Trial and Error

The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto

IQBAL AKHUND

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Reproduced by
Sani H. Panhwar

Dedicated

With sympathy
and not without hope,
to
Benazir

In that land all is lackadaisical:
No lakes of cawdled spawn, and no locked ponds
Of settled purpose, no netted fishes;
But only inkling streams and running fronds
fritillaried with dreams, weedy with wishes;
On clear days mountains of meaning are seen
Humped high on the horizon; no one goes
To con their meaning, no one cares or knows.
in that land all is fiat, indifferent; there is neither
springing house nor hanging tent,
No aims are entertained, nothing is meant,
For there are no ends and no trends, no roads,
Only follow your nose to anywhere.
For it is a timeless land, it lies
Between the act and the attrition

These extracts are from a poem sent to me by a colleague many years ago and that I discovered among my papers. I have not been able to trace the author's name and apologize to whoever it is for using these lines without permission.

I reproduce them not as a verdict on Pakistan as a nation but because, to me, they seem to depict the country's congenital malaise that is a mixture of smugness and self-doubt,

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Preface

The substance of this book was originally to have been the last chapter of my previous book, *Memoirs of a Bystander*, but on further thought, I found that its subject matter did not quite fit into a book of memoirs, nor would an epilogue be the proper place for what it has to tell. For Benazir's advent and the return of democracy was not the end of a story but a new beginning. It was not full-fledged parliamentary democracy but something of a viceregal diarchy, with power shared between a popularly elected prime minister and an indirectly elected president.

Many disappointments and much disillusionment lay ahead. Still, it was a beginning. Her advent was seen by many as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Second Coming. But Benazir was not Zulfikar Bhutto reincarnated. Rather was she heir to a twin legacy—that of her brilliant, mercurial, and ill-starred father and that of the sly and ever-smiling Ziaul Haq, whom and whose works she had reason to abominate from the depths of her being. The legacy left by her father, Zulfikar Bhutto, was a double-edged legacy—popularity with—the masses and distrust and suspicion among the establishment and key foreign powers like the USA and Britain. Benazir was to be accused by her critics a disappointed partisans of giving up the first and selling out to the establishment for the sake of power and perks.

Benazir's advent was by no means the end of the Ziaul Haq era. Zia's death had not closed a chapter but only opened up, or reopened, possibilities in every field, or so it seemed in the initial euphoria of the times. Zia's chief endowment to the nation was a constitutional amendment that, almost *ex officio*, set the president and the prime minister at loggerheads.[1] Moreover Ziaul Haq was not, so much a dictator as a Head Oligarch and, though he was gone, members of the oligarchy remained entrenched at all levels of the system. They paid lip service to the restoration of democracy but only on a basis that left them undisturbed in the enjoyment of the power and perks to which they had become accustomed. Nonetheless, Benazir's first government had a significance beyond its brief duration. It was the first genuinely elected government after Pakistan's longest martial law regime. Then it was headed by a woman, and a woman who had suffered hardship and endured personal loss as few others.

This was Pakistan's third attempt at democracy—the first being the period up to the adoption of the 1956 constitution and its brief existence; the second, aborted after the elections held by Yahya Khan, led to the break-up of Pakistan and then to the 1973

[1] The Eighth Amendment to the 1973 constitution, obtained by Ziaul Haq from the National Assembly as the price for lifting martial law, gave the president the power to dismiss at will the elected government as well as the National Assembly and to order fresh elections.

constitution adopted under Bhutto: (I do not count Ayub Khan's 1962 'Basic Democracy', which was a one-man show and fell by the wayside as soon as his own rule did.) Now there was a chance to make a fresh start on Pakistan's fifty-year adventure with nationhood and democracy.

On one side, all hopes were pinned on the return of Bhutto's heir; on the other, the prospect provoked all the hatred and fears that he himself had aroused. Were the hopes dashed and the fears confirmed? What was Benazir seeking and what did she achieve? Vindication or revenge? To restore and consolidate democratic institutions and norms? Or would she be content with power for its own sake and for personal aggrandizement? There were different views on the subject from the start and these differences remain. Pakistanis, living in a country of stark contrasts and aware of the country's chequered historical background, tend to view things in black and white, judge people and events against absolute standards. Perhaps only history can give definitive answers to these and similar questions.

This book deals mainly with developments during Benazir's first government, which lasted only twenty months and in which I was Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs. It was a position of some importance and I believe that I had Benazir's trust, but I cannot claim that mine was a central role m the government, whose primary concerns did not lie in the field of foreign affairs. On Afghanistan, Kashmir, and India the government was faced with very complex and thorny issues, but the decision-making in all of these had been taken over by the army and the intelligence agencies in Zia's time and there, in the ultimate analysis, it remained. The role of the Foreign Ministry was scarcely that of a *primus inter pares*.

The Bhutto phenomenon has a special place in the political history of Pakistan. In the ups and downs of the Bhutto political dynasty one may see a metaphor for the contradictions and vicissitudes of Pakistanis as a nation and Pakistan as a state. It would not be altogether a literary conceit to do so. The leaders who have governed Pakistan during the fifty years of its existence have, almost without exception, in one way or another failed the country. In answer to criticisms after her second overthrow, Benazir responded to a pressman's question with a question of her Own,[2]

> to whom do you compare our leadership ... to that of India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, or to President Ayub who built the 22 families,[3] to President Yahya Khan who presided over the disintegration of Pakistan, or do we compare ourselves with Ziaul Haq ... the man who gave us the Kalashnikov culture and the drug culture, the politics of ethnicity and sectarianism ... when the Afghan

[2] The monthly *Newsline*, Karachi, December 1996.

[3] The phrase is from a book published in the 1960s by the Pakistani economist, the late Mahbubul Haq, in which he argued that substantial economic development during President Ayub Khan's regime had not benefited the country as a whole but only enriched a limited number of businessmen.

Jihad funds were robbed by one of his colleagues while another indulged in the drug trade?

