opposition is one thing. Stopping them from contesting from behind prison bars is another. And the more the General fights the Opposition, especially the ladies, the less heroic he looks to his own men. Muslim culture venerates women as Mothers and Sisters. Men who lock them up lose respect.

Caught in the bind between culture and politics, the military regime considers passing a law preventing a political leader from contesting for chief executive thrice. The problem is that any law the regime passes needs parliamentary ratification. And the laws that Parliament ratifies depends on the whether the elections are engineered or fair.

The military regime did hold several rounds of talks with political leaders of all shades and hues initially. But negotiation between the main Opposition and the Generals, they are log jammed on three issues.

The first issue pertains to the release of political prisoners, the return of the exiles and the withdrawal of politically motivated cases that ran their course and remain unproven in their sixth year. The second logjam is on the proposed law banning a person from election as a chief executive for the third time. The third logjam is on the Opposition insistence that certain election modalities be adopted to ensure fair elections in name rather than in labelling.

The third logjam causes the most apprehension amongst the military regime. It apprehends that if there are fair elections, a popular party leader can influence the Assembly from Dubai, London or Washington. The case study of the previous Opposition Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government is cited. This would make the General dependent on the good will of the Party leader rather than the Parliament dependent on the good will of the General. Thus it appears that the military regime is on a double collision course: both with the democratic Opposition candidate for Prime Minister as well as with the concept of fair elections.

The absence of fair elections condemns Islamabad to continuing instability. The new Premier can blackmail the President by threatening to join up with the democratic Opposition. This is what Premier Junejo did in the eighties taking Generals from their plush Mercedes Benz limousines and putting them in small Suzuki cars. He defied them on other issues too, such as the Geneva Process relating to Afghanistan. Such defiance strained his relations with the military President. He was dismissed, of course ostensibly for corruption and incompetence. Islamabad plunged into further turmoil.

Extra constitutional measures lead to extra constitutional reaction. It is expected that rigged elections can allow extremist elements to hijack domestic opposition. Thus a fair election is important to Pakistan's national interest although a few persons may see it as damaging to their personal interest.

Before Islamabad joined the international intervention in Afghanistan, it was regarded in a hostile light. Islamabad was then considered the patron saint of the Taliban as well as a sympathiser of Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden who had taken refuge the Taliban.

The military nature of the regime made it an outcast. When American President Clinton visited South Asia in 2000, he went to India for five days. He visited Islamabad for five hours.

History can change in a minute. And it did on September 11. The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon made Islamabad a key country. In breaking ties with the Taliban and the Bin Laden group, even if under pressure and threat, Musharaf made the war against terror easier to organise. As such, he is now recognised and welcomed in capitals and by leaders who previously had little to do with him.

Emergency economic aid has flowed in generous amounts from Japan, Pakistan's largest aid donor as well as other countries. Tokyo promised \$300 million over two years to the country. For a country with a debt in tens of billions of dollars, that is a generous help. But it is not a long-term solution.

Pakistanis decry Musharaf's inability to get Islamabad's debt written off. They cite his poor negotiating skills. After all, Egypt, Jordan and other countries managed to get their debts written off in incidents of international crisis. Musharaf, unaware of economic intricacies, got Pakistan's debt "restructured". Restructuring is a euphemism for adding on debt. Now Islamabad has double the debt that it had earlier. The difference is that payment starts post Musharaf. His regime gets the benefit and the unborn children get the punishment.

Prime Minister Koizumi, as leader of a country that knows the devastation caused by nuclear attack, would also have spoken to General Musharaf about nuclear affairs. Tokyo has urged Pakistan to continue its moratorium on nuclear testing. It has urged the country to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. And the leaders must have discussed these issues too.

But the issue that would have troubled the military leader most was the issue of democracy and the holding of fair elections. It is a tune that is sung everywhere he goes.

Last month he was in Washington. This month in Tokyo. The continents, culture and cuisines change. But one item on the menu remains constant, an item the General could digest: continued economic support to Pakistan is contingent on the restoration of the democratic process through the holding of fair, free and impartial elections.

And the disempowered people of Pakistan appreciate that message.

Harbinger of democracy in Pakistan

April 4, 2002

Pakistan's moderniser Quaid-i-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto left deep footprints in the sands of history. To his lasting credit remains the 1973 Constitution of the country, the Simla Accord of 1972 which brought the longest peace between India and Pakistan, the social reforms to build an egalitarian society, the non-aligned foreign policy, the nuclear programme and the building of the social, economic and military infrastructure of the country.

Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was an intellectual of the highest order. He was a thinker, author and orator. He was deliberate, discreet, and competent; honest, upright and keeper of his covenants. He was a principled friend to the poor, downtrodden and oppressed. He was a man of the people, fearless in his beliefs who refused to bow before any man or power other than the Almighty. His courage was such that he preferred to face death for his beliefs and embraced martyrdom. Core to his belief was his faith in freedom and the liberation of humanity. Under his government, Pakistan gave overt and covert support to the African nations then under apartheid and minority rule.

Quaid-i-Awam was a Pan Islamic nationalistic. Many saw in his Pan Islamic vision the concept of the perfect modern Muslim man. As a Pan Islamist, he believed in one Muslim Ummah, with one Muslim nation and one Muslim army stretching from the shores of Europe to the tips of Africa and Asia. However, he was a moderniser and saw nationalism as the key to unity rejecting fanaticism as such a route.

Quaid-i-Awam gave pride to every Muslim. He was a hero of the Third World who spoke boldly against racism, colonialism and imperialism. He fearlessly defended the right of nations to independence. When the 1973 Ramadhan War broke out, he sent Pakistan's military to defend the borders of the Muslim countries including the Golan Heights of Syria. Quaid-i-Awam's short life of fifty years was spent in the service of many international, regional and national causes. This essay is focussed on his contribution to democracy.

The most important and the most enduring legacy of the Quaid-i-Awam was raising the consciousness of the people for democracy. He awakened the masses, making them realise they were the legitimate fountainhead of political power. He enlightened the farmer, the industrial worker, the student, the woman and the rest of the common people of their importance and of their right of franchise, which is

the definite means of bringing changes for the betterment of the lives of the common people.

Quaid-i-Awam deeply cherished the democracy and democratic values and in the end gave his life for freedom. Way back in 1969, when the common people of Pakistan were still to overthrow the Ayub dictatorship, he stood trial in Lahore High Court defending the lofty ideals of democratic rights for his fellow countrymen: "Yes, My Lords, democracy is certainly...like a breath of fresh air, like the fragrance of a spring flower. It is a melody of liberty, richer in sensation than a tangible touch. But, more than a feeling, democracy is fundamental rights, it is adult franchise, the secrecy of the ballot, free press, free association, independence of the judiciary, supremacy of the legislature, controls on the executive, and other related conditions, which are conspicuously absent in the present regime's system."

Tolstoy in the last volume of his War and Peace expressed that history is a movement of ideas in which political leaders play a minor role. I may add that sometimes the movement of ideas is indeed rapid. Yet, at times, the movement of ideas is slower than the melting of the glaciers. The movement of ideas is facilitated in a vibrant political and democratic culture, which gives room for dissent and disagreement. In dictatorial societies, history remains static in a cold freeze. And so it was in Pakistan before Quaid-i-Awam. He was the one who converted that static and decayed dictatorial polity into a vibrant and dynamic democratic society: the cost of which he paid with the most precious gift of his own life.

He opposed military rule considering it a cancer eating up a society. In the case of Pakistan, he viewed military rule as a negation of the very genesis of the country which came into being as a result of a democratic process. Living in the era of the Cold War when the warm waters of the Indian ocean stood temptingly before the Soviet Union while its ally India occupied Kashmir, he was determined to build a strong defence.

His contributions to an impregnable Pakistan are seen in the nuclear programme as well as in the Kamra Aeronautical factory. He built the Heavy Mechanical Complex and revived the morale of the armed forces after the shameful surrender in Dacca. He brought back ninety thousand prisoners of war from Indian camps as well as Pakistani territory lost in the 1971 war. He prevented the war trials of the Generals who had committed genocide to protect the name and honour of the country. He saved the armed forces from getting a bad name for a few drunken generals that had wreaked havoc in their ambition to keep power at national cost.

Bhutto believed the army's indulgence in political quagmire was harmful to its professional competence as an institution. He said clearly: "The Pakistan Armed Forces cannot afford a moment's deviation from their real responsibility. For the sake of Pakistan's integrity, they simply cannot afford to get involved or absorbed in the political life of the country. Those soldiers who leave barracks and move into Government mansions lose wars and become prisoners of war as happened in 1971."

His words rang true in 1981 when General Zia lost the Siachen Glacier and again in 1999 when Pakistan withdrew unilaterally from Kargil refusing to even acknowledge the dead bodies of its soldiers. It rang true again in 2001 when Pakistan joined the War Against Terror only to see the Northern Alliance bring the change in Kabul over its own doomed efforts.

There were many who said West Pakistan would disintegrate after the emergence of Bangladesh. Pakistan owes its second rebirth in 1971 to the brilliance and leadership of a giant of a man. His greatness was such that he lifted a nation drowning in despair to Himalayan heights motivating them to reach for the stars and the skies. Pakistan became an epicentre of the Muslim world with scholars in science, culture, intellectual pursuit harnessing their energies for the greater good. He was admired by the leading statesmen of the world community who saw in this Muslim moderniser a man who could help reshape the world in the direction of peace and progress.

Quaid-i-Awam's brilliant life filled Pakistan with energy and strength. There was a sense of purpose in the country which was buzzing with ideas and enterprises. The growth rate increased and money poured in from expatriates who got the universal right to passport. The Muslim countries were donating about \$500 million annually to Pakistan, making it less dependent on international financial institutions. The people got jobs and opportunities. He introduced habeas corpus, or fundamental human rights. Women of the country were emancipated entering the police force, foreign service and subordinate judiciary.

Prophetically, he also warned of the ploys dictators adopt by interchanging democracy with basic democracy. He said: "We demand democracy, and they give us basic democracy. If basic democracy is democracy, then why does every country not have it? If this is such a good system then the whole world should have had this system. But, nowhere in the world is this system in vogue. Neither in America, nor in England, nor in France, nor in India, nor in China, nor in Russia. Even then we are told that this is a wonderful system." Before him the legitimacy of a dictator was tailored through basic democracy where district councils become

the electoral college. After his struggle, basic democracy lost its value in the eyes of the common people who saw it as a trick to rob them of the right to free franchise.

He was true to his values. When the time came he sacrificed his life but refused to compromise on his lofty ideals. He was fond of saying, "It is better to live like a lion for one day than to live like a jackal for a thousand." He lived with the courage of a lion, defying death in embracing martyrdom. He said he would show "how a leader of the people lives and dies," and he did. The world pleaded for his life wanting to save a man whose intellect and contribution to peace and progress was vital to the world community. But a frightened dictator, ignoring the unanimous call of the Supreme Court of Pakistan to spare the Quaid's life, ordered the execution in the middle of the night. His last words were, "I am innocent."

Prime Minister Bhutto went bravely to the gallows as the world learnt in shock that it had lost its most beloved son. There was widespread national and international condemnation. Bhutto left his world to enter the pantheon of history where he stands today with other towering personalities who shaped the course of history. His martyrdom sparked freedom movements in many countries as people gathered in capitals across the world to condemn his murder. As a student of history, he knew that eternal life remains in sacrificing oneself for a cause that is larger than an individual. And the most noble of all causes is the cause of the liberation of humanity from tyranny and oppression.

Quaid-i-Awam was born in 1928. He was martyred in 1979. Yet he lives in the hearts and minds of the people still shining like a star that brightens the sky motivating those caught in the prisons of oppression.

Today is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's 23rd death anniversary

East and West: Can the two meet?

April 11, 2002

It is said, "The East is the East and the West is the West. The two shall never meet". The conflicting perceptions on the Middle East highlight the differences between the two worlds. Seen from the prism of the West, as led by the US, the attention is on the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussain. He is seen as the bad boy of the Middle East.

Following the events of September 11, which saw the worst attacks on the US since Pearl Harbour, US foreign policy is geared towards securing the homeland. Fears that Iraq is building weapons of mass destruction that could hurt US citizens and security is the driving force behind the "Get Saddam" Operation. Vice President Cheney is the latest in a series of US officials visiting the Middle East to secure support for the next US military action after Afghanistan.

The signals from the Bush administration are clear. It's not a question of "if". It's a question of "when" the US begins its Middle-East action against Iraq. The lack of Arab support for such action failed to dampen the desire for "regime change" in Baghdad.

The outlook in the East, led by the Arab world, is in sharp contrast. For the Arabs, and the larger Muslim world, the threat is Prime Minister Sharon. The Israeli Leader is seen fuelling the flames of fire.

If Washington is looking for "regime change" in Baghdad, Tel Aviv is looking for "regime change" in the Palestinian Authority.

Sharon has called President Arafat "the enemy". His soldiers have stormed Arafat's headquarters. His tanks have moved into Palestinian territory. The message is clear: if he could get away with it, Sharon would assassinate the President of the Palestinian people. He says he regrets not doing it earlier. Only US pressure is holding him back so far.

In an effort to halt the Middle East violence, President Bush nominated General Zinni as his Special Envoy. The Zinni mission was unable to stem the violent and bloody tide. There is little hope that it can. Maybe the US is waiting for the fighting to reach "exhaustion level" to set the stage for what it considers meaningful talks.

Much debated these days is the Saudi Peace Plan proposed by Crown Prince Abdullah. The Saudi Plan proposes that Israel go back to the 1967 borders in

exchange for Arab recognition. The plan was endorsed at the Beirut Arab Summit and is based on the principle of land for peace.

Israel is unlikely to accept the plan although it could be a face saving platform to bring the two sides to the negotiating table. Israel feels insecure with the 1967 borders. It dreads the return of the Palestinian refugees and sees its own death in them. Israel even fears its own Israeli Arab population. It seeks to protect the Jewish nature of the Israeli state.

In fact, shortly after the Beirut Arab Summit on March 28, 2002 backed the Saudi Peace Plan, Israeli troops smashed into Arafat's Presidential power base. Room to room fighting broke out.

The Israelis are military giants compared to the armed strength of the Palestinian fighters. But the Israeli premise that its superior military force can bring the "regime change" so badly desired by the aging Sharon, floundered on the inability to read the Palestinian mind. It also floundered on the inability to read the Arab mind.

The use of military force hardened Arafat's resolve. Offers of exile were spurned by him. He would die defying Israeli might.

Arafat has lost his youth. But he has not lost his spirit. Sharon keeps calling the besieged, beleaguered leader "the problem". But for the Arabs, he is the solution. And they are standing behind Arafat.

The Arab support for Arafat has yet to translate into international support of the kind that can restrain the Israelis. This is because a powerful segment in America shares Sharon's view that Arafat should go. They hold Arafat responsible for the failure of the Clinton-Barak initiative. They feel that Arafat is too stubborn. They back Sharon in finding a replacement who can be an Anwar Sadat.

Yet if Arafat goes, the future can be more dangerous. Arafat's departure can drive more men and women into the suicide bombing campaign. This can only endanger more Israelis and deny them the security they seek.

Some wonder what Israel's goals are. Is it to drive out Arafat and bring regime change? Or is it to trigger a larger war to re-draw boundaries.

Two aging men who fought many a battle in the past hold the fate of their people in their hands. One can win even if he dies. The other cannot, even if he kills his main prey. For the Arab world, Sharon's hands are stained with the blood of Sabra

and Chattila. For the Israeli people, Sharon is the tough leader who promised them security. But the highest Israeli casualties in recent history characterise his tenure. Arafat was once a peace-maker. Sharon can become one if he gives up the gun for the negotiating table.

Sharon's campaign against Arafat has united the Arab world. The Beirut Summit was a clear closing of Arab ranks on two fronts. First, the Arab nations rallied behind President Arafat and the Saudi Peace Plan. Second the Arab nations opposed "action against an Arab nation". Translated it means that the Arab countries are vetoing US goals over Iraq. Their aim is to keep the focus on Sharon's leadership of Israel.

To the West, Saddam is the threat to peace. To the East, Sharon is the threat to peace. The Middle East is boiling.

As temperatures rise in the Middle East, it becomes more important to define terrorism. There is unanimity that the September 11 attack on America was an act of terror. There is little unanimity on terrorism in the Middle East. The answer is different depending on race and religion. That the race and religion determines the response makes the Middle East the real threat to world peace. Every action has a reaction that is equal and opposite.

The West has military might at an unimaginable level. Smart bombs, Oxygen sucking bombs, predator planes, daisy cutters are new words in military terminology.

Israel is depending on machines to protect and shield its interests and keep its casualties down. This has resulted in a reaction where the militarily weak are using the human body. When a person is beyond fearing death, they become the human bomb.

The Palestinian refusal to wither away in the face of a superior military action rests on the willingness to die for the defence of Palestinian rights. They have the backing of a member of critical states.

Its time for the international community to review its policy before the world plummets into a graver crisis. To do that, the international community needs to come up with definitions of terrorism and definitions of wars of national liberation. It also needs to differentiate between conflicts recognised by the United Nations and others, which lack international legitimacy.

Civilian deaths are abhorrent and must be rejected. But moral arguments, unfortunately, cut little ice when combatants are locked in mortal conflict.

Peace in the Middle East will not come from the gun. Peace can only come through negotiations.

Perhaps the Arab League could set-up a Middle East Contact Group to convince the world community. Otherwise the world may well wait for force to exhaust one side. And that would be too tragic.

THE SMELL OF WAR MAY 2002

The smell of war is in the air. Like helpless actors India and Pakistan are inexorably moving in the direction of a deadly conflict. Once again the United States and the international community are involved in fire fighting a potential nuclear conflict.

Indo Pak enmity revolves around the dispute over the area known as Jammu and Kashmir. The people of Jammu and Kashmir were promised the right to self determination by the United Nations in an unimplemented fifty year old agenda item. India refuses to allow the Referendum, concerned that the Muslim population will secede. Pakistan backs the Kashmiri move for freedom.

The latest crisis started on May 14 when Kashmiri militants, camouflaged as Indian soldiers, mowed down women and children on with guns and grenades in the disputed valley. The message was clear: if the militants could target Indian army families in their homes, the Indian soldiers at the Line of Control between the two countries could hardly deter them.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of backing the militants. Islamabad denies this.

The Indian soldiers who saw their wives, daughters and sons killed are putting pressure on the Indian Government. The pressure on Premier Vajpayee is to exact retribution through military retaliation that could easily spill into the fourth war between the South Asian neighbours.

The chance of such a war was predicted by the American CIA chief in March. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Tenet stated, "If India were to conduct large-scale offensive operations into Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, Pakistan might retaliate with strikes of its own in the belief that its nuclear deterrent would limit the scope of an Indian counterattack."

Two years back, American President Clinton described South Asia as the most dangerous place in the world.

And for the last six months, Indian and Pakistani soldiers stood eye ball to eye ball at the line of control. That massive build up followed an attack on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi last December.

Now India has expelled Pakistan's High Commissioner. The Indian Prime Minister called for a "decisive fight" against Pakistan.

The drums of war are beating.

The international community has high stakes in the region.

Pakistan is now a key ally of the US led forces in neighboring Afghanistan. The last situation the U S would like to see develop is the war against terror deflected by the war between India and Pakistan.

But if the militants wanted to deflect attention from the heat of allied forces against Al Qaeda in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan, they succeeded. The fight that began in Kabul last September, triggered by militants flying planes into the Twin Towers, has every possibility of turning into a fight for Srinagar triggered by militants determined to provoke an Indo Pak clash.

A critical error by the international community was the conclusion that a military dictator could defuse tension between India and Pakistan or prevent the rise of the tidal wave of extremism which is now engulfing the region.

Pakistan's military ruler General Musharaf, the great white hope in the fight against terrorism, is sinking in a quick sand of his own making. His tenure was marked by the rise of extremism, militancy, terrorism and regional tension. He missed the opportunity at Agra in 2000 to sign a confidence building treaty with New Delhi. He carries the baggage of being the architect of the Kargil conflict that nearly led to an Indo Pak war in 1999. His lone ranger politics pits him against domestic political forces polarizing the country. Given this history, it's unlikely that dialogue proposals can halt the inexorable march to war now taking place.

There is one way that the prospects of war can be prevented and that is regime change. Regime change in Islamabad offers the possibility of halting hostilities to permit a new government to make a fresh start in confidence building. The voice of the international community as well as the Pakistani armed forces are critical determinants as to the calculations made. It is their voice which will determine whether General Musharaf resigns to defuse the crisis or clings on to power in a show of nuclear brinksmanship.

In 1971, the senior officers of the Pakistan Army went to then military dictator General Yahya forcing him to resign after Islamabad suffered a military defeat in an earlier war between the two countries. Yahya's resignation paved the way for the formation of a new government. That government signed the Simla Agreement

in 1972 holding peace in place until both India and Pakistan detonated nuclear devices in 1998. Since then the two countries have thrice come to the brink of war. Clearly a new, post nuclear explosions treaty is the need of the hour.

Reports indicate that the Pakistani Generals do speak up. They initially opposed the holding of the controversial Referendum by which Musharaf tried electing himself Pakistan's President. They will debate a two front war at a time when their men are stretched out both at the eastern and western borders.

The view of Pakistan's important and powerful ally, America, is pivotal too. The White House was vocal in its support for General Musharaf President Bush called him "my friend". Now it will have to choose between a man that is considered a friend and risking a limited war that could get out of hand.

New Delhi will reflect before starting a military action which lacks the support of the US. But it enjoys far greater freedom of action than Islamabad did during the Kargil fighting. Then President Clinton could dictate to debt laden Islamabad held hostage by the IMF. President Bush might find it difficult to dictate to New Delhi. New Delhi's economy is largely independent.

Bush does have one weapon in his hand that can deter New Delhi. That is the threat of international mediation for the Kashmir cause. New Delhi is opposed to such internationalism.

A military set back means trouble for Musharaf. Far better for him and the region that he agrees to regime change to prevent the start of armed hostilities that could trigger a nuclear nightmare.

And far better for New Delhi to accept such a regime change as face saving than allow a limited war that could spill out of control.

New Delhi could remember that Islamabad can do well in a war that is limited in area and time. Its military is well equipped. A limited war could turn into a longer and larger war in the heat of a blazing summer with temperatures rising to fifty degrees centigrade in parts of both countries.

During his testimony before the Senate Committee last March, CIA director said the decision to turn Islamabad into an ally in the wake of the September 11 bombings was "a fundamental political shift with inherent risks."

Those risks are now evident as the South Asian region teeters on the brink of a violent tomorrow.

Terror in Karachi

May 24, 2002

In a deadly suicide attack on May 8, bombers in Pakistan struck at foreign targets again. A naval bus was blown up killing fourteen people including eleven French engineers. The suicide bombers narrowly missed hitting the New Zealand cricket team staying at a hotel in an elite Karachi neighbourhood.

The cricket team left by the next available flight while French President Chirac's celebrations over a grand electoral presidential win were cut short. France joined America as the latest foreign victim in the third suicide operation under Islamabad's military dictator since this year began.

As blood, bodies and metal blew across the road, a clear pattern was emerging for the terrorist actions.

Following the rout of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, the militants are re-grouping in Pakistan. This is hardly surprising. Many of them were initially recruited and brought to Pakistan when fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan was fashionable.

Once the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, so did the international support for the fight to win Kabul. The freedom fighters decided they had defeated one super power and could defeat another. So was born extremism and militancy.

Militancy found an expression in the post Soviet period in Kashmir. There Indian occupation was bitterly resented. The Kashmiris were ripe to rise and they did in 1989. Their movement was hijacked by the Afghan based elements in late 1996 even as Kashmiri leaders in the All Parties Hurriyat Conference were sidelined.

Now the extremists moved seamlessly through the three borders, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indian held Kashmir.

The death of Pakistani democracy in 1996 enabled the military hardliners supporting the Afghan elements to control Pakistan. They rigged the elections and dominated the administration. As Mr. Sharif grew increasingly unpopular, they backed the coup of General Musharraf to retain their grip on power.

Ironically, even as the international community views Musharraf as the Great White Hope in defeating extremism, many in Pakistan doubt that he can. Depending on a military regime backed by hardliners is like banking on an arsonist to put out the fire.

The terrorist actions occur in an interconnecting pattern between Pakistan's Northern and Eastern hot borders. This inter-connection was made clear by Islamabad's coup leader when he defended the decision to join the war against terror last September. Addressing the Pakistani people, he said he was "joining the lesser evil (America) to fight the greater evil (India)".

The Northern Borders with neighbouring Afghanistan are hot due to escaping Al Qaeda and the international force that is after them. The Eastern Border with India is hot given the massive troop deployment that accompanied New Delhi's demand that Islamabad hand over men it wanted in the Indian Parliament bombing.

When the Americans put the heat on Islamabad to chase Al Qaeda, the border with India heats up. Islamabad then says its military is pre-occupied with the Indian threat and unable to help effectively. This gives the dual advantage of highlighting the Kashmir Dispute.

Last winter, the Americans wanted Islamabad's military to seal the border with Afghanistan and capture fleeing Al Qaeda. Militants successfully relieved the pressure by conducting the Indian Parliament attack. The threat of a possibly nuclear war became real. The international community was pre-occupied defusing it.

As summer approached, American pressure on Islamabad to control its wild Northern Frontier with mountains and fierce tribesmen sympathetic to Al Qaeda grew. Against the growing pressure, the Karachi terror attack near a five star hotel killing the Frenchmen and others took place shocking the city. Quickly an attack followed on May 14 killing women and children in disputed Kashmir sending the Indo-Pak war temperatures sky rocketing again.

Once again Islamabad's military will find itself pre-occupied with India. And the international community will find itself pre-occupied with defusing the war threat.

The pattern is evident on the political field too. For example, when the Agra Summit heralding Indo-Pak talks took place, General Musharraf seized the hour to boot out President Tarrar and seize the Presidency for himself.

As Musharraf packed his bags for his Washington trip in February, the Danny Pearl kidnapping and murder took place. If any one doubted whether a military dictator was a proper alternative to a democratic dispensation, the kidnapping dealt with the doubts.

Then came the dictator's Referendum. Supporting Opposition calls to register a negative vote through boycott, ninety five percent of the population refused to go to the polling booths. Even as the military leader smarted from the setback of the Referendum, popularly called the Joke-dum, the Karachi attack took place.

Recently General Musharraf released twelve hundred militants into the anarchic streets of the country. He said it was wrong to keep them behind bars without court convictions. Yet such compunctions disappear when it comes to keeping his political rivals behind bars without conviction. They suffer in the sixth year of imprisonment without relief in a country where colonels sit in court rooms to pressure the courts.

Released from prison on the eve of the Karachi terror attacks were one hundred and thirty convicted militants from the nineties. Experienced in rocket attacks, political assassinations, mass murders, sabotage and subterfuge, they know the streets of Karachi well. They have hideouts and finance their schemes through thefts. They have access to buried armed caches and gun smugglers. They have the experience and the capability to mount and spread terror. That they were released is mind boggling. The excuse offered was that their release could deliver Referendum votes that Musharraf needed.

Musharraf says he is unable to reach accommodation with the democratic parties because they are corrupt. Yet those charges are denied and those leaders unconvicted. The only logical explanation is that Musharraf is controlled by hardliners determined to crush the democratic forces through another rigged election. If this is the case, his continuation is a serious threat to the unity of Pakistan as well as regional peace and global security.

