

SHAHEED MOHTARMA BENAZIR BHUTTO

INTERVIEWS



Compiled & Edited by
Prof. Aijaz A. Qure



**CULTURE DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SINDH**

**Shaheed Mohtarma
Benazir Bhutto
Interviews
(Volume 1)**

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Publisher's Note

Promoting culture through publication of books is one of the prime responsibilities of Culture Department and the department has succeeded in carrying out this responsibility with great vigour through publishing books that cover a vast range of topics based on Art, Culture, Language, Literature, Archeology and History. The initiative taken by Mr. Abdul Aziz Uqaili, Secretary, Culture Department for publication of the books, is highly commendable.

Keeping up with the tradition of promoting Pakistani culture, and highlighting the efforts made by the prominent personalities of Pakistan in terms of their contribution in projecting a positive image of the country, the Culture Department, Government of Sindh takes pride in publishing the book based on the interviews of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was admired not only in Pakistan but all over the world for her undaunted courage and her struggle for democracy. She sacrificed her life for people's rights irrespective of their cast and creed. Because of her selfless efforts to promote democracy and improve the condition of her nation, she has acquired the status of a legend. It is, therefore, an immense pleasure and honour for me to write publisher's note on the works based on such a legendary personality.

I am deeply indebted to Prof. Aijaz Ahmed Qureshi, the

Director of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Chair for this gigantic work. Compiling Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's interviews is a great accomplishment and such an endeavour needs to be appreciated.

The establishment of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Chair at the University of Karachi is an important milestone for achieving educational and research objectives. I would like to pay special thanks to President Asif Ali Zardari for his keen interest in the project, and the Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Qaim Ali Shah, for the approval of the chair and the financial support for the purpose.

It would be unfair not to mention Dr. Muhammad Ali Manjhi, Director Culture for his efforts to make the project a success. I can say it with certainty that the readers will like the book. However, suggestions for improving the quality of publication would be highly appreciated.

Ms. Sassui Palijo
Minister for Culture
Government of Sindh

Foreword

The book is based on the interviews of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, conducted by journalists, media persons and scholars of repute at different times and different parts of the world. The book includes forty interviews, taken by both local and foreign correspondents over a span of 20 years (from 1987 to 2007).

The interviews, compiled in book form, have been collected by the research officers working in SMBB Chair, University of Karachi. These researchers did extensive field work, visiting various libraries all over Sindh, including *Sindh Archives Library, Institute of Sindhology Library, University of Sindh, Mehmood Hussain Library, University of Karachi, Hamdard University Library, Gul Hayat Institute Library, Larkana, Ashiana Adab Library, Garhi Yaseen, District Shikarpur, and many others.*

It is pertinent to inform that other than the interviews compiled in book form, a bulk of material in the form of interviews, speeches, articles, letters, lectures, and other writings, is available and can be turned into books. The Chair has therefore decided to collect all such material and establish a library of its own for future researchers. It plans to conduct research on Shaheed Mohtarma and to organize various seminars and conferences on her philosophy and vision.

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, a true martyr, was an erudite and a politician of high caliber. She worked

for the downtrodden people of Pakistan and sacrificed her life for the cause of democracy. Reading her interviews, one can see the profundity of her thought and her concern for the people of Pakistan who had been victims of military regime from time to time. She had highlighted various issues that people were confronted with, such as poverty, lack of health and education facilities, deteriorating socio-economic conditions, social and political disorders, violation of human rights, religious rifts, and so on. The interviews reflect her political maturity and the passion for reviving the true democratic spirit. Moreover, her views on international issues manifest her profound understanding of international politics.

The interviews included in this book are the first part of the publication. A number of other books based on the interviews will be published in the near future.

I am grateful to Ms. Sassui Palijo, the Minister of Culture, Government of Sindh for her cooperation and help in publishing this book. I would also like to express my gratitude to her for establishing the chair at the University of Karachi.

I am thankful to Mr. Abdul Aziz Uqaili, the secretary Department of Culture, Government of Sindh for his unconditional support. I am equally thankful to Dr. Sikander Ali Panhwar, former Director General Culture Government of Sindh for his help in the publication of this book.

I am grateful to the current Vice-Chancellor, University of Karachi, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Qaisar, the former

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Karachi, Prof. Dr. Pirzada Qasim Raza Siddiqui, Dean Faculty of Arts, Dr. Zafar Iqbal, Prof. M. Saleem Memon, Advisor of the Chair, Mr. Taj Haider, Secretary General, Pakistan Peoples Party Sindh and member Advisory Committee of the chair for their support in the accomplishment of the project.

Last but not the least, I would like to take the opportunity to thank my Research officers, Ms. Shagufta Chandio, Mr. Asif Ali Surhio, Office Assistant, Hyder Ali Bhand and my friends, Mr. Amanullah Shaikh and Mr. Sanaullah Soomro for their immense help in compiling the book.

Prof. Aijaz A. Qureshi

Director,
Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Chair,
University of Karachi,
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

Two Leaders, on a Collision Course

*Interview by Lally Weymouth for News Week Magazine,
December 12, 2007 just before her assassination.*

NEWSWEEK: How do you see your prospects in the election?

BHUTTO: We [are] all worried that the elections are going to be rigged in favor of the ruling party.

NEWSWEEK: Do you think it's possible to prevent that?

BHUTTO: Well, [election] observers are coming from the European Union [among others]. So I think if we can get observers to ensure that the ballots don't get siphoned off, it'll be a huge setback to the rigging plans.

NEWSWEEK: The election commission [appointed by Musharraf] is another issue, isn't it?

BHUTTO: The chief election commissioner—it's very difficult to get him to move. Mostly he justifies what happens. For example, our candidate in Baluchistan was kidnapped and not allowed to file his nomination papers.

NEWSWEEK: Who kidnapped him?

BHUTTO: We assume a secret agency. So he missed filing [for the candidacy]. He appeared again and said, "Let me file. They kidnapped me to stop me filing." They did not allow him to file. We want this rectified.

NEWSWEEK: Is [former prime minister] Nawaz Sharif playing a role in all this?

BHUTTO: Yes, he's playing a very positive role by participating [in the elections]. When he came [back to Pakistan, from exile

in Saudi Arabia], his alliance wanted him to boycott [the elections]. I said to him, the point is to try to work together. But if we boycott, there is no need for them to rig the elections, because they'll win an overwhelming majority and they'll get to do whatever they want in the parliament. But if we fight we'll force them to rig, and if both of us fight they'll have to rig really big.

NEWSWEEK: When last I spoke to you in New York a few months ago, you were skeptical of whether Musharraf would go through with the deal with you.

BHUTTO: I was more than right. Because all of a sudden he suspended the constitution. We thought we had a roadmap to democracy, and we found ourselves on a train journey to dictatorship. Thank God the lawyers, the media, the civil society, political parties, everyone in Pakistan went up in arms. Everyone came down like a ton of bricks. There was international support and internal pressure. I think Mr. Negroponte's visit to Pakistan was an important one. Musharraf gave a date for elections before he came. After he left, Musharraf gave a date to retire from the army chief, which to me was like a miracle. There were so many people who said he would never retire as army chief.

NEWSWEEK: Will Musharraf restore the judiciary?

BHUTTO: I doubt it.

The present unrest in Pakistan - Benazir Bhutto & David Miliband

*Interview by James Naughtie for BBC Radio 4, The Today Programme
13th November 2007*

James Naughtie: And we're going straight to Pakistan, to Lahore, where we can talk to Benazir Bhutto who is surrounded by thousands of troops and being prevented from having her march and who is on the line. Good morning.

Benazir Bhutto: Good morning.

JN: What is the situation where you now find yourself?

BB: Well we've got about four thousand Policemen all around the house including in the neighbours, armoured personnel carriers and massive trucks filled with red sand, barbed wire, and I'm just wondering when we have this huge deployment where Police of this kind can't be used to hunt down Osama bin Laden.

The whole problem in Pakistan has been the inability of General Musharraf's regime to focus on the real threat which is coming from the extremists in the tribal areas of Pakistan and instead they've concentrated on marginalizing the moderate forces which has just fuelled extremism further.

JN: For some time you've been engaged in a, a kind of dialogue with General Musharraf. What is your view now of his hold on power?

BB: Well I think General Musharraf should be, if he's lost the confidence of the people of Pakistan, he's at war with the judiciary of the country having arrested the judges, he's taken on the Bar Association, imposed censorship and basically

alienated the press and the nation. He's attacked NGO groups who are also protesting, he is unable to give the nation a fair election, he's announced an election date no doubt, but one should look at all the things he didn't announce. He was given good advice by the Commonwealth, by the Foreign Secretary, by President Bush's Administration but he doesn't listen to the advice he is given, he is bent on maintaining and sustaining a dictatorship and dictatorship and Pakistan simply don't go together. It's dictatorship that has led to the political protest, it's dictatorship which has led to the rise of extremism.

JN: Can we take it from what you've just said that there are no circumstances under which you would serve in power with General Musharraf now?

BB: That's right there are no circumstances in which I could see myself serving with General Musharraf. I tried for more than a year, I did my best, I worked out a road map for democracy but he went back on that and imposed martial law. After that there were several people, foreign countries and people inside, that publicly called, and Foreign Secretary Miliband, that rightly called for General Musharraf to give a date when he would hold general election, give a date for when he would retire as Chief of Army Staff, release the judges and the political prisoners and lift the gags on the media.

Now these were given by a friend of Pakistan and would have helped diffuse the internal situation. But ...

JN: Well ...

BB: ... unfortunately General Musharraf did too little and if he does anything now it will be too late. He's alienated the people with his brute force by breaking in to homes, his police have broken in to homes, so I really think it's impossible for the People's Party and myself to work with him any more.

JN: We'll be talking to the Foreign Secretary in a moment, in fact I think he's listening to what you're saying now. Given what you've just said what would you like him to do and the British Government to do?

BB: Well it might not be very diplomatic but I would like to say to the Foreign Secretary to ask General Musharraf to step down. And certainly I feel that as long as General Musharraf is there the turmoil in Pakistan will continue and Britain really needs to look at the situation whether a nuclear armed nation, a country like Pakistan, can afford ...

JN: Well ...

BB: ... to go under. It's imploding. Britain has interests ...

JN: ... we'll ask ...

BB: ... in, in the region and it, we see our tribal areas have become safe havens for extremists ...

JN: ... what will you ...

BB: ... (indistinct) NATO troops and attack people in Pakistan.

JN: Finally, and briefly if you can Miss Bhutto, what will you do now?

BB: Well I intend to continue marching for democracy I intend to continue marching for an end to martial law.

JN: Benazir Bhutto in Lahore thank you.

Sarah Montague: Well with the time at ten minutes to eight we are now joined by the Foreign Secretary David Miliband who was listening to Benazir Bhutto there. Good morning.

David Miliband: Good morning.

SM: Will you ask President Musharraf to step down?

DB: Well we've been absolutely clear already that it's vital

that President Musharraf fulfils his commitment to step down as head of the Army, that's one of the four pieces of the international jigsaw that have been absolutely a point of consensus and obviously I've talked about those points with Benazir Bhutto on two occasions on the phone and also in person. Stepping down as head of the Army is, is key, free and fair elections vital, media restrictions lifted and obviously the political prisoners, many of them from Benazir Bhutto's party, also have to be released.

SM: But as you will have heard her saying there whatever he does now it is too late so will you ask him to step down?

DB: Well we, we've made clear that he does have to step down as head of the Army and that democratic forces have to have their sway in ...

SM: Mr. Miliband forgive me for pushing you but did, she's specifically saying that you need to ask him to step down as President.

DB: Right well that's the first time I've heard her say that, I, I, I came in halfway through the interview ...

SM: I think it is the first time that she's said it or at least ...

DB: ... yeah ...

SM: ... within the last hour ...

DB: ... yeah, I, I, I ...

SM: ... what is your response to it?

DB: ... well I think that the, as I said in the House of Commons last week, the situation in Pakistan is moving very fast. Even in the last twenty four hours we've had the meeting of the Commonwealth Ministers' Action Group which is saying that unless the situation improves then Pakistan will be suspended from the Commonwealth. I will look at, obviously, at what

Benazir Bhutto has said but the, the point of consensus up to now with all of our international partners and I have to say also with opposition figures within Pakistan has been about the centrality of free and fair elections because in the end it has to be the people of Pakistan who decide who their Government should be, not me.

SM: Her argument though, as I say, is that it's too late for him to do something now, it's too late, there's nothing he can do, he needs to step down. From what you're saying, it's not too late.

DB: Well I think that's a matter in the end for the constitution of Pakistan. There, there is a constitution in Pakistan, it needs to be respected, it's vital that at the heart are free and fair elections ...

SM: But it's not, forgive me, it's not being respected at the moment is it?

DB: ... well it's not being respected, it's been suspended as, there, there's an emergency rule there, the constitution has been suspended. Elections have been confirmed for, for, before the 9th of January but as I said in the House of Commons in the Foreign Affairs Debate yesterday we must make sure that the elections are free and fair in that the opposition have a proper chance to put their case, they'll, the electoral rolls are in a proper state, and obviously also that political prisoners are released. So it's got to be the reality and substance of proper elections, not just the words of them.

SM: So the British Government position is the same as the Commonwealth, the, the, made yesterday, that within ten days the military rule must be lifted?

DB: Abs, absolutely the, the Commonwealth position was one that UK played an important part in creating. The importance of ten days, just for the benefit of listeners, is that the Commonwealth Heads of Government will be meeting

next week, at the end of next week, in Kampala, and the 22nd of November relates to, to that meeting and that's, that's why the ten days has become important.

SM: You were invited on to speak before, of course, the development in Pakistan on the comments made by the Prime Minister last night who talked about foreign policy saying his foreign policy, he described it as hard headed internationalism. Now you, of course, as Foreign Secretary are the man implementing that policy, what does it mean to you?

DB: I think that the most important thing that it means is that we will use all the tools at our disposal, the so called soft power of diplomacy and trade but also the hard power of our military forces who are in action around the world, to ensure that we can advance British values and interests, and the more we can do that in international institutions obviously the more effective we are at utilising the relationships that we, and partnerships that we have around the world.

And I think one of the lessons of the, of the period since the end of the Cold War, the lessons of the period since September 2001, is that, you know, in a way Pakistan makes this point, if you pose the choice as either you favour democracy or you favour security, in other words either you favour aid programmes or you favour military action, you don't get it right. You have to use both and whether it be in Darfur, which the Prime Minister talked about yesterday, we've got to make sure that we get our programmes for economic governance, for political reform and for security right. I think that's the heart of the message the Prime Minister was putting across.

Don't expect the Constitution to be restored before a year

*Interview by Andrea Mitchel for NBC News
November 05, 2007*

MITCHELL: Prime Minister Bhutto, tell me what your latest information is about what President Musharraf has done, and your reaction to it.

BHUTTO: General Musharraf has suspended the Constitution of Pakistan, so it's really a declaration of martial law. But he's calling it an emergency. An emergency sounds more palatable to international opinion. But the proclamation says that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan shall remain in abeyance, and that's very worrying. My party and I would like to see the Constitution restored.

MITCHELL: Is there any justification that you know of for him declaring this suspension of the Constitution?

BHUTTO: Well, General Musharraf has tried to justify the imposition of martial law or emergency claiming that there has been an ascendancy in the activities of extremists. I agree with him that there has been ascendancy in the activities of the extremists, but I don't believe in the solution. In my view, dictatorship fuels extremism. The extremists feed off dictatorship, and dictatorship feeds off the extremists. The dictatorship needs the extremists to justify its existence, and the extremists need dictatorship to expand and spread. So I believe the solution lies in respecting the Constitution, respecting the rule of law, and investing in the people, trusting the people, and allowing the people to determine their future.

MITCHELL: What are you planning to do?

BHUTTO: I returned to Pakistan to give moral support to the people of my country and to tell them that they were not alone in the struggle for the restoration of our Constitution. I plan to meet with leaders of other political parties and discuss with them the policies we should make in trying to seek a restoration of our Constitution.

MITCHELL: At this point, given what General Musharraf has done, have you abandoned any plan to work out a political agreement where you would run, and become prime minister, and work with him in a government?

BHUTTO: Well, it's very difficult for me to work with a military leader. General Musharraf has committed to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, and he has personally assured me that he would retire as chief of Army Staff. But now he has declared martial law in this capacity, as chief of Army Staff. The Constitution gives our president emergency powers, but the constitutional articles for emergency have not been utilized. Instead, General Musharraf has said that in his capacity, that "I, General Pervez Musharraf, chief of the Army Staff, proclaim emergency". So, he has actually said that he will continue as chief of Army Staff, and that makes for a very difficult situation. Of course, if he was to restore the Constitution and retire as chief of Army Staff, that would be a totally different situation. It would lend confidence that he was once again considering the democratic route. But not while he remains chief of Army Staff and suspends the Constitution.

MITCHELL: And what do you think you and your supporters can do now, politically or in any other fashion?

BHUTTO: Well, we would like to protest the imposition of martial law, and we would like to raise our voices for the restoration of democracy. So we're going to be meeting together to discuss the most effective ways of doing that. We are calling upon the international community to use its

enormous leverage with General Musharraf to persuade him that this is a regressive step, it's a violation of the promises and the commitments that he made to the people of Pakistan and to the international community. And that if he really wishes to fight extremists, then the best way to do that is to trust the people, restore the Constitution, establish an independent Election Commission, and hold fair, free and impartial elections.

MITCHELL: Have you had any communication with Secretary Rice or any American officials?

BHUTTO: Not yet. I just came to Pakistan. But before, earlier, yesterday I heard that there were efforts being made to stop the imposition of emergency. And I also planned to come back to Pakistan so that I could also contact the people in the regime here and tell them not to take this step. But by the time I left, they had already taken this step.

MITCHELL: I've seen a report from Sky News that you believe that this is an attempt to delay elections for a year or two. Is that what you believe is happening?

BHUTTO: That's right. My reports from inside the regime are that there is going to be a salami (piecemeal) approach, where we are going to be told this is a temporary measure for three to six months, and then it will be extended for another six months. And in fact, I believe that the hard-liners within the regime, and there are many hard-liners which served with an earlier military dictator of the 80's, who formed the Afghan mujahideen who went on to become Al Qaeda and the Taliban. These hard-liners believe that America will be caught up in the presidential elections for a year. And then a new administration in the US will take another year to settle down. And they feel they need two years to drive NATO out of Afghanistan, destabilize (Afghan President) Karzai, and set up a kind of puppet government there, as well to expand their influence in Pakistan. These are the reports I'm getting from inside the regime.

MITCHELL: You think that General Musharraf is trying to suspend the Constitution for an extended period of time, for a matter of years?

BHUTTO: Yes. But he will not say so immediately. It will be done in installments. I believe this position has been taken to suspend the Constitution for at least one year, if not two.

MITCHELL: I was going to ask you if you're concerned for your safety?

BHUTTO: I do have concerns for the safety of all the people of my country, not just myself. I am unsure what will happen; this is a difficult period, but at the same time, General Musharraf has also been sensitive to international opinion. He was going to impose emergency earlier, and then the United States intervened; there was a long conversation with the secretary of State. And so I do believe that it's very important for us to try and get Pakistan back on to the democratic track. To persuade General Musharraf to restore the Constitution and to respect the courts, to respect the judiciary, and to trust the people of the country.

MITCHELL: Prime Minister, what would you like the United States government to do at this stage?

BHUTTO: I would like the United States government to telephone General Musharraf to tell him that it's not possible for them to support the suspension of Pakistan's Constitution or the sacking of the judges. And that democracy is important, as President Bush has rightly said, it is democracy, it is the strength of the ballot, not the bullet, that is more important, and if it's about winning hearts and minds then democracy is very important. I would like the United States to tell General Musharraf — please, accept the verdict of the people, hold elections, restore the Constitution.

MITCHELL: Do you think it's so risky at this point that you would not hold rallies or marches? Have you decided one

way or another what you want you and your political supporters to do?

BHUTTO: We would like to hold rallies and public demonstrations, but now fundamental human rights have been suspended, and we are going to have to get together to decide what is the best form of protest. But there will be a protest. Whether it's a public meeting, whether it's a sit-in, there will be protests, because it's very difficult to keep quiet in the face of the suspension of the Constitution of Pakistan, which amounts to a military rule. We would like to see the restoration of the Constitution, and I would like to urge General Musharraf to restore the Constitution, to accept the verdict of the court, even if it's a verdict that he does not like. Because we can only strengthen the rule of law if we accept the verdict of the court. And I would like to ask Washington not to put everything behind one man, but to put it behind the people of Pakistan. People of my country must know that the international community and the world's only super-power stands with them rather than with an individual.

Pakistan and Extremism

*Interview by David Frost, a very senior international journalist
Al Jazeera News, November 3, 2007*

David Frost: Tell me, has that terrible assassination attempt affected your decision to carry on with this battle?

Benazir Bhutto: No it's that horrific incident, in which 158 innocent young men, women, a baby, lost their lives, has just made me more determined, to continue. I do believe Pakistan is under increasing threat of an extremist takeover and to save the country, I believe we must restore democracy, get the peoples faith in the country, moving the country forward, so I'm determined to go ahead with the mission to save Pakistan with democracy.

David Frost: And how do you... how do your children feel about this? They're old enough now to know the risks you've got to take.

Benazir Bhutto: This is one of the reasons that I traveled from Karachi to Dubai. I wanted to console my children. I couldn't come immediately after the bomb blast, because we had to tend to the wounded and also condole with the families and I had to pray at my fathers grave. But I came here to be with them. They were asleep, when the midnight blasts took place and in the morning the got text messages from their friends, saying "We hope your mother is well" They were pretty upset and then their father came into the room and said "I have something to tell you". They said: "Well dad, we already know." They're coping, but obviously they worry, they do want me to continue though, they understand that I am doing this... for their country and for all the people of Pakistan.

David Frost: That's a... that's a marvelous story that

underlines how our children these days get their information almost before we do.

Benazir Bhutto: That's right. And not only our children, but what has really in a sense I'm overwhelmed but in a bit...Also feel a tremendous sense... burden of responsibility, because one of the mothers who has lost her sons in this terrorist attack that took place in Karachi, has just volunteered her other son, to join up as one of my security guard in Rawalpindi and when our party boys told that she didn't had to do this, she just lost one son, the mother turned around and said: "The only hope that we have is that she succeeds and that's the reason why I want to send my second son to be her security guard too."

David Frost: That's very, that's very courageous indeed. Tell me, do you know yet... Does anyone know exactly who was responsible for this assassination attempt? There is one report, that said, that you had arranged to send president Musharraf a letter, to be sent in the event of your death by assassination, urging him to investigate certain individuals in his government, is that true?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes it is true that I wrote to General Musharraf. I received information from General Musharraf, that a friendly country had passed on to them. The information that I could be attacked by a gang from the Afghan warlord Baitullah Mesud or by Hamza Bin Laden, the son of Osama Bin Laden or by the Pakistani Taliban in Islamabad or by a group in Karachi. So I sent back a letter saying that while these groups may be used, I thought it was more important to go after the people who supported them, who organized them, who could possibly be the financiers or the organizers of the finance for those groups and I named three individuals, who I thought were the sympathizers. Now I understand, that I could be wrong and my suspicions could be misplaced, but these are the people, that I suspect want to stop the restoration of democracy, they want to stop my return, because they know in 1993, when Pakistan was on the brink of being declared a

terrorist state, I stopped the rise of terrorism and they know I can do it again. So I feel that these are the forces, that really want to stop not just me, but the democratic process and the will of the people from triumphing.

David Frost: In terms of these three people that you mentioned, were they members of or associated with the government.

Benazir Bhutto: Yes well, one of them is a very key figure in security, he is a former military officer, he is someone that has had dealings with Jaish-e-Mohammad one of the band groups of Maulana Azhar, who was in an Indian jail for decapitating three British tourists and three American tourists and he also had dealings with Omar Sheikh, the man who murdered Osama Bin Laden. Now I know, that having dealings with people, does not necessarily mean direct evidence, but I also know, that internal security has totally collapsed in Pakistan and that internal security cannot collapse without there being some blind eye, if not collusion being turned to the rise of the militants and militancy. Not only are our tribal areas out of our control, but even the beautiful Valley of Swat is now under takeover by islamists. So I would like to see a part lead police inquiry, assisted by Scotland Yard or the FBI, come in, use their forensic and scientific explanation to find out not only the perpetrators, but the financiers and the organizers of this heinous crime that killed 158 innocent people.

David Frost: And in terms of that terrible tragedy, have you actually spoken to President Musharraf since that?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes I have, he was very gracious, he had the Director General Inter Services Intelligence to ring me up the first evening, who condemned the incident that had taken place and he phoned me the next morning and he said, that he and Prime Minister Aziz had been watching my reception from the beginning and were very sorry about the unfortunate blast, that had taken place and also he condemned the blast.

He grieved with the families, he expressed the sorrow, but he was a bit worried, that my party naming security officials, could hamper the rapprochement process and I showed him, that it was not my intention, to hamper the rapprochement process. I did want to see a peaceful transition to democracy through fair, free and impartial elections but I also felt that it was important (a) to have an independent inquiry, that gave me confidence and (b) to have impartial, political neutral people in key positions in government in the caretaker or the transitory period.

David Frost: You ...You still feel that you can do business with president Musharraf, that hasn't been affected by this tragedy, the two of you can still work together.

Benazir Bhutto: Well David, I think we need to see, this and ongoing negotiations, we both have the desire to work together, but while we have the principles sorted out, we really need to sort out the legalities. Because I'm asking myself, how a PPP government, if the people of Pakistan elect us, can actually cope, if we cannot have officials in our internal security who we feel have no links to militants and to their supporters. And just wondering, that if I was the target of a horrific terrorist attack, in which 158 people died, and I can't even file a police complaint, because the government doesn't allow me to file it, then well, what does rapprochement mean, an effective transition, or would it mean a continuation of the status quo. I'm interested in an effective transition, and I'm willing to explore with general Musharraf, the modalities in which... that we can have such a transition. But I'm not willing to be the icing on the cake if it's a poisoned cake full of the kind of system that in the last five years has seen terrorism rise not just in Pakistan, but its effects in nearby Afghanistan on NATO troops, and even beyond, in Europe.

David Frost: And in terms of, in terms of what happens next, has there been any progress in terms of the thing about you being allowed to have... or *anybody* being allowed to have

three terms in Pakistan, as prime minister?

Benazir Bhutto: Well I have discussed with my party members, what has been confidentially assured to us, but they know that we expect a resolution of this issue at the opportune time. But what I'm really interested right now is an investigation, a Pakistan police investigation, assisted by the international community, with the forensic skills to unmask the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of this act of terrorism. I'm not saying this just because this was an attack on me. The locality where the chairman Joint Chiefs of Army Staffs lives, was attacked two days back, an airforce bus was attacked yesterday, people in marketplaces are killed and unless we get to the financiers and the perpetrators and organizers, we're not going to be able to frighten them into accepting responsibility for their crimes. They don't accept, they kill people and they think they won't even have to go to jail. They won't have to answer before a judge, and that's wrong.

David Frost: And what about the situation... What if the supreme court say that the election of president Musharraf was valid, but he still kept wearing his army uniform. Would that be a problem for you?

Benazir Bhutto: Well, general Musharraf and I discussed this issue during our negotiations, and I ... it was decided that we would accept the decision of the supreme court of Pakistan, and I'm on public, as saying this before my return to Pakistan, that as far as the Pakistan People's Party is concerned, we are not going to resign from the assemblies in protest, over general Musharraf's reelection as president. We have a different view on its legality, but we're going to leave it to the supreme court of Pakistan to decide. So we're going to back the supreme court in whatever judgment it decides to give on the issue of general Musharraf's legality. We expect that the supreme court will probably allow him to continue, but ask him to retire as army chief and seek a reaffirmation vote from the next assembly.

David Frost: So and.. if... if he kept wearing the army uniform, that would be a problem for you, and the supreme court perhaps.

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, yes. It would be a problem for me, for the supreme court of Pakistan. It would probably demoralize the armed forces, who haven't had a serving army chief since October 1999, and it would certainly not be acceptable to the people of Pakistan. Now general Musharraf has assured me, that he would retire as chief of army staff, and he said this, to the supreme court too, in an open declaration that he would take his oath as president for a second time, without the uniform. So, let's see what happens.

David Frost: How is the Pakistan you now see, different from the Pakistan you left eight years ago?

Benazir Bhutto: Well part of the Pakistan that I know, was very much there. The three million people who turned out to greet me at Karachi airport, were dancing, they were singing, they were celebrating, they were full of joy. There were young people, there were taxi drivers, rikshaw drivers and daily wage earners, they were the working classes, the laborers, the peasants, and they all came to demonstrate their support in democracy and their support to the forces of moderation. And then the tragedy struck, but it struck through the militants who are a minority. A small minority, who want to use the bullet to capture my country, and they mustn't be allowed to do so. And even though there has been turmoil and tragedy, I am confident that if we can restore the democratic process, we can restore tranquility, security to our people, provide them with employment and the education, that are the best guarantees of a tolerant society.

David Frost: Benazir, thank you so much for joining us today, it's been a real privilege to talk, and to hear the situation exactly as you see it. Thank you very much indeed.

Benazir Bhutto: Thank you David.

I knew an attempt would be made I knew people would be at risk

*Interview by Richard Engel for NBC News,
Monday, October 22, 2007*

Ann Curry: "If you had not returned these, people would not have died. These women would have their husbands. They would have their children. These 140 people would be alive. These 500 people would not have been wounded."

This must feel very painful for you to know that with your decision to come back would cause not suffering but started this chain reaction. Do you regret coming back now seeing what has happened?"

Benazir Bhutto: "I don't."

Curry: "You knew it was going to happen."

Bhutto: "I knew an attempt would be made."

Curry: "So, you knew that people would be at risk."

Bhutto: "I knew people would be at risk."

Curry: "So, was it worth that risk, given what has happened?"

Bhutto: "And the people who came knew that there would be a risk. They put their lives on the line. And I put my life on the line. And we did it because we believe in a cause. We want to save Pakistan. And we think saving Pakistan comes by saving democracy."

We know democracy means the empowerment of the poor people, the ordinary people, the dispossessed, the downtrodden and the discriminated. So, the people who can put their lives on the line, I put my life on the line. Because

God forbid if there is a Taliban takeover, well, everybody's life will be at risk anyway. They went around killing people. They went around denying girls knowledge. They went around bankrupting Afghanistan to the extent that people were poor and desperate and hungry. And the only jobs on offer were to join the Taliban irregular forces to wage war against other countries and other innocent people."

Curry: "Even if you don't regret returning, because your ideals, as you just described them, are high, do you regret how they returned [unintel phrase]? That is a 20-minute drive. It took 10 hours. It was a very slow-moving motorcade surrounded by millions of people. When you knew — when you knew you were at risk, that you could be putting them at risk, did you make the right choice to come back in this way?"

Bhutto: "I ... Ann, I find this question very uncomfortable."

Curry: "Of course, you do [unintel phrase] ...

Bhutto: "The reas— no, let me tell you why. Let me tell you why, for me it validates terrorism and extremism. I know that's not how you mean it.

But for me it validates terrorism and extremism.

It means that terrorists can force us to change our values. It means that terrorists can dictate the agenda. It means that terrorists, by threatening violence, can take over nations and destroy the quality of life of their people. And that's the reason it makes me uncomfortable.

It was no secret to me that I could be attacked. I chose to return and put my life on the line to defend a principle I believe in. I never forced [unintel] anyone to come out to the airport to receive me. They chose to come because they wanted to bring change, to bring democracy and to save their motherland from disintegrating.

And I don't think the terrorists succeeded because we took 10 hours. I think the terrorists succeeded because the lights

were off and they could move under cover of darkness without being intercepted by us. But even on the outside chance, even if the lights had not been off, even if we had failed to detect them, at the end of the day, I have to ask that can we validate terrorism and extremism and say, "Let's give up. Because if we don't give up trying to save our values and trying to save our land then we'll get killed."

Curry: "To risk so much there must be strong evidence that what you're risking for might come through. What is the real chance that your coming back will bring democracy, democratic freedom back again given the complications, given Musharaff difficulty, given the dilemma — given the extremists? What is the real chance that all of these lives that have been lost, and with the risk still ongoing, the lives still threatened will be worth your return?"

Bhutto: "Well, I feel as I can only answer for myself. Everybody has to make this choice for themselves. I can only say I feel saving Pakistan by saving democracy is worth putting my life on the line.

This is my country. I've seen what happened to Afghanistan when the Taliban took over. I saw what happened in Iran when there was a revolution. There were millions of refugees. Homes were destroyed.

Dictatorship came. And it - decades - decades since that happened, both events happened in the '70s. I don't want people of Pakistan to be made into refugees. I don't want people of Pakistan to live in fear that some terrorist is going to come knocking on the door and kill them inside their homes."

Curry: "You have survived one of the deadliest attacks in Pakistan. What is your strongest memory of it?"

Bhutto: "My memory was of the light and the dead bodies. Because when we were moving in the procession, the street lights had been shut. And all along I was very worried about

the street lights shut. I knew my security wouldn't be able to spot a suicide bomber with a heavy jacket or a car bomber coming toward us in the darkness. So, we kept trying to contact people in the government to get the street lights turned on."

Curry: "You're saying while you're in the motorcade, you were at that moment worried about the suicide bomber enough that you were calling the government asking for help?"

Bhutto: "That's right. That's right. I had been cautioned. General Musharaff had asked me to delay my return to Pakistan. And he had very kindly shared with me information that he had received about four possible suicide squads being sent to kill me.

But I felt that if I did not return then they would threaten me the next time and the next time. And that the objective was to stop the transition to democracy, not just my return on October 18th. So, we took a lot of precaution of security. And we were confident about the caution as much as a person can be.

But when the sun set and it got dark we got worried. Because we knew that in the darkness we couldn't see. Then we got some floodlights.

And we tried to move the floodlight over the crowds and over the bridges. But the floodlight could only show a sliver of people. And most of the people we could not see.

And — after the bomb blast, the vaheco [PH] squad fire. So — we could then see what had happened. And as the vehicles burned I could see twisted bodies, glass, blood all over. And it was a dreadful sight because these [unintel] had been walking alongside our truck. And suddenly they'd been thrown. And people from our truck had also been thrown. But luckily they survived.

So, my first sight — I'd never seen a sight like this. This was, I

hope, my last but definitely my first sight. And it's just too much blood and gore on everybody's clothes."

Curry: "When you heard the first blast and the ... second blast, what went through your mind?"

Bhutto: "I knew it was a suicide attack or a car bomb. Because after the first attack went off I would doing my speech of my political secretary. So, we were sitting and reading the speech which I was to give later in the day. And when the first noise came she tried to get up saying, "Let me see if it's a firecracker."

And I at once stopped her. I said, 'Wait. Let's wait and see what is,' I respond to her. She [unintel] to me. And then came the second sound, much louder than the first sound, and a sort of crunching noise and glass shattering.

Curry: "Was your vehicle affected? Did it move, jump, anything? Did you feel anything? Or was it just the sound?"

Bhutto: "No, no, the vaheco rocked from the first blast. We had this armored truck that had been prepared. And if we had been lower on the ground, we would be dead. And we still don't know whether it was a suicide bomber or a car bomb. Because later on we felt that a car had come up. And that there was a car that moved.

We don't know whether the bomber came in the car or whether there were two different groups of bombers. But I have asked the government of Pakistan to hold an independent inquiry headed by a credible police officer and ask them to seek international assistance. When I talk to the British — the British government as well as the secretary of state, I mention to both of them my conversation with the government inviting international assistance to a Pakistan led inquiry. Because that ..."

Curry: "Why? Why do you want international assistance into the investigation as to why you were attacked? Do you not trust the government to do the investigation on it?"

Bhutto: "No, I trust the government. But I think that the international community has greater expertise. I also feel that there are elements within our administration who were associated with the past military dictatorship which had founded the Afghan *Mujahadeen*, and because of the friends of the friendship or the bonds that grew up at that time, they might not be able to do such a thorough job. Or because of a lack of expertise they might not be able to such a thorough job. So, I would like to see an independent, credible investigation assisted by the international community with expertise in anti-terrorism so that we can get to the bottom of the militants."

Ann Curry: "You have named three people. Before you arrived you sent a letter to President Musharaff naming three people, all three high-ranking officials in this government. And you accused them or said they were plotting against you. What is your evidence? Who gave you this evidence?"

Bhutto: "I know who the - my enemies are. I know the forces that supported dictatorship. Because they feel that dictatorship provides the environment in which militancy, extremism and terrorism can thrive."

Curry: "But how did you know these three enough to write a letter and name them. You must have known something to do so."

Bhutto: "Well, they had been against me for a very long time. They have tried to stop me. They've tried to stop my party from returning. And I had information that they were continuing to meet with my political opponents.

And I knew that these are — [unintel phrase] political opponents, it's a long history. It goes back to 1977 when military dictator of the '80s, all through my father's government, and said that he was acting in the name of Islam and that he wanted to bring an Islamic system into the country. So, this battle that has now erupted onto the international stage was

actually - a battle that began long ago in the streets of Pakistan."

Curry: "Did the United States tip you off that you were in danger? Did the United States, I mean, help you name these three?"

Bhutto: "No, no, United States didn't tip me off about the attacks. Nor did they help me name these three people. In fact, these three people, when named by me, a brotherly country gave information - a Muslim country gave information to the government of Pakistan, to General Musharaff, which General Musharaff shared with me about the suicide bombers.

But my enmity and [unintel] people who want to stop me, who want to stop democracy, I know who they are. I know they stop me earlier. I know that these - some of them destabilize my government in 1996. And I know they don't want me returning. Because they think that democracy will — weaken their stranglehold on power and will basically undermine their whole agenda of taking on another superpower after having defeated one."

Curry: "One of these three is a close friend of President Musharaff. He is the chief of intelligence."

Bhutto: "Well —"

Curry: "So, is it not risky to name a close friend of the president to the president as being someone who's plotting against you?"

Bhutto: "Well, at that time I did not know whether there would be an assassination attempt that I would survive. And I wanted to leave on record the suspects. I also didn't know that he was a friend of General Musharaff.

But I asked myself that even if I knew that he was a friend and I thought of him as a suspect, would I have not written? No, I would have written. Because I must name the people who I

think will go to any expense to stop me because they want to stop democracy, because they feel without me the People's Party will become factionalized and that there will be not national alternative to forming a government through an election. So, they will always be able to influence the cobbling together of coalition.

And all I want is an independent inquiry. If the man is innocent, let a credible international inquiry show that. But there are forces that want to stop democracy. And those forces are trying to stop me because they know that I have the support of the people of Pakistan."

Curry: "Are you saying you believe you were targeted by members of Musharaff's government?"

Bhutto: "I won't - don't want to be misinterpreted on this.

Curry: "I know you don't. But you are saying that three members of his government, high-ranking members are those you are worried may be plotting against you.

Bhutto: "Not all three, not all three, one of them - I mean, not all three are members of the government."

Curry: "Well, I mean."

Bhutto: "And one of them - no, no, let me tell you. One of them is not a member of the government. And General Musharaff says that that person is already under some observance. As far as another member is concerned, he has openly made his opposition to me known, which I don't mind.

Because politicians have opposition. But it is my information that his son fought — was associate with the militant group called Natiterabom [PH]. And it is now in the newspaper that under his influence one of the People's Islamist militants has been released from prison and taken to the VIP — ward of the hospital. So, I mean, there are these — I know he has connections with militant groups. And then, of course, there

is a third individual who you have named which I have not named. I've not named about publicly other than in my letter. And I want these people."

Curry: "Investigated?"

Bhutto: "Well, yes, I — I want — let me say I want the terrorist attack that killed 140 people and wounded — 300.

Curry: "It could have been 500."

Bhutto: "More than ..."

Curry: "The numbers are above 500 now."

Bhutto: "Some say 500, yes, that's right. Wounded so many people investigated. Because I do not believe that militancy in Pakistan could have succeeded until the sympathizers of the militants had infiltrated the administrative and security apparatus."

Curry: "You're saying —"

Bhutto: "And now I'm to —"

Curry: "That, in fact, the government did not — did not — that members of the government did not organize this. You're saying that it could not have been — it could not have happened had it not been for the collusion of some members of the government?"

Bhutto: "I know some members have ties with the militants. I just — I know it. They've defended suicide bombings. They've done this publicly."

Yes, I want to go back and bring change, people want democracy

Interview by Wolf Blitzer, CNN September 28, 2007

Blitzer: You're going back to Pakistan, even though you know you're wanted there on corruption charges, among other things. When, first of all, will you go back to Pakistan?

Bhutto: I'm leaving on the 17th of October and arriving on the 18th of October. It's 21 days to my departure and I can't wait to get back home.

Blitzer: What makes you think you'll be received any differently than another former prime minister who went back and was quickly kicked out, Nawaz Sharif?

Bhutto: I'm in a different boat than Mr. Nawaz Sharif. He was sentenced for treason and tax evasion. I haven't been sentenced for any crime. And, secondly, Mr. Nawaz Sharif got the Saudis to stand guarantee for his release and said he wouldn't return for 10 years. I was offered the same deal, but I refused. And my husband stayed behind bars without a conviction for eight years. So, we are in two different boats. There are no guarantees.

Blitzer: Do you have assurances from President Musharraf that you will be allowed to stay in Pakistan?

Bhutto: Well, General Musharraf has not given this assurance, but I know I can't be handed over to any third country. So the choice is either to let me be free or the choice is to try and lock me up.

Blitzer: And so when you get back to Pakistan, what's your game plan? You want to run for office?

Bhutto: Yes, I want to go back and bring change. People want democracy, and there's a critical path in Pakistan's future, one fork between dictatorship and democracy, another between moderation, the issues of moderation and extremism. People want change. They want democracy. I think that we can undermine extremism through Democratic means.

Blitzer: You're a relatively young woman. How scared are you, though, because as you know, Osama bin Laden and other terrorists, they've attacked you in the past, and they clearly would like to go after you now.

Bhutto: Yes, of course, they would like to go against me. There's a lot of threats because under military dictatorship and an anarchy situation has developed which the terrorists and Osama have exploited. They don't want democracy. They don't want me back.

Blitzer: They don't want a woman to be the prime minister of Pakistan either.

Bhutto: And they don't believe in women governing nations. So, they will try to plot against me, but these are risks that must be taken, I'm prepared to take them.

Blitzer: Yeah, your family has a history unfortunately, a tragic history, of assassinations.

Bhutto: I know the past has been tragic, but I'm an optimist by nature. I put my faith in the people of Pakistan. I put my faith in God. I see that what I am doing is for a good cause, for a right cause, to save Pakistan from extremists and militants and to build regional security. I know the dangers out there, but I'm prepared to take those risks.

Blitzer: Your father was killed at a political assassination.

Bhutto: My father was killed. It was a very terrible moment in my life. But I also learned from him that one has to stand up

for the principles they believe in. And I'm standing up for the principle of democracy. I'm standing up for moderation. And I'm standing up for hope for all the people in Pakistan who today are poor and miserable and really quite desperate.

Blitzer: Can you forge an alliance, an alliance of convenience, with President Musharraf that will allow the two of you to work together for the benefit of Pakistan?

Bhutto: I have been trying to reach an understanding with General Musharraf to bring about a transition to democracy, and I was quite hopeful a few weeks ago, but now I'm getting a little worried, because time is running out. And unless General Musharraf can take concrete steps to show that we are moving forward, moving away from dictatorship towards democracy, it might be very difficult for us to reach an understanding.

Blitzer: What can you say about all the reports, widespread reports, that the two of you met secretly?

Bhutto: Well, there were these widespread reports that we met secretly. And whenever we've had an opportunity to meet, we've had a good rapport, a good exchange of ideas, but there are people around him who don't want this understanding, who don't want him to make the political concessions that are necessary to facilitate the path towards democracy. I had asked him to take some steps for fair elections. Those remain unimplemented. There were certain other commitments. So, now I worry. I worry that time is running out and there's pressure on my party to join the other political parties and resign from parliament unless an accommodation is reached with General Musharraf.

Blitzer: So I just want to be precise. Are you now confirming that you did have these meetings in recent weeks and months with President Musharraf?

Bhutto: Well, we were supposed to keep it secret, but it's

kind of an open secret now.

Blitzer: So you can confirm that for us.

Bhutto: You're not letting me off the hook. But sort of.

Blitzer: I will take that as a confirmation. Michael Scheuer is a former CIA analyst, he ran the bin Laden unit at the CIA. We spoke with him earlier today. He said you've been targeted in the past, including by Ramzi Yousef, who was the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and you will be targeted again. I just want to get back to this point. You got to be very worried. What kind of security will you have when you go back there?

Bhutto: Well, I have raised the issue of my security with General Musharraf, and I've asked him to provide me the security that I'm entitled to as a former prime minister. I hope that he will provide me the security, because I have been a target of terrorists in the past. And I know I could be a target in the future.

Blitzer: Who are you more afraid of, the al Qaeda, Taliban elements who hate you, or elements in the Pakistani military?

Bhutto: I'm not afraid of either the al Qaeda or the Taliban elements or the Pakistani military. But I think at the end of the day, the people who try and plot will use al Qaeda, will use Taliban, because Taliban and al Qaeda are the groups that will suffer the most major reverses if my party and I are returned to power. We fought them in the past because we want a stable Pakistan, a prosperous Pakistan and we can't get any stability with militancy and extremists.

Blitzer: President and you've had a strained relationship to put it mildly with President Musharraf. In his book he says that when you ran your party, you were chairperson for life in the tradition of the old African dictators. Strong words coming from him. And all the charges of corruption that your party was rife with corruption, your husband, what do you say to

those allegations, which some, including Michael Scheuer, the former CIA analyst, said had a strong element of truth?

Bhutto: Well, I would say that a person is innocent unless proved otherwise. There's no sentence against me. These are politically motivated charges. When the chief justice of Pakistan proved to be a problem, he was slapped with corruption charges. These are deliberate allegations made to detract attention from the institutionalized corruption of the military, transparency, international, a reputed international group has said that corruption under the military regime is far greater than it was under previous civilian predecessors.

Blitzer: You have called President Musharraf a dictator, and he runs a dictatorship. But as you know, the Bush administration, the U.S. government, has a strong relationship with — with President Musharraf's government, and relies on the Musharraf government to cooperate in the war on terror, to provide some sense of stability, security, in that part of the world. What's your basic complaint with what the U.S. is doing right now? In other words, is the U.S. supporting a dictatorship?