She made a telling point indeed for, by the prevailing standards, the Bhuttos certainly pass muster and in many ways make a better showing. The sad thing about the Bhuttos was not that their governments were no worse than the others but that, all said and done, they were not very different a failure that seems especially poignant in the case of the daughter because of the price that was extracted from the father for his transgressions and because of all that she herself suffered and endured, so bravely and unflinchingly, yet in the end it seemed as if it had all been for nothing.

Introduction

20 September 1996, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, lies dying on a dusty pavement outside his home in Karachi. His life is ebbing away with the blood flowing from a fatal bullet wound that has pierced his jaw. In the darkened street, the policemen who fired the bullets come and go without paying much attention to his condition, but put him under arrest for possessing unlicensed arms. Alongside lie, dying or dead, a number of his armed henchmen, all similarly under arrest. Then one of the policemen thinks about providing medical attention but considers it necessary to check with higher authorities before doing anything so bold as sending the grievously wounded man to a hospital. So he goes to a nearby post to seek instructions from senior officer. These are that Murtaza should be taken to a hospital 'as soon as possible'.

The prime minister's brother, whose life is oozing away minute by minute, is then put in a police van which stops at the police post, where the senior officers are duly informed that he is being taken to the Mideast Medical Centre, about three minutes down the road. There the police put him on a stretcher, leave it in the doorway of the hospital, and themselves leave the place without a word to
anyone.

Mir Murtaza Bhutto, tall, handsome, debonair, the only surviving son of the executed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had been returning home after addressing a public meeting in an out-lying shanty town of Karachi. He did not know that he was riding towards his own execution, though in a press conference at his home earlier in the day he had spoken of a plot against his life, and he had named names. Some three days earlier, the police had picked up one of his closest associates, a man by the name of Ali Sonara, on charges of being an Indian spy and of involvement in various terrorist acts. The next day, Murtaza, accompanied by his strong-arm boys, had gone on a rampage, raiding various police stations in order to find and free his comrade and confidant and, according to some, a man who knew too much.

At the public meeting, Murtaza, in his habitual fashion, had lashed out at the iniquities and shortcomings of his sister's government and the corruption and wheeling-dealing of her husband, Asif Zardari. Meanwhile, a heavily-armed police contingent had arrived at the seaside residential suburb of Clifton and blocked the way to Murtaza's house in pursuance of a decision by the Sindh government to disarm Murtaza's armed guards. At a traffic check-post at the so-called 'Two Swords' roundabout close by the Bhutto house, a number of senior police officers had come down to supervise the operation. As Murtaza's motorcade carrying him and his armed men neared home, a

police van that had been tailing it crackled a wireless message to the check-post, 'Your "guest" is on his way!'

After the shooting was over, the police filed an FIR (First Information Report), or complaint that the police party had been fired upon by Murtaza's men and been compelled to fire back in self-defence. Then, as noted in the report of the Sindh government's Judicial Enquiry Tribunal, the police proceeded deliberately to obliterate all pertinent pieces of evidence from the scene—fingerprints, footprints, bullet marks, cartridge empties, police vehicles at the scene, everything was removed, nothing was recorded.

Meanwhile, as described, Murtaza had been left bleeding on the pavement for forty minutes until his chances of survival had all but vanished. The Mideast Medical Centre where he was silently deposited by the police is not equipped to deal with such emergency cases, whereas the fully equipped Jinnah Post-Graduate Hospital is only a ten-minute ambulance drive from the scene. It is doubtful whether the police would have behaved in such a way towards the brother of a prime minister unless they were sure that it was meant to be done. Benazir said as much herself in her testimony before the Tribunal: 'My brother could not have been killed unless there was an assurance from the other side that they would be protected, and that sort of assurance must have come from no less a person than the president.'

The Tribunal found no evidence to uphold this supposition but observed drily that those police officers who had planned the operation must have been aware of the risk of Mir Murtaza himself becoming a victim of the shooting along with his bodyguards. 'As such [they] would not have gone ahead without approval from the relevant provincial or federal higher authorities.'

Murtaza had been dead for hours when Benazir, who had come from Islamabad, arrived at the hospital. She came barefoot to show her bereavement, but her arrival was greeted with boos by the pro-Murtaza crowd that had gathered outside the hospital when news spread of his fate. In Larkana, where Murtaza's body was taken for burial in the family graveyard, the hostility of the crowds was such that she was unable to attend the funeral. Things had come a long way in the eleven years since she had brought home the body of another brother, Shahnawaz, who had also died of foul play, in the Mediterranean resort of Cannes.

Ziaul Haq still ruled Pakistan then, but delirious multitudes had greeted her at every railway station and wayside stop as she travelled by train from Karachi to the family burial ground near Larkana.

Six weeks after Murtaza's killing, she was out of her job for the second time, perhaps for good this time. In an interview with *Time* magazine a few months later, her answer to

the question whether she wanted to be prime minister again sounded out of character, almost sulky:

> No, I don't. Why should I? for me, the prime ministership means hard work. My father worked from morning to night. I worked from morning to night. What did my father get? He got hanged. What did I get? I got slandered...

1

Exile's Return

In April 1986, Benazir returned to Pakistan from two years of self-imposed exile. The world media's attention had made her name familiar all over the world, a 'Daughter of the East' who spoke in western accents, a Muslim woman who was a role model for women everywhere. She came home as the flag-bearer of the Bhutto name, delight, of martyr, herself the object of General Zialul Haq's decade-long persecution, the shining hope of democracy and freedom and progress, a world media superstar. Wherever she went vast crowds turned out to meet her. At Lahore, her first stop and then considered a Bhutto fief, the multitudes recalled those that used to gather for her father and it looked, at least to her, as if the city was ready to be taken by storm. 'Marcos is gone, the president of Haiti is gone, now another dictator must go!' she proclaimed. In Peshawar, emotional, chanting crowds, including Afghans from refugee camps, fired their guns in the air and released colorful balloons. She declared: 'There is fear in the heart of the usurper. The time has come for the usurper to run away.' The crowd echoed: '*Za za Zia! Zia za*' (Go, Zia, Go!)