Pakistan invests billions in its intelligence workforce through salary, pensions and perks including lucrative land grants. Elected local leaders and junior police officers find it hard to operate without Big Brother from the powerful Inter Services Intelligence, Military Intelligence, Corps of Intelligence and a panoply of other intelligences breathing down their necks. In such a situation, there is little explanation as to why this huge internal army with eyes and ears everywhere is unable to monitor militants, extremists and terrorists.

Opposition groups believe hardliners control the intelligence as a state subsidized political party. The Major General controlling the intelligence political party is busy making and breaking political alliances at the behest of the Presidency. At the cost of poverty alleviation, officers travel frequently, taking extra daily allowance, contacting politicians. Their goal is to create a King's Party and hold on to power

by rigging the promised October elections to keep out those they threw out in 1996.

Islamabad's descent into madness can stop when the military hardliners who seized power in 1996 are replaced through transparent elections that bring a political change. This is possible when the military and the judiciary join the people in supporting implementation of electoral reforms ensuring democracy. Otherwise the war that started in Kabul last September could end up in Delhi on the back of militants determined to play a high stakes game with human lives.

The death of a minister

July 24, 2002

The death of Omar Asghar, a former Pakistan Federal Minister, in Karachi last month raises clouds of suspicion.

Omar was found dead by family members after they broke open the door to his room. Police said he committed suicide leaving a suicide note in his handwriting. Close associates denied Omar was depressed. The regime condoled without ordering an inquiry.

Some tie Omar's death to disappearing pension funds and improperly audited NGO funds used in local elections last year.

His death comes at a time when Washington is spending billions of dollars to discover means that funded Al Qaeda and the methods used to launder the money. Even as Al Qaeda is vanquished from Afghanistan, the hunt for them continues in the mountain passes of Pakistan.

Elements of the media speculate that Al Qaeda leader Bin Laden is in Pakistan's tribal areas. Islamabad's military dictator denies this. Clearly the focus on eliminating Al Qaeda has shifted largely to Pakistan.

Omar's grieving family has not blamed the state apparatus. Yet, Omar's death takes place against a global security environment.

Omar's ministry oversaw vast NGO funds in the lead up to the local elections held last August. NGOs are controversial these days. Some suspected as front organisations for militant groups were banned following the attacks of September 11. US President also banned some Trusts established ostensibly for charitable purposes.

Omar's ministry also oversaw large amounts of state controlled pension funds. Omar resigned from the Musharraf cabinet shortly after the pension embezzlement of over one hundred million dollars was discovered.

Omar is not blamed for the embezzlement. However, many believe he knew too much.

Omar's is the second "suicide" in six months tied to the missing Old Age Benefits Investment (EOBI) funds. The accountant handling the transfer of funds from the EOBI to a Bank account from where they disappeared also died in a "suicide".

The embezzlement was accidentally discovered by an honest officer investigating the collapse of the Prudential Bank. To his horror, the investigating officer, expecting reward, was persecuted. He wrote the National Accountability Chairman (NAB) on August 3, 2001 complaining of the persecution. No action was taken on his letter or his 114 page report.

Thereafter, the NAB Chairman was removed from his post and silenced with an appointment as Governor of the country's largest province. Earlier he was found to have handled counterfeit American dollars while posted in Washington.

It is too early to say whether the missing money is linked to the security agencies, Al Qaeda, the military hardliners or to corrupt criminal gangs operating in the country. Some published reports indicated that the money hijacker Atta received was routed through Islamabad.

In 1993, the collapse of Mehran Bank led to the discovery that the security agencies were illegally helping themselves to state funds. Omar's father filed a petition before the Supreme Court demanding action. Of those involved in the illegality one is currently Islamabad's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Another oversees law and order in Punjab. He achieved notoriety when Danny Pearl's suspected killer turned himself over to him.

Meanwhile in Paris an officer of yet another Pakistani bank was arrested by French authorities and charged with money laundering.

Other Pakistani banks also collapsed, including Bankers Equity. The audits were done quietly and little is known of the facts publicly.

There are reports that the military regime plans establishing a "Trust" overseas with enormous amounts of funds to "keep it safe from corrupt politicians". A person approached for help with the Trust was told that the money would be from privatisation proceeds and be routed through the State Bank of Pakistan. Further that the money would be used for social security payments.

This offer is suspicious. Privatisation proceeds cannot be hidden from the World Bank or the Finance Ministry. Social Security is paid through the relevant Ministry rather than secret overseas organisations. Therefore it is probable that the source and purpose of the money is other than being stated. This begs the question: whose funds are these, from where are they being raised and transferred.

There is much talk, too, over the two hundred and forty billion rupees reportedly printed by Islamabad to bolster foreign exchange reserves. Officers were reportedly sent with suitcases to buy dollars from the market and take their commissions on it. The money translated into four and half billion dollars.

But no one knows where the two hundred and forty billion rupees went. It still has to show up in the liquidity available in the country itself.

Pakistan's Parliament was terminated when General Musharraf seized power in October 1999. Issues of financial impropriety cannot therefore be raised before Parliament. Military dictator Musharraf promises to revive Parliament following General Elections scheduled for this October. In the absence of reforms to ensure transparent elections, scepticism remains. Cynics say General Musharraf will handpick representatives to ensure a dummy Parliament too weak to raise controversial issues.

For years Pakistan's military establishment blamed Pakistani politicians for corruption. The politicians counterclaimed that the charges are politically motivated by militants and their sympathisers determined to maintain their stranglehold on the state apparatus.

According to the press, the honest investigator who discovered the missing pension funds was also investigating another bank called the Muslim Commercial Bank.

Its owner now is attempting to buy the United Bank of Pakistan. There is concern that Gulf investors bringing capital into Pakistan are being disfavoured as the regime tilts towards monopoly creation in the banking sector.

Omar was a key witness in the case of the missing EOBI funds as was the accountant who died. Omar knew who gave the order for him to transfer the pension funds to the account from where they disappeared.

Omar took those secrets with him to the grave.

The democratisation of Pakistan is our best chance of avoiding a nuclear war over Kashmir

The Guardian (London) - August 6, 2002

At CIA headquarters on the banks of Washington's Potomac river, analysts review intelligence from vast human and technological sources. Each day, working with sister agencies including Britain's MI6 and Israel's Mossad, it determines possible sources of international conflict that could include weapons of mass destruction. For 15 years, the unanimous consensus has been that the place most likely to trigger a nuclear confrontation, and spark Armageddon, is south Asia. The issue is Kashmir.

Nuclear deterrence - the centrepiece of military strategy for both of south Asia's nuclear powers - was designed to prevent conflict. Yet since India detonated nuclear devices in 1998, and Pakistan responded in kind, south Asia has thrice come to the brink of war. Deterrence value was replaced with an intoxicating sense of power and glory. That emotion churns the street and excites the barracks. I call it the Hijacker Atta Syndrome: "I may die but I will take more down with me." Intelligence estimates, backed by published reports, suggest that a nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India over Kashmir, even if limited to five or six primary targets on each side, would cause millions of immediate deaths, and millions more after long and dreadful suffering from ensuing cancer on both sides of the border for decades to come.

Unfortunately, in both Islamabad and Delhi the foxes may be in charge of the chicken coops. With the military in Pakistan and Hindu nationalist hardliners in Delhi firmly in control, the options for dialogue and confidence-building appear remote.

When two sides believe they can both gain from a military conflict, it makes the world a much more dangerous place. The danger to the region increases with a military dictatorship in Pakistan unaccountable to the people. History teaches us that democracies don't start wars, especially nuclear wars. With a military junta in Islamabad, and the world distracted by the US-led war against terrorism, the "public check" on political decision-making in the country has ceased to exist.

I believe the people of south Asia deserve a future that is better than the recent past. If India and Pakistan disagree on the territorial nature of Kashmir, we can still move ahead without prejudice to our long-held beliefs. The nuclear war threat

can recede if the leadership on both sides of the divide has the courage to promote safe and open borders to socially unite the Kashmiri people.

The Kashmiri people are central to the dispute and it is the responsibility of the leadership on both sides of the divide to put these people first. If China and India can have a border dispute and still trade, India and Pakistan can do the same. In the absence of an elected civilian leadership in Pakistan that is accountable to the people, however, the possibility of such a dialogue is remote.

The worry is that the pattern of militant acts provoking a near-nuclear confrontation will continue at regular intervals until it erupts into a full-fledged nuclear war. In the post-nuclear-detonation region that south Asia has been since 1998, those who live there can ill afford a military conflict. In the post-September 11 world, the Kashmiri people can ill afford a world community where terrorism and armed conflict by an occupied people is still to be distinguished.

Catastrophe could also be triggered by accident: with artillery shells whizzing over the line of control when tension rises, hundreds of thousands of troops poised to strike, and elements on both sides willing to throw a match on to the fire, the situation is precarious.

Press reports indicate that nuclear weapons could be given to individual commanders with independent launch control. It is not clear whether these reports are accurate, but if so, the probability of an accidental launch jumps sharply. And with tension so high, an accident could never possibly be explained away and controlled. The genie would be out of the jar for the first time in 57 years.

With the doomsday scenarios in front of us, what can be done to prevent the insanity?

To return to an earlier point, democracies don't start wars; democracies don't provoke wars. Each of the three wars between India and Pakistan was fought under military dictators in Pakistan. The last three major incidents that brought the world to the precipice of nuclear war surfaced after my democratic government was overthrown and the military established ascendancy in the political arena. The best prospect for peace in south Asia is to support the democratisation process in Pakistan.

The past three years have seen three nuclear crises. The next three years could see even more. Each month of military dictatorship brings us closer to Armageddon. Political power must be transferred legally, peacefully and subject to the will of the

people. Commentators believe that my party and I would be re-elected if transparent elections were held in Pakistan in October.

The international community could use its full resources to guarantee a fair and transparent electoral process by pressuring the military regime to implement opposition proposals for such a process.

The alternative is for the world community to be repeatedly sucked back into the region. The world walked away from democratising Afghanistan after the defeat of the Soviets in 1989. That departure led directly to the Talibanisation of the country and the September 11 atrocities. Walking away from democratisation of nuclear-armed Pakistan could lead to even more horrific results.

The ball is in the international community's court. The stakes are nothing less than saving the world from nuclear war.

**Benazir vows to fight for civilian assertion
Appreciates Nawaz; dubs elections as fraud; shows reluctance to
come**

**By Jalilur Rehman
The News dated September 9, 2002**

Faced with disqualification and having no hope in the judicial process, former prime minister and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairperson Benazir Bhutto vowed to fight a long battle for democracy, instead of committing to come back and lead her party in its campaign in the October elections.

Responding to the The News/Jang/Geo TV panel, moderated by Imtiaz Alam, Benazir Bhutto accused the government of hijacking the whole electoral process and making a mockery of the revival of democracy.

By keeping the leadership of the two major parties out of the electoral process, the Musharraf government is paving the way for the king's parties and providing a walkover to the religious right in national electoral debate, Bhutto lamented.

Taking serious exception to the remarks of General Musharraf that she was a 'security risk', Bhutto asserted that whatever the PPP has been saying the military establishment had to grudgingly toe it after a while and by paying a higher price.

On Taliban, she said, I had ordered not to let them go beyond Kandahar and not takeover Kabul, but the extremists in the army pushed them forward. Similarly, I warned in New Delhi that Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-i-Mohammed will play havoc by bringing two countries to blows and damage Pakistan. I was proved correct and the military government after accusing me a national security risk had to ban them, Ms Bhutto pointed out.

Explaining her position on the accusation, she said that there are two forces in the country: one is the PPP representing the will of the civil society and the other is the garrison not ready to accept the will of the people. That is the principal conflict and will remain so until the armed forces confine themselves to their specific duties and avoid from dictating terms to the representatives of the people.

On her accusations against General Musharraf that he was letting the extremists to regroup, despite the fact that his own life is at risk, she said the extremist elements within are trying hard to save the terrorists. She lamented the fact that the Establishment is keeping the hardliners, instead of taking a course of self-cleansing.

Ms Bhutto tried to establish a link between the revival of democracy and the war against terrorism, but refused to blame the US for ignoring this linkage. She also declined to draw a parallel between the farce of elections in the occupied Kashmir and what she termed as the most rigged election in Pakistan's history. Ms Bhutto also avoided to establish a link between the normalization of relations with India and consolidation of democracy in Pakistan for fear of being termed a security risk.

Avoiding to comment on Musharraf-Bush combination, against democracy, Ms Bhutto reiterated her party's commitment to full constitutional rule, supremacy of the Parliament and undiluted democracy. She demanded that elections be held under a neutral caretaker government since there is no hope for their fairness under the present regime. On civil-military relations, she said the khakis should have no role in politics and they should confine themselves to the defense of the geographical frontiers.

Appreciating Mian Nawaz Sharif's gesture to withdraw his nomination papers to protest against her disqualification, Ms Bhutto said the PPP's and PML-N's struggle is common and we will remain united in our struggle for the restoration of complete revival of constitutional democratic rule even after the elections. She agreed to the suggestion that there should be electoral adjustment to put up a joint struggle against the dictatorship from the platform of ARD. She, however, clarified that a triangular fight suits her against the king's party, PML-QA.

On defense and social expenditure, Ms Bhutto tried to defend her record that she spent more on poverty eradication than on defense, despite being reminded that she spent more on defense and less on social sectors. She tried to explain how she tried to alleviate poverty during her two tenures. She agreed to a questioner that she could not do anything on the local government, despite being committed to devolution of power and power to the grassroots.

Ms Bhutto denied having been approached for a deal with the government through Makhdoom Amin Fahim and said that had her person been the priority, Zardari would have been out during the Sharif government. She called upon the democratic forces and the press to support her and the ARD for the revival of democracy. Ms Bhutto rejected any deal with the regime short of the supremacy of the Parliament and the 1973 Constitution. The News Encounter was attended by the leading PPP activists, including Prof. Ejazul Hassan, Munawar Anjum and women activists.

Interview With Benazir Bhutto
BYLINE: Sean Hannity; Alan Colmes
September 23, 2002 Monday

HANNITY: Welcome back to HANNITY & COLMES. I'm Sean Hannity reporting tonight from Washington, D.C.

And also coming up, is there any reason that this woman shouldn't lose custody of her children? Well, we'll debate that. But first, we're joined by the former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto.

Madame, prime minister, good to see you. Thank you for coming back to the program. I want to ask -- I think there are many forces within Pakistan that fear you coming back into that country. I think it's played a part. In July, you were found guilty in absentia of corruption, sentenced to three years. You could face imprisonment if you return. And a few weeks ago, the Pakistan election commission determined you could not be a candidate for office in October. What is it about you that they fear?

BENAZIR BHUTTO, FMR. PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER: I believe the military hard-liners fear my return because under my leadership, Pakistan fought the forces of extremism, militancy, and terrorism. I stopped the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan. Until my government was overthrown, the Taliban were unable to break off the talks with the U.N. After my overthrow, they invited in Usama. And he set up al Qaeda.

HANNITY: Yes.

BHUTTO: So I think they do fear my return.

HANNITY: Are Americans wrong in thinking that General Musharraf has done a good job as it relates to supporting us in the war on terror?

BHUTTO: Well, I wish the real Mr. Musharraf would stand up. Although he himself says that he is supportive of the U.S. action in the war against terror, he has surrounded himself with sympathizers of al Qaeda and of the Taliban. For example, last month he appointed a deputy attorney general to prosecute me, whose son died fighting for al Qaeda in Afghanistan. And I'm saying wait a minute.

HANNITY: Yes.

BHUTTO: I support the war against terror. You should be strengthening my hand.

HANNITY: Do you think that -- what we hear that he has done this to his own peril. And we hear that there have been so many changes and efforts to shore up his own government, that those are false reports, that there isn't a real internal threat against him for his stand against terrorism, and his stand against al Qaeda?

BHUTTO: Oh, the people of Pakistan are very firmly opposed to al Qaeda and Taliban. People of Pakistan are suspicious of the involvement of some of our hard-line generals and their links to al Qaeda and Taliban.

COLMES: Right.

BHUTTO: I think the United States could depend on the people of Pakistan to support the war against terror. They don't have to depend on the generals.

COLMES: Madame Prime Minister, welcome to New York. Let me show you what you said as quoted in "The Salt Lake Tribune" back in January of this year. You said, "our policing of the region would have been far superior than the current regime, and there never would have been a need for the U.S. to bomb Afghanistan because there would never have been a World Trade Center attack," you said earlier this year. You believe, had you been prime minister, had you stayed in power, September 11, 2001, would not have resulted in the atrocities?

BHUTTO: Yes, I believe that September 2001 would not have taken place when I was prime minister. None of the attacks on international terror took place when I was prime minister. The two attacks on the World Trade Center, the two attacks on the two U.S. embassies in Africa, and the Cole ship in Yemen all took place when my party and I were in opposition.

COLMES: So what you're saying is a government in Pakistan can itself prevent this will level of terror from happening? Or isn't this a multinational group of people who came together to do this, didn't extend far beyond Pakistan? How could one prime minister affect such change?

BHUTTO: Well, maybe they would have had to shift their operations away to another region of the world if they wanted to continue. But under my leadership, Pakistan had a strong government, which was cracking down on illegal immigration, which was cracking down on the movement of illegal aliens across

our land. And we simply did not permit such terrorists and militants to go into Pakistan or out of Pakistan anywhere else in the world.

COLMES: We've heard that these cells though met in Hamburg, Germany. They met in different places, not just in Pakistan?

BHUTTO: True, but all of them somehow link up with Afghanistan. And that was accessed through Pakistan. Now we see that the key elements, people like Usama bin Laden's right hand man, Abu Zubaydah, they are arrested from Pakistan.

COLMES: Do you think he's alive? Usama?

BHUTTO: Usama? Anybody's guess. I think he's probably holed up in a mountain waiting for his time.

COLMES: Do you think he's in Pakistan?

BHUTTO: I don't think he's in Pakistan, but I think he's probably in no man's land, that mountainous region.

COLMES: Do you think Musharraf knows where he is?

BHUTTO: I'm not sure whether Musharraf knows where he is, but I do know this much, that Musharraf does have people around him who want to stop me and stop my party because we're a threat to terrorism.

COLMES: Why are you a threat? Because you're saying they're in sync with the terrorists. They want terrorism? They're supporters of terrorism? And because you're a threat to terrorism, they don't want you around? So you're saying Musharraf wants terrorism to continue?

BHUTTO: I'm saying that Musharraf was brought into power by those who want terrorism to continue. And I'm saying that Musharraf has been unable to break with them and to reach out to the democratic forces. I'm saying that he's got people who fought the Afghan jihad in the past, who have deep friendships with Usama, with the Taliban. And they allowed Usama to escape and they allowed Mullah Omar to escape.

HANNITY: All right, we'll take a break. We'll come back. And when we come back, we'll assess the magnitude of the threat of radical Islam, as we continue with the prime minister. And also coming up, she had a bad day. Well, that's the reason

Madelyne Toogood gave for her apparent beating of her child, her daughter. How will the courts respond? We'll debate that. Busy night, straight ahead.

COLMES: Welcome back to HANNITY & COLMES. Coming up, is there any excuse for this? We'll tell you if Madelyne Toogood's defense has a case. First, we're continuing with the former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto.

Sean talks on some of the dissent about you in Pakistan, some of the allegations. Here's what "The New York Times" reported in 1998. "Investigators have detailed a pattern of secret payments by foreign companies that sought favors during your two terms as prime minister." Said "Mrs. Bhutto originally kindled wild enthusiasm in Pakistan with her populist brand of politics, then suffered a heavy loss of support as the corruption allegations gained credence."

Why did they gain credence?

BHUTTO: Well, I guess the corruption allegations gained credence because the economy was doing very well. There were lots of contracts going about. There were billions of dollars coming into the country. And people were prone to buy any kind of rumor that was spread by the military hard-liners when they didn't get a contract.

COLMES: Is your husband a political prisoner, rather than a prisoner for having any wrongdoing?

BHUTTO: Yes. My husband is a political prisoner. He's being held as a hostage to my political career. Six years have passed, and he's been persecuted inhumanly. He's not the only one who's in. The vice chairman of my party, the secretary general of my party, my close aides, and family are being persecuted.

COLMES: Let me ask you about our relationship with Iraq. And the arguments been made, if we do a preemptive strike, this could influence the relationship between Pakistan and India, and that there might be a preemptive strike taken there if we do that. They'll say if the United States does it, why shouldn't we do it? Does that concern you?

BHUTTO: Yes, it does concern me. And that's why we're very pleased that President Bush has decided to go to the United Nations. I know there was a lot of pressure on President Bush to act unilaterally.

COLMES: But he said if the United Nations doesn't go along with him, he may still go it alone.

BHUTTO: Right, of course, that needs a little bit of clarification. My understanding is that the president wants to inspect Iraq's installations. And my understanding is that the Arab leader's going to talk to Mr. Saddam Hussein to get those inspections done. So I think this gives us an opportunity to try and work the political solution.

COLMES: Do you support a preemptive strike?

BHUTTO: Well, I don't support a preemptive strike. I do support political measures to get to the bottom of the inspections with regard to nuclear. If that fails, obviously, then, the Muslim people will see that the military option was the only option.

COLMES: But...

BHUTTO: But a preemptive military strike to the exclusion of any political measure is something that is bothering me.

COLMES: So you're saying then there would have to be more proof, there'd have to be something more solid for us to justify going in preemptively?

BHUTTO: Well, yes. I'm trying to say that it's good that you get collective security.

COLMES: Right.

BHUTTO: You get the U.N. to go in. You get the Arab states involved. And I think if you get the Arab states involved, and the issue is nuclear, they're going to go to Saddam Hussein. And I think they can get him to cooperate. If they don't, then of course, the situation changes.

HANNITY: We've had 12 years of lies, deceit, cat and mouse game, and further pursuit, a frenzied pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. What other proof, what other evidence would we need?

BHUTTO: You're right on all those counts. There have been 12 years. And those 12 years haven't led anywhere. But at this particular moment, I think it is important to go through the U.N. And I think it's important to involve the Arab League. If there can be a political solution, why have the people of Iraq bombed?

HANNITY: And if there's not, the United States still has the other option. Can I...

BHUTTO: It still has.

HANNITY: ...do you have contact with the Bush administration or officials within the Bush administration?

BHUTTO: Well, I have contact with White House officials and with the State Department. Of course, I'd like high level contact, but for the time being, that's the contact I have.

HANNITY: I'd like high level contacts there, too. They won't let me in the door, but I'm teasing. I want you, from your perspective and your years in office and your battle, and your -- you've watched the development of radical Islam, the extremist fanatical groups coming into power. How widespread, if you were to assess the threat for the world, how widespread is it? Are the numbers far greater than any of us want to admit?

BHUTTO: I think the numbers are far smaller, Mr. Hannity. I think about 10 percent of the population in the Muslim countries actually support the extremists and the militants. I think...

HANNITY: Ten percent of how many, though?

BHUTTO: Ten percent of one billion can become a huge number. It means 100 million.

HANNITY: It's a huge number?

BHUTTO: Yes, this is a huge number. You're right there again, Mr. Hannity. But 90 percent of the people in the Muslim world really admire democratic principles. And if they had an opportunity, many would come to America.

HANNITY: Why don't we see that in any of these Islamic states? Why don't we see that -- look at the way women are treated.

BHUTTO: Right.

HANNITY: Look at -- you know, why don't we see that -- I mean, if that's the case, if they want that, we don't see that when there is that rule?

BHUTTO: Maybe they need a little bit of help, Mr. Hannity.

HANNITY: Do you want me to -- how could we help them?

BHUTTO: Well, we had Free Radio Europe. We had other diplomatic and political measures to free the Communist people from the control that that authoritarian states had over them. And what I'd really like to see is an attempt by the international community to reach out to those women who are discriminated in the Muslim street, to reach out to those students who are denied education in the Muslim street, and to help empower them. Long term, I think that's the way we're going to really win this war against terror.

HANNITY: Well, I would like to see that for all the women of the world and for -- I'd like to see the entire world live free because we see the blessings of liberty that we have established here. I don't see this change happening any too quickly, do you?

BHUTTO: I wish I could see it happening quickly. One place where it can happen quickly is Pakistan. I'd like to see President Bush sit General Musharraf down and say, General Musharraf, you've got to have fair elections, elections in which all parties and all candidates...

HANNITY: You don't view that as a realistic possibility, based on the fact that Musharraf is viewed, General Musharraf in this country, is viewed as somebody who has been very helpful in our battle against terror?

BHUTTO: You're right. It's viewed like that, but I think at the end of the day when one sees that the militants are regrouping, and the Karzai government is under threat, and the Pakistani democracy, the absence of it is leading to an unstable situation in Pakistan itself, I'm hoping that Washington would review its position.

COLMES: Madame Prime Minister, you predict -- one last question. You predict a day when you will be prime minister once again?

BHUTTO: When fair elections are held. And I hope that day comes sometime soon for the sake of my people.

COLMES: Thank you for being with us tonight.

Coming up, what should the punishment be for a woman who does this to her own child? That debate when we get back on HANNITY & COLMES.

**Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto
to ARY - TV
Translation (Urdu to English)**

Q. Who is Benazir Bhutto, Who are you?

Ans: I am a mother, I am a daughter, I am a sister, I am a wife, I am a human being and like so may others in our country, I try to make the best of my life. I see life as a precious gift and must be lived for a cause higher than oneself.

Q. Being a daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and as an individual, how do you differentiate between the two?

Ans: Well, as a daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, I have certain responsibility. He was a great political leader, he had a mission and he gave his life for the economic prosperity of the people of Pakistan. I have great commitment to further that mission. In that respect, I am a very political person. As an individual, I am someone who gets tired, happy and angry.

Q. You spent most of your time in the West in younger days and then came to Pakistan. How did you adjust?

Ans: I was a bit shocked when I went to the West. I was spoiled daughter of Pakistan's Foreign Minister who had become the most popular leader of Pakistan. I was used to a different life style, I had never cooked, never cleaned. Suddenly, I found myself in America where there are so many freedoms and learnt how to adjust. I learnt to stand on my own feet and I am grateful to that experience. I went back to Pakistan expecting to join the Foreign Service but the military coup took place. Tanks had surrounded our house. It was a very traumatic moment. My father was arrested and taken away. My life changed. I was plunged into politics and that is where I am since that fateful day.

Q. You are now living in exile. Is it by choice or were you forced into it?

Ans: I was forced. If our country had law, constitution, democracy, fair elections then why a Pakistani would have been forced to live in exile. There has been repeated military interference in our country and then there is no justice or law in the country. I am forced but I want to go back, I want to breath in Pakistani environment. My small children also get saddened by looking at me and want to go back to Pakistan.

Q. Why do you not go back and defend yourself in the several cases against yourself?

Ans: I want to defend and I stayed in Pakistan for the same purpose but I was thrown from one city to other. I used to wake up at night and I did not know where I got up, in what city. Judges used to work overtime in the courts against my case. I had no time to instruct my counsels. When I was convicted, I was out of the country. I thought, I could fight and we were able to tell the people of Pakistan the facts. The people are with us because they know that we were victimized. I want to go back to take part in the elections because people of Pakistan feel themselves hapless. Since the peoples' government was toppled in 1996, the unemployment has increased, people have been thrown out of jobs on a big scale, utility bills have increased many folds and people have been forced to commit suicide because of price hike. I think that under my leadership the PPP can change the situation. Pakistan once again can enjoy respect and honour. Now the situation is that we are taking dictations from New Delhi and other places. I have got the experience to earn respect for the country and the poor people.