Bhutto: I certainly think that the United States is supported a dictatorship for its own short-term strategic reasons arising out of the war against terrorism. When Musharraf has been seen as a reliable ally. But last year President Bush went to Pakistan and made a pledge, to support democracy and free elections. And Condoleezza Rice yesterday gave a statement expressing her disappointment about the arrests of political activists. So, I think that the United States is gently trying to prod General Musharraf on to the path of greater democratization which I welcome.

Blitzer: But do you have any doubt that President Musharraf is committed to destroying al Qaeda which has gone after him on several occasions as well?

Bhutto: Well, he says he's committed to destroying them.

Blitzer: What do you think?

Bhutto: I don't think he's been very effective. I think the longer — many people think the military is the solution. I don't. I think the situation has become anarchic and will continue to be anarchy because as long as there is a military dominated regime in Pakistan.

Blitzer: Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan, you're a courageous woman, good luck when you go back.

Bhutto: Thank you.

When I Return to Pakistan

*Interview by Anjum Naveed for Associated Press,
Thursday, September 20, 2007*

I am returning to Pakistan on Oct. 18 to bring change to my country. Pakistan's future viability, stability and security lie in empowering its people and building political institutions. My goal is to prove that the fundamental battle for the hearts and minds of a generation can be accomplished only under democracy.

The central issue facing Pakistan is moderation vs. extremism. The resolution of this issue will affect the world, particularly South and Central Asia and all Muslim nations. Extremism can flourish only in an environment where basic governmental social responsibility for the welfare of the people is neglected. Political dictatorship and social hopelessness create the desperation that fuels religious extremism.

Throughout Pakistan's 60-year history, weaving between dictatorship and democracy, from free elections to rigged elections to no elections, religious fundamentalists have never been a significant part of our political consciousness. We are inherently a centrist, moderate nation. Historically, the religious parties have not received more than 11 percent of the vote in national elections. The largest political party is mine, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Pakistan's political landscape has been molded primarily by the moderate PPP, which has demonstrated strong and continuous support from the rural masses and the urban elite.

Extremism looms as a threat, but it will be contained as it has been in the past if the moderate middle can be mobilized to stand up to fanaticism. I return to lead that battle.

I have led an unusual life. I have buried a father killed at age 50 and two brothers killed in the prime of their lives. I raised

my children as a single mother when my husband was arrested and held for eight years without a conviction -- a hostage to my political career. I made my choice when the mantle of political leadership was thrust upon my shoulders after my father's murder. I did not shrink from responsibility then, and I will not shrink from it now.

I am aware that some in Pakistan have questioned the dialogue I have engaged in with Gen. Pervez Musharraf over the past several months. I held those discussions hoping that Musharraf would resign from the army and restore democracy.

My goal in that dialogue has never been personal but was always to ensure that there be fair and free elections in Pakistan, to save democracy. The fight against extremism requires a national effort that can flow only from legitimate elections. Within our intelligence and military are elements who sympathize with religious extremists. If these elements are not answerable to Parliament and the elected government, the battle against religious militancy, a battle for the survival and future of Pakistan, could be lost. The military must be part of the battle against extremism, but as the six years since Sept. 11, 2001, have shown, the military cannot do it on its own.

Many issues remain unresolved in our political structure. Musharraf is precluded from seeking reelection in or out of uniform. Pakistani law requires a two-year wait before a member of the military can run for the presidency. The general can respond to the people's desire for legitimate presidential, parliamentary and ministerial elections, or he can tamper with the constitution. The latter choice would risk a fresh confrontation with the judiciary, the legal community and the political parties. Such a confrontation could lead to another declaration of martial law, civil unrest, or both.

Civil unrest is what the extremists want. Anarchy and chaos suit them.

The political element in Musharraf's party that presided over the rise of extremism has worked with every Pakistani administration since my government was destabilized in 1996. Its members are blocking the democratic change I have

tried to achieve with Musharraf. They fear that democracy will be difficult to manipulate to the benefit of extremists and militants.

My dialogue with Musharraf aims to move the country forward from a dictatorship that has failed to stop the tribal areas from becoming havens for terrorists. The extremists are even spreading their tentacles into Pakistan's cities.

Last week brought a fresh challenge. Just days ago, Pakistan's election commission arbitrarily amended the constitutional provision regarding the eligibility of a person competent to contest for the office of president. As the constitution can be amended only through a two-thirds majority in Parliament, a judicial hornet's nest has been stirred.

My party and I seek fair, free and impartial elections to be held by an independent election commission under an interim government of national consensus. We want a level playing field for all candidates and parties.

In words commonly attributed to Joseph Stalin, "Those who cast the vote decide nothing. Those who count the vote decide everything." That's why we have stressed electoral reforms -- although our efforts have so far been in vain.

President Bush has rightly noted, "The most powerful weapon in the struggle against extremism is not bullets or bombs -- it is the universal appeal of freedom. Freedom is the design of our maker, and the longing of every soul."

When my flight lands in Pakistan next month, I know I will be greeted with joy by the people. I do not know what awaits me, personally or politically, once I leave the airport. I pray for the best and prepare for the worst. But in any case, I am going home to fight for the restoration of Pakistan's place in the community of democratic nations.

The writer is chairwoman of the Pakistan People's Party and served as prime minister of Pakistan from 1988 to 1990 and from 1993 to 1996. She lives in exile in Dubai.

The poor and shirtless of Pakistan are my strength.

*interview by Mr. Karan Thapar for CNBC TV18's "India Tonight"
Wednesday, September 12, 2007*

Karan Thapar: You have been talking to General Musharraf for a year, for the last six months there has been speculation that a deal is in the offing, yet it has not materialised. Will it or won't it materialise?

Benazir Bhutto: The Pakistan People's Party and I have been in a struggle for the democratic rights of the people and we have been exploring whether a transition to democracy can be made through the holding of free and fair elections open to all political parties and political leaders. We haven't still come to a point where an agreement can be reached. Many people in his party are against the democratization of Pakistan.

Karan Thapar: Are you hopeful that there will be an agreement or are you beginning to feel that there won't be one?

Benazir Bhutto: We are running out of time as elections are coming up but the window is not completely shut.

Karan Thapar: So the window is still open?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes.

Karan Thapar: In the belief that the window is still open, for four decades the Bhuttos have been identified with democracy and being opposed to military rule. You have been to jail in that course and your late father paid with his life. Why, today, are you negotiating with an army dictator?

Benazir Bhutto: That is a good question because people should realise that we have used every platform for our people and their democratic rights: whether it is the platform of the streets, Parliament or dialogue. I want to remind you that General Zia-ul-Haq went and visited my father in 1977 to seek political settlement. My father met him but did not agree to the dictatorship. I haven't agreed to the dictatorship either. My husband spent eight years in prison. I, too, could have given foreign guarantees and had charges against me dropped and lived in comfort. I chose to face the consequences of opposing a military dictatorship. Let's make this clear: it's all for democracy and people's rights.

Karan Thapar: Your critics in Pakistan turn around and say, 'This is just for herself'. They say you are just courting General Musharraf because you are desperate to get the corruption charges against you dropped.

Benazir Bhutto: : Well, that's wrong, because if I just wanted the corruption charges dropped, there would be no problem, would there? They would be only too happy to do it, just like they dropped the corruption charges against Nawaz Sharif and limited his sentence. If it was an issue of just charges, they would have been dropped and my husband and I would have led a smooth life with our three children. But we didn't, we were buffeted by storms because we stayed true to the people of Pakistan.

Karan Thapar: But what about the second criticism made that you are extending a lifeline to a sinking dictator. Arguably, Musharraf would not be able to retain his presidency without your party and your support. So at this moment, when he is anyway on the run and falling, why are you supporting him?

Benazir Bhutto: I think the question needs to be reframed because we are not supporting him. We are supporting a transition to democracy and the holding of fair elections and electing a viable Parliament.

Karan Thapar: Can I quote to you what you said to the Sunday Times in Britain just six weeks ago on July 22? You said, 'Musharraf has lost his moral authority. His popularity ratings are down and it would be very unpopular if we saved him and would lose votes if we are associated with him.' But that is exactly what you are doing. You have reversed your view. Why?

Benazir Bhutto: I don't reverse my views, Mr Thapar. I have a very clear mission of where my party and my country should go. I don't support uniformed presidency. When I was asked a question related to uniformed presidency, is said it was not possible for us. He is very unpopular and that is what the International Republican Institute polls also show. Pakistan is an important country. It is facing a threat from within and it is very important for us to move in a manner that can get the country elections. This dialogue of ours on democracy has precluded at certain critical moments so far the imposition of emergency in country.

Karan Thapar: You are suggesting that the deal that's in the offing is in the interest of Pakistan but your own party workers, when they found out that you were talking to Musharraf were perplexed and disheartened. Even newspapers like The Daily Times, owned my members, supporters and former MPs of your party say you have gone soft and have compromised.

Benazir Bhutto: People are entitled to their opinion and at the end of the day you have to be judged by your people and the forces of history. The people of Pakistan support me. The people in my party believe in my leadership and if any of them were disgruntled they would not be applying to me to give them tickets in the forthcoming the general elections. The very fact that there are so many people interested in obtaining the tickets from the PPP shows that the PPP's struggle for democracy is understood by the people of Pakistan. The PPP's mission to eliminate poverty and unemployment and control inflation is understood by them.

Karan Thapar: Those are of course noble sentiments and any politician would express them.

Benazir Bhutto: I don't think all politicians express that.

Karan Thapar: Most of them do.

Benazir Bhutto: I don't see that. Most of them talk about a power struggle and lifelines to dictators. People don't really talk about suffering.

Karan Thapar: People say Benazir Bhutto is doing this under American pressure. She is obliged by the George Bush administration to extend a helping hand and therefore she has come under American pressure.

Benazir Bhutto: I am not under American pressure. I am under the pressure of the people of Pakistan who want their social, economic and democratic. Certainly, General Musharraf is a key ally to the US in the war against terrorism. The US has interest in the stability and welfare of Pakistan. But I am a Pakistani leader and I have been lobbying very hard for Washington to review its policies and support the democratic process in Pakistan.

Karan Thapar: You say you are a Pakistani leader and you are. Yet, Richard Boucher was in Islamabad over the weekend, John Negroponte will be there on Wednesday, they are all lobbying for this deal. To Pakistanis, it suddenly looks as if you are an American ally. Aren't you endangering your independence and credibility by this close association and this impression that you are under American pressure?

Benazir Bhutto: I know that some people are trying to create this impression, but it's wrong. The Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Mr John Negroponte and Ambassador Boucher have visited Pakistan many times because Pakistan is a key ally in the war against terror.

Karan Thapar: Now they are lobbying for you?

Benazir Bhutto: That's what you are saying. I haven't heard from them.

Karan Thapar: That's what the papers are saying.

Benazir Bhutto: I think that is wrong. It's a smear campaign that is being carried on by fearful political leaders. I want you to wait till you get the fact which is that Pakistan has a situation the tribal areas. NATO troupes in Afghanistan are being persistently attacked by pro-Taliban forces who run across the border into our area. America has threatened to take uni-lateral action. There are very many issues.

Karan Thapar: So this allegation embarrasses you?

Benazir Bhutto: It does not embarrass me but I think what you are trying to do is to cover up the fact that there is a war going on and you don't want me to talk about that. Whenever Mr Boucher has been to Pakistan he has met with Maulana Fazul Rahman and leaders of the MMA. They have gone to Washington. Washington is the world's only superpower. It is giving Pakistan \$10 billion in aid and I am not at all embarrassed about the fact that I am a Pakistani leader who can speak up in the US about the need for democracy in my country and I have been doing that. But the reason people speak to me is because I am the majority leader of the people of Pakistan. The poor and shirtless people of Pakistan who many would like to ignore support me and they are my strength.

Karan Thapar: The worst outcome of the talks that you are having with General Musharraf regardless of whether it would lead to deal or not.....

Benazir Bhutto: Don't use the word 'deal' because a deal means two parties or two people coming together under hand. People ask why didn't I make a deal. They ask why didn't I make a deal when my husband was in prison facing the hangman's noose.

Karan Thapar: The worst outcome of this association whether there is conclusion or not, is that in contrast and comparison to your great rival, Nawaz Sharif, who today looks like a champion of democracy. He has gone back to Pakistan and faced up to arrest. The Pakistani polls today are suggesting that he is the most popular leader in the country. Aren't you losing out in comparison to him by trying to find a sideways entry back home?

Benazir Bhutto: The answers must be longer than the questions so you will indulge me as I answer you. Mr Nawaz Sharif has compromised his position by involving Saudi and Lebanese leaders to get out of prison. People contrast that with the heroism shown by my husband and my family in resisting the temptation to run and have charges against us dropped. We have stood up for the people of Pakistan and the political system. Polls show that the Pakistan People's Party and I are most popular leaders in the country. Yes, more popular than even Mr Nawaz Sharif.

Karan Thapar: Are you more popular than Nawaz Sharif even after his return and arrest?

Benazir Bhutto: Of course, that is what the polls show Mr. Nawaz Sharif compromised his political position and now after I announce that I would be going back between September and December and after of the struggle of the lawyer showed that the chief justice of Pakistan is independent. Mr. Nawaz Sharif chose to go back but when the judiciary was under pressure, when there was no hope of getting any relief from them and the days were dark and dismal. Those were the days when PPP workers and other democratic forces stood the ground and kept the torch of democracy alive.

Karan Thapar: You have frequently suggested that the understanding that you are about to reach with General Musharraf is in the best interest of Pakistan. Why is it in the best interest of Pakistan that General Musharraf should continue as President for another five years?

Benazir Bhutto: I think that it is in the best interest of Pakistan that the people of Pakistan should elect their leaders, that there should be a civilian President who does not wear a uniform and that there be credible elections in which the people get to elect a representative government to deal with their problems.

Karan Thapar: If all of that may happen without your being involved, how does your involvement make this more likely?

Benazir Bhutto: That is not true. That is absolutely not true. It think that it was the involvement of the Pakistan People's Party through dialogue and street pressure which has lead to a particular situation Pakistan.

Karan Thapar: Do you mean with that pressure General Musharraf would still be retaining his uniform not even talking of shedding?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, I think that if the pressure of the Pakistan People's Party as well as of the other democratic forces would not be there then the Chief Justice would not have been reinstated. That was a very critical point on our country's history.

Karan Thapar: Did you play a role in the reinstatement of the Chief Justice?

Benazir Bhutto: My party was very critical.

Karan Thapar: What about the fact that people say that Benazir Bhutto is the one person who ensures that Musharraf gets five years as President? Without her support and without the understanding it is the end of Musharraf, but she ensuring that he survives?

Benazir Bhutto: I don't agree with that assessment. I think General Musharraf could be replaced by another General. I don't believe that the jihadi forces are in the restoration of democracy. The jihadi force that the destabilised the PPP

government in 1996 made sure that when Mr Nawaz Sharif was removed there was martial law so PPP would not go down.

In Pakistan it is a battle between dictatorship and democracy but it also battle between moderation and extremism.

Karan Thapar: Which is the more important one?

Benazir Bhutto: They are both important.

Karan Thapar: At the moment you seem to be supporting the survival of a dictator in the belief that he is liberal like you.

Benazir Bhutto: I don't believe in the survival of dictatorship. I believe in democracy. There have been contacts in 1999 that have not led to an agreement. Mr Nawaz Sharif did sign an agreement with Saudi and Lebanese guarantees and he left. If I had done the same democracy would have died in Pakistan and we would be in a situation like Husni Mubarrak.

Karan Thapar: So in other words, by accepting exile and not doing a deal, you have kept the flame of democracy alive.

Benazir Bhutto: My husband was in prison so I didn't accept the exile. I went into exile myself and it was not a comfortable exile. There was once a time when I was dragged from one courtroom to another, I had litigation, I was slandered in the press, I had Interpol notices and I could hardly go from airport to airport without knowing that I would be arrested. If I too had said why should I be troubled and thought of my self then there would have been no democracy today in Pakistan. I have fought for the democratic rights of my people and I am grateful to the people of Pakistan who support me despite the propaganda of my opponents.

Karan Thapar: The challenge that now lies ahead of you is this - without an understanding will you return? You will be arrested like Nawaz Sharif, you could face trial or you could end up in jail. Will you return if you don't have an understanding?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes. I will return. I announced on January 5 of this year that I would be returning to Pakistan and whether there is an understanding or not. The reason there has been no understanding to date is because I have refused to accept anything for myself. I have been fighting to get something for the people of Pakistan. Through this process of dialogue, I have insured that the elections that were promised in Pakistan not be derailed.

There could have been an emergency and there could have been an imposition of martial law, but during these critical months from January to September, we have averted such a disaster and we have done so because we always kept the doors of dialogue open for a peaceful political transition towards democracy in our country.

Karan Thapar: My last question is that is there an outer date by when you will be back on Pakistan soil?

Benazir Bhutto: My party intends to announce the date of my return on September 14. We want to announce it from the soil of Pakistan.

Karan Thapar: And what ever that date is, you will abide by it, you won't change it.

Benazir Bhutto: I don't change dates. There has been no dates announced so far because when a date is announced, the date is implemented.

Karan Thapar: Let's turn to the relationship you'd hope to have with government of India, were you to become Prime Minister of your country for the third time? During the last few years it's widely believed that the relationship between India and Pakistan under Manmohan Singh and Musharraf has been better than perhaps its ever been in the last sixty years. How can you make sure that the momentum is maintained if not taken further?

Benazir Bhutto: Well we have had our differences with

General Musharraf on many issues in Pakistan. But we have welcomed the dialogue process with India despite much internal criticism by some of our supporters who thought that we should exploit the India issue to get greater popularity amongst sections of our people. And if General Musharraf has proceeded well with this composite dialogue with India it is certainly something we will continue to follow.

Karan Thapar: So the footsteps that General Musharraf has taken, both those that are apparent to the press and the public and those that have happened on the back channels, you will take those footsteps further, you won't suddenly halt because there is a change of regime.

Benazir Bhutto: Well I certainly hope that we can take the process forward but I'm not aware of what has been said in the private through back channels. But as far as principle of having a composite dialogue is concerned and as far as taking the process forward is concerned I certainly support that and I think it's very important for India and Pakistan to reach a kind of peace after 60 years since their independence.

Karan Thapar: Let me raise with you two issues that have in fact come up in the dialogue between India and Pakistan over the last three years. In April 2005 both General Musharraf and PM Manmohan Singh agreed that any solution to the Kashmir problem had to happen within three parameters and these were said to be firstly that the boundaries cannot be altered, Secondly that the LOC (Line of control) cannot be a permanent boundary and thirdly that boundaries must be made irrelevant. Do you agree with that particular approach?

Benazir Bhutto: Well it was my party which actually put forward the concept of safe and open borders in 1998 and since then it has been adopted by General Musharraf and it has proved to be very popular. So we do believe in India and Pakistan, starting from Kashmir, working for safe and open borders that can socially and economically unite the Kashmiri people even if we have differences on what the geographical

shape should be.

Karan Thapar: Last week I put this very same question to Nawaz Sharif and instead of giving the answer you did, that this is very much in line with our thinking, he said that General Musharraf has no business to be negotiating, he has no legitimacy and he suggested without saying it he would revise, perhaps possibly revoke, any advance that Musharraf had made simply because he had no right to make it. You are saying something very different; you are saying to the Indian audience if footsteps have been taken which will lead to a solution I will stand by them and follow them and take them further.

Benazir Bhutto: That is true, although I agree with Mr. Nawaz Sharif that a military ruler does not have the mandate or legitimacy to negotiate for peace. But nonetheless peace is a very precious gift and if advances have been made I think it is important for us not to lose those advances and carry the process forward.

Karan Thapar: Now I can remember earlier interviews with you where you've talked about not just open borders but you have also talked about joint sovereignty and you have talked about shared parliaments, a way of creating a structure for the two Kashmirs to give them a sense of unity. And now very recently General Musharraf has begun to say things which are fairly similar. He's talked about demilitarization, he's talked about self governance, he's talked about joint management. In a sense do you think that he is now following through the thoughts which you too had raised two, three, four years ago and therefore were you to succeed him you'd take these ideas of joint management, of self governance further as well?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, we certainly have to examine what can be done to bring the people of divided Kashmir together so that their feelings and aspirations are also addressed. But the most important challenge for us now is to try and have safe

and open borders. My concern is if the militancy is not tackled in Pakistan it will spill over not only in Afghanistan but it will also affect our relations with India. Militancy is already proving to be an internal threat within Pakistan. So we cannot allow militants to hold hostage the foreign policy. I have met with Kashmiri leaders on both sides of the divide and I know that Kashmiri people have paid a very heavy price for the dispute that has lasted for so long. We need to find a way where we can involve them, through India and Pakistan, into an understanding which can bring about a lasting solution for them.

Karan Thapar: But once again you are not revoking or moving away from the ideas Musharraf has raised of self governance and joint management, because they accord in a sense with the thinking you've expressed yourself. You are saying you will take it further but you will do it in alliance with in consultation with Kashmiri people.

Benazir Bhutto: That's right. I think the support by Kashmiri leaders is very important and I also believe that somewhere along the line one has to respect agreements that governments make...

Karan Thapar: Even if it is made by Musharraf...

Benazir Bhutto: Even if one does not always agree with them. In this particular context I do agree with the composite dialogue, I do agree with the talks which have been taking place informally by the Kashmiri leaders on both sides of the dialogue. But even in other cases where I have disagreed with certain policies like when Mr. Nawaz Sharif negotiated a motorway agreement with Turkey for which we did not have money, I raised the resources to make sure that we honoured the agreement because honouring agreements between countries is important.

Karan Thapar: What you are saying will be hugely reassuring to the Indian audience. Let me therefore raise two questions

that will come to their minds. Many people in India remember the young Benazir Bhutto of 89- 90 shouting on television "Har gali mein bache kehte hain..azadi azadi azadi...". I get the feeling that that is now very much in the past. The lady sitting in front of me is a very different person.

Benazir Bhutto: Certainly I believe in freedom but the struggle for freedom should not impinge upon peaceful relations between nations. There should be peaceful and negotiated settlements. Maybe the dialogue process with Gen Musharraf is also an attempt to seek a peaceful negotiated settlement. Certainly times have changed. That movement of the Kashmiris was subsequently infiltrated by some Islamist elements that fought against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. We moved a long way away from 20 years ago. Today, India and Pakistan are involved in composite dialogue. Today India and Pak agree on certain parameters of how that solution should be reached and my party if elected to govt. will support that cause.

Karan Thapar: That's very clear. Last year in July you signed a charter of democracy with Nawaz and you committed yourself in the charter to a solution to the Kashmir problem in line with UN resolutions. Since 2004, Musharraf has moved well beyond that position and as a result this whole new approach to Kashmir, which you endorse, has followed on. But when you commit yourself to the UN resolutions it looks to people in India as if you are winding the clock back. So will the UN resolution dominate your approach to Kashmir or have you accepted that that was something that applied in 2006? The charter of democracy does not apply today.

Benazir Bhutto: UN resolution is valid. It is a law and is legal. Against that background, India and Pakistan, with the support of Kashmiri leaders, are involved in a composite dialogue. This is setting a new pace, a new agenda and we hope that it will reach a new goal where the people of India and Pak resolve their problems over Kashmir, where the people of Kashmir can live in peace and rebuild their lives.

Karan Thapar: Is Kashmir still the core issue or is it just one of very many important issues?

Benazir Bhutto: Kashmir is certainly a core issue but it is not an issue that should be allowed to derail Indo-Pak relations or dialogue. So irrespective of whether we are able to make progress on an issue that has in the past been intractable, its important for India & Pakistan to make progress in their dialogue if such progress is available.

Karan Thapar: Lets come to the issue many believe is the biggest hurdle in Indo-Pak relations. Its the perception in India that the majority of terrorism is unleashed by organisations like Jaish & Lashkar, funded, aided and assisted, perhaps even nurtured, by the ISI. If you do become PM how will you stop this?

Benazir Bhutto: Its very important for Pak to put its internal house in order. The Militants that we nurtured during the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union have now started to haunt us. Jaish & Lashkar have unleashed suicide bombings in Pak. It has led to the death of innocent people in my own country and across borders. So the task in Pakistan is enormous. We need reform in our society and I hope all the political parties can work together to make Parliament sovereign, to reform our security services and to end the establishment of private armies and private militia that conduct militant activities.

Karan Thapar: Will you crack down on any group that is a terrorist group which inflicts terror whether in Pakistan or in India? Do I hear you correctly on this?

Benazir Bhutto: That is right!

Karan Thapar: So the Indian govt can take this as a firm commitment from Benazir Bhutto?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes and so can the Karzai govt. Most importantly, the people of Pakistan can take it as a firm

commitment that they will live in peace. They will not live in the shadow of terror. The PPP govt. will not permit private armies who are trying to take over Pakistan and our values

Karan Thapar: Despite repeated assurance from Gen Musharraf the Indian govt believes that militant terrorist training camps continue to exist in what you call Azad Kashmir as well as in NWFP and particularly in the area of Naushera. Will you close them down?

Benazir Bhutto: Where so ever there are Private armies and private militias they will be shut down and dismantled. We do not believe in militancy. If militancy remains unchecked my country will disintegrate. We are fighting for democracy and moderation but also for the territorial integrity of Pak. Many people will call it a failing State. I trust my people. They are great and I know they will rise to the occasion to restore the rule of law and constitution and put an end to terror that stalks our land and impinges on our national security.

Karan Thapar: The Indian govt has requested access to people like Hafiz Mohd Syed and Masood Azhar because they believe they are responsible for much of the terrorism India experiences. Musharraf has continuously denied that access. Will you grant it?

Benazir Bhutto: I do not know the reasons why he denied that access, so I will have to see the record before I give an affirmative answer. But I do believe in regional co-operation and in countries sharing the problems they have. So this will certainly be a matter that will be considered but I can't give a categorical answer until I see the record.

Karan Thapar: Indians believe that Dawood Ibrahim is the architect of 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts. They also believe he is free in Karachi possibly under the protection of the Pak govt. They have requested his extradition but it has been denied. Will you grant it?

Benazir Bhutto: We will certainly. If he's living in Karachi its very worng. We will look into that request. I do not think Pak should get a bad name and be seen as a country which harbours wanted criminals from different parts of the world including India.

Karan Thapar: If the Indian people turn around and say that Benazir sounds like she's trying to say she will be better than Musharraf, are they misunderstanding you?

Benazir Bhutto: The Indian people will be understanding me well if they think this is a Pakistani leader who wants to build a different kind of South Asia than the one in the past. This is a Pakistani leader who realises that it's the 60th anniversary of India & Pak independence and we have to go forward. This is a leader who has worked with the Gandhi family, BJP and is ready to build a new page in our history with Indian leaders.

Karan Thapar: Let's talk about the west and start with America. Many Pakistanis are angry about US policy in the middle east, in Iraq, in Iran, in Afghanistan. How do you respond to this anger?

Benazir Bhutto: Lots of people associate Washington with supporting military dictatorship in our country. First the decade long dictatorship of Gen Zia-ul-Haq which saw the hanging of an elected PM and now the long dictatorship by Gen Musharraf. So there is resentment against America on that score. But people also value American support at critical times. When there was a threat of Indian invasion following the Kargil incident it was the PM, Nawaz Sharif, who went to Washington and secured the help of Mr. Clinton in preventing an all-out war.

Karan Thapar: Forgive me , only on the grounds that he withdraw his army from across the border and end the infiltration of India. It wasn't support, it was a crack of the whip from Clinton. Nawaz returned a broken man.

Benazir Bhutto: I know that's the way it can be described but the fact remains that Nawaz Sharif made a very urgent trip to Washington.

Karan Thapar: He wanted to be bailed out and he was. It was bailing out.

Benazir Bhutto: Washington bailed out Pakistan. In fact Washington bailed out Pakistan after the conflict in 1971 when our country separated. So Pakistan has some kind of dual relations with America. We recognise USA's importance to our security and well-being. At the same time there has been criticism of USA, supporting military dictatorships in the country. By supporting democracy, USA can undo that criticism.

Karan Thapar: Today in the West , many regard Islam as a threat to their western values, to their modern values, to their Christian values. How would you, if you become PM, help the West understand Islam better as a religion ?

Benazir Bhutto: The problem I have with this issue is that it gives the impression Osama-Bin-Laden's version of Islam is seen as the correct version. Islam has a concept of just war and Islam does not permit killing of children, women and old men. I do not believe that the version given by fanatics has got anything to do with Islam. The message of Islam is about peace, respect for other religions and human dignity for Muslim people.

Karan Thapar: How can you ensure the USA listens to your version rather than be frightened by that of Osama-Bin-Laden?

Benazir Bhutto: People will get frightened when John Reid, the shoe bomber, or Tanveer, the tube bomber, leave a trail leading back to Islamabad. People will be frightened of my country and about Islam. But if you are serious about the moderate voice of Islam then I am sure that Islam's true glory

will be seen and heard by the world.

Karan Thapar: So your seriousness and sincerity will make a difference?

Benazir Bhutto: I'm saying the voice of moderate Muslims must come forward. I am saying that the voice of 160 million good people of Pakistan who want to live in prosperity is being drowned out by the sound of a handful of militants who run around unchecked. They have guns in their hands. They give all kinds of edicts of their own. This week they kidnapped two women and declared them prostitutes and beheaded them. They are taking law into their own hands and thereby hurting Muslims.

Karan Thapar: What message will go to the Western world if a modern educated Muslim woman, who studied at Harvard and Oxford, were to become PM of Pakistan in 2007? Admittedly for the third time , but for the first time after 9/11

Benazir Bhutto: A very positive message to the world community. If Pak elects a Muslim woman who studied abroad, it will show that Muslims do not discriminate on the basis of gender. It would show that Islam teaches its followers to go far and wide to seek knowledge and information. There would be a picture of Osama who is saying one thing and there will be a picture of Pakistan's elected leader. A woman practicing the policies of compassion in her homeland and building peace within the region.

Karan Thapar: So much of that depends on your success in your own country. Let's briefly talk about what policies you will follow at home. First, would you consider giving the army a role in governance, perhaps in the national security council, so that future Army Chiefs do not dismiss PMs , just because they don't like their policies.

Benazir Bhutto: I have great trouble with the concept the people of Pakistan are unfit to govern themselves and they

need a teacher in the form of the Armed Forces to tell them what to do. I understand we are in a transitional period but I think ultimately we need to first have elections and then build the political institutions that are necessary to sustain and nurture democracy so that Parliament is sovereign. It is the will of the people, through which Parliament should prevail. I worry about the power of the President to dismiss the Parliament. I am worried because I don't want the people of Pak to be set up for failure again as they enter another democratic phase. In the past, democracy failed because the President kept sacking parliaments. It is important as we tackle internal militancy that the President does not have the power to axe the Parliament that is successfully dealing with such an issue.

Karan Thapar: So far from giving the army a role in governance, you think the army should be kept out of politics?

Benazir Bhutto: The Army has to roll back from its interference in politics. Our success depends on other political parties, the charter of democracy and the people of Pak. Ultimately a truly professional armed forces, like the ones that exist in USA, UK and India is the kind of armed forces we should aim for.

Karan Thapar: The Charter of Democracy commits you to:

1. Bringing ISI under civil rule
2. Parliamentary scrutiny of the army budget
3. To ensure that officers annually declare their assets
4. To review all military allotments of land

Will you go ahead with all of that?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes. If I have the constitutional majority, I will. It is a task in which I need the aid of all political parties. We usually win with a simple majority, but for such changes you need constitutional amendments.

Karan Thapar: The second thing that the Charter of Democracy commits you to is a commission to enquire into

the causes of and to fix responsibility for the Kargil conflict. Will you do that?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes.

Karan Thapar: Does that mean Musharraf will be made accountable for the decisions he took and the actions he ordered?

Benazir Bhutto: This issue needs enquiring. Because when I was PM , I was given a briefing which I vetoed , which could have led to a Kargil-like situation. Nawaz Sharif and other signatories agreed to an enquiry into Kargil. Countries do have enquiries so that so we can learn from the past. I am not looking to spend time seeking revenge against the people involved. I am looking to learn from the past to move on to a better future.

Karan Thapar: And Nawaz Sharif also have to be accountable to this commission? If General Musharraf needs to be surely Nawaz does too?

Benazir Bhutto: Nawaz also wanted this enquiry and he asked for it to be included. We both signed it. It is not about punishment, it is about how decisions are taken and whether they are right or wrong and to ensure that Pakistan will not be made vulnerable by such decisions.

Karan Thapar: The Charter also commits you to create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to enquire into all military coups and dismissal of civilian govts since 1996. Will you go ahead with that?

Benazir Bhutto: I want to clarify that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an enquiry which attempts to take a look at what happened in 1996 - when lawyers, bureaucrats bankers , politicians were arrested, tortured and interrogated by military officials. So I want to show what happens when governments are dismissed. It happened to my father , then to my first govt. and then again to my second

government. All were overthrown. I don't want revenge. But I do want a white paper that shows that politicians are often made innocent victims of conspiracies.

Karan Thapar: So you want truth and justice?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes

Karan Thapar: Ms Bhutto, A pleasure talking to you.

Benazir Bhutto: Thank you

“The people do not want the armed forces to play a partisan political role”

*Interview by Ayesha Siddiq,
an internationally known political analyst, based in Pakistan.
Newsline Magazine, 12 September 2007*

Q: How do you view the military's relationship with the state and society in Pakistan?

A: The people of Pakistan respect their armed forces as defenders of the geographical borders of Pakistan. However, when the armed forces intervene in governance they get politicised. The people do not want the armed forces to play a partisan political role. They want the armed forces to emerge as a national non-partisan institution.

The involvement of the armed forces in civilian administrative posts leads to resentment among the civil bureaucracy and technocrats. Extra professional activities like real estate, business and commercial enterprises also make the armed forces more controversial.

Their commercial profile has attracted adverse comments from within the country and also from the international community, which is not good for the armed forces or for the country.

The relationship that I envisage between the military and the state is one where the military functions under the control of the constitution, the elected parliament and the political government. This is the norm in all democratic countries. The military has a key role to play in defending the motherland, coming to the aid of civil power for internal duties, in national reconstruction projects as well as being a part of international peacekeeping.

In my youth we had proud officers and soldiers who laid down their lives for the country, earning glory for themselves and for our country. The military lived simple lives, in keeping with the conditions of a country where poverty is rampant. They had no political or religious connections. It all changed during the military dictatorship of General Zia. He introduced the works of Maulana Maudoodi, a religious leader, to the armed forces. He undermined the army's non-partisan role by promoting sectarianism and politics.

Q: Given the current geo-strategic situation in the country, the possibility exists of a combined military-civilian rule. How will political parties strengthen themselves in this system?

A: The combined military-civilian rule during the period of General of political and democratic processes and respect for the constitution by all state institutions.

Q: Where have political parties faltered in strengthening themselves vis-à-vis a political army?

A: It's difficult for a flower to bloom without water. So too, it is difficult for political parties to mature in the absence of democracy. PPP has been kept alive by the blood of its martyrs, the dedication of its workers and the political awareness of the discriminated and disempowered masses. I salute them.

Q: How can political parties and the civil society negotiate with the military and reduce the military's expanded role in the state and society?

A: The army is from among the people. Its role is determined by its leadership. Army chiefs like General Tikka, General Waheed, General Asif and General Karamat were good leaders. We need good leadership to help our army meet the demands of the 21st century and of a democratic polity.

Army-to-army exchange with foreign countries can also help armed forces learn from the role of armies in developed

societies. It is the culture of law that we need to build.

Secondly, civil society and political parties must not applaud a political army. Denial of the oxygen of public applause has a deterrence value.

A Conversation with Benazir Bhutto

*Interview by Richard N. Haass, President, Council on Foreign Relations
USA, August 15, 2007*

RICHARD N. HAASS: Good afternoon and welcome to a special meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations. It's special because it's August -- and we try not to do too many meetings in August. It's also special because of the subject and our speaker here today, the former prime minister of Pakistan.

Our timing is good. This week marks the 60th anniversary of Pakistan. And our timing is good for another reason, which is, Pakistan has been, is and, I would predict, will be much in the news for days, weeks, months and longer to come.

It's hard to imagine someone better placed to speak about the current situation in Pakistan than Benazir Bhutto. She was born into one of Pakistan's leading political families. She was educated at both Harvard and Oxford. And -- full confession -- let me say that she and I met some -- at the risk of being less than gallant -- 30 years ago or so at Oxford. We would have met even earlier than that, at Harvard, except she got accepted and I did not. And of such things history is made. I'm almost over it, by the way.

And Benazir Bhutto has twice been prime minister of her country, from 1988 to 1990, as well as from 1993 to 1996. And now and before, her fans and her critics alike, I believe, would agree that she has been an important -- indeed, critical -- voice in that country's trajectory, regardless of her physical location. It's been a number of years -- a year or so? -- since she has --

BENAZIR BHUTTO: Eight years.

HAASS: -- eight years since she's been able to be in her country. And I expect one of the things we will talk about is when that situation is likely to change.

The way we are going to do it today is, Ms. Bhutto will speak for about 10 minutes. You will hear her voice. Then you will hear for a few minutes our voices, and then we will reserve the bulk of the time this afternoon to hear your voice, any comments or, more likely, questions you have.

We've also already begun collecting questions from our national members who are wired into this event by the wonders of modern technology.

As you no doubt notice, because you are here, we started approximately 30 minutes earlier than we normally start. And in the political or institutional equivalent of the theory of the conservation of time, we will end 30 minutes earlier than usual, so those of you catching the Jitney to the Hamptons will not be delayed.

It is, for me, a personal pleasure to welcome back to the Council on Foreign Relations an old friend of mine and someone who is familiar to many of you in this room and knows well this organization, the former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto. (Applause.)

BHUTTO: Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's a privilege for me to be here this afternoon as the guest of the Council on Foreign Relations. Thank you for inviting me.

And as I come here to have a conversation with you, I find that my country, Pakistan, is once again in a crisis, and it's a crisis that threatens not only my nation and region, but possible could have repercussions on the entire world.

It's a crisis that has its roots almost half a century ago, when the military in my country first seized power, in 1958. Four military dictatorships -- and most recently those of General Zia ul-Haq in the '80s and now General Musharraf -- have ruled my nation for the last 30 years, except for a few years of

civilian government. And so I believe that democracy has never really been given a chance to grow or nurture in my homeland.

As an example, I was only allowed to govern for five of the 10 years that my people elected me to govern. And now Pakistan has changed dramatically from the days when I left office, in 1996, for now, from areas previously controlled by my government, pro-Taliban forces linked to al Qaeda launch regular attacks on NATO troops across the border in Afghanistan.

In the view of my party, military dictatorship, first in the '80s and now again, under General Musharraf, has fueled the forces of extremism, and military dictatorship puts into place a government that is unaccountable, that is unrepresentative, undemocratic, and disconnected from the ordinary people in the country, disconnected from the aspirations of the people who make up Pakistan. Moreover, military dictatorship is born from the power of the gun, and so it undermines the concept of the rule of law and gives birth to a culture of might, a culture of weapons, violence and intolerance.

The suppression of democracy in my homeland has had profound institutional consequences. The major infrastructure building blocks of democracy have been weakened, political parties have been marginalized, NGOs are dismantled, judges sacked and civil society undermined. And by undermining the infrastructure of democracy, the regime that is in place to date was a regime put into place by the intelligence agencies after the flawed elections of 2002. This regime has not allowed the freedom of association, the freedom of movement, the freedom of speech for moderate political forces, and so by default, the mosques and the madrassas have become the only outlet of permitted political expression in the country.

And so just as the -- we've seen the emergence of the religious parties, we've seen the emergence of the extremist groups, and just as the military dictatorship of the '80s used

the so-called Islamic card to promote a military dictatorship while demonizing political parties, so too the present military establishment of this century has used the so-called Islamist card to pressurize the international community into supporting military dictatorship once again.

But I am here this afternoon to tell you that as far as we, the Pakistan People's Party, is concerned, the choice in Pakistan is not really between military dictatorship and religious parties; the choice for Pakistan is indeed between dictatorship and democracy. And I feel that the real choice that the world also faces today is the choice between dictatorship and democracy, and in the choice that we make between dictatorship and democracy lies the outcome of the battle between extremism and moderation in Pakistan.

The U.S. intelligence recent threat assessment stated that, and I quote, "Al Qaeda and the Taliban seem to be fairly well-settled into the safe haven spaces of Pakistan. We see more training, we see more money, we see more communications, we see that activity rising." That's the most recent U.S. national intelligence threat assessment. And so it's often surprising to those of us in Pakistan who see the international community back the present regime. But this backing continues, despite the regime's failure to stop the Taliban and al Qaeda reorganizing after they were defeated, demoralized and dispersed following the events of 9/11.

This is a regime under which the religious parties have risen, for the first time, to power, and they run two of Pakistan's four federating units -- two most critical states of Pakistan, those that border Afghanistan. And even while the military dictatorship has allowed the religious parties to govern two of Pakistan's most critical four provinces, it has exiled the moderate leadership of the country, it has weakened internal law enforcement and allowed for a very bloody suppression of people's human rights.

The military operation in Baluchistan is an example of the brutality of the suppression. The killings that took place in

Karachi on May 12th, where 48 peaceful political activists were gunned down in the streets of Karachi, and not one person has been arrested for those murders that were actually televised, shows the level to which the regime permits the suppression of the political opposition. And most recently, 17 members of my party were killed in Islamabad on July 17 at the hands of a suicide bomber.

The weakness of law enforcement has led to a series of suicide bombings, roadside bombings. To give you an example, since last July, 300 people have fallen victim to suicide bombers within Pakistan. Disappearances, too, which were unheard of in our country's history, have become the order of the day. And even as I speak to you, a Pak-origin American, Dr. Sarki, has disappeared, not because he supports extremists, but because he's a nationalist, and the level of intolerance for differing views is so high that people can disappear simply for supporting nationalism.

The West's close association with a military dictatorship, in my humble view, is alienating Pakistan's people and is playing into the hands of those hardliners who blame the West for the ills of the region. And it need not be this way. A people inspired by democracy, human rights and economic opportunity will turn their back decisively against extremism.

There is a silver lining on the clouds. The recent restoration of the chief justice of Pakistan to the Supreme Court has given hope to people of Pakistan that the unchecked power of the military will now finally come under a degree of scrutiny by the highest judicial institutions in the country. We in the PPP have kept the doors of dialogue open with the military regime to facilitate the transfer of democracy. This hasn't been a popular move, but we've done it because we think the stability of Pakistan is important to our own security as well as to regional security.

However, without progress on the issue of fair elections, this dialogue could founder. And now, as we approach the autumn, time is running out.

Ladies and gentlemen, I plan to return later this year to Pakistan to lead a democratic movement for the restoration of democracy. I seek to lead a democratic Pakistan which is free from the yoke of military dictatorship and that will cease to be a haven, the very petri dish of international terrorism. A democratic Pakistan that would help stabilize Afghanistan, relieving pressure on NATO troops. A democratic Pakistan that would pursue the drug barons and bust up the drug cartel that today is funding terrorism. A Pakistan where the rule of law is established so that no one has the permission to establish, recruit, train and run private armies and private militias. A democratic Pakistan that puts the welfare of its people as the centerpiece of its national policy.

And as I plan to return to Pakistan, I put my faith in the people of my country who have stood by my party and by myself through this long decade -- more than a decade, 11 years since the PPP government was ousted -- because they believe that the PPP can eliminate terrorism and give them security, and security will bring in the economic investment that can help us reverse the tide of rising poverty in the country, and by so doing, it will certainly undermine the forces of militancy and extremism.

I thank you all for listening to me so patiently. (Applause.)

HAASS: Well, thank you.

And before I ask a few questions, just to remind people, if they haven't shut off their cell phones or their BlackBerrys, please do. And this is obviously on the record. And as I said, there are people listening in around the country and around the world who are our national members.

Let me begin with a -- in some ways it's a question that to me was implicit in everything you said. You talk about the history of your country over the last 60 years. What is it about Pakistan or Pakistanis that accounts for the fact that, probably a majority of its history, democracy has not prevailed. What's wrong?

BHUTTO: Well, we feel that the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, died very quickly, a year after Pakistan was founded, and so we didn't have a national leader with the authority, the respect to help us develop our democratic political institutions, whereas Nehru, in nearby India, provided the leadership that could help a new nation strengthen its democratic institutions.

Secondly, we also feel that Pakistan's geostrategic position as a country -- you know, we -- Afghanistan was the buffer state during the Cold War, and Pakistan was one side of the buffer state -- so our geostrategic position as the bastion for the free world also led to the international community dealing with whoever was in power. So in a sense, the military dictatorships were able to milk international support for suppressing democratic rights for short-term strategic goals. But I am concerned that that policy is now backfiring.

HAASS: Do you therefore actually wish that the United States and others were putting more pressure on your government to reinstall democracy?

BHUTTO: Yes, I would very much like to see the United States link its support, its financial and military assistance to Pakistan, to the restoration of democracy, to the holding of elections that are free, fair and impartial and open to all political parties. But for me, the restoration of democracy is only the first step. I would like to see the international community make a long-term commitment to a country as critical as Pakistan and indeed our nearby neighbor, Afghanistan, in helping us to build our institutions.

In 1988, when democracy was restored, the military establishment was still very powerful. The extremist groups were still there. And when the aid and assistance to Pakistan was cut, we had to adopt harsh economic policies. So in a way, it showed that democracy doesn't pay, and the military was able to reassert itself.

So I'd like to see a much longer-term commitment. Europe

made a long-term commitment. When Europe was driven by war, the international community put NATO troops in Europe, and it made a long-term commitment through the Marshall Plan to develop the institutions. So I know it's unpopular, but I don't see quick fixes. I think what's needed is the restoration of democracy but also a commitment to help the institutions of a nation be built to sustain that democracy.

HAASS: If this is going to happen, two, if you will, constituencies in Pakistan are going to have to agree. One is the army. Do you think there is a consensus in the army to essentially return to the barracks?

BHUTTO: I doubt that there's a consensus. I don't get that sense. But I do get the sense that the army right now is itself uncomfortable with its role. The public has turned against the uniform -- General Musharraf as the uniform -- and there are reports that the military personnel have been told not to wear their uniforms when they go into the streets. So in that sense, the rank and file does not like being unpopular. It's used to being respected by the people at large. And so to make the army noncontroversial, it's important to get them out of the politics.