'We could have taken over that day!' she declared in the euphoria induced by Lahore's welcome. But the crowds were in a festive mood, not a violent one. Police everywhere remained on the sidelines and troops stayed in their barracks. Martial law had been lifted and a semi-democratic government was in power under Ziaul Haq's handpicked Mohammad Khan Junejo. Junejo, man of moderation by nature, was playing it cool by design. In allowing the rally to be held, he was banking on the relaxed political environment that prevailed in the country and acting in the belief that the initial fervour of the crowds would die down in time. It was possibly also his shrewd way of showing Zia what the alternative to Junejo could be. (Ziaul Haq did lock her up again for a while but let her out when Washington frowned.)

For her part, Benazir focused her attacks on Zia, sparing Junejo, and indeed suggested that the Junejo government could play a role in the restoration of genuine democracy. Alexander Stanic, of the Yugoslav news agency *Tanjug*, noted that the way in which her rallies had been organized and conducted, and the political maturity displayed at them, showed that Benazir's campaign was more than just euphoria. 'I have not come here to take revenge!' she declared in order to reassure powerful men in the establishment who might have had fears on that score. When, during her nine-hour procession through the city of Lahore, American flags were burned amidst slogans against the United States for its support of the Zia dictatorship, she was careful to dissociate herself from these manifestations.

The New York Times wrote that on her return, Benazir was faced by, 'defections, splits, and a lack of discipline in her organization'. This was perhaps an overstatement, but on the political plane she did face serious problems. Contention within the party broke out almost as soon as she landed. First came the break with Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, who had been the PPP's acting leader in the absence of the Bhutto ladies from the country. It happened on Jatoi's part for reasons of pique, and on Benazir's part, due to her desire to break free and take over the leadership of the Party, to be rid, in her ironic words, of the 'uncles' her father's colleagues and senior party men who had known her as a little girl and whom now she found it irksome to consult and defer to. Among the 'uncles' who went, or were sent, their way, was a real uncle, Mumtaz Bhutto. Mumtaz felt strongly about the situation of Sindh and of the Sindhis in Pakistan and considered that the PPP was far too dependent on the Punjab vote to be able to protect Sindhi interests. He came out on a platform for a confederal constitution, in which he saw the only solution to Pakistan's abiding constitutional dilemma, viz., that the population of one province out-numbered those of all the others put together. (Before the secession of Bangladesh, this had been East Pakistan; now it was the Punjab). He predicted that Benazir's was going to be the last throw for federalism and if it failed, as, in his view, it inevitably would, the most that could be hoped was that Pakistan might survive as a confederation.

The challenge to Benazir came also from the left wing of the PPP—from 'Old Bolsheviks' like Malik Miraj Khalid, Rao Rashid, and Shaikh Rashid, who were dismayed by the pro-American and pragmatic turn she was giving to the party's traditional policy. Talking to Labour's Neil Kinnock in London a year later, Benazir spoke of her problems in bringing the PPP from left to left of centre, and generally in maintaining a credible political posture. Ziaul Haq, she said to him, had the advantage of being in power and could and did take up more and more political space, forcing the PPP to the margins. 'We had to fight hard to regain territory.' Even to many sympathizers she appeared to be in the doldrums because her policies were increasingly indistinguishable from the government's. They felt that she risked losing her leftist vote bank on account of the changes she was making in the PPP's platform and orientation. Nevertheless, she was able to quash these challenges without too much trouble. The ease with which she was able to assert her leadership to the party was due only partly to the fact that she was the daughter of the martyred and betrayed Zulfikar Bhutto. Her authority came also, and increasingly so from her personal charisma, her sense of mission the aura of leadership she had acquired by her decade-long defiance of the martial law regime and the persecution she had suffered at its hands. On the ideological plane in adopting a pragmatic approach she was not swimming against the current but going with the political trend as it had developed in the years since Bhutto roused the crowds with his populist slogan '*roti, kapra, makan*'.

Money was coming into the country, from the Gulf, from the Afghan war, from drugs. Now few people thought merely in terms of 'bread, clothing' and shelter, and most had other priorities. Bhutto himself, it is said, had been having second thoughts about the

matter and may well have oriented the party's programme in a pragmatic direction if he had been able to enjoy a second term in office.

It is worth noting in passing that world politics as a whole was moving away from sharply defined ideological categories. An example was France, a country of deep and long-standing ideological polarization, where the 1988 elections proved a setback to parties of both the extreme right and the extreme left. President Mitterand, whose Socialist party failed to win a decisive majority in 1986, went so far as to say that it was not healthy for a single party to govern and that consensus, rather than arithmetical majority, should be the basis of government.

On home leave in 1986 from my job as an assistant secretary-general at the United Nations in New York, I visited Benazir in Larkana. It was a good ten years since I had last seen her when she and Murtaza had come down from Harvard to spend a weekend with us in New York. I was struck by the change in her appearance and bearing. She had grown into a woman, and a strikingly attractive one. She had an air of relaxed self-confidence which recalled her father, yet without that something overweening which had given Zulfikar Bhutto's personality an abrasive edge. The house was the same redbrick Mughal-Victorian structure I used to visit as a child, more than half a century earlier, when we lived up the street in the Session Judge's house. The peeling paint and the generally run-down appearance of the place belied stories spun by Ziaul Haq's agitprop information ministry that Bhutto had spent vast amounts of government money doing it up. The town of Larkana itself showed few signs of having once been the home of an all-powerful prime minister. It was the typical South Asian town, with badly paved streets, shabby public buildings, and unkempt public places.[4]