Q. You have been the Prime Minister for two terms but in that country your husband is imprisoned for the last seven years. Are the courts so incompetent that they can not give one decision in his case?

Ans: No one is kept in prison for that long without sentence in the UK or the USA. In we get a bail in one case then the regime makes another case. General Musharraf himself said to PPP delegation that he would not interfere in judiciary. Now why does he not accept Zardari's bail? When Zardari got bail in all the cases, another fake BMW case was initiated and he was arrested in that case. On one hand they accuse us for corruption of 3 billion dollars and on the other hand they accuse us of importing second hand BMW.

Q. Why do you not decide to deal with all cases with the prosecutors because it has become a national issue?

Ans: Ask them to do it. I accuse them of corruption. They have no proof whatsoever in the cases against us. Dishonest Generals are prosecuting an innocent woman. They want to oust me from politics. My government worked for the people of Pakistan. Farooq Adam who was Prosecutor General asked the Judges to behave. General Maqbool was also in the NAB. He was involved in a case of counterfeit money and was arrested by the US official. Saifur Rehman was a defaulter himself—these kinds of people were appointed against us. If an honest officer is appointed then he would end all the cases against us because these are very weak cases. There are strong cases against the members of this regime.

WAPDA is on record to complain about a sitting minister of this government of embezzling money but he is not caught. One hundred million dollars of Employees Old Age Benefit fund has been looted. It is unfortunate that corruption cases have always been initiated against civilians from Hussain Shaheed Suharwardi to Skiandar Mirza. But real looters and plunderers are Generals, who have not been touched. They carried out Genocide in Bangladesh and it is no more a secret now, but they are not hauled up. The one's who spilled the blood of innocent young troops in Kargil, sent the troops there and then called back. You are talking of money here but the people who have taken precious lives and did not accept the corpses of these martyrs, when these Generals would be investigated? I think this is a conflict between civilian and military. Generals want to usurp the right of civilians. Generals want that civilians should not do politics, they themselves want to enter in politics. When Generals turn into politicians then the country breaks up and the economy of the country is destroyed—this has happened in Pakistan.

Q. General Mirza Asalm Baig in a programme recently, has said that politicians ask the military to interfere.

Ans: There is some truth in his assertion. We politicians have also been weak. The politicians are investigated but the Generals are not. If proof against a General is produced, he is appointed as an ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon. These Generals are made Generals despite murdering people by using violence. There has to be balance and politicians have been subjected to a lot. Investigation should be carried out of the people who gulp the entire budget.

Q. Recently, President Musharraf

Ans: He could be president for you, for me, he is General and I am not sure whether he is serving General or not, I would have to ask my lawyers.

Q. So you do not accept him?

Ans: Not at all. The people rejected him in the referendum. Eight years old children were casting votes in the farce referendum. General has become very weak after the fraud referendum. It is unfortunate that General Musharraf is not giving up the post of the Chief of Army Staff, he is doing politics, he is using the military for his own interests. He is on a collusion course with the people. He is president of no one. Mush is in Pakistan because Bush is in the US. The day Bush distances himself from Mush then Bush would nowhere to be seen.

Q. When he had removed Nawaz Sharif, you had welcomed him.

Ans: I supported him on conditions that he would form an interim government and hold elections within three months. But he did not do so then we opposed him and he started initiating cases against us.

Q. How long you would be against each other because country is suffering because of it. You both want Pakistan's interests to be served. Do you not think that you have to compromise?

Ans: Compromise is necessary through negotiations. When he, ignoring me, invited a delegation of PPP to meet him, I said to my colleagues to go to that meeting. The delegation was told that it would get everything if Mohtarma Benazir leaves politics. The delegation asked to adopt the proposals of election reform given by the PPP and to respect the human rights but the General is not ready to do that. We cannot support dictatorship of a dictator but we can negotiate for democracy then a compromise could be reached. But General is on record to say that he does not want to share power. He wants one man's rule and want to divide people. I pray for him that he sees the light. During the last three years poverty has increased, per capita income has reduced, miseries of people have increased.

Q. Is it necessary to go to the West and India especially, when Pakistan's relations with India are very bad at the moment?

Ans: Many people including PPP supportive Generals send me messages that they are in a difficult situation when I went to India and held talks with Vajpayee. I told them whatever step I took was in Pakistan's interests. I want the tension between India and Pakistan removed. If this tension is not removed then Pakistan would be at loss. I wanted to prove that political leaders can hold talks. Musharraf had also gone to India and negotiations were failed. Then I went to India and said that the people of Pakistan want a respected and just solution of the disputes. On Kashmir, both the countries have different point of view but if China and India have no tension at the border despite border disputes between them then why it could not be replicated in Kashmir? Why innocent people lose their lives?

Q. Do you think that Pakistan benefited by your visit?

Ans: Yes. The world has changed economically, socially, politically, after 11 September. I had asked the Pakistani regime to distance itself from Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, but the regime did not listen to me. I have been twice elected Prime Minister of Pakistan and the World ask me of my views, but my views were not listened to, and just after two months the Indian Parliament

was attacked. After that on the dictation of Vajpayee, the regime had to distance itself from those Jihadi Organisations. It is very unfortunate that the regime did not listen to me and had to act on Vajpayee's dictation.

Q. What do you want to say about the accusation that Taliban are the product of your government?

Ans: Taliban came to the surface when I was Prime Minister. At that time there were two types of Taliban. One who wanted to share the power, talk to the UN, distanced themselves from Bin Ladin, did not allow training camps and the second type were those who wanted the entire Afghanistan for Taliban, they fought with other groups and killed Iranian diplomats, they invited Al-Qaeda to make Afghanistan their base camps, inducted fighters from all over the World and trained them. These were the ones who dropped bombs in the US. Taliban knew that under my leadership, Pakistan would not allow them to destroy places all over the World. When PPP government was removed then the second type of Taliban came to the fore. The same was the situation in Kashmir. During PPP government, APHC was marginalized, and other organisations were strengthened. I think that apples should be compared with apples and pears with pears.

Q. How would you have dealt with the situation after 11 September if you were in power?

Ans: I think that there would have been no attack on WTC if PPP government were in power. During PPP government never the attacks on WTC or Africa happened. Because of my policies the whole Muslim World was in peace. I went to Bosnia and talked to Clinton and John Major and the civil war ended in Bosnia. Our policies were for the Muslim World and entire World. After the removal of PPP government, Pakistan faced a set back in Kabu. WTC was other. It is the policies, which count that what benefit they can deliver to Muslims and the World.

Q. Who do you blame for the attack on WTC?

Ans: I think that it was Usama Bin Ladins doing. He has supporters all over the World including Pakistan.

Q. Whose product is Usama Bin Ladin?

Ans: It is a long story. CIA gave money to ISI of Pakistan in the war against Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. ISI recruited extremists. Zia-ul-Haq was against PPP so he recruited the most extreme people. He was a sectarianist as well. You can say that Usama Bin Ladin is a product of Zia era. In 1988 during my

government the Madarassas were privatised and taken away from ISI control. There is a group of retired Generals of Zia era who work as a mafia. They brought Nawaz Sharif, Farooq Leghari, Musharraf as they wanted. They pull the strings and they have their own hard-line policies and oppose the policies of PPP and Musharraf fears them and is confronting the PPP.

Q. You have been a rival to Nawaz Sharif, now according to reports you are with Nawaz Sharif against Mian Azhar.

Ans: PPP and PML(N) are members of ARD. Politics is not done on liking and disliking. Politics does not draw lines. It is based on common ideologies and interests. PPP politics is based on democracy and federalism. If someone agrees with our principles then we are with them, if they do not share our principle then we do not take them with us. We regard supreme our own principles, ideology, policies, programme and mission.

Q. Have you struck any deal with Nawaz Sharif?

Ans: PPP and PML(N) are part of ARD, they had combined public meetings, we have been struggling together for the last two years.

Q. Why have there been tussle between the two parties while one of them was in power and the other in opposition?

Ans: I have never made any law to victimise any opponent neither I ordered to arrest anyone. I did not appoint any friend of mine as special prosecutor. Mian Nawaz Sharif's father was arrested but not on my orders but he was arrested for not paying his bank loans. When Nawaz Sharif was Prime Minister to same issue surfaced in Al-Taufeeq case and the newspapers reported about Qazi's of Alford, but I did not personally do anything against Nawaz's father or brothers.

Q. Recently the Secretary General of Commonwealth has criticised General Musharraf of concentrating all powers in his hands. What are your comments?

Ans: He is very correct. We have written to Mr. McKinnon several times asking him to raise his voice for democracy. The laws are made by the representatives of the people and this is not Generals' job. There are few good Generals in the army as well but when I refer to Generals, I talk about the ruling Generals. These good Generals realize that General Musharraf is doing wrong and tell him so also. But General Musharraf does not listen to anyone.

Q. Do you agree with the constitutional changes by General Musharraf?

Ans: To some of them like joint electorate, restoration of women seats in the assemblies but we do not agree that one individual should have the power to decide the fate of 140 million people. President should not have the power to dismiss elected government. Five governments were dismissed by the president since Jonejo's dismissal in this way. The country could not get stability. I think that General Waheed Kakar's formula was the best that if President dismisses the Prime Minister then he should also go like Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Nawaz Sharif both were dismissed in 1993. The elections then be held under the judiciary as it is done in Bangladesh. If this is so then the President would try his best to work with the Prime Minister. Then there is National Security Council. We do not agree with its role. For what we need this? In the past the military hardliners supported Taliban, they retreated unceremoniously from Kargil and then went to Agra to greet Vajpayee then these Generals arrested Taliban officials and handed them over to the US and sent to Cuba. These all wrong policies were carried out by the Generals. The politicians had the wisdom, the thinking and the vision to carry out all good policies. National Security Council must not interfere with the foreign policy. Foreign policy should be with the Prime Minister and Parliament. If the General wants to keep clean the army and intelligence of the fundamentalist and needs Security Council then it is fine. He should clearly define the role of National Security Council. If it is to carry out the agenda of hardliners and to remove the civilian government because of differences on foreign policy then I think it is wrong. Role of National Security Council could be to investigate the army.

Q. What do you think of condition of being Graduate to be a candidate for the assemblies?

Ans: I think it is totally wrong to exclude over 90 percent population from their rights to contest elections. It is un-Islamic, unethical and politically incorrect.

Q. Musharraf would remain President for the next five years and political government?

Ans: General Musharraf would have to beg for votes. If the elections are held free and fair then he will have to ask for votes from the PPP and if elections are rigged even then he would have to go to his puppet Mian Azhar and beg for votes. He has to get elected to be President. This is possible that the politicians get together and get rid of military dictator.

Q. You want to say that to remain President, he has to take his uniform off?

Ans: Definitely, he will have to do that, but he knows that if he gives up uniform then who would fear him? The military should not be made disputed and partial.

Benazir Bhutto claims Opposition majority, states Coalition Terms Special SAT Report

WASHINGTON: PPP Leader Benazir Bhutto on Sunday night (10 Nov.) claimed the Opposition parties had 173 votes and PPP would vote for a MMA prime minister but not join a MMA government formally and would sit on the Opposition benches.

Speaking to reporters at a dinner hosted by Akbar S. Khawaja, a community activist, Benazir said talks were going on between PPP and other parties but she stressed that if there was any positive development, "the ARD would be taken into confidence immediately."

She indicated that there may have crept up some mis-communications between the ARD partners but those have now been removed and "we have a clear understanding on all issues."

Benazir said the PPP was ready to "Swap Votes" with the MMA but PPP would not formally join a MMA Government, as the MMA is also not prepared to join a PPP Government.

"We have been promised the Senate Chairmanship and House speakership in return for our votes for Maulana Fazlur Rehman to become Leader of the House. We will place our votes at the disposal of Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan who can use them for any leader he wants," she clarified.

The PPP leader said it was the right of the PPP to nominate any of its leaders for the posts of Senate chairman and Speaker of the House, once an agreement was signed with MMA to swap votes. "They should have no objections on any personalities."

She maintained that the Opposition had the numbers but it would be a one vote majority which could be taken away by the government at any time. The Parliament is hung, in the real meaning of the word.

She was confident that the opposition would be able to demonstrate its strength on the floor of the house, but it was less easy to do so outside. She also maintained that provincial governments could not be set up unless the situation at the centre became clear.

Here is the full transcript of the interview with Ms Bhutto, recorded in Washington late Sunday night.

Q: What negotiations are you involved in right now?

BB: We have an alliance with ARD and some of the member parties of ARD, including the MMA, are also members of the All Parties Conference (APC). The collective vote commanded by the three ARD parties is 173. We have the majority, but I should point out that with the switch of one vote from this alliance could create difficulties for the government formed by the alliance. I would like to draw a clear distinction here between "vote swap" and "government." The MMA is not willing to form a government with PPP and the PPP is not willing to form a government with MMA. This is a delicate situation, because while on the face of it, the opposition parties have a majority, given the unwillingness of the two major components of this alliance to sit together in the same government makes the situation fragile. Keeping this situation in view, we have also held negotiations with PML(Q). And we have also talked to the government. We are trying to work for the emergence of a situation which should guarantee the survival of the (National) Assembly. The negotiations that we have held with the government have revolved around the democratisation of Pakistan, human rights in Pakistan and welfare of the people of Pakistan.

Q: So you are not cutting a deal outside the ARD or with the government?

BB: No, we would like to keep the ARD, but first of all, we need to have an understanding with the government. Once we have an understanding with them, then we can go to the ARD.

Q: Have there been any concrete proposals made by the government to you on any of the major issues?

BB: There have been discussions on the issues of the political prisoners, the withdrawal of the cases and so on. And there has been progress on some of the issues and some of the issues are ... well, there has been progress on some of the issues. Yes.

Q: And the ARD leadership is aware of what you are doing with the government?

BB: They are aware that we are in contact with the government and as soon as there is a positive development, then we would go to the ARD and explain the situation. But we need a positive development. It is one thing to agree generally: it is another thing to move forward. So we need to move forward.

Q: And how much time do you think, how much longer do you think you will keep talking?

BB: Well, this the regime has to decide. If I had been the Prime Minister of the country and I had started the process, I would move forward with it. I can only speak for myself. I am unable to speak for the other parties involved.

Q: Do you think it is right for the government to hold the Assembly hostage to an agreement before calling the session?

BB: That I don't know, what the situation back home is.

Q: Why are they not calling the session and letting the Assembly decide?

BB: I understand, I understand, I could be wrong. I can give you an understanding that is a charitable understanding and then I could give you an uncharitable suspicion. The charitable understanding is that there is a hung parliament and so the government is delaying the calling of the Assembly until there is some kind of an indication that either the PML and the PPP are together or the PML and the MMA are together or the PML and all the parties are together. That is a charitable explanation. The uncharitable explanation is that they need the delay to do some horse-trading. But to be charitable, at the moment the People's Party and its allies, I mean the joint opposition, allies is the wrong term, the joint opposition has 173 votes, which is the exact number needed to elect the Leader of the House and to elect the Speaker. But the switch of one vote could change that equation. The PML(Q) on the other hand have calculations of 135.

Q: Normally, in democracies, the majority party or coalition demonstrates its numbers and then the government is obliged to call them to form a government. Is there any plan to demonstrate your numbers?

BB: No there is no plan to demonstrate the numbers. It is easier for us to demonstrate them in the parliament rather than outside the parliament. The opposition has these numbers and there are certain draft agreements also circulating amongst them. Obviously, these draft agreements have to reach a conclusion before one can move forward from this end. But whatever the line is, the numbers can be very easily calculated. We all know who are lined in the opposition: the PPP, the PML(N), the MMA, the BNP, the JWP. These are easy to calculate and we also know the people who are with the King's party, so it is easy to calculate. Now if they say that it is a hung parliament, then there have to be

elections within three months under the constitution. Obviously another election within three months ...

Q: New elections without calling a session?

BB: No, no, you have to call a session. Once you call a session and the session is deadlocked, what next?

Q: So the session has to be called?

BB: The session can be called. That is for the opposition. I mean I am far away. I am unable to say this. It is for the ARD and all the people to discuss, but the way I see it from a distance, that there is a hung parliament, that the opposition has a majority, but it is a one vote majority.

Q: Are you worried about your own party's unity?

BB: No, I am not worried about the unity of the Party. I have confidence that the members who have been elected are honourable and they will show integrity of character. And I expect them to stand with the party. I know different people may have different recommendations to make, but by the end of the day everybody stands by the party. And that is the proper political behaviour. That is what I expect of my colleagues and I know that my colleagues will live up to my expectations.

Q: It is being said that they should let the provincial governments come into being without the National Assembly being convened? What are your views on this?

BB: This may be probably easier for them. In the Frontier Province, undoubtedly MMA is the majority party. And in the Punjab, undoubtedly PML(Q) is the majority party. There may be problems in Sindh and Balochistan because in these two provinces there will have to be alliances that make the government. And unless the alliances are clear in the centre, the alliances will be missing the provinces. You could end up with three deadlocked assemblies, one at the top, two at the bottom, unless there is a change the political equation.

Q: What is the situation in Sindh?

BB: In Sindh, the Sindh Pakistan People's Party has almost a majority and we are talking to different political parties to try and gain a majority. But let us face it, Sindh is a pretty volatile province to govern without support from the centre.

Q: Last question. Are you superstitious?

BB: Why, yes.

Q: I ask because the tape on which I am recording this interview is the same tape on which I recorded Gen. Musharraf on his last visit to the United States. Your voice now overrides that of Gen. Musharraf on this tape.

BB (laughs): I think that is a very good omen.

A general's joy 'The News' dated January 17, 2003

The Persian poet Hafiz said, "the General's joy in dominating the world is not worth the suffering of his army".

Since September 11 Pakistan's General Musharraf basked in the global glow that joining the War against Terror brought him. Once a pariah whom President Clinton refused to spend much time with, he became a close friend of President George Bush.

But the General's joy of dominating the friendship with Washington while allowing the religious parties to rise in Pakistan created an ambiguous situation.

Technically Pakistan is a key ally of the Washington led alliance to eliminate al-Qaeda cells across the world. On the ground, pro-Taliban religious parties were key beneficiaries of the rigged elections the General held last October.

General Musharraf's novel leadership places Islamabad in an unenviable position. It is viewed simultaneously with friendship and suspicion. Two recent events highlight the situation that Islamabad finds itself in. First the clash between an officer of the Pakistan army with American troops. Second, the finger printing of Pakistani male nationals under new US Immigration rules.

Pursuing fleeing al-Qaeda/Taliban remnants from Afghanistan this January, US troops found them doing another Tora Bora: escaping into the tribal areas that border Afghanistan. The US troops went into hot pursuit. They were confronted by a Pakistani military officer. The officer opened fire on the US forces wounding the US soldier. In retaliation, the US dropped a 500 pound bomb on a Masjid where the officer took refuge. (The bomb failed to hit the officer).

This was the second incident between the two armies. The hotlines between Washington and Islamabad burnt as the two countries tried to calm down the incident.

According to one of the wire services, "minimum cooperation with the Americans is the word that has gone out to Pakistani military units still going through the motions of assisting the US Special Forces".

The duality in open and secret policy sends conflicting signals to the Pakistani public and the Pakistani army. They are victims of the official policy of double speak and unable to clearly identify either friend or foe. Presumably these are

commando tactics to keep the enemy confused. Only no one knows who the enemy is.

Therefore, Pakistanis find themselves included in the new Immigration rules set by the United States to screen all those leaving and entering the United States. All males between the ages of 16 and 45 are finger printed and have mug shots taken. Most Pakistanis are angered at the treatment given that Islamabad is a member of the alliance against terror.

Islamabad's image is hardly helped by the collapse of institutions taking place since the death of democracy in 1996. There was a time when the Pakistan military could seal its own borders giving little excuse for hot pursuit.

There was a time when Pakistan's police force broke the back of an ethnic insurgency. But such is the state of the police force in the post democratic period, that Islamabad gave permission to the FBI to make arrests of suspected persons.

Islamabad was allowed generous rescheduling of debts in exchange for helping clean the world of terrorism. But Pakistanis still face the iron fist of the terrorist on their own soil. The death toll rises sickeningly as one terrorist attack follows another, as one bomb blast precedes another. As Hafiz said, "the General's joy in dominating the world is not worth the suffering of his army". Or of his people.

The writer is former Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Pakistan's rigged elections must be rejected
Demonstrates the dangers of flawed polling results
Bhutto's supporters defrauded
February 1, 2003

Pakistan's parliamentary elections held this October were part of a military promise to restore democracy in the country. The elections were marred by allegations of widespread rigging.

The American Human Rights Watch noted that the "decks were stacked" against the political parties. The European Union called the elections "flawed". The Commonwealth of Nations declined to restore Islamabad's suspended membership to its organization.

At best the elections could be called a transition to civilian rule.

The Pakistani elections were held against an international background of tension, turmoil and terrorism. Terrorism struck repeatedly across different parts of Asia as Pakistanis went to the poll. It struck in Indonesia, Kuwait and Yemen.

One year back, the terrorists were routed from Afghanistan. In the one year since their defeat, Islamabad's military regime failed to play its part in controlling and containing the terrorists.

Islamabad's military regime, through inability at best and deceit at worst, allowed the terrorists to escape during the bombing of Tora Bora. Now the terrorists have regrouped. Suicide bombers attacked churches, mosques and diplomatic missions in Pakistan during the early part of this year. Recently, they reached beyond from Indonesia to Kuwait.

Islamabad's military dictatorship was the tinderbox that fuelled the regrouping of the forces of extremism, bigotry and hatred which endanger world peace in the twenty-first century.

There is talk in the world community about democracy in the Palestinian Authority as well as in Baghdad. However, talk of democracy in Pakistan is muted. The Pakistani dictator is viewed as an ally in the war against terror. The policy of keeping one dictator in hand while speaking against dictatorship in other places leads to confusion and cynicism in the Muslim world. The need is to speak consistently and clearly about freedom.

The Muslim people live largely in dictatorships. Often the choice they face is a Hobbesian one between military dictatorship and religious dictatorship. Its important to give the Muslim people a third choice, the choice of a free society based on fundamental human rights and the rule of law.

Instead Muslim countries find themselves in societies where women are discriminated against, where cronyism and nepotism demolish the vitality of free competition, where judges are bribed or coerced and political parties decimated.

Islamabad's generals ruthlessly use the intelligence agencies to factionalise mainstream political parties. Their goal to undermine traditional political parties plays into the hands of religious extremists. They are free to campaign. Their leaders are released from prisons by compliant courts too afraid to free political prisoners belonging to democratic parties.

Extremism and terrorism were born in the bowels of war torn Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation of that country in the eighties. It's important to learn where the world went wrong in Afghanistan in order to weaken the forces of terrorism.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Kabul the world community, distracted by the fall of the Berlin Wall, turned its attention to Europe. In so doing, it failed to work for a democratic government in Afghanistan built on the principles of coalition, consensus and compromise.

The fundamental mistake, contributing to the tragedy of the World Trade Centers bombing, was the inability to uphold the values of freedom, democracy and self-determination that undermine terrorism. Democracy and human rights must be the centerpiece of policy to counter the forces of terrorism.

Those who support democracy abhor terrorism in all its murderous forms.

Pakistani democrats need the support of the members of the global community in their struggle for fundamental human rights and free elections. The October elections orchestrated in Pakistan were a mockery of justice. Five different laws were promulgated by edict to prevent the leadership of the Pakistan People's Party from freely participating. However, Mullah Omar's tutor was allowed to participate. Today he is a member of the Pakistani Parliament.

General Musharaf promised new faces for Pakistan's future. The new face can be found in Mullah Omar's tutor as well as the large number of persons elected under

the banner of the religious parties. A significant number of these are battle hardened veterans of the Afghan Jihad.

The critical Pakistani provinces bordering Afghanistan were handed to the religious parties in the controversial elections held by Musharaf and his men. This is the area where the remnants of Al Qaeda and Taliban are suspected of hiding. Moreover, control of the Senate now moves to the religious parties. They can veto legislation for the next six years.

One day before the elections, it was reported on television that Islamabad's generals planned giving the areas bordering Afghanistan to the religious parties. The information proved right.

As the Musharaf regime tampered with the election result, it deliberately gave the religious parties the power they now enjoy. The rigging of the elections was done in several ways, including tampering the vote count. The vote count announcement was delayed from three to thirty-six hours to change the results. The announced results contradicted each election poll showing the democratic forces triumphing in the elections.

When votes are fixed they show up in the numbers. The normal pattern of voting in the constituency is disrupted with huge discrepancies. In the constituencies where rigging has taken place, the turnout in the polling stations even exceeded one hundred percent.

Perhaps the Generals thought they could keep the West in line by threatening religious turmoil unless their dictatorship was backed. If so, they miscalculated. Both their earlier protégés, Prime Ministers Junejo and Nawaz, turned on them. There is every likelihood that their new protégés will do the same.

Dictatorship does not contain extremism, it provokes it. Building a democratic Afghanistan could have marginalised the Talibans and Bin Ladens of this world before they declared war on the world.

Back in 1996 when Pakistan was a democracy, it emerged as one of the ten leading capital markets of the world. Democracy in Pakistan was destabilised by military hardliners and religious extremists. Two years after the overthrow of the PPP government, Bin Laden declared war on the west from the soil of Afghanistan where he was harboured by the Taliban. The destabilisation of democracy in Pakistan continues to reverberate in South Asia and the larger world community.

Pakistani democracy is important for empowering the Pakistani people as well as for addressing the social issues affecting its poverty stricken people. But democracy in Pakistan is also important to the geo-strategic concerns of the world community as it battles terrorism in this century.

For those reasons, last October's electoral farce must be rejected.

But Islamabad's generals are betting on a different course. They are betting that the world is distracted by the violence in the Middle East and the weapons inspections in Baghdad. They are betting that the world community will sideline the cause of democracy in Pakistan. Maybe they are right. But if Islamabad's nuclear armed military dictatorship is allowed to exploit the war on international terror to legitimise its domestic dictatorship, the threat from terrorists can only increase.

A democratic Pakistan is the best guarantee of the triumph of moderation and modernisation in a volatile region of the world.

The General is in a Constitutional Crisis

Benazir Bhutto

August 30, 2003

Last October, amongst much international fanfare, General Musharaf held controversial elections that gave birth to a Parliament after a three year interval.

His happiness with a handpicked Parliament was short-lived. Although the two former Prime Ministers were disallowed from contesting and the Kings Party emerged with the largest number of seats, the country is descending into a constitutional crisis.

The constitutional crisis is triggered by the inability of General Musharaf to learn from his military predecessors that parliamentary leaders are won over rather than kicked about.

Last week the General was in Hyderabad where he declared that if the Parliament refuses his order to rubber stamp his edicts, known as the Legal Framework Order, the Parliament will “go”.

He is wrong in claiming that if the LFO goes, so does the Parliament. His three year rule was based on the promise to hold elections resulting in a sovereign Parliament. It was not endorsed by the country’s Supreme Court to enable one man to force his unrepresentative views on an entire Nation.