But there are a group within the armed forces who are the top leadership who have a vested interest in dictatorship, because dictatorship brings power not only to them, but it brings power to their relatives, who then start doing well in parliamentary elections which are rigged, or then start doing well economically because business contracts go that way. So that I feel that as far as the rank and file of the Pakistani army is concerned, they'd like to get out and they'd like to let the civilians do the job, but I'm not sure that's what the leadership feels.

HAASS: The other key constituency, if you will, is a rather fundamental one, which is the Pakistani people. And I suppose the question that comes to mind is whether you now have in Pakistan a significant chunk of the population --

how would I put it? -- that is more committed to its ideology than it is to institutions and democracy, that the process of radicalization and the rise of extremism in your country has now created a significant obstacle or hurdle to the restoration of democracy.

BHUTTO: I know that that's an argument that some of the supporters of the military regime say, that elections in Pakistan could give up a Hamas-type solution, but that's not what the polls show, that's not what the elections have shown. Since the inception of Pakistan, all the elections have shown that the religious parties never do well when it comes to elections.

And secondly, the most recent poll by the IRI, the International Republican Institute, also showed that the religious parties would not do well. So they cannot gain through a fair, free and impartial election. However, if the military establishment decides rig the elections, that's another issue, which is why we in the PPP have asked General Musharraf to implement certain reforms to ensure that the elections will be fair, and we have also requested the international community to fund a robust monitoring team to ensure that those elections are fair.

HAASS: When you talk about your commitment to going back later this year, are there any preconditions that either you have set or have been set for you that you are at liberty to discuss?

BHUTTO: Well, General Musharraf would not like me to come. He has publicly stated that he would not like me and Mr. Nawaz Sharif to return before the end of the year. He says it will be destabilizing if Mr. Nawaz Sharif and I return to lead our parties in the election campaign. Both of us don't agree because we feel our return will be destabilizing to the ruling party known as the Muslim League-Q, but it won't be destabilizing to the nation, it won't be destabilizing necessarily to the presidency. And we feel that elections

cannot be free and fair unless the leaders of all parties are allowed to contest and contest freely.

I mean what sort of an election would we have, for example, in America if, for example, in a presidential contest Rudy Giuliani was allowed to campaign and Hillary Clinton wasn't? It would give an unfair advantage to one side.

HAASS: But implicit in the -- we won't go there.

Implicit in what I hear you saying is General or President Musharraf's desire to essentially get this round of elections out of the way before you and Mr. Sharif or both of you were to return, and I don't know whether implicit in that is that he's essentially saying, okay, next time to participate, but not this time.

BHUTTO: That's what he said the last time -- but the issue is that what are the choices before General Musharraf? Last time he had a choice to keep the two of us out, and he had the choice to put together a political party that he said would address the social needs of the people and contain terrorism. Neither happened.

Secondly, the choice before him today is not between allowing us back afterwards, the choice is either facilitating a transfer to democracy to keep Pakistan stable and to try and broker an arrangement where he will also be continuing; or alternatively, to have all the political parties gang up against him where he could risk a movement in the streets that is stronger than the recent one which the lawyers waged.

So I don't think the options he has before him are the same as the last one, and I would rather seek to persuade him to permit an election, which will enhance his own reputation, that people could respect him for holding fair elections. But if there's a perception that the elections have been stolen, it could be like Ukraine and the Orange Revolution, where the civil groups and the political parties get together and force him out.

HAASS: Could you imagine yourself -- to use the French concept -- entering into cohabitation with somebody such as President Musharraf?

BHUTTO: Well, it would depend on how the event unfolded. At the moment, the situation is this, but we have been having a negotiation for almost a year. And while there's been agreement on several issues and where General Musharraf has committed to taking certain confidence-building measures, those haven't been taken. So my party's asking that -- you know, is it just the talk or is it going to turn into a walk? So that would very much depend on what happens up front and whether we have an understanding.

We have tried to have it, and it's not easy because, you know, the IRI polls showed that two-thirds of Pakistanis feel he's very unpopular and should go. But we are risking our popularity by even having this dialogue, but we understand Pakistan is a critical country. We understand that instability in Pakistan could threaten our own security as well as that of the region, so we've taken the risk, but we really need General Musharraf also to come up with the measures that he has already promised, to implement the measures that he has already promised by the end of this month, preferably.

HAASS: Let me turn to -- we'll obviously have more questions on that, but let me turn, if I may, for a moment to some questions about Pakistan's relationship with its neighbors and with others.

It's almost a year now since the so-called Miranshah -- am I pronouncing it right? -- agreement, which essentially was a special arrangement, we'll call it, between the central government and North Waziristan.

And quite honestly in this country and elsewhere, it's been widely criticized as constituting a form of appeasement, where the central government essentially allowed people far too much discretion, autonomy -- what have you -- to do what they would, including getting involved in ways, across

the border with Afghanistan, including conceivably ways of supporting al Qaeda. What is your stance about what should be done in terms of dealing with North Waziristan and more generally with that part of the country?

BHUTTO: Well, People's Party and I rejected that ceasefire of September 2006 -- the peace treaty -- and we rejected the ceasefires before that. In fact, we were appalled that the tribal region of our country was handed over to foreigners, because Afghan Taliban, Afghans and al Qaeda are added to the Chechens and the Uzbeks. And this is Pakistani territory, and Pakistan has to protect its own territory.

So we've been absolutely appalled by that. And we think the first thing the government of Pakistan has to do is to take the territory back. We've ceded authority of our own territory, and it's not enough to satisfy the agenda of the Afghan Taliban or the Arab al Qaeda or the Central Asian Uzbek-Chechen. They're now knocking on the doors of our frontier province.

There's been an attempt to take over the city of Darra Adam Khel. They've tried to take over Tank; they've tried to take over Malakand. The more you give them; the more they want.

HAASS: What about the argument the other way? When people make your point often in Washington, one hears the argument that if one pushed General Musharraf or President Musharraf to do just that, his own security forces -- be it elements of the army or elements of the ISI, the Intelligence Directorate -- would not prove loyal, that essentially if he pushed things that far, he himself would be challenged. What do you say when you hear that kind of an argument?

BHUTTO: When I hear that argument, I hear two kinds of arguments. One of the arguments that I hear is that he's not going to push them too far, because then he'll be deposed. But the issue is that when you are the chief of army staff and you control basically all the bombs in Pakistan, then you've got to put together a team that will support you and give you

the base that will corner the people who are the extremists so that you'll not topple. You've got to take them on. Because if you don't take them on, then they win the battle anyway. Whereas if you take them on, well, either you win and if you don't win, well, you've tried, and somebody is going to come in and try harder.

The second argument that I hear is that you've got to placate the hardliners. You've got to bring them into the mainstream and energize the religious parties. You know, people tell me that People's Party is so moderate that the people who are the militants and the extremists will get against it, and they won't let you work. But the issue is we won't let them work either.

Now what's happening is that we brought them into -- we've said, let's bring them into the mainstream. We've given them two provinces; we've given them the leader of opposition. And has it quenched their thirst? No, they want more and more. They want to take over the whole state of Pakistan, not on the basis of having the popular support but on the basis of having the support of the militants and the militias.

So this is a battle to save Pakistan. We have to save Pakistan from within. And by saving Pakistan from within, I think that it will be having a profound effect on our region. It will have an effect on Afghanistan, on India and also the larger world community.

Let's not forget that the Tube bomber in London happened to have visited my country, or that Abu Zubaydah or the CEO of al Qaeda -- they were arrested from Pakistani cities. So the terrorists must know that Pakistan's not going to provide them an environment that they can visit safely. And I just need to understand why we have such a large intelligence if the intelligence is not able to intercept them. So my goal would be to put together a team that would give the support to the government to go after them relentlessly.

QUESTIONER: You may have covered that, what I was going

to ask you next, but let me try it anyhow.

We had quite an interesting, and indeed still are, mini-debate here politically between two -- initially two of the Democratic aspirants for presidents, and it spread now across party lines. And Barack Obama kicked it off by saying, "If we have actionable intelligence about high-value terrorist targets and President Musharraf won't act, we will." That's a direct quote from a recent speech of his. What is your reaction to that?

BHUTTO: Well, I wouldn't like the United States to violate Pakistan's sovereignty with unauthorized military operations. But the issue that I would like to stress is that Barack Obama also said, if Pakistan won't act. And that's the critical issue, that the government has to act. And the government has to act to protect Pakistan's own serenity and integrity, its own respect, and to understand that if it creates a vacuum, then others aren't going to just twiddle their thumbs while militants freely move across the border.

I think General Musharraf did the right thing recently in admitting that militants are using our soil, but he said the army has nothing to do with it. But nonetheless, the issue for me is that we cannot cede parts of Pakistani territory to anybody; not just the Taliban, to anybody. That in Pakistan we have one army, one police, one constitution, one government. We cannot allow parallel armies, parallel militias, parallel laws and parallel command structures. Today it's not just the intelligence services, who were previously called a state within a state. Today it's the militants who are becoming yet another little state within the state, and this is leading some people to say that Pakistan is on the slippery slope of being called a failed state. But this is a crisis for Pakistan, that unless we deal with the extremists and the terrorists, our entire state could founder.

HAASS: A sobering moment on which to open things up. So let me open it up to you all, our members. Wait for a microphone. Please state your name and your affiliation. And please limit yourself to one question so we can conceivably

get lots of people in there.

Minky?

QUESTIONER: Minky Worden from Human Rights Watch. Welcome to New York.

Back to Richard's point about the possibility of an alliance with General Musharraf. In view of how he took power, wouldn't an alliance with him send the negative message to future coup plotters that elected politicians could legitimize them in the end?

BHUTTO: Yes, at one level it would send a negative message. But Pakistan isn't an ordinary country and it's not facing an ordinary situation now. We have two different fault lines. We have one fault line between dictatorship and democracy, and we have a second fault line between the forces of moderation and the forces of extremism. We have problems with General Musharraf because he's a coup leader, and dealing with him we have severe problems at that level.

But on the other hand, General Musharraf says and has committed himself to Pakistan following a moderate path. So to that extent, if he could get the moderate forces to work together for a transition to democracy, I think in the present circumstances it would be helpful. At least that's the decision my party took, and that's why we have been involved in these negotiations.

Whether it will work, frankly, I can't say. Time, as I said, is running out. General Musharraf made certain commitments to us and we would need to see the fulfillment of those commitments in the next two to three weeks before my party meets to take a final decision on where we stand.

HAASS: Rabbi Schneier? You have to wait for a microphone. That's how we do it in our synagogue here.

QUESTIONER: You attributed the rise of the fundamentalism and radical extremism to the dictatorship and lack of democracy. The question: What would you do, and your

party, to deal with the network of madrassas -- schools -- that are infiltrated with Wahhabi ideology? And we're not only talking about today. You're training an entire generation of children who do not believe in democracy. What will you do with it?

BHUTTO: Well, I agree with you that this is another very big challenge, because nowadays we have three kinds of madrassas in Pakistan. One is the traditional madrassa which teaches people their religious duties and obligations. The second is a madrassa which basically brainwashes our children into intolerance. So the battle that we -- and the third madrassa is the one which is acting as the headquarters of the militant groups, as we saw in the issue of the Red Mosque.

I thank you for drawing my attention to the middle madrassa, which is the value system, because this is a battle for values, that are we going to move in the direction of a pluralistic society or not. And I feel that nobody in my country should have the right to teach people hate, to teach them violence and to brainwash them from the very beginning in extremist thought to prepare them, which is why we would like to reform those madrassas. And if anybody does not teach the approved curriculum -- or we don't even care about approved curriculums; what we care about is that you cannot teach people hate and you cannot teach them violence. You cannot say you have to kill people of a different faith or you have to kill people of a different ethnicity. So as long as madrassas abide by those rules, they will be allowed to function, and if they don't, they will be shut down.

HAASS: You don't feel, though, they should also have the responsibility to teach, say, the basics of science, math, whatever, so people can essentially function in a modern society and world?

BHUTTO: You know, Richard, it was in -- we did that, I did that. I know we talked about Musharraf now, but my government -- actually, everybody thinks the war on

terrorism began now; for me, it began much earlier with the first attack on the World Trade Towers. And in 1993, Pakistan was on the brink of being declared a terrorist state. My government arrested Ramzi Yousef, the man who was behind the first attack on the World Trade Towers. My security people didn't want to give him up, because he had not only attacked the World Trade Towers, he had tried to kill me to stop me from becoming prime minister of Pakistan.

But I handed him over, and we began an investigation, and that's when we discovered these madrassas, political madrassas that had been set up secretly by (funds ?) during the Afghan jihad, and we found that there were students from 126 different countries who had come to be recruited and enrolled in these madrassas. And that's when my Ministry of Interior and my Ministry of Education worked together to introduce math and science into the madrassas. But we also said that you cannot teach hate, because it's not enough to teach them computers and science if they're still taught to discriminate on the basis of ethnicity and discriminate on the basis of religion. So we did all that.

What we found is as soon as our government went, they diverted to their own ways. So obviously we've got to stop them from teaching hate, and we've got to make them teach science and math and so on, but at the same time, a government in Pakistan has to commit to building schools -- not only building schools which people can go to, but building them on the (mantra ?) of madrassas, because the madrassas don't only give education; they give free food and clothing. So parents who are poor bring their children to the madrassas to be fed and looked after during the week. So my government had come up with a concept called Apna Ghar -- Your House -- where the government would set up boarding schools for people who are poor, and they could bring their children for free education and food and clothing.

Unless we provide an alternative to the madrassa -- it's not enough just trying to shut one down or reform the curriculum, so I think a multifaceted approach needs to be adopted.

HAASS: One of our members, Ricardo Tavares (sp), from Rancho Santa Fe, California, writes in and notes that the Pakistani economy has grown an average of 7 percent a year over the last five years, and he talks about the important role that foreign direct investment has played. And the question I have is, based on his question, really, is if you were back in power, how much would your economic policies look like Shaukat Aziz's, the current prime minister? And how much would you be introducing changes from what we now see in Pakistan?

BHUTTO: Well, I want to put this in a different frame.

HAASS: Okay.

BHUTTO: And I want to say that I find the 7 percent growth rate very disappointing, given the fact that all our loans have been rescheduled and given the fact that we are receiving \$10 billion in overt and covert assistance. Because when I was prime minister of Pakistan, I left office while I had to pay off the debts and without all this money, with a 6 percent growth rate, which started to go up in the year '96-'97 to 8 percent. So I think Pakistan has a huge potential and that the present regime has got a 7 percent growth rate more because of the debts being rescheduled and external flows coming in and not because of direct foreign investment.

There has been privatization. There have been a couple of groups from the Gulf that have come in, but name me one major international company, for example, like from America or from England -- I could name you General Electric, AES, National Power, who were all coming in when I was prime minister of Pakistan. But when you have terrorism and extremism and you have suicide bombers who are going and blowing up marketplaces and blowing up diplomatic missions and churches and (mosques ?) and places of worship, you don't get foreign investment. So we have a jobless recovery in Pakistan.

On paper, the statistics look good because you've got the

external flows coming in. But in fact, poverty and unemployment in Pakistan has risen, and it's ticking like a time bomb. Because the people are unemployed and unemployment has risen, these militias and militants go to our people and say, we will give you a salary, we will pay you \$150 or \$200 a month; come and join our army.

So it's not just people who are ideologues who are joining the militants; it's jobless people who are being recruited in private armies. So, yes, I'm happy that flows are coming in and the debts are rescheduled and we've got 7 percent. At one level I'm happy, but on another level I'm not, because I think that we need an economy which invites the investment, that produces the jobs and a government that addresses the social and economic needs of the people so they cannot be exploited by those who are criminals and terrorists.

HAASS: Yes, sir. I don't have my glasses on, so I can't see that far.

QUESTIONER: (Name and affiliation inaudible.) Madame Prime Minister, if you were elected and if you had been the authority to work with the world community on issues of terrorism, would it be easier or more difficult for you than it has been for Musharraf? I understand that it was a difficult decision for Musharraf to come in support of the United States and the alliance, the coalition of the willing.

BHUTTO: I want to tell you that there's a broad consensus in Pakistan between the major political parties that General Musharraf took the right step and that we have to fight terrorism. Mr. Nawaz Sharif and I have had our differences in the past, but we've come together and we've signed a Charter of Democracy. And in that both our parties were the major parties in Pakistan have committed to fighting terrorism and extremism. But while it may have been a difficult decision for Musharraf at one level, there is a consensus within Pakistan that terrorism is a threat to the outside world and it's also a threat to the people of Pakistan.

We want to work together with the international community to eliminate terrorism and extremism from our country. Would it be easier for us? Well, you know, this is a very interesting question. In some ways it would be easier for us, and in other ways it's easier for Musharraf. Musharraf's strong point is that he's got the army. Musharraf's strong point is he's got the intelligence. But at the same time, his difficulty is that this the same military security apparatus that fought the Afghan jihad of the '80s, that established the Afghan mujaheddin, who later went on to become the Taliban and al Qaeda.

So people who work together have certain social occasions together and find it more difficult to suddenly take on the people they were breaking bread with; whereas with us, while we certainly need the army in back-up situations and we certainly need the military intelligence, we have a different information. We have an information based on our public and our people and our support. We have the law enforcement in terms of police. We have paramilitary forces. So we can go directly to the people.

For instance, I was talking to one of my party people now when we were distributing tickets in England before coming here, and I said, how are you going to fight with these suicide bombers? And he said, well, if anybody tried to kill me in my area, my family would know immediately who it was because we know who's living in the next house, we know who's living in the next lane, and we wouldn't leave them -- we'd make sure that they were caught so they wouldn't dare to touch me. So having that kind of political or public information is very important.

The military establishment moves against all people. It doesn't identify the people who could be the troublemakers. So if our army is sent into the tribal areas, it's difficult for the army to assess when to bulldoze a home. Is that an extremist home or is that one which belongs to a member of the community? The equation changes, which is why our military did not have success in putting out the insurgency in Karachi

in the '90s, but my government was able to do it. It wasn't easy; it took us a year, 15 months, but we did it because people from the public would come to us, to our elected representatives and meet with us and say, you know, it's that person and it's that person you should be watching. So we would get information from the public.

Because when the public are involved with the government and when the public are benefitting from a government in terms of jobs and schools and drinking water, the public want to save their own community. But when there is a government that is non-representative, the public becomes alienated, and the public are against the government. And it doesn't really make that much of a difference to the public whether it's, you know, Musharraf or whether it's the militants or whether it's the military. It only makes an effect when there's actually a suicide bombing in a particular locality.

So in some ways, a democratic government is stronger because it can reach the people and it can pull together the law enforcement; terrorism is as much a military situation as it is an investigative criminal situation. So I think what's needed is meshing together. Of course, if I had General Musharraf's powers -- I mean, you know, powers over the military, powers over the police, powers over the seven administrations -- I think that this situation could be -- is not easily tackled, but could be tackled. We have state capacity and resources to tackle it. But the present regime has not been able to tackle it.

I know this answer is long. Bear with me for one minute more.

Law enforcement got hold of a chief cleric smuggling weapons into Islamabad. But was that police officer rewarded? No, he wasn't, because the cabinet minister intervened and freed the militant who was smuggling weapons into Islamabad.

So we cannot resolve the situation when law enforcement itself is demoralized for doing the job that it ought to be doing.

HAASS: As you raise legal issues, at the risk of being an

ungracious host -- you've been prime minister twice, obviously, and twice you've been dismissed, by two different presidents. Among the charges were obviously corruption. How do you deal with those charges?

BHUTTO: Well, I say that a person is innocent unless proved otherwise. And I say the very fact that I faced a state-sponsored persecution for 10 long years, which could have broken many other person(s) -- it's easy to litigate, go and have an investigation, and you go from city to city and country to country and continent to continent and courtroom to courtroom. But I was strong in my convictions. I defended myself. There's nothing against me. And my people also believe that a person is innocent unless proved otherwise.

However, I feel that this demonization process was taken to discredit the political class, divert attention from the institutionalized corruption of the military

I wasn't the only prime minister who was sacked for corruption. Twice Mr. Nawaz Sharif was sacked for corruption. His predecessor Mr. Junejo was sacked for corruption. The prime minister of the '50s was sacked for corruption. And when the chief justice started showing too much independence, he was charged with corruption. When Mr. Imran Khan, the cricketer, who has one parliamentary seat, started defying the government, his wife was charged with smuggling tiles.

So these charges are concocted to put the political class on the defensive. This doesn't mean there isn't corruption. I think we do need to tackle corruption. I think we need transparency, we need a free press, and we need vibrant civil groups that act as watchdogs on government.

HAASS: Rita Hauser.

QUESTIONER: Hi. With some degree --

HAASS: Please, wait for a microphone.

QUESTIONER: Sorry. Rita Hauser. With some degree of frequency we read, at least in the European press, about Sunni and Shi'a conflict, particularly in Karachi -- one group attacking the mosques of the other, and some degree of violence in private militias. Is the Sunni-Shi'a divide an issue in Pakistan? And if so, what dimension?

BHUTTO: Well, unfortunately, intolerance is becoming an issue in Pakistan. It wasn't in the past. But while people are aware that these militant groups preach hatred against other religions -- for example, they say, "Kill the Christians, kill the Jews, kill the Hindus" -- most people are not aware that these extremist groups also preach hatred against different schools of Islam with different interpretations. So they also say, "Kill the Shi'as because they are non-believers." They also say fathers should kill their daughters if the daughters marry against the father's wishes.

So this issue is one of a dialogue between the Islamic world and the non-Islamic. But there's also a dialogue that is necessary within the Islamic world.

When I was growing up as a child, we were always taught that you shall have your religion, and I shall have my religion; that every religious group has to respect another religious interpretation, whether it is within the Muslim fold or outside.

But unfortunately, that's no longer the case. Ever since the extremists started attacking those religious groups who did not conform to their religious interpretation within Islam, including the Shi'as, then they organized themselves to hit back at those groups. And it's very painful for me as a Muslim to see that the place of worship, the mosque in Islam, which should be a place of refuge, has now turned into one where people fight and there is bloodshed and where their militants are stocking arms. It's a very disturbing phenomena for the majority of the Muslim people of Pakistan.

But you quite right; this kind of extremist interpretation is leading to sectarian warfare not only in Pakistan -- you've been very wise to pinpoint it -- it's leading elsewhere in the

Muslim world, too.

HAASS: There's about 40 or 50 people who have their hands up. So let me apologize for making 40 or 50 more enemies today. I'm off to an early start in our year.

I see a gentleman all the way in the back corner. At least I see his hand. I can't see --

QUESTIONER: Thank you. James Tunkey, I-On Asia. Prime Minister, I would ask if you would request or recommend any changes to the U.S. military or intelligence or other types of aid or support in Pakistan.

BHUTTO: Well, I would like to see the U.S. military and economic aid to Pakistan continue. I think there needs to be a long-term commitment to security in the region. I sometimes hear -- I mean, in this tribal jirga, for example, that was held, some people said the way to restore peace is to withdraw NATO from Afghanistan. I don't agree. I think it takes a generation to build up different attitudes, different beliefs, different institutions. I remember Afghanistan being without any institution at all.

So I think it's important to make a long-term commitment to our common endeavors, to fighting terrorism and building democratic states with viable political institutions that can redress the -- that can address the aspirations of the people there.

So I'd like to see this assistance continue, but I'd like it to be committed to a democratic Pakistan. I find it very strange that democracies should be supported in Afghanistan, and yet while democratic leaders in Afghanistan give confidence to the international community, the international community is still apprehensive about dealing with democratic leaders in Pakistan.

For me, I see military rule as the problem. I don't see it as the solution.

HAASS: But just to be clear, so we understand what you're saying, are you therefore suggesting that Congress or others should reduce U.S. aid to Pakistan unless democracy is restored?

BHUTTO: Well, I would like them to link it to the restoration of democracy, yes. I think they need to tell our military has a vested interest in seeing a restoration of democracy. Most of the people in our army are patriotic. Most of the people in our army would not like to see any harm come to our country. And if they feel that the aid is going to dry up, they'll have an institutional interest in promoting democracy to keep the aid coming in. But if they think that they can keep the aid even with the dictatorship, why should they tilt towards a democracy?

HAASS: I want to call on Dan Markey, who's our senior fellow here for India, Pakistan and South Asia.

QUESTIONER: Hi. You mentioned one silver lining in all of these challenges, and that was the chief justice and his restoration, the protests that led up to that. And I'm curious how you understand that. Do you see it as a kind of one political moment, sort of a bump in the road, or is this a fundamental turning point for Pakistan? Is this something much more historic, something much more lasting? Does it have more potential?

BHUTTO: It's too early to say whether this will be a lasting phenomenon. But certainly for many Pakistanis it has given hope that it could turn into a defining moment when the judiciary finally begins to operate independently.

The chief justice's return, for example, has enabled my party to go to the court to seek relief where the electoral lists were concerned for the forthcoming elections. Thirty percent of our voters were not enrolled. Of those that were enrolled, 26 percent were duplicates. So we have a hope of having an independent adjudicator.

Mr. Nawaz Sharif has also filed a petition seeking to return to Pakistan. The lawyers movement is -- the lawyers community is highly energized. Many people lost their lives in the struggle. Many were imprisoned. A heavy price was paid. They were baton charged, had head injuries.

So, given this mood in the country, we hope that it can become a permanent turning point in our country's history. It's certainly given hope.

HAASS: One of the series we have here at the council is called Lessons Learned, where we ask prominent individuals to reflect on their careers and decisions they've made, all of which is a segue to this probably last question from Trudy Rubin, who's with the Philadelphia Inquirer. And she basically says: If you became prime minister again, what would you do differently? What are the lessons that you learned from your two stints in political power and now as an observer on the outside?

BHUTTO: Well, you know, in retrospect, you look back and you see things with a different vision, and there were certainly things I wish I had done differently. For example, I was with my father at Shimla when he signed the Shimla agreement with India to try and bring the two countries to peace despite the differences on Kashmir. And it was always my dream to be remembered as -- to give a legacy as a peacemaker. So I do look back in retrospect and regret the opportunity I had to make peace.

Secondly, I remember when the Taliban first came up in neighboring Afghanistan. Many of us, including our friends from the U.S., initially thought that they would bring peace to that war-torn country. And that was a critical, fatal mistake we made. If I had to do things again, that's certainly not a decision that I would have taken.

And in my early years, I think, as one of the first female, woman prime ministers in a Muslim world and one of the first group of women leaders on the world stage, I was so

concerned with trying to appear as tough as a man and as strong as a man, and to judge myself to be a good leader by such decisions. I don't think I would have been as -- I think I should have been true to what I was. The people wanted me to be there as a woman leader, somebody who was more nurturing, who could take care of our people, our women, our children, redress their needs, build them hostels and schools and provide them with basic nutrition. I wish I had focused more on that than on the more militaristic notions. All that militarization did not in the end save us at Kargil. It took President Clinton to bring an end to that particular phase.

So, yes, you look back and you see many things that you would have done differently.

HAASS: Thank you. It seems a fitting place.

Let me just say this is, again, a rare meeting in August. We will resume with a rather busy schedule, and particularly in September when we have all sorts of leaders coming to New York for the U.N. General Assembly.

Let me again thank you all for coming and apologize to those for whose desire to ask questions did not get realized. Please don't hate me through Labor Day.

And let me thank Ms. Bhutto for again coming to the Council on Foreign Relations. (Applause.)

BHUTTO: Thank you, Richard. Thank you very much. Thank you. I hope it won't take you 30 years to invite me again.

HAASS: Thank you

'Pakistan Must Not Be Talibanized'

Interview for Spiegel, the News magazine, August 13, 2007

Spiegel: Pakistan cannot find peace. President Pervez Musharraf may lose power. He met with you in Abu Dhabi in late July. What did you talk about?

Bhutto: I am not aware of any official confirmation from either side of the meeting, but as far as the contact between General Musharraf and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), we have been discussing the transition back to democracy and the holding of free, fair and impartial elections.

Spiegel: You have been living in exile for eight years. You could probably only return home after the charges of corruption leveled against you have been dropped. The regulation prohibiting a third term as prime minister would also have to be eliminated. What did Musharraf say about that?

Bhutto: We discussed a level playing field for all political parties and we also discussed how parliament could be made more effective.

Spiegel: Musharraf has been more unpopular than ever since the siege of the Red Mosque. Is this your chance?

Bhutto: I think it is unfortunate that he has been unable to restore law and order in the tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan or take measures to eradicate terrorism there. Pro-Taliban forces have regrouped and the policy of having ceasefires or peace treaties with them from time to time has simply emboldened them to expand their influence. I want to give my compatriots a clear choice: Either they support

extremism or they reject it decisively.

Spiegel: That sounds very simple. How can you achieve greater successes than Musharraf, who knows he has the United States by his side and who is therefore mockingly called "Busharraf" by many people?

Bhutto: It will indeed not be easy. But terrorism is the greatest danger -- our country must not be Talibanized. I am confident that my compatriots will defend themselves against this danger.

Spiegel: Until now, you had rejected all talks with a president who wears a uniform.

Bhutto: I would like to clarify that there is no change in the PPP's stance that it cannot work with a uniformed president. A uniformed president blurs the distinction between civilian and military rule.

Spiegel: You have signed a charter with former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, another former government member in exile, which is intended to pave the way for a return to democracy. Sharif considers any contact with Musharraf a breach of this agreement.

Bhutto: It is disputed that the charter of democracy precludes dialogue for the transition to democracy. Our agreement does not prohibit contact with a military dictator if that opens up a path back to normality. Sharif and I have formulated blueprints for the future. We are no longer rivals but rather partners, and we have a common goal. We are the most important players in the historic attempt to restore democracy.

"I am looking at this for saving my country from a militant takeover."

*Interview by Mr. Nayan Chanda at Yale Global,
August 9, 2007*

Nayan Chanda: We are pleased to have in our studios Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, two time prime minister of Pakistan, and we are especially pleased to have her with us today at a time when Pakistan is facing a critical choice about its future. Welcome Mrs. Bhutto.

Benazir Bhutto: Thank you, it's lovely to be at Yale.

Chanda: Politics is as far removed from poetry as possible so I cannot resist reading a little poem that you wrote some years ago: "One has might, the other right. One has the sword, the other the pen. Guns rust and fall apart. Ideas live forever." So do you think President Musharraf's guns are rusting and that is why he is turning to you to do a deal?

Bhutto: Certainly there has been a degree of unease within Pakistan; General Musharraf had given a charter where he wanted to take the country, which was toward a true democracy and a moderate society. However in the last six years, we've seen that the extremists have spread throughout the country. We used to think it was just in the tribal areas, but indeed the Red Mosque incident in our capital city of Islamabad showed that the tentacles of extremism were spreading and that poses great challenges to Pakistan from within as well as complicates the external picture.

Chanda: So the reason why he's now willing to sit down with you is because he's feeling that he's no longer in full control?

Bhutto: I see it differently. I think after 9/11, when the first general elections were held under General Musharraf, it was less than a year later, and he was seen very much as a strong ally of the west on which the international community could depend, to reform the madrassas and to constrain and restrain the terrorist elements within the country. But unfortunately since then, there has been the rise of suicide bombings. Innocent people in Pakistan like our women and children are being killed, and I think now the international community has started supporting the democratic process. Within Pakistan, we've had a pro-democracy movement which has gathered strength as poverty in the country increased and people's needs were neglected.

So this confluence has made the elections of 2007 very important. All the independent polls show that the Pakistan People's Party [PPP] and I would go on to win any fair election. So I think that this is what the need of drawing people together. In Pakistan, we have different fault lines. We have one on dictatorship versus democracy, and we have a second one on moderation versus fundamentalism or extremism. So I think that General Musharraf is trying to seek a way out by having these contacts with the Pakistan People's Party.

Chanda: Nawaz Sharif has suggested that one should do everything to remove military from politics. And what you may be trying to do will be seen by people as prolonging the military rule rather than getting rid of military altogether.

Bhutto: I know that is what Mr. Nawaz Sharif is saying. But I don't agree. And I find it very strange that Mr. Nawaz Sharif talked to General Musharraf and got out in the year 2000 which did prolong military rule in my country. I was also offered that if I quit politics for 10 years, all the charges against me would be dropped and my husband would be released. But I refused that offer because I felt that it would prolong the military rule in my country.

And now I am talking because this is about getting the uniform out of the office of the presidency. This is about facilitating the transfer to democracy. And as I said, we are talking, but we are not there yet. So I am really not in a position to tell you today that there really will be an agreement on the facilitative transfer to democracy. But I do know one thing, that a facilitative transfer to democracy is far more preferable than a situation of chaos on the streets that can be taken advantage of by extremist elements. So as a Pakistani leader, who wants to see the stability and unity of my country and see Pakistan go on the path of moderation, I think it is important for me to explore peaceful political options of a transfer to democracy. I will point out to you that no one believed when the Shah of Iran was facing street riots that it would end up in an ayatollah revolution. But that's what happened. And when the Mensheviks took to the streets in Russia, no one expected the Bolsheviks. So when we have a situation where we have militants who are armed and we have political parties who are unarmed, I would do my best to have a peaceful transfer. But if that fails, maybe I won't be able to stop the street agitation. And that would be dangerous.

So let's hope that we can indeed get either through the negotiations we are having, or through the Supreme Court of Pakistan, some kind of a facilitative and peaceful revival of the constitution, restoration of democratic process, and a redress of people's social and economic needs so that terrorism and militancy can be undermined.

Chanda: According to some press reports, the agreement that has been reached between you and President Musharraf is that he will be a civilian president who will be in charge of national security and foreign affairs and you will be chief executive. And the ban on you running for prime minister for the third time will be lifted and your family can finally return. Is there any truth in this?

Bhutto: These are certainly some of the issues that are being

discussed. General Musharraf wants to get elected from the present assembly; he thinks that is legal. We in the PPP believe that it is not legal. So this matter is going to be decided really by the courts and perhaps by public pressure too. But ultimately it is a decision of a legal dispute. The elections are going to be held later this year. My concern is that those elections should be fair, free and impartial. I believe [along] with the International Crisis Group that military intervention in the country is creating a failed state which poses a danger to Pakistan's own security as well as regional security. So I would like those elections to be fair. And I think any attempt by General Musharraf to manipulate those elections will lead to a far bigger internal crisis with far reaching repercussions. We have not reached an agreement yet because everything the regime says it would do is post- presidential, prime ministerial and parliamentary elections. And my party does not want to be led up the garden path. So we believe that the cooperation needs to be calibrated so that there are different phases of implementation.

Chanda: Is it possible that if he gets reelected by the parliament one more time, but he makes you the interim prime minister so that there can again be a free and fair election in December, would you accept that?

Bhutto: No, no, no. I am not looking at this for myself. I am looking at this for the empowerment of my people. And I am looking at this for saving my country from a militant takeover, [and] God forbid, disintegration. I think this is the worst crisis that we faced since 1971. What we are looking for is a cooperation, once the uniform is off. The PPP cannot cooperate with a uniform presidency which blurs the distinction between civil and military rule. Because the PPP has been fighting every single military dictatorship that there has been in the country and we symbolize the aspirations of the people for a democratic Pakistan. The PPP is also looking for holding fair elections. We won't like a situation where the elections are manipulated. And then we are offered a handful of ministries in return for legitimizing fraudulent elections.

Chanda: So what would be necessary for you to consider the elections will be fair and free, what would be the conditions?

Bhutto: Very good question. The All Parties Conference [of opposition parties] held in July earlier this year, which was called for by Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, came up with the points that need to be implemented by the election commission of Pakistan for the holding of fair elections. And earlier, the very widely respected international group known as the NDI, National Democratic Institute, held a roundtable of all political parties in Pakistan and the roundtable also came up with proposals. And we have handed these proposals over to General Musharraf's side. And they have been promising us for some months that they will actually implement various proposals that have come during the time for fair elections. They keep reassuring us that the elections will be fair.

But unfortunately, except for transparent ballot boxes, none of those reforms have been implemented, which is really leading to some unease in PPP circles and indeed the opposition circles that now the elections are round the corner, when is this all going to happen? When are these reforms going to be lifted? And then there is also the issue of balance between the presidency and the parliament. I see little point in getting a parliament elected where the prime minister is thrown out two months later. We had this in the '90s when the presidential power to dismiss the parliament was used ruthlessly, not only against Mr. Nawaz Sharif and myself twice, but even against Mr. [Muhammad Khan] Junejo. We feel that there is little point in taking our country backward to the instability of the '90s. We have to move forward towards a better political system where we know what the role and responsibility of the parliament is and what the role and the responsibility of the president is.

Chanda: How does one reach that era without constitutional reforms?

Bhutto: General Musharraf assures us that he wants the parliament to have all the powers. And he says he does not want any powers himself. But there is dichotomy because the constitution actually gives all the key powers to the presidency. So this is an issue on which the discussions are still on-going. Because while General Musharraf says he wants all the powers to be with the parliament, he seems unwilling to give up the presidential power to dismiss the parliament. So we are still having on-going discussions on that particular issue. But we agree, both sides agree, that the reforms should be implemented for fair elections, both sides agree that the ban on the twice-elected prime minister should go, both sides agree that the moderate forces should come together, both sides agree that there should be a level playing field and an end to motivated litigation.

So there is a lot of agreement, apparent agreement on a lot of issues while one or two still are outstanding. But right now the issue is, When is the implementation going to take place and in which phase is this implementation going to take place. To complicate the issue, the ruling party has been saying that nothing will change and that they are not really negotiating with the PPP. They are just giving PPP a "dheel," which in our local language means long rope. They keep talking about how they are going to impose emergency. So some people have cynically remarked that the Red Mosque incident in Islamabad was actually cooked up by elements of the cabinet to provide a pretext for emergency, but their plan failed when the presidency decided to take action against the militants. So you know we are talking here about a country from which many key Al Qaeda suspects and terrorists have been arrested like Abu Zubeida, and Khalid Sheikh from Pindi [Rawalpindi], Ramzi bin al Shihab from Karachi. So we must remember that this not just a war for Pakistan's heart and soul; this is something that will have far-reaching ramifications on militant struggles across our borders. We in the PPP are very determined to build peace. In fact, we say that the message of Islam is peace. And we want peace for our

citizens inside our country, we want an end to the attacks on NATO and Afghan troops in the nearby Afghanistan. And we want an end to the militants who tried to hijack our foreign policy by conducting attacks on the Indian parliament and on other sites in India. So our world vision collides rather dramatically with the world vision of the extremists. Musharraf has said he is for moderation, so we hope that he can do something upfront that can facilitate moderate forces coming together.

Chanda: President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain of the Pakistan Muslim League has said that maybe there will be imposition of emergency and the assembly's term will be extended for one year. If that happens, then what will be the position of your party?

Bhutto: I believe my party will join with all the other political parties to protest any attempt to defer the elections. What we have been telling all the other political parties, we had an All Parties Conference in London, and we all agreed on certain points for the holding of fair, free and impartial elections. Whereas the other political parties wanted to start a movement straight away, we said, no, we have to wait. We have to wait and see whether either the elections are postponed or we have to wait and see whether the elections are rigged. But to start an agitation at this point might tempt the rulers into imposing emergency. But I do think that if the doors of the election are shut on us and the emergency is imposed or the elections are rigged, then certainly the PPP with the other political parties, civil groups and NGOs in Pakistan will put pressure like in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution for the empowerment of our people.

Chanda: You can see a street protest of the type that we saw recently involving the chief justice, perhaps even bigger with the participation of political parties?

Bhutto: That's right. I very much can see that happening. I would like to see it happening, but I don't think Pakistan

needs anarchy or civil strife or bloodshed. But both sides have responsibility to prevent that. And the elections now give General Musharraf and the presidency an opportunity as well as the military establishment an opportunity to take Pakistan safely from one phase of governance to another phase of governance. The spoilers are there. After all why would those who have politically benefited from firing the shots from the shoulders of the military want to have fair elections which will see them give up power and go into opposition.

So I understand that there will be elements like the ruling PML(Q) [Pakistan Muslim League (Qaid-e-Azam)] which will do everything to scuttle a process of reconciliation and resolution, moving Pakistan to a moderate course. But I think it is important for General Musharraf and the military establishment to stay the course, not to defer the elections, not to impose the emergency and to make sure that those elections are credible and satisfy the public. The public are the important people. We need international observers. Otherwise there would just be name calling. So we need a third party that can certify whether the elections are going to be fair or not.

Chanda: President Musharraf has been criticized recently severely in the US for not doing enough to capture the Al Qaeda suspects hiding in Pakistan. What do you think of that? Do you think he is doing enough?

Bhutto: Well I know as a Pakistani it certainly hurts me very much when I see that inevitably the trail of terrorists leads back to my country. If it is an issue of the tube bomber, we find that he had visited the Pakistan or if it is an issue of Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, we find that he had made a telephone call to Pakistan. If it is capturing the CEO of Al Qaeda Khalid Sheikh, we find that he was captured in Pakistan's garrison city of Rawalpindi. It bothers us Pakistanis that our great nation should be associated with such elements. We don't want to make our country hospitable to such elements. My party severely criticized the peace

agreement that was signed in 2006 with the Taliban elements in the tribal regions of Pakistan. And we feel that our tribal areas receded to the foreign elements, to Afghan Taliban and the Arab and the Chechen militant fighters. And now those groups actually administer parts of our territory. And hold our people hostage. They dispense their own form of justice. They teach little 12-year-old boys to behead those they accuse of being spies. I mean little children should have pens in their hands. Little children should have schools to go to. Little children should have dreams.

Chanda: So why is it that it can still continue in the Pakistan territory?

Bhutto: This is a question that General Musharraf and his regime must answer. While they have certainly verbally expressed the sentiment for the right cause of eliminating terrorism and extremism in the country, unfortunately they have not been able to assert the rule of law in the country. My government would move swiftly to assert law and order in the tribal areas of Pakistan, to hunt down the Al Qaeda leaders who are trying to take advantage of the lack of law and order there, to stop the drug trade which is actually funding and fuelling terrorism and to reform the political madrassas who use the name madrassas, but are actually militant headquarters using women and children as human shields. I am a woman, I am a mother. I do not want to see the innocent women and children of my country held up as human shields and killed as they were during the Red Mosque incident. And I think it is the duty of government to provide the protection of the life and liberty of its citizens.

Chanda: Given the fact that, despite President Musharraf's verbal assurances that he's doing everything, it is still continuing and in fact increasing, can you blame the Americans for saying that they will actually intervene without the Pakistani permission?

Bhutto: Well, I can understand why they say that because they feel that Islamabad has failed to stop the terrorists and that is why they would like to move in, but I will really urge against that. I believe that the violation of Pakistan's sovereignty through unauthorized military action will have very adverse consequences. When under attack, all Pakistanis will forget their differences and they will all unite. So any unauthorized action would pit the NATO against all the people of Pakistan, and I do not think that is advisable. But I think what is advisable is to have a close working relationship. Certainly, when the PPP is elected to power, we intend to restore law and order to our tribal areas and prevent the militants from attacking NATO. So we intend to take away the causes that today can threaten air strikes against Pakistan. We also intend to work very closely with the NATO and with the United States and other countries to eliminate terrorism; to help us also in our tribal areas, to eliminate, through intelligence sharing and other means of cooperation.

Chanda: Pakistan has always sought its strategic depth in Afghanistan as part of its security policy. Do you think that policy has led to the alliance between the Pakistani ISI and Taliban? Will you change that?

Bhutto: Well I certainly hope that I can change it. I believe that the policy of strategic depth has backfired and in fact it was in 1998 that I stood up in the parliament of Pakistan and I said that the policy of strategic depth is turning into one of strategic threat for Pakistan. And the passage of years have shown to me that indeed such a policy is leading to militancy, suicide bombers, weaponization, drug trade in Pakistan to an increase in poverty and unemployment. As the priorities of the state shift, these issues are neglected, so I want to end to that policy of strategic depth. I think Afghanistan has traditionally been viewed either as a buffer state or as a forward policy state where there is strategic depth. And throughout history, different empires, even the British Empire or the Greeks, even when they came to the area, have looked

at the issue in terms of the strategic depth or a buffer state. And I think for us it is much better to have an Afghanistan that is peaceful, that allows us to trade with it, that has good relations with all its neighbors, and I think it is very promising that Afghanistan has joined the South Asian Association of Regional Countries. And I think for India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other countries of SAARC, this is where we should concentrate. We should try to create the economic interdependencies that allowed Europe to emerge from the ravages of two World Wars and build a common market that has given unprecedented growth and an increase in the standard of living of ordinary Europeans. I mean in the '50s people were all on the rations. And now they are spoiled for choice.

Chanda: Another issue Kashmir... seems to have been defused a little bit. Do you see any prospect, if you return to Pakistan as prime minister, you will have a different approach than what has been tried by Musharraf?

Bhutto: No. I think Musharraf did the right thing in following the spirit of the Simla agreement, which my father had signed with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. And that the spirit of the Islamabad Declaration where Rajiv Gandhi and I had decided to work for peaceful relations. Certainly the fighting over Kargil and the 1 million men who faced each other eyeball to eyeball after the Indian Parliament attack drove home the dramatic consequences of a conflict between India and Pakistan, who are both nuclear capable states. I do not think we can afford this. I think Musharraf did the right thing. We have been very critical of him when he has done the wrong thing vis-à-vis the policy with India or vis-à-vis the policy with women rights vis-à-vis restoring the women's seats in Parliament. We supported those measures because we do not believe in being totally rejectionist or of being totally accepting. We believe in dealing with issue by issue.

So yes, we would continue the process of dialogue with India and not only that I hope in the 60th year of our anniversary – both countries are turning 60 in a few days time – I hope we

can come and build a peace treaty. That will enable our people to turn their backs on an unhappy past and look to a brighter future. Kashmir is an issue between us, it is a dispute but then, you know, India has a dispute with China over the border, but they do not go to war with each other. So we need to learn that we can have differing opinions without actually allowing them to transform themselves into conflict, bloodshed, terrorism, militancy or war.

Chanda: When you were Prime Minister, how much were you aware of A.Q. Khan's nuclear-arms sales activities?