I had come to condole the death of her brother Shahnawaz but, inevitably, the conversation turned to politics. As I was living in New York at the time, she asked me how the United States Administration viewed the political situation in Pakistan. It was my opinion that the Americans would not intervene to topple Zia but nor would they go out of their way to help him stay in power if a viable alternative was available. My impression was that the stage had come when they would be just as pleased if Zia stepped out of the picture on his own. On the other hand, if there was trouble in the streets and a risk that the whole system might come crashing down, endangering American interests in the region, then their instinct would be to help to prop it up—both because that is the easier thing to do and to avert a radical shift in Pakistan's position, particularly in view of the American stake in the Afghan war. It seemed to me that they saw Ziaul Haq's own nominee, Prime Minister Junejo, as the leader of the post-Zia transition. That was undoubtedly the reason why the Administration had gone

[4] As elsewhere in Sindh at the time, there were dacoits around the Larkana countryside, who often kidnapped for ransom. On the way back to the airport, my car stopped to pick up an armed escort. When I expressed surprise that even the PPP should feel threatened, the party official accompanying me tried to put a brave face on it. `Well, once in a while one of our men is taken but the dacoits don't ask us for very large sums.' Discount ransoms!

out of its way to do him honors during his recent official visit to Washington. However, my feeling was that he was being built up to replace Ziaul Haq rather than to put down Benazir. 'To the Americans,' I said to Benazir, 'you are still an unknown quantity and they would rather put their money on someone they know and feel they can be sure of.' I think she agreed with the general drift of what I said, but did not go along with my advice: 'You are young and have plenty of time ahead of you. You can afford to bide your time.' I saw no immediate prospect of Ziaul Haq or his system being overthrown and felt that not much could be achieved by agitation in the streets. I believed that at that stage Benazir should be firming up her base by reorganizing the PPP from the grassroots up, democratizing the leadership at various levels, and giving the party a more coherent philosophy and programme of action. But I was a diplomat and had spent much of my working life abroad. I was not fully sensitive to the compulsions that motivate and move politicians and Pakistan's politics. She said that her party-men were impatient and she couldn't just sit around doing nothing. 'Autumn is approaching and I will have to do something.'

The year before, Ziaul Haq had allowed the holding of non-party elections that were conducted, as *Time* magazine put it, 'with no campaign themes, no platforms, no debate about national issues'. Benazir had been prepared nevertheless to take the plunge, believing that even in non-party elections enough PPP-inclined candidates would be elected to create a new situation on the political scene. This was also the view of Western embassies in Islamabad, who estimated that if the PPP had fielded a full slate of candidates it could easily have won 120-30 seats. However, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), a cross-spectrum political alliance headed by Benazir, had boycotted the elections because member parties (notwithstanding that some of them' had collaborated with Ziaul Haq in the beginning) were loath to give the slightest degree of legitimacy to the Zia regime by accepting his rules of the game. They also suspected, not without reason, that he had no intention of giving up power and would use the non-pares elections only to confuse and divide the MRD. Ziaul Haq, of course, was not the least bit put out by the MRD boycott. He told *Time* magazine[5] that he found the results of the election 'not only encouraging but extremely satisfying'. And he added smugly, 'I think the people were saying, "We endorse your policies, we are participating whole-heartedly in your election on a non-party basis".[6] This was indeed a very subjective reading of the election result and of the mood of the people. In truth the ground under Zia's feet was beginning to shift, but, the MRD having lost the opportunity offered by the Zia elections, the prospect of Benazir compelling him to order fresh, party-based elections was very foggy. Zia represented in m his person the whole Pakistan establishment - the military, the civil bureaucracy, the business classes, landowners, and the religious groups - and he had the blessings of the United States which was providing the military regime not only with military and economic

[5] 11 March 1985.
[6] October 1987.

assistance but the political support and diplomatic respectability. As or Benazir the first flush of popular acclaim over, she did not have a strategy for dislodging Ziaul Haq from the chair on which he appeared to be so firmly seated. She reserved her slings and arrows for Ziaul Haq, and was careful to spare the pillars of his strength. Her strategy seemed to be to reassure and win over all these groups. To some extent she did in fact succeed in reassuring them, but they were not going to rise up and help her snatch power from Ziaul Haq, who suited them well enough. As for the United States, Mushahid Hussain, writing in *The Nation* of Lahore,' took the view that her strategy of 'banking on the Yanks' was a double miscalculation—the Americans did not want a change in Pakistan, and the policy was out of synch with the popular anti-American mood in the country. And then there was the danger that, if her agitation brought about a *coup* against Ziaul Haq he who led it would inevitably keep power for himself.

So the only option available to Benazir at that point seemed to be that of playing by the current rules—fight the local bodies elections, whether or not political parties were allowed to campaign; strengthen and extend the MRD; keep the pressure on for the holding of general elections, even if not until 1990, the date set by Ziaul Haq. The problem was that the rules had been made to keep her out and were liable to be changed in mid-play; moreover, such a passive, gradualist programme could cause the steam to go out of the opposition campaign. 'If things do not work out that way, we will take to the streets, for in the end that is all we have,' she said to me in the course of one discussion.

In August, Benazir issued an 'elections-now-or-else' ultimatum and attempted to mount a show of street power against the regime by launching what she called the 'Doves of Democracy'—peaceful groups that would come out in large numbers all over the country to agitate for the holding of early elections. But they did not show up in large enough numbers to create an embarrassment for Zia or to provoke him into a major crackdown that would have been embarrassing for his American allies. Those that did take to the streets were soon taken care of by the police in the usual way. Benazir took the setback in her stride and made a candid assessment: 'We underestimated the regime's ability to suppress opposition activity. We have to come to terms with that. In the future, we have to outplay them, out-smart them, and out-manipulate them.'

Speaking to the Sukkur Bar Association in January 1987, she explained the rationale for her pragmatism, which already struck some part men as excessive and indiscriminate:

> Rigidity and inflexibility are the products of narrow minds. I remember *Shaheed*[7] Bhutto saying, 'There is no principle so general that it does not include an exception.' We too must determine the various forces in the country and deal with them ... for the achievement of our goals but without compromising our

[7] Martyr.