Parliament is resisting the efforts by the military dictator to subjugate the elected voice of the country. It views the edicts of the General as partially an attempt to bring in a presidential system through the backdoor. It worries about the National Security Council bringing defence and foreign policy issues under the control of the armed forces. Unlike Turkey, the ruling Generals in Islamabad are closer to the extremist forces that fought the Afghan Jihad than the moderate political leadership.

Parliamentarians assess, too, that it is not in Musharaf’s self interest to dissolve Parliament and he is making empty threats. An attempt to dissolve Parliament could be the end of the Musharaf presidency if precedent is a guide. Moreover, he would lack immunity for his deeds. Therefore it was in his own interests ultimately to accept the demands of the political parties and allow Parliament to function.

Pakistan's political history showed that a president that dissolved an assembly had to go too-- although the Parliament came back after fresh elections. General Zia, Mr Ghulam Ishaque Khan and Mr. Farooq Leghari were the three Presidents in recent history that went home after dissolving parliaments. In his heart, Musharaf knows that he too would go home—without immunity. Therefore there is little chance of his getting rid of the Assembly as he threatens from time to time.

Islamabad's present Parliament was elected under the decision of the Supreme Court that held the constitution in abeyance until such time as the new assemblies were elected. Musharaf is the latest in a long line of dictators in the chequered political history of Pakistan. The earlier dictators brought their Legal Framework Orders (LFO) to the Parliament. The only one who did not do that was General Yahya Khan. That action resulted in the breakup of the country and the surrender of 90,000 troops.

There are some positive aspects to the LFO introduced on the insistence of political parties. These include larger representation for women as well as joint electorates for minorities. Parliament would approve them. But the General is increasingly ignorant of the political realities in the country. Last week he wrongly claimed in Hyderabad that womens representation and joint electorates were in danger.

Or perhaps this was a trick to divert attention from the real issues agitating the elected representatives. The controversial issues include Pakistan's governance by a sitting army chief (which Musharaf still is after claiming the presidency), the power of the president to dismiss assemblies which gave rise to political instability in the past, the need to reform the election commission and the modalities for elections, labour rights and other laws. These could include, were press reports correct, that Musharaf granted himself a million dollar house as army chief and a second as president. As a lollypop, he extended this to all former presidents. To check this, the Parliamentarians asked for a list of the edicts passed which they are expected to ratify during the official talks. That list is yet to be given to them.

There were other controversial edicts passed too. For example, the Opposition complained to the United Nations Rapporteur when reports leaked that an accountability judge was paid a dressed up bribe as "retrospective promotion and back payments" in a case against former First Lady Begum Bhutto. Parlaimentarians would be uncomfortable indemnifying such self serving acts. Parliamentarians need a comprehensive copy of each of the edicts passed and need to vote for them individually after applying due diligence. Yet they are denied access even to the nature of the edicts that they are to consider.

For months the Jamali administration and the political parties were engaged in negotiations on the LFO issue. (Although the substantive talks took place with the religious alliance and not the alliance with the former Premiers). For some reason, General Musharaf did not want these negotiations to succeed. According to reports, even while these negotiations were going on, Musharaf was discussing dissolving Parliament to frighten the legislators and get a better deal for himself. This was an old trick which had been played by Gen. Ayub in the fifties and Gen. Zia in the eighties. The Parliamentarians are wise enough to see through these empty threats and are calling Musharaf's bluff. He needs the assembly for indemnity for overthrowing the constitution. If he fails to get it from his handpicked assembly by making concessions, he could be the biggest loser.

The reason Musharaf wants to make Parliament subservient is that he can no longer preside over cabinet meetings. He misses the time when he could change laws at will through edicts. Whatever he wished, right or wrong, became law. He was surrounded by yes men and courtiers. Now he finds placating his own allies, what to talk of the Opposition, a frustrating task. If he doesn't keep them happy, his allies stay away from the Parliament breaking the quorum, ending the session and embarrassing him.

He does not want to give up the army post. It's surprising that he is unable to find one amongst the many military colleagues whom he could trust as the new army chief. He wants everything his own way without realizing that political leadership is about give and take and about compromise. His inflexibility and refusal to see the other parties point of view has plunged the country into a grave constitutional crisis.

In retrospect, the lack of leadership qualities is unsurprising. Musharaf's lack of leadership qualities gave birth to the ill advised Kargil adventure where Islamabad had to withdraw unilaterally after three thousand soldiers and officers gave their lives for the success of the operation. He joined the war against terror without consulting his handpicked National Security Council or handpicked cabinet. They too would have joined the anti terror effort and the country could have benefited by developing a consensus as well as getting better terms than Musharaf got, like debt write off.

Musharaf's other bitter legacy is the rise in economic and political suicides, three near wars with New Delhi, deteriorating relations with neighbours Iran and Afghanistan, renewed violence in Karachi, the Okara Military Farms scandal where peasants are losing their lives because Musharaf's cronies want their lands and blind eye to governmental corruption.

Musharaf came in with the promise of clean politics which now lies shredded under his military boots. He freed convicted men to form a government in one of the smaller provinces. Those who were declared corrupt by his cronies in the National Accountability Bureau were declared clean the minute they joined Musharaf. The press report the use of money in buying Senatorships while Musharaf turns a blind eye. Recently the press reported a Senator offering to purchase twelve parliamentarians for Musharaf.

The politics of expediency and opportunism may be the art of the dictator. However, earlier dictators lacked Musharaf's stubbornness putting their own self interest before that of false pride. His inability to coopt the anti Nawaz Grand Democratic Alliance, at the time he overthrew the former Premier, lost him political support. His controversial presidential referendum weakened him further. His manipulation of the electoral process with the sordid horsetrading and postponement of Parliamentary sessions worsened his plight. The more he fights the traditional parties, now united in the Alliance for the restoration of Democracy, the weaker he gets.

His attempts to build controversial dams that hurts lower riparians (and perhaps benefit desert state land self allotted to himself and his cronies) creates inter provincial tensions for personal gain. Pakistan faces a water crisis. The answer is to build a series of smaller dams. These can be done much more quickly, much more cheaply and provide water much more expeditiously than huge dams.

Musharaf's continued attempts to marginalize the two former Prime Ministers reflects his inability to build a pluralistic society that ultimately creates a stable society. The continued relevance of the leaders of the mainstream parties in the hearts and minds of the public makes Musharaf angry and frustrated. He wants his own way all the time even when it damages the national fabric. He appears highly strung becoming emotional before the press with tears in his eyes.

It must be asked, as the Bombay Blasts once again shake the fragile peace initiative between India and Pakistan, greater Taliban activity hurts Pak Afghan relations, Musharaf remains mired in a constitutional crisis at home and the spectre of poverty continues to haunt the youth of Pakistan while Musharaf remains at loggerheads with Pakistan's two major parties whose leaders he fears, if he is the right person to lead Pakistan.

New Regional Alignments **September 12, 2003**

Decision making in Pakistan once took place in an institutional framework allowing debate between different governmental departments. This resulted in credible, legitimate, serious and acceptable policies based on consensus.

No more.

Since commando style politics reshaped Islamabad's foreign policy, impetuosity is the name of the game.

Such impetuosity was displayed following the bombing of the World Trade Centers on September 11, 2001. As the call from Secretary of State Colin Powell came, Islamabad's military dictator leapt to attention. Much to the surprise of the American administration, disclosed in a book called *Bush at War*, General Musharaf joined the international coalition against terrorism without naming a price.

Or consulting the institutions of government.

The foreign office, the security services, the national security council, the cabinet itself that would have supported the decision to join the war against terror were ignored.

Impetuosity cost Pakistan consensus and perhaps debt relief that could relieve unborn generations of financial burdens. Other countries, including Egypt and Jordan, managed such relief when strategic regional situations developed.

This summer the military dictator flew to Camp David for talks with President Bush, the most powerful leader of the unipolar world. His visit followed that of the President of the Philippines. She was treated to a resplendent state visit with a grand White House dinner while the Marine Band played in the background. He was treated to the lesser official visit, businesslike, simple and quickly over at Camp David.

Fresh from Camp David, the General decided on another display of impetuosity during a television talk show. He now wanted a "debate" on whether Pakistan should recognize the state of Israel. Although informal contacts between Islamabad and Tel Aviv existed since the days of General Zia in the

seventies, Islamabad links recognition to the resolution of the Jerusalem and Golan Heights issues.

Perhaps the General thought that all doors to Washington lead through Israel. Or perhaps he wanted to dangle a carrot for his continuation in office. In any event, this momentous announcement was made without consulting the cabinet, the national security council or even his brother officers that make up the corp commanders of the Pakistan army.

Surprisingly, the General thought that a hard nosed state like Israel would bite a dangling carrot cutting its strategic relationship with India for a “debate” in Islamabad.

Of course Prime Minister Vajpayee was listening. He swiftly invited Prime Minister Sharon to New Delhi to let those that were in the dark know that the Israeli-Indian nexus was safe and sound.

The result of the General’s commando gambit, throwing aside consensus for unilateral action, is a troubling backlash for Islamabad.

Islamabad’s foreign office expressed the depth of concern over the growing Indo-Israel defence cooperation. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said “It is an act directed against Pakistan and we would be most concerned as they are very negative developments.”

The Israeli defence pact with New Delhi follows the Indo-Iranian defence agreement reached a few months back. Meanwhile Islamabad’s relations with Kabul are hardly good as pro Taliban militants regroup and attempt to destabilize the Karzai government.

Against this background, the All Parties Hurriyet Conference, a grouping of Kashmiri leaders across the divide, sympathetic to Islamabad, split.

Washington, which facilitated Indo-Pakistan talks in the past, has yet to suggest a summit meeting between Musharaf and Vajpayee during their September visits to the UN General Assembly in New York.

And Indian troops in Ladakh are carrying out military exercises which are “within the disputed territory” according to a foreign office briefing in Islamabad.

These exercises are taking place with US Special Forces as part of new Indo American military ties against the backdrop of Israeli Prime Minister Sharon's visit to New Delhi.

Islamabad is helpless in the face of provocation even as it is Washington's most valued ally.

The time calls for leadership to overcome the sorry pass of individual decision making although it seems that time and leadership are at odds with each other.

The Difference Between Right and Wrong

21 September 2003

Dictatorship breeds despair in society leading to a pessimistic outlook. And a disenchanted people.

Disenchantment, in turn, leads to despair, demoralisation and a defeatist attitude. This defeatist attitude is growing in Pakistan and in a number of countries that share, with Pakistan, a common history. A history of contradictions where freedom from colonialism was quickly replaced by domestic tyranny.

The movement against colonialism in the last century was led by brave and principled leaders. They created a resilient society inspiring people to greater heights and bigger sacrifices.

Value systems seep through the body politic of a society.

In a dictatorship, the appeal is to benefit oneself for a plot, a permit or a post. It breeds a culture of corruption that erodes the nobility of the individual and the soul of the society. The pursuit of selfish materialism results in poverty of life where those who have everything have nothing.

In contrast, political parties ask followers to abandon self interest to help others. It is the act of abandonment of self interest for a greater cause that infuses the spirit of life into the soul of a Nation. Here the individual gives up the dearest possessions: life, liberty, youth, family, health and livelihood to further a cause larger than the self.

Prosperous societies are built around the majesty of law. Here judges overturn governmental excesses to protect the individual. The act of overturning a publicly perceived excess is an act of justice that crowns the rule of law with splendour. Once the dominant Muslim culture rested on the pillars of Adl and Insaaf—of being just and dispensing justice.

In the twenty first century, the danger is that leadership betrays the public confidence and dishonours its heroic past. The legacy of fighting for the rule of law and the emancipation of society is giving way to the use of force. Force is used by a few to get what they want irrespective of whether their community believes it is right or wrong.

History is replete with examples of those marginalised because they thought wrong was right in the pursuit of an end they believed justified the means.

This is where some Muslim societies started to wander after a period of greatness. Some Muslim schools began teaching that it was alright to commit a wrong (haraam) act if it was for a right (halal) end.

Greatness rests on a sense of justice. Talk of a just leadership, a just society, a just war echoes through the corridors of history. It echoes because every great society and leadership flowed from the perception of justice done, of right triumphing over wrong, of the weak challenging the mighty because right empowered them to do so.

Civilisations collapsed, and societies are collapsing, as the distinction between right and wrong, right and might is blurring.

An ethical value system emphasises that right is stronger than might. Nations prosper where the weak and oppressed are considered equal to the rich and privileged. An ethical foundation brings individual prosperity irrespective of social background. To build ethical societies so many gave so much during the wave of anti colonialism movements that in the twentieth century produced independent nations.

Today some of those independent nations in the arc from Aden in the Yemen to the straits of Malacca face dangers of disintegration. The danger comes from the form of governance resting on despotism.

Dictatorial rulers use oppression, injustice, corruption to either bribe or terrorise otherwise good souls into debasing themselves into lower beings. In so doing, they corrupt an individual lacking the will to suffer. More dangerously, the fabric of society upon which ultimately rests the greatness of a Nation is destroyed. Fear begins to guide actions and reactions replacing the confidence that flows from the security that justice will be done.

Perhaps for this reason all the great religions of the world emphasised the importance of the word "just". God is always just. God created humanity in His image. When humanity is unable to act justly, humanity loses its divine spirit. Without spirit, life ebbs away until what is left is lifelessness or death.

Islamabad is a case study. As elections are rigged, parliament mocked, parliamentarians pressured to sell themselves, the judiciary decried by the

Pakistan Bar Council, the children of our generation suffer in Pakistan and elsewhere.

Their upbringing is handicapped by the incapacity of society to differentiate between right and wrong.

The Middle East is also an example. Here the Israelis and Palestinians ceased to care about each others children. The targets are not military. The targets are civilians randomly chosen to be killed. Hate generates hate and the fires of hate make rational thinking impossible.

An Israeli leader threatens to assassinate the President of the Palestinians. It is a reflection of the times that such a shocking threat be made. Even more sadly that such a threat was silently received by the majority of nations.

If such a threat is permitted to materialise, a Palestinian may assassinate an Israeli prime minister in retaliation. The Israelis will retaliate by upping the ante. The vicious cycle of violence will continue.

Each action is equal and opposite. Of violence and of peace. Of right and of wrong. But somehow this lesson is forgotten. The belief is that might will crush the enemy and bring a one-sided victory.

A world that once condemned assassination as an evil act remains silent. The sacrosanct nature of human life seems to lose its sanctity. The changing values describe a world losing contact with the qualities of ethics and morality once considered the moving forces of human and societal behaviour.

Is the change continental? The dominant value of the past was spread by European powers where civil rights and compassionate tolerance were the hallmarks of greatness. Today it is America which is the undeclared new empire of the world. It is an empire born of a past where the maxim in the expansive wilderness was a raw and ready justice: "dead or alive".

This is in sharp contrast to the European ethos where each individual, even the most grotesque murderer, had rights and was entitled to an impartial trial. Previously a person was innocent before proven guilty. And that is what the United Nations Human Rights Convention still says. Yet the United Nations is no longer what it once was. A person is now presumed guilty and must battle to prove innocence.

The changing ethos takes place against a more violent world.

It seems that the ones with might need not listen to representative bodies or submit to collective will. Thus Pakistan's dictator can remain president and army chief irrespective of what the Parliament thinks. And parliamentarians in Pakistan can switch sides for favours irrespective of what their constituents or parties think.

It must be asked: can such a value system produce societies that protect and nurture children, give pride to its youth and glory to its Nations?

The answer rests on making that crucial difference which once was made when religion, society and great leaders taught the difference between right and wrong.

The Way Out of Pakistan's Constitutional Crisis

Last October Pakistan's military dictator held controversial elections in a promised road map for restoring constitutional and civil rule. The General, who is a key ally of the West following the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, declared that the elections meant he was sincere in transferring power to the elected representatives. Yet the claim was far from credible. The elections were badly rigged. The European Union said that they were flawed. An American human rights committee said that the decks were stacked against the political parties.

The military intelligence agencies were given the task of forming a political party to face the Pakistan Peoples Party which I lead. This "King's Party" contained many individuals previously charged with corruption by the National Accountability Bureau. (In the country NAB is known as the National Arm twisting Bureau).

The denial of people's representation has resulted in a constitutional crisis. The new Parliament still does not have a Leader of Opposition for two reasons. First, because my supporters would obtain that post. Second, a moderate alternative doesn't frighten the West. General Musharaf wants the West to believe that the choice in Pakistan is between military dictatorship and Religious dictatorship. He tries for more defections from the PPP Parliamentary Group so the post of Leader of Opposition can go to the religious parties. (They are also disgruntled with him for different reasons.)

In a choice between the military or the religious parties controlling Pakistan's nuclear assets, the West would fall into line with the military. But this argument is a total fraud. In fact the choice in Pakistan today is between military dictatorship and democracy. It could change if the institutions in Pakistan fail to prevent the dismemberment of the democratic forces in the country.

Meanwhile the military backed ruling Party, known as the Kings Party, is also facing difficulties. Its members are disgruntled. They refuse to attend the Parliamentary session which is often adjourned for lack of quorum. So desperate is the situation that in a recent session the Police were asked to pick up parliamentarians from their homes and bring them to the Parliament.

Parliament is elected to enact laws. But the General wants Parliament to accept, without seeing detailed provisions, a new law that his retired buddies in uniform drew up. Parliament insists on seeing the exact provisions. And boycotts take place in protest.

An Opposition member was arrested this month for releasing a letter indicating discontent in the armed forces. He is being threatened with a sedition trial for expressing his right to free speech as well as his elected right to bring matters of national importance to the Parliament.

Islamabad admits that some Pak military men were caught fighting side by side with the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. These are called "rogue elements". A US official claimed in October that General Musharaf's orders were not being implemented by the rank and file of the military. This brought a sharp denial from the military spokesperson who claimed Musharaf was fully in control.

Nonetheless, these events do show that all is not well either on the political or the military front. It is troubling that a key country in a key region, described as one of the most dangerous in the world, is facing internal instability.

As the popular leader of the people, I continue as the target of the regime. Like the ghost in Shakespeare's Hamlet, I am in the political story although out of the country.

The regime banned me from contesting for Prime Minister of Pakistan under one law. Under another, it has banned me from contesting for Parliament itself even as a backbencher. I cannot enter my home or country safely. I have not seen my husband for years. He was imprisoned the day democracy was killed in 1996. Each time he is released, he is re-arrested under another charge. He was released twenty times and re-arrested twenty one times.

Unhappy with the prominence I was gaining overseas by attending conferences and speaking at Universities, the regime is trying to curtail my movement in exile. They have wrongly claimed to Swiss authorities that I manipulated the award of a contract to benefit my husband. I did no such thing. No court has convicted me of this even though more than seven years have passed since the overthrow of the government that I led.

Seven years later a Swiss investigating Magistrate found that the alleged account was not mine. He claimed that I had "access" to it. I opposed the finding before the Geneva authorities. To my delight they quashed the finding of the Investigating Magistrate on November 4, 2003 and sent it back to the Prosecutor's office.

Since democracy was derailed in 1996, many dramatic events took place in South Asia. India and Pakistan came close to a possible nuclear war three times. Violence

in occupied Jammu and Kashmir has intensified. That violence spilled into India itself with a devastating attack on its Parliament.

After 1996, Taliban invited in Al Qaeda and allowed it to raise, recruit and train young Muslim men in terror. It was from Afghanistan, that Al Qaeda declared war on the West. The attack on the twin towers killed three thousand innocent people. The retaliatory war led to more innocent deaths.

Recently a Father of five killed himself and his family because he could not feed them. He became one more statistic in the number of economic suicides that now take place in Pakistan. People kill themselves because they can no longer afford to live.

This month a 12 year old girl in a village in Sindh fell down unconscious from her school bench. When she regained consciousness she confided to her teacher that for the last two days she and her family had been starving. Her father is sick and her brothers can't find a job.

Pakistan's State Bank noted this year that poverty has risen to thirty percent in the country. This means that one in three people in Pakistan are living in the most abject circumstances.

Sadly, a country that could focus on eliminating hunger and poverty, reforming its schools, training its youth for the challenges of the twenty first century is wasting its energies in power struggles against the popular leadership of the country.

The solution lies in a political system where Parliament does what it's supposed to do: freely enact laws. It lies in a parliamentary agreement where the parties commit to the full democratization of Pakistan where the next elections are held by the Pakistan Human Rights Commission and all parties and leaders are free to contest with results announced within the hour at local headquarters.

The state of democracy, economy and social equilibrium is worrying. Given the number of failing states around the world, it should be of concern to all of those interested in seeing a stable South Asia.

Mohtarma Bhutto in BBC programme

12 January 2004: Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto took part in a BBC program where she answered questions from viewers from across the world.

Here is the text of the question answer session:

BBC: Leaders of India and Pakistan have entered in a new phase in normalising the relations between the two countries. How sincere are the efforts this time in your view?

Benazir Bhutto: My understanding is that leaders of both the countries are under tremendous pressure from the people of South Asia. This region has serious problems which need to be addressed immediately - poverty, unemployment. Common man thinks till the time these problems are not addressed, this region would be left behind in the 21st century. It is this pressure, which has given a new hope of friendly relations between India and Pakistan.

BBC Q: How sincere is the present establishment of Pakistan in restoring friendly relations with India ?

Benazir: I hope that this establishment in Pakistan has learnt lessons from the past. Earlier too, the Indian Prime Minister had made efforts to make peace with Pakistan with his Bus diplomacy and Agra summit. Unfortunately, both failed, and I am extremely sorry to say that the media, newspapers and intellectuals blamed my country for failures on both occasions. But now I hope that Islamabad has learnt from the past, and the efforts being made by Gen Musharraf could yield good results, and my hope is based on the reason peace is the need of present time.

BBC listener from Singapore: Despite 55 years after independence, Pakistan has been under the control of military dictators' majority of the time. One Prime Minister was hanged in the past, and now two former Prime Ministers cannot enter the country. Is this because Pakistan has been obsessed with Kashmir and anti-India-ism? Do you think Gen Musharraf would restore a civilian government or would he meet the fate same as those of his military ruler predecessors?

Benazir: There has been an impression that due to tension in the region, the armed forces in Pakistan have managed a considerable political clout, and therefore the democratic forces could not become strong. But now I hope, all this would become a part of history soon.

So far, as Gen Musharraf is concerned, he has been under great pressure to start peace talks with India, I hope these efforts would reach some logical conclusion!

When the democratic process would be restored in Pakistan, only at that time would I be satisfied, that a political consensus would lead to a durable peace process. In this regard, I have appealed to the Musharraf regime to allow both the exiled former Prime Ministers to return to the country and be a part of the peace process, so that the world can see this as a sincere effort of the army, civilian rule and people of all the four states of Pakistan, and not merely as a tactical manoeuvre!

BBC Q: You hope that the efforts being made by Gen Musharraf would be successful, were the democratic governments in Pakistan in the past reluctant to have normal ties with India ?

Benazir: See, this world witnesses different scenarios and situations with the changing times. When the Berlin Wall was pulled down, a ray of hope arose that the people in other regions with similar walls could unite. It was at that time in 1989, felt that the struggle and sacrifices of Kashmiri people would be highlighted at an international level. People were being killed on both sides - Kashmiri struggle and Indian army. That was one scenario, means sympathy with such struggles.

Then in 2001, after the attack on WTC, the world saw another change, at that time the sympathy with such struggles and especially with the use of force ceased to exist. So it is the timing at a particular juncture that is important.

BBC Q: You were mentioning about the pressure on Gen Musharraf for peace talks with India. Who is pressurizing him?

Benazir: He is under pressure from the entire world. On one hand is the internal pressure and, on the other is the external pressure. Washington clearly told Gen Musharraf to ban the militant groups within Pakistan. He promised to do so two years ago, but those groups started operating under different names. The US again told him that it was naming those groups as terror organisations, and they be banned, he says he would do it now, so he is under pressure from all sides!

BBC listener from Dubai: It has been 55 years now since the two countries have been fighting over territory and Kashmir. This time was the first, when both talked serious business, and decided to put controversial issues behind. You have ruled

over Pakistan, tell us how much can the Musharraf regime be trusted, and does this regime have the power to implement what it promises?

Benazir: See, the issue of trust is an extremely one when we talk about Indo-Pak relations. We have to be clear that no particular individual can remain in power forever, and has to finally go one day!

My understanding is, for Pakistan to be trusted internationally, there would have to be political consensus internally. Even if, today were to say that a particular leader is sincere, he would not be there forever, and remember individual decisions are temporary, and not long-lasting. I feel that the people of South Asia are not ready to be cheated once again, we have to seize this opportunity and have an internal political consensus on the peace efforts with India.

BBC listener from Gujarat: In today's scenario, especially after 9/11 and the Iraq war, things have changed, and Gen Musharraf is accepted internationally. What is your and Nawaz Sharif's political future?

Benazir: You are right, both of us are out of the political process of the country. Gen Musharraf has himself been saying that the opposition in the National Assembly takes directions from those out of the country. If the opposition leadership is out of the country, then what sort of democracy is there in Pakistan? I think it cannot be restored also like this.

Recently, Gen Musharraf sought a vote of confidence, he did not win that also. He struck an alliance with the MMA, and despite that had to resort to wrong counting.

In Pakistan, the assemblies of the state have equal votes, but this time it was not the case, Punjab assembly was given more votes to ensure Musharraf's victory. Sine we are out of the country, the civilian institutions are not being allowed to function properly, and the state of affairs is such that a powerful military ruler cannot win a vote of confidence, he has to resort to wrong practices to claim victory! Only on our return can the things improve in Pakistan. Last time also, when I returned during Gen Zia's tenure, there was not a democratically elected government in Pakistan. Now I am looking for a chance to return to my country and serve the people!

See, the situation in Pakistan is very complex at the moment. On the one hand, rights of people have been snatched, and on the other, political leaders are facing persecution. But the situation is such, that due to the situation in Afghanistan, Gen

Musharraf was able to cosy up to Washington, and has been able to divert attention from the internal situation in Pakistan.

But myself, and Mian Nawaz Sharif want to return to Pakistan. Maybe both of us go together, maybe we go separately.

So far as I am concerned, I am definitely planning my return!

BBC listener from Islamabad: Madam, you have blamed the previous governments of Pakistan for failures at Lahore and Agra, which is wrong. How can you be critical of Gen Musharraf who is supported by 99 percent Pakistanis, you are not in touch with reality as you have been out since last five-six years now ?

Benazir: Supporters of Gen Musharraf think I have no credibility and he has the support of the majority of people in Pakistan. But the real situation is different. If his referendum was fair, then why did European Union and other international bodies raise questions on it? If the General really had support, why did he have to rig the referendum?

These are questions which have not been answered so far. Nawaz Sharif was my political rival, and the Lahore bus diplomacy took place during his tenure, and that very time Kargil was being planned. You can point a finger and say I am wrong in saying that Pakistan was blamed for previous failures - Lahore and Agra ! But in the eye of the world, the overwhelming opinion is - It was due to Kargil that the bus diplomacy failed! I feel that the political leadership has the skills and experience to deal with different situations successfully!

BBC listener from Allahabad : Can India hope for better relations with Pakistan, given the interference of army in every sphere of life, and the influence it has on the present government in Islamabad?

Benazir: It is a fact that the army has interfered tremendously in the politics of Pakistan. Just have a look at the history of Indo-Pak relations. The two countries have fought three wars against each other, and during all three wars, there was a military ruler in Pakistan.