Bhutto: I was not at all aware of his nuclear arms sales opportunities. In fact, as Prime Minister of Pakistan, my government gave birth to the Benazir Nuclear Doctrine. Under this nuclear doctrine, Pakistan would not export nuclear technology. That is the cardinal principle of the doctrine. And we would not put together the components of a weapon unless our security was threatened. And then we would not shape and mold uranium into nuclear parts. So it was a policy that was bipartisan and came through with consultations with the presidency and the armed forces so that it was accepted by all as part of the national interest and to my knowledge it held until India detonated its nuclear devices and then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in retaliation, detonated in Pakistan. So it was quite a shock that I learnt that the no-export of nuclear technology had been violated, and then I would not have believed it until A.Q. Khan came on television and confessed, and now the only question before us is, did he fall on his sword to protect others or the others are also involved? For that, my party calls for a parliamentary inquiry because Pakistan cannot afford to endanger its own nuclear system by scientists who begin to smuggle and proliferate weapons of mass destruction.

Chanda: But he was flying C-130 of Pakistan Air Force to carry stuff. Is it possible that he was doing it alone?

Bhutto: This is a issue we want resolved at the inquiry

because it is amazing to think that he could have access to C-130 aircraft and go to North Korea. And not only go to North Korea, but go to so many other countries. I remember in General Musharraf's regime, there had been a full page advertisement taken out by the ministry of commerce, advertising the sale of nuclear components. Many of us were shocked, this is before A.Q. Khan's whole issue had been unearthed. So it was actually very shocking, particularly in this world in which we live, where terrorists want to get their hands on weapons of mass destruction. The entire world community including the Pakistanis who live in diaspora as well as all other human beings could face devastating consequences if mad people manage to get lured by money. So I will like to find out more about how A.Q. Khan went around doing this. Musharraf has pardoned him. That is one end of the spectrum, but the other end of the spectrum is that we must make sure that something like this can never happen again.

Chanda: Had A.Q. Khan had not engaged in this kind of activity, would it have been possible today for Pakistan to sign a civilian nuclear agreement with the US as India has done?

Bhutto: It is a difficult call. It is a difficult call. I think that India is a larger market. And India is five times larger than Pakistan. And certainly the post cold war, many academics had predicted that the Western world would start coming to India. So it is difficult to call. But certainly Pakistanis are disappointed that we were not offered the same civil nuclear agreement. I hope that at some stage we are able to be offered a similar civil nuclear cooperation, but I also want to take my generation away from the early generations' view of tit-for-tat with India. We cannot keep competing with the Jones's. We have to identify our own core interests. We need to pursue our core interests and not seek to so overextend ourselves that we begin to collapse from within. I think that is when the policy of strategic depth has done. It is threatening

Pakistan from within and today if I risk my life to go back to my country; I do it because I see the threat within. And I want to try and help my people and help my country avert disaster.

Chanda: Last question, if General Musharraf does not doff his military uniform, would you still go back to Pakistan before the end of the year?

Bhutto: Yes, I will go back to Pakistan whether Musharraf takes his uniform off or not. I will go back to Pakistan this year irrespective of whether we have an agreement with General Musharraf or not. But I hope that General Musharraf will review, in light of the circumstances in Pakistan after the restoration of the chief justice of Pakistan, his decision to seek re-election in uniform from the present assemblies.

Chanda: Thank you very much, Ms. Benazir Bhutto.

Taliban, Afghanistan and Musharraf

*Interview by George Negus, a veteran journalist
Dateline SBS, 2007*

George Negus: Could I start by saying to you, after all you have been through in recent times, both you and your family, and what you could be facing if you go back to Pakistan as you've suggested - jail, maybe even an attempt on your life - one has to ask you, why go back to Pakistan at all, let alone to try and lead the country?

Benazir Bhutto: Many of my friends are shocked that I have taken the decision to return, but Pakistan is my country, it's in trouble, and I feel that I could contribute towards improving the situation. So I feel it is my duty and my responsibility to return and work for a better Pakistan that is peaceful and that can actually count in eliminating the forces of terrorism that seem to have expanded their influence since my government was overthrown.

George Negus: I'd like to talk to you about that in a moment, but can we talk about what I have seen described as "a negotiated transition to democracy" that you are talking about. A curious situation where we could find two ex-prime ministers doing some sort of democratic deal with a military dictator to try and form a government in Pakistan?

Benazir Bhutto: I have problems with the word 'deal' because it gives the impression that we would be supporting dictatorship and that's not my agenda. My party and I are very interested in facilitating a transition to democracy because we believe that democracy undermines religious extremism by providing for the social and economic needs of the people who otherwise are exploited by religious extremists. So therefore my party has had contact - it hasn't

led anywhere yet - but we have tried to seek, if possible, a negotiated transition to democracy. And if it's not possible, we are prepared to take the risk and do our best in the elections that have been promised for this year.

George Negus: So how far down the track are you with this negotiated arrangement? Has there been actual contact between you or your people and the current President? and also Nawaz Sharif? Are the three groups talking?

Benazir Bhutto: We are not all talking together, so to say, but Mr. Nawaz Sharif and I are both committed to the restoration of democracy and to the holding of fair elections under an independent election commission. And with those goals in mind, there have been contacts with the regime. But unfortunately they haven't led anywhere. There has been a lot of talk, but no concrete development, and I think the regime may perhaps just be buying time and giving the illusion that it is interested in a political settlement when in fact it might be trying to consolidate its dictatorship. Certainly recent events in Pakistan, including the sacking of the top judge, indicate that the regime wants to continue as it has in the past, and that's not worked.

George Negus: You say you're not comfortable with the term 'deal', but as somebody put it to me earlier today here, aren't you dancing with the devil? I mean, this man is not a democrat, he is a dictator, he gained power by a coup. How is it really possible for people like yourselves, as democrats, to be even considering such an arrangement?

Benazir Bhutto: First of all, you said "dancing with the devil", but this devil is one that has a tremendous amount of international support, from many countries. Your Prime Minister has visited Pakistan, and he has a lot of support in London and in Washington.

George Negus: True.

Benazir Bhutto: Pakistan is a key state in the war against terrorism and there is a lot of concern in the international community over what will happen if Musharraf is changed or removed. And it's to address those concerns that the Pakistan Peoples Party feels that it is important for us to emphasise that what we are looking for is not a break in the efforts to counter terrorism. That what we are looking for are more successful programs because unless we address the basic needs of the people of Pakistan, we're not going to get very far as far as peace within Pakistan or peace in neighbouring Afghanistan is concerned.

George Negus: Aren't you facing an enormous hurdle because, as you said, in London and Washington and Canberra, for some obscure reason, Pervez Musharraf is acceptable, despite not being elected.

Benazir Bhutto: I am unsure exactly where I said that, but I do believe that he is sitting there, he has got the international support. We need fair elections, and we need a way out. Now, whether that is possible, I am unsure. I am unsure because I think General Musharraf would prefer to keep his military dictatorship going as it has, with a few coteries running the affairs of the country rather than accepting the will of the people. But nonetheless, I'm prepared to explore that, and if it fails, I'm still prepared to go back to Pakistan and fight the elections to the best of my ability and my party's ability.

George Negus: So you think it's worth the compromise that is involved?

Benazir Bhutto: There isn't a compromise yet, Mr. Negus!

George Negus: But you're hoping there will be one?

Benazir Bhutto: The issue we're discussing is fair elections. We, the PPP, would like to see elections that are transparent and open to all political personalities including the exiled prime ministers. At the moment there are huge question

marks over whether General Musharraf and his regime is going to do that. In fact just last month, General Musharraf said that he would not allow us to former prime ministers return and contest because they had already been elected twice. It surprised me, because he is running for a third term for president and has already given himself four extensions as chief of army staff. So I think there is a certain mind-set within the military. But we have a situation internationally where the military regime has a lot of support, and it has a lot of support for strategic reasons. So we would like a peaceful, negotiated, facilitated transfer to democracy. If that's not possible, my fear is that the street agitation could increase and who knows who will ultimately emerge as the winner of that agitation.

George Negus: Can I ask you this - what is actually going to happen? You say that you think there is a window of opportunity for you and Nawaz Sharif to go back to Pakistan despite the fact he said he doesn't want you there - the President - between September and December. What will happen when you turn up at the airport in Islamabad or Karachi?

Benazir Bhutto: When I turn up in Islamabad or Karachi, the regime might try to stop me. They might arrest my supporters. Or they might think this would be detrimental to the image of Pakistan as we head towards elections, and they might allow the crowd to gather. It could go either way. I know that I could get bail from the court, and so they wouldn't be able to arrest me on any existing unproven allegation, but it doesn't take long in my country to make up another allegation. So they might arrest me. The future is uncertain, but one thing I know - that elections are scheduled for later this year and that my party would certainly benefit if I am a contestant in those elections.

George Negus: What you have also said is that the battle lines have been drawn in Pakistan. The military dictatorship versus democracy, and moderate Islam versus extremism.

You believe that these elections that you are talking about may be the last chance Pakistan has to choose a moderate path. Your fear, you say, is if we do not act in these elections, the next election may be too late. That's pretty dramatic.

Benazir Bhutto: That's right, but I made that statement on the basis on the developments that have taken place first, since my dismissal in 1996. It was after that dismissal that al-Qaeda emerged and from the soil of Afghanistan started making threats to the world community. Secondly, the attacks around the world - whether it was in New York, Madrid, London, Bali, or India - began. And thirdly, since 2002 I've seen that the Taliban or al-Qaeda forces have begun expanding their influence within Pakistan. General Musharraf's regime has ceded our tribal territories to pro-Taliban forces, who today administer and collect taxes and dispense their form of justice. Now they are spreading their influence into the settled areas, into the cities of the frontier provinces - into Swat and Malakand - and they are also approaching Islamabad.

George Negus: So you have your doubts about whether Pervez Musharraf is actually trying to stop the activities of people like al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan, but didn't you yourself find it difficult will to deal with them? Didn't you in fact support them in the early days?

Benazir Bhutto: Never al-Qaeda. Never al-Qaeda.

George Negus: And the Taliban?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, that was a mistake, but the Taliban were there in Afghanistan. It was a mistake that many countries made when they first came up and we thought that they might bring peace to Afghanistan. But you know, Mr. Negus, there are many ghastly dictatorships all over the world, and at that time the Taliban was just another ghastly dictatorship in Afghanistan. There was no al-Qaeda. It was only after the removal of my government that al-Qaeda was formed, and it was then that they began training people. Had I been in

power, I would have brought all the influence and pressure to bear on landlocked Afghanistan and Taliban to prevent them allowing the establishment of al-Qaeda camps. That is one of my biggest regrets, that my government was dislodged and al-Qaeda took root and today the Western world and the Muslim world are facing great difficulties due to the creation and spread of al-Qaeda.

George Negus: And you seriously believe that if you don't move at this time to try to get yourself involved - despite the risks entailed - if you don't get involved this time it could be too late and Pakistan will move further and further into Taliban territory?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, I believe that, because just in the last five years within our capital of Islamabad, the militant forces have established a new political madrassa where they are training 7,000 people. This is just one new madrassa. They have spread all over the country, and if they get five more years, there will build up more political madrassas, which are really like little mini army headquarters from where they carry out their subversive and militant activities.

George Negus: We have run out of time, unfortunately, but thank you very much for your time, and, as I found myself saying earlier, it's very difficult to keep a good Pakistani woman down.

Benazir Bhutto: Thank you,

Mr. Negus: Thank you for that.

Musharraf Can't Become President

*Interview by Prabhu Chawla for INDIA TODAY in Aaj Tak
Dubai 2007*

Q. So how do you feel about your impending departure for home?

A. I am very excited. Seven years is a long time and I am wondering what changes have taken place.

Q. What do you expect? A red carpet or the reception that Sharif got?

A. I don't know how I will be received. But I am not in the same boat as him. He has been convicted by the court of law and sentenced for treason and tax evasion. He had traded his imprisonment for a 10-year exile in Saudi Arabia with his family and this involved foreign guarantees. I was given the same offer. But I refused. So unlike Nawaz Sharif, I cannot be put on a plane and sent out.

Q. But the Government will not allow you also to return as there are charges pending against you.

A. The corruption charges against me have not been withdrawn. As far as I am concerned, I am out on bail and should not be arrested. I stayed out so I would not lose my freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of movement and association. Read the rest of this entry

Q. What do you think of Lt. Gen. Ashfaq Kiani? He's a close ally of Musharraf. Does that bother you?

A. Lt General Kiani has a reputation as a professional officer which is what the armed forces and Pakistan need.

Q. The army controls everything from arms to businesses and there are those who are supporting extremism and terrorism. How would you be able to handle and control the Army?

A. Our first step is to separate the offices of army chief and the President. General Musharraf has now given an undertaking to the Supreme Court of Pakistan that he will retire as army chief after the presidential elections this October. Under the present military doctored Constitution, the armed forces come under the President. The political parties would need to unite to bring control of the armed forces back to Parliament for reform to take place. PPP has signed a Charter of Democracy calling upon political parties to make the members of the armed forces answerable to Parliament, as they are in Washington, London and France, for greater transparency and accountability.

Q. What would be your ideal amendment to the Constitution, if you return to power?

A. To prevent a return to the dysfunctional democracy of the nineties it is important to do away with the powers of the president to dismiss an elected parliament in his discretion. Secondly, there are other issues like lifting the military imposed ban on a twice elected prime minister contesting election for a third time for prime minister, appointment of Governors, members of the Judiciary and Election Commission. The Charter of Democracy spells out the changes needed.

Q. You've had mentioned about the package deal with Musharraf: balance of power, reforms for a fair election, lifting the ban on a twice-elected prime minister. When do you expect these to happen and how so?

A. These issues are part of our negotiations and will happen in a phased manner. Some steps have already been taken like arrangements for shedding military uniform, the counting of ballots, stopping horse trading by preventing arrest of parliamentarians without permission of an Ethics Committee, end to political victimization and national reconciliation. I

hope other issues like eligibility of Prime Ministerial candidates and balance of power between parliament and presidency will also be resolved in due course.

Q. Elaborate on what does "a power-sharing" deal means? Would this include the Army as well since Musharraf has a hold on them?

A. The PPP negotiations are not to share power but to restore democracy through the holding of fair, free and impartial elections where civilians govern and people are the masters of their own destiny.

Q. Being in self-exiled for 8 years, what has changed inside on a person (as a mother and wife) and professional level (as a politician)?

A. Adversity has tempered my character. My husband was in jail in Pakistan for 8 years without a conviction and I had to bring up small children as single parent in exile besides looking after my ailing mother. Scores of members of my party were killed. We paid a heavy price for democracy. This experience has strengthened my commitment for building a tolerant society which respects human rights, allows a free media, has a transparent and corruption free government which tackles the social and economic issues of the people, brings peace internally by undermining the forces of extremism and builds peace regionally.

Q. How would you run the country now in comparison to your previous tenures? Which issues would you give priority?

A. I would seek reconciliation, peace, ending militancy, eradicating poverty, building institutions of civil rule and democracy, spreading education and providing hope to the people of Pakistan for a better future.

Q. You mentioned before that you'd better controls in the tribal areas when you were in office. Things have certainly

changed during the past years — 9/11 and the rising inflation rate and terrorism - in the country. How do you expect to tackle an uphill task after being out of action for 8 years?

A. The military government has relied solely on the use of force in dealing with extremism in the tribal areas. We believe that alongside the use of force, we also need to take political steps and improve the socio economic conditions of the people in the tribal area. Poverty and social isolation also breeds militancy. We will address issues of poverty and social isolation in the tribal areas. My Party has already filed a constitutional petition in the Supreme Court seeking the extension of Political Parties Act to the tribal areas. We want to bring the people of the tribal areas into the twenty first century and make them stake holders in fighting militancy and extremism. We would interrupt the flow of drug funds that finance militancy as well as spread education and employment.

Q. It was understood that you tried to strike a deal with the Army. How is it going and how would that gel with your deal with Musharraf?

A. I am not striking any deal with the Army. I am looking at transition to democracy in which the Parliament is sovereign and the military performs its constitutionally ordained duties.

Q. Your take on American funds to Pakistan for the war on terror. Increasingly, there is an anti-American sentiment among Pakistanis because the country's leaders continue to be dictated by the American government. Do you think the country still needs aid to fight terror? What would you have done?

A. Terrorism is a threat to the internal unity and integrity of Pakistan. Unless it is eliminated, God forbid, Pakistan could disintegrate and its people suffer bloodshed and civil war. A PPP government will cooperate with the international community in the fight on terror to save Pakistan and bring

regional security for a safer world.

Q. Observers said the power marriage between you and Musharraf will not last due to conflicting interests, management styles and personalities. What is your comment?

A. It is for the people to decide who will govern them. However unless the Constitution clearly spells out the responsibilities of the President and Parliament, no government will survive irrespective of the management styles and personalities of the persons involved. The dismissals of earlier governments including that of Prime Minister Junejo and Prime Minister Nawaz prove the point. I argue for a Constitution that permits for stability.

Q. Critiques said that you do not have the slightest clue as to how a soldier gets sandwiched between his oath of a soldier and his own conscience while killing Muslim brothers. What is your comment?

A. I would not like to see the Pakistan army kill Muslims or non-Muslims whether it is in East Pakistan, Baluchistan, Karachi or the tribal areas of Pakistan. However I would like to see the Pakistan army defend the unity and territorial integrity of Pakistan and come in aid of civil power to protect the lives, liberty and livelihood of the people of Pakistan whenever it is under threat.

HOPING AGAINST HOPE

*Interview by Mr. Ashraf Mumtaz
Dawn magazine Sunday, 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

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 a scapegoat to save others. Don't forget that the PPP was overthrown twice to set the stage for the war again

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 organisations, 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 organisation 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 regime 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 elsewhere 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.

The government's reaction to the PPP rally violates the values of enlightenment

*Interview via E-mail for Herald Magazine, Karachi,
May 2005*

Q. Did you anticipate the way the government responded to Asif Zardari's arrival?

A. Not really. Since it was Zardari's first visit to the city after eight years of imprisonment, the party decided to welcome him warmly and peacefully. The regime had been talking about reconciliation and a level playing field for all political parties, so it was important for him to test this in the run-up to the local bodies and general elections. But the events in Lahore have thrown up many issues such as whether a regime that disallows the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) to demonstrate its popularity can hold fair elections.

Moreover, the regime claims that democracy has been restored but flouts the democratic values of freedom of movement and political association. The government's intolerant reaction to a peaceful political rally clearly vindicates the values of enlightenment that the regime claims to espouse. And while the regime claims that it has not promoted the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) as the general's opposition, the difference in its treatment of the MMA's rallies as opposed to the PPP's demonstrates its partiality to the former.

Q. Critics allege that Zardari's return was stage-managed to use him as the back channel for secret negotiations with the military regime...

A. Back channel negotiations have been going on since October 1999. However, there has been no agreement because of the inability of the regime to accept the human

and democratic rights of the people or the political parties

Q. But the Punjab chief minister claims that his government was simply acting on the PPP's request to protect Zardari...

A. The Punjab chief minister has also claimed that his government did not arrest anyone in the Punjab.

Q. Do you think that the Chaudhrys would have taken such measures without the blessings of the federal government?

A. We avoid going into what our thoughts or those of the regime's may be as this amounts to speculation. Instead, we go by stated facts. The stated facts are that General Musharraf has announced a policy of reconciliation. He says that he wants an alliance with the liberal parties to build an enlightened society. In light of this stated policy, the momentum of talks will depend on what General Musharraf can do to prevent his present parliamentary partners from denying fair elections and political space to rival political parties.

Q. Despite the mobilisation of the party cadres, the PPP failed to demonstrate the defiance that was expected...

A. I am proud of the PPP workers, of their sincerity towards the party cause and their dedication to the mission of Quaid-e-Azam for a democratic Pakistan. The PPP's workers demonstrated the federal and popular structure of the party as well as its organisational capacity. Zardari is now in Bilawal House II and will be in a position to assist in improving the party's position in the Punjab.

Q. What bearing will this have on the upcoming local bodies elections?

A. The local bodies elections will be the second test of the policy of reconciliation announced by the presidency. General Musharraf says that he wants democracy and believes in fair elections. If the local bodies elections are rigged, the promises of the general elections being fair will be questioned. This will set in motion actions to prevent

rigging in the general elections.

Q. Do you agree with the view that your dialogue with the regime may divide the opposition?

A. We neither started the dialogue nor stopped it. We are the opposition. It is the regime that begins or ends dialogues. As far as we are concerned, we do our own planning, concentrate on our organisation, on policy issues, on solidarity with the people of Pakistan and their concerns. We keep the doors of dialogue open.

INDO-PAK RELATIONS

Interview via E-mail by Amitabha Sen, May 6, 2004,

Only a strong & true Democracy can ensure lasting peace, expanding trade.

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 Musharaf 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.

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 fulfil 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.

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.

AFTA, the EU, ASEAN, GCC are some of the economic groups that are emerging.

As you can see that in different ways social forces have been unleashed which are changing the world.

We want the children of Pakistan to grow up secure in their culture and history with the confidence to be global citizens 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.

“Musharraf is willing to take orders from anyone”

*Interview by Javed Soomro for Newsline Magazine
April, 2004*

Q: Why do you continue to live in exile? Why don't you return to Pakistan and wage a political struggle for the country's return to democracy?

A: A political war can be fought from anywhere. I do want to go back, but if I return, [I suspect] they would tie my hands and I won't be able to do much. It's quite difficult for me not to be able to return to my country, but in my country justice has been murdered. My husband has been in prison for the last seven-and-a half years. Whenever he is freed by a court, he is re-arrested on other false charges. So, if I were to go back, I wonder what I could do for my party? But, having said that, I still want to return home whenever I get a chance.

Q: And when do you think you might get that chance?

A: I wish I could answer that.

Q: Political leaders fight from prisons. Are you afraid of going to prison?

A: No, I am not. I've been behind bars [before]. In a way, a jail is a place where you can rest, read books and live with yourself. But being in jail is difficult too because it's like being in a graveyard, you can't do much.

When I was in jail, Zia-ul-Haq became even stronger – and then, when I went abroad in 1986, I was able to expose him. In 1986 and later in 1989, when I was in the country, they were constantly maligning and harassing me. They didn't

even give me time to defend myself. Then my party colleagues advised me to stay out of the country and begin our campaign against martial law.

Q: Given that President General Musharraf continues to enjoy the support of the west and some political parties, how do you intend to proceed against him?

A: We want the restoration of democracy and an end to martial law, but General Musharraf has created a situation whereby the Taliban are asserting themselves once again, and there is speculation that Osama bin Laden has been [apprehended and hidden away] so that the world will [continue to] feel a need for Musharraf.

Our people are dying, poverty and unemployment are on the rise, but the rest of the world says that Musharraf is needed because [only] he can stop nuclear proliferation, [only] he [can launch] an operation in the tribal areas. So he manipulates and dangles some kind of carrot in front of the world all the time. This is not good for the people [of Pakistan], and I think the world has got it all wrong.

The PPP was waging a struggle inside the country and that was why we kept our doors open for negotiations with General Musharraf so that fair elections could take place. He imposed a ban on me [contesting the elections], but still we participated in them. Then Musharraf betrayed my party colleagues. He promised that he would hand over power to the PPP if it won the elections providing it was minus Benazir. We won the elections but he did not transfer power. After that, we devised a strategy against the LFO. General Musharraf then went to the maulvis and begged them for their support. He told them that he would take off his uniform and send the judges home. So the maulvis gave him their support.

Q: Do you believe President Musharraf is taking orders from the US?

A: Whatever the US asks him [Musharraf] to do, he does, and when we say anything he calls it treason. He is willing to take orders from anyone. A phone call was made from the US asking him to get out of Kargil, and he got out – and left 3,000 of our soldiers to die in the snow. Then, when the Indian parliament was attacked, Vajpayee asked him to ban certain jihadi groups otherwise the Indian army would strike, Musharraf banned those outfits. He does all of that but I don't know why he [insists on being] our enemy.

Q: But you have welcomed his efforts to improve relations with India...

A: Yes, we want good relations with India. We are not so narrow-minded that if an opponent does something which we believe is right, we still oppose him just for the sake of opposition. However, we do believe that military or dictatorial rule is not good for our country and we will keep fighting it.

Q: Recently the Pakistani scientist, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, was shown on television confessing that he was involved in nuclear proliferation. Would you comment?

A: Dr. Qadeer Khan has confessed, but remember that he is under arrest and we don't know what kind of pressures he is facing. As a former Prime Minister, it's very hard for me to believe that Dr. Qadeer Khan was involved in illegal trade at an individual level. I suspect that he was instructed to do so and now there is a cover-up. I feel sorry that an Indian scientist is a President while we have made our scientist a prisoner. If he has really done what is being claimed then he has betrayed the nation, but my heart doesn't accept the fact that he has betrayed us. I believe the faces of those people who have harmed the national interest have yet to be unmasked.

Q: Who are those people?

A: I think the transfer of information to North Korea and Libya

took place during General Musharraf's rule. He gave orders, either as the chief of army staff or as President. Remember, that Musharraf went to Libya in 2000 and the deal with North Korea that Pakistan get missile parts in exchange for uranium from North Korea took place in August 2002, and a photograph of the shipment was taken by a spy satellite. So I think the nation needs to know and I demand that an enquiry be instituted to investigate who did what. If General Musharraf has [indeed] given the orders, he should be held accountable.

Q: But some accounts seem to suggest that a deal was struck when you, as Prime Minister, went to North Korea?

A: Well, this impression was being projected by certain quarters but it is absolutely wrong. I did go to North Korea, but when I went I wanted to acquire missile technology for my country. We established our Missile Technology Board in 1989 and built a missile that I named Zulfikar. It was to be test-fired in 1997, which was Pakistan's golden jubilee year. However, this missile was later renamed Ghauri. I went to North Korea to learn about their technology. And we did acquire North Korean technology – but that was against money, not technology.

'Musharraf fails to remember that army chiefs in Pakistan have not had a very nice life'

*Interview by Shyam Bhatia for India Abroad, London,
September 3, 2003*

Q. Is it true that you have met Condoleezza Rice because the Bush administration wishes to build bridges with you?

A. No, I would love to meet her. I did meet her before she was National Security Adviser. I have tremendous respect for her being a woman and rising to such a high position. I think the Bush administration is very sensitive about contacts with the opposition. These days Musharraf is a key ally of the West.

I am sorry about this because I think the more the West supports Musharraf, the stronger the extremist forces grow and the moderate forces are being marginalized, that's not good for Pakistan.

Q. How long can Musharraf last?

A. As long as the army supports him, not as long as America supports him. The American support is one factor because the army will say, 'we need weapons or money and so we need Musharraf.' Right now they think good, he's getting us the money and our ideological perception continues.

Since 1977 our security establishment was hijacked by Zia-ul-Haq's officers. They think Pakistan should have a puppet government in Afghanistan so that we can get strategic depth all the way up to the Amur river. They think that through nuclear brinkmanship they can bring India to its knees because they think no matter how intense the insurgency gets in Kashmir what can India do?

Ultimately, if India tries to have a war, the world community

will have to intervene to stop it going nuclear and if the world community does not come in, India knows if it crosses into Lahore, Pakistan will throw a bomb.

India might retaliate but it will still mean so many people in India will die.

They have this strategy and they think having Musharraf on top allows them to pursue this strategy.

Q. There is also rising anti-Americanism in Pakistan.

A. There is rising anti-Americanism for different reasons. One of them is that Musharraf is a dictator and people feel angry that the West talks about freedom but turns a blind eye to the empowerment of Pakistanis.

The second reason is that we have a very large Pakhtun population and the bombing in Afghanistan led to many civilian deaths and people knew each other across the border, so there is that grief.

The third thing is that we have a large military class wedded to the idea that Afghanistan is critical to Pakistan because of strategic depth. This class also has a pensioner class and there are constituencies within that who are anti-American.

Q. Does Musharraf have an exit strategy?

A. No he does not. He thinks if he remains head of the army nobody will throw him out. He fails to remember that army chiefs in Pakistan have not had a very nice life. Yahya Khan went to Ayub and told him, 'Go home sir' and he had to.

General Gul Hasan went to Yahya and said, 'Go home sir,' and he had to. General Zia died and if he was killed it had to be by his own men.

General Asif Nawaz died and again if he was killed it is because his own men wanted a change. [*Jehangir*] Karamat resigned and Musharraf himself was about to be killed in a plane crash.

Q. General Musharraf is a pretty bright man, isn't he?

A. That's what people say, but from what I remember of him, I was quite disappointed by his analytical skills. He was my Director General Military Operations and he presented me with his plan in front of 50 officers about how the mujahideen would infiltrate an area similar to Kargil. How they would bring about a war and the Indians wouldn't be able to dislocate us and they would be forced to start a second front at which point the international community would intervene and we would take Srinagar.

I said to him, 'General, what would happen on the day after you took Srinagar.' He replied, 'I don't know what you mean, I don't understand your question.'

I think he personally doesn't like me because of that confrontation we had in GHQ on the Kargil issue. But believe me I had to have that confrontation because if I did not, the blood of 3,000 soldiers would be on my hands.

After I was overthrown they went ahead with their folly and 3,000 of our young boys, the best in our army, died, so many on the Indian side died, there was so much bitterness. The whole world had to intervene to stop it escalating into a nuclear war.

Q. How did you find Musharraf personally, all those pictures of him with his dogs and his whisky?

A. He was quite a jolly officer initially. I don't know about the whisky drinking and dog loving because I did not see him with his dogs or his whisky. But he was my translator for the Turkish delegation, he was very sharp. He was also very close to General Hamid Gul, who was one of the corps commanders. When they had this exercise 'Zarb Al Momen,' he was my conducting officer.

We had this fracas on the Kargil war games proposal and I don't know if he has ever got over it. But we politicians learn that there are no such things as personal feelings in politics.

It's the interests of the country, of the party, of the people.

Nawaz Sharif and I were at daggers drawn. Believe me what we suffered at his hands I will always remember, but I have put it behind me. He suffered too and now he is a changed man. He very much opposes the military exploitation of our country.

Q. Do Pakistanis hate all Indians, or is it just Hindus they dislike?

A. It changes from times of tension to times of less tension. When there is tension and there are troops on the border they hate everyone who is Indian, irrespective of whether they are Muslim or Hindu.

When there is no tension people really welcome Indians. Indian films are very popular, Indian goods are smuggled across all the time, people are desperate to get Indian visas and travel to India to visit their families or the Taj Mahal.

Overseas the Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis see themselves as South Asians, they work together, they socialise together, there is no hatred at all.

Q. There must be others in Pakistan who are broadminded?

A: If you leave it to the people they want to be friends. Sometimes I think your country and my country, the military need wars so they can go on buying weapons. I don't know, but as far as people to people links are concerned, there is a lot of love and affection.

When I first talked of peace in 1987 between India and Pakistan there was so much criticism. I was called an Indian agent and an Israeli agent. Now I see that everyone is falling into line.

Q. So Kashmir is the stumbling block?

A. It's for negotiation. When I was prime minister the Indian government had agreed to put Kashmir as an agenda item

and we had two agenda items.

One was Kashmir and the second was Indo-Pak. We said we would not let lack of progress on one issue impede progress on the other.

After India went nuclear in 1988 the Pakistan People's Party had a reappraisal. We said we don't want to follow tit for tat with India. We should follow our core interests, but not copy India. India wants a bomb, we want a bomb. India wants a missile, we want a missile etc. We said we must dissociate from tit for tat.

The second thing we said was that if we disagree on the territorial unity of Kashmir, we can still work for the social unity of Kashmir by working for safe and open borders. If we have safe and open borders people can travel and trade. Ultimately I feel we have to ask ourselves with all that population what can we do to pick ourselves out of this mess for the future.

The only way forward for us is to try and see what the European Union did and to have a kind of tariffs and common market. If we open up, people will come and visit Pakistan, more hotels will be built, more people will get jobs. It's the same in your country.

Q. Do Pakistanis feel they should rule in New Delhi?

A. I don't know about that but I have met people who are very bitter about India and I am sure you have the same on your side who have witnessed massacres. People who witnessed the massacres find it difficult to let go.

But generally those who did not witness massacres all want to talk about their homes in India. Indians are the same. Mr. I K Gujral [*former Indian prime minister*] has told me of his homes in Jhelum and Mr. Advani has told me of Karachi and Hyderabad.

Q. Could you comment on the recent pronouncement of the

Swiss magistrate, Daniel Devaud, who has convicted you and your husband of money laundering?

A: I wish I could understand why the Swiss magistrate did this, but perhaps he was poisoned over six years by things that my political opponents had to say. I happen to be the most popular leader in Pakistan and election polls have proved that.

Therefore for a series of people I must be eliminated. The first successor tried to eliminate me, to impose a one party rule in the country. Now the military again wants to eliminate me because they want the MMA [*Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal*] -- the alliance of religious parties -- to be the only alternative in the country.

So long as I am leading the PPP [*Pakistan Peoples Party*], the party has the support of the people. So I think this is an attempt to eliminate my leadership through motivated charges.

Q. What is Magistrate Devaud's actual charge? He seems to have fined you and your husband large amounts of money.

A. I have no idea because I have not been given a copy of the order. I am working with a detective agency to procure a copy of the order that was passed on the 31st of July. The detective agency has managed to obtain a copy of the order in French and right now some supporters are trying to translate the order from French into English so that I can understand it.

I need to have a fair opportunity to respond but when orders are passed behind my back, communicated to the government of Pakistan, I have to respond on the basis of what sources in the government tell me.

Q. Do you still believe you will be welcome if you go back to Pakistan and that you could be prime minister again? Is the political game over for Benazir Bhutto?

A. It's not over for me, not in a democratic way. If there is dictatorship, yes, dictators oppose me because I symbolise freedom, free markets, a modern Pakistan integrating with the rest of the world community.

The people of Pakistan support me because of my programmes. They first supported me because of my father, now they support me because in my terms of office they got social and economic development.

They saw here's a prime minister who cares for the poor, who's eliminating polio, bringing down infant mortality, reducing population growth rate, building 48,000 primary schools, teaching people computer literacy, getting optic fibres put across Pakistan so that our people can be equipped for the 21st century, attracting investment which is creating jobs and young people are building their lives, building roads and bridges in Karachi and Lahore and Pindi, dry port in Faisalabad.

So people love me now because they see that under my leadership they benefited.

They had peace with India, they didn't have these Kargil adventures. They had peace with Afghanistan because there was no Al Qaeda in Afghanistan when I was prime minister. There may have been Taliban but there was no Al Qaeda. Militants and militias were on the run.

Look at all the flowers around here, they are all from people who say 'we are standing by you.'

Q. You really care about going back?

A. I care about the people, I don't care about the power because I've been prime minister twice. I do care about Pakistan and I do care about the people. For me the best option is that I could go back and be president or prime minister of Pakistan because I could help Pakistan be a modern state.

I am concerned when I see Pakistanis finger-printed and mug

-shotted. They are finger-printed and mug-shotted because all the time people are popping up like Khalid Sheikh and other wanted Al Qaeda [*members*]. So we are suspects in the eyes of the world community and I would like to change that. At the same time last year when I was banned from contesting, I told my party, please contest because I am not interested in power. I am interested in the poor people, I want to help the poor of Pakistan and if you all form the government, I will feel I have formed the government.

So my first option is to be prime minister or president of Pakistan. But my first love is the people of Pakistan and I want them to prosper and I feel that what I am facing today has nothing to do with corruption.

Just yesterday I heard that Musharraf has taken with his generals 10 acres.

He and four others, the finance minister, his military secretary, his brother-in-law who is also in the army, they have taken 10 acres in Islamabad. I never took even one square yard in Islamabad.

Look at the house where I was born in and look at the house Musharraf was born in. Look at the school I went to and look at the school where he went to. Look at the house I lived in before I got married and look at the house he lived in after he married.

Today he has got so much real estate. Where did he get it from? Because I speak about accountability in the army, because I speak about the armed forces reforming themselves and going back to the austere lifestyle of General Tikka and General Babar, the greedy generals don't like it.

Q. Does a mere Swiss magistrate have the authority to pronounce on such weighty matters such as ordering you to pay £30 million to the military government of Pakistan?

A. You are right, a magistrate is a minor judicial figure and he cannot confiscate money and pronounce on such matters.



This magistrate has given a finding and if I challenge this finding, it will be quashed and the matter will go to court and the government of Pakistan will have to produce prosecution witnesses and we will have the right to cross examine them as one should.

In fact I have already been charged on this charge of abusing my office to award a contract to a pre-shipment firm to benefit my husband.

I was already charged on that and there was a total lack of evidence, but I was being framed until miraculously these tape recordings surfaced, which proved that the law ministry had written the judgement. Then the supreme court set it aside and sent it for re-trial.

I live in Karachi, the first trial took place in Lahore. Now they are making me face the same charges again in Pindi and there my lawyers have appealed to the supreme court that this is double jeopardy and you cannot be tried twice.

I have now been told that since the Swiss magistrate has found against me, I will be tried for a third time on the same charge.

The charge is a simple one. The charge is that Benazir Bhutto abused her position as prime minister of Pakistan to influence the awards of the pre-shipment contracts to financially benefit her husband. It's a charge that I've denied, but it's a charge that I have faced in Lahore. It was set aside after the day it surfaced, it's a charge that's going in Pindi and now they are saying it's a charge that will apply in Switzerland.

I'm quite happy to face the charge. I faced it in Lahore, I've got lawyers in Pindi and I know that my supporters will rally around me and I'll face the charge in Switzerland. But I do ask is this the way justice is done?

This is my main issue. You can try me in Switzerland, but then withdraw the charge in Pindi.

Q. Teresita C Schaffer from the Centre of Strategic Studies in

Washington, DC has been quoted as saying that as Swiss courts have a reputation for probity, this decision will damage you politically at home, irreparably.

A. Tessie has on several occasions made negative statements about my leadership and the confidence of the people in politics and she has been proved wrong. Prior to my original conviction being set aside, Tessie also made several pronouncements.

I think there is a dichotomy at play here and I think the dichotomy is that in Pakistan I have a widespread popular base. People are with me and elections have repeatedly been rigged and observers have noted they were rigged. French observers in 1997 and then the European Union spoke of serious flaws in 2002 and they have been done to keep me out. But internationally I believe I have alienated some of my old friends in the West because I am seen as the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who gave Pakistan the nuclear bomb.

And I am seen as the person who helped Pakistan acquire nuclear technology, enabling Pakistan to deliver nuclear capable missiles. So I think there is a concern in the international community that a weak Pakistan and a Pakistan dependent on the international community is better than a strong Pakistan. So perhaps that is the reason why they would want to see me undermined.

Or, secondly, maybe they just believe what they have been fed by the establishment. I have always been puzzled by the amount of support I have in Pakistan and at the same time by the popular support I have in the West where I am recognised and respected. But in the institutional framework there have always been reservations about me.

Right now if there is a fair election under the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, I will form the government.

"Sindh has many genuine grievances, which must be addressed"

*Interview by Aamir Sial & Imran Khan Sial for Sindh Today,
London, April 2003*

Aamir / Imran Sial: It has been noted that the popularity graph of PPP in Sindh has gone down considerably during the recent years. What are the reasons?

Benazir Bhutto: Some people do think that the graph of the PPP in Sindh has gone down during recent years. Others believe otherwise noting that the PPP actually won the last elections which were heavily rigged. For me, PPP is the most popular Party in the country, the only Federal Party with the vision, the program, the team and the experience to build a modern Pakistan on democratic lines where there is prosperity and progress for its people.

The PPP secured the largest number of seats in the Sindh Provincial Assembly, secured the largest number of Senate seats and in terms of popular vote also got the largest numbers. This was clearly a victory. Its another matter that unconstitutional use was made of the ISI, Rangers, Provincial and Central Governments to cheat the people of the victory they bestowed on the PPP.

This success was achieved despite the massive manipulations, gerrymandering and rigging by the regime. The hounding of the political opponents, the making of unholy alliances to keep the PPP out, the massive coercion and inducements to break the will of our people were all employed shamelessly and ruthlessly but failed to achieve the purposes of the regime.

Aamir / Imran Sial: It is said that when PPP is out of power, it forcefully pleads the case of Sindh. However, when it was in

power, it promoted the case of Punjab versus Sindh. What are your comments?

Benazir Bhutto: The PPP is a Federalist Party supporting a federal structure of the state. The pro establishment parties like to argue that the PPP plays the Sindh card. They do this as offensive defence for their policy of marginalising the smaller provinces in the key decision making apparatus. The nationalists in the province are wary of the PPP because its strong and popular base foiled their attempts to gain power on the basis of regionalism.

The PPP and I promote the politics of Federalism believing that poverty, hunger, backwardness, prejudice and discrimination knows no region, no race and no gender. However, because I am from Sindh, there will be those who will exploit my ethnicity to cast confusion on my politics. I take it in my stride having confidence in the political astuteness of the people of Pakistan from Khyber to Karachi.

Sindh is a smaller province and like other smaller provinces has its share of grievances. We believe that Sindh has many genuine grievances, which must be addressed. The grievances include the denial of the Sindh assembly to choose a government of its own and the imposition of a regime on the people of Sindh from Islamabad to act as a handmaiden to Islamabad rather than as the legitimate voice of the people of the province.

When the PPP is in power in the center it respects the principle of Federalism allowing the genuine aspirations of the people of Sindh without undue interference in their affairs. It does this with regard to other provinces too. Its when that principle is violated that a hue and cry is raised.

Aamir / Imran Sial: The people of Sindh and the other two provinces (NWFP and Balochistan) are subservient to Punjab. For example, Sindh's contribution towards National Resources Pool is over 190 billion rupees. In return it is getting only 25/30 billion rupees. Now as an Opposition Party in Sindh,

your Party is shedding crocodile tears for Sindh. You were in power twice but Sindh did not get its equitable share in NFC Award and Indus water.

Benazir Bhutto: There is a misperception on the issue of the NFC award. According to the Constitution the NFC award is announced after regular interval of five years. The NFC award was already announced when the PPP took over. The PPP government was overthrown by a conspiracy in which the Prime Minister's brother was killed to overthrow the Prime Minister's government. Thus PPP was denied the opportunity of completing its five year term and taking up the NFC which would have come before it in due constitutional course. The Sindh provincial chapter is agitating for the rightful share for the province in the NFC award.

Aamir / Imran Sial: Your Party in real sense is of 'Waderas' and 'Choudhries'. You were in power twice; you did nothing for the abolition of the feudal syndrome in Pakistan? Is it because your family is one of them?

Benazir Bhutto: Its wrong to say that the PPP is a Party of the Waderas and the Choudhries. The PPP is a Party of the farmers, laborers, students, women, minorities, the working classes, the middle classes and the youth.

My Family, like others, was once upon a time a feudal unit with holdings of tens of thousands of acres at one time. It is no more so. Under Quaid e Awam feudalism was abolished. The PPP twice reduced the ceiling of land holdings through land reform and gave proprietary rights to the tenants. The Party was the first to strike and strike deeply at the very heart of feudal structure and feudalism in the country.

Now there is a competition for credit between the urban and the rural sector. The label of feudalism is used to deny the farmers their right share in the credit and other resources of the land. This is wrong and one of the reasons of the economic malaise facing the country. The farming sector contributes substantially to the export and earnings of the

Nation as well as providing jobs. To overcome unemployment and economic misery, we need to stop those who use "feudalism" as an empty slogan to continue the unfair distribution of resources. Poverty is eating into the social fabric of Pakistan. Water is already in shortage and food shortages in the twenty first century pose a real threat. We need to invest fairly and equitably between the rural and urban sectors.

Aamir / Imran Sial: It appears you had tried every thing to get 'Aashirwad' (Blessings) of the military government of General Pervez Musharraf. In the beginning, you had supported the Army and you are still busy attempting a sort of 'compromise' with the Army?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, the military regime tries to give the impression that the PPP tried to get its Aashirwad. But its wrong in its claims. The military regime was upset with the PPP because, while we welcomed the overthrow of the Nawaz regime as called for by the Grand Democratic Alliance, we also insisted that an interim government be formed to hold fair, free and impartial elections. This the military regime had little intention of doing and thus began the persecution of the PPP to prevent its voice for freedom and democracy.

Recognizing that the country was under a military rule and with the goal of facilitating a transfer to a democratic society, the PPP did keep the doors of dialogue open. The dialogue failed because the two parties involved were unable to come up with a compromise that was acceptable to it. The PPP goal was the democratization of Pakistan and respect for human rights. The military regime was prepared to do the politics of hostage taking and negotiate on the basis of its hostage Senator Zardari. It took great courage to defy the blackmail which is why people respect the PPP. They know the PPP is for the people, by the people and of the people and that the PPP will always put the people of the country and its principles before shady deals and power hungry politics.

Obviously we expect the release of our imprisoned leaders, including Senator Zardari whom the regime holds hostage. We expect our human rights to be respected and acknowledged. I pay tribute to Sen. Zardari for facing his seventh year in prison heroically for the sake of the Party and the people. He could have cut a deal to save his health, his family, his livelihood and he refused to do so sacrificing his happiness for a larger cause, the cause of the emancipation of the people of Pakistan from the clutches of a military dictatorship.

Aamir / Imran Sial: It appears that you have made a 'compromise' on the principles, which Shaheed Bhutto set to ameliorate the lot of the poor people. There was no allegation of corruption on Shaheed Bhutto even from his worst enemies but you are facing a flood of such allegations. Any comments?

Benazir Bhutto: I have a different view. Both Shaheed Bhutto and I faced politically motivated criminal charges in a bid to eliminate our leadership although the charges were different. Both of us refused to bow down in the face of those charges.

Aamir / Imran Sial: When you were in power particularly the second term, you forgot the people of Lyari. For example last time you did not make any significant visit to Lyari. The elected members of Lyari did nothing for Lyari and you did not make them accountable?

Benazir Bhutto: I am part of the people of Lyari and they are part of me. Lyari is the heart of the PPP support in Karachi and the center of its anti military struggle. The paths of Lyari are wet with the blood of our martyrs amongst whom I too was tear gassed. I did visit Lyari during my second tenure as Prime Minister and many programs of social uplift were introduced. With the overthrow of the PPP government, people of Lyari, like working classes and middle classes elsewhere, were orphaned. However, PPP will be back. PPP is the hope of Lyari and of Pakistan and its impoverished people upon whom the curse of suicide bombings and militancy has been foisted by the unrepresentative rulers.

Aamir / Imran Sial: People of Sindh are still casting their votes for PPP in the name of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. However, your contribution for the people of Sindh is negligible. What do you say?

Benazir Bhutto: Every village, every hut and every home in Sindh, as elsewhere, bears the signs and evidence of the development and prosperity that Pakistan Peoples Party under Quaid e Awam and his daughter's leadership brought under different tenures. To give one small example: every child in every village and town was and is being given polio drops to save them from a crippling disease because of the PPP government formed in 1993.