> basic principles ... it was not pleasant for us in the PPP to sit with the PNA whom we regarded as our mortal foes. Yet in the interest of weakening Zia's martial law, in the interest of restoring democracy ... we did so ... I hope we never return to the polarization of 1977...

And as if to establish her credentials, she reminded the audience: 'Sukkur has been my home. I know Sukkur well. I know its dust and heat and its insects, You know my address here. It is a well-known address the district jail of Sukkur.'

She travelled up and down and across the country denouncing the Zia regime's corruption, disregard of human rights and rule of law - speeches that seem to have set the tone for all subsequent political rhetoric in Pakistan and in due course, for the opposition's attacks against her own performance.

Addressing the Lahore District Bar in November 1986, she reminded members that they had been subjected to a *lathi* (baton)-charge by the police in 1980. She mentioned some of the more draconian and outrageous martial law orders and regulations:

- Order No. 4, empowering military courts to inflict punishments of death, amputation, life imprisonment, flogging, unlimited fines, and forfeiture of all moveable and immovable property.

- Regulation No. 54, prescribing the death penalty for the ill-defined offence of 'spreading despondency'. Under this regulation, courts were to presume the accused to be guilty unless he could prove the contrary.

- Order No. 12, absolving military courts of the duty to inform the accused of the grounds of action against him.

In May 1987, speaking to the Federal Union of Journalists in Lahore, she mentioned the names of well-known journalists who had been sacked from their jobs, others who had been fined or jailed, and four who had been flogged in public by the Zia regime. The censors, she said, deleted even the sayings of the Quaid and Koranic verses that might be inconvenient to the regime. A regulation prohibited the publication of any news against government functionaries even if it was true and its publication might be in the national interest. (A foreign newsmagazine published the item under the title: 'Where truth is a crime.')

'The PPP,' Benazir declared, 'is committed to repeal the Press and Publications Ordinance; would withdraw the ban on travel by journalists; reinstate sacked journalists; compensate and permit the reopening of banned publications.' She condemned and denounced military rule and derided Junejo's claim that the civilian government had regained supremacy over the affairs of state, but she was careful not to

attack the military as an institution, and drew a line between Ziaul Haq as a person and the army as an institution. In a speech to the Shikarpur Bar,[8] she referred to him as '*Mister* Ziaul Haq who calls himself General, long after his term expired.'

In a rather transparent attempt to discredit Zia in what he often described as his 'only constituency', she declared, 'The merger of the offices of President and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) in one person is a grievous subversion of the Constitution of Pakistan. It is also a subversion of the Pakistan army...'

In an interview with the *Daily News* of Karachi[9] she said,

> What can the poor army do? It is a very disciplined institution. They have to obey orders. This man has held on to the post of COPS and ruined the whole country and the whole army ... Is there no general better than Ziaul Haq who could be made COAS? For twelve years he has retained this post, unconstitutionally. Why isn't he removed?

Ziaul Haq, she said, was treating the army as his 'private *lashkar*'.

In a speech on national security in October 1987, she attacked Ziaul Haq's insouciance over Siachen and drew a contrast between The valour of the *jawans* and the General's heedlessness. How was it, she asked, that the Army Chief had never bothered to visit the troops who were fighting and giving their lives in the snowy Himalayan wastes?

Everywhere she went she gave voice to complaints and concerns that were close to the hearts of the people—a litany that is now all too familiar:

> ... sorption has assumed unheard of proportions. Nothing happens without the palms of the concerned officers being greased. The entire department takes its share, the big bosses taking the most ... cutbacks, commissions, and bribery are now commonplace. They evoke no amazement, and create no shock ... External debt exceeds $16 billion with $1 billion going on debt servicing alone ... the country is being crushed by the burden of debt, every child is indebted for thousands of rupees, future generations have been mortgaged, our economic policies are being dictated by the IMF and World Bank.
>
> The prime minister with his entourage of 101 members spent £2 million on a visit to the United Kingdom ... 50 limousines were hired by the embassy at a cost of £75,000...

[8] 7 June 1987.
[9] 30 April 1987.

> Look at the aircraft being imported for VIP transport in this poor country ... look at the profusion of Mercedes cars. They are swarming the roads. Even lowly officials are going about in expensive, brand new Honda Accords....

Then this, on the state of law and order:

> ... the police in the Punjab and the army in Sindh have been given the license to kill. The so-called 'police encounters' have so completely eroded the credibility of that organization that even when hardened criminals die at its hands, there is suspicion that the whole encounter was engineered by it.

Such statements struck a chord in the popular mind and created an aura of hope and expectation around her coming. It is only in retrospect, looking back at her two incomplete terms in office, that one reflects with irony on these pronouncements.

Sometimes, too, she could be carried away by the need to empathize with her audience and fall into inanity or worse. Thus, speaking at the Shikarpur Bar on 7 June 1987 to a Sindhi audience, she said: 'Who can deny that before the democratic order (she meant, Zulfikar Bhutto's PPP government) Karachi was like an alien town for Sindhis. The best educational institutions were closed to them. *Lucrative* (emphasis added) jobs in Customs and Income Tax had invisible No Entrance signs for them.' (As if the task was not to stop the corruption in such departments but to ensure that the loot was fairly distributed!)

Benazir's public campaign, which Junejo did nothing to hinder, was surely not without effect. In the country as a whole, fatigue with Ziaul Haq's long tenure and his Islamist posturing was setting in. In 1986 he called a high-level seminar, *Ijtema-i-Ahi-i-Fikr-o-Danish* (Assembly of Thinkers and Wise Men) to ponder over 'the biggest problems being faced by the country'. Nine separate groups, representing various professions—jurists, the academic world, religious scholars, women, etc, mulled over the question for several days. One of the groups—oddly, the one representing retired generals and high-ranking civil servants, pillars of the regime—came up with the (implicit) answer that what was wrong with the country was Ziaul Haq's personal rule and system and that it should be replaced as soon as possible by holding free and fair elections on a party-based system! It was another sign that Ziaul Haq's hold on the system was beginning to wane.