On the other hand, look at civilian governments, after the Shimla Agreement, there was no war between the two countries, this was a political achievement. Now look at the recent past, after the PPP government was destabilised in 1996, both the countries were close to another war on atleast three occasions. Washington, London, different Muslim countries and even other neighbours in South Asia had to intervene to prevent the two nations from going to war against each other.

Therefore, civilian governments bring peace, and it is a harsh reality that the military rule in Pakistan has not been able to build friendly relations with India.

BBC Q: But Madam, at the moment, peace efforts are being made by a military ruler?

Benazir: Yes the efforts are being made, and I hope they would be successful. But if political consensus is not evolving in Pakistan, it would mean these efforts are temporary, and it is being done under international pressure. You do not know what would be the situation tomorrow, therefore I repeat without political consensus, you do not know of the outcome!

BBC listener from Roorkee: Are Indo-Pak talks under any compulsion or is it an emotional issue for both sides. Why do both countries move and then stop suddenly?

Benazir: You are right, both the sides have raised hopes and then suddenly the peace process has stopped.

Even now, there are certain doubts, that the hopes could be misplaced and, suddenly any development could spoil the entire show.

But, I feel that let us not be held captive by the past. I could have easily said India should not talk to Gen Musharraf, as he is a military dictator, but I did not say so, because peace is so important for South Asia, that let us all keep the differences, rifts aside and give a momentum to the peace process.

That is why I have welcomed the peace process, and let us now give a positive spin to the process. When we talk of a positive peace process, we should not make it an individual peace process, it should be a broad based, institutional process.

BBC listener from Saudi Arabia: Madam, you are a leader of a political party, why don't you go to Pakistan to fight your cases and fight for democracy, what are you achieving by sitting in London?

Benazir: I am in exile. See, the conspiracy bazaar is hot in Pakistan at the moment. These people would not allow me to do politics, meet my people and serve the country. They would like to see that my entire time goes in courts, one day in Karachi, other day in Lahore and so on. Therefore I am in exile.

Every day I am looking for a chance to return to my country, and serve my people. I hope the day of my return would come very soon, and you would hear in Saudi Arabia, that I have returned back home. I would definitely go back one day!

BBC listener from Meerut: Whoever may rule in Pakistan, whether it be civilian or military, nobody is sincere in relations with India. When you were on chair, you also did not make any sincere attempt to have friendly relations with India. Why is it so?

Benazir: See, there is a big constituency inside and outside Pakistan, which thinks that till the time Kashmir issue is resolved, relations with India cannot be normalised. We have to keep this constituency in control, and send a message to Kashmiris that they are not being ignored.

So far as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is concerned, our stand is that the two countries should first concentrate on confidence building measures, as both of them would not agree on Kashmir, due to huge difference on the stand.

We feel once confidence building is done, friendship is there, then contentious issues could be solved. When I was the Prime Minister, I agreed with Rajiv Gandhi on trade, and both of us agreed that the two countries would not attack each other's nuclear facilities.

Quaid-e-Awam - The Ideal Leader

April 4, 2004

The People of Pakistan pay tribute to Quaid-e-Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Shaheed on the twenty fifth Martyrdom anniversary of his assassination on April 4, 2004.

April 4 is a day to recall the Quaid-e-Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's first directly elected Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Shaheed was sworn in as President during Pakistan's darkest hour in December 1971. The Nation was demoralised and divided. Ninety thousand prisoners of war had surrendered to Indian forces. The Indian General Manekshaw was promising to give his people another "present in a few months". Defeatist voices said that Pakistan would fail to survive.

Quaid e Awam defied the defeatists. With his enormous confidence in the people of the country, he promised to save residual Pakistan from disintegration, rebuild the armed forces, revive the economy, educate the youth and make Pakistan a country respected in every corner of the world. And he succeeded.

Quaid-e-Awam fulfilled Quaid-e-Azam's constitutional dream by formulating a unanimous Islamic, Federal, Democratic and Egalitarian Constitution providing autonomy to the federating units, creating Baluchistan as a separate province with its own High Court and creating the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in Muzaffarabad. The 1973 Constitution was the first constitution in the Muslim world to recognise habeas corpus, that is the human rights of its citizens.

That constitutional framework is now endangered. Under General Musharaf's Legal Framework Order, Parliament exists but power is vested outside it. This mocks the right of the people to determine their own future. By vesting power outside Parliament, the Islamic and democratic principles of accountability of the rulers is openly flouted promoting corruption, nepotism and the plunder of the Nation. Consequently the ghost of poverty and unemployment is haunting the lives of every second Pakistani.

Quaid e Awam was firmly opposed to Military rule. He believed that the greatness of a Nation could be achieved when its military performed its professional duties under civilian command and political authority. He was so right.

Quaid e Awam was the Father of Pakistan's nuclear program. When India detonated a nuclear device, he said, "We will eat grass but build the bomb". He was told that "a horrible example" would be made of him if he refused to abandon his nuclear dream. However, he preferred to walk to the gallows than sacrifice the interest and honour of his country.

Compare Quaid e Awam's sacrifice of his life with the mishandling of the nuclear export issue. This mishandling is endangering the program for which the great Quaid gave his life.

Instead of owning up to the export of nuclear technology which would mean a loss of power for General Musharaf (nothing compared to the sacrifice of life), his regime tried blaming the scientists carrying out their orders. This is the difference between a popular leader who lives and dies for his Nation, accepting responsibility, and a dictator that loves power at the cost of national security and solidarity.

By putting the blame on the scientists alone, the Musharaf regime has ridiculed the Pakistan armed forces and the security services throughout the world. Musharaf is trying to say that the military is so weak and the intelligence so inept that highly guarded secrets could be spirited out in military planes without discovery by a handful of scientists.

The Martyrdom of Quaid e Awam in 1979 led to the intervention of the armed forces and their growing dominance. The politicisation of the armed forces has damaged the standing of Pakistan and derailed the industrialisation and economic growth of Pakistan. While India and China boom with growing economies, Islamabad survives on debt reschedulement and floats on a sea of unemployment and misery.

The politicisation of the armed forces led to the Kalashnikov and drug culture, the rise of ethnicity, sectarianism and militancy, the collapse of the judiciary and the police force, the militarization of the foreign service and the denial of press freedom. It led to the destabilisation of the democratically elected governments and the rise of the intelligence state.

The expansion of the intelligence as the unelected government of Pakistan making and breaking political parties, devising policies without debate or accountability while redrawing curriculums in military academies to brainwash young men into clones of the existing hierarchy is correlated to each rising crisis.

The expansion of the security services to the grass roots level correlates to the death of democracy, the collapse of justice, the jobless economy, the forward Afghan policy, the Kargil disaster, three near wars with India and the export of nuclear technology. This series of horrific events could never have occurred if the policies of the Quaid e Awam, the true political heir to the Quaid e Azam, were followed and military had remained in the barracks.

If Quaid e Awam believed that progress and military rule are alien to one another, he equally felt that the role of the religious elements was outside politics. He believed that those exploiting religion for political ends damaged the progress and prosperity of a Nation.

It was the rise of religious parties under successive dictatorships which contributed to the politics of militancy and the negative image with regard to Muslim countries. Respectful of the various Muslim schools of interpretation, Quaid e Awam kept the works of religious leaders out of the training program for the military and judiciary academies and out of the educational curriculum. He believed that stressing one school of interpretation could provoke another and lead to Muslim fighting Muslim. This was a nightmare scenario which he felt must be avoided. He believed that every Pakistani, irrespective of his religious affiliation or gender or race was equal before the eyes of God, the eyes of the state and the eyes of law.

Under Musharaf, the Frontier assembly has controversially introduced the teaching of Maulana Maudoodi in the school system. Unless the school system is freed from Maudoodi's doctrinaire teaching, the consequences can be worrying for the next generation. His teachings can end up exploiting the state school system to churn out future generations committed to a particular ideological view.

Quaid e Awam's message was a message of liberation from injustice, discrimination and exploitation. He believed that serving humanity was the biggest service that could be done. He believed that human dignity flowed from ending misery which came from oppression, poverty and unemployment. He introduced far reaching social reforms, including providing universal right to travel, free education, labour rights and land distribution to the landless tenants to transform Pakistan's economy from one of grinding poverty to that of prosperity. He was committed to the poor. He lived to liberate them from the shackles of the suffering that comes from joblessness and hopelessness.

The road to success for lies in emulating Quaid e Awam. A person attains greatness by the cause that he lives for and not self-dividends. To allow

opportunism and expediency to replace integrity and steadfastness is the road to self-destruction.

Quaid-e-Awam was very conscious of his Islamic heritage. He used to say, "courage is in our blood, we are the children of a rich heritage. We shall succeed in our dream of an Islamic association since destiny demands it, political reality justifies it, posterity awaits it". It was this dream that concretised in laying the foundation of the fortress of Islam in Lahore's Islamic Summit in 1974.

In this way, he was the forefather of the regional concept, which today sees the birth of the European Union, the Gulf Countries Cooperation and the South Asian Regional Countries Association.

Under his government, Pakistan gave overt and covert support to the African nations then under apartheid and minority rule. He was a hero of the Third World who spoke boldly against racism, colonialism and imperialism. He was the boldest voice for the rights of the Kashmiri people and the Palestinians. The general who hanged him had once confessed that the amount of attention Pakistan army received from Prime Minister Bhutto had "no parallel in the history of Pakistan army prior to 1971".

He was, in fact, a harbinger of colossal change taking Pakistan from bullock backwardness into the atomic age. His progressive socio-economic and democratic ideas gave him the strength and popular support to consolidate the state on an egalitarian agenda to attain Food, Clothing and Shelter. He pushed politics out of the posh drawing rooms into the muddy lanes and villages of the poor. The party founded by him - the Pakistan People's Party -- remains the only formidable symbol of peoples rule.

Shaheed Bhutto's source of strength was the masses whose political consciousness he raised to hitherto unknown heights. He educated the people to be the fountainhead of all power. He deeply cherished democratic values and gave his life for the cause of freedom. For him military rule was a negation of the very genesis of the country that came into being as a result of a democratic process and a vote.

Today Pakistan is at the crossroads. Its policies relating to Nuclear, Taliban, India, Militancy, Religious Parties, Democracy and Economy are in shambles. Shaheed Bhutto believed that the army could protect its institutional competence by keeping out of politics. He said, "Those soldiers who leave the barracks to move into Government mansions lose wars and become prisoners of war as happened in 1971."

Through the twenty five years since he was assassinated, Quaid e Awam's words reverberate as a warning and a guide to the country to save its honour, respect, pride and position by reverting to the golden principles that gave it birth.

From his grave, the Quaid e Awam's ever lasting message of freedom, emancipation and progress resound in millions of hearts from the mountains of the Khunjrab pass to Khyber and on to Karachi on the shores of the Arabian sea.

It is witnessed in the struggle of those imprisoned, exiled or tortured. It is symbolised in the sacrifice of Shaheed Dhani Bux who immolated himself this year in protest against military rule.

On April 4, each citizen that believes on Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan, pays tribute to Quaid-e-Awam and to so many men and women, known and unknown, that gave their blood, sweat and tears to inspire coming generations to stand up and live in courage, dignity and hope.

INDO-PAK RELATIONS

Only a strong & true Democracy can ensure lasting peace, expanding trade: Benazir

A strong and true Democracy alone can ensure lasting peace and expanding trade between the two most powerful nations in the South Asian region- India and Pakistan, asserts the Pakistan Peoples Party supremo, Ms Benazir Bhutto. To give a permanent effect to the improvement of relations, the involvement of the true representatives of the people of both countries is essential. "Democracies rarely go to wars against other democracies", she said in an interview with Amitabha Sen. She admits a feel good factor is now wafting through the Indo-Pak corridors since January SAARC Summit but the PPP chairperson claimed that this change in direction could be attributed to Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf's military regime pursuing PPP agenda to improve relations with India. "It is premature to judge whether this is a sincere change in direction by the Musharraf military regime. However, its safe to bet that as long as the regime remains under pressure on the Afghan front, where Taliban are regrouping, it will continue to hold out the olive branch to New Delhi", country's former Prime Minister said adding that both Pakistan and India should seek to improve bilateral trade relations "without prejudice to their respective positions on political issues such as Kashmir". Both the countries need to signal to the world community that they are committed to the peaceful management, peaceful dialogue and peaceful solution to the bilateral issues. "There cannot be trade when one million men face each other at the borders in a state of high alert. There cannot be foreign investment," she said.

AS: Madam, a 'feel good' factor is claimed to be wafting through the Indo-Pak corridors since the last SAARC summit in this January. Do you think it's real or apparent? Do you think there have been perceptible changes (positive) in the bilateral relationship in the recent past compared with what it was when you were at the helm of affairs as the Prime Minister of Pakistan? What are the distinctive changes you find now in the bilateral relationship between these two nations?

Ms Bhutto: Yes, there is a feel good factor wafting through Indo Pak relations since the January SAARC Summit. The Musharraf military regime accepted the PPP agenda of improving relations with India. In this connection, we have seen the level of violence in the occupied valley slowly come down to 1996 levels although they are not quite there yet.

Relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated after the removal of the PPP Government. Bus Diplomacy was a cover to undertake the Kargil operation. The nuclear detonations added a dangerous edge to the confrontation. The attack on the Indian Parliament was a clear departure from the days of the PPP when no attack took place outside the disputed region and where attacks remained confined to military targets.

It is premature to judge whether this is a sincere change in direction by the Musharaf military regime. However, its safe to bet that as long as the regime remains under pressure on the Afghan front, where Taliban are regrouping, it will continue to hold out the olive branch to New Delhi.

To give a permanent effect to the improvement of relations, the involvement of the true representatives of the people of both countries is essential. PPP believes that mid term elections, which are widely predicted, should be held under the Pakistan Human Rights Commission. This can lead to a representative government in Pakistan that can legitimise the peace process and contribute to its durability.

As Prime Minister of Pakistan, I oversaw the signing of substantive agreements with India. This included the non-attack on each others nuclear installations, liberalisation of trade as well as the agreement and ratification of a SAARC common market patterned on the EU. There were important draft agreements on the redeployment of troops to Kargil as well as a mutual troops reduction treaty. I understand that some of these measures are now being discussed informally. However, we still have to see a substantive agreement on the lines of the ones that the PPP government was able to sign. I hope these come in due course.

The concern is that the military dictatorship is frightened of creating a domestic consensus on issues. Its fear of consensus leads to suspicions that it actually has another hand to play contrary to the one being shown. For example, the military dictatorship announced it was cutting orderlies from the armed forces. Simultaneously, they created an even larger cadre of orderlies under one of their foundations. Or take the fact that the military dictatorship announced it was cutting the defence budget when it shifted one third of it--pensions--to the civil list. People in Pakistan are proud of their armed forces and critical of the fat and waste. The regime promises to cut the perks and privileges that see only twenty percent actually spent on defence and the rest on administration. But it still has to deliver.

AS: Under the given situation today and in the event of your Party being in power, what positive measures you would have suggested to the Indian government or initiated yourself to resolve the political issues including of course Kashmir?

Ms Bhutto: There are a host of issues that the two countries could focus and build upon. Some that come immediately to mind are to work on eradicating poverty by improving SAARC common market conditions. Others could include Indo-Pak talks focusing on the draft treaties pertaining to the redeployment of troops to Kargil, the mutual troops reduction, nuclear confidence building measures, opening of safe borders, greater free travel, tariff talks to facilitate trade and greater participation for the Kashmiri people.

AS: An impression is gaining ground that existence and blowing up of Kashmir issue are hurting both India and Pakistan and in effect serving the interest of many a foreign countries. Your comment please?

Ms Bhutto: Yes, an impression is certainly gaining ground that tensions between India and Pakistan is hurting the international influence of South Asia. This influence is both political and economic since politics these days is based a great deal on economics. However, on international developments, informal consultations between the SAARC countries could be helpful to the recognition of South Asia as an importance centre of power housing more than a billion people, with a huge consumer market. The countries could also evolve parallel but common points on international issues as they develop.

“I would like to convey to the Indian people that a new generation of Pakistanis to whom the torch of independence has passed, wish to renew the faith of its Founding Father in the importance of friendship between two great South Asian neighbours to the everlasting benefit of all the people of South Asia.”

AS: Do you think that US recognition of Pakistan as a member of Non-NATO Military Alliance would only strain the Indo-Pak relationship further and clock the whole issue of Kashmir back to square one? How as former PM of Pakistan you would react to such recognition? To what extent this will impact the mutual trust and faith both the government are trying to build up and strengthen?

Ms Bhutto: I am unsure as to why Islamabad was keen to get a Non-Nato Military alliance with the United States when the status is largely ceremonial. Its naivety to believe that US troops would come dashing in to save Pakistan from an Indian attack when its own strategic concerns were not at stake. I am not privy to the grounds that led to Pakistan becoming a member of the Non Nato military alliance. I would like to see the file to understand what Washington and Islamabad hoped to gain from such a decision before deciding about its future.

For example India has a relationship of strategic partnership with the US without being a Non Nato Military Partner. Joint military exercises also are undertaken.

AS: Given the freedom and choice, what form of government you would opt for- Presidential form of govt. like the US retaining its democratic characters or a Parliamentary form of govt. that world's largest Democracy has been following since its Independence in 1947?

Ms Bhutto: Pakistan was created in the name of Parliamentary democracy and therefore I subscribe to its founding principles. It is a multi ethnic region with diverse cultures, languages, poetry, literature and histories that need preservation within the framework of Federalism. What one prefers and what one has to work within is obviously a difference. Right now, perforce of circumstances, the PPP is working in a Parliament that is dominated by Presidential powers. However, I would like to see Parliamentary Committees becoming stronger on the pattern of the American Parliamentary Committees.

In Pakistan, a presidential system is understood as a code word for indirect army rule. People in the country believe that repeated military interventions have damaged the judicial, political, civil, administrative, financial, social systems of Pakistan.

AS: The process of shaping up SAARC as a strong and effective regional trade platform is confronted with many a hurdle. As former Prime Minister of Pakistan, to what extent you think strained Indo-Pak relations is slowing down the process? What impact this will have on the trade structure of this region?

Ms Bhutto: A lot of work had been done under the PPP government on speeding up the SAARC process as a regional trade platform. Given the will, it can proceed fast and unleash great economic and employment opportunities for the people of our region in trade and tourism. It will offset poverty and the misery that hunger brings.

AS: Do you feel distinctive differences in the form of govt. and their philosophies that we have in either side of the border is one of the major causes of strenuous bilateral relationship?

Ms Bhutto: The independence of the Indian judiciary and of its Election Commission, the non-intervention policies of its military have given India greater clout in the world system. This has happened despite Pakistan's strategic importance in fighting communism and then fighting terrorism.

New Delhi markets itself strategically internationally in moral terms. It speaks of itself as a democracy that supports democracies. Despite militancy in Kashmir, this marketing is so strong, that New Delhi has the clout as the world's biggest

democracy. Islamabad markets itself as having an army that can fulfill tactical needs. I would like to see Islamabad reorient itself in its international image to gain from a high moral ground. Democracies rarely go to wars against other democracies.

It is instructive to recall that major peace initiatives in the region were taken when Pakistan had democratic governments. Whether it was the Simla agreement in 1972 or the agreements on redeployment in Siachin and non-attack on each other's nuclear installations they all happened when there were democratic governments in Pakistan. Therefore one could say that differences in the form of governments in the two countries have also contributed to the climate of hostility and disruption of peace process in the region.

AS: One of major issue that India has been trying to impress upon Pakistan in respect of trade relation is MFN (Most Favoured Nation) status. Your views on this issue please?

Ms Bhutto: Under World Trade Organisation rules liberalisation of trade will have to take place and it should be welcomed. Most Favoured Nation status can be examined against this background.

During the PPP government in 1993-96, to facilitate liberalisation of trade, we carried out an extensive study on the impact of trade with India. The study concluded that normal trade relations with India would be of benefit to Pakistan as well as India. We believe that the two countries should seek to improve trade relations without prejudice to their respective positions on political issues such as Kashmir.

"I want the children of Pakistan to grow up secure in their culture and history with the confidence to be global citizens of tomorrow. Regional cooperation is one step forward for the global citizen of tomorrow. Our students will compete for jobs not only in South Asia but all across the world. I want to see a generation of youngsters who can do that with confidence without any self imposed restriction."

AS: Without going into the burning political issues like Kashmir, can you suggest measures that can bring these two countries in the sub-continent closer on the trade front?

Ms Bhutto: We need to facilitate the trade through measures such as those that facilitated the European common market. Cross-border trade is less than 4% of both countries' total foreign trade. This is a shockingly low statistic. We could set up groups that would give us the structural proposals that could enhance the

figures. The energy sector is a promising sector as we look at the economic picture. Growing markets need energy and Pakistan has the potential to help India with energy delivery as well as a transit route from other countries. The automobile sector is another attractive proposition. India has large surplus capacity in vehicle production, while Pakistan import more expensive vehicles from the developed economies. In information technology our software vendors can capture the global market share through cooperation. Tourism will be a big boon. During the cricket match, the shops in Lahore were emptied as Pakistani products were bought up by a curious Indian crowd attracted by something new. There is great curiosity between the two countries. There are religious and historical sites, museums, homes of fore father that can lead to a huge outpouring of public interest in each other.

AS: In a recent seminar in New Delhi, you cited the example of Sino-Indian relations. The fact remains that despite boundary problems, Sino-Indian trade has expanded significantly and the current year is set to register a new record as things stand today. As a Prime Minister you had seen the evolution in the relationships between these two nations and closely interacted with the then Indian government. Would you kindly state your mind and say what really stops these two countries to shake hands at least in the trade front, which, if expanded, will mean marked improvement not only in trade but also in the quality of lives of millions of people as well on either side of the border?

Ms Bhutto: During my two tenures in office, the PPP government focussed on regional trade. It introduced the idea of special groups of people, like parliamentarians, travelling to each other's countries without visas. It introduced the idea of lowering tariffs on goods. This became the South Asian Preferential Tariff Agreement (SAPTA). After the 1990 dismissal of the PPP government, SAPTA was held up. Upon our forming the government again in 1993, one of our first acts was to ratify SAPTA. Following this detailed talks took place and in 1996 we were about to announce a vast trade liberalisation regime following exhaustive consultation with commerce and trade bodies when our government was dismissed undemocratically once again. During 1993 and 1996 the PPP government approved Iran's proposal to build a gas pipeline to India. This was a major strategic shift of economic policy recognising that regional economic and politics were the key to success for all the stakeholders.

We wish to take up from where we left. There is so much to do to give our people hope of peace, freedom, human dignity and the greatest human dignity comes from employment, from food on the table and hope of a better life for oneself and ones children.

AS: This takes us to the issue of “conflict management” that you have emphasized on so strongly in your speech in New Delhi. But don’t you think fundamentals of economic co-operations and bilateral trade relations are largely influenced by the style of “conflict management” which again may not be uniform in all countries. What could be the common meeting ground whereby “conflict management” can have a much less bitter coexistence with economic development of the affected countries?

Ms Bhutto: ‘Conflict management’ means agreeing to disagree on some issues, as China and India do on the Boundary issue, without allowing it to impede other issues where progress can be made. There cannot be trade when one million men face each other at the borders in a state of high alert. There cannot be foreign investment. We need to signal to the world community that we are committed to the peaceful management, peaceful dialogue and peaceful solution to the outstanding problems between us. This will attract investment and it will allow us to develop regional trade. It will allow us to break the chains of poverty, backwardness, misery and suffering that has been the fate of the vast majority of our people for centuries. There is an opportunity that must be seized.

AS: In the event of the Pakistan Peoples Party’s coming back to power in future, as Chairperson of PPP what would be your priorities in terms of economic and trade relations with India? Would you insist on trade expansion pending the settlement of political issues?

Ms Bhutto: Yes, PPP and I would promote trade expansion pending the settlement of political issues. To do otherwise is to condemn our peoples to a history of violence, blood shed and poverty.

AS: For lasting and closer friendly relationships with India, what message you would like to convey to both the Indian government and the Indian people at large and also to your own countrymen?

Ms Bhutto: I would like to convey to the Indian people that a new generation of Pakistanis to whom the torch of independence has passed, wish to renew the faith of its Founding Father in the importance of friendship between two great South Asian neighbours to the everlasting benefit of all the people of South Asia.

AS: Last but not least. Referring to a much broad canvas of an Asian Dream, you talk of a world where “children’s lives will be free of self-imposed limitations”. Are you suggesting a borderless region? Something like European Union runs and managed by European Parliament? Your comment please.

Ms Bhutto: The information technology is changing the world. The world is becoming borderless as computers permit people to buy from ebay and amazon from their own city and their own home. The concept of sovereignty as it existed after the Second World war is changing.

The war against terrorism has added to the changing world and the concept of sovereignty. The war against terrorism needs joint cooperation amongst nations of the world in diverse areas from money laundering to investigation to extradition.

The World Trade Organisation rules again impact upon sovereignty in areas of trade. Countries under the organisation are to regulate trade relations according to specific structures.

NAFTA, the EU, ASEAN, GCC are some of the economic groups that are emerging.

So you can see that in different ways social forces have been unleashed which are changing the world.

I want the children of Pakistan to grow up secure in their culture and history with the confidence to be global citizens of tomorrow. Regional cooperation is one step forward for the global citizen of tomorrow. Our students will compete for jobs not only in South Asia but all across the world. I want to see a generation of youngsters who can do that with confidence without any self imposed restriction. I wish I were Nostradamus to predict where the world is heading. We will have to wait and see except in the meantime we should do the best we can with what we know.

Ms Bhutto's interview for online journal Indiaonestop.com - May 06, 2004

Who Killed Munawar Suhrawardy?

June 18, 2004

It was with deep sorrow that I learnt of the brutal murder of my brother and security in charge Munawar Suhrawardy on June 17, 2004. Munawar Suhrawardy worked with the PPP and the Bhutto family as a young teenager protesting the arrest of Quaid e Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977. He rose to be Information Secretary Sindh declining offers to become a Senator. He said he wanted to remain a worker of the Party. And so he remained.

Munawar Suhrawardy was one of the finest sons that Karachi, Sindh and Pakistan have produced. Fearless he fought for freedom, justice and the rights of the people of Pakistan through thick and thin. I trusted Munawar Suhrawardy with my life. He was my bodyguard from the days of the campaign of the democratic forces to end Zia's military dictatorship. He took training to prevent assassination on my life. It is a tragedy that he was assassinated himself.

Words cannot express the grief that I feel upon losing Munawar who was a true brother to me to his last breath. I mourn him as I mourned my brothers Shah Nawaz and Murtaza. I grieve for his young widow and for his small children. Munawar was a wonderful Father and so proud of his wife. I remember his home full of happiness. Munawar was a devoted brother too. He tenderly took care of his brother paralysed through an earlier attack. An assassin's bullet has taken a precious life and shattered the happiness of an innocent family.

The grief I feel is part of the larger grief of the democratic forces and the PPP family. Each one of us knows that true dedication and devotion to the PPP and to the torch passed from Quaid e Awam means that we walk in the shadow of death. We do so, as Munawar did, knowing that life and death are in God's hands. Today Allah has taken Munawar from us to the next world. He has gone to join our other Martyrs and will live forever. He leaves behind a grieving widow, small children and a brother paralysed in an earlier attack. He leaves behind millions others across the country from Khyber to Karachi and across the world who will always remember him for his courage, his fortitude and for his fight for peace, justice, equality and emancipation of the people from poverty and backwardness.