Aamir / Imran Sial: How can you still defend and condone what all your husband has done while in power? It is only because he is your dear husband? Does loyalty come before truth?

Benazir Bhutto: I do defend my husband because truth is important and so is loyalty. I am glad and heartened that so do the people of the Party and of Pakistan. I consider Asif framed by a powerful establishment bent upon overthrowing my government by hitting at my husband. If my husband cared about money, he would have done a deal with the government to save his businesses. He refused all deals. Asif cares about carrying on the mission of Quaid e Awam in building a modern, democratic, prosperous Pakistan. The venom of the regime against Asif for being the husband of a woman leader is evident from the fact that he when he was freed on bail in a 20th case, a 21st case was made against him.

'I never asked for power'

*Interview by Rory McCarthy, The Guardian,
August 15, 2002*

Benazir Bhutto, the Muslim world's first woman leader, was once Pakistan's greatest political hope. Then she was sacked for corruption and fled. She tells Rory McCarthy why she is determined to go home, risk jail and try again

She doesn't seem like the woman to unseat a military regime. Sitting on the sofa in her fourth-floor Kensington apartment, Benazir Bhutto is sipping on her Starbucks chai, a fond memory of the sugary, milky tea that is a mainstay of the Pakistani life she left behind long ago. To one side are dozens of well-thumbed copies of Hello! magazine. On another table a copy of the London Property News celebrates the surge in house prices. Water tinkles incessantly through a small mock Japanese fountain in the fireplace and her children scamper through back rooms in the flat.

Once this woman was Pakistan's greatest political hope. Her legacy was impeccable and her supporters numerous and devoted. Her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was perhaps Pakistan's most popular leader, a man with a real sense of the deprivation suffered by the majority in his country, and with a rare ability to grasp popular support. Unseated in a coup by General Zia ul-Haq in 1977 he was hanged two years later. The young Benazir Bhutto spent a traumatic 30 minutes with her father the day before he was executed and was then jailed herself for five years. The bitter rivalry between the Bhuttos and the army has never been extinguished.

Bhutto soon stepped out of her father's shadow and after studying at Oxford and Harvard she returned to a fanatical welcome in Pakistan in 1986 as thousands thronged to her

speeches, eager to catch sight of the new Bhutto. Within two years she was the first female prime minister in the Muslim world and one of the most powerful women on the globe. But all too quickly the dream disintegrated. Bhutto was twice sacked as prime minister on charges of misrule and corruption and then soundly beaten in elections in 1997. Her husband was jailed and eventually she fled the country, hounded by more corruption allegations. That, she reminds me, was exactly three years and four months ago. Now the tide has turned.

This summer there has been a sudden rush of supplicants calling at her London apartment desperate to stand as candidates for her party in the coming elections in Pakistan. In the drawing rooms of the political elite in Islamabad the hunch is that Bhutto, at 54 the great matriarch of the Pakistani political scene, could sweep the October polls and mount the first serious challenge to the military regime.

The only trouble is that General Pervez Musharraf, the army chief who seized power in a coup in October 1999, doesn't want her back. He likes to tell Pakistanis as often as he can how she "mismanaged" and "corrupted" the country. Bhutto will, he has warned, go straight to jail should she dare to fly home (she has already been convicted of failing to appear before a court to answer charges of corruption). He has introduced a rash of new constitutional amendments which bar her from contesting a seat in the October polls and from becoming prime minister for a third term. Her lawyers are challenging the amendments, and the prospect of a few weeks in jail does not seem to put her off. Most pundits in Pakistan readily admit it would give her cause a tremendous boost to be seen as another Bhutto martyred by a military dictatorship. "Of course, I want to go back if I can contest those elections," she says. "I can fight the elections from prison if I am allowed to contest my seat."

There had been plans to fly home as early as this week. Those have now been shelved, although preparations have been made to book a plane - either a private charter, or a

scheduled PIA or Emirates flight. The danger is that if she does return and her lawyers lose the legal case against the constitutional amendments, she could find herself unable to take part in the elections and remain a prisoner not just for weeks but for years. After all, her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, has now served a total of eight-and-a-half years in jail and has yet to be convicted of a crime.

"If I am stopped from fighting the elections, then it is a new situation and then my party and I would have to sit down and take stock of that," she says. "It is one thing being able to contest an election and to give the people hope that I can be the next prime minister. It is a totally different situation where the people of Pakistan are told that the results are already taken and the leader of your choice is banned."

Bhutto is a survivor and has an infinite belief in herself and her abilities. Rarely does she reveal even glimpses of her true character or her real thoughts. She may have genuinely not yet decided whether to return. Or she may have accepted that she can never return, but intends to leave the military on tenterhooks for as long as possible. Despite Musharraf's hostility, Bhutto's party is still the strongest political force in Pakistan and she is the only Pakistani politician with any natural charisma.

In the flesh Bhutto is immediately charming. Flirtatious, funny, questioning and eager to listen, she spends her conversations continually and self-consciously adjusting the translucent white dupatta covering her long, thick hair. Her features are striking. She is tall, her eyes are dark and her accent finely chiselled. She insists on dressing conservatively in the public eye, but she bears none of the haughtiness that has been a trademark of her political rivals. Few Pakistani politicians truly enjoy engaging with their crowds of supporters and rarely give more than a brisk wave from inside their expensive, air-conditioned four-wheel drives. Bhutto has a much more refined political touch and always delights in meeting the people who have come out to support her, frequently singling out the women in particular. It is this

effusive but innate charm which has created for her such a reputation. And it is this charisma, allied to the fact that rival political parties are now largely split or discredited, that means that, even without her return, her Pakistan People's Party will probably romp home in the October polls.

This massive support from a male-dominated Islamic republic for such a westernised woman is difficult to fathom. It has been many years since politics in Pakistan was about policies not personalities, but she insists her party offers a serious political agenda. The party stands for enhanced power to Pakistan's provinces, which have often felt squeezed out by the Punjab in the past, she says. It means parliamentary democracy and social emancipation for women (concentrating on the problems of domestic violence). Perhaps most importantly it means negotiations with India to find a diplomatic solution to the Kashmir dispute. "Ordinary Pakistanis feel that when we are there they get something out of it," she says. But as she continues to explain her family's political staying power her train of thought becomes increasingly ethereal. Eventually she puts it down to a dynastic belief in Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam. "I find that whenever I am in power, or my father was in power, somehow good things happen. The economy picks up, we have good rains, water comes, people have crops. I think the reason this happens is that we want to give love and we receive love."

Musharraf and Pakistan's anti-corruption investigators have a less charitable view of the Bhuttos. They have repeatedly insisted that Bhutto and her husband, who served as investment minister in her government, stole at least £830m from the state coffers during their time in power. The couple have, they claim, 26 different bank accounts across the world (most in Switzerland) and own 14 properties, including a stud farm in Texas, six houses in Florida, the Kensington flat and Rockwood House, a £2.5m country estate in Surrey. Last year, Britain handed over 22,000 pages of documents detailing the couple's assets to Pakistani investigators. Yet the only corruption conviction against her was overturned on appeal

last year after judges discovered an astonishing series of attempts to rig the trial. Bhutto insists she can challenge the military on every allegation she faces and that the money behind the property was legally obtained. "Let's say Rockwood House belongs to my husband. So? Don't you have a house?" She is reluctant to admit ownership of her plush Kensington apartment, which she says is owned by "whomsoever owns it".

After all, she reminds us, she has owned properties for years. "But if I have property, what is wrong with having property? I am not an un-propertyed woman." (The clash between her obvious wealth and her belief in the ascetics of Sufism appears to her no contradiction. Later in the conversation she insists she is "detached in a sense from the material world.")

Yet in an unguarded moment of honesty she admits her husband, who was a wealthy socialite and playboy before their marriage and since accused of staggering corruption, may have been at fault. He was "not an angel". "I think that my husband also associated with certain people which gave him a bad name. I think my husband also had a different view about patronage than what is now acceptable. But to say that he broke the law, to say that he stole money, to say that he was involved in illegal acts is wrong."

Her commitment is remarkable. Many blamed her political downfall on her husband's unbridled extravagance (he was known as "Mr 10 Percent" for allegedly taking huge kickbacks on the government contracts he awarded.) Some aides told her to drop him for the sake of her career. Instead, she has stood by the man she wed through an arranged marriage and who presented her on their engagement with a ring engraved with the words: "Until death do us part." For more than half their married life he has been in jail. They now speak on the telephone for an hour a week. He is allowed another 30 minutes a week to speak to their three children: Bilawal, 13, Bakhtwar, 12, and Aseefa, nine. Dozens of intelligence agents listen in.

During the past three years she has spent in exile, the military has repeatedly offered to free her husband if she promises to give up politics. This clearly infuriates her. "This is the view that I have spent a quarter of a century fighting. They think women are extensions of men and they think that a woman can be got through her husband." Perhaps, more pragmatically, she also believes it would be a sign of weakness in the face of her opponents. "I find it very hard to turn around and say to the 140m people of Pakistan that you gave me your love but I walked away for the sake of my husband." The queen of hyperbole doesn't blink.

At the end, she is left fighting the same battle with the military that her family has fought since Zia's coup 25 years ago. In the intervening years, the army has grown ever larger, the military's intelligence agencies ever more powerful. She is still prepared to strike a deal with the current military regime if it promises to reverse the latest constitutional amendments and allow freer participation in the elections. That now seems unlikely. Instead the Bhuttos and the generals are likely to fight it out for many years to come. It is difficult to understand why she bothers to countenance a return home if it is not for an addiction to power. "Whatever my aims and agendas were, I never asked for power. I think they need me. I don't think it's addictive. I think, if anything, it's the opposite of addictive. You want to run away from it, but it doesn't let you go. It's doing it again."

“The military wants a system that protects its policies and privileges”

*Interview by Zahid Hussain for Newslime Magazine
July 2002*

Q: Are you planning to return to Pakistan before the October elections?

A: Yes, I am planning to return and contest the October elections in Pakistan. However, I have yet to decide the date of my return. It will be taken in consultation with my lawyers and political advisors, after the election schedule is announced.

Q: General Musharraf has often said that he will not allow you to return to power. Will the PPP participate in the elections if you are barred?

A: It's true that General Musharraf opposes my return, seeing me as a symbol of democracy in the country. He is comfortable with dictatorship. I hope better sense prevails. Democracy is necessary to peace and to undermining the forces of terrorism. I am constitutionally competent to contest the elections. General Musharraf needs my participation to give credibility to the electoral process, as well as to respect the fundamental right of all those who wish to vote for me.

Q: What is your response to General Musharraf's decision to arrogate to himself the power to pick anyone as prime minister?

A: It is undemocratic. It takes us to the past. Musharraf could review advice that ill-serves the country and sows the seeds of instability, corruption and floor-crossing.

Q: In your view what system does the military government intend to introduce?

A: The military wants a system that protects its policies and privileges. Military hardliners called me a 'security threat' for promoting peace in South Asia and for supporting a broad-based government in Afghanistan. They destabilised my government on politically motivated charges. They want to ensure that future political governments that seek peace in the region, crackdown against private militant groups or ask questions about corruption in the military, are sacked on collateral charges.

Q: Are you planning to lead a campaign against General Musharraf's move to change the constitution and stop political leaders from participating in the polls?

A: Yes. The political parties have unanimously rejected the one-man constitutional changes. A series of public meetings are planned for next month, to support the right of people to determine their own laws through representation and to lobby for the implementation of electoral reforms to protect transparency of the proposed elections.

Q: Do you think people will come to your support?

A: Given the right to a free ballot, the people would support my return. The government I led gave ordinary people peace, security, dignity, and opportunity to progress. Right now, they feel they have lost their voice, and their miseries have increased since my departure.

Q: How do you see the situation developing?

A: The next few months are critical to Pakistan's future direction as a democratic state committed to promoting peace, fighting terrorism and working for social justice. The challenges are there: Given the goodwill of the enormous number of Pakistanis who love the country and want to see it move into the future with confidence, I pray we triumph in achieving freedom, fundamental rights and socio-economic emancipation for our hardworking and poverty-stricken people.

Well, certainly my own father did so much to rehabilitate the image of the Pakistani army

*Interview by Vir Sanghvi,
India, November 2001*

Vir Sanghvi: The traditional way to introduce my guest would be to describe her as a former Prime Minister of Pakistan. But with Benazir Bhutto you never think of her as being a former anything you never think of the past. So what I will say is that she's been Prime Minister of Pakistan twice already and she is just 47. Do you think you'll be Prime Minister again?

Benazir Bhutto: I hope that I can be Prime Minister again if there are fresh elections again which are fair so Pakistan is at a turning point in its own history. But we're very concerned that General Musharraf may manipulate the next elections.

VS: he was in Agra for this summit when he had a breakfast with all of us. Indian editors and media personalities which he thoughtfully video taped for a larger audience and in which he said that democracy in Pakistan has been a sham and "I am reassembling democracy" and "I am the most popular person in Pakistan, come and see for yourself". When a man believes that, do you think he is really serious about allowing any of you to come back to Pakistan?

BB: Well he's told my party people that he doesn't want me to come back

VS: He's said that in so many words?

BB: He has said it in so many words. He's said it publicly that I will not permit her to return. He's said it to my party in person that I will not permit her to return but the rest of you can all

And you know how the generals paid us back? They arrested each one of my father's family. From the father, to the mother, to the son, to the daughter and tried each one of us. So I am –

VS: and ultimately of course they murdered your father

BB: They murdered my father. And till this date there hasn't been an investigation of how a conspiracy was concocted to murder Pakistan's elected Prime Minister which is why my party is now saying that we need a truth and reconciliation commission so that all of us who are the victims, we can at least go before the commission and talk about the state-sponsored attempt to pervert the course of justice and subvert the will of the people of Pakistan. Our people deserve to know more.

VS: The other thing you mentioned was Kargil which was of interest to us as Indians. There is a story - and you can confirm this – that the plan was not new that the generals had hatched something along those lines even when you were Prime Minister and that you had said no. Is that accurate?

BB: Well, there were war games and as part of the war games, different scenarios would be built and there was a such a war game scenario.

VS: There was such a - it was presented to you

BB: Well I will put it in this way, there was – I want to be careful about what I say here –

VS: I understand

BB: There was a war game scenario and I put my foot down. I said no, this is wrong. If anything like this happens it will be a big setback for Pakistan and we will be forced to withdraw. I want my countrymen to hold their head up high. I don't want them to feel the shame and humiliation. So I put my foot down. But later on when it materialized so many of our men

died and we were humiliated. We were ordered to unilaterally withdraw from the world community.

VS: I want to ask you one more question about Kargil. This war game and all that you're talking about, did this predate General Musharraf?

BB: No. General Musharraf was the person who presented the war plan to me.

VS: Really.

BB: Yes.

VS: So he was planning that even then.

BB: I don't think he was planning it.

VS: I know you're going to be careful but what are you going to say?

BB: I'm going to tell you that ever since we lost Siachen under General Zia's rule – and every time we have a general we lose something or the other – ever since we lost parts of the Siachen area under General Zia's era I think there was an attempt to do something that could retrieve for us what had been lost and it wasn't the first time that I was given such a war game scenario, I was given it in my first term too and I said this was wrong, it's not workable I want to see a Pakistan which is at peace with its neighbours, a Pakistan that does not involve itself with conflicts.

VS: And of course they didn't like that.

BB: Well of course you must ask them (laughing). I don't think they did.

VS: I'm going to ask you more about your relations with the army and with the ISI.

BB: Yes I think it's a fair assessment but I would say that I had

there were Pakistani soldiers, two brigadiers had to be flown out just as the Northern Alliance forces were advancing. How deeply involved was the Pakistan Army with what was going on in Afghanistan?

BB: Well it's very dangerous because if it was actually Pakistani retired military – or even serving – serving even far worse because it raises issues about discipline. I remember in 1989 there was a plan where the Afghan interim government was going to ask for a confederation with Pakistan and then they were going to ask for the help of Pakistan and we were to send in our armed forces to aid and assist the Afghan interim government in overthrowing President Najib's government and I vetoed that. I said that the Soviets had gone into Afghanistan and they had been very badly viewed and therefore there was no question of us trying to promote a confederation in which our own armed forces would get involved in Pakistan. I see the role of our armed forces as defending Pakistan's borders. I have a role for them which is in conformity with other countries in the world.

VS: But that's not their view of themselves is it?

BB: I'm not sure, because these reports are not to my view confirmed. I have seen the press reports. But it's not been confirmed by say – nobody's been produced in front of a television camera and shown as a Pakistani brigadier, so I don't know, but what I'm saying is

VS: Should there be an inquiry?

BB: Definitely.

VS: We've talked a lot about Pakistan, we've talked about Afghanistan, we haven't talked that much about India. I hear you were in Ajmer and I hear there were crowds on the street and a roaring reception

BB: I'm a bit of a Sufi.

VS: Are you? I didn't know that

BB: I come from Sindh which is the land of Sufis and of saints and so I like to go for protection and pray at important Mazars and Ajmer Sharif is a very important one.

VS: And god knows you probably need the protection these days given what's going on.

BB: Yes I do. I think I've made Lashkar-e-Taiba very angry.

VS: I was going to ask you about that. You've said as far as I understand it that yes there was trouble in Kashmir when you were Prime Minister. But at that stage the trouble was – from our point of view trouble, not from your point of view perhaps – indigenous to Kashmir.

BB: And the level of violence was much lower because it was indigenous.

VS: That's right. Since then you've suggested that the people like the Lashkar – who are of course not Kashmiris – you didn't mention them – of course the Jaish-e-Muhammad would be the other example – have been introduced into the valley. This surely is undesirable so why has it upset people in Pakistan so much?

BB: It's upset a certain class of people in Pakistan. But I don't think it's upset ordinary people because Lashkar-e-Taiba and some of these extreme groups are suspected to be behind these sectarian killings in which a large number of Pakistanis have lost their lives. But somehow or the other there is a group of people who fought the Afghan Jihad, who are committed to orthodoxy, who've created private militias and they've tried to dress these private militias up in the national flag and claimed that they are good for us. I don't they're good for us.

VS: And export them to Kashmir, as you say...

VS: That's the time when you and Rajiv were both there —

BB: That's right. And then I have another yesterday which was a winter. And I'm saying that I can understand that you have your reservations because of the disappointment that many felt in my second term and I know that even people in Pakistan who are liberals felt that disappointment. And I'm determined next time around that there shall be a spring.

VS: Benazir Bhutto I wish you luck and I hope you'll give me an interview when you're prime minister.

BB: God willing

Pakistan and the World

Interview by Standard Journal of International Relations (SJIR)
October 18, 2001

SJIR: If you were in power in today's Pakistan, would you do anything differently with respect to Pakistani foreign policy?

Bhutto: Well, the general parameters I think I would agree on, which would be to join the international coalition against terror. Terror is a threat to the United States but it is also a very real threat for us in Pakistan. The rise of the extremist groups in Pakistan has left unguarded militias, and has led to the proliferation of weapons and to the killing of many Pakistanis. So I think its important for us to have joined that battle. As for the details, obviously Id bring my own experience as the regime brings its own experience. While I may have handled things differently, as prime minister I wouldn't like them breathing down my neck, so Id like to avoid breathing down their necks.

SJIR: There is clear evidence that the 1999 Kargil crisis involved the implicit cooperation of the Pakistani military with known terrorist organizations, and there is speculation that that cooperation continues today. How will the relationship between Pakistan and radical Kashmiri elements change with Musharraf's highly public stance on cooperating with Americas global antiterrorism campaign?

Bhutto: You see, I propose that there should be a world summit on terrorism to define what is terrorism. Of course, with what happened in New York and Washington, everyone has agreed that that is terrorism. But terrorism is one thing, and national aspirations of oppressed people is another. We need to make that distinction. Kashmir is a dispute which is recognized by the United Nations in Security Council

SJIR: Is there any dialogue right now between his administration and your party?

Bhutto: Yes, he is in contact with the vice-chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, and some of his generals are in contact. They have been in contact for two years. Of course there's a big gulf still between General Musharraf and ourselves, but now that some hardline generals have been removed, we hope that we can expect some more positive results.

SJIR: What do you think Musharraf's prospects are for retaining control of the military given that he fired four of his top military officials? And what is his potential to even retain the support of the Pakistani population for what he is doing?

Bhutto: This is a difficult question to answer because there are problems, and we are unsure as to how it will turn out. General Musharraf is the chief of army staff. Our army has traditionally been very disciplined, and therefore there is no precedent of a coup succeeding to date against an army chief. They have succeeded against civilians, but not against an army chief. General Musharraf, by sidelining certain generals has secured his position within the army. Now the question that bothers many of us is, if the agitation picks up and the army is called upon to confront the agitators, then the army may decline. It may do so, or it may decline. So that's what's bothering us. We'd like to see the army stable and united, but its discipline will be strained if it is called upon to take on the agitators.

SJIR: As the agitation potentially grows, do you think Islamic radicals within the country will pose a threat to the administration, or is there a way Musharraf can control that?

Bhutto: Well, so far the agitation has remained confined to those areas where there are strong Afghan populations. You know that many of the refugees from the Taliban are living in Peshawar and Quetta, and there is a very large Afghan refugee presence also in the city of Karachi. This is primarily

where the demonstrations have been. So I think as long as the demonstrations remain confined there is less danger. But there is a clear tension within Pakistan and no one knows how this will play out. There is tension because one wonders about civilian casualties and the capacity of the people of Pakistan to absorb such civilian casualties. So we just have to watch the situation and see how it emerges. Its very difficult to say. However, the political parties have given our support unconditionally to General Musharraf, and what we have said is that there should be a broad-based national unity government to demonstrate a public mobilization to counter the militants.

SJIR: To your knowledge, what is the state of the safety of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal at this point? And what are the chances of it being used in the wrong way by someone in the military if command and control is lost?

Bhutto: When I was Prime Minister of Pakistan, our policy was to avoid putting together a device until it was necessary. We had the components, but we avoided putting it together. Other prime ministers followed in our footsteps. There were many other who came, and they all followed in our footsteps. But after the second overthrow, a situation arose when India detonated five nuclear devices and Pakistan followed suit with six. After that I am unaware of what happened whether they built more bombs or whether they decided to make other components. I am unaware of the command and control structures, so I am unable to say whether they are safe or aren't safe. However, I would assume that the machinery of government would have evolved to a stage where they would have the maximum security. So while the possibility of the fundamentalists taking control of the nuclear weapons is there, the probability is not. However, Pakistan needs to engage with the international community on this issue to see what can be done to give confidence while maintaining Pakistan's security and addressing the concerns of the international community.

SJIR: What role do you think Pakistan should play in the reconstruction of Afghanistan?

Bhutto: For the first phase, which is the formation of a broad-based government, I think Pakistan needs to stop having favorites and leave it to the Afghan people to choose who they want. I think Pakistan needs to decide that a stable Afghanistan is more important than a country driven by civil war which is run by a favorite.

Secondly, I think that Islamabad needs to work with the international community for the return of the 1.5 million refugees who are on our soil. These people will not go back while there is fighting, while there are landmines and while their entire irrigation system is decimated. So I think really we need a kind of Marshall Plan. And I am also glad to hear President Bush talk about compassion. He talks about politics but he also talks about compassion. He talks about the bombardment, which is necessary, but he also drops food. I think that dual message is important. I used to fight against the Vietnam War, and I feel very uneasy about the bombardment, but I also wonder what else can be done other than a military solution if the Taliban refuses to turn over one individual and prefers that the whole country be bombed.

SJIR: Also, you spoke in your speech about support for insurgent groups during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Do you think there may be a parallel situation to that with the Northern Alliance today, with the possibility of perpetuating more terror?

Bhutto: Well, all of them have pretty rough edges, but then all of them have led pretty rough lives. These are people who are 18 and 19. They've lived with war and bloodshed. Maybe your and my idea about the situation is a little more than what we see. We need to work with what is there in Afghanistan we need to work with people who are relatively more moderate than the Taliban. I would say that we need to see who will keep Afghanistan for the Afghan people without making it a recruiting and training center.

SJIR: If you and your party come to power in the next Pakistani election, what is the first thing you would do to help economic reform in Pakistan?

Bhutto: The first thing the economy needs is confidence. It is confidence that makes people invest in businesses. So I would really concentrate on that. But along with confidence, I would work with the world community in seeking some type of debt retirement for Pakistan. Pakistan is playing an important role in the coming conflict, and I think our people need to see that if Pakistan stands up for freedom, that Pakistan's contribution is appreciated. Most importantly, we, the Pakistanis, have to stand on our own feet, and the best way we can do that is by moving towards decentralization, devolution, and deregulation. I'd like to be able to contribute further to that process.

Extremism in our society

Interview by Frontline Magazine , September, 2001

Q: What exactly has been brewing in Pakistan?

A: In the 1980s, the Soviets had occupied Afghanistan. The international community helped arm the most fanatic warriors to take on the Soviets. The Soviets left in 1989. This coincided with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall. The international community turned its attention to Europe. But back in Pakistan, the forces that had organized themselves against the Soviet occupation were still present.

They thought they had defeated one superpower. They thought they could defeat another superpower. And so I found that democracy in Pakistan was destabilized. Again and again, my party cautioned about the rise of what we call the jihad forces, or the force of extremism. There was a nexus between some of our military officers and training schools that had been set up to recruit soldiers for that jihad and between cells in different pro-American Muslim countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and friendships that had formed.

So these still had this passion of thinking they could defeat another superpower. So this was brewing in my region. We had the pro-Taliban forces; destabilized democracy; tried to crush the democratic forces, concoct cases, indulge in acts of terror. But the rest of the world had moved on, until the bomb attack in the World Trade Center took place.

Q: Why do you think the Islamists in this region became so strong?

A: Well, there are many different layers to the Islamists. And they have somehow managed to pull together the different

layers. The extremists subscribe to a very narrow theological school in Islam, which is different than the schools of interpretation that the vast majority of Muslims believe in.

But they have managed to pull in regional wars that are taking place in the Muslim world, whether it's Chechnya or Kashmir, and of course the Palestinian issue. So they try to exploit that.

And thirdly, they've tried to take advantage of the fact that, even if they believe in dictatorship, they believe in Muslim dictatorship, as they see themselves, whereas the rest are Western dictatorships. So they're touching on a whole lot of issues. They're touching on religion, on politics, on dictatorship -- on where the Muslims go in the future.

The one billion Muslims, they're standing at the crossroads. It's a world of enormous change. The Cold War is over. The identities that we had adopted or that had shaped us have given way. We need to find new identities. There's a loss about what this new identity is going to mean.

This confusion about globalization -- is globalization going to help the poor people, or is globalization ruthless and is it going to adversely impact on the lives of the poor and the ordinary? So somehow or the other, they have placed themselves at a position where they're touching on a lot of different nerves. It's important to try and isolate them to their core issue, which, to my view, is to take advantage of an international environment to impose dictatorship of the worst kind in the majority Muslim countries. This is aimed technically at the West. But it's aimed, in my view, against the larger Muslim world.

Q: What's the ultimate goal, then?

A: If I talk to Osama bin Laden, I'm sure he would like to see himself as the ruler of Saudi Arabia. If you talk to his key lieutenant, I'm sure he'd like to see himself as the ruler of Egypt. So there are a lot of different countries which are involved, where certain groups of people exercised power

during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and think that they can exercise power again.

Saudi Arabia is key, because it is a home to two of the most sacred places in Islam. That is the place of worship in Mecca and also the final resting place of the prophet of Islam -- Medina. These people have a view of spiritual leaderships. If they catch hold of Saudi Arabia, they think they can catch hold of the larger Muslim world.

Of course, for them right now, their control of Afghanistan and their indirect control over Pakistan is very important. If Afghanistan falls from the hands of the Taliban and if they can no longer rely on their cells or structures of friends in Pakistan, then I believe that the back of their strength will be broken. They might be able to do some things, but not to have the kind of enormity that shook the world on September 11.

Q: How did that more extreme voice come about? What sort of propagated that extremism?

A: What happened was that the West relied on the military regime of General Zia. General Zia's military machine made all the decisions. They got all the money and they carried out the groundswell.

General Zia himself was part of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was very close to a man called Maulana Maududi, who in turn was very close to the Saudi clergy -- not the monarchy, not the government, not the state, but the Saudi clergy. And he started indoctrinating the army in the teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood and Maulana Maududi.

When the West came to him with bundles of cash to fight the Russians, he gave the money to establish schools that had the thinking of Maulana Maududi, or the thinking of the same as the clergy of Saudi Arabia or of the Muslim Brotherhood -- whatever one wants to call it. So the control of the religious schools, which was to teach the Koran, became also platforms for propagating the view of a particular theological sect. ...

The mosques and schools in Pakistan are varied. But they began being dominated by those who had a narrow interpretation of Islam.

Q: You were talking about some of the madrassas in Pakistan. How did you manage to control them? And was there a control on what was taught and on the curriculum?

A: First of all, these madrassas were set up by the intelligence service of General Zia, so they were secret and they were underground. Very few people knew about them. But we learned about them in, I think, 1994, when my government arrested Ramzi Yousef, who had made the first attack on the World Trade Center.

We found out that he had tried to kill me twice. So my law enforcement were very keen to prevent any further attempts. They began investigating the matter, which took them to these religious schools.... They didn't want us discovering most of these schools were in the Punjab [region].

But there were a few schools in other states of Pakistan, like the frontier. ... So my government shut one of the universities in Peshawar. And we also talked to the Afghan leaders to shut their training camps in Khost -- these were the schools and training camps.

And as soon as we did that, the rest of the madrassas started inviting the provincial state governments and telling them, "Look, we will do what you want. We will teach science, we will teach mathematics. You please come." And they did away with the training and the recruiting.

We closed down Peshawar and we showed we would act. So if we closed down more schools, the teachers would have lost their jobs. They wouldn't have been able to continue with their program. So I think that they began to retrench.

I also talked with a chief minister several times. The army I convinced, and the intelligence. I said they've got their main schools in places like Moritka which was like in the Punjab,

and which was like an armed fortress, huge armed fortress. And I found out there were students from lots of different Muslim countries coming to study in these schools, and then going off to Khost in training camps in pockets of Afghanistan. So they stopped doing that while I was prime minister of Pakistan.

Q: As a leader, did you not find it difficult... You're stuck in a situation where you have extreme elements within your own society. And you must, in a way, sort of appease the fact that there is a certain part of the population that really believes in these radical sort of views. How did you walk that fine line?

A: Well, they're elements of our own society. They can't be all killed. They can't be all exterminated. One has to work with people, factionalize them. And when we were in government, we tried that they should not unite. For example, there were some of them who used to be in parliament. And even though they did not join the government, we did not object to them getting elected in certain committees. So they were occupied then with certain jobs. After the overthrow of the government, the parliaments became like dummy parliaments. And that's when the jihad movement became strong.

... But these people are now all surfaced, and while the democrats have been paralyzed with the court system, the pro-Taliban forces have been given an open field. So now they boldly come out and they hold press conferences. It was unimaginable that they should come out and hold press conferences with a gun by their side.

... Whatever you talk about, the bombing on the [U.S.S.] *Cole* in Yemen, or we talk about the bombings of the embassies in Africa or the first World Trade Center bombing (in 1993), or the second World Trade Center bombing-- these require time. They require a lot of logistical support. It's simply not possible for the terrorists to do all this when there are governments against them. But after our overthrow, I found that the security apparatus had basically taken over the show.

They put inside that retired officials who had been with General Zia. And the retired officials were given the task to paralyze the democratic opposition. Then they created another cell, called the election cell, which, now they're going to try and tamper with the elections to that cell. They created a third cell where they vet every single civilian appointee.

So they act very much like drug barons do in certain other countries by trying to take over the apparatus of the state. ... And most of them have links to General Zia, who fought the Afghan jihad, or they have links [to] the security apparatus that fought the Afghan jihad for General Zia. And they're still all over the place.

So people like me are confused. We were taught that the enemy of your enemy is your friend. So we thought the enemy of the Taliban should be the friend of the Free World. But what we have witnessed instead is that a very military regime, which had allowed a free hand to the jihad forces, or the extremist forces -- that military regime has been adopted as the blue-eyed boy of the West. And although they say that they support the campaign against terror, the entire apparatus remains in the hands of the pro-Taliban forces.

Q: President Musharraf is then stuck in a sort of funny situation, where he must befriend the Taliban but yet ... be a friend of the U.S. And that's a funny line to be walking. How do you think he's handling it, and can he sustain this for long?

A: I'd like to be able to assess General Musharraf, but I'm unable to, because I don't have any access to him. ...he's been unable to break with the Taliban, and he's defended that by saying that we need some communication with the Taliban. He must be having good reasons for doing what he is. But I would have liked him to do things differently.

... The person whom he has as the home secretary of the Punjab -- which has to really regulate the bulk of the madrassas, because this is where they are -- he too, is a man from the security apparatus. In his Cabinet, the minister of

communication is from the security apparatus.

I'm not saying that these people are necessarily acting for the Taliban. But I am saying that they are pro-Taliban. And it seems to me that the control, domestic and in key foreign countries, is still with elements who are pro-Taliban. I would have liked to see Musharraf do things separately.

... And I think for the democrats in Pakistan, I'd like Musharraf to answer that question: Are you with us or not with us? Because God forbid, if this is a policy of paying lip service to the international coalition and saying wink wink, nudge nudge to the Taliban, the consequences can be terrible for my own country, Pakistan.

Q: Saudi Arabia -- what's it up to? It feels like it's trying to export their version of Wahhabism through all this financing of madrassas. Did you see that impact in Pakistan?

A: I would put it differently. In Saudi Arabia, the country is divided in its governing structure between the monarchy and the religious clergy. And the religious clergy have a very important role of their own -- they get money.

That religious clergy has been distributing money along with other countries to what they say are charities to NGOs. These are charities and NGOs that are supposed technically to be helping the poor and the needy. But instead, they're going to the poor and needy that are being looked after by a particular political spectrum that shares the same religious school of thought as the Saudi clergy.

So what we have seen is, if there is a Muslim who is donating for a mosque, he doesn't know that this is actually going to end up in something which is a mosque. But along with being a mosque, it has also got a man who is in a mountain who is politically linked to this theological movement that is taking place within the Muslim countries.

Q: An extreme movement.

A: Extreme. ... So really, there is a lot of money going. And a lot of these madrassas, they're endowed, in Pakistan-- [they] don't need Pakistan government. They have money of their own. They have tons of money coming in. And I think it's important for us, my government had started doing this. We started telling them, "Tell us where your money is coming from."

And I think that maybe we, the Muslim countries, need to share notes with each other and we need to come together, to guide our youth as to what we want in the twenty-first century; if they have grievances, how they are supposed to articulate their grievances. Nowadays, the Muslim youth think that the only way to protest what they think is wrong is to pick up a gun.

Q: As prime minister, did you feel responsible in some way for propping up the Taliban and making them more powerful?

A: Yes, in a sense I did, but they were very different Taliban. You see, at the time, I was prime minister, they were confined to Kandahar. They had signed an agreement with the Northern Alliance for a commission to set up a broad-based government. And at that time, the Taliban certainly were not executing women in public stadiums, or being as ruthless with them as they are now. They hadn't blown up the Bamiyan statues, or decided to go it alone, or allowed Osama bin Laden or Al Qaeda to come. They were very different.

But after my overthrow, the pro-extremist elements hijacked the whole direction of Pakistan and hijacked the direction of Afghanistan. I feel that my brother was killed by rogue elements in the security apparatus, who wanted to overthrow my government because it was an obstacle on the part of their attempts to have an international campaign to impose a dictatorship sanctified in the name of religion.

And since my overthrow, the Taliban decided that they would kill the Uzbeks and kill the Panshiris and the Shi'as. They don't have any agreement with them; they've gone it alone. And

they have gone and given recruitment.

So we saw this coming. And in 1998, my party said that the Taliban have crossed all limits of law and respectability and canons of governments, and Pakistan should break relations with them. But the government regime did not break relations, because there are too many sympathizers in our regime.

Q: But in hindsight, do you think that position was naive? To support the Taliban, or...?

A: If we had known in hindsight, that this is what they were going to do, of course it was wrong. I feel the only reason that this has happened is because the popular democratic government in Pakistan was overthrown and that Taliban forces were given a free hand.

... And my party has been speaking on this for five years -- that the pro-jihad elements who defeated one superpower and think they can defeat another are going to lead the country into a deep crisis. And we are in a crisis. The Americans are bombing. But the bombing is not delivering anything. Instead, there's a converse message getting through: that there is bombing, but it's not hitting the Taliban, it's actually hitting the civilians. "So sorry."

Q: What mistakes has the U.S. been making in the region?

A: I think it would be wrong for me to second-guess what they should be doing.

But I do feel that Pakistan is a key player, and that one of the weaknesses of the whole alliance is Islamabad. ... At the time these bombings took place, Pakistan was run by a military regime with sympathies for the Taliban.

Now the military regime says we've converted. But how far has that conversion gone down the rank and file?

So I feel really what the U.S. focus should be a little bit more medium-term. And it should ... keep the pressure on the Taliban, sure. But it should be for the return of democracy,

because, ultimately, it's the Pakistani people that are going to have to play a pivotal role in explaining to their own people, to the Afghans, and to the Muslim community why the Taliban are bad and need to be replaced, and why Osama bin Laden is not the hero of the Muslim world, but somebody who has damaged its name.

Q: And how to convince them if there are so many people in Peshawar that are flooding to help the [Taliban] fight?

A: You see, again, as I say, that question should be put to General Musharraf. He's the man in charge. He should come and answer why people are fleeing. ... And I think the situation is getting out of hand. These protests were small, initially. Some of them are growing. Some of them are becoming violent, and it worries me.

APHC must be included in talks

*Interview by Ashraf Mumtaz for Daily Dawn,
June 10, 2001*

Q: How do you see the Indian prime minister's invitation to Gen Pervez Musharraf for a visit to New Delhi and at the same time calling off the six-month-old ceasefire? What in your opinion should be the agenda for talks? What should be the yardstick for the success of these talks?

A: The PPP advocates dialogue between India and Pakistan for a resolution of out-standing disputes between the two countries, including Kashmir. However, it is double-minded about the world's largest democracy talking to a dictator. Since Gen Musharraf lacks a mandate to represent the people of Pakistan, his position is weak in negotiating lowering of tension between the two countries.

The end of the ceasefire by India is indicative of the level of violence in the valley continuing unabated despite the ceasefire. In calling off the ceasefire, Prime Minister Vajpayee could be placating his hardliners who resisted talks with the architect of Kargil due to whom many Indians lost their lives. Although I am the twice elected prime minister of Pakistan and leader of the most popular party, I have not been taken into confidence on the talks. Nor would I be willing to lend legitimacy to the visit in the absence of a date for elections, release of all political prisoners and a representative government. As far as I can see, the visit will enable Musharraf to have coffee with Vajpayee, send smoke signals of peaceful intent to the west, visit his old home and do some shopping. I am willing to be proved wrong but I doubt that, the visit will lead to any substantive agreement regarding Kashmir.

Q: In the past you have been saying that bilateral relations in

other fields should be improved before taking up the Kashmir issue. Do you still hold the same opinion?

A: That's incorrect. The PPP has given a formula to address the core issue of Kashmir. This is for both sides to agree to have open and safe border without prejudice to the Security Council resolutions with a view to build-ing a South Asian trading bloc.

Q: Do you agree with sugges-tions that Pakistan should also take the APHC along? If so, how can Pakistan have the APHC included in talks?

A: I am unable to comment on this as I am not privy to discussions, on this issue. I understand that the Musharaf regime has announced that it will not meet the APHC during the Musharaf visit to New Delhi. However, the APHC is a party to the dispute and if Musharaf regime can have negotiations with New Delhi with-out the APHC, its leaders may feel that they too can negotiate with India without Islamabad.

Q: What in your opinion was the importance of New Delhi Jamia Masjid Imam Ahmed Shah Bukhari's recent mysteri-ous visit to Pakistan?

A: I am unaware of the mes-sages and meetings by the New Delhi Jamia Masjid Iriam during his visit to Pakistan. Therefore, I find it improper to comment.

Q: What should be the ARD's role at this juncture? Will the alliance be justified in continuing its anti-government campaign at a time when, in principle, it should strengthen the hands of Gen Pervez to enable him to talk to India with confidence? Do you agree that even in the absence of an invitation from New Dellii for the cliief executive, there was a need for the ARD not to pursue a controntationist course when the military government had com-pleted more than half of its term and it was reiterating that it would hold elections according to the time frame set by the Supreme

Court? Some parties in the ARD are giving indications as if the restoration of assemblies will be acceptable to them. What will be the PPP's point of view?

A: The ARD is an opposition alliance struggling to restore constitutional rule, fundamental human rights and freedom in the country. The ARD believes that only an elected and representative government has the right to deal with issues relating to the country's security. That includes the range of issues from India to the economy. Democracy and stability go hand in hand and it's important for Pakistan to return to democratic rule so that the out-standing issues can be dealt with by a representative government.

The regime has yet to accede to the ARD demands for a date for fair, free and impartial elections open to all parties and personalities, release of political prisoners and repeal and re-enactment of the NAB law. It's naive to expect an unrepresentative regime getting unsolicited political support for its initiatives in the absence of any settlement with the political forces. Of course the regime may think it can treat the political forces with contempt since we represent an unarmed people. However, such an approach has rebounded in the past and will rebound again.

The PPP is opposed to the revival of assemblies which in any case is a non-starter. The regime lacks a constitutional majority in them and has little interest in reviving them. It's a ploy to divide the political forces.

Q. What is your assessment about Gen Musharraf's future designs? Some say he wants to become president while others are of the view he will quit power after restoring democracy. If the general really wants to become president, how will the ARD be able to stop him? Will it not be the interest of democracy - and avert any possible danger of military intervention in the future- that political parties accept a general as president?

A: Only General Musharraf can talk about his future designs.

However, to get elected, you need political support. The PPP opposes formalisation of the military's role in the political affairs of the country. That formalisation under the Eighth Amendment led to the destabilisation of democracy since 1985 and the misery of the people.

Q: This is the first time that adversaries FPP and the PML are together in the ARD. What has been the PPP's experience of working with the PML? How do you see the reported suggestions of Mian Shahbaz Sharif to his brother Nawaz Sharif that the PML should beware of the PPP as it may "ditch the PML anytime?"

A: The PML(N) is part of the ARD which has set before itself the agenda of restoration of democracy and the constitution in the country. Both the parties are conducting themselves with maturity in the alliance.

I am unaware of the suggestions by Shahbaz Sharif to Nawaz Sharif regarding the PPP. You might ask him about his views.

Q: How do you see the MQM's decision to boycott the local elections? Who will be the beneficiary of the decision?

A: Since the MQM left the ARD, there has been talk of it being in secret league with the regime. This view is strengthened by the acquittal of the suspects in the Hakim Saïd murder following the prosecutor's statement in court. The MQM could be still contesting without the party label. After all this is a non-party election and the PPP is not participating as a party.

Q: What instructions have you issued to your party about the next phase of local elections? Will the PPP make adjustments with the PML? Were adjustments made in the earlier phases of local polls? How do you see the performance of your party in these elections?

A: The local elections are non-party based. The next phase will also be held accordingly. However, the PPP has appealed

to people to vote for pro-democracy candidates who could defend democracy if the regime tried to turn the local elections into an Ayub style basic democracy, Pro-democracy groups in local areas would assess for themselves the best strategy to win.

Q: Former naval chief Admiral Mansoorul Haq has Voluntarily' come back from the US to face a NAB case against him. Will the PPP chairperson also take a similar step and have herself cleared of all allegations against her? Why one should not hope that you will set a prece-dent for others how they should behave when corruption charges are made against them?

A: Admiral Mansur came back as part of a plea bargain wherein he admitted his guilt. My case is quite different. I am a political personality who is being victimised on political grounds and who has pleaded her innocence. As far as the hope of staying in the country when a wrong charge is made, that precedent was laid by my family. Both my father and I were wrongfully convicted through that precedent. Now Senator Zardari and others are wrongfully and inhumanly held. We can strengthen humane precedents and challenge unjust ones. It is with that conviction that I am facing the tormentors of the people who think that they can destroy the hopes of the discriminated and downtrodden people by tormenting me. They are wrong. Those who punish innocent children and their mother to punish the poor of our country will surely be punished by the forces of nature. I hope the young people of our country, who are our future and our hope, will follow my precedent of fighting a brutal and vindictive regime at great personal cost. Honour lies in resisting tyranny and injustice.

"I would choose brains over beauty.... I am unafraid of old age"

*Interview by Aamir Sial & Imran Khan Sial for Sindh Today,
London, June 2011*

ST: Do you miss your married life or are you quite happy with this arrangement, where the two spouses live separately and meet occasionally?

Benazir Bhutto: I miss my home life and am deeply unhappy at having to deny my children a proper upbringing by both their parents. Marriage gives a family great happiness and emotional stability. Asif is being held hostage to emotionally blackmail both of us. He has been behind bars for most of my sixteen years of marriage. He is in the tenth year of his imprisonment. However, both of us derive solace from the fact that we are struggling for a great cause.

ST: What are your fears, regrets in life, if any?

Benazir Bhutto: Life is too short too live with fear or with regret.

ST: When you look at your life, 10 years from now, what do you foresee?

Benazir Bhutto: I see a bright future ahead for Pakistan one where the people prosper with peace on the borders, with freedom and the rule of law bringing in progress and prosperity.

ST: Are you afraid of old age?

Benazir Bhutto: I am unafraid of old age. Old age is a gift from God. I lost my Father and both my brothers at a young age. I give thanks to God for each day of life.

ST: As a woman, do you believe in beauty or brains – given a choice, what would you choose?

Benazir Bhutto: I would choose brains over beauty any day. Brains allows a person to work for themselves and their society. Moreover, beauty fades away whereas brains allows for experience to lead to wisdom.

ST: Do you enjoy motherhood? And have you ever beaten up any of your children?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, I enjoy motherhood. By the grace of God, most times my children are polite, courteous, obedient, take care of their responsibilities, do their homework and do not need disciplining.

ST: Is your household matriarchal or patriarchal?

Benazir Bhutto: By force of circumstances it now matriarchal. I would like it to be a happy mix of both matriarchal and patriarchal.

ST: Do you believe in visiting Peers, Mazars, and faith healers?

Benazir Bhutto: I believe in prayers.