Even within the armed forces, some of Benazir's arrows may have hit home. Before restoring a limited form of democracy in 1985, Ziaul Haq had staged a referendum in which, if the voters said, yes, they approved of Islamization, it would be taken that they wanted the author of the policy—himself—to stay on as president for another five years, It had been a fiasco, less than five percent of the electorate having turned out to vote. The poor turnout showed it up for what it was—a legalistic gimmick for Zia to

remain president after martial law was lifted and some democratic forms were restored. Those serving in the armed forces cannot have failed to notice that the only thing propping up their chief was the fact that he had them at his command. Ziaul Haq himself recognized the anomaly of his position. In an interview with Maleeha Lodhi in *South* magazine, he conceded:

> ... You can't have an elected president as army chief of staff. I will have to relinquish my post after the lifting of martial law... The term of the president will begin on the day the elected assemblies first meet, whereas I will step down as chief of staff when martial law is lifted.

But of course he did no such thing, nor, by the look of it, did he have any intention of doing so. Thus the prospect of Benazir's coming to power remained in the realm of the unforeseen and the. providential. Then suddenly, out of the blue, both these things came to pass. First came two, possibly interconnected, events—an explosion at the Ojhri ammunition dump and arsenal and, soon thereafter, the sacking of Junejo. The Ojhri camp, situated right in the middle of the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, was an ordnance and ammunition depot of the Pakistan army and also the place where large quantities of US supplied *materiel* were stored in transit to the battle front in Afghanistan. When it blew up, everything, rockets, missiles,, shells, whatever, flew into the air and in every direction, wreaking havoc in both cities and the areas in between. Hundreds were killed, thousands injured, and much property was destroyed. Ziaul Haq was bereft, for once, of his usual aplomb, and when he was shown on TV with the kin of victims, he did not seem to know what to say to them and what demeanor to adopt. To their laments and anguish, he responded by offering congratulations' on their fortitude! There were demands for his resignation, of which he of course took no notice. A newspaper cartoon had him declaring: 'The Ojhri camp was set up by the British, so it is Queen Elizabeth who should abdicate!'

Ziaul Haq dismissed his handpicked prime minister, Mohammad Khan Junejo, suddenly and unceremoniously not long afterwards. According to one story current at the time, it was because Junejo was going to reveal the 'real' story behind the Ojhri disaster (a story that has however, not been told to this day). Ziaul Haq's own reasons for the dismissal were set out in a sort of charge-sheet accusing the Junejo government of maladministration and incompetence, of allowing rampant corruption and nepotism, the complete breakdown of morality and law and order, and—obligatory item—of not doing anything to further the cause of Islam. And so on and so forth,. This litany of omissions and commissions became the standard format for action under the Eighth Amendment. Until its repeal in 1997, not one government or Assembly was able to complete its term. The president assumed unto himself the electorate's job of judging the performance of the elected representatives and of a government enjoying its confidence. (The caretaker government appointed by Zia in Junejo's place comprised many of the same 'corrupt' members of the Junejo government, and when the dismissed

Junejo left Islamabad for his home in Sindh, Ziaul Haq, in a characteristic piece of ostentatious courtesy, went to the 'corrupt' ex-prime minister's house to bid him good bye).

No one believed that Ziaul Haq had got rid of Junejo for the reasons he had given. So why did he do it? Nobody knew for sure. There may have been more than one reason. For one thing, Junejo had not proven to be quite the docile puppet Ziaul Haq thought he had chosen to run the sort of democracy he had in mind for the country. The Press had also seen the mild-mannered Junejo as a weak man and was inclined to make fun of him. Writing in *The Nation* of Lahore, Jalilur Rahman remarked on Mr. Junejo's 'extraordinary capacity to be inconspicuous in the most conspicuous situations'. He was too tall to be altogether inconspicuous but undoubtedly he had a diffident air about him and he was not articulate. Nevertheless, he was not diffident in asserting such powers as were left with the prime minister under Ziaul Haq's truncated constitution. Indeed, he went a long way in testing how far the prime minister's authority could be stretched. He talked about the problem of 'wearing two hats,' that is, Ziaul Haq being both army chief and president, and then began feeling the ground for the replacement of Ziaul Haq as COAS. That, certainly, would have provoked Zia to bring down the sword of Damocles.

In fact, the potential for differences between Zia and his nominee had begun to emerge right from the beginning. Junejo was well aware, of course, that he was not prime minister of a full-fledged parliamentary government. In his first speech in the National Assembly, he explained his approach:

> We were of the opinion that there was no way to end martial law and set up a democratic government except through elections...We don't harbor a grudge against those [he was evidently alluding to Bar and the PPP] who hold a different opinion. To our mind they are also patriots. We need their cooperation too ... but we did not subscribe to the view that we should first reach the destination, then start the journey ... It is the duty of every person to extend full cooperation to complete the process of devolution of power.

In a press conference, he affirmed that martial law was incompatible with democracy and would have to go.

Within the limitations of the system, Junejo was jealous in preserving whatever prerogatives, great or small, his position allowed him. Thus, right at the beginning, when a file was put up to him to sign some ambassadorial appointments which the president had already approved, Junejo refused to do so, reminding the Foreign Ministry that it was for the prime minister to appoint ambassadors, the president may only sign their letters of credence. He eased out some of Zia's key men from the administration—Sahibzada Yaqub from the Foreign Ministry, Mahbubul Haq from the

Finance Ministry, and General Mujeebur Rahman, the Information Secretary. On a more important plane, Junejo went his own way on Afghanistan and signed the Geneva Peace accords against the policy and wishes of Ziaul Haq. And, in a move that must have really infuriated the General, Junejo mustered support for his action by calling an all-parties conference at which Benazir was also present and given a place of honor.