Munawar Suhrawardy was one of the most creative and intelligent workers of the PPP. In him we have lost a jewel of a man and a true hero. Munawar's ability to come up with ideas to project democracy was unparalleled. Munawar joined all of us in London for the series of meetings that are being held to further the cause of the democratic forces. As considerate as ever, Munawar brought me falsas and supari

to remind me of our Karachi. His last words to me were that I should land in Karachi and he would take responsibility for all the arrangements for my return.

Munawar Suhrawardy will always live in the hearts and minds of every peace loving and freedom loving citizen of Pakistan. He is a true hero.

Munawar's assassination brings me to the motive for his murder. There are three possible scenarios that must be investigated if the truth is to be known.

First, that Munawar was murdered by MQM militants who saw him as a symbol of a peaceful Karachi. In this connection, we must remember that General Musharaf freed the criminals and terrorists in prison to keep PPP out of power in Sindh. The result was that six hundred and fifty police officers who participated in the drive to bring peace to Karachi lost their lives since November 2002. Hundreds others were also murdered as was Karachi's other beloved son Abdullah Murad Shaheed from Malir. Despite being an elected Member of Parliament, Murad's family was illegally stopped from registering the murder complaint against the MQM militants.

Second that Munnawar's murder was connected to my return plans. General Musharaf must volunteer to put himself before questioning for Munnawar's murder. Since the news leaked that I was to return to Pakistan, General Musharaf has made a vicious statement against me promising to "kick" me. I see Munnawar's murder in the light of Musharaf's aggressive statement. To clear his name, Musharaf must explain the measures he meant to take which amounted to a "kick".

Musharaf was also quoted to have said this week while meeting parliamentarians that I "would never be allowed to return to power" because he considers me a security threat. In other words, he considers me a threat to his military dictatorship. This is why Musharaf's questioning is necessary to find out what steps he intended when he said he would "kick" me and stop me from returning to power. Killing my body guard and security in chief is one way of signalling that he would try assassination to prevent the democratic forces and the PPP under my leadership from returning to power. In this connection, my husband Asif's bodyguard was also murdered in February when plans for my return were being discussed.

Third that those elements within the state apparatus who accompanied nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan to foreign countries murdered Munawar to send a message as to how far they could go to defend their farce that A. Q. Khan acted alone. I say this because the murder of Asif's bodyguard and Munawar (who was

also my body guard for two decades) took place after I spoke to America's Fox television in February and to Canada's CBC in June. In both these interviews I dismissed the theory that A.Q.Khan acted alone.

Karachi has lost one of its finest sons. He will forever shine in the pages of history as a true son of Quaid e Azam and Quaid e Awam. His murder must be investigated freely, fully and impartially. Otherwise other sons of Karachi will continue to fall to the assassin's bullet.

Age of Terrorism and Poverty

5 August 2004

While the world focuses on the War against Terrorism, the war against poverty slides onto the backburner.

Since the bombing of the World Trade Centers almost three years back, three elements are emerging. The first is the fight to root out militants, the second is the political rise of the voice of the religious margins (extremists) and the third is the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Pakistan is a front line state in the war against terrorism. Most of the leading terrorists were arrested from Pakistan. Khalid Shaikh, once described as the CEO of Al Qaeda, was arrested from Rawalpindi. Other important leaders continue to be caught in dribs and drabs every six months including Ahmad Khalfan Ghailani a Tanzanian who was arrested in the Pakistani city of Gujrat last month.

This is both good and bad news for Islamabad's military ruler. The positive part is that the General gets to play good cop and earn Washington's pleasure to continue his dictatorship. The bad part is that eyebrows are raised as to why Al Qaeda leading militants found it necessary to hide in a land run by Washington's "key ally" in the war against terrorism.

Unfortunately for Pakistan, assassinations and suicide bombings are increasing domestically in Pakistan. Scores of Pakistanis and many foreigners were killed as a consequence. Many leading political leaders, including a parliamentarian of the Pakistan Peoples Party, were gunned down in streets from the North in Rawalpindi to the South in Karachi.

None of the assassins were arrested.

Instead public interest was focused on five high profile assassination attempts that took place since last December. These included two attacks on General Musharraf, one on the Karachi Corp Commander, the fourth on Prime Minister designate Mr. Shaukat Aziz and the Baluchistan Chief Minister.

While the regime claims that these were assassination attempts against the politically high value targets, the pattern speaks against it. At best these were attempts to frighten the high value targets. At worst, if the cynics are to be believed, these were stage managed for external exploitation.

For example, in each of the attacks, the suicide bombers used low intensity explosives. While the cars were hit, or nearly hit, the casualties were of personal and national value and not of political value. These included innocent people escorting the politically high value targets. Each high value target, including Musharraf, the Corp Commander, the Prime Minister designate and the Chief Minister did not receive a scratch. While it is welcome that they survived, the larger issue needs resolving: was the aim of the attacker's to kill the high value targets or merely frighten them-- or was it something else.

The drivers in the Corp Commander and Prime Minister designate cars were killed but the rest of the passengers escaped unscathed. It is difficult to believe that a suicide bomber would repeatedly use a low intensity explosive so that only one occupant of the car he was bombing would die (or the person outside the car would die).

A public Commission into the suicide attacks would reveal the true intent of the suicide bomber. This is much needed.

The second significant development since the attack on the World Trade Towers has been the rise of the religious extremists. There appear to be groups in both the Muslim and Non Muslim world who believe that a clash of civilizations is needed for religious reasons. The Christian fundamentalists believe that Christ will be resurrected once the people of the Judaic faith are resettled on the banks of the Euphrates. The Muslim extremists believe that the Mahdi will arrive when the battle between the Muslims and the non-Muslims intensifies.

This is a political scenario threatening to undo the social fabric built since the end of the Second World War. That fabric was based on tolerance namely the tolerance between different faiths, races, gender and culture. A clash of civilizations can lead to Armageddon where there will be no winners on earth. But perhaps the religious extremists are not searching for winners on earth.

The challenge for the world community is to emphasize the values of tolerance, moderation and inter-faith understanding on which rest the pillars of a less violent world.

However, the bombing of the World Trade Centers and the events in Iraq have complicated the issue. The attacks on the World Trade Centers led to suspicion against Muslims and a loss of civil liberties. The events in Iraq led to a counter suspicion by Muslims as to the purposes of the war. The inability to find weapons of mass destruction and the Abu Ghareb abuses undermined the reasons given for the Iraq war.

While attention is focused on terrorism and militancy, the issues of poverty alleviation are relegated to the back burner. Today big business seems to be in the driving seat. One report in the media recently claimed that, "Twenty years ago, CEOs made an average of 40 times more than the factory floor worker. Last year it was 400 times more, and is now climbing to a multiple of 500".

This staggering rise in the fortunes of those on top, while those below suffer, can turn into a festering sore that erupts. The recent Indian elections demonstrated that a stock market economy alone could not make India shine. The Indian electorate went against all predictions as the peasants, laborers and middle classes came out and voted for change. Similarly in Pakistan, the talk of stock market rises and forex increases hides a more troubling picture. This is a picture of increasing poverty, hunger, misery and frustration. The numbers of young people killing themselves out of hunger was twelve hundred in six months. These are the catalogued numbers whereas the real figures are higher.

In Pakistan, the average income has been shrinking. The cost of living is sharply rising. It is becoming increasingly difficult for a common citizen to pay fat utility bills and buy basic necessities of life. The Pakistan Economic Survey admits that poverty figures have increased since democracy was derailed in 1996. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing at an alarming rate. The War Against Terrorism is primarily perceived as a war based on the use of force. However, economics has its own force, as does desperation of families that cannot feed themselves. A more stable world depends on the ability to use force when necessary and also to seek political solutions when possible. After all, force is a prelude to a more favorable negotiating position in a political settlement.

Militancy and greed cannot become the defining images of a new century that began with much hope. As the body count rises in Iraq, as a leading NGO pulls out of Afghanistan and as a suicide attack takes place against Pakistan's Prime Minister designate, the time has come to pause and reflect.

By returning to the simple values of democracy, the will of the people, broad based government and building institutions that can respond to the people, the social malaise can be addressed.

Neglecting rising poverty against the background of religious extremism margins can only complicate an already difficult world situation.

Interview of Ms. Benazir Bhutto
Political Review Aspenia (of Italy)
through Ms. Marina
23 October 2004

Q1- How do you consider the “affair” of the scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, who has been accused to provide secret information and nuclear technology to the North Korea, Iran and Libya? What did you do as Prime Minister?

Ans: The clandestine nuclear export was a serious matter. Personally I find it hard to believe that individual scientists could have acted on their own without the knowledge or involvement of those who were supposed to monitor their activities and were responsible for the security of both the scientists and strategic assets.

However, it is too early to say who is responsible. PPP has called for the holding of a bi-partisan parliamentary inquiry given the concern that the scientists may have been made into scapegoats. You remember Musharaf was the self styled chief executive when a newspaper advertisement was given by his handpicked commerce minister for the sale of nuclear products in 2000. Matters like these raise serious questions as one begins to suspect that those who violated the policy are now hiding behind the scientists and there is heartburning over this in Pakistan.

When I was the Prime Minister there were three layers of control over the nuclear program. These three layers pertained to: first the policy formulation which was under the control of the tripartite group comprising of the President, the Prime Minister and the Army chief. Second, the program itself that was in the control of the scientists. Third, the security of the assets that was in the hands of the military. This was so during my two terms as Prime Minister.

I also addressed some important concerns. For instance there was a concern that a nuclear scientist could be induced to visit a country and then detained there to help their possible nuclear program. I directed that no scientist should leave the country without written government permission and without security detail.

As member of the policy group I was able to convince the President and Military about the need to allay the concerns of the international community through confidence building steps such as the policy decision not to export nuclear technology. The President and the army chief agreed to this.

Foreign Office is conducting an inquiry into the violation of the laid down policy of my government. This is at the centre of the dispute which hit Pakistan early this year.

Saif Gaddafi has claimed that forty million dollars was paid by Libya for a “bomb dossier”. This presumably occurred somewhere between 1998 and 2000 which would put the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of General Musharaf who was either the army chief under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at the time or the chief executive. Yet Washington appears to forgive Musharaf claiming that it is “in the past”.

Q 2- Why, according to you is it important the nuclear development?

Ans: In terms of strategic balance we need nuclear technology because of India choosing to go nuclear by exploding its first nuclear device in 1974. After India’s nuclear tests of 1974 Pakistan was left with no choice but to also acquire nuclear technology for strategic reasons.

Q3- According to you, the holding of nuclear weapons in Pakistan, did it increase or decrease the security?

Ans: It is a moot question whether nuclear weapons enhance or diminish national security. Academics have been arguing endlessly without yet arriving at any conclusive answer.

Many in Pakistan see nuclear capability as deterrence to any future war with India. There is lurking fear that a conventional war could turn nuclear. Therefore having nuclear capability would ensure that India could not launch a conventional war, knowing that if it did, it would turn nuclear, and that hundreds of millions would die.

Q 4 And in India?

Ans: Both India and Pakistan have teeming and toiling masses whose socio economic problems have not been addressed.

Both India and Pakistan need to realise that spiralling arms race particularly with a nuclear dimension will drain them of their resources. They need to learn from the experience of former Soviet Union and the danger of an implosion.

Q 5 Which are the relations between USA and Pakistan, concerning security?

Ans: There have been ups and downs in the relations between the two countries. Between 1990 and 1993, Pakistan came within a hair's breadth of being declared a terrorist state. Once I became Prime Minister of Pakistan, I ensured that Pakistan was safe from this threat.

When General Musharraf seized power in a coup in 1999 the United States and the west treated him as a pariah. President Clinton during his visit to the sub continent in 2000 stayed in Pakistan for only 20 minutes during which he refused to be photographed with General Musharraf. But come 9/11 and the relationship changed..

We feel that because of the support of the US to the dictatorship of Musharraf democracy in Pakistan has been put on the back burner. We think this policy needs to be reviewed because dictatorship can not fight terrorism. Only a democracy can fight forces of terrorism.

Q 6:- Which will be, according to your point of view, the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the next 10 years in Asia?

Ans: The reasons why countries choose to go nuclear is because of political compulsions. A country, which has a serious security threat perception from anywhere, is more likely to acquire nuclear weapons than a country that does not have serious threats to its security. It is difficult for me to comment as to which other country will follow the nuclear path but it is safe to say that countries s facing serious threats to their security will seek these weapons no matter what technological barriers are erected in their way. It is important to draw such countries into the mainstream through dialogue.

Q 7: Is there a relation between terrorism and nuclear weapons?

Ans: Terrorists have no creed, no religion, no scruples. A terrorist wants to die but before killing himself he wants to kill as many as possible. A terrorist's priority therefore would be to lay his hands on weapons of mass destruction so that he could kill as many as possible. This is the connection between a terrorist and nuclear weapons. A terrorist would do anything to lay his hands on nuclear weapons.

Q 8:- Shortly how do you expect the future scenario between western and Islamic world?

Ans: The west could understand that terrorism has no religion and distinguish between muslims and terrorism.

There is the other aspect also. Most of the unaddressed political problems are in Muslim countries. Behind every act of terror there is also some un-addressed political problem. There is a need to address these political problems and isolate terrorists from the causes they exploit.

Benazir Bhutto's answer to al-Qaeda
ASIA Times On-Line Exclusive
November 3, 2004

Benazir Bhutto, daughter of former premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, as leader of the Pakistan People's Party, served as premier for two terms, 1988-90 and 1993-96, the first term making her the first female prime minister in the Muslim world. She currently lives in self-imposed exile. Asia Times Online's Syed Saleem Shahzad spoke to Mrs. Bhutto on a wide range of topics.

Asia Times Online: Islamic extremists have called for "death to America", with no room for compromise. Why has this extremism emerged now, and not, for instance, during the Cold War?

Benazir Bhutto: The slogan "death to America" was, to my knowledge, raised before Islamic extremists took center stage in global politics. If I recall correctly, it was used way back in Latin America during the times of Che Guevara and Pancho Villa. The slogan is today considered more deadly because of the events of 9/11. In the past, it was more a manifestation of anger or resentment among those who raised such slogans. The events of 9/11 have given it a less rhetorical content.

During the Cold War the countries which felt aggrieved used superpower rivalry to promote their agendas. With the demise of the Soviet Union, and the rise of Islamic extremists during the fight against the Soviet occupation [of Afghanistan], Islamic extremists felt that they could take on the remaining superpower. It is unlikely that non-state actors can take on a superpower without being assisted by another superpower. However, they can cause random terror, spread insecurity and fear, give birth to a clash of cultures and religions and create more hatred and intolerance. This is the real danger. We need to counter such extremism by promoting unity, tolerance and respect to different races, religions and genders. In such moderation lies the harmony and well being of the world community. Moreover, we need to address unresolved political issues to prevent extremists from exploiting them for their own narrow and theocratic ends.

ATol: The US says "you are with us or against us" - all-out war with no compromise.

Bhutto: The impact of 9/11 was dramatic and led to a dramatic declaration that either you are with us or against us. The United States was struck in its financial and political center - while Pearl Harbor was on the periphery in comparison. Pearl Harbor drew the US into World War II. The attacks of 9/11 have drawn it

into the war against terror. For some time, the events of 9/11 will continue to dominate the agenda of global politics, with the US in the lead.

ATol: The US is fighting a war against an invisible enemy called al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden's International Islamic Front (a loose coalition of pro-al-Qaeda organizations). What is al-Qaeda in the real sense? Is there an ideology behind its movement, or are they just a bunch of militants who are mindlessly in search of soft US targets to blow up?

Bhutto: Al-Qaeda has managed to unite disparate militant groups into an international confederate of terrorists, which is at times called the Islamic Front. Often these groups exploit local tensions, for example the tensions in the Middle East, the nationalistic feelings of the Chechen people, the nationalistic opposition to foreign troops in Iraq or the Kashmir dispute. However, they do have an ideology. Their real agenda is to use regional political issues to bring about a theocratic dictatorship similar to the one that existed in Afghanistan under the Taliban. Gender discrimination, cultural intolerance, denial of representation, repression of freedom and subjugation of the masses to one-man clerical dictatorship is a negation of humanity's struggle to overcome suffering and to live in respect and dignity. It is important to separate the terrorists from the regional issue by defusing tensions where they exist through political action.

ATol: There is a theory that Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf was the biggest supporter of al-Qaeda before September 11, 2001. Why and how did he become the "most trusted" US partner in the "war on terror"? And does the Pakistani army fully support him?

Bhutto: It is a fact that the Musharraf regime was the biggest supporter of the Taliban, who harbored al-Qaeda, which was recruiting and training men for terrorism prior to 9/11. This policy was defended in the name of strategic depth. I called it "strategic threat" in a speech I gave in parliament calling for the breaking of ties with the Taliban in 1998. According to a book by Bob Woodward, the Bush administration asked Musharraf to stand up and be counted as friend or foe. Since he gave a positive answer in one telephone call, they decided to work with him. It was more convenient for Washington to work with someone stating he was prepared to play ball than bring about a change at a time of immense crisis. Washington has managed to squeeze concessions out of Musharraf. There is a US base in Pakistan, the FBI [US Federal Bureau of Investigation] are allowed to operate [in Pakistan] and through electronic "transepts" have captured some big fish. Musharraf in turn has been able to use the relationship to buy time during which the Taliban (either deliberately or inadvertently) have been able to regroup. He has also cleverly held out the promise of the capture of a high-value target -

read Osama bin Laden or [Taliban leader] Mullah Omar - during the US presidential-election year.

The Pakistan army is a disciplined force. It may be unhappy having to kill civilians in search of terrorists in the tribal areas, but it does what it is ordered to do through its chain of command. There have been isolated incidents that demonstrate a lack of support, namely in the two assassination attempts [last year] against Musharraf, and some other incidents. However, this kind of isolated, junior-level activity is not new. It has occurred in the past during the Attock Conspiracy case of the 1970s [to overthrow Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government] and the Islamic Brotherhood attempt to overthrow the democratic government in the 1990s.

By involving the military in civilian affairs and scandals ... as well as political persecution, the impartiality of the armed forces and its professionalism has been made subject to public controversy. It is this controversial political role that would make most professional officers uncomfortable.

ATol: The US invasion of Iraq, in the name of creating a civil society and a liberal democracy in the Middle East, has instead promoted fundamentalist trends, especially in Iraq itself, which had been a tolerant secular society but is now a fundamentalist hotbed where private Shi'ite and Sunni militias rule the roost.

Bhutto: There were two plans: one for the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime and the second for a postwar order. The first worked and the second did not. The consequences are before us. It's a tragedy to see Muslims divided on sectarian lines. It's important for Muslims to unite and dissent on political rather than religious issues.

ATol: Previously, Islamic fundamentalist parties could not make headway in elections, now they are emerging as a challenge in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Bhutto: Extremist and fundamentalist political parties have never been able to score any significant political victories in countries like Pakistan. In fact, if the past record is any guide, it is clear that the extremist parties were never voted into power or even brought close to it by the people. The extremists rose under the dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan. The religious parties [Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal] formed a government for the first time [in North West Frontier Province] under General Musharraf's dictatorship.

It is dictatorship that leads to the rise of extremist groups. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc are all countries that share a background of long periods of military or authoritarian rule. The best defense against extremism and terrorism is the promotion of freedom, human dignity, rule of law, tolerance and pluralism. The present marginalization of moderate political parties in Pakistan can cause blow-back in time. There is a political vacuum in Pakistan which is dangerous to the future.

ATol: There is an extreme feeling of dissent within religious political parties, which is further giving birth to more extreme notions. Jihadi organizations are one manifestation, but there is a very strong opinion flourishing in the shape of Hizbut Tehrir-like organizations, which has taken strong roots in Central Asia and is silently taking root in Pakistan. Unlike religious-political parties, they do not believe in democracy at all. What is the perspective of these trends?

Bhutto: During the days of fighting the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan [1980s], a military dictator in Pakistan [Zia] used religious parties to recruit fighters. He used money to set up religious schools whose real purpose was to indoctrinate young men into becoming robots. Since he was associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, he used those links to bring together members of the Muslim Brotherhood from different parts of the world. They were brainwashed into believing that after defeating the Soviet Union, they could take on the other superpower, namely America. They were never told that the success against the Soviets was because it was a proxy war with international backing. These indoctrinated elements were patronized in the military, security, civilian and political structure of Pakistan. They believe that Islam came to Pakistan through the shores of Central Asia and can now be exported to Europe through Central Asia. Hence we see the cells operating in that area.

I believe that both my governments were destabilized by these forces. The Pakistan People's Party and I posed the most potent threat to them. We gave an alternative vision of freedom, human rights, modernity compatible with religion as well as progress and prosperity. Pakistan, under the PPP, was an example of a moderate, enlightened and modern democracy to 1 billion Muslims at the crossroads having to choose between the past and the future. These elements prefer Musharraf to the PPP. Musharraf is a military dictator and is not an ideological alternative to them. They have scuttled all attempts at rapprochement between the army led by Musharraf and the people led by the PPP. This is why some sections of the media have speculated that Islamabad could be seized by a combine of religio-political-military elements. I do not believe that this nightmare scenario is possible because I believe that the restoration of democracy can turn the wheel of disaster into one of opportunity for the people of Pakistan - and the wider world community.

Previously, the religious parties were used to help recruit militants. With the passage of two decades, the militant cells are becoming more independent of the religious parties. While they take their spiritual mentoring from the religious parties, their organizational structures are cellular and independent. But there is a real danger today. Disillusioned with military dictatorship and unable to express disillusionment through a fair electoral process, the danger is of the radicalization of the masses. This disillusionment provides a perfect breeding ground for extremist organizations. That was why in Pakistan, parties that are sympathetic to the Taliban and al-Qaeda claim that neither democracy nor military dictatorship works and that theocratic rule should be given a chance. Thus, when people are denied the democratic model of development, they can choose a system that is even worse than military dictatorship.

ATol: Why have secular forces in Muslim societies failed to contain fundamentalism?

Bhutto: Most secular forces were kept out of government during the Cold War by military or authoritarian rulers lacking grass-root support and legitimacy. Since authoritarianism and dictatorship rested on force rather than on law, it gave birth to a culture of lawlessness and extremism. We need to have democracy in the Muslim world and we need to spend more on education and human development to contain the forces of extremism.

ATol: Where do liberation movements such as those in Palestine and Kashmir stand?

Bhutto: The armed struggle of the people of Palestine and Kashmir and others under occupation received a setback following the events of 9/11. Now there is zero tolerance for armed struggle. However, the causes of unrest are political and the search for a solution will continue through peaceful avenues.

Major Military Changes in Pakistan October 2004

Returning from a long overseas visit, Pakistan's military ruler announced a flurry of high level military changes. Now the top military positions are occupied by officers much more junior to General Musharaf himself. In that sense, the changes ought to give General Musharaf more confidence in his control of the armed forces.

Pakistan's armed forces have traditionally been highly disciplined. Even the u-turns in foreign policy have not impacted upon the iron discipline of the armed forces. Although much was made of the involvement of a few junior officers in assassination attempts on the military and political leadership of the country since it joined the war against terror, the reality was that the armed forces remained loyal to their chief and disciplined to their institution.

With the changes, all serving three star generals above the rank of Brigadier owe their rank and position to General Musharaf. Interestingly, those with political duties, such as Generals Akram, Hafeez and Ehtishaam, were largely left out of the promotions ladder. Whether this was done inadvertently or deliberately, it follows a pattern that some new democracies adopted during transitional periods.

The first impact on the high level army changes will be on the issue of Pakistan's transition to civilian rule.

Presently General Musharaf holds both the positions of Chief of Army Staff as well as the powerful Presidency. If the changes give General Musharaf a greater sense of confidence, he is more likely to facilitate civilian rule by taking off his uniform in the coming months. Alternatively he might feel overconfident and decide to keep the uniform dispensing with public sentiments.

Facilitating civilian rule by bifurcating the positions of President and Army chief was a pledge Musharaf made a year back. In an agreement with a grouping of religious parties, he accepted their nominee as Parliamentary Leader of Opposition, allowed their government to continue in the Frontier province and accepted their clerical qualifications to enter Parliament. The six member alliance of religious political parties in turn supported the constitutional changes Musharaf demanded. These changes created a dictatorial President armed with enormous powers over the executive, the judiciary and the armed forces. It also brought National Security issues directly under the President making him the effective strategic commander in the field.

However, a few months back, Mr. Musharaf ignited a debate regarding his constitutional pledge to shed his military uniform. Citing the war against terror, he claimed he needed the military uniform to succeed in his efforts. Recently there have been some drib drab arrests of Al Qaeda militants in regular sequential order to keep the outside world placated. However, the guessing game of whether the General will hand over the prize of Taliban leader Mullah Omar and Al Qaeda Osama Bin Laden before the U.S. Presidential elections continues.

Nonetheless, questions were asked as to whether General Musharaf needed to continue wearing the hat of army chief to successfully eliminate militancy and terrorism in the country. These questions were asked in the context of the enormous presidential powers that make the military subservient to the powers of the Presidency.

Senior retired military Generals with close links to General Musharaf as well as to the military have predicted that General Musharaf will indeed separate the offices of the Presidency and the army chief by the end of this December.

If this prediction is correct, it means that a new round of military changes will take place come December. Pakistan could end up with an officer class that is distinct from the ones closely associated with the first Afghan Jihad. That Afghan war, while noble in resisting the Soviet occupation, witnessed the rise of the most extreme Afghan Arab groups that went on to form Al Qaeda and Taliban. It was a rise with which Pakistani military officers, under orders from military dictator General Zia, were associated.

Already some changes are visibly discernable that can go on to have long term effects. For example, to keep its grip on power, the establishment created an intelligence corp. in 1990. This corp. ensured that the same group of officers climbed up the promotion ladder. As the same group of men went from junior to senior, they carried with them similar ideological leanings, friendships, hostilities and networking with a group of politicians, civil servants, businessmen and bankers. The promotions more or less went with a major general heading the military intelligence before going on to head the inter services intelligence.

That mould has now been broken. Following the two assassination attempts against him last December, General Musharaf removed the head of military intelligence and appointed his Military Secretary as the new head. This October, as he promoted the head of the powerful ISI to the post of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Musharaf brought in tenth corp. commander General Kiani as the new head of ISI.

The tenth corp. is extremely important. It is the corp that strikes when a coup takes place. General Kiani was replaced with General Satti as the new Corp Commander. Both these officers are from the Punjab--a further break to the mould. There was a perception earlier, whether true or false, that Musharaf who is Urdu speaking was turning to officers of a similar background for promotion. That perception is now laid to rest with the ethnically balanced promotions. (The third important social group in the army hails from the Frontier. It is not known whether any key appointments from this group were made or are planned).

Both Generals Satti and Kiani, according to media reports, played a pivotal role in investigating the conspirators in the assassin plan against Musharaf. Their investigations led to the sensational arrests of key players.