ST: Are you a good cook? And what are some of your favourite dishes?

Benazir Bhutto: I like to cook. If I got more practice, I would be a good cook. However, politics leaves me little time for the kitchen. I do like to go into the kitchen occasionally and cook. I find it therapeutic. I learnt cooking when I was in solitary confinement under house arrest. By cooking I could see something I created and feel that I was alive and relevant rather than buried alive in a grave like situation.

I do like to put a lot of onions in the meat dishes I make. I also believe that haldi, piaz, lissan are very good for health. I like to add dhania to dishes both sabat and fresh. I like khatta mittha khana. Most of all I miss Palla fish and Palla fish eggs.

Now I know why poets wrote so much about the palla. I sent some to Japan when I visited the country.

ST: What would bring you greater happiness - your third term as the Prime Minister of Pakistan or the freedom of your husband?

Benazir Bhutto: My personal happiness has always been subordinated to the greater happiness of the 150 million people of Pakistan. As a wife, my happiness would come from the release of my husband. As a leader, my responsibilities are to my people for whose democratic and egalitarian aspirations my Father and brothers, as well as the PPP workers, laid down their lives.

ST: Do you cry easily? Do you ever exhibit your real feelings?

Benazir Bhutto: When my Father was in prison I stopped myself from showing emotions. However, by nature I like to exhibit my feelings. I can cry from anger, I can cry when hearing a sad story, I can cry when watching a sad or happy movie. This way I give vent to my feelings and move on.

ST: Are you short - tempered or in total control of your emotions/ impulses?

Benazir Bhutto: I am short tempered when aggravated, that is when I have too much to do and am running late. However, if I have time, I can be patient and control my emotions. I prefer having time because I can let the other person speak and try to understand what they are saying.

ST: Who is your ideal and why?

Benazir Bhutto: As a Muslim woman I derived great inspiration from Bibi Khadija the wife of the Holy Prophet PBUH and from Bibi Fatima. In political terms my Father is my ideal. He was brave and bold. He wrote beautifully and spoke with great mastery. He worked hard and dressed well. He was witty, charming and humorous. He taught me that life is

worthless unless spent in the service of your people. He was a great patriot. Neither Pakistan, South Asia or the Muslim world has been the same since he was killed.

ST: Do you enjoy your celebrity status or wish you had led a simple, commoner's life, without the spotlight?

Benazir Bhutto: I was born into a famous family and lived in the public life all the time. Because of this I yearn for anonymity and the ability to do things that ordinary people do without being watched all the time.

ST: Would you like any of your children to join politics? If so, which one are you grooming?

Benazir Bhutto: I love all my children dearly and would like them to grow up and serve their country through politics or community service. It is up to them what they decide to do with their lives. I would like to give them a good education, as I would like to see every child in my country get. This is why PPP increased the education budget.

ST: Do you read fiction or listen to music in your spare time? What are your tastes in both?

Benazir Bhutto: I hardly ever read fiction. I like to read about politics. I like to read autobiography's and current issues. I am fond of books and feel sad that my children prefer the computer to reading. I used to like pop songs in college but gave up hearing them afterwards. Now I like to listen to classical music, which I find calming.

ST: Do you believe that men and women are given equal status in Islam?

Benazir Bhutto: Yes, I believe Islam is a religion of emancipation, which gives equal status to men and women. Every one, white or black, man or woman, rich or poor is equal in the eyes of God.

"Whether the PPP will accept Musharraf as President, depends on whether he will ask for our support"

*The interview by Zahid Hussain for Newslime Magazine,
May 2001*

Q: What impact will the Supreme Court judgment that set aside yours and Asif's conviction have on your future political plans?

A: The Supreme Court judgment has upset the military regime's time schedule to rid me from the political arena before the general elections. The judgment spoke of a biased trial and the focus on a fresh trial will rest on a fair hearing. Given a fair hearing, or even an unfair one given the appeal procedure, the regime will be unable to oust me before the promised elections in 2002. The judgment puts me center stage for the next parliamentary elections even if the regime chooses to arrest me. Imprisoned candidates can contest elections and I become a more potent election campaign issue. In other words, the judgment upset the political apple cart of the military regime.

Q: You appear very optimistic of returning as prime minister for the third time. What makes you so confident?

A: I am confident of returning as prime minister because the people support me. This support was demonstrated in the labour elections, the Northern Area elections and the local bodies elections. True there are detractors and we could have done better. Yet, compared to those who came later, we performed better economically, politically and socially.

Since the dismissal of the PPP government, the country has slid into anarchy, chaos, bankruptcy and martial law. Per

capita income is down by two per cent. The highest employment rate has dived to the lowest. Revenue, growth and investment rates are down. The country needs a popular government to give confidence to markets with a view to create wealth, jobs and give people a sense of optimism and pride in the country.

One qualification: my running for prime minister depends on the constitutional structure we end up with. Pakistan desperately needs stability based on popular consensus. The fears of the generals and the politicians need addressing. PPP opposes handcuffing parliament to the corp. commanders, although we accept a need to prevent the rise of non-liberal regimes to safeguard democracy. If the constitution is right, I'll contest. Otherwise, I'll opt out of a flawed system and prevent myself being set up for failure.

Q: When do you plan to come back to Pakistan? Some reports suggest that the party has asked you to wait until the completion of the local bodies polls?

A: My return is scheduled after the local elections and before the general elections. The party and I want to take each step in a manner benefiting the party's electoral prospects. For us, the PPP is the organisational vehicle for the federating units and the people to achieve autonomy, equality and prosperity.

Q: The military government has said nine other corruption cases are ready to be filed and that you will be arrested upon your return. Will that affect your return?

A: The Supreme Court convicts the judge that tried me and yet the regime proceeds against me. This is proof of vendetta. The military magicians pull out nine cases at will with a view to deter my return. But I will return irrespective. Now the clock is ticking against the military regime. The plans to revive the economy, give good governance and conduct even-handed accountability are collapsing. The deadline of the 2002 polls is round the corner and the population is restive.

Q: The British government has recently handed over to the military government some 220000 documents detailing assets and bank accounts of yourself and Asif. Do you think the documents may damage your position in other cases?

A: Islamabad has given a sovereign commitment to Britain to use the material in a trumped-up narcotics charge. The documents contain disputed state-ments in that the British decision is an administrative rather than a judicial matter. The statements are without cross examination and legally worthless. I am unaware what material there is in the bank documents, even though everyone ought to have the right to be heard. However, one thing is clear: even if the prosecution story of bank accounts is accepted, every citizen is lawfully entitled to bank documents. The regime has already resiled from the corruption charge and the former Interior Minister and General Mushtaq have exposed the narcotics charges.

Q: There are some clear indica-tions of General Musharraf becoming president. What is your posi-tion on that? Some reports suggest you are ready to accept him as the president conditionally? What are those conditions?

A: As for Musharraf and whether the PPP will accept him as president, that depends on whether he asks for our support. Naturally we would prefer our own president, but we are prepared to hear him and see the quid pro quo being offered before discussing the matter with our allies and taking a decision. As for what conditions we might settle for, that depends on the political situation and who has what strength at which time.

Q: Does this mean you are pre-pared to strike a deal with the military?

A: Talks yes, deal no. PPP is on record, publicly and privately, calling for a negotiated exit strategy-for the generals since 1999.

Q: You have been prime minister twice. Why do you think you will get a third chance and if so, how will the third stint be different?

A: The reason I believe PPP will get a third chance is because we gave the country its best economic performance and social development. The country had the highest revenues, growth and investment as well as an anti-poverty programme. Bridges, roads, gas, electricity, water, education and health were provided and Pakistan's prestige was enhanced. Others who followed bankrupted the country and polarised it. There fore, ordinary people wish to vote for us.

Our third term will be different in seeking to build peace in the region and in building a more transparent and open society whilst dealing with social issues that the youth of today demand, such as anti-corruption and less focus on tension.

Q: There is no prece-dence in Pakistan of generals abdicating power voluntarily. Do you think a peaceful transition of power to a democratically elected civilian government is possible next year in accordance with the Supreme Court ruling?

A: General Musharraf has given his word to the Pakistani people, the inter-national community and the Supreme Court that he will hold elections by then. Pakistan is losing out on financial support due to dictatorship. The pressure to hold elections is there although we will all breathe a sigh of relief when they are actually held.

Q: What do you think of the pre-sent situation in Sindh where a new alliance is emerging between the MQM and Jiye Sindh on the water crisis?

A: The water crisis is a genuine one which threatens the unity and integrity of the country. The desilting programme wasted water in water channel tailenders the previous year aggravating the water shortage in this year. The country needs more small dams. It also needs more autonomy and transparent intra-provincial dealings.

"If a democratic restoration is going to be a dressed-up dictatorship, my personal preference is to accept a tactical withdrawal from a flawed system"

*Interview by Ali Dayan Hassan for Herald Magazine,
April 2001*

Q. General Musharraf seems determined to go ahead with his plans for restructuring the political system. At the same time, the local bodies elections indicate that your party remains one of the two major political forces, even under this new system. Will you accept the new constitutional dispensation that will emerge from this restructuring?

A. We need to see a military-imposed constitution before deciding how to respond to it. But if such a constitution trinitities into the eighth amendment and military intelligence toppling governments, then, no, we will not accept it. But Musharraf can make a difference by breaking with past military tradition and reconciling with political parties on the basis of Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan.

It is true that PPP supporters swept the local bodies elections, proving the party's popularity amongst the people. The PPP stands for the Quaid-e-Azam's vision of a federal, democratic and egalitarian Pakistan. This vision, of course, differs from that of military rulers who are bent upon enforcing a presidential type of system. Musharraf's insistence on dictating a new constitution to the parliament can only mean more instability. Instead, he should break with the past 'decade, when the military undid the people's will through presidential edicts, rigged elections, money embezzled from banks and concocted criminal cases.

Q: if you do accept, however partially, a new constitutional dispensation, why are the ARD and the PPP opposing the regime's efforts right now?

A. I disagree with the notion that Musharraf has offered a "new" dispensation. The offer is a repetition of the eighth amendment: a weak prime minister, a powerful security apparatus, a new Nawaz Sharif. Instead of following this "course of action, Musharraf ought to review the past, less as a soldier and more as a Pakistani. Instead of supporting the jihadi view that corrupt politicians brought down the democratic fabric of the state, he could consider that the intelligence apparatus was a force above the law, bent upon subverting democracy and the hopes of the Pakistani people. Musharraf's inability to negotiate with the opposition alliance president, Nawabzada Nasrullah, reflects the polarisation within the country. This bodes ill for political stability which is a prerequisite for economic prosperity.

We oppose the present dispensation on several grounds. These include our desire to see the constitution restored and the judges taking oath under it, the repeal of the NAB law, the release of political — nabbed — prisoners, the withdrawal of army officers from the monitoring teams and fair, free and impartial elections under an interim government of national consensus.

Q. General Musharraf has stated that the new democracy will be significantly different from the previous experiment, in that the democratic process will only be restored under a strict system of checks and balances, both on the civilian government as well as on the military. Does this seem feasible to you?

A. Musharraf's "new democracy" is the resuscitated corpse of Ayub's controlled democracy and Zia's eighth amendment. As Pakistan's twice-elected prime minister, I brought prosperity to the country but was got rid of by the military through the president, despite enjoying the support of the parliament and the people. Unless a Pakistani prime minister

has the same powers as the Indian and Bangladeshi prime ministers, instability will prevail. Can Musharraf assist in enabling the military to appreciate this very basic reality? The PPP welcomes checks and balances for the military, if Musharraf has indeed proposed that. Prime ministers in parliamentary democracies work under checks and balances and I support that. However, I oppose handcuffing prime ministers to the military's whims and holding the knife of dismissal at their throats. Such tactics are not checks and balances. They are blackmail and intimidation, which the country can do without.

Q. There are indications that without creating a system of checks and balances, the military may not be willing to transfer power. What will your priority be: seeing some kind of a democratic process restored or fighting for an unfettered parliamentary system, even if that means a delay in the restoration of democracy?

A. My personal priority is to see the restoration of a democratic process as soon as possible. However, the final decision will be that of my party, the opposition alliance and the liberal intelligentsia, which supports a modern and democratic Pakistan.

Q. With Sharif out of the picture, the impression in official corridors is that your person, and not your-party, is the only obstacle in the way of a democratic restoration. Do you agree that you may have to alien out with the military for good?

A. Well, this impression is quite erroneous. I am only an obstacle for the pro-Taliban elements and they want to remove me. As for the people, I thank them for the overwhelming support given to pro-PPP candidates in the local bodies elections. The Benazir led PPP swept those elections. The wishes of the people ought to be accepted so that Pakistan can begin its recovery. Only the generals can decide whether they will accept the people's leadership or would prefer to fall out with the people's will. Ask them this

question. As far as I am concerned, the Pakistan. army - and the country - were respected worldwide under my leadership. It is a very different story today. That is the reality, whether the generals like it or not.

Q. Would you accept a tactical withdrawal from the political centre-stage if it Will facilitate a return to democracy?

A. That depends. I understand that the country needs my leadership and I am ready to serve the country. However, if it means repeating the past, with propaganda wars, presidential dismissals, rigged elections and dismantling of institutions, then my personal preference is to accept a tactical withdrawal from a flawed system. Dressed-up dictatorship is hardly a 'return to democracy'. However, that's just a personal view and my personal views are subordinate to the political requirements of the party and the people who support us.

"The tapes are voice verifiable under modern technology"

*Interview by Zahid Hussain for Newslite Magazine ,
March 2001*

Q: Are you shocked with the latest disclosures of recorded conversations between Justice Qayyum and Saifur Rehman / Khalid Anwar?

A: Yes, I am shocked to the core of my being. I knew from sympathisers in the NAB and the courts that the judge took instructions from Minister Saif. The freezing of my undisputed property ex parte (for which the disputed property was made the excuse) was announced by Minister Saif several hours before the judge signed the order. *Jang* also disclosed that Minister Saif said the judges would do as the regime asked. But the cold blooded manner in which the sentence against me was dictated was traumatic. The judge and cabinet were hag-gling over my sentence as we ladies haggle in Bohri Bazaar over prices.

The tapes show that the judge was a proxy for a trial conducted by cabinet ministers who set the dates for hearing and dictated the sentence.

I have suffered enormously. I hope the Supreme Court grants Senator Zardari and my request for honourable acquittal rather than orders a retrial. A retrial would mean punishing us for the sins of the judge whereas honourable acquittal would respect our rights under the law.

Independent jurists have already opined that the material lacks evidence and that I should be acquitted. One jurist opined that even the charge in the case could not be made out against us. There's a world of jurist backing for our honourable acquittal. The media trial destroyed our chances

of a fair hearing. I've seen it in my case. So deep was the propaganda, that even when confronted with the evidence of acquittal, some persons still find it hard to exonerate us. But we are entitled to protection under the law-that's honourable acquittal because a person is innocent unless proved otherwise by a fair and independent judge in a fair hearing.

Q: Khalid Anwar and Justice Qayyum have questioned the veracity of the tapes?

A: There is a witness against them and tapes of proven evidence. It's an irony that they plotted against me on the basis of unproven documents, and without a single material witness.

Ask them to sign a joint letter with me asking the government to invite the United Nations rapporteur for judges and the judiciary to investigate the matter and see how they run. The tapes are voice verifiable under modern technology. The tapes validate opinions given by American chief justices and a British Attorney General.

I have suffered enormously as has my family. Pakistan's judiciary can only be cleansed of corrupt elements when action is taken on the irrefutable evidence provided. An honest judiciary is what we need for foreign and domestic investors to kick-start the economy.

Less for my sake, as I keep clear of retribution, but more for the sake of the country, its people, press and economy, I call for action against the concerned by the United Nations rapporteur.

I know we have many honest judges but they operate in a climate of all pervasive coercion with the sword of sacking over their heads. That's why the Pakistan People's Party has called for the UN rapporteur.

Remember how Qayyum came back to allow President Tarar to fight the presidential elections after he was disqualified by the Chief Election Commissioner? He's the same man that

re-wrote the tarrils for Hubco, did the sports inquiry against the cricketers and handled sensitive cases. The role of Chief Justice Rashid was deplorable too. He handed out threats to Qayyum about arrest warrants and dis-cussed signing the judgment to give to the government in advance. It's shameful.

Q: How do you think this disclo-sure is going to help you in your appeal against the conviction which is coming for hearing in the Supreme Court?

A: I hope my appeal for an honourable acquittal on the grounds that I was a victim of politically driven judicial abuse will be accepted. I have been wrongly tried by a corrupt judge. The court needs to protect my rights and bring to closure a sordid episode in judi-cial history.

The investigation, the charge and the sentence were all manipulated. The tapes indicate a race between the accountability judges to convict me. I was shuttled back and forth from city to city and courtroom to courtroom for three years. It was disorienting waking up at nights and wondering where I was.

The United States Human Rights report wrote of the politically-driven. accountability. Minister Saif boasted of torturing witnesses. The Pakistan Human Rights Commission called it a questionable sentence. A judge of Pakistan's Supreme Court said that even the charge could not be made and ended with the plea "God help us when judges become partisan" even before the tapes were discovered.

The PPP has called for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate charges of perjury, obstruction of justice and fabrication of cases against political opponents with a view to prevent it from happening in the future.

Q: It is said that the judi-ciary has been pressurised by all governments at some time or another. It is also believed that the judges' phones were bugged by your government too.

A: That is certainly a point of view held by many and I sympathise with it. I'd like it known that prime ministers were also pressured by politically motivated and ambitious judges. I speak of my experience. My government was prevented from nominating judges by the powerful establishment. In the first term, fifty judges were packed into the courts including Qayyum without the advice of a prime minister by President Ghulam Ishaq's interim regime.

In the second term, judges that the chief justices had approved in writing were delegitimised after Judge Bhatti granted relief to a person wrongfully accused of blasphemy. The cut-off date was my term.

I am unaware of whether the intelligence agencies bugged the judges' phones. I know that my offices and personal quarters were bugged by the intelligence when I was the prime minister. That's why the PPP has called for the rationalisation of the policy pertaining to all the intelligence agencies in the country.

Q: Khalid Anwar has said there was nothing wrong in his asking a judge to expedite the trial. What is your reaction ?

A: I reject Law Minister Khalid Anwar's defence. The tapes show that he was conducting the trial and had taken-over the proceedings. He was setting dates and the independence of the court was demolished by his interfering.

Keeping the evidence of the tapes aside for a moment, the law minister had little business in asking the judge to take advice from the law minister who happens to promote him to the Supreme Court. However, Khalid Anwar could tell us, since he has confessed to ringing up judges, how many he rang up and what he talked to them about. The law requires that election petitions be decided within six months. Did he ring up any judges in connection with those and how many were settled? All I can say," Oh what a tangled Web we weave, when first we learn to deceive".

Q: The chairman of NAB, General Khalid Maqbool, said you will be arrested on your arrival.

A: It's for General Maqbool to answer how he knows what the court will do when I apply for bail unless he's doing a Qayyum on us all over again. I hope oth-erwise, because Maqbool has the reputation of being a decent officer.

I may add that General Maqbool has said that there are no new cases against me. AH the cases by the previous regime, except for the PIA appointments case, were based on the same set of unproven documents pro-duced in the SGS case. I've already mentioned what jurists had to say about those.

I am disturbed by reports that army officials in NAB - not Maqbool - have taken over the running of the newly consti-tuted accountability courts. There are witnesses who will come out at the right moment to testify on these conversations.

It is said that NAB is the judge in the accountability courts. The judges sit there as proxies. Their decisions are dictated elsewhere. That's why the accountability courts have a conviction rate of 92 per cent.

Accountability judges are being bribed through extraordinary monetary benefits dressed up as pay packages. They get 80,000 rupees a month, compared to 20,000 rupees for judges in their seniority sitting in other special courts. They've been given new cars and cash benefits to do up their houses. The independence of the judiciary is affected when a vested interest develops.

For these reasons, it is important to call in the United Nations rapporteur on judges and the judiciary to investigate whether political opponents of the regime can get a fair trial.

We do need an anti-corruption process, The PPP has asked for the repeal of the present law and its reenact-ment in keeping with due process and an' independent hearing.

The security apparatus has run amok

*Interview by Syed Ali Dayan Hassan for Herald Magazine Annual,
January 2001*

Q. What do you think is the basic problem with civil-military relations?

A. The inability of the military to bow before the people's will.

Q. Why is that?

A. The military's view on security and government is at variance with the popular will. Pakistan is a federation but the armed forces distrust provincial units. They are scared of giving up power.

Q. So, what is the solution to this impasse in civil-military relations?

A. Either we have democracy or dictatorship. The military seeks a dictatorship or a controlled democracy to continue with their security agenda. They need the centralised state and a diversion of resources for that security agenda. For the first time, they are realising the difficulty of running the ship of state. I believe the solution lies in democracy and devolution. We should return to the roots of the Quaid. He founded Pakistan on the principles of federalism, autonomy and freedom. If we revert to this dream, we might devolve more power but we will be more secure.

Q. How has the army managed to present a discredited image of political figures, including you?

A. I dispute that they have succeeded but I agree that they have tried. There are two factors that explain this. One, political institutions are weak and have poor financial

resources and organisational ability. Also, they are unable to communicate freely with the masses. This is because genuine political forces have been continually hunted by the establishment, and when you are constantly hunted, you have little time to organise. Second, because the army does give power to some politicians, it has divided the civilian popular base by holding out to those who cannot win - the promise of power without legitimacy.

Q. You have presided twice over a controlled democracy. What have you learnt from the experience?

A. There is a tendency in Pakistan, due to military dictatorships and one-man rule, to think that one person can make all the difference. But in a democratic system, it is not just one person that makes a difference. A democratic ruler, such as myself, functions within the confines of the constitution. We need a civic consensus on what a constitution should be and what constitutes freedom and plurality. I had to work on the mandate I was given and that is why I say that we did not achieve much. I had to work with the 8th amendment and a president who could sack the prime minister. In other words, some elements in the intelligence agencies used the president when they felt I was becoming too powerful. They never allowed us enough time to elect members of the senate which would have made my party - and the democratic forces - stronger. The real solution lies not with any individual. I can only give a clarion call. Then it depends on the masses whether they rally around that call to say that they want a constitution based on the supremacy of the will of the people and that the prime minister and parliament must determine national security and not the military.

Q. But then, if you had commanded a two-thirds majority and could have amended the constitution, a coup would have taken place against you instead of Sharif...

A. I do not think so. I could be wrong, of course, given that a coup did take place against my father's government.

However, when I came to power in 1988, the world was interested in Pakistani democracy and, at that time, if I had been given my due constitutional majority, I believe the PPP could have restructured society without the military.

Q. You are accused by many of having compromised the 11-year-old political struggle by agreeing to cohabit with an establishment that is innately hostile to democratic governance. Thereby, you allowed yourself to be used by the enemies of what you stood for. How can one be sure that you will not allow that to happen again?

A. That is only partially true. I had two terms and two records. In my first term, I did dictate the security agenda and I was overthrown because of that. But the liberal forces that should have stood by me failed to do so. And therefore, in my second term, I went in for a historic compromise. I accept my part of the responsibility but others must own up to theirs. Secondly, I have never been a believer in armed struggle. There are two ways to reform either through constitutionalism or through revolution. If I am elected, I am duty bound to function within the ambit of the constitution. Consequently, I am unable to give the guarantees I am asked for. Those guarantees can only be provided by the voter by giving the PPP enough of a majority to change the constitution. If you vote me in with enough of a majority to change the Constitution, then, yes, I can do things differently. But if you vote me in with a moth-eaten majority, then I have to live within the limitations of the mandate.

Q. Are you calling, in effect, for a new constitution?

A. I am calling for the removal of the Zia-dictated distortions in the 1973 constitution. The 1973 constitution was a federal, democratic, unanimous and Islamic constitution and I stand by it. Under it, the concurrent list should have been abolished in 1983 (in areas such as education, health, population, information — these belong in the domain of the provinces). This has not happened. Under the '73 constitution, only the

parliament can decide which laws are repugnant to Islam. But under this distorted constitution, the Shariat bench decides such issues. This creates fiscal crises such as the one on *riba*. Thus, you see, there is a world of a difference between what the '73 constitution was and what it has become. Crucially, the 73 constitution did not give the president the power to act as the mouthpiece of the military. The actions of an unelected dictator were indemnified in the constitution, including laws in the name of religion such as the blasphemy law which has less to do with blasphemy and more to do with the persecution of minorities. What I am saying, in essence, is that we need to revisit the Quaid's dream which constitutionally manifested itself in the 1973 constitution.

Q. Will you validate General Musharraf's amendments to the constitution?

A. It depends on what the amendments are. My party is opposed to validating Musharraf's amendments but if Musharraf announces the repeal of the separate electorate (imposed by Zia), I would validate it. Your question is general. If there is a reformist agenda, in keeping with liberal aspirations, yes, I would validate it. But if an amendment creates a National Security Council through which the military can get rid of political governments that fail to toe the line, I would oppose it. When I use the term 'military', I do not mean the armed forces as such. I think the security apparatus has run amok. I think a different kind of NSC is needed to bring the security apparatus under the rule of law — not under the rule of a prime minister but under the rule of law. Let me give you an example. When I became prime minister, they came to me and said they wanted to increase the intelligence corps but I rejected the proposal. But when I was overthrown in 1990, the same proposal was approved by Mr. Mustafa Jatoi. And now we have seven different intelligence agencies playing politics right down to the *tehsil* level. This has led to the destabilisation of political governments, the collapse of the economy and has

undermined our standing in the international community. Plurality of power means that the security apparatus has the right to an independent analysis of the situation but that independent analysis must not be shoved down the throats of everybody else.

Q. Did you attempt to rein in the intelligence agencies when you were in power?

A. Yes, I did. For instance, in December 1988, within a week of my forming the government, Brigadier Imtiaz working at the ISI Internal began contacting political parties to overthrow my government. My political adviser at the time, General Babar, moved to have him replaced. The army refused initially, though later, Brigadier Imtiaz was removed from the ISI Internal, not from the army itself. So, I tried but they defied me and because of the 8th amendment, I could not remove any officer myself. We collected proof, in 1989, of ISI elements visiting MNAs for a no-confidence move. We made audio tapes. The head of the MI entered my office and saw the photograph of the man who had been approaching my MNAs. He panicked, took the photograph and the tape and then sent me a report saying the man in question was deranged. In 1990, when the ISI launched a similar effort, we made a videotape called Operation Jackal. A serving army officer, Brigadier Imtiaz, technically not in the ISI but substantively still there, was taped saying: 'the army does not want her, the president does not want her, the Americans don't want her'. He was seeking the support of parliamentarians to oust the government. I gave that tape, substantive proof of treason, to General Beg. He filibustered. Eventually, under pressure, Beg just retired the man whereas he should have been tried for treason. Then, when the no-confidence move failed, I was approached by my MPAs in the NWFP who said that General Beg had called them to the GHQ and said, 'We want to get rid of her starting with the NWFP and could you please move a no- confidence vote against her.' So, a destabilising political role has been played by a chief of army

staff, by chiefs of intelligence, by the heads of the ISI and the president, at different times.

On March 23, 1989, the army *Jawans* mobbed me in a show of support when I went to the Pakistan Day parade. General Beg panicked. I was used to being mobbed and public adulation. I told him it was all right. The support waned when the intelligence agencies - sometimes the ISI, sometimes the MI, at others the FIT and the FIU and even the corps command - intrigued. Poisonous stories were prepared and circulated to the corps commanders and the jawans to put the seeds of hatred in people's hearts. These included false stories of corruption, of Indian agents, of Jewish agents, of American agents, Sikh lists. Thus, an impression was created that we are corrupt traitors and even our supporters turned against us. Beg was with me till the Intelligence worked on him and convinced him that 'she wants to remove you and replace you with General Imtiaz as CO AS'. It was a ridiculous story but he believed it. They told Ghulam Ishaq Khan that, 'If she gets a senate majority, she'll impeach you and replace you with Yahya Bakhtiar'. They concocted these stories. They went to one of my party leaders and said, 'Get 10 MNAs and we will make you prime minister'. A corps commander went to my husband in 1989 and said that they could not salute a woman. 'Let her make you prime minister as we have no problems with the PPP'. In 1993, they sent a Middle Eastern prince to tell me the same thing - that Nawaz was going but I should bow out because if I fought, things would be different.

Q. Can you provide further examples of how the military establishment and the intelligence agencies operated to destabilise democracy during your first tenure?

A. I have two witnesses who tell me that they attended two similar meetings arranged by a then-serving corps commander during my first term. In these meetings, the corps commander, Nawaz Sharif and Osama Bin Laden were present. Osama Bin Laden was told that a woman in this position was against. Islam so he should give them money to

overthrow me. And then Nawaz said that he would bring Islam to Pakistan. Does the public think these things need to be' investigated independently or not? No one had heard of Osama Bin Laden then. I had not either. He is famous now. In those days he was unknown but he was sitting there interfering in my government. He paid 10 million dollars to finance the no-confidence move against me. At that time, we heard that the money came from Saudi Arabia. I sent a minister to meet King Fahd. He has been very kind to me and I really like him.. He is an urbane, generous and kind man. I told my emissary to remind the king that he had said to me: 'All Bhutto was my brother and my friend. I opposed his murder. I thought it was unjust then and I think it is unjust now. You are like my daughter'. Then how come he was sending money to overthrow my government?

He sent back a message saying that the Saudi government was not involved and it was a private Saudi citizen. Later on, from these two individuals who were with the PML (hen but are with us now, I learnt that the meetings involved Sharif, a then-serving corps commander and Osama and they wheedled 10 million dollars out of Osama to overthrow the government.

Meanwhile, my parliamentarians informed me that they were offered a million dollars each by Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi to get rid of me. I like Mr. Jatoi. He treats me like a daughter and personally I have no problem with him. But I do think Mr. Jatoi and I both owe it to the nation that the facts should come out.

I set up my own Trojan horse. I told the MN As to go ahead and take the money. 'Lei them think you are with them'. That is how they lost the no-confidence motion. My four MNAs were counted against me but they did not crossover and two more joined me. Otherwise they had it all set. And then we had this very funny incident when these four MNAs came to the prime minister's house with briefcases of money and said, 'You take it', and I said, 'No, I cannot'. In the end, of course, the money was not taken but. the fact remains that these sorts of

sums were paid for no-confidence votes. And they were not paid by the political parties but by the intelligence agencies and rogue elements in the military as well as right-wing adventurists.

And at the SAP games, Beg sat next to me with a very satisfied smile on his face. When three PML MNAs came and sat next to me, his face fell. 'What are they doing here?' he asked me in panic. I smiled and said they had joined the government. 'Isn't that wonderful?' Beg just looked like a ghost.

And then we were accused of horse-trading and corruption. Thus the intelligence agencies try to create a 'heads, I win, tails, you lose' situation for the political class. This simply cannot continue.

Q. What happened during your second tenure?

A. When General Javed Ashraf was my DGISI, everything was fine. But then one day an ISI official heroically — and there are heroes amongst them as well — intercepted a coup attempt by Brigadier Muntasir. Muntasir's group was using the army's name to smuggle arms into Pakistan. And the next thing I knew, the officer who; intercepted the coup (instead of being given a medal) was shunted out. A person called Shujaat was installed and all our troubles began.

Then Javed Ashraf went and General Raana came in. Good man, but he must have been quite simple because he brought me this absurd report. It was absurd and it was false, I knew that. The report said that Asif Zardari, along with Javed Pasha, was going to mortgage Pakistan's airports. I was incensed, knowing the report to be untrue, and wanted it investigated. I expected the ISI report to pay accolades acknowledging our efforts to streamline the economy. I asked Raana for verification of this report as, clearly, the source had played, mischief. But he asked me to let it be and I did. Henceforth, the reports -became manufactured.

Anyway, General Shujaat took over and started destabilising

the government. General Naseerullah Babar came to me, we spoke to the defence secretary but he was unable to remove him. We spoke to the DG ISI, Raana, but he did not remove him. So here is this ISI Internal, running a political campaign to overthrow your government and the constitution does not allow you to hold him accountable.

In January 1996, I was flying to inaugurate the Akora Dam when one of the officials informed me that General Mahmood, then DG MI, had asked him to resign citing 'Asif Zardari's corruption'. The official refused and Mahmood told him that, 'She is going by March and we will sort you out'. I heard this and kept quiet. In March 1996, three journalists were called by the DG MI to GHQ and asked to write various stories. I would like General Mahmood to explain to the nation at whose behest he did these things. Was it at the president's behest? Was it at the army chief's behest? Was it at the behest of a foreign power? At whose behest? Let the people of Pakistan know how policies are made.

Then came the interesting Surrey scandal. How was it that the scandal was in the possession of the parliamentary opposition a day prior to its publication in a British newspaper? In July 1996, I heard that the DG MI had said that the Surrey scandal is nothing compared to what is to come. I took this up with Jahangir Karamat. I said, 'Please ask the DG MI if this is part of his duties. Is he doing this because of you? Is he doing this because of something else?' Karamat wrote me a letter in response saying that raising this issue meant that I did not trust him and, therefore, he would resign. I did have the option of saying, 'Fine, I accept your resignation'. But I thought he was a good man, although a bit weak, so I said, 'No, you must not resign. I took this up with you because you are my COAS and if your subordinate officer does something, I ought to take it up with you'. Nothing happened to the DGMI.

Q. And then...

A. I was in the NWFP when I got a report from the COAS saying that General Hameed Gul came to see him and told

him that the President was ready to sack the prime minister. But the president, according to Hameed Gul, said that he could not discuss this with the army chief because he felt that the army chief was very friendly with the prime minister and therefore the army chief should himself raise the issue with the president. I was horrified at this report. In the middle of August there was a dinner for the Turkish president and Leghari was being very sweet to me, offering me *gulab jamuns* and so on. Now, I was in a state of confusion. Were they trying to make me distrust the president whom I had known for so long? In the midst of all this, one of the president's relatives came to see me and said that the DG MI (General Mahmood) was telling the president that he had to get rid of Benazir and if he did not then the army would get rid of the president and the prime minister. The plot thickened to an unreal extent. Was it the president? Was it the army chief? Was it the chief justice? Was it the DG MI, the DG ISI, the DG Internal? Who was it? And these questions, I feel, ought to be in the public domain. Not for my sake. What happened to me, happened. But Pakistan deserves a better future than to fall victim to repeated palace intrigues.

I called General Babar and Sherpao and asked them to speak to the president. The president told them that if they (the army) put a gun to his head, he would not dismiss the government. 'She is my sister and she has made me president. I am a Baloch. I am *ghairatmand*. How can I think of turning against my benefactress?' I called the COAS to discuss the report in light of the president's response. The COAS said he could mediate if there was a gulf. Then he told me that some foreign bankers came to see him and said that the economy was going to default. This of course, was absolutely untrue. (It may default now but not then.) I wondered what these foreign bankers were doing briefing the COAS. Looking for jobs at the behest of the president? I don't know. I informed the COAS that he was being given false information. There was no danger of default. I told him, 'The president denies wanting to sack the government. You tell me he is going to. Why don't you talk to him. Ask him point blank are

you going to dissolve the government? And then come back and tell me'. The COAS agreed. That night my brother was killed.

Later on, I learnt that the COAS asked the president if he would still dissolve the government that very day. And he responded, 'Yes, I have gone too far to turn back'. That is why I think Murtaza's murder was part of the plan. One day he was killed. The next day Leghari comes to condole. The following day he has the Supreme Court opened on a public holiday. He tries to create a presidential form of government, starts writing letters about corruption and starts inviting Nawaz Sharif over. There are a lot of intrigues that took place.

I blamed the president for my brother's murder and planned to file an FIR against him. However, two of my ministers intervened. Consequently, I met with the president. After my brother's first Thursday prayer, I asked him his plans. 'I am your brother. How could I ever be involved. I'm trying to save You' and other such rubbish was all he had to say in response. Anyway, I said, 'Farooq, our mutual friends in the press, Irshad Haqqani, Najam Sethi and others say that the president is going to dismiss the government because of Zardari and corruption and so on. Is this true Farooq? Do you want this done?' He flatly denied it but he could only seek refuge in social niceties. 'Have another piece of cake. Have a *gulab jamn*. I had these brought for you because they are your favourite'. I heard him and went back but by this time I did not trust him.

Originally, my dilemma was that Karamat was honourable but I did not know him. It was difficult for me to choose between the president and the COAS. But I must say, in retrospect, that I exonerate Karamat and the military as an institution. It was the president in collusion with rogue elements of the intelligence and security apparatus that overthrew the government.

Karamat informed me that he had asked the president to give the prime minister till December, 31 to sort out differences. But then Farooq got suspicious because he was told that the

CO AS was in touch with the prime minister. He told the CO AS, 'I cannot wait till December 31. I will move on November 14 when she returns from Rome'. But then he decided to overthrow the government on the night of November 4. Meanwhile, they changed my military secretary telling me it was a routine change. And when the COAS tried to send me a message, he could not get through. The COAS then got in touch with the defence secretary but he, too, could not get through to me.

A totally wrong impression was built up of a collapsing, defaulting economy by the likes of Shahid Javed Burki and Shaukat Aziz. On the night of November 4, the IMF director was sitting with me. He said, 'I have been over the budget with a fine comb, Pakistan is over the worst and now it will be smooth sailing'. My opponents simply did not want this announcement made nor did they want the IMF director to brief the COAS and the army accordingly.

They sent a Colonel Asif to the PM House and as soon as the lights went out, they moved. General Babar reported that the army had taken over the airports. I rang up the president and said, 'do you know this?' He said, 'Really?' and pretended to be so shocked. I said, 'Cut it out. I want to know whether they are acting on your orders'. He started mumbling and said, 'I had to do it. I had no choice'. I told him that that was what Zia had said to my father. That is why I started calling him Farooq Haq. I also told him, '*Khair, waqt batai ga kay ye suhi ya ghalat faisla hai*'.

Usually when a government is formed, the institutions of government respect the law. This was not the case in my experience. And I would like to ask these people: Why? Why was this done? Intelligence operatives openly said that the government was going. On September 6, Defence Day, I was in Karachi chairing a law and order meeting. General Akram, the DG Rangers, asked, 'Prime Minister, we hear your government is going, What is the truth in this?' Who told Akram my government was going when I enjoyed a majority in parliament and there were no street protests? What was

happening? All these generals were sitting around telling journalists that the government must go. One of my friends in the *Herald* told me that they had started dropping brown manila envelopes at the *Herald* offices.

In short, a political government was destabilised by the security apparatus. Precisely on whose, orders, I cannot say. apparatus. Precisely on whose, orders, I cannot say.

Q. What led to Murtaza Bhutto's death? What was the role of the intelligence apparatus in his death?

A. In July, I met my brother and we had a good meeting. In August, the DG ISI came to see me and brought an MI report claiming that Benazir and Murtaza had made up and had decided to kill opposition leaders including Nawaz and Chaudhry Shujaat. In exchange, it said, I had agreed to release one Shaukat (who had killed the Masooma sisters in Karachi and is locked up in a Gujrat jail). The report stated that Murtaza was going to use several people, including Yaroo Baloch, for the killings. I had a copy sent to Murtaza. And I told the DG ISI that, 'This report is incorrect. Who is giving the CO AS reports that say that me prime Minister of the country is planning to murder?' He replied that the DG MI received the report and gave it to the chief who asked that it be brought to the prime minister's attention. I said the report was wrong. But there has been no inquiry on this report to date. The person who gave it to MI is unknown, as is his motive for falsely claiming that the prime minister and her brother were planning murder. There are many such concocted reports that reach the Highest levels of government due to lack of checks on, and the accountability of, those who send them. I believe that because I gave a copy to my brother, he was killed. If I had not, maybe they would have killed one of the PML (N) leaders instead of him and Murtaza and I would both be in jail on murder charges. Interestingly, when my brother was killed, all the people who were mentioned in the MI report were actually on site. How did the MI know that? And who gave the MI this information?

I am not blaming the ML because I -don't know and I don't like to cast aspersions but somebody was intriguing and had given all these names. I was very distressed.

When Murtaza was killed, his widow, Ghinwa, was made a Pakistani citizen overnight in violation of rules and regulations. Murtaza did not want her to be a Pakistani citizen. She had been married to him for many years and had never sought Pakistani citizenship. But lo and behold, she was a Pakistani citizen, dispensing with *iddat* and her party afloat with money. The tri-coloured posters that her group printed could not be afforded by any of the major political parties. Where did that money come from, for God's sake? All these things happened and I'd like answers.

Q. What you are describing is a situation where nobody seems to be following the law and everybody is destabilising the civilian government for rather murky ends...

A. General Waheed came to me and said Brigadier Muntasir planned to kill the prime minister, ; the president, the COAS and all the; corps commanders. He said an example should be made of Muntasir. But after COAS Waheed went, COAS Karamat came to pie and said, 'Don't try him, slow it down'. So who worked on who?

I remember, one day I rang up the defence secretary and said, 'I have come to know that the president's secretary (Shamsher) is having a secret meeting with Abida Hussain and Fakhr Imam at the house of Farooq Majeed in Islamabad. And after that meeting, he is going to meet the COAS. Could you please ring up the COAS and find out why?' Hardly had I put the phone down when it rang and Hameed Gul was on the line sneering: 'You want to know why he has gone? I'll tell you... ha ha ha.' Even in October or November 1996, high level retired officers were personally listening in to our conversations to the extent that within 30 seconds a response openly ridiculing the sitting prime minister was made.

So, you see, something quite extraordinary was taking place. The prime minister's telephones were tapped. One COAS wanted to hang Brigadier Muntasir while the other wanted to show leniency. COAS Waheed never asked to stop the inquiry into DG ISI Asad Durrani siphoning money from public sector banks. But COAS Karamat did. How and why did these things happen? How and why did these decisions change? The nation needs to know.

These intrigues cannot go on. And I am not talking about retribution. I am talking about acknowledgement. When my brother was killed, the ISI Internal corps Spread word in every village that Benazir and her husband had killed Murtaza.

Naturally, when you hear something everywhere, you do begin to believe it. People know better today. But the issue is what was done then.

Q. There were many other rumours and scandals as well...

A. Concocted stories. For instance, there is this story that Murtaza shaved Asif's moustache or vice versa. This is simply a lie. Did they think Asif and Murtaza were feudal barbarians from a bygone age that they would behave like this? But it was believed. How do these things get manufactured and find their way into the press? I would like to know who gave the MI report of those very people who were with my brother on the day he was killed. And it was a ditto copy of an attempt on my mother in January 1994.

A prime minister could not have asked for a more obedient colleague than Farooq Leghari. He got spoilt. Something happened. His cousin came to me after the overthrow and said that he asked Leghari why he had dismissed the government. According to the cousin, Leghari responded, 'her husband made a videotape of my child's relationship (with a Lahore-based individual) and my *ghairat* did not give me permission.' Well, I knew nothing of his family's personal matters other than what he told me, I did not know about the tape. So, I ask: who made the tape and gave it to the

president with the intention of provoking him? I am willing to go before a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and say I was told this by Hainid Nasir Chattha and Leghari's relatives. I did not do this. Neither did my husband. So, you see, I have seen a president, an army chief and a series of people who were loyal and obedient but who turned against me. I can understand why he was upset over the videotape. Perhaps they felt he needed a little push to expedite the government's dismissal. It is said, and could be investigated, that Farooq was blackmailed because there was a cotton scandal in which he was accused of taking money. According to this uninvestigated report, Farooq arranged huge sums of money from a Punjab-based banker to buy up the cotton crop and export it. Nawaz Sharif accused him of corruption and Farooq instituted a defamation case. Nawaz fought the case. It is said that Farooq then asked Shahid Hamid to negotiate with Sharif (because the case was going against him). Shahid Hamid, apparently, contacted Nawaz to settle out of court. It is argued that Leghari was pressurised by Nawaz Sharif through the defamation suit. The case was only withdrawn after Sharif came to power.

There are many stories, some true and some not, based on intrigue and abuse of power. And one is unable to identify where the abuse of power comes from? Does it come from the president, the ISI, the MI, the chief justice or the army chief? Each time the power is abused the centre from which it is being abused shifts. Sometimes the chief justice is used, sometimes the president or somebody else. We cannot have an army or intelligence agencies that constantly destabilise governments. We cannot have rogue elements incessantly violating their oath and plunging the nation into crises.

Q. As a popularly elected leader, why did you not see fit to share this information with *ihr*. people of Pakistan while you were in power?

A. Maybe I should have done that. But I thought I would be creating more polarisation and confrontation and a break

down of the constitutional machinery. And under the 8th amendment, the president had the right to dissolve a government if he felt that the constitutional machinery was breaking down. I wanted to avoid giving them a pretext.

In 1990, I was slammed for disclosing that the ISI overthrew my government and accused of trying to divided country and the army. Subsequently, it was proved that General Asad Durrani took 10 crores from one provincial bank alone to pay my political opponents. No inquiry has been conducted about how much the other provincial banks gave for that campaign. There is a list of politicians who took payments, including Nawaz Sharif. I would like to see him before a TRC. Who ran the media campaign with advertisements on the back pages of newspapers? A lot happened and blaming politicians alone for tarnishing democracy is actually less than half the story.

I believe I won four elections. Twice the governments were destabilised. And twice, partisan administrations conducted elections and ensured the defeat of the PPP. The DG ISI, Hameed Gul, admitted to influencing the 1988 elections. The DG ISI, Asad Durrani, admitted to influencing the 1990 elections. In the 1997 elections, 150 computers were bought from a man - I know him - to rig the election. I wrote a letter to the president saying that the election will be rigged. The computers were installed in Model Town. The returning officers (the presiding officers) were given lists with 50 to 100 names missing on each. After the elections, the election commission computers were hacked into and the additional votes in those polling stations were added to the tally.

I made mistakes and I am prepared to admit them but so must others. Others also owe it: they owe it to their own armed forces, to the people of Pakistan and to the Muslim world. We call the last decade the decade of dirty democracy. I see it as one when we pretended democracy but principally conspired against a democratically elected leader and her government.