Whatever his reasons, the dismissal of Junejo put the normally sure-footed General badly off-balance, for he was now obliged, even under his own altered-to-measure constitution, to call fresh elections within ninety days. Of course he did not do it within the stipulated period, but there was no way he could avoid doing it without going back to martial law all over again. Such a move would entail all sorts of uncertainties and was likely also to lead to friction with Washington. So he set a date for new elections, 16 November, two and a half months later than the due date under the constitution.[10] He explained blithely that the decision was in keeping with the spirit of the constitution although it may appear to be against its letter! One of the stories current at the time—such was the general belief in Zia's deviousness—was that he had chosen that particular date for the election because Benazir, who was expecting, was due to have her baby then.

For meanwhile Benazir had got married. In an interview with a Karachi newspaper a year earlier[11] she had been asked point-blank: 'You don't think of having your own home, of marriage?' To which she had replied, 'No, I don't have much time to think of these matters—unless I am questioned by journalists!' And then added, 'I think it's a little unfair because I don't see journalists putting such questions to men ... For me, my political life is uppermost ... I breathe politics, I think of politics all the time ... politics is the means by which we will change the life of the people.' However, her own personal life had political aspects too, and being single could be a political handicap. In 1987 she was thirty-four years old, getting past what is considered the marriageable age for girls in Pakistan. She was, of course, eligible in every possible way—birth, beauty, and wealth—except one. She was on the permanent blacklist of the country's ruler and liable at any time to be arrested, exiled, externed—the man who wished to marry her would have to be prepared to brave unknown risks to his career and business and possibly his own freedom. Then suddenly it was announced that she was to marry the son of a former party-man of the elder Bhutto and now a leader of a rival group, the NAP (National Awami Party). Asif Zardari's name was not at the time a household word in Pakistan. He was known mainly as a man-about-Karachi town who partied, played a bit of polo, and dabbled in real estate. The wedding was a star-studded spectacle to which people, including the press, came from all over the world. However, Western ambassadors in Islamabad saw a predicament when they received invitations to the affair, for the Afghan war was on and there was still need to be sensitive to Zia's

[10] In Washington I was explaining that. according to the constitution, the elections should have been called at an earlier date, to which a Democratic Party official said wryly, 'Yeah, like eleven years ago...'

[11] *The Daily News*, Karachi, 30 April 1987.

susceptibilities. They held a meeting behind closed doors in Islamabad to consider the dilemma and resolved it in diplomatic fashion by accepting the invitation but deputing their Consuls-General in Karachi to attend.

Ziaul Haq announced that the elections would be held on a non-party basis as he considered that a more democratic way. He must have realized, of course, that even without the party label, PPP loyalists or sympathizers would take most of the seats. The reason why he favored non-party elections was that independently elected candidates were free of the constraints of the Political Representation Act, which forbade floor-crossing. They could more easily be bought, sold, cajoled, or coerced. The PPP took the question to court, which eventually handed down its decision that under the constitution, political parties had the right to participate in elections.

By 1988 election fever had gripped the country. This time Benazir was determined to participate and had brought the MRD round to her view. She was confident that Zia could be beaten at his own game played by his own rules. She was not inclined to let formalistic considerations stand in her way. Thus she was no longer bothered by the bitterly contested question of the registration of political parties under Zia's Political Parties' Ordinance. It was only a formality, she said to me, a matter of filling out a questionnaire. In any case, she expected the Supreme Court, before whom the PPP had filed a reference, to rule the Ordinance *ultra vires* (which in due course it did).

There were rumors that Benazir might possibly join hands for election purposes with Junejo, as the ex-Prime Minister had also been travelling around the country, hitting out at Ziaul Haq. He took the position that everything done by the latter since dismissing his government in May was ultra tires and without legal effect, firstly because his own dismissal was unjustified, and secondly because no caretaker prime minister had been appointed as required under the constitution.

Zia joined the fray in his own way by announcing in June a 'historic decision ... a revolutionary step', to wit, that henceforth *Shariat* would be the supreme law of the land. The announcement had been preceded by a meeting of religious scholars from various sects at which agreement was reached on the disputed elements of Islamic law. The scholars agreed, *inter alia*, that a woman could not be the head of state or head of government of an Islamic state, or at least not until she was forty years of age. Benazir at the time was approaching the mid-thirties, and this particular proposal was eventually dropped as being a little too obvious.

Though Zia tried to hype up the *Sharia* ordinance as the long-awaited return of Pakistan to the fold of Islam, in the main all it did was to provide for appointing commissions and committees to study how to bring the country's laws and practices in line with the tenets of Islam. The ordinance also created some jobs for mates on High Court benches.

The Nation of Lahore in its editorial the next day,[12] noting that the ordinance had been 'promulgated in a hurry', wondered tongue-in-cheek, 'whether this hurry has been dictated by the president's desire to fulfill a long-standing commitment made to the people or to divert attention from the more pressing issue of general elections due in seventy days.'

The Islamists for their part treated Zia's move as cosmetic. One school of thought believed that proper Islamization could only be ensured by applying the *Fatwa-i-Alamgiri* under which justice had been administered in Emperor Aurangzeb's[13] time. In response, a Professor Rahimullah Shchab wrote an article in the government mouthpiece. *The Pakistan Times*, drawing attention to the deficiencies in the emperor's *fatwa*. Thus there was no *hadd* punishment (amputation) for theft of firewood, grass, milk, fish, or of musical instruments, nor for theft from either another thief or (interesting equivalence!) from the government treasury. Nor would a thief suffer amputation if he loaded his loot onto the back of his donkey and then let the quadruped find its way home without any prodding. Furthermore, Professor Rahimullah pointed out, a *hadd* punishment was awarded only if the culprit confessed to the crime, and even in that case, the judge was required to do all he could to persuade the person to retract his confession in order to avoid having his hand cut off (why this should take a lot of persuasion is difficult to understand). Moreover, if, after being sentenced to a *hadd* punishment, the culprit ran away, he was not to be pursued. The professor, eager to dampen criticism of Zia's 'historic step' from the orthodox side, therefore urged all those who were keen to see real action under the *hudood* laws to stick with Zia's *Sharia* ordinance.[14]

One doubts whether Ziaul Haq, shrewd character that he was, expected this announcement to electrify the nation, for this was not the first time he had made similar 'historic announcements' connected with Islam. Like Zulfikar Bhutto's Islamist measures of 1977, the move was a damp squib. It showed only that, in his eleventh year in power, the dictator was running out of options. But no one could be sure that Zia would not pull off another fast one to postpone elections or influence their outcome.