On the surface, General Ehsan is the only officer from the old intelligence apparatus to have survived the promotions scale. He is the new Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff and replaces another ISI official, General Aziz. While most people dismiss the office of CJCS as unimportant, that perception is incorrect. The office of CJCS is an important one which sees all secrets ciphers and minutes of confidential meetings. It knows exactly what is happening in the country in all the sensitive fields. Knowledge is power and this office is one which does have power--although of a different kind to that of an operational office.

Outgoing CJCS General Aziz was one of the key players in the political battle that led to General Musharaf's successful coup d'etat in October 1999. After 9/11, he was removed from his early position as Chief of General Staff along with two other officers who brought General Musharaf to power. In removing the three men who helped his plane land to safety in October 1999 saving his life (and giving him the seat of power), General Musharaf re-ignited the traditions of the Moghul rulers of undivided India. They showed ruthlessness in getting rid of their Fathers, sons and brothers in the battle for power.

Media reports painted General Aziz as, "the most feared" who "Musharaf projected in private sessions with American leaders as the fundo who may take over and reverse their war against the Islamic radicals".

The retirement of Aziz took place calmly and in routine.

General Musharaf tried to placate the ones he relieved from the offices they held. The former hard-line head of ISI, General Mahmood, was made head of Fauji Foundation. The rumours are that General Aziz will be made President of Azad Kashmir.

The coveted post of Vice Chief of army staff went to Corps Commander, Karachi, Lt. Gen Ahsan Saleem Hayat. He narrowly survived an assassination attempt by terrorists earlier. If anything were to happen to General Musharaf before December this year, Ahsan would become key to the future direction that Pakistan takes.

But if all goes well until December, and General Musharaf decides to take off his uniform (as predicted by the group of powerful retired military officials), its any body's guess who makes it to chief. Certainly the bet is on Vice Chief Ahsan by virtue of the office he now holds--but others could be in the running.

General Musharaf plays his promotion cards close to his chest. The military prefers promotions by seniority--but few were the times that seniority won in the chequered history of the country.

There is an appointment principle that claims in the first eighteen months an appointee is dependent and willing to please. After that he must be changed to prevent the boss becoming dependent on them.

Obviously General Musharaf would not like to be dependent on anyone in the country, least of all from his core constituency of the military.

Pakistan and the War Against Terror
Benazir Bhutto
December 10, 2004

The senseless catastrophe that struck America on September 11th, 2001 continues to echo across the globe.

It would seem that the world is moving perilously close to the clash of civilizations predicted a generation ago by Professor Samuel Huntington. The question before us, and before the world, is whether the path to catastrophe can be avoided and whether the clash of civilizations is reversible.

Much of our ability to avert the clash of civilizations lies in learning the lessons of history. Patience and Perseverance are required to up haul political systems that disempowered people in this the twenty first century. Short term solutions could lead to blowback. Pakistan is an example of a Nation where the forces of tyranny, terrorism, proliferation and a militant interpretation of Islam by the margins mingle to create a difficult challenge.

The international community decided to throw its weight behind Pakistan's military dictator following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centers. It was the right decision to take given the context. There are worries though that the inability of the international community to facilitate Pakistan's transition to civilian and democratic rule could undermine its objectives in the long run.

It is a well known secret that there is sympathy for Bin Laden, Taliban and Arab fighters amongst Pakistan's military and clerical class. These were the two organizations used to train the Mujahideen against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Following the withdrawal of the Soviets, the Mujahideen went on to become in large parts the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Pakistan's military dictatorship has resulted in the domination of the country's political, financial and social class by the dominant military. It has also seen the rise of the religious parties. The religious parties are public friends of Bin Laden and Mullah Omar. They have filled the vacuum caused by the military regime's determination to sideline the genuine representatives of the people.

Withdrawal of the military from the political affairs remains a key concern of international policy makers as well as the people of Pakistan. Pakistan's present military ruler, General Musharaf, vested the Presidency with enormous constitutional powers. These constitutional changes amounted to creating a

civilian dictator. It was argued that an all powerful President would help facilitate the withdrawal of the army to the barracks and prevent the recurrence of Martial Law in the country.

This has not happened. In December 2004, after receiving signals that General Musharaf wanted to keep his military post of army chief, the Parliament passed a bill enabling him to be both President and Army Chief.

A military President in Pakistan, Washington's key ally, sends the wrong message to one billion Muslims regarding the reasons for the war against terror. President Bush called this a war for the values of freedom. Prime Minister Blair said this was not a war between religions but against oppression and tyranny. The democratisation of Pakistan is important to the war against terrorism, to the interpretation of Islam as a message of freedom and enlightenment as well as to the empowerment of the people of Pakistan.

It is difficult to shake the haunting image of the Twin Towers and three thousand innocent victims, collapsing under the weight of hate. We live in an age traumatized by terror.

Today I see a Muslim world in flux. Children of two divergent education systems reach positions of power and responsibility. Many of the children of affluent, middle class families in the Muslim world studied in state run schools are children of societies shadowed by dictatorship. Often, as in the case of Pakistan, they grew up under a ruthless dictatorship that used the intelligence services to imprison, torture and shoot citizens for their political views. People in Pakistan were whipped or shot at for holding a protest demonstration calling for the restoration of democracy.

Even as political freedoms were denied, economic and social successes remained a distant dream. More often than not, unemployment, poverty, malnutrition and injustice destroyed lives. Society was often governed by the whim of the rulers rather than by a set of rules. This led to frustration and discontent amongst ordinary people.

The mainstream political parties were banned and stopped from freely functioning. The avenue for the embittered, frustrated youth was often only the Mosque where they gathered for prayers.

Clerics, fearful of speaking against the dictator, would speak against those who supported the dictator—and often this was the West. Unable to directly vent the frustration felt by the domestic constituency, they would speak against the policies

outside the country. Thus a post World War Two generation, which one could call the Cold War generation, grew up hearing about denial of nationhood to Palestine, lack of self determination to Kashmir, the denial of autonomy to the Chechens. They learnt of past Muslim glory based on conquest and war. They learned little or nothing about the Muslim renaissance which saw giant leaps forward in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, literature and science based on education and rational discourse. They imbibed the lesson that a return to the simple, austere life of the past could once again rekindle the courage and passion that saw Islam sweep across continents and spread its message far and wide. The theocratic state, disciplined under a single religious figure, was presented as the path to victory--victory against the temptations of the soul, victory against the injustices perpetuated by bigger powers, victory against lawlessness at home.

It is this embittered generation that must be rescued with an alternative political model to that of the theocratic state. The fight for freedom is a fight for values that can build a pluralistic world free of discrimination on the basis of race, religion or gender.

When the terrorists targeted the World Trade Centres, they tried to destroy a symbol of pluralism. At the World Trade Centers, there were Men and women, working side by side as equals. There were Muslims, Christians, Jews and Hindus working together to build worldwide trade and communication and cooperation.

Modernity, diversity and democracy are the fanatics' worst fears. They confuse the message to prevent Muslim people from learning that diversity ensures that cultural and religious identity remains intact.

Whatever their alleged goals, there is no defense or justification in Islam for their barbaric conduct.

Their actions contradict the teachings of the Muslim Prophet who said to Muslims that even during war, 'Do not cheat or commit treachery, nor should you mutilate or kill children, women or old men.'

It is ironic that despite the strong commitment to democracy, most Muslims are living in dictatorships. Much as the people of the Communist world were in the past, so too are the Muslim people hostages in authoritarian regimes all around the world today.

Islam is committed to universal education and literacy. The very first word of the Holy Book Koran is "read."

Yet a Muslim past replete with the finest universities and research centers of rational discourse is now part of history.

Islam is committed to the equality of women in society. The wife of Islam's Prophet was herself a proud workingwoman.

As a Muslim woman who grew up believing that modernity and religion are compatible, it distresses me to see women discriminated against in different aspects of life including the right to choose their marital partner.

In this the twenty first century, women in parts of the Muslim world are witnessing the re-emergence of a tribal custom that permits male family members to kill a woman who marries without their permission. This most dishonorable murder is called ironically an "honour killing".

Islam flourished in its early days with a commitment to trade and commerce. But today trade and commerce are often tangled in a web of government regulations denying ordinary Muslims opportunity of entrepreneurship.

Muslim countries are in search of leaders that can revive the values of Islam by reintroducing the politics of consensus and compromise which lie at the heart of democratic values. Such values have nothing to do with terrorism. Terrorism cannot be justified by any argument.

Unfortunately many Muslim countries, including Indonesia, Pakistan, the Phillipines had long histories of authoritarian rule. In the twentieth century some argued that authoritarianism could produce a professional middle class facilitating democratic reform. They cited the Asian tigers as examples.

Others argued that the rise of the lawlessness and terrorism was a consequence of a generation that saw power come from the use of force. By suspending the majesty of law, by taking over by force, by ruling through repression, military dictators and authoritarian rulers gave birth to the culture of obtaining power through violence.

To undermine terrorism, violence, brutality and barbarism, it is necessary to stress the values of democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, justice, equality and the empowerment of all citizens. The Muslim people need models of political development that enhance the dignity of the individual and the prosperity of the Nation.

We must fight a war on terrorism and simultaneously fight an equally critical war on the political manipulation of religion and against the regressive forces of totalitarianism.

The terrorists who attack America aim to establish theocracies of ignorance to manipulate for their own political ends. They are the enemies of all humanity.

The world is threatened but a military response is only part of the solution to the problem of terrorism and the growing divide between the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

The instability of the Iraqi occupation, the exploitation of the situation in Iraq by the remnants of Saddam's dictatorship and Osama's terrorists, the continuing instability in Afghanistan, the unresolved situation in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians, and the tragedy of Kashmir impact upon the people in the Street. No one knows when the masses can become a mob and that mob strike out against anything Western.

The attack on the American Embassy in Iran during the time of Ayatollah Khomeini and the burning of the American Embassy in Islamabad under General Zia are examples of those who would channel hate for their myopic political ends. The war against terror is a war that must be fought for world safety.

We must learn from the lesson of the past, particularly the lessons from fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan in the eighties. Then America, Pakistan and its allies created the very Frankenstein that now calls itself Al Qaeda. It did this by neglecting to strengthen political moderates, by neglecting to put money into education and infrastructure. Short term strategies often create far more intractable long-term problems. I am afraid we inadvertently created our own Frankensteins.

The Taliban have been routed. The military, political and economic control centers of the Al Qaeda are disrupted. An oppressive Iraqi regime has been toppled.

But the success of phase one does not mean that the war is over. The world walked away from Afghanistan once before, in the past, after the defeat of the Soviets in 1989. That political miscalculation sowed the seeds of the tragedy of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda and most regrettably, the events of September 11th, 2001.

The overall policy of standing against Soviet aggression in Afghanistan was right. Yet the early to arm, train, supply and legitimize the most extreme fanatics sowed the seeds for the 21st century terrorism that is now swirling around us.

The fundamental mistake, contributing to a long-term historical calamity, was that we were not consistently committed to the values of freedom, democracy and self-determination that ultimately undermine and belie the basic tenets of terrorism.

We must not repeat that mistake again.

Just as democracies do not make war, democracies also do not sponsor international terrorism.

Let us remember that building a moderate, stable and democratic political structure in Afghanistan would have marginalized the Taliban and the Osamas of this world well before they had unleashed their war against the people of Afghanistan and the people of the United States.

The international community has danced with dictators in the past, with tragic results. I pray that it is not making the same mistake today on the nuclear subcontinent. Now that the US presidential elections are over, I would like to see President Bush lead the international community in building an opportunity for Pakistan's transition to democratic rule. Pakistan's military ruler could be encouraged to open up a sincere and substantive dialogue with the democratic forces and to end judicial abuse and political harrassment.

Fresh party based elections, open to all parties and personalities, with international monitors, an independent Election Commission, electoral modalities that are transparent and a count that is immediate, open and accurately reflects the sentiments of the people could settle issues of legitimacy and governance which now complicate Pakistan's social and economic challenges. Such an election could put Pakistan back into the community of democratic nations.

Recently the world learned that scientists in charge of Islamabad's nuclear weapons program were clandestinely selling nuclear secrets to North Korea, Iran and Libya. Dr. A .Q. Khan, the chief scientist became the fall guy for the operation. He came on television to confess his guilt. That very evening he was pardoned and allowed to keep the assets obtained through the illicit nuclear sales.

Meanwhile Osama Bin Laden's biographer claimed that Osma told him he had access to two dirty bombs.

Two assassination attempts on General Musharaf demonstrate the thin thread on which the alliance with Islamabad is built.

For me, the democratic forces of Pakistan are the tiny ripples of hope that will coalesce to end authoritarianism and bring the promise of democracy to Pakistan.

For now, elements in Pakistan exploit the war on terror to protect a military dictatorship. A military dictatorship suits them. It undermines the international community's commitment to democracy in the context of Iraq and Afghanistan. It alienates the people of Pakistan and Muslim youth across the Muslim world.

This February, Fox television asked me whether Bin Laden would be captured before the American Presidential elections. I replied with a categorical "No". The elements that need dictatorship in Pakistan need Bin Laden and Taliban. They know that the international community's short term decision on strategic grounds to support dictatorship would erode once Bin Laden was caught or Taliban weakened.

In the war against terrorism, I believe the greatest protection of freedom from terrorists comes from replacing dictatorships with governments responsible to the people, governments based on the values of democracy and liberty.

History has taught us the very hard lesson that when the world turns against democracy, it turns against itself. A democratic Pakistan is the world's best guarantee of the triumph of moderation and modernity among one billion Muslims at the crossroads of our history.

Quaid-e-Awam -- The Leader of the People
by Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto
April 4, 2006

Quaid-e-Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Shaheed's martyrdom anniversary on April 4 falls at a time when Pakistan is faced with a critical situation.

The dark shadow of military dictatorship clouds the political horizon and spawns fissiparous tendencies striking at the solidarity of the country. Rocket launchers and bomb blasts kill innocents while the military is involved in operations against its own people.

The rise of the suicide bomber and armed struggle is reminiscent of an earlier military dictatorship. The tyranny of General Zia's brutal military rule led to the Kalashnikov culture where young men picked up automatic weapons. That culture has reasserted itself under the present military dictatorship of General Musharaf. Except the weapons are more dangerous than the Kalashnikovs of yesterday.

The country has learnt through tragic lessons of history that each military dictatorship leads to national loss, culture of lawlessness, corruption, nepotism, political persecution, mis-governance and neglect of areas that directly affect the lives of the citizens of the country.

A small elite benefit from the rentier mentality of the military dictatorship which rents out Pakistan's real estate in return for power and hundreds of millions of non budgetary support which often ends up coming in suitcases. This creates a climate where tragically some have taken to calling Bin Laden, "the best finance minister Pakistan has" due to hundreds of millions of non budgetary support that comes for his capture. They argue that while the money may not come directly to the people of Pakistan, it would "trickle down".

The supporters of the military dictatorship often point out that when the Soviet occupation of Pakistan ended, the west, "turned its back" on Pakistan. By this they means the suitcase politics ended and the non budgetary support dried up. It appears that they wish to convey that when the war against terrorism ends, the non budgetary support would dry up too. That creates a vested interest for stoking the fires that enable Islamabad to emerge as a "strategic" player.

Although we are the closest allies, under the nose of the dictatorship, Taliban forces have reorganised, reasserted themselves and ensured they dispense their

form of “justice” in parts of the tribal areas of Pakistan. Neighbouring Afghanistan complains they are destabilising the country and has given a dossier to Islamabad. Instead of examining the dossier, Islamabad chose to use harsh language against Afghanistan and accused its leadership of being “oblivious” to the ground situation.

One could argue that it was Islamabad that was “oblivious” to the ground situation except that too many cynics believe that the regime is not oblivious but choosing to ensure its political survival and economic self interest.

President Bush came to Pakistan to see whether General Musharaf was still as committed to the war against terrorism as he was after 9/11 and found he was. Musharaf in turn was apologetic about the “slippages” that had occurred.

However, the question that comes to the fore is how credible that apology can be. The military dictatorship knows fully well, having learnt this from the departure of Ceto, Seato and the Soviet occupation, that without a “strategic threat” the *raison d’être* of military dictatorship as well as the unaccountable non budgetary amounts would dry up. Do they want that? Would they want that?

The non budgetary support is reported to be in the region of nine hundred million dollars annually. That amount is almost equal to the cotton export of the country. It amounts to significant flows of external support for a country that is additionally getting another five hundred million dollars in budgetary support.

To consolidate its hold on power, the military dictatorship has ruthlessly targeted the mainstream political parties through horsetrading, coercion and inducements. However, they have failed to deceive the people, who are the children of the democratic dream of Quaid e Azam and Quaid e Awam, into abandoning the mainstream parties. Undeterred by this, the military dictatorship is now seeking to crush the moderate forces in Balauchistan, Pakistan’s largest province. The suppression of the nationalist Balauch tribes plays into the hands of the bearded and non bearded leadership that relies on religion or the military for its support. Another dangerous vacuum is being created in yet another part of the country.

The price of “rentier politics” is alienation, divisiveness and the threat of an implosion that could strike at the very territorial integrity of Pakistan.

It happened before. The disempowerment of the people of Pakistan resulted in the disintegration of the country and the emergence of Bangladesh. West Pakistan was threatened with break up but Quaid e Awam Shaheed Bhutto saved the country through his popular support and his empowerment of the people and the

provinces. When Quaid e Awam Shaheed Bhutto was unjustly killed, the country was once again in turmoil. Sindh threatened to separate. The Balauch leaders were sitting in Kabul. Once again it was the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party which saved the country through honest dispensation to people and provinces. The Balauch and Pakhtoon leaders were invited back from Kabul, given amnesty, they contested elections, development funds were made available and the country re-integrated.

However, since military academies are forced to re-write history to ensure that its dictators are repackaged as knights in shining armour, memory remained short. The drunken rule of General Yayha Khan was exonerated from the military mind as the cause of national disintegration. Blame was placed on the politicians who were out of power and therefore powerless to take the decisions that led to disintegration. So too was the tyranny of General Zia whitewashed to paint him as a *mard e momin* (man of faith). His rape of the Constitution, hanging of an elected Prime Minister, creation of sectarian and ethnic violent groups and emptying of the treasury were buried. Instead the politicians were blamed to pave the way once again for another military ruler.

It was during the rule of the present military dictatorship that advertisements were taken out for nuclear export and a ship intercepted on its way to Libya with cargo to assist in nuclear proliferation. Although the nuclear scientist Qadeer Khan chose to confess sole responsibility and fall on his sword to protect others, the damage to national interest was done. India is given nuclear energy packages that Islamabad cannot dream of. As President Bush put it, India and Pakistan are two different countries with two different histories. Yet in 1947 they were cut from the same cloth and Pakistan had parity with India.

Quaid e Awam opposed the “rentier” mentality that lies at the heart of military dictatorships and creates the crises that damage national integrity as well as impoverish the people of Pakistan. He believed that Pakistan’s true wealth lay in its people. He took Pakistan from the bullock age to the atomic age. He broke the shackles of ignorance by building universities across the nation and opened their doors to the young. He gave hope to the millions of Pakistanis living in poverty by telling them that it was not birth or class but hard work and knowledge that would determine their future. He created a new middle class and sent Pakistanis overseas to work. They were welcomed with open arms because Islamabad’s standing reached the skies. In sharp contrast, the presentation of a Pakistani passport at an immigration desk today, sadly, too often means suspicion.

As Balauchistan burns, Taliban strength grows in the tribal areas, earthquake victims struggle to survive, innocent civilians are killed, the elite celebrate while

the poor sweat, the internal contradictions grow greater. There is a stark need to revert to the democratic legacy of the greatest leaders of Pakistan, namely Quaid e Azam and his political son Quaid e Awam to avert the danger of a failed state.

The military regime, unfortunately, is still building castles in the air. According to reports, it still conspires at rigging elections to deny the people their right to choose a government of their choice. Attempts are made to offer the main stream parties either the governments of Sindh or Punjab in return for presidential support and re-alignment with the political orphans who make up the ruling party. The real intent is to break the Opposition alliance and continue with a structure that was erected in 2002 and which has failed to meet the needs of reform or institution building.

Recently Alexander Haig came on television where he described General Musharaf as an endangered species. The reasons that great nations build great institutions is because they realise that greatness lies in enduring structures that are immortal and not in individuals who will have their time on the stage and then move on.

In Quaid-e-Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a Colossus of a leader, Pakistan was fortunate to have a peoples hero who studied history and knew the lessons of history. He picked up the pieces of residual Pakistan and energised it with investments all the way from the Karakorum Highway to the Bin Qasim Port. He built the Heavy Mechanical Complex, gave Pakistan the Mushak aircraft, health and education, jobs for the youth, dignity to the women who were inducted into the foreign service and the judiciary, labour rights, land reforms, habeous corpus and most importantly the unanimous Federal, Democratic, Egalitarian and Peoples Constitution of 1973 with provincial autonomy. Quaid e Awam brought back 90,000 prisoners of war, prevented their war crime trials and also restored territory lost to West Pakistan on the battle field. He laid the foundation for an enduring and honourable relationship with India on the basis of the Simla Agreement. He negotiated with President Daud of Afghanistan the signing of the Durand line as a border between Afghanistan and Pakistan but was overthrown before it was signed. He emancipated the people from ignorance and backwardness and hosted the first Islamic Summit at Lahore where President Arafat was recognised as the sole leader of the Palestinians paving the way for the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority.

Quaid e Awam did not believe that the strength of a Party came from the name of a political leader. He believed that the strength of the Party came from the masses. When he launched the Pakistan Peoples Party in 1967, it did not have any famous names. General Musa made fun of the PPP claiming that it had only, "rickshawalas and tongawalas". The people of the country did not care for the famous names.

They wanted to end military dictatorship and the drawing room politics where a small elite belonging to the bureaucracy and security decided the destiny of the nation through their subservient puppets. The people said that they would vote for the PPP even if it gave a ticket to a lamp-post because they wanted to take charge of their lives. The people of the country, whether professionals, presiding officers, returning officers, election commission officials, ordinary citizens or on election duty, police duty, military duty, judicial duty saw the elections of 1971 as a clarion call to end military rule. They refused to rig elections. They voted for PPP under the leadership of Quaid e Awam. The election victory was a triumph of peoples power washing away all the so called big names of politics in freedom's tidal wave of triumph.

Today Pakistan has to battle terrorists, extremists, militants, suicide bombers, Taliban, insurgency in Balauchistan, reform maddrassas, improve the judiciary, the police service, the military, protect women and minorities, address the problems of the youth, ensure labour and peasant rights while dreaming of bringing the twenty first century from backward tribal areas to the sea shores and dusty villages of the land.

A country that launched the world of modernity in the region in the seventies introducing radios and passports for every citizen and which launched the telecommunication revolution as well as the policies of information technology, deregulation, decentralisation and privitisation in Pakistan in 1988, with its success being copied in South and West Asia, has the capacity to once again transform its society from crisis to capability.

And to do that it must turn to the message of Quaid e Awam, the torch bearer of the legacy of Quaid e Azam who believed in true enlightenment based on representative institutions, anchored in justice and born with the zeal to serve the working classes, the middle classes and all the people of Pakistan.

He who gave his blood and the blood of his sons, both from his party and his family, knew that there can be no sacrifice greater than the sacrifice for the people whose respect, honour and dignity is the respect honour and dignity of the Nation.

Even though Quaid e Awam was sentenced on a trumped up charge, today, as millions pay him tribute across the world, his name shines and inspires whereas those of his opponents is forgotten. His supporters pay him tribute although more than two decades have passed since he was taken away from this world in 1979 on the same day as the Jesus Christ was crucified.

Quaid e Awam made the people proud of themselves and of their Nation. As his followers say, "Zinda Hai Bhutto, Zinda Hai"--Bhutto lives, he lives.

Indeed he does, in the heart of all those who dream of a better tomorrow.

The Rich Have Fun While the Ship Sinks
A Budget Critique
by Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto
June 18, 2006

Pakistan is witnessing a worrying economic and social divide. There is a growing disparity between the rich and the poor and between the powerful and the powerless.

For the rich, the military dictatorship's high economic growth is a major boon. It means bullish stock markets, booming property prices, and easier bank loans. For the asset-less poor, the recent surge in economic growth is a bane. Prices for essential goods are higher – and purchasing power lower in real terms. Pakistan, in the words of the economist Mahbub ul Haq, is like a titanic where the rich are having fun but the ship is sinking down.

These growing economic imbalances threaten to rip apart the social fabric of society. If unchecked, they can deepen ethnic cleavages in a country plagued by militarization of North Waziristan and Balauchistan and a growing sense of alienation in the provinces.

This story of growth and inequality, stark poverty amidst obscene luxury is reminiscent of the 1960s and the so called “decade of development” under General Ayub Khan.

The divisive economic policies of General Ayub's era sparked a nation wide protest and ultimately culminated in Pakistan's dismemberment in 1971. Now another military dictator follows similar policies of economic exploitation of the poor, disempowerment of the citizens and faces a rising rebellion in Pakistan's largest province.

Last year, the general price level (measured by the consumer price index) – rose by 9.30 percent. This is the largest annual increase in the last eight years. Over three years, oil prices went up by nearly 70 percent affecting all aspects of daily life from transportation costs to goods prices.

The military dictatorship's economic mismanagement resulted in record increases in the prices of edible items including pulses, sugar, vegetables and cooking oil. Such soaring prices played havoc on the monthly budget of fixed income groups.

In the developed world, food prices remained constant. Take the case of United Kingdom where there was no significant increase in the price of milk, oil, poultry, sugar and other items of daily consumption during the last six years.

The Pakistani media rightly highlighted the dramatic increase in food prices. Such price rises transform into real lives with children going hungry because their parents cannot afford the sky rocketing prices and with increasing malnutrition amongst both young and old. Yet the dictatorship turned to the utility store concept begun by the PPP. The PPP did set up the utility stores but it never saw them as a substitute for deficit reduction and curbing price control. Four hundred utility stores cannot go far in a country with a population of nearly 160 million people.

Ensuring price stability requires good governance. It requires steps to stop hoarding, improve supply networks, reduce the role of middle men, and control business cartels.

Sugar prices nearly doubled in the last six months. The Public Accounts Committee held selected sugar mills responsible involving influential sugar barons in the Federal Cabinet.

However, when it comes to nabbing sugar hoarders and business cartels whose misdeeds impoverish millions of ordinary citizens, there is a criminal silence. The law is helpless in eradicating corruption since the loyalty of the corrupt is crucial to sustaining the military regime. The country's entire accountability apparatus is geared towards keeping one unelected leader in office.

A misplaced focus on expenditures rather than outcomes

The regime claims to increase pro-poor expenditures through increased subsidies and higher development spending. Greater allocations for development are welcome but who will finance these expenditures and how will they reach the poor?

First, there is a distinction between allocations and actual expenditures. The Musharaf regime regularly failed to utilize amounts allocated for development. Sometimes as much as fifty per cent was unutilized. One Chief Ministers left 70 percent of the development expenditure unutilized. During last year's first nine months, the NWFP spent only 38.7 percent of its annual development budget. A higher development allocation does not necessarily mean higher actual expenditures.

Second, given defence expenditure and debt servicing (with more and more loans being taken) fiscal space is limited. By the middle of the financial year development spending is reduced. This is the second reason why higher allocations do not necessarily make higher expenditures.

Third, the relationship between expenditures and outcomes is not automatic. Examples abound of hospitals without doctors, ghost schools, missing teachers, political patronage, centralized management structures and widespread corruption in education and health departments. In fact, when public resources are channelled through dysfunctional public institutions they rarely reach intended beneficiaries.