Secondly, my agenda was not to fight with the military and the security apparatus. My agenda was to change the destiny of the people of Pakistan. And I am proud of my efforts in that respect. I am proud of the fact that we brought electricity to villages that had never had it before. I am proud of the fact that people in urban areas who could not get telephone lines for 20 years, got them immediately, thanks to my government. There was virtually nothing by way of technology when the PPP took over. I brought the world of modern technology to Pakistan and I have a legacy. We eliminated polio, reduced infant mortality rates and there is so much that I did. And maybe, the way I see ' life, this was a power battle. That yes, the establishment had to be resisted, but at the same time, the dispossessed and the downtrodden who had put their faith in me needed my time and my attention. The PPP increased literacy rates by a third. I was given a gold medal by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for our efforts in the health sector. I built 48,000 primary schools, recruited 70,000 new teachers and changed the dynamics of Pakistan. These are solid achievements on the ground, acknowledged and honoured by independent observers. The ISI propaganda may obscure them in the press but the beneficiaries are only too aware of them.

Most importantly, I do believe that the changed dynamics have led to the enlargement of the liberal constituency and the resistance to military dictatorship has also increased, albeit in a different fashion.

Q. How can this situation change? How can Pakistan ensure that civilian governments are not destabilised by the intelligence apparatus?

A. It is for us, as a nation, to decide what we want together. The army can reveal its true intentions by eliminating democracy and Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan through rule by puppets - and there are a lot of puppets in the market. Or else, the military has to learn to acquiesce to the people's will. We are all part of the problem and we are all part of the

solution. I think there is a need for a frank and open talk between all the different players because, in our own ways, we all love Pakistan. What are we going to have now? A revolution or a Truth and Reconciliation Commission where these issues are exposed, less for retribution and more for a record and acknowledgement of victims. It bothers me that a man was hired to allege that my husband had tied a bomb to his [the man's] leg. This was done in order to fabricate a case against [Zardari], and it was printed in the *Washington Post* and elsewhere. Political parties are unable to combat intelligence agencies with vast resources. After the government's overthrow, I received an alleged ISI message that I should boycott the elections because otherwise the establishment would give Sharif a two-thirds majority. I declined through the messenger. I felt that if the PPP boycotted the elections, there could be martial law and I wanted to spare the party the historical blame for creating such a situation. I understand that the COAS and chief justice were ready to restore the 1993 assembly in 1996, minus myself as prime minister. I was given this message by a conduit and it was confirmed to me by the chief justice through my former attorney general. Farooq Leghari refused to accept this and threatened to resign. These decisions have little to do with law. There is a lack of strong institutions and we need to build those.

During my second government, I heard that certain officers asked Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah to create a crisis and promised that he would be made interim prime minister. I took this issue up with the army. I was told that the army did not have officers with the names I had provided. The military also complained that the prime minister could not control the army even though the defence ministry was under the prime minister. The courts supported this view in my dismissal.

I would like to talk about these experiences with the service chiefs (with whom, for the most part, I had good relations) and see what solutions emerge and how intelligence reports

can be made subject to accountability and authenticity checks. Otherwise, jawans and generals hearing about the prime minister's husband's alleged bid to mortgage the, airports, will be justifiably upset. This is one thing, in addition to the use of torture in fabricating cases, that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission could investigate. How could the ISI chief, General Raana, give the prime minister a report that was so totally contrary to facts? And if such information is circulated in the armed forces, then we are being set up for a perpetual state of confrontation between the military and the civil rulers.

Perhaps, the service chiefs can come up with a system that examines intelligence reports of the last decade to assess their credibility and suggests steps that can be taken to ensure that this kind of disinformation at the highest levels is not perpetuated.

It is wrong to believe that the problem always lies with army chiefs. I got on well with Beg till he was alienated through false reports. CO AS Kakar, in fact, tried to save, democracy, as did COAS Karamat. The problem is with the intelligence agencies the security apparatus.

Q. Will the generals be required to testify before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission you are proposing?

A. We need a figure like Mandela or Bishop Tutu, someone with great moral authority, to preside over it. Then, we need the victims to start coming first. Not the serving generals but the victims must be called first. Once we start with the tortured and the coerced, we will get a paper trail back to those responsible. I understand that most of them are retired Ziaist officers who fought the Afghan jihad and have infiltrated the security apparatus to dictate their security agenda.

My husband was interrogated by an army officer in the murder inquiry of my brother and that was wrong. It was simply beyond the army's purview. Let's start. I am not here

to prejudice. Maybe some generals will be called and maybe some will not. Some were involved and some were not. Second, I'd like to invite the UN rapporteur on judges and the judiciary to investigate cases of judicial abuse and responsibility. Not just on my case but on Hubco, for example. Was it right for the Lahore High Court, through Justice Qayyum, to rewrite the tariff? How did that happen? On the Saima case: did the judge conduct himself properly? It is time to reform our institutions. And rather than look for a messiah, it is time for us to back a political party with an agenda, even if we disagree with some aspects of that political party.

These games have to end. And they are played by elements within the military and the rest of us have to play along just to survive and stay afloat. I think the retired Ziaist element choreographs these events. It is very powerful. They used their power to back Musharraf when he was in the air. When they did not want to back Karamat, he could not take power even though he was on the ground.

Q. What about the problems associated with Asif Zardari?

A. My husband has spent seven of the last 10 years behind bars. OK. He is not an angel. Maybe he did things that were wrong, *tie* is man enough to say, 'I did it', in a fair and impartial inquiry. But what about all those others who are asked to pervert the course of justice? What about the police officers who were tortured to say that Asif Zardari had Murtaza murdered? Two SDMs were removed, Four IOs were changed and I don't know how many magistrates were changed because they refused to pervert justice. Which were the army officers involved in the perversion of legality and justice? Why did they do it?

Both times I formed the government, I found that the generals respected me and they had good reason. I continued with the Bhuttoist dream of a strong, impregnable Pakistan and besides, whatever they wanted in the defence arena, they got. Ultimately, they turned against me, affected by the smear campaign labeling me a Jewish agent, an Indian

agent, an American agent and accusing my husband of being corrupt. When people are getting small salaries and they are told that one is ripping off the nation and their utility bills are going up, riot because the armed forces are consuming a huge amount but because Asif Zardari has a polo team, it does create resentment. Public opinion is manipulated into turning against you. I do have a political structure and solid base that has stood by me. But how can a political party fight an organised military, several intelligence outfits, the president and the judiciary? It is very important to create this awareness. It is very important for the press to come on board to expose these manipulations.

Corruption and efficiency are strangers to each other. Both the governments I led have been far more efficient than anything in between, including the present regime. The economic indicators for the periods in question back my assertions. Therefore, the only logical conclusion that can be drawn is that the quantum of corruption during both my tenures was far lower than all the other periods of military and quasi-military (under Nawaz) rule.

Q. What you have described is an arbitrary system of governance run by individual whim. Even if a TRC brings these things out in the open, they may not come to an end. How can we put an end to this situation?

A. The situation can be ended through constitutional restructuring. I remember how very hawkish the Western world was during the Cold War. Once women entered politics, things started to change. The participation of women is very important. A TRC can only be one part of the solution. A UN rapporteur on the judiciary is another. The third aspect is a consensus between the armed forces and the political parties on an NSC, not as Musharraf wants it but as an umbrella where the role of the security apparatus can be monitored. A constitutional mechanism which defines the role of intelligence agencies, lays down procedures for them and ensures that they work within the ambit of the law and

constitution. This ties in with the disbursal of unauthorised funds to these intelligence agencies and the practice of these agencies to extract money from banks, state institutions and state-run organizations.

Q. Do you think you will be prime minister again?

A. Well, yes, I do. The people support me and I can be prime minister again. However, I do not particularly want to be prime minister again, having been there twice already. But Pakistan is facing a bleak future. My party, our allies, and increasingly, independent observers, feel that I owe it to my country to give of my experience of my leadership of the PPP, to pull the country out of bankruptcy and put it once again on a pluralistic, democratic path.

Q. What would you do differently this time?

A. In this question there is an implicit assumption. Some of the things I did were very good and some ought to be done differently.

But let me state clearly that I am not a messiah. I can only work within the limitations placed upon me by the people (in terms of my ability to effect constitutional change) and the institutional realities of Pakistan. For example, if I come in, I'm going to have to work with judges who have been appointed by people of a very different ideological thinking. What happened in the judges' case? Let us examine that. Every single judge was appointed in writing, in the same way in which judges had been appointed in the past, just before my first term, because they did not want liberal judges, they packed the courts with 50 judges without the advice of the prime minister, which was unconstitutional. When I became prime minister, my attorney general denotified them. Today, they are amongst those trying me: Justices Qayyum, Rehman and Abbasi. The sacked judges came back to get their revenge. Anyway, the judges then decided that even if they were illegally appointed, the illegally appointed ones would

be legitimised. Then came my second tenure, where in accordance with the legal prescription, I appointed more judges.

One of my appointees, Justice Arif Iqbal Bhatti acquitted a man accused of blasphemy and all hell broke loose. So, those illegally appointed by Ghulam Ishaq Khan were legitimised and those appointed legally by me were kicked out. The establishment obviously felt that if these judges came in, they would be affirmative on minorities, on women's rights and other arenas and their power base would be threatened. And when I made a speech in the parliament about it, they could not find a word wrong with it so they filled the press with comments such as, 'Her tone was wrong'. Nawaz Sharif could storm the court and it was fine.

Q. What errors of judgment did you make all mitigating circumstances notwithstanding? And how would you tackle them differently now?

A. There are several areas where I would do things differently. First, perceptions of corruption were not tackled by an independent investigative system. We brushed them aside and that was a mistake. Second, the security agenda that we adopted led to increased tension within the region. I wish we had taken the opportunity to carry on with the task begun when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister of India. I am very committed to the Kashmir issue but there is little to be gained from repeating patterns of the past that lead to repeated conflict and near-conflict while placing the issue itself in cold storage. I think we need to acknowledge that this is a dispute that needs management and resolution. Also, I do believe that while we did hold hearings into so-called extra-judicial killings, those hearings were not publicised enough and instead of holding those hearings through sessions judges, we should have had more well known and established human rights agencies such as Amnesty International, Asia Watch, Human Rights Watch and other NGOs.

But I insist that in terms of social development and the economy, both my tenures, particularly the latter one, were periods of tremendous growth.

One other area that I failed to tackle was defence expenditure. I had revenues pouring in through our successful policies and I thought, 'Let us share this largesse with the military'. But I think the time has come when we need a new post Cold War identity for the military. The Cold War is over. The idea that Pakistan, without US aid amounting to 4.5 billion dollars, can maintain parity with India, is wrong. I think the time has come for Pakistan to delink itself from what India does. The time has come to involve our armed forces, as my father did, in national reconstruction without taking away the civil bureaucracy's rights.

Q. Why have you chosen to speak about these issues now?

A. In one way or another I have constantly been speaking about them. Perhaps some people who were not listening earlier are beginning to listen now.

Tomorrow they may decide to kill me because I know too much. But I want this on record so that one day, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, somebody goes back and says, 'What was happening in Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan?' Without putting an end to destabilisation, democracy will fail again, even if we have another election, and another government. We need the rule of law and we need a defined role for everybody.

Even now, there are reports of intelligence lists of 642 cleared names for the so-called local bodies election for the Larkana division alone. I do not want to malign the army or the ISI and I do not want to malign the politicians. There are politicians willing to be Juliets to the military's Romeo but they jilt the people in the process. It is time the people counted.

The DG ISI turned against me. Why? Because I was his boss and I was cross with him when he gave me a report that was wrong and I wanted him to substantiate it and he couldn't.

Should intelligence reports not be substantiated when questioned by executive authority?

As nation, we need to come to terms with the past and then let go of it I see life as a journey where every single soul is tested by Allah. What sustains me is my faith. I am not a fanatic though my enemies portray me as a fundamentalist with a dupatta on the head and a tasbeeh in hand. I am devout. I am like many modern Pakistanis who do believe in equal opportunities, freedom and free markets but who also need spiritual sustenance in a world that is increasingly materialistic. I have been given much, including the opportunity to serve the people of Pakistan twice as their prime minister. Maybe I will serve a third time. Maybe I will not. The important thing is that what happened to me as the popularly elected leader of the people should not happen to other popularly elected leaders.

Q. But what happens if there are new elections, you win them but not with an absolute majority and the new King's Party starts playing games? Will it not happen all over again?

A. Either the democratic forces win or the establishment wins. If the establishment wins, the past will be repeated and that is what has happened for 50 years. If the democratic forces win, maybe the 21st century will be different for Pakistan. It is a fight and we are unable to say who will be the winner. But then, democracy is also about evolution. And democracy is also about fighting for what you believe is right and not giving up.

If you believe in something, go for it... there is a price to be paid

*Interview for Academy of Achievement
London, England, October 27, 2000*

Q: Could you begin by telling us something about your childhood in Karachi?

A: 1953. It was a very different world then. Very few motor cars and much more poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor was greater, too. I remember people walking barefoot and bare-backed because of the poverty.

It was a very privileged life that we led with huge homes and scores of staff with everything looked after. Now the world has changed much more. There's a greater appreciation of each human being, being equal and entitled to the same opportunity, as well as an emphasis on human dignity. In those days there was much less dignity. I remember that the poorer people would greet the richer people by bending down and touching their feet, or prostrating them and throwing themselves on the feet, so it was a totally different kind of world and it has changed for the better in that sense.

Q: As you say, you led a life of privilege amidst great poverty. Were you aware of these disparities? How did this influence you?

A: My father was always championing the cause of the poor. He was very much against the status quo, so he was always telling us that it is wrong, that there should be people in such abject poverty, unable to feed their children. I'd be sitting there when women would come to my mother and say, "Take my children, we can't feed them."

My father was a lawyer. I remember him coming back and saying that a man came and said, "I don't have any money to pay you for this case." Some other case he'd been involved in. And he said, "Take my cow because I don't have any money," and that was the cow that would give them milk to feed the children. So it was quite shocking to me, and I was sensitive to it because my father was sensitive to it. And he'd take us -- we were landowners, large landowners -- and he would take us to the lands and he would tell me, "Look at the way these people sweat in the heat and in the sun in the fields, and it is because of their sweat that you will have the opportunity to be educated, and you have a debt to these people, because they weren't born to sweat like this. And, "You have a debt and you've got to come back and pay that debt by serving your people."

Q: Your father was an important influence in your life?

A: A very important influence.

Now when I look back on it, it was my father who was against the gender constraints of my time. And my mother, she used to be a working woman herself, she joined the National Guards. She was a captain in the National Guards. She was the first woman in Karachi to own a car and to drive, and people used to talk about her because they said, you know, "We're not supposed to drive cars." But when I look back on it, it was my mother who taught that a woman grew up to be married and to have children, and she would tell my father in front of me, "Why do you want to educate her? No man will want to marry her." So all the time, for her, success depended on having a good catch as a husband, and having children. Whereas for my father, he broke free of those constraints, and he insisted that I have an education. He said, "Boys and girls are equal. I want my daughter to have the same opportunities."

Q: How do you account for that?

A: I really don't know, because I never had a chance to ask him. As a child I just assumed this is what fathers did, and

when I finished university he was in prison. Then he was unjustly hanged by a military dictator. Now in reflection, I would like to ask him, "What made you do things differently?" I'd go to other people's homes, and I remember a friend of mine -- they couldn't eat food until the brothers had finished, and the leftovers would be given to the daughters. That never happened in our home. I remember that I used to sit at the head of the table because I was the eldest child. That never happened in other homes, and I should have asked my father when I had the chance, but he enabled me to appreciate that a woman is not a lesser creature.

And also my nuns. I used to go to a convent school, the Convent of Jesus and Mary. And I remember very much Mother Eugene used to teach us literature and poetry, and to reach for the moon, and the lodestar, and inspiring us. It was very inspirational and motivational that one could conquer the moon and the stars if one reached out. It was all about reaching out. I think the two powerful influences in my life in my childhood was my father and my teacher in the Convent of Jesus and Mary, Mother Eugene.

I was fascinated with literature. My father gave me a love for books. He loved reading books and he'd make sure that I bought books and he'd buy me books. And then Mother Eugene made my imagination run wild through Shakespeare -- *Twelfth Night* and *Julius Caesar* -- and Keats and Browning and Byron.

Q: What books were most important to you?

A: It was mostly historical biographies that I would read. I remember starting out with King Alfred of England, and the cakes that he burned when he got lost and was taken in and given refuge. Alexander, the Great, cutting the Gordian knot. Nobody could do it, but he sliced it. His horse who was frightened; he tamed the horse because he understood it was the shadow that frightened the horse. I read mostly about people who were achievers.

My father was himself an achiever and maybe it was a time of achievers. I grew up at a time when colonialism had just ended. The whole inspiration behind colonialism had been to discover the world and achieve more. There was a sense of adventure in going to unmapped places, braving beasts of unknown description, to conquer the world. We were still very much in that phase when words and expressions were more grandiose and the imagination was more grandiose. Now things are much leaner and meaner.

Q: Were you a good student?

A: I was a good student. My father put a great emphasis on education, and I found that he would always be so pleased when I did well. But it was terrible for my siblings because they were always being compared by the teachers to me and they would revolt against it, because I'd have a neat handwriting. It's awful now, but right then it was neat, and I'd get my work done and finish everything. I was very studious. I was very, very studious. I had a love for learning. The others didn't like to sit down and do their homework, but I loved doing it.

Q: You were the oldest?

A: I was the eldest, and I had a great sense of responsibility. When my parents would leave the house they'd tell me, "Take care of the other kids." I'd be only three and my youngest sister would be one but I still remember, "Take care of the kids."

I remember once we came to England. I think I was about four, and my younger sister was two. They used to have these gas pipes, and I was always a very curious child and they told me, "Don't touch those pipes." And I went and touched them and opened it up and my parents came back just in time because I nearly poisoned the whole household. So I learned not to be too curious after that.

Were there other influences or inspirations in your early life?

Benazir Bhutto: When I was a very young child I remember I

was always against violence. It was an era when people used to go shooting and hunting. I remember once coming out on the veranda in our home in the countryside -- and my father was teaching my brother to shoot a parrot and... I remember seeing the parrot fall down dead and bleed, and I remember being appalled by it. And I remember the parrot fluttering and I can't bear to see blood to this day or killing. I'm very much against war and conflict and the taking of life, and I think that seeing that little bird -- green and beautiful and living and chirping in the tree, and then falling down dead -- did have a profound effect. It sounds silly to say that I should feel so strongly about a bird, but I remember my father telling me when he was facing the death sentence that "I remember the little girl who cried so much because a bird died, how she must feel." So for me, human life is very, very sacred.

There's another thing I remember.

This man had come to our home. He was a fisherman and he used to fish from the sea nearby and he used to sell us the fish. And he fell very ill, so my mother took him -- he was again shoeless and backless -- and my mother took him inside the house and said, you know, "What do you want, or whatever, to make you feel better?" And I remember he wanted a Coca-Cola. Now everybody drinks Coke, but in those days it was difficult to get a Coke, and that was his wish. And he was very sick and my mother wanted to send him to the doctor, and I remember he didn't want to go to the doctor. He was clinging to the car, and I always felt, after that, that perhaps people need to have their dignity and to die in peace rather than to be taken to strange clinics. So I feel a great empathy now when there is a rediscovering of the way -- of how people should be allowed to pass away. I've had many traumatic deaths in my life, and perhaps that has given me more sensitivity to the need to take leave amongst one's loved ones to begin the journey to the next world -- because I believe there is a next world -- than to let it just end in a clinical room.

Q: Was there a moment of self revelation or self-discovery when you knew what you wanted to do with your life, that you were going to be different just as your father had been different?

A: It was not sudden. It came gradually. There were two moments, let us say, when it happened.

One of the moments was when my father died and I had my - before he died, I had my last meeting with him, in the death cell, and he said that, "You have suffered so much." I had been in prison myself, and he said, "You are so young. You just finished your university. You came back. You had your whole life and look at the terror under which we have lived." So he said, "I set you free. Why don't you go and live in London or Paris or Switzerland or Washington, and you are well taken care of, and have some happiness because you have seen too much suffering." I reached out through the prison bars, and I remember grasping his hands and saying, "No, papa, I will continue the struggle that you began for democracy."

So that was one of the points where I decided that I didn't want out. I'd stay, but I still didn't think I'd ever be prime minister.

I thought my mother would be the prime minister, and that I'd work for her to be the prime minister, and that's what I did. But my mother got sick and actually she had lung cancer, but we didn't know she was getting Alzheimer's. So she started behaving differently and we thought it's because she's had this serious illness, and she's reflecting on how to lead her life. And suddenly I found that since mommy was away and the whole party was about to collapse unless I was there, so I started looking after the party at that stage. When I went back, I remember people were shouting, "Prime Minister Benazir!" And suddenly it struck me that "looking after" means -- with mommy ill -- "looking after" means that I will be the prime minister. So it was in that sort of moment when I realized the responsibility that I had taken over could lead me

all the way to an office that could govern the destiny of more than 100 million Muslims in Pakistan.

Q: You came to America to go to college. How did the years at Harvard affect you or influence you?

A: I think the most profound influence in my formative years was the years I spent at Harvard. I went there at a time of great social ferment, at a time when the Vietnam war was being fought. I -- as a nation -- was against the Vietnam war, but I found that my American fellow students were against that war too. So -- and they didn't want to fight the war. They were protesting it and I found that if you didn't like something you could do something about it. It was also a time when Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King and idealism -- Cesar Chavez and the grape boycott from California, labor rights. So I was very much into saving the world. My generation grew up in saving the world. We thought education wasn't important. Exams weren't important, although I still did it because I was scared my father would get cross, but I discovered that life was more than my homework and my tuitions and my tutorial. Life was about the larger issues where we could all play a role.

The women's movement had just started. Kate Millet had just written her book and I remember all the discussions we'd have about which of us women would succeed. I remember a very dear friend of mine in college years, who I have hardly seen since, Wendy Lesser. She was putting out a literary magazine in California the last I heard. But we'd sit there having these intense conversations about women succeeding. Could they succeed? Could they break the barriers? At that time many women still thought that their objective in life was to go and be married, and not so much to have a career.

It was the time of McGovern running, and President Nixon's resignation. You know, Massachusetts was the only state that voted for McGovern, so it showed how idealistic we were compared to the rest of the world. Recycling newspapers, I'd go around trying to recycle newspapers. I see a bit of that age

come back in the sense of the environmental issues which are getting important, but less in issues of sacrificing yourself for the larger community. Now I think it's more an age of the individual comes first. Then it was more an age where we as individuals subordinate ourselves to the larger communal good.

Q: So you took all of this back to Pakistan with you?

A: Yes. I said, "Why can't we change our presidents?" because I saw Watergate happening and President Nixon being impeached.

I saw the power of democracy. It was really -- I felt powerful. I felt my voice counted. And meantime in Pakistan my father had been trying to empower the ordinary Pakistanis and telling them that they could break free of the shackles of feudalism and a military industrial complex. So when I went back, my own experience put me a bit ahead because I had a broader experience. I had experience in Pakistan and in America, and I had seen it succeed. So I went back really at the right time.

Q: Did you have any doubts about what a woman could accomplish in a Muslim country?

A: I didn't have any doubts. My father was so important to me, and he thought a woman could succeed. He would tell me that "My daughter is going to make me more proud than Indira Ghandi made her father." So for me it was normal for daughters to succeed. Indira Ghandi was a very powerful leader. Mrs. Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka had been the first woman prime minister. Then of course, we had Fatima Jinna, who was also a presidential candidate -- unsuccessful but a presidential candidate.

I grew up in a region full of powerful women and I thought, "Well if they can do it, I can do it too." But when I used to talk to others they would say, "You're mad. How can a woman succeed?" Not necessarily in politics, but I wanted to be a

diplomat. I wanted to have my own newspaper. You know, I wanted to do things, and other people -- men and women -- would find that very surprising, so others doubted it. Even my own husband, when he married me, he thought I was under delusions that I could beat a military dictator, and he thought that, "When she wakes up and finds out that it's all wrong and she can't, then I'll be there to console her." Little knowing that I was the one who had to console him when I won.

My father always said, "My daughter will be making me more proud." There would be people saying, "Women are second class citizens, women don't have the same rights as men, and how can you think that people will elect you?"

But I had faith in myself. I had always felt that I could become prime minister if I wanted to, but I didn't want to, because I had seen the assassination attempts on my father. I'd seen the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur in Bangladesh, and maybe there was some kind of subconscious fear of what politics could bring, so I didn't want to do it. I didn't want the fear, the worries.

Q: Was it the execution of your father that changed that?

A: His (my father's) execution changed that, because I felt I just couldn't let his blood, and the blood of all those others who had died -- because the dictator hanged so many people who were supportive of him. And they were coming on the streets to have him freed, and he'd have them whiplashed or hanged, and I thought they all did so much and he did so much, and how can we let the dictator win and let all this blood go to waste? So it was really at that time a sense of vindicating them rather than having my own agenda. I did believe in democracy but later on I developed an independent agenda of my own.

Q: Not only were you a woman, you were young. You were only 35 when you became the first woman to serve as prime minister of a Muslim country.

A: It was a victory for women everywhere. I would really realize that when I won and I got so many letters from other Muslim women, and more than that, from women within my own country who felt that it was not decent to work. I don't know why. It's a strange thing to say today, but in those days people thought that it was indecent for a woman to work and "good women" (in inverted commas) didn't work. It was a very strange world of divisions, and it liberated women. They said, "The prime minister is a woman, why can't we work?" I remember being told a story about a lady who wanted to be a pilot, and went for an interview and the chairman, who happened to be from the armed forces, laughed and said, "Come back to me when we have a woman prime minister." Well she did, and she got the job and now there are more woman pilots too.

Q: You've had to deal with family tragedy, you've been in and out of prison, in and out of detention. How have you dealt with these enormous obstacles and challenges in your life?

A: In life there are challenges, but I think leadership is very much predicated on the capacity to absorb defeat and overcome it. Now, after having been in politics for more than two decades, I have come to the strong conclusion that the difference between somebody who succeeds and somebody who fails is the ability to absorb a setback. Because on the road to success there will be setbacks, and there are those who give up, and those who say that, "No, we are going to go on." So it's that capacity to absorb a failure.

Also, when I was in prison I became very devout. I'm not a fundamentalist but I am very devout, and I believe that God places a burden on one's shoulders that he feels that you can bear. So when the burden grows heavy I turn to God and say, "God, don't let it be so heavy that I cannot put up with it." So I would say that in solitary confinement when I had nobody to talk to. I was brought up ritualistically religious as many people are. Their parents take them to church and teach them how to say their prayers like my mother taught me, but it's all ritualistic.

It was when I was in prison and everyone was cut off from me, my family, my friends, food, even couldn't get a glass of water without having to beg somebody for it who came twice a day with my food, and no ice. I mean, the ordinary things, in the heat of the summer where you can open the fridge and take -- nothing. I had nothing. They cut everything -- took everything away. Material, physical, everything. And suddenly I realized they can take everyone away. I couldn't read newspapers. They wouldn't give me newspapers or Time magazine. So suddenly I realized that they can't take God away from me. So to pass the time I started passing it in prayer. So from that moment I realized that God is always with one, so what gave me the faith and sustenance was my belief that God places a burden on people to bear and He places only that burden which they can bear.

The second thing was the love of ordinary people. The love was so much that it was enriching. It gave me strength, nurturance. Maybe I'm a needy person, maybe I need love. Sometimes I think, "Why would someone go on doing it?" When I get so much love at the mass level, I feel that I must go on. So I think that those are the two factors that really kept me going because in the worst of my moments I always had vast reservoirs of love.

I remember when I was overthrown in '97 and things were very bad in the press. They were calling us all sorts of names. And the first time - you know, you're spoiled as prime minister, you have your own planes to go and everything like that, you don't catch passenger planes or go through immigration -- you know, security checks. The first time I caught a plane and was reintroduced to the real world, one of the air hostesses just saw me and she hugged me and she said that, "You know it was during your time that my brother got a job and changed our family's life." Then I remember that when I reached Karachi -- I was going home -- the whole union had gathered, and the whole union received me and they threw rose petals all over me. So suddenly I thought, "I'm not alone." Even if the press, the government, everything was after me.

Q: You ran to improve the position of women, social services, education, health. Your very political ideals were controversial, weren't they?

A: That was my agenda. First I did it for democracy, because that was my father's agenda and it was also mine as a youth. But my own agenda was very much poverty alleviation and population planning, for instance. We brought down the population growth rate by one-third, and because of the cascading effect it's going to continue going downwards. And there was a lot of hue and cry against the population program, but we did it by recruiting 50,000 women from different villages, and training them in three-month installments. First they would train for three months. They'd go out and work and then every month they'd come back for a refresher to learn something more. So when we had 50,000 women with a vested stake in it, we had ambassadors everywhere to counter people in villages who were opposed to population control.

I remember the iodized salt; the clerics said, "You shouldn't eat iodized salt because it has really got population control in it and you won't be able to have any children." So we did take on an agenda that frightened the people who believed in the status quo, and who actually believed in a tribal patriarchal society, because to a great extent there is still an undercurrent of a patriarchal society in Pakistan.

Q: How do you deal with that kind of resistance? There's a price you pay for change, how do you deal with that?

A: There will always be critics. They say in politics there will be the appointed and the disappointed. So there will always be the critics. One has to take it, I learned that right after my first election. I thought all I have to do is win an election and all my critics will disappear and according to Barbara Cartland we'll live happily ever after. But I realized you wake up later, and your critics are still around and you still have to factor them in.

My experience has made me a more inclusive person, not inclusive to the margins, but inclusive to those people who have differences with us but who are still moderates, so I tried to be more inclusive. It's not easy because the other side has to respond too. Ultimately there will be critics but one has to do what is right as long as the majority of people support that.

Building schools was right. I tried to placate even the clerics originally. I adopted a very aggressive stance. I thought I had to prove I was as tough as a man because I was in a man's world. Now I think it's not a man's world anymore but in those days it was supposed to be. So I also tried to be very aggressive and warmongering in my second term to try and co-opt my opposition. I am a consensus sort of person, I like to win people over. Not to compromise the core of my values, but I seek the middle way and I tried to do that. I think in retrospect it was wrong because I did not co-opt them and I alienated some of my own supporters. But at the same time we got the three years to eliminate polio, to build schools and electrify villages.

Now I feel that if politics was a man's world in 1997, now it's a human's world, and that when people vote for women, they vote because they think women are more nurturing, that they give life, they produce children, and they give life. As the larger issues of communism and capitalism fade away, the focus in my view is turning more and more to the human being, and with more women coming into the work force or into the press, there is a sense that women leaders will be sensitive to the needs of mother and child.

Q: Are there other women leaders in Pakistan today who could be your successor?

A: When I meet a young woman student now and ask her what do you want to be, she says, "Prime minister." So I'm sure that there are lots and lots of young girls out there who one day can be prime minister. But I think we need to also make it easier for women to win elections in Pakistan, and

that's why we have proposed affirmative action: a kind of list system where, on the basis of votes that each party gets, they can then list about 25 percent or 33 percent women to bring more women into parliament.

Certainly there are women activists, but not too many. The base of women who can win elections to parliament is too small, but former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's wife has also started politicking, which is really a vindication for us, because they used to be very much against women coming out into the political field.

But of the younger students, the people who were in their first year, second year, third year of university when I was prime minister, those are the women who think that to be successful means to be prime minister of the country. If you ask a man what he wants to be, he'll turn around and say, "A businessman," or "A lawyer," but the girl students that I talked to all wanted to be prime minister.

That generation that grew up in the last decade, used to seeing me as prime minister or as leader of the opposition, has now seen Wajed winning in Bangladesh and Mrs. Ciller in Turkey, and other Muslim countries, this has had an impact on the Muslim world. In Oman now they have started having women parliamentarians, and I think they may be permitting them in local elections in Kuwait and some of the other Middle Eastern countries.

When I first got elected, they said, "A woman has usurped a man's place! She should be killed, she should be assassinated, she has committed heresy!" So going from heresy to seeing it happen! Part of it is the information technology because it brings what is happening in the rest of the world to ordinary women in parts of the Muslim world and they say, "Why not us?"

Q: As a woman, as a politician, as a leader, how much room is there for idealism in political leadership and achieving your goals?

A: For me idealism has been the motivation. I think power for itself is useless. If it was just power, how could one -- politics is an obsession. You cannot just be in politics -- or if you really want something -- it is not an eight to five job. It's an around the clock job. So if it was just power I think it would be very empty. I think idealism is very important. The need to change, to bring about change. I feel that life is like -- or society is like -- a canvas, and that if we get office you are given an opportunity to paint it. And it is up to you whether you make a good picture or whether you make a bad picture. I think it is very, very important to have ideals, because when one has ideals one thinks the suffering is worth it. And for me the suffering has been worth it because I think I could change things, and I am still idealistic and I am still optimistic. And people tell me, "Why are you still idealistic and optimistic?" And I say, "Because there could be ten people who are bad, but there are 90 people who are good."

You do have to be practical, so there are times when you make compromises, not because you want to, but that's how the political mathematics plays out. There have been times when we have been forced into coalitions and we've been unable to do the things we want to do because of other coalition powers. It's a balancing. It's a game of mathematics. How much are you gaining? How much can you do, and how much are you losing? You put those down and you look at it and you say, "Well okay, the gains are so much; if this is the price that has to be paid, let's pay it."

Q: Do you ever stop and think back on how you might have handled things differently in your career, in your life?

A: Very much so. When I look back on my life, I think of the different stages when we were so raw and naive, before we realized how things work. I think back to the time when my father was in prison. There were hard liners, they rejected compromise. There was a lot of pressure on the military dictator, but we just weren't ready to compromise. I think now I would look at it differently.

I think back to my first tenure as prime minister, and I didn't get on with the president because he wanted to have a kind of presidential system and I believed in the parliamentary system. Then I remember a later president who was from my own party. I think of the amount of power I gave him, and he treated me so shabbily. If I had given the first president half the powers that I gave my own president, maybe he would not have knocked us out, and democracy could have taken stronger root.

I look back also to little things. There used to be a South Asian Association Regional Conference, and I was supposed to go to New Delhi and I didn't go because somebody told me, "Oh, let the president go. He's from the Punjab and if he makes an agreement it will be more acceptable." Now I realize that maybe he was unable to do it because he came from a more militaristic background than I did.

Little things or big things, you look back and you say, "I wish I had done that a different way." Much more critical to my own life was my failure to understand the world is moving towards transparency. I had lived through this era of military dictatorship when the press would write all sorts of things and it would be water off the duck's back. When there were these demands, I did make an information act, but didn't follow it through, so I wish I had given more freedom of information.

I wish I had tackled the so-called corruption issues more deeply. It was a precedent. We all knew kickbacks must be taken. Not personally but on the level that, "These things happen." It wasn't like, "We are here to change it." It was like, "This is how business is done." In retrospect, I think that I would have done many, many, many things differently.

But you learn from your own experiences. How do you succeed? By making right decisions. But how do you come to the right decisions? Through experience. And how do you get experience? Through wrong decisions. In retrospect, one is older and wiser.

Q: But you simply have to keep going?

A: You have to keep going and keep in touch with people. Power is such a strange phenomenon that one gets isolated from the real world. People can't see you. They can't phone you. They have to go through the operator, and it's up to the operator who he puts through. They can't write you, because the secretary is going to read the letters and decide which ones are going to come to you. And in countries like mine, where there has been less democracy for so many decades, and people are less literate, or very few have been educated overseas, the ability to decide what is important for the other person is missing, and it's more an ability of who they want to please. This is quite frustrating for me because I have had exposure to the other world and I understand that it has to be done differently.

So really one becomes a prisoner. I used to meet my party people, I used to meet poor people in the villages, and they were all very happy because we were doing poverty alleviation and so on. But people in the urban middle classes were very unhappy, and I realize now that I should have been out more meeting people who worked with us, or meeting people who were the representatives of organized groups.

The other thing I learned, in the past when I used to meet people I used to want to tell them what we were doing. Now I realize that you have to listen to people and what they are saying we ought to be doing, because that's the feedback. I heard the Prime Minister of Ireland say, "Even if you have an idea, let the other person think it's their idea," and he was so right.

Each time one is in trouble or hits rock bottom, it's a time for reflection. I think being able to climb back depends very much on the ability to reflect and see how the world has changed, because it's going to go on changing.

Q: If a young person came to you who wanted to live a life of activism, a political life, what would your advice be to them?

A: I'd tell them, "If you believe in something, go for it, but know that when you go for it there's a price to be paid. Be ready to pay that price and you can contribute to the welfare of society, and society will acknowledge you and respect you for it. And don't be afraid. Don't be afraid."

Q: You and your husband are facing another personal crisis. What do you see ahead for yourself? What are you looking forward to?

A: I've left it to the Lord to decide which is the best path for me, while myself seeking high office. I learned in two decades that you can shape the direction of your society by being in power or even being outside power. So for the first time I realize you don't have to be prime minister to dominate the debate, so I thought it's better for me to concentrate on the party and build the party as an institution. Otherwise we never have the time. We've always been hounded, or we're governing. Somebody needs to take time out to organize the party. So I said, "Let somebody else be the prime minister." The party didn't agree to it. They said, "We want you." Now, as the situation is spiraling out of control more and more, people are saying, "But you're the only national figure. You've got a team and you've got the experience and you've got a program, so we need you."

But it's ambiguous, because while people want me, they have reservations. They may be founded well or founded wrong, but they have reservations about the role of my husband. It's very difficult, because when I was in government my husband used to deal with all the traditional politicians, and he was a great help to me. Now I see the crisis is bigger and people expect me to overcome the bigger crisis, and I have that apprehension of "How will I do it if he's not there to be dealing with some of the tribal lords and people who are in parliament?" You can't wish them away. So I have that sort of hesitation.

The second thing is on a more personal level. Of the 12 years I've been married, my husband has been behind bars for

seven, so I say, "How is it life?" Again we are in politics, and the children won't have the mother or the father, and my son is now 12. In the next five years he'll be 17 and go off to college and then get a job and get married and have his own home. So I have these ambiguous feelings, "Is it right or not?" But I've always had a strong sense of duty, so I feel that I ought to go and put myself over as a candidate. My party has endorsed me for prime minister, but whether that happens or not, I leave it to the Lord to say whatever is best for me and best for my country.

Q: Or your son could become prime minister. How would you feel about his going into politics?

A: If my children go into politics? Again very ambiguous, because I don't want them to go through what I went through. As a mother I want to protect them from the tragedies that I have seen in my life, but they are growing up in a political home. They see politicians all the time. So for them being in politics is natural and they play games about who is going to be prime minister. I tell them, "Wait a minute. First you've got to get a job and you've got to get a profession. You can't even think about politics without having a law degree or a medicine degree or engineering, some degree." So I temper their enthusiasm. The world is changing, and I think that in the new global century you can have a career without being in government. Through NGOs and community service there's a great deal that can be done.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges ahead? I mean, not just for you or for Pakistan but in the world as we start our way through the 21st Century?

A: Ethnic and religious violence. I think that as nation states begin to become weaker because of the force of globalization, there will be a greater reversion to ethnicity and to religious violence. I fear that the international community lacks a mechanism for conflict prevention or being in a position to end the conflict. Everyone is looking towards America, and

the American people have their own problems. They can be there if there's a strategic concern, but they can't be there everywhere. So there is a lack of growth of regional institutions that could deal with regional violence and leave the global problems or the strategic problems to the more global powers. I fear the 21st Century could witness a period of contradiction where there is the greatest era of peace -- the super power rivalry having gone -- but there is a lot of localized violence.

Q: Still looking ahead into the 21st Century, what are your hopes for us all? What are your hopes for Pakistan and the world?

A: My hope is really for a world of peace that provides people opportunities to prosper. Each individual is given life once to lead, and each individual deserves a chance to succeed, especially if they are prepared to work hard. People need peace and they need opportunity, in Pakistan and everywhere else. That's the world I'd like to see.

Q: We hope to see you again someday, perhaps to congratulate you on a Nobel Peace Prize for resolving the conflict in Kashmir. That would be nice.

A: That would be very nice. I would certainly work towards it if life and fate and my people gave me that opportunity.

Well, thank you for giving us this opportunity. We've enjoyed talking to you.

Thank you very much.

"Negotiations need not be sell-outs"

*Interview by Syed Ali Dayan Hassan for Herald Magazine,
March 2000*

Q. What is the India policy of the PPP?

A. The PPP and I are concerned about the war clouds which have gathered over the subcontinent since the undemocratic dismissal of our government. Our India policy is aimed at building peace and we intend to work with India for the opening of borders between Kashmir, promoting an economic common market and reaching agreements on how to contain the threat of proliferation

Q. Do you think Pakistan and India should move towards easing tensions and, if so, how?

A. Pakistan and India will take some time to find a solution for Kashmir. Until such time, we need to manage the conflict in a manner which prevents war and allows the Kashmiri people a say in their matters. There are models we can learn from. China and the United States have differences over Taiwan, yet they manage the conflict without compromising their positions. Similarly, the opening of borders between Jordan and Israel is a model we can follow for building confidence between India and Pakistan by "Opening borders in Kashmir."

Q. In your opinion, is Pakistan's current level of defence expenditure sustainable?

A. No, the defence expenditure is one of the causes of the economy's collapse and we need to rationalise it. One way is to work for mutual troops reduction, which India and Pakistan were about to agree upon during the first tenure of the PPP. Another way is to the defence budget auditable before a joint committee of parliament.

Musharraf promised to reduce defence expenditure, but alas this promise will be difficult to fulfil because the travel and daily allowances (TA/DA) of army officers on civilian duty are burning a hole in the budget, as are the over-inflated salaries that those in the so-called accountability cell have awarded themselves.

Q. What is your view on the India policy of the government of Pakistan?

A. The India policy of the present regime is ambiguous as contradictory signals are being given out. General Musharraf moved in the right direction when he reduced troops at the border. However, this advantage was lost when the Indian airliner was hijacked and both countries exchanged angry words. The Pakistani testing of a missile and threats of using the nuclear option if pushed have not helped either. The open campaign by Masood Azhar and Lashkar-e-Taiba on, Pakistani soil has also muddled the waters. Moreover, given the Kargil incident and India's subsequent distrust, the Musharraf regime suffers from a handicap.

Presently, the generals are directing their energies towards a divisive internal political agenda. The large-scale induction of the military into the civil sector is leading to the neglect of the borders. Naturally, the Indians are taking advantage of it. The Musharraf regime should review its policies towards the political forces and build a consensus to promote moderate policies which can give South Asia stability and prosperity.

Q. Do you think India and Pakistan should compromise on Kashmir?

A. Neither country is willing to compromise. However, negotiations need not be sell-outs. When Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister of India, the two countries achieved milestone agreements.

These included the non-attack on each others' nuclear facilities, establishment of hot lines between the GHQs of

both countries and the opening of trade. Two other agreements, pertaining to re-deployment of troops and mutual reduction of troops, had been reached but were not announced before the Indian elections of 1989. The agreements were lost thereafter.

Both countries need to learn how to manage the dispute to prevent a conflict. The Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration are both pacts that can be built upon.

Q. What is your view on Clinton's visit to the region? Should he visit Pakistan?

A. The PPP and I believe it is important that President Clinton visit Pakistan to maintain the political balance in the region. Any isolation of Pakistan could encourage the hawks in the Indian establishment to push for punitive action against us.

Q. What would your party policy towards the United States be if Clinton fails to visit Pakistan?

A. We recognise that the United States is the sole superpower and consider Clinton a friend of Pakistan. He has vowed to take a personal interest in the Kashmir issue. The US State Department has also made it clear that South Asia will remain a concern of the US irrespective of who wins the next election. Our party policy would continue to seek the American interest in South Asia despite the setback suffered if the US president feels that it is not possible for him to visit Pakistan for now.

Q. Do you foresee any possibility of a durable peace between Pakistan and India?

A. Yes. Pakistan and India need to learn from Europe. The Berlin Wall came down there and we need to take down our own walls constructed of hate and blood. The Quaid-e-Azam saw Partition as the way forward for the Muslims and Hindus of the subcontinent to live in peace. We need to live up to that promise.

"I Don't want to be Prime Minister"

*Interview by Donald Morrison and Hannah Baloch,
Time Magazine, March 1997*

Q: This election was a tremendous set-back for you. What went wrong?

A: If the elections had been fair, free and impartial, the Pakistan People's Party [PPP] and I would have won on the basis of the development work we have done, on the basis of restoring peace, of increasing education and health expenditures, bringing the deficit down, repaying debt and bringing peace to Karachi.

In both my terms in office [1988-90, 1993-96], I had to save Pakistan's economy. When people have to pay more, they are unhappy. When they are unhappy, they are prone to believing sensational stories that are spread. Even though my husband and his friends were maintaining the upkeep of their own horses, the nation was fed stories that their horses were eating marmalade and drinking milk, which is totally untrue—but people begin to believe it in a time of hardship. People were fed the line that the reason there was inflation was because there was corruption. There was an insidious campaign of unsubstantiated charges. And now, five months after I was dismissed [by President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari, setting the stage for last month's elections], not a single charge of corruption has been filed against my cabinet ministers or myself or my husband.

Q: Does that explain why the PPP got only 17 seats out of a total 217 in the National Assembly?

A: I think [new Prime Minister Mian Muhammed] Nawaz Sharif has been setup to show that "We've tried Nawaz, we've tried Benazir, and neither work." My sympathies are with the

Prime Minister because I believe in a prime ministerial form of government and I would like to see political stability in Pakistan. I believe the low voter turnout was due to the month of Ramadan. The disillusionment of voters with the electoral process was tied to two points. One, that even if you turn out and vote, what's the point? You don't know if the government is going to last or not. And two, even if you turn out and vote, things aren't going to get better for you economically.

I helped this country recover twice, first in 1988 when [Prime Minister Muhammed Khan] Junejo brought it to the point of economic collapse and in 1993 when Nawaz Sharif and his managers brought it to collapse. I'm not prepared to do it again. If somebody walks through that door with a golden platter and says, "Here's a letter appointing you prime minister," I would say, "Sorry, thank you, no. Tell the people who created the mess to sort it out themselves." Why should the people of Pakistan associate Benazir Bhutto with giving them injections that are painful and her opponents with giving them Vitamins? Each time these opponents come in, they spend freely, they build up the deficit, they ruin the economy, and I'm called in to bail it out. And what do I get in return? Slander. I don't need it.

Q: Are you saying you don't ever want to be prime minister?

A: No, I don't. Why should I? I want my party to pick the next prime minister. I want the country to choose my party nominee, whoever emerges and can capture the hearts and minds of the people. I want to see my party succeed because I think it is an enlightened party that believes in the politics of moderation and emancipation. I will do everything I can for my party. But I am not interested in becoming prime minister again. I don't have to live with slander.

I chose this life. But I've done my best for the country twice over. I feel the people still love me, and I don't want them to turn against me. I feel if there's another mess and I come in as prime minister a third time, and again I have to tax to reduce the deficit and again I have to retire the debt, then maybe the

people will not love me. Today they do. If I go out somewhere, they come and hug me and kiss me and ask for autographs. For me, that love and affection means more than power. I said this to my party people, and they were all shocked. I said, "I know you all want me to be prime minister." But for me, the prime ministership means hard work. My father [Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, prime minister from 1973 to 1977] worked from morning to night. I worked from morning to night. My rather, what did he get? He got hanged. What did I get? I got slandered. Let there be a new leadership. I want my party to win the next elections, and I will help my party prepare to win. But I don't want to be prime minister.

Q: It's hard to envision your party without a Bhutto as leader.

A: But you see, the Bhuttos have never believed this. We saw the PPP as the party of the people, those who believed in a liberal, en-lightened, modern, moderate Pak-istan integrating itself with the in-ternational world. People think the PPP is me. No. It is made up of hun-dreds of thousands of workers who are wedded to a particular outlook in life and who are highly motivat-ed and trained. The PPP worker is the strength of the party. It's not me. It's the man in the village.

Q: How are your relations with Ghinva Bhutto [widow of Be-nazir's murdered brother Murtaza and heir to his PPP breakaway faction]?

A: I don't know her at all. I think she is surrounded by people who are inimical to me. I wish her good luck if she wants power and if she wants pain and politics. Whatever she wants, I wish her good luck.

Q: Who do you think is behind the [Sept. 20] death of your brother?

A: I think nobody would have killed the Prime ministers brother if they thought the Prime minister was going to stay in power. We were a very close family; my father used to say that my mother and my two brothers and sis-ter and I were

like five fingers of the fist. We had this deep affection, even though my Brother's politics were different from mine. It is not possible that people would have dared kill my brother unless somebody had assured them that I was going to be sacked. The only person who could do that was the President [Farooq Leghari].

Q: Do you anticipate clashes between the President and Nawaz Sharif?

A: Well, I feel the President is waiting for economic hardship to kick Nawaz Sharif—I don't mean necessarily to throw him out, but to assert himself. I think the President would like to be de facto prime minister.

Q: Will Nawaz Sharif use his parliamentary majority to overturn the constitutional amendment that lets the president dismiss governments?

A: He has that majority, but will he use it before he is slandered with charges of corruption? The people will be told the reason there is inflation and taxation is because all these civilians are corrupt, so maybe we need a nice civilian authoritarian figure like Farooq ul-Haq [Leghari]. But I believe nature has its own course. I believe in natural justice and poetic justice.

Q: Do you think justice is being done in the case of Asif Zardari, your husband?

A: I don't think so. He was picked up and held incommunicado 48 hours and placed in preventive detention. He was released by one court, shifted to another province, released by another court and then framed in my brother's murder. His health has suffered. They want to have the trial inside the prison, which I think is intended to deny outside observers from coming. I'm going to write a letter to the President saying that if his hands do not have my brother's bloodstains, then he should allow independent television teams to broadcast a live transmission of everything that goes on in

the court. This is a case in which all people of Pakistan are interested.

Q: Is your husband under pressure to testify against you?

A: Not so far. I believe that his family members have been approached that your son will be sentenced unless he mentions her. But my husband is a very honorable man. He may have his weaknesses. All men do. But I do not believe for even one moment he would crumble, despite the fact he has been kept in solitary confinement facing a death sentence. As far as he is concerned, he always wanted to see a political reconciliation between me and Murtaza. He is in jail facing a dark time, and I am facing a dark time, and we ought to give each other the benefit of doubt.

Q: It certainly has been a difficult year for you.

A: A dreadful, dreadful, dreadful year. It reminded me of 1979 when my father was killed. This past year was dreadful because not only was my brother killed, but Farooq Leghari, whom I considered a brother, put the knife into my back [by dismissing her government]. What I minded was the deceit and the betrayal. What I minded was that he said, "No, no, no, I'm not going to do it." Sometimes it's the betrayal and the deceit that matters more than the actual falling-out. So I lost my brother, I lost Farooq Leghari and then my husband is in prison. I believe the elections were stolen from me. But I do know something: I am a strong woman, and I have the capacity and the confidence to face this. I have certain obligations. My mother doesn't keep very good health. I have three young children I have to take care of. I have a political party that I have to revamp and revitalize.

Q: Why are you subjecting your-self to these ordeals?

A: I don't know. Maybe I have a sense of public duty. Maybe I was just brought up that no matter how bad things get, you go on doing your job. For me, my job had been to serve my country. I don't want to serve it directly now as prime minister.

I want to serve it by helping my party.

Q: Have you been tempted simply to throw in the towel and leave?

A: No. I cannot leave Pakistan. It's my home. If I leave Pakistan, who will go to my father's grave? These things might not seem important to other people, but they are important to me. If I don't do that, why should my children do it for me?

Q: What do you hope for your children? That they go into politics?

A: I don't want to influence them one way or another. But my own advice to them would be don't go into politics.

"Leaders are not angels"

*interview by Amir Zia, Newsline Magazine,
December 1996*

Q: Unlike your first stint in power, this time you had a friend and an ally in the President. What went wrong?

A: In our country, we have a history of opportunists and turncoats. And history repeats itself.

Q: Would you explain the nature of your differences with the President?

A: Basically he wanted to run the country. He was not satisfied with his constitutional duties. Obviously as a colleague we consulted him on an informal basis on all major issues. But as time went by, he wanted to become chief executive. And that was the biggest difficulty.

Q: Your government has been sacked twice in the last six years on charges of corruption and mismanagement. People might think that there is some truth in these allegations. How widespread was corruption in your administration?

A: People are not fools. They know how many assemblies have been charged with corruption and dissolved to fulfill the ambitions of power hungry men since 1947. In the last eight years alone, we have had four dismissals. No one can judge the performance of government in democracy except the people themselves. When any one person takes unto himself to decide this, then it is not democracy, it is tyranny.

Q: Don't you think that corruption is an issue in Pakistan? As Prime Minister, what steps did you take to fight it?

A: Corruption is a two-level issue. Corruption is rampant in

our society at the mid and the lower levels. However, corruption is used as a pretext for authoritarian decisions. It is used as a pre-text to defame politicians and parliamentarians. The people who talk of eliminating corruption are not sincere. The composition of the caretaker administration shows that they are biased and prejudiced against the PPP. They are PPP haters. Many of them had been conspiring to overthrow the elected government so that they could get positions in the caretaker administration. They are defaulters, confederationists, cronies and college mates. The whole caretaker system smells of cronyism, corruption and opportunism.

As far as corruption at the lower level is concerned, we had totally depoliticised the FIA and the CBR. In the three years of our government, we brought down telephone arrears from 27 per cent to 17 per cent which was a remarkable drop. We had brought down gas arrears and in three years recovered more money from bank defaulters than in the last five years. Our performance in tackling the corrupt was one major reason that the moneyed classes got together against us.

We had also presented an accountability bill, which would have taken away immunity from the President. I think he (Farooq Leghari) did not like it so he acted to prompt its passage. In the accountability bill now presented by the President, he has made himself immune from this process. Although if somebody is corrupt, it's not the Prime Minister, it is the President.

In his bill, he has targeted only the parliamentarians and bureaucrats to seize power. In one hand you hold the sword through which you can dissolve the assembly and in the other hand, you hold the sword with which you can cut off the head of the MNA and the bureaucrat. Then who calls the shots? The parliament or the Aiwān-e-Saddar with the two swords in its hands.

Q: Your husband has been accused of massive corruption. Many of your sympathisers blame him for your fall. Will you comment?

A: Well, I would not like to talk about Mr. Asif Ali Zardari just as my husband alone because he is a twice-elected member of the National Assembly. He is a political personality in his own right. He has been a cabinet member twice. Once Farooq Leghari took his *sifaiish* to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and got him inducted as the minister for water and power. Second time, Farooq Leghari swore him in as minister of investment. A media trial was conducted against my husband and so far, although six weeks have passed since the dissolution, he has not been charged with a single crime.

Please remember that the President can call for any document, any record. Under the constitution the government is obliged to keep him informed. Any scandals in which the President thought Asif was involved, he could have easily asked for the relevant documents and the charges should have been ready the day he dismissed the government. Since 1947 we have seen three attempts to defame parliamentarians by anti-democratic forces. A campaign was carried out from Tokyo, from London to Washington and from Islamabad, from Lahore to Karachi against my friends and my husband. That's why I said I offer myself for accountability before a special prosecutor selected by the parliament. And Asif said he too was prepared to offer himself for accountability. I have been tried before and I have been found innocent. I am not afraid of trials. But why I: it that only a Prime Minister from Larkana has to be tried.

Q: What is the nature of your differences with your sister-in-law Ghinwa Bhutto? She has blamed you for defending the killers of Murtaza Bhutto.

A: I really don't want to offer any comment on my sister-in-law. I hardly know her. I knew my brother Murtaza's first wife, Fouzia, because I was in exile at that time. I spent many happy moments with Murtaza, Fouzia and I don't daughter Fatima. I don't know Murtaza's second wife and I do not wish to offer any comment on her at all.

Q: Do you think that the PPP Shaheed Bhutto group poses a threat in the coming elections, specially in your home province of Sindh?

A: As much as the Haqiqi did to the Altaf group.

Q: Do you think there will be elections on February 3?

A: I think there are different groups that coalesced together on a one-point agenda to oust the Benazir government. Once this one-point agenda was over, the coalition fell apart. A part of that coalition would like to see the postponement of elections and is trying for it. But whether it will be strong enough to do it is not known. Sahibzada Yaqub did not take up the issue of quoting difficulties in the holding of elections without the backing of this particular group of the anti-Benazir faction.

Q: Do you think the caretakers will try to keep you out of the elections?

A: It's a dilemma for them. Do they knock out both Benazir and Nawaz Sharif, because they have to be even-handed at least for prima facie sake. But if they do so, do the elections have any credibility in which the leader of the house and leader of the opposition are knocked out? At least in my case, the establishment wants to face the Benazir threat through disqualification. In my father's case they wanted to face the Bhutto threat through hanging. When people cannot be politically defeated, then such tactics are adopted. It's really a shame that 50 years after independence we don't have the same rights as the people in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka enjoy under parliamentary democracy.

Q: What are the key points of your election campaign?

A: The work we did to remove the hardships faced by the people of Pakistan. Our anti-polio campaign, checking the population growth rate. In fact we got the gold medal from the World Health Organisation for our efforts in the field of

health. The fact that we were building 10,000 primary schools a year to eliminate illiteracy.

First, the fact that we worked for the glory of Pakistan. Second, when we took over, Pakistan was about to be declared a terrorist state, but we saved Pakistan from this threat. There was pressure on Pakistan for the unilateral rollback of its nuclear programme, we convinced the world to follow the multilateral and regional process to save Pakistan's peaceful nuclear programme. Third, that despite India's opposition, we got the Brown Amendment through which resulted in 150 million dollars cash for Pakistan and 370 million dollars worth of sophisticated military hardware including spares for the F-16s. Fourth, for the first time in the history of the Islamic world, a unanimous declaration was passed for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the Security Council resolutions.

Fifth, we arranged for the holding of an extraordinary Islamic Summit in Islamabad on March 23, 1997. Sixth, we arranged for the holding of the second Muslim Women's Olympics in '97. Seventh, we confronted anti-Islamic propaganda and put forward Islam as a message of tolerance and moderation. We became the voice of the Muslim Ummah at all the leading conferences of the world including Cairo and Beijing. Eighth, we attracted 22 billion dollars of investment merit pledges. Ninth, we cut the budget deficit to three points and we were the first government to repay our foreign debt. Unfortunately this new government has increased the debt by borrowing at 22 per cent. Tenth, we launched the Social Action Programme at local levels. I can go on, but I hope these 10 points are satisfactory.

Q: If you return to power for the third time, what changes will you bring in your method of governance?

A: We are working on our manifesto. But I really do not know how any government can function when agencies are bent upon undermining it by spreading false and malicious rumours.

Q: How do you see the future of democracy in Pakistan? Do you feel the need for a change in the system to ensure the continuation of the democratic process?

A: Democracy stands at the crossroads in Pakistan as we enter our jubilee year. It is the time for reflection and to ponder what went wrong in the past. This period of the '90s reminds me of the '50s when assemblies came and went. It was followed by the presidential system, which was followed by the disintegration of Pakistan.

Bengalis were made to feel like second class citizens. I think it's very important for us not to repeat those mistakes. We are already into phase one which is repeated dissolutions. We should not enter phase two, because it will lead to phase three. Phase two would be the presidential system and phase three will be disintegration. I think we need to get back to the 1973 Constitution. We need to have an agreement between major parties to hold fair, free and impartial elections through an independent election commission at regular intervals. We need to have electoral and judicial reforms. We can't have supra-parliaments in the form of the president or the judiciary. Either the parliament should run or tell us we are not a democracy and there are going to be supra-bodies, which are not directly elected by the people of Pakistan, deciding the fate of the nation.

Q: Why did you not try to repeal the 8th Amendment?

A: I did try to repeal the 8th Amendment. Unfortunately we did not enjoy a two-thirds majority. Unfortunately the preconditions put forward by the leader of the opposition was the immediate holding of elections. We did not believe that the immediate holding of elections would lead to stability. And we can see that the dissolution has led to a great political and financial crisis.

Q: Your opponents have said that the country has faced its worst economic recession under your government. Do you accept the responsibility?

A: Of course not. I think Pakistan faces severe difficulties in the economic field. The challenges are enormous. We are not going to overcome these difficulties in a short time. That's why I went to the people and said you have to make sacrifices. But when you bring down the deficit to three points, triple your foreign exchange reserves, pay back your foreign debt, reduce your export-import gap slash the non-development expenses, faring down defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP, attract 22 billion dollars worth of investment and reduce load shedding by 75 per cent - I think our performance in the economic field was commendable.

But the stark reality is that the difficulties were not over because of two reasons, debt and demography. Our debt burden is huge and today it is crushing Pakistan. Unfortunately, the partisan and prejudiced caretakers, in their lust for power overthrew an elected government and increased Pakistan's debt by borrowing at a 22 per cent swap fund. This will go up in three month's time and today the country is faced with a severe crisis. Secondly our population growth rate was 3.1 per cent. We brought it down to 2.9 per cent and we were going to bring it down to 2.6 per cent. But I believe that the cuts in the lady health visitors' health programmes by the caretakers will damage our efforts.

There are no easy solutions. The time of foreign aid has dried up. There can only be foreign trade and investment which can be attracted under dynamic leadership and political stability. But in the game of musical chairs, this becomes difficult. Here we were attracting foreign investments, but every time a major political deal was made, for instance if there was a deal coming in of 200 million dollars which would have gone into Pakistan's foreign exchange, created 10,000 jobs, given 30 to 40 crore rupees in revenue, a scandal was made. These multi-nationals can take their money anywhere in the world and they did. They picked up their money and went elsewhere saying thank you very much, we do not want to come to this scandal-mongering country.

Now, for instance, the caretaker cabinet has cancelled the deal with IBM for identity cards and wants to pay 700 million dollars as compensation, which is nearly a billion rupees. Somebody is obviously making something out of this deal. How can you pay one billion rupees out of the state resources when we have no money. That one billion rupees can make you schools, basic health units, irrigation and they are wasting this amount as compensation. IBM is a reputed international company. I am against this cancellation. If it's cancelled without compensation it is fine, if the contract was bad, why are you paying them compensation. How can a multi-national like IBM be treated this way. The priorities of imported test tube advisors is out of synchronisation with the realities of Pakistani politics. They don't know the poverty of the country. They do not know the difficulties.

Q: Do democratic governments in Pakistan have full authority in running the affairs of the country or are there strings attached to their power?

A: Well there are no overt strings, but covert strings. Stories are fed to the press and the opposition. There are constant intrigues, which create difficulties for the government.

Q: You expressed fears of a soft-Islamic revolution in the country. What is the basis of your apprehensions?

A: I have not expressed fears. I think there are people who believe in a soft-Islamic revolution and they have prepared a blueprint for it. They think they can exploit the democratic order and freedom of the press to discredit and defame the parliamentarians, to knock out the major leaders of the major parties and leave the extremists as the only organised force in the field and bring them to power. And then pass a referendum, like Zia-ul-Haq did to get himself elected and change the basic structure of the constitution.

I believe they want to declare Pakistan a sectarian state. They made an attempt in 1994 when Sattar Edhi fled the country, they made an attempt in 1995 when General Abbasi's coup

was aborted. A major general was involved in that and he hired mercenaries to attack the GHQ, to kill the President, the Prime Minister and the chief of the army staff.

I believe they succeeded this year in toppling another, government, and they are planning postponement of elections. If they can't build pressure for the postponement of elections, they will; make sure that the next government goes too so that they can turn around and say parliamentary democracy doesn't work. They do so by feeding stories to the press.

For instance, they spread the story that she drinks six crores worth of mineral water, which is an absolute lie. You can ask the entire staff of the Prime Minister's House how they used to marvel at the fact that here was a prime minister who says don't spend money, put off the bulbs, put off the air-conditioners, this is public money, you must not waste it and how we tried to introduce simplicity in running the household. They said she is eating partridges which again is a lie. Then they went on saying that she built stables at the government's expense and leads a life of luxury, which is not true. I am a very hard working woman. I work from morning to night. I have dedicated my life to the people of Pakistan. And I have never looked back from that day in the death cell of my father, where I pledged to continue his mission no matter what the odds.

Q: Is the army a mere spectator in the country's power politics or is there any clanger to the demo-cratic system?

A: I found the army to be neutral and professional in its approach. I have found all the corps commanders I had the opportunity to meet to be absolutely independent, neutral, non-interfering and non-politicised.

I had a different experience during my first tenure. This time there was a sea change in the army's thinking. I believe it started with Asif Nawaz, continued with General Waheed and with Jehangir Karamat's leadership. However, we must understand that the rank and file of the army cannot remain

uninfluenced by the smear stories that appear in a segment of the press.

Q: What will you say if you are asked to be self-critical on your government?

A: Well, I'll say I trust too easily. Running a country is not an easy job. But because we had a popular mandate, we ran Pakistan with an independent judiciary, independent press, independent political parties with full freedom. I am sure we made mistakes, everybody does, but leaders are not angels, they are mortals. And to learn from experience is a part of life.

When we talk about mistakes, who do we compare ourselves to? Do we compare our leadership with India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, or President Ayub who built 22 families, to President Yahya Khan who presided over the disintegration of Pakistan, or do we compare ourselves with Zia-ul-Haq who hanged an elected prime minister. The man who gave the Kalashnikov culture and drug culture, the politics of ethnicity and sectarianism. Do we compare ourselves with Zia's period when Afghan jihad funds were robbed by one of his colleagues while another indulged in drug trade. Do we refer to the prolific ways of Nawaz Sharif when the banking sector was about to collapse due to the yellow cab scheme, or the scam of cooperative companies. In comparison to them we did very well. We took on to the Kalashnikov culture and the drug culture. And we took it on heroically. We were fearless in our attempts to defend the unity and integrity of Pakistan, to give the citizens law and order and a sense of security. I believe we saved Pakistan. Karachi was on the brink of division and the division of Karachi would have meant the division of Sindh and the division of Sindh would have meant the division of Pakistan. People should look at the positive side. But I think in our country we suffer from a problem of negativity. If we have more democracy, people will understand the real issues. Eight years of democracy are nothing in a country's lifetime. IP

"The charge-sheet is a gross lie"

*Interview by Z. Abbas, Herald Magazine,
November, 1996*

Q: Following the dismissal of your government, you have been asking President Leghari to step down. Do you really think this is a realistic demand under the circumstances?

A: I think it is a realistic demand if he wants free, fair and impartial elections. He is obviously neither fair nor impartial. The charge-sheet that he has read out is a gross lie. If he thinks he has acted in the national interest, he should not want to cling on to power. If he is a good Musalman, who wants to save Pakistan, then let both the president and prime minister go, and let the people decide who was right and who was wrong. Ghulam Ishaq Khan stepped down so that fair, free and impartial elections could be held. I therefore feel that if there is justice in this land, the Supreme Court should uphold its earlier decision and I think that the assembly should be restored as there was no justification for its removal.

Secondly, we don't know if he really wants to hold elections because he [Leghari] is behaving very much like General Ziaul Haq, dismissing us at two o'clock in the morning. And the way he was speaking to me was the way Ziaul Haq used to speak to my father. My father was receiving reports that Zia was going to sack him. But Zia was so sweet. Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. It was the same with Farooq. But all along he was writing the dissolution order. So, I think whatever he is saying has no credibility.

Q: The way it all happened, in the middle of the night, creates the impression that the action was taken in haste. What could have precipitated the move?

A: I don't think there was any real haste. And I don't think it was sudden. In fact, I think it had been building up for quite some time. And once he became president, he had the pomp, but he didn't have the power. But since he was our friend, and he was our associate we would discuss everything with him on a friendly, informal political level.

He was very keen that Nawaz Sharif be arrested. I resisted that. So he used to chair all the meetings related to Nawaz Sharif in the Aiwan-e-Sadr himself. He was also very keen to get rid of Wattoo and bring in Makhdoom Altaf so that he could also run the Punjab. However, the situation started to change from September 1995 onwards because, although he had pushed and pushed Governor Saroop, myself, the MPAs and others to oust Mr. Wattoo, his man didn't come in. He ; [Makhdoom Altaf] was our party man, but I think he [Leghari] thought he could get whatever he and his relatives wanted through Makhdoom Altaf. So I think when he didn't come in, it was a major break.

Then I went to America in October '95, and I was told that our finances were in a mess, and that we should never have deviated from the IMF programme. But we had only done so because of Farooq. I thought this was a serious blow to our credibility so I diverted all handling of finance to Mr. Jafarey. Subsequently, the meetings that used to take place at the President stopped.

So he suddenly felt he was no longer the fulcrum, and perhaps he started feeling that he was not being given as much importance as he deserved. Then I think he wanted to put pressure on us through the Supreme Court over the appointment of judges because we kept hearing from our sources in Karachi that, actually, the president is behind this case. But we didn't believe these reports because we had so much confidence and faith in him. I think the breaking point really came over the Basharahil and one more issue. I don't wish to talk about that one more issue now. The time will come and then, if need be, I shall talk about it. So that was the breaking point, the sale of UBL, because after that his attitude

towards me started changing.

Then I began hearing stories about how they were contacting people, how they want Qazi Hussain Ahmed to come out with a movement against me, but I didn't believe he wanted to topple me. I kept getting information about his activities, but I couldn't believe it because he was so sweet to me. You can't mistrust somebody with whom you have worked for 20 years, and somebody whom you have made the president. And I couldn't believe that when I had made him the president, he would take away the right that 130 million had given me.

Q: Are you saying that the entire chain of events was carefully planned and there was no haste involved?

A: Yes, there was no haste. It was planned. Because I had come to know about it and I had pre-empted it. At that point, I think they decided to postpone the move.

So, I think this is a repeat not of 1993, this is repeat of 1990. The people who were involved in 1990, minus General Beg, are involved in 1996.

Q: The new government has arrested Asif Zardari and has made serious charges against you. Surely, they must be in possession of some incriminating material?

A: They have nothing against us. After all, if they had something against us, why wasn't it revealed at the time of the dismissal. They have arrested Asif without any charge. Mr. Farooq Leghari ordered the ISI to kidnap my husband and hold him incommunicado. Of course the ISI had to follow orders, but they treated my husband very well. The fact that they have been unable to file any charges gives lie to the proclamation that the move was in the national interest. It was a bid for power.

Q: But it's not only the president who has been critical of you. Many other people were dismayed at the way you were running the country, at the level of corruption, mismanage-

ment and misrule. Don't you think you made some mistakes?

A: I think only the people of Pakistan could judge whether or not I made mistakes after I had completed my tenure. I think we had a free press, people were free to criticise us. People were free to make fair judgments, and people were free to make unfair judgments. I also think people made judgments on the basis of information that they were fed, and I think most of that information was incorrect. So people drew conclusions on the basis of distorted and concocted information that they were fed. But let us say, even if we were bad or incompetent or whatever, people had the right to criticise us. But only through an election, a free, fair and impartial election could the people decide, and they have been denied this right. How can there be free, fair and impartial elections with a president who is obviously prejudiced, and would not like to see me return to power. We are back to 1990, when to prevent my return, they had to rig the elections. And once they rig the elections, where will the nation go?

Q: The spontaneous reaction which followed the dissolution was one of joy, with people coming out to dance on the streets. It seems as if the people have heaved a sigh of relief on your ouster...

A: Well I think our opponents did. Let's not forget we have opponents in the country. The country is polarised. We control about 40 per cent of the popular vote, and there are others who control a certain per cent of votes. I think that a handful of people celebrated. But our opponents did heave a sigh of relief that I was gone.

Obviously in a democratic society you have your supporters who are shocked and dazed, upset and angry, and you have your opponents.

Q: But doesn't the response indicate that your popularity graph has dipped?

A: I have just swept the elections in Azad Kashmir. If my popularity graph had *gone* down, then with Sardar Qayyum as the sitting prime minister, how could I sweep the elections there? I repudiate the fact that I am unpopular. This is a media campaign to rig the elections. And therefore I say that if you want me to accept the results, you want my party to accept the results, you want the people of Pakistan to accept the results, then let Wasim Sajjad take over, and let neutral people be installed in the caretaker set-up. Then if I lose I'll accept that I am unpopular. But if you appoint Mumtaz Bhutto and Zafarullah Jamali, and you think I'm going to accept the election results — no Way!

Benazir for parliament's sovereignty

*Interview by CNN & published by
Daily Business Recorder April 6, 1993*

Q: You were fired. If you will, by the President of Pakistan, now your successor has been, what do you think that means for democracy in Pakistan?

A: In five years we have had three prime ministers and three parliaments which reflects the, political instability in Pakistan, that's why I believe (the forthcoming) elections in Pakistan are important for Pakistan to present itself to the world, and to its own people as truly democratic nation and before democracy becomes a farce.

Q: Do you think there is a fear though, that people are going to be apathetic about elections, I mean, that if they continue to elect governments, and the President continues to fire them. What is the point?

A: There is a feeling of despondency, and that's why we asked the President to take certain measures to ensure that the elections are free and can inspire the confidence of the people. He (the President) has said that he will examine these proposals. I do think there is a degree of apathy: What good is it to elect a government that doesn't last or doesn't really reflect us? It is a test for Pakistan, but one, I hope, we will pass.

Q: Is there any guarantee that the President is going to stand back this time ...?

A: Well, there are no guarantees in life but one has certain goals and one strives to achieve those goals. I have been struggling for more than a decade for a representative government and rule of law in Pakistan. And I believe that

public opinion agrees today that the sovereignty of parliament should be restored if democracy is to take root in the country.

Q: Moving to a slightly different subject - the head of the CIA has basically said that as far as Washington is concerned, Pakistan is on the brink of being considered as a nation which supports terrorism. How do you respond to that?

A: I am concerned by the image Pakistan is beginning to get worldwide. After enjoying a period of tremendous Western support during the Afghan war, we are becoming increasingly isolated. I believe that if these elections are fair and the Pakistan People's Party and I return to power, we'll work with our friends to bring Pakistan out of isolation and to end the fears that have arisen about the nature of our state policies. I would also like to appeal that the terrorism issue be put aside during the elections so that it does not become an election issue.

Q: Why do you think it shouldn't become an election issue?

A: It would become far more difficult to handle if emotion become involved and campaigns are at time when temperatures rise. So what I am saying is let a new government come into place and give the new government time to deal with this issue. We dealt with problematic issue before. When I was prime minister, we were in danger of having Pakistan's aid cutoff on the nuclear issue. But we overrode that obstacle. So, I am confident, that given the political will, the leadership within Pakistan - the military and the civilian side - can work together with its friends overseas to ensure that the threat is met.

Q: You raise the nuclear issue. In the past, Pakistan's position has been that it will not join the nuclear non-proliferation club until India does. Do you think that perhaps time has come for Pakistan to take the lead?

A: It is very difficult for Pakistan given the tensions in Kashmir, tensions with India, to take a unilateral step. But we overcame this problem in the past and I don't see why, given the will, we should not overcome it again. I shall try to do so with my own country's military and President as I did in the past.

Q: We will now again moving perhaps further west. Pakistan is a Muslim country. It recently hosted a meeting of Muslim for-eign ministers to discuss the situa-tion in Bosnia-Herzegovina. What is the reaction now of the Muslim world as we continue to see the carnage in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

A: The massacre of Muslims in the heart of Europe is something which has shocked the entire Muslim world and, indeed, I believe human conscience everywhere, particularly when the Muslim world rallied round at the time of the Gulf war. Questions are being asked that why is the world so slow to react now. And that the question the world ought to answer by getting together and solving the problem.

Q: Ms. Bhutto thank you very much for joining us.

A: Thank You.

"The Zia era is dead, it is now just a matter of burying it"

Herald Magazine, August 1988

Q. The MRD has declared that the nonparty elections announced by General Zia would not be acceptable to it. Does it mean that the alliance would boycott the polls if its mode is not changed?

A. The point that the MRD is trying to make is that General Zia's statement has no bearing in law, it is not the constitution. What the MRD is trying to say is that you are no more a martial law administrator. You can't just tell us what kind of elections there will be or there will not be. We are seeking a constitutional remedy and building political pressure to ensure that there are party-based elections. So our minds, at the moment, are not running on the concept of non-party polls.

We are, at present, working according to the constitution that General Zia gave, according to the judgement the Supreme Court gave. It is very clear in both of them, that party-based elections be held. What bearing General Zia's statement has, we don't know. These are his personal views. We doubt that he can, at present, force his personal views on the nation. We have studied the power of ordinance and the power of referendum. These powers are both sub-constitutional. Therefore, unless General Zia wants a constitutional crisis, and wants to reopen settled issues, we think the course of party-based elections must be adopted and must be followed.

If the 'elections are not party-based, we will reconvene an MRD meeting and decide what to do at the appropriate time. But, at the moment, we are convinced that the laws are on our side, and that the elections must be party-based. We feel that General Zia has set non-party elections for two reasons

and, he is hoping that, perhaps, we won't challenge it. The functional literacy rate in our own country is 10 percent, and the voters see party symbols as their identification. If you take away the party symbol, how is a voter expected to identify the candidate of a party. Even if you bring out posters, the people will not be able to read them. So it is a meaningless exercise. So Zia thinks that by this exercise he can undermine the sovereignty of the people and he can deprive them of their right to choose their own government. Secondly, General Zia is very frightened that so many people are joining the democratic movement and he wanted to tell them that the *talwar* will not be on the ballot paper. That is why, in utter contempt of the constitution and the Supreme Court judgement, he came out in favour of non-party elections.

Q. Are you saying that non-party elections are simply meant to stop the People's Party from emerging as a majority party in the parliament?

A. Yes, the party-less elections are being held to manipulate the elections and prevent the victory of the democratic forces. That is the sole aim and objective that General Zia has.

Q. Can the MRD put enough pressure to force General Zia to change the mode of elections?

A. We certainly hope to seek all political and constitutional remedies. I always believed that it is the promotion of truth and the promotion of principles which is more important. If you have a sense of continuity of history, then you don't just do things for the moment, you do things for the process. For us, democracy is the key to the emancipation of the people of Pakistan. Unless people have a representative government, they cannot have a federal government. If they don't have a federal government, they cannot have a national concept and national aim. Unless there is a democracy, people cannot have economic and social justice. Rather than just pandering to what General Zia says and saying, 'Let's get some seats,' one should look at the verdict of his Upft. One has to look at

the ultimate consequence of history. I think General Zia is much weaker today than he was eleven and a half years ago. But we defied him at that time, when we thought he was doing injustice. It is a great injustice to the people of Pakistan that he just flouts the law.

Q. Will General Zia try to wriggle out of his election commitment as he has done in the past?

A. Yes, one cannot rule out the fact that he may still try to get out of the November 16 election date. November 16 is not a constitutional date. The constitutional date was in August. On May 29th, I was asked to comment, and I said that in August the roads will be muddy, there will be rains, there will be floods and there will be crop sowing. There was no one who did not know that the month of Moharram was coming. Why did he dissolve the assembly on May 29? Because he thought that the PPP and I would not be able to campaign effectively. And when he realised his miscalculations, he changed the date to November. So the date is not in accordance with the constitution. The date is what is disadvantageous to the opposition. And if he finds that, despite these disadvantages, the opposition is still getting the majority vote, then he will try to wriggle out. That is why we want the nation to be on guard and not permit him to wriggle out. Our own indications are, that he is hoping for the fall of Qandahar and other major cities in Afghanistan so that he can, once again, bask in the international limelight and the domestic issues would no longer be focused on. By November, snow sets in and whatever has to happen has to happen before November. He hopes that by November there will be a major victory in Afghanistan, so that he can postpone the polls. He hopes that in November, if the Democrats don't win the elections in the U.S., then maybe he can have a rethink about it. So General Zia is keeping his options open, as far as November is concerned.

But no matter how much he thinks he is keeping his options open, the Zia era is now dead. It is just a matter of burying it,

whether it takes six months, whether it takes nine months. Even if it takes a year, for all purposes we are now hearing dying sounds of a dead era. All that is left is its burial, and how that burial is going to take place. On May 29, the Soviets will have withdrawn from Afghanistan and with that, his longevity will also come to an end. Zia's longevity came with Afghanistan and his finale will also come with Afghanistan. Internal compulsions and external compulsions are very different from that of 1979. The polarisation, the power groupings are all very different. General Zia's behaviour on May 29 was very erratic. And I think in his heart of hearts, he does know that his time is up. Zia's era combined with the Muslim League's, perhaps, could have trudged along, although in the view which I expressed in 1986, it was difficult for us to foresee the trudging along till 1990.

Q. But according to the present constitution, General Zia will continue to be the President of the country till 1990 even if the opposition gets a majority in the parliament.

A. Constitutionally one has to see what Zia leaves of the constitution. If he had held elections within 90 days, if he had held party-based election, then he could turn around and say that he had upheld the constitution and the opposition is also bound to respect the constitution once it takes a majority in the parliament. But if nothing is left of the constitution, and the opposition gets the majority, then Zia cannot seek solace behind it. It is really upto him what he does, what he leaves. It is the constitution that *he* gave. And that is what we said in the beginning, that his protection lies in it. His well-being is in it. Whether he keeps his constitution or not, we leave it to him. If he wants to keep the constitution, then he must hold party-based and free, fair and impartial elections. If he does not do that, and despite that the opposition wins a majority, then he can say, Which constitution are you talking about?

Q. If the People's Party returns to the parliament with a

majority and General Zia invites you to form the government, would you accept him as president?

A. General Zia will never nominate me even if the PPP gets 199 out of 200 seats. Zia's tactic is to go to somebody in the PPP, and say '*Aap 'Ajaeiri*'. Because he always wanted to break the PPP. Whoever was in the PPP, he had asked him to become Prime Minister. The PPP without Benazir Bhutto is acceptable to him. That is what General Zia would try and do, even if the PPP comes in with a majority. It is a very hypothetical question. All I can say at this stage is, that it is our belief that he who commands the majority must govern.

Q. Some observers predict a serious post-election crisis. Do you also subscribe to this view?

A. The next few months in Pakistan are certainly going to be; months of political uncertainty and fluidity to a great extent. And that uncertainty is caused by General Zia. Because if he wants to have free, fair and impartial elections on a party-basis, then there would not be any uncertainty. One would go according to the system. One would go according to the provisions of the constitution. But if the system is subverted before the elections, then naturally the post-election scenario will also be bleak.

As far as the PPP and the MRD are concerned, we have always tried for a systematic changeover, not something which is anarchic and chaotic. Even now the PPP is, in principle in favour of any system which can take the nation peacefully through towards its next government. That is why when General Zia appointed his new ministers, we still reacted in a very restrained fashion. All along we tried to provide a positive political climate. But I am sorry to say that there is no response from the administration in the creation of a positive political atmosphere. All along, the administration has taken the course of confrontation. The opposition has not adopted the course of confrontation. The opposition has been very cooperative. It is the administration which has been confrontationist. Now, one day one holds the card, and the other day,

the other holds the card. So, much of the post-election scenario which you referred to will depend on what the administration is upto now.

Q. But hasn't the confrontation already begun?

A. It is true that they are taking a confrontationist path. We have not. We have been very restrained.

"Under the PPP, Sind is prepared to give Pakistan a chance"

Herald Magazine, Karachi, 1988

Q: What are the main reasons for the discontent in Sindh?

A. The alienation of Sind began with the imposition of martial law in 1977. Not only the alienation of Sind but also the alienation of the minority provinces began when their rights were usurped, their representatives were thrown into jail and there was no one to articulate their aspirations.

One effect of martial law that added fuel to the general disenchantment in the smaller provinces was the assassination of the popularly-elected prime minister. This act heightened the alienation in Sind.

As a sop to the sentiments of the people of Sind, a Sindhi was named Prime Minister. But he was there not because parliament had elected him as leader of the majority party. He was there because General Zia, the chief of army staff, nominated him as the Prime Minister. Therefore the people of Sind felt no identification with him. They felt that he was part and parcel of the system that had wronged them.

The regime faced its greatest threat when I came back in 1986 - a threat which we believed would have resulted in its downfall if our autumn schedule had been kept, and a summer showdown averted. In anticipation of the people's desire for change, the regime sent the army into Sind on the pretext that we are going there to fight dacoits.' In fact, it was a policy of large scale intimidation.

When you send an army into a province then naturally you build greater resentment, greater hatred, and a hatred that is fuelled by bloodshed. I believe it is neither good for the

Pakistani army nor good for Pakistan, nor good for the People of Sind to have the army in Sind. Mr. Junejo, the Muslim League - they have been unable to deal with the problems. The only party which has the courage and the guts to take on the General and to pull out the army from Sind and to set this country on the right lines is the PPP. That is why every effort is being made to keep the party out of power. To face die PPP, Sind has been divided, ethnic politics have been introduced. Why was the Kalabagh dam issue kept alive for four years? To create hatred between the provinces so that the country is too divided and too fragmented to take on the government.

Q. What, in your view, is the main objective behind the formation of the Sind National Alliance?

A. I know why the alliance has been formed. The Sam conference is an attempt by people who are pulling the strings from above to try and create an anti-PPP base in the interior, to create an ethnic group.

The problems of Sind are manifold. The Sind National Alliance was not able to touch even the tip of the iceberg. That is because they don't really have roots amongst the people to understand what the problems are. Most of them are perpetrators of crimes against the people of Sind for the last eleven years. How can you go to some-body who's been shooting bullets at you and say, "How, can I clean these bullet wounds?" I understand the Sann conference, I can identify the hands behind it but at the same time the PPP has taken a conscious policy decision not to build a hysteria against it, not to elevate it to an importance it does not deserve. But if a moot serves the purpose of unity it is very good. However, I have not experienced any such unity in the past nor do I think they'll be able to maintain it.

Q. Do you think the conference was part of the government's strategy to counter the PPP in the forthcoming elections?

A. Well, they don't want to form an alternative, because they want to stay in power themselves. But they want to form groups to take on the PPP. First, they don't want to hold elections. They never want to hold elections. No military ruler or dictatorship serves the people, they serve themselves. So their whole idea is: how do we continue to serve ourselves?

Q. Has the emergence of diverse ethnic groupings created a dent in the popularity of the PPP?

A. Ethnic politics was seen as a solution by the military regime to divide the strength of the PPP and to try to fragment it. And I think in the short term, ethnic politics diverted attention away from the PPP and away from political demands to ethnic demands.

We were conscious of this move, and within our own party circles, we had a discussion on how to tackle this ethnic issue. And ultimately, the decision that we arrived at was: don't take on a direct confrontation, with an ethnic party. When it is riding on an emotional wave. In that emotional wave, people are not prepared to listen to rational arguments. Wait until that wave has subsided to see what the ethnic groups deliver. And what you'll see is that ethnic policies can't deliver. Karachi has had an MQM but have the disturbances in Karachi stopped? Are Karachi's troubles over? I don't say they don't have good intentions - of course I think they played one very positive role. The Urdu-speaking people here were feeling left out, and the MQM gave them a sense of identity which was very important. I don't think one should feel alarmed or frightened when people have a sense of their own identity - whether it is the Urdu-speaking or a part of a minority province or even the majority province. Because, today in the Punjab, we have a lot of interest in Punjabi culture. All these cultures together enrich Pakistani culture. All these identities help shape and mesh the national identity. It is not something we should be scared of. It is something we should welcome into the mainstream.

So that's a very positive rôle the MQM has played. But ; then where is this going to lead? Because if you continue with ethnic politics then the MQM is not the only ethnic group in Karachi. You're provoking all the other groups . to gang up against you. And if all of them gang up, then where will you be? How will the bloodshed stop?

And, if the MQM is talking about jobs - if they can't deliver, why are they sitting in the municipal corporations? But let us see what they can do. There are two possibilities. Either they will not learn the lessons, in which case they will not be able to develop further, or if they learn the lessons, then they will have to move towards a larger organisation which can tackle basic problems.

Your question was on whether ethnic politics had damaged the PPP and what I'm trying to say is that 'damaged' is not a word I would use. But ethnic politics temporarily diverted the attention of the people, but the timing of the regime was wrong. Although it diverted from the local elections, by the time the general elections come along, I think people will realise that ethnic politics has not stopped bloodshed, has not stopped unemployment and, therefore, if one wants a redress of one's local problems, one has to go beyond the local to a wider level. The only wider body that can, on a national level, mobilise the resources and ensure a just distribution is the Pakistan People's Party.

Q. But because of the reasons you just mentioned, is there greater pressure on the PPP itself to take a more nationalist stand in Sind?

A. The point is that the pressure was at its peak at the time of the assassination when people wanted to have nothing to do with Pakistan. The second peak was reached during the '83 and '86 movements, when there was a great sense of discontent. Even today Sind, is very discontented. Under the PPP, they're prepared to give Pakistan a chance. Without the PPP, I'm not so sure.

The nationalists today '*wohjo wafaq ki boat kartey hain — woh ghadar hain*' (Those who talk of federation are traitors). But there's no federation in Pakistan today. There is presidential rule. Why don't they talk against presidential rule? Why don't you say that it is military dictatorship that has led to all this bloodshed? Like they took out a procession in Karachi. When PPP workers raised slogans of 'down with Zia', they beat up PPP work-ers. Why don't they speak against Zia?

What I feel is that the problems of Sind are tied into much larger problems. When these people say, "Don't let the PPP win," what are they really saying? They are saying, "Let us form governments under Zia." Unless the PPP comes to power, who is going to remove Zia from the office of President and Who is going to remove him from the office of chief of army staff?. Who's going to remove the army from Sind? Who's going to stop the building of Pannu Aquil? If you capture the Sind provincial assem-bly, you don't really change the central government. But if you capture the central government, then you can bring about a change in the entire country. So this is why they are playing ducks and drakes and I don't believe that they can succeed.

Benazir: likes and dislikes

Muslim Mag, Islamabad, 11-9-1987

Q: What do you now regard as your greatest misfortune?

A: Living in a dictatorship.

Q: Where do you like to live?

A: Pakistan.

Q: What is your vision of complete earthly bliss?

A: A world free from hunger and poverty.

Q: Which faults are you most inclined to excuse?

A: Human errors.

Q: Your favourite heroes in fiction?

A: Shakespeare's: Mark Antony.

Q: Your favourite figure in history?

A: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Q: Your favourite heroines in real life?

A: Bibi Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Q: Your favourite heroines in poetry?

A: Andromache, Hector's wife in the Illiad

Q: Your favourite painters?

A: Van Gogh.

Q: Your favourite composer?

A: Mozart

Q: Which characteristics do you value most in a man?

A: Moral courage.

Q: Which characteristics do you value most in a woman?

A: Perseverance.

Q: Your favourite virtue?

A: Truth.

Q: Your favourite occupation.

A: Achieving goals.

Q: Who or what would you like to have been?

A: Editor of a newspaper.

Q: The predominant trait in your character?

A: Commitment.

Q: What do you value most in your friends.

A: Faith and loyalty.

Q: Your greatest fault?

A: Trusting too easily.

Q: Your dream of happiness?

A: The day Gen Zia is overthrown.

Q: What would be the greatest Misfortune for you?

A: Another Military Dictatorship.

Q: What do you want to be?

A: Compassionate and incorruptible.

Q: Your favourite colour?

A: White.

Q: Your favourite flower?

A: Tulips, Tuberoses and the lotus.

Q: Your favourite bird?

A: Parrot

Q: Your favourite writer?

A: Rousseau.

Q: Your favourite poet?

A: Shelley

Q: Your heroes in real life?

A: Bob Geldof

Q: Your heroines in history?

A: Queen Elizabeth I

Q: Your favourite names?

A: Sikander

Q: What do you most abhor?

A: Liars, hypocrites and opportunists.

Q: Which historical figures do you despise most?

A: The Quislings.

Q: Which military achievements do you most admire?

A: The Long March in China.

Q: What reform do you most admire?

A: That of character.

Q: What natural talent would you like to be endowed with?

A: A photographic memory.

Q: How do you want to die?

A: On my feet.

Q: Your present state of mind?

A: Determined.

Q: Your motto?

A: To strive.













President Clinton with Prime Minister Benazir in White House.



On return from abroad on 18th October, 2007.



Fateh at Shaheed Z. A. Bhutto's Mazar at Naudero.



Offering fateha to the parents of October 18 martyrs.



The children of October 18 martyrs are not alone, I am with them.



President Bush and Mrs. Barbara Bush pose with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, who were attired in traditional Pakistani dresses.



A Pledge with Father of Nation.



Great persons of a Great family.



Different moods of different periods.



Z. A. Bhutto, Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto during visit of India.



Witness in Jam Saqi's case.



With Loving mother.



Loving mother with Loving smiles.



A warm handshake with Queen Elizabeth.



On the occasion of Awards & Honorary Degree.



President G.I. Khan Administering Oath of the Prime Minister to Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on 2nd December, 1988.



Visit of Siachin.



With PLO Leader Yasir Arfat, Asif Ali Zardari in Islamabad, 13th September, 1996.



With South African's legendary freedom fighter President Nelson Mandela.



With Rajiv Gandhi during talks in Islamabad in 1989.



With Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, December 2003.