Fourth, these higher development expenditures need financing. If new resources are raised through domestic borrowing, they translate into tomorrow's greater debt liabilities which further burden the weak and downtrodden sections of society.

The poor need a level playing field that ensures socio-economic justice to all. Despite promises of "enlightened moderation", the military regime's managers refuse to change an unequal and unjust system that locks people in a perpetual cycle of poverty. It is a system that taxes the poor and subsidizes the rich, a system that keeps ordinary people hostage to the interests of a narrow elite.

Social protection – too little, too late

The budget includes a 15 percent dearness allowance for government employees, a modest increase in pensions, reduced income tax rates for the salaried class and an increase in the minimum wage. These well-intentioned steps cannot relieve the financial pressures on the poor. Few of Pakistan's people have formal sector employment to take benefit of these schemes.

The budget launched an employment scheme based on personal loans granted through the National Bank of Pakistan. This scheme is unlikely to resolve chronic unemployment in Pakistan. Employment comes through revival of the industrial sector and a fundamental change in national priorities. While masses of young people look for a remunerative job, retired military officers take over civilian positions. These are jobs that could help thousands of families but are used to give a second income to retired military personnel.

Social protection in Pakistan is grossly inadequate. Even on generous accounts, the country spends less than 1% of GDP on social protection.

Last year, expenses of both the Prime Minister's House and the President's House exceeded their annual budgetary allocation. The Prime Minister's House spent twice as much as originally allocated! The new army General Headquarters in Islamabad, including mansions and luxury clubs for top military bureaucrats, will cost a whopping \$ 2.4 billion dollars.

Defending frontiers or defending the real estate?

To balance the budget, the increase in development expenditures should have been offset by cutting non-development expenditures. Instead, a raise of about Rs 27 billion in defense spending was announced.

Moreover, the Public Accounts Committee found last month that over Rs 35 billion in military pensions were paid from the civilian budget!

This is strategic fudging to prevent the ratio of defense expenditures to GDP rising.

At a time when sixty percent of the people live on two dollars or less a day, when poverty, hunger and unemployment is rising, solidarity with the people could have been demonstrated by reducing perks for the top military brass. This was not done.

The democratic political parties have a record of a strong commitment to defense requirements. But there is a difference between defence requirement and financing lavish life styles for the top brass. The Charter of Democracy signed on May 14, 2006 calls for transparency in defense spending. It is therefore important that the military regime allows a healthy parliamentary discussion on the uses for defence allocations.

Privatizing the future

It was the vision and hard work of Quaid e Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Shaheed that Pakistan invested in public sector corporations including the Steel Mill. The PPP governments invested in the infrastructure of the country building amongst others the Karakorum Highway, Port Qasim, Heavy Mechanical Factory, Heavy Engineering Factory, Saindak Project, Ormara Naval Base, Pasni and Gwadar Ports, the Oil Refinery, Power Projects, Fertiliser, Cement, Sugar and other plants.

While the state's involvement in public corporations was overstretched, a rushed, non-transparent privatization fails to protect the rights of ordinary workers. Most recently this was witnessed in the controversial sale of the Pakistan Steel Mills. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of workers in privatized entities face an

uncertain future. The regime must ensure they are able to sustain a secure livelihood for themselves and their children.

The budget mysteriously refrains from providing information on the actual use of privatization proceeds. The concern is that the military dictatorship has used privatization proceeds for budget deficit reduction purposes. That would be a shame for far more necessary is the need to retire the national debt. This is what the PPP government did, becoming the first in history to repay principal debt and lower the debt burden on the unborn generation.

While children sleep hungry and parents cannot find work, the harsh reality of life under the military dictatorship is a stinging rebuke of the inability of unrepresentative systems to deliver economic emancipation to their people.

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto is chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party

Hoping against hope
Interview of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto - Ashraf Mumtaz
The Dawn - July 16, 2006

'The Charter of Democracy is a prescription for saving Pakistan from disintegration and degenerating towards being a failed state. Every patriotic person in the country, whether in the military or anywhere else, will support the charter to protect the unity, integrity and well-being of Pakistan,' says PPP chief Benazir Bhutto

THE meeting of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy on July 2, 2006 in London is considered more important than the earlier meetings of the coalition. It was in the city of London that all its components signed the Charter of Democracy (CoD). The decision to move a no-trust motion against the Musharraf regime was also taken at the July 2 meeting. To what extent this decision would help the coalition achieve its targets set in the 36-point CoD remains to be seen.

Apparently, despite this decision, the PPP has not changed its stance regarding whether Gen Musharraf should be allowed to contest presidential elections if he takes off his military uniform and holds free and fair polls. Other parties in the coalition have a different point of view. They say that Gen Musharraf is not acceptable to them with or without military uniform.

Even after the July 2 meeting, the PPP is not willing to commit whether it will take part in the elections if Gen Musharraf is still there on the political horizon.

To discuss these issues, recently Dawn Magazine caught up with, PPP chairperson and self-exiled former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto. The following are excerpts from the interview:

Q. A few days before the ARD's July 2 meeting in London, a statement attributed to you was issued. It said that if Gen Musharraf wants to contest presidential elections, he should first step down as the COAS and hold free and fair elections. Is it not against the declared policy of your party? Previously, the your party's stand was that Gen Musharraf is not eligible to contest the elections unless he retires as a general and then waits for two years like any other government servant to take part in politics.

A. The army chief cannot contest presidential elections because the Constitution doesn't allow it. Moreover, the armed forces are a national institution and must be

above the political fray. General Musharraf's campaigning for the ruling party is undermining the neutrality and universal appeal of the armed forces.

Q. In one of your previous interviews, you opposed agitation saying that it may pave the way for another general to step in and intervene in politics. You also talked of a smooth and controlled transition to democracy. But the ARD meeting called upon all democratic forces to get united in order to form a national consensus government and hold elections within 90 days. Is the ARD decision not in conflict with your views? Which, in your opinion, is the better course for the restoration of democracy?

A. The PPP prefers a smooth transition to democracy and believes that pressure should be mounted for a government of national consensus to replace the ruling party which rigged the last local elections. The national government should implement electoral reforms as charted out in the PPP election paper released in March, 2006. This paper, amongst other measures, brings the chief secretaries and the inspector-general police under the election commission, thereby preventing provincial and federal administrations from politically exploiting them for election purposes. However, if a national government is not formed nor electoral reforms are undertaken, political parties may be forced into forming a grand alliance.

Q. Will it be right to expect that in the future the PPP will not issue any statement contradicting the decisions taken from the ARD's platform?

A. The PPP is a member of the ARD and its views, as well as those of other component parties, are the views of the ARD. The ARD is a political alliance formed to achieve a certain well-defined objective, namely the restoration of democracy through holding free and fair elections under an independent election commission and a caretaker set-up of national consensus. The alliance has also recently bound itself to a charter that seeks to banish the role of the military in politics. As far as the issues before the alliance are concerned, all statements are issued by the alliance and not by any single party.

Q. Will any move to impeach Gen Musharraf not according him an implied recognition as president because only the head of state can be impeached, not a general? What reaction do you expect from the general in case such a move fails? It is likely to fail because the opposition doesn't have the required strength in parliament.

A. The decision taken at the ARD meeting is of a no-confidence vote against the Musharraf regime. A committee has been established to examine the matter further with a view to highlighting loot and plunder committed by the regime

following the Supreme Court's verdict in the Steel Mills case. The verdict clearly spoke of illegalities and of a loss of billions of rupees.

Q. When a no-confidence motion was moved against you in 1989, which was defeated by seven votes, you said that such a move 'shakes the country' even if it is defeated. Why will it not shake the country now?

A. We will move the no-confidence vote if the regime fails to resign. It is to morally protest the loot and plunder taking place in the country and billions of rupees are being wasted on the so-called National Accountability Bureau. If the opposition were to dig open the privatisation done by the junta, every case will smell foul including the KESC's privatisation to a company that did not have 10 years' experience running a utility which is the international benchmark for such privatisations.

As a consequence, the country is experiencing power cuts. The capital market has crashed five times during the Musharraf dictatorship. Chairman SECP Tariq Hassan was stopped from hiring financial forensic experts to track the money back to those who robbed millions of middle class investors. The former prime minister, Jamali also spoke of this fraud and manipulation. The allegations of fraud involving purchase of railway engines remain uninvestigated. The cement scandal, the sugar scandal, the wheat scandal, and the Lahore land scandal are aimed at robbing the people and keeping wealth in a few hands that can be used to destabilise democratic governments in the future by creating monopolies with the ability to force shortages of essential items.

General Musharraf says that he would declare his assets annually, but has failed to do so. Those who are close to him haven't done so either. The Sindh High Court in its judgment of May 2006 in the tractor gate scandal said, "The entire proceedings suffer from a lack of transparency, smack of subjective decision, arbitrariness and excess of jurisdiction as well as favoritism." The Sindh High Court further ruled that "existing notifications are not to be acted upon". These are proofs of financial wrongdoing and abuse of office.

Despite the courts ruling on prima facie corruption, no action has been taken and instead billions are wasted on the so-called National Accountability Bureau whose sole purpose is to keep one man in office by entangling democratic alternative in a series of investigations through trumped up charges.

The people's government established an Engineering Development Board to take pro-people decisions on tariffs, concessions and imports of the engineering industry. But the military dictatorship recently appointed a new chief executive

who has never attended an engineering school to sign on the dotted line of specific schemes.

There is a difference when the establishment moves a vote of no-confidence against a democratically elected prime minister and when the opposition moves a vote of no-confidence against an establishment appointee who cannot win a union council seat on merit. The opposition will moving the vote of no-confidence to draw attention towards the financial turpitude and wanton plunder of national assets that are leaving our people impoverished, hungry and miserable.

Q. The CoD is a very good document to go through. How will the ARD implement it when a number of its provisions are against the army or its chief? Are political forces strong enough to take on the army and throw it out of politics?

A. When the Quaid-i-Azam declared that the Muslims of the subcontinent would carve out a separate nation state, many said that the Hindu majority and the ruling British would never allow it to happen. But his dream came true. The Charter of Democracy is a prescription for saving Pakistan from disintegration and from degenerating into a failed state. Every patriotic person in the country, whether in the military or anywhere else, will support the charter to save the unity, integrity and well-being of Pakistan.

Q. What steps should be taken to bring the army's role in politics to an end? Can you give our readers the sequence of such measures?

A. The political parties which are signatories to the charter will support the building of institutions including the election commission, parliament, and judiciary, and grant provincial autonomy to bring the government to the people who are the true owners of Pakistan. The armed forces' budget will be made accountable and the armed forces will come under the prime minister who is the chief executive.

Q. Federal Minister Sher Afgan insists that in recent times you contacted Gen Musharraf at least a dozen times. Denials issued by your party have been unable to make him change his claim. What's the factual position? Wouldn't holding a dialogue with the general be more useful than getting into confrontation with him?

A. In most countries people look for evidence before they print wild allegations. The minister did not provide any evidence and his allegations are patently false.

Q. On what terms will the PPP be willing to cooperate with Gen Musharraf?

A. The PPP has not considered this issue as there is little likelihood to stand along side those who allowed Osama bin Laden to escape from Tora Bora and the Taliban to regroup and re-assert themselves as well as forced A Q Khan to become an scapegoat to save others. Don't forget that the PPP was overthrown twice to set the stage for the war against terrorism. After its first overthrow, Pakistan was on the brink of being declared a terrorist state in 1993. After the PPP's second overthrow, 9/11 took place. If the PPP had been in power, Al Qaeda would never have established camps in Afghanistan; the attacks on the Trade Towers would not have taken place, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan would not have occurred; and Muslims everywhere would not be under siege. The policies of the PPP were aimed at bringing peace, harmony and brotherhood. Those who want a clash of civilizations cannot accept the PPP and it is futile to even consider such a package while trumped up charges are made, political prisoners languish in jails and exiled politicians are denied the right to live in their own homeland.

Q. Your party, like other parties in the opposition, is opposing Gen Musharraf's plans to get himself re-elected by present assemblies. The argument is that an assembly whose own life is that of five years can't elect a president for 10 years. If so, how will you justify your own election as chairperson of your party for life when the electoral college is not meant for that long a term?

A. There is a difference between a country's parliament where different ideologies compete and the masses decide which way to go, and a political party which has one ideology according to which its workers decide who they wish to lead them.

Q. Can you categorically claim that the PPP will not take part in the elections if they're held in the presence of Gen Musharraf?

A. There are those that would like the PPP to boycott the forthcoming national elections; but it is premature to speculate what the PPP would do. The PPP prefers contesting the elections, but will take the final decision closer to election time and in consultation with other opposition parties.

Q. Why don't you go back to Pakistan and face the cases against that are against you in several courts? One says this bearing in mind the judiciary that is so independent that its decision in the Steel Mills case is being appreciated by everyone. If you don't go back, would it be right to infer that you still don't expect a fair trial?

A. I am facing cases in several courts in Pakistan and in a number of investigative litigations overseas. No leader in history has faced as many litigations as I have across so many jurisdictions. I am thankful to the people of Pakistan whose

prayers are my shield and my defence. I urge my brothers and sisters to continue praying for me because I need their prayers. The regime could get more vengeful as it gets more fearful as the time of elections comes closer. I may mention here that my election petition to be declared a member of parliament on the women's seat was to be decided in six months as per law. It is still not decided. No doubt the Steel Mills privatisation judgment is a good one and there are many conscientious members in our judiciary. I hope they will take bolder decisions in the future while some bold ones have already come. However, according to national and international human rights organizations, Pakistan's judiciary is under executive pressure.

Q. In a case pending against you before a Swiss case, any kind of judgment is expected. Who would you hold responsible in case the verdict goes against you: Mr. Sharif, who prepared the case, or the present government, which pursued it vigorously?

A. The hardliners in the establishment created the National Accountability Bureau as a front organization to politically re-engineer Pakistan's direction. It used different persons for the purpose, including Mr. Leghari, Mr. Sharif and Mr. Musharraf. Therefore, the cases continued even after the regimes changed.

Q. Why were red notices issued against you and your spouse? How do you see the government's move to have your assets in the US, the UAE and else where seized?

A. All these moves are being made to detract attention from the institutionalised corruption of the regime.

Q. What's your party's stance on cooperating with the MMA?

A. The nature of "cooperation" should be defined before a comment can be made. Within the framework of the ARD we are prepared to cooperate with all other political parties to banish dictatorship from the country.

Q. What should be Pakistan's role in the stand-off between the US and Iran?

A. Pakistan should seek to use its influence with both countries to bring about a political settlement.

Interview of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to Hindustan Times July 19, 2006

Q: Since the agreement between you and Nawaz Sharif, have any further developments taken place for the re-emergence of real party system and removal of a military-run administration?

Ans: The Charter of Democracy was agreed on May 14 2006. Thereafter Mr. Sharif and I met several times in Dubai and London to reaffirm our vision of Pakistan's future as a Federal, Democratic and egalitarian state at peace with itself and its neighbours. On July 2 the Opposition alliance known as ARD met and adopted a number of wide ranging resolutions. The resolutions aim at building pressure for a government of national consensus to hold the next general elections. The Charter goes beyond elections to the pluralistic and accountable society that we dream of creating a moderate, enlightened and flourishing society is implemented. We affirmed that Mr. Sharif and I shall return to Pakistan before the general elections and warned that any attempt to stop our homecoming will be a denial of the constitutional right of impartial and free elections.

We reaffirmed that terrorism and extremism are a by-product of military regimes and can be fought best by a democratically elected Government.

We resolved that the military dictatorship has brought the Federation of Pakistan to the precipice when all but one road leads to strife, chaos and the threat of disintegration. The Federation today is at war with its peoples and itself. The regime today uses brute and naked state force in a war against its own people who demand their constitutional, economic, political and cultural rights.

Parliament's sovereignty is vetoed by the National Security Council. Parliament is denied the right to freely formulate policy or to protect the rights of the federating units or intercede in the grave political crisis facing the Federation. Parliament has been reduced to a rubber stamp for the Chief of Army Staff who unconstitutionally occupies the Office of the President.

We have called upon all moderate and democratic political forces, irrespective of their Party positions, to unite on calling for the restoration of democracy, the formation of a government of national consensus to hold free, fair and honest elections within 90 days. We decided to consider resigning from the Assemblies, in consultation with other Opposition

Parties, should General Musharaf seek to elect himself through the present Assemblies.

Q: We had heard that another meeting with Nawaz Sharif was scheduled in Dubai. Have you two kept in contact in the pursuit of joint objectives outlined in the agreement?

Ans: We have met several times since the Charter was signed in May. However in the meantime senior leadership of the two parties are in regular contact for fine-tuning the political struggle and for consultations with other democratic parties to endorse the Charter of Democracy.

Q: Are there any plans for both of you together or you alone for returning to Pakistan?

Ans: As the two parties are together partners in the ARD it makes sense that both Nawaz Sharif and I return to the country together. But it is premature to decide such matters at this stage.

Q: Is the US Ambassador's statement that both of you must be allowed back in Pakistan, an indication of the official thinking in Washington. Do you feel that Musharraf could be swayed to relent, albeit under pressure to permit entry?

Ans: If the US Ambassador was correctly quoted in the media that the exiled prime ministers be freely allowed back in Pakistan, it is a positive and welcome statement. The US is the world's strongest democracy. President Bush has spoken of supporting democracy in different parts of the world. Those close to General Musharaf claim that he is a close ally of the international community and the principle of democracy will not be applied to Pakistan. Therefore the statement of the Ambassador, if correctly quoted, is important reflecting the democratic aspirations of the people of Pakistan. Pakistan needs to go forward regionally in relations with India and Pakistan as well as in dealing with those forces who are out to talibinise Pakistan. It needs to eliminate terrorism for its own survival and to protect its people from zealots who kill innocents in Mosques and Churches and Temples. It needs to give social and economic equality to its people. The last thing it needs is more of the last five years which have seen an army chief rule the country singlehandedly and one who has faced two assassination attempts. Moreover, poverty has risen in Pakistan and the international ratings for the country have gone down. People of Pakistan are hardworking, lawful and

keen to join the march of civilization towards freedom. Justice, gender equality, peace and prosperity. They can do so through democracy.

Q: If you do return could Musharraf detain either or both of you? This will defeat the very purpose of your going back. What is then the alternative? Is it possible that Washington could persuade Musharraf from such an action? Or you would risk it. There are cases pending against you. He might use them as the reason for detention. Or that could prove the last straw for the people?

Ans: When Musharraf has pardoned the nuclear scientist A.Q.Khan who sold nuclear technology on the international market according to his confession, Musharraf has no moral right to persecute me on unproven allegations that are a decade old. I plan going back irrespective of what Musharraf does. When I was banned from contesting the last elections I did not go back for several reasons. Those elections were too close to 9/11 and Musharraf kept claiming he would not stop my party from forming the government if we won a majority. Well, we did win a majority but Musharraf postponed the parliament and factionalised my Party. My party knows I made the sacrifice for it. This time my Party wants me back with one voice and I shall be there for them and for our people who have stood by me just as I have stood by them. As I have suffered, I can understand the suffering of my people. They live on less than two dollars a day and young people find it difficult to get jobs. That's wrong. Our hospitals and schools are crying out for funding. My Party and I will invest in our people and in peace.

Q: Is there any understanding on how to decide about who will be the PM, if the party system is restored and elections held?

Ans: It is premature to talk about it at this stage. Our first concern is to end bonapartism and the military's involvement in politics. In the Charter we have agreed to recognize the right of a political party to form government and not chased out of office before completing its term.

Q: Has Musharraf or his people made any tentative move to establish contact with you for a formula to resolve the deadlock?

Ans: We read in the press that Musharraf and his aides are to contact me for a political solution and then we read that Musharraf has changed his mind. I personally doubt that Musharraf or those that are around him would want an understanding with the PPP led by me. What he says is similar to the PPP platform but on the ground the situation is different. Pakistan is a

critical country and the stakes are high for those around Musharraf who allowed Osama Bin Laden to escape from Tora Bora, allowed the Taliban to regroup and re-assert themselves as well as forced AQ Khan to fall on his sword to save others. It seems a contradiction in terms to think such elements would allow the PPP back to power if they can help it. Don't forget that PPP was overthrown twice to set the stage for the war against terrorism. After its first overthrow, Pakistan was on the brink of being declared a terrorist state in 1993. After the PPP's second overthrow the attacks of 9/11 took place. If the PPP had been in power, Al Qaeda would never have established camps in Afghanistan, the attacks on the Trade Towers would not have taken place, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan would not have occurred and Muslims everywhere would not be under siege because extremists exploit the message of Islam. The policies of the PPP were aimed at bringing peace, harmony and brotherhood. Those who want a clash of civilizations cannot accept the PPP. They fear my popularity with the people whom my Father served and gave his life for and whom I served losing my Father, brothers, was imprisoned with my Mother, saw my husband held for eleven and a half years without a conviction and endured exile bringing up little children and looking after an ailing Mother.

Q: Do you apprehend that if Musharraf comes under extreme pressure to give way to you, he might venture into some sort of small-scale skirmish with India.

Ans: It is said that external threats help divert attention from the internal problems and that whenever Pakistan has had a military dictatorship there has been a skirmish or a conflict. I hope better sense prevails this time. Even though Musharraf and I are on different sides of the political spectrum in Pakistan, I am glad to see that he has adopted-- at least overtly-- the PPP policy enunciated at Simla for good relations between India and Pakistan.

Of course I remain skeptical of the ability of a military dictatorship to build peace due to inherent historical reasons.

'I Worry for Pakistan's Future'
Benazir Bhutto on Pakistan's Future
By Karen Fragala Smith - Newsweek

After a decade in exile, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto is itching to get back into politics – and fearful of militant Islam's growing influence.

Nov. 15, 2006 - Age has scarcely mellowed Benazir Bhutto. At 53, Pakistan's two-time former prime minister has lost none of the fighting spirit that made her the first woman to be elected leader of a modern Muslim nation nearly two decades ago, when she was only 35. Recently she publicly joined forces with her former political nemesis (and now fellow exile) Nawaz Sharif, renouncing their past feuds and demanding restoration of democracy in Pakistan. Their pact was yet another headache for the country's military leader, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who already faces a full share of problems in both embattled Kashmir and on the Afghan border, where Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leaders are believed to be hiding. Bhutto recently traveled to New York to lecture at the Oxonian Society and announce her hope of running for prime minister in 2007. She spoke with NEWSWEEK's Karen Fragala Smith about her views on the Taliban, women's rights and the corruption allegations that plagued her political career. Excerpts:

NEWSWEEK: Why hasn't Osama Bin Laden been found?

Benazir Bhutto: I believe that elements of the [Pakistani] military security apparatus have a lot of sympathy for bin Laden. General Musharraf is relying on the [military] to find bin Laden, and it's simply not going to happen. What we really need is a change, and I believe that change has to come by going to the civilian option.

How would you rate General Musharraf's performance as a partner to the United States in the Bush administration's fight against terror?

I think General Musharraf took the right decision following the events of 9/11 to stand with the international community to fight terrorism. But I question how effective he has been in eliminating terrorism. There is a lack of implementation of his decisions in many parts of the country, and we have seen in [recent] years how the Taliban have reorganized themselves, and their goal is to take over Afghanistan once again. The religious parties have gained strength within Pakistan and today control of two of our most important provinces that border

Afghanistan. Militant groups that were [once] banned – who were attacking New Delhi, Bombay – are re-emerging and hold peace between India and Pakistan hostage. When I look at the rise of the religious parties, the reorganization of the Taliban and the persistence of the militant groups, I worry for Pakistan's future.

Is it true that you initially supported the Taliban when they first formed in Afghanistan?

When the Taliban first emerged, the United States, Pakistan and many other countries saw them as a force for peace, but soon we became disillusioned. There's a difference between Taliban with Al Qaeda and Taliban without Al Qaeda. When the first Taliban emerged, there was no Al Qaeda. They were there as Afghans trying to be a political force within Afghanistan. After the overthrow of my government in 1996, they allowed Al Qaeda to set up training camps. At that time, I was leader of the opposition in the Pakistani Parliament, and I called upon the government to issue an ultimatum to the Taliban that unless they evicted Al Qaeda, Pakistan would break relations with them. Unfortunately, my calls fell on deaf ears.

Describe your new alliance with former political rival Nawaz Sharif. What are your intentions going forward?

I traveled to Saudi Arabia last year to meet with Mr. Sharif. I told him that [people] inside and outside Pakistan are concerned that both of us spend so much time fighting each other [and] that if democracy was restored, we might have another round of senseless political battles. We needed to send a signal that we've learned our lessons and that next time it will be different. We came up with a "Charter of Democracy" [which is] aimed at creating a political system of checks and balances. In Pakistan, politics is a zero-sum game, but we believe that there should be a place within the system for divergent political views. A democratic society will also create tolerance among the young people in Pakistan who are confused by conflicting messages. On the one hand, they hear about the beauty of an accountable, transparent governance system that empowers ordinary people. But their reality is that power flows from the gun. We need to reverse the culture of violence and replace it with a culture of law and tolerance.

Pakistan currently has term limits that would keep you from returning to office as prime minister. Would you consider running in some other capacity?

In the immediate future, my party and the alliance with Mr. Sharif are both looking to put an end to the term limits. We feel that it should be left to the people of Pakistan. It's not like America, where a president is elected and he completes

[one or] two terms. Our terms are interrupted, so they don't really qualify in the American sense of two terms. I am planning to go back to Pakistan to help my party in the next general elections. If that limitation is lifted, I'll run for prime minister.

Your administration was plagued by corruption charges.

The allegations have been made to destroy my reputation. Despite the rules being stacked against me, none of the courts were able to convict me. I have always proclaimed my innocence, my husband has proclaimed his, and neither of us have been convicted, nor has any other member of my family. These corruption charges have been made to tarnish my image and deny Pakistan a democratic alternative. Since 1950, corruption charges have been made against every civilian prime minister—I believe it's to divert attention from the institutionalized corruption of the military.

What is your view on India-Pakistan relations?

Irrespective of the differences on Kashmir, India and Pakistan have to move forward. One of the key ways that we can move forward is by copying Europe's example. Europe was torn apart by war until it decided to build a common market. I've spoken to Indian leaders on this, and within Pakistan and India there's an emerging consensus that while we have differences, these differences should not stop us from economic development and cooperation in terms of trade and travel. But obviously we need safe borders. While militants hold guns in their hands and disturb the peace, it's very difficult to get safe and open borders. Attacking militancy is very important, not only vis-à-vis Afghanistan, but also vis-à-vis India.

What do you think of the current state of women's rights in Pakistan?

There's a very big debate on the role of women in the Muslim world. Some claim that women must be kept behind closed doors, but I argue that Islam came to emancipate women, not to repress them. The time has come when we within the Muslim world need to realize that each of us has a right to interpret religion as we wish, and we do not need clerics or the state to tell us how to worship. There are certain religious leaders who say it's against Islam for a woman to rule.

What is your perspective?

When I was first elected prime minister of Pakistan, a leading Saudi cleric said that it was un-Islamic. At the same time, the religious leaders from Yemen, Cairo and Syria all came out in support of a woman leading an Islamic nation. [There is]

tremendous debate and discussion between those who would take us to the past, and those who look to the future.