I met Benazir shortly after Ziaul Haq announced the date for new elections. We talked about the PPP's platform and, in particular, foreign policy issues. The problem in this field was that on all major issues—Afghanistan, Kashmir, relations with India, China, the United States there was no basic difference between government policy and the PPP's positions. Anything she said was likely to sound like an echo of the government position. My view was that the PPP should downplay foreign policy, confining criticism to its conduct, rather than its substance. She demurred: '... we must have a line of our own on foreign policy. We just have to find a new approach in the foreign policy field,'

[12] 17 August 1988.
[13] Aurangzeb Alamgir, Emperor of India, 1659-1707.
[14] *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, 7 July 1988.

and she mentioned differences over relations with the super-powers, the present excessive leaning towards the United States, the permanent tension with India. She was right, of course, but there lay her dilemma, for the differences were in nuances and the public was not likely to be stirred over nuances. The rest would be demagoguery.

The country's longest period of martial law had not only left a difficult legacy of problems but had disabled or blunted the machinery for dealing with them. The major challenges for an elected government would be the restoration of the 1973 constitution, repeal of the Eighth Amendment, re-establishment of civilian control over the military, and reform and revitalization of the administrative machinery. She said to me that she had deliberately adopted a low-key approach on these and other 'sensitive' issues, trying to take into account the susceptibilities of the armed forces as well as the position and interests of the United States. She was not for pushing things to conclusions and forcing issues. In the same spirit, she said, she would not personally be taking part in the 'Black Day' that the PPP was holding on 5 July, the anniversary of Bhutto's overthrow.

One knotty question remained: if the PPP won the election, what would be the equation between Benazir and her father's executioner? As for Zia, he had ensured his own position by having it written into the constitution that he himself would stay on as president, regardless. If, despite his best efforts, the PPP did win the election, he would undoubtedly do everything he could to stop Benazir from becoming prime minister. But if it came to that and he had to swallow the bitter pill of appointing Bhutto's daughter as prime minister, he could show it as a sort of vindication, a washing away of the 'damned spot' of Bhutto's execution. But was it possible, was it conceivable, that Benazir would take the oath of office from President Ziaul Haq and serve as his prime minister? Or would she rather eschew office for the present and exercise power from behind the scenes as head of the party in power?

For Benazir, the question must have been an agonizing one. I asked her about it on one occasion. She did not answer directly but said that Zia would not in any case be allowed to retain the office of army chief. This, of course, was easier said than done, for under Zia's amendment to the constitution it was he himself, as president, who had the sole power to appoint the heads of the armed services and Benazir knew this quite well.

What took me aback was the implication in her answer that she might be willing to serve under Zia as a constitutional president. Was this the ultimate example of the pragmatism of which she was already giving many signs and which had upset some of the PPP's ideological old guard? I assumed, rather, that at that stage, she had perhaps not thought out all the implications of the situation. She may just have said to herself: we will see about crossing that bridge when we come to it. No doubt she believed that the PPP's victory would be so overwhelming that the Zia problem would be taken care of.

She gave a clue to her thinking a couple of months later in an interview[15] with a sympathetic journalist who asked her the same question. Rena it said that things had to be taken step by step. The first step would be to restore the 1973 constitution and thereby delink the army from politics and restore an independent judiciary and parliamentary government. But before that, she added, 'We have to win a majority in the parliament—this is easy if the elections are party-based, less easy if they are not.'

But then providence took a hand and Ziaul Haq's death in an aircrash resolved this question as well as the uncertainty about whether elections would be held at all or whether at the last minute he would find, or create, some excuse for putting them off once again.

[15] Maleeha Lodhi in *The Muslim*, Islamabad, 6 June 1988.

2
The Hand of God

Who dunnit? There were few clues other than guesswork based on motive. *A cui bono*? asked Zia's admirer, the former US National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Whom did Zia's death profit? On that basis there were many possible suspects—KGB, RAW, insiders, Opposition elements, *Al Zulfikar*, even the ubiquitous CIA.[16] Rumours and insinuations and controversy continued to swirl around the event. An article in the *Reader's Digest* pointed the finger of suspicion at unnamed civil and military officers. There was an acrimonious public exchange in the newspapers Then the late dictator's son, Ejazul Haq, accused a senior civil servant, Fateh Khan Bandial, who had headed an inquiry into the accident, of having done a cover up. Eventually Benazir felt compelled to appoint a committee to look into the matter all over again. I was among its members but the Benazir government was dismissed before the committee could hold a meeting. However, I did see the reports of the earlier inquiries and investigations. They threw no light on who might have done it or how. This was due in part to the fact that much evidence had been destroyed irretrievably in the fire that raged until rescue teams could reach the place of the accident.

The bare bones of the story are that on 17 August 1988 Ziaul Haq, accompanied by a number of other generals and senior officers, flew down to Bahawalpur to witness field tests of a new American battle tank that the army was interested in acquiring. He was joined there by US Ambassador Arnold Raphel. After the tests and lunch, Ziaul Haq and the others, and, at Zia's imitation, also the US ambassador, got into the President's C-130 aircraft for the flight back. Barely ten minutes into the air, the plane dropped out of the sky and, without a word or distress signal from the crew, fell into the desert, where much of it and the victims were burnt to cinders before rescue teams reached the scene.

As to how it was done, an Israeli ex-agent put forward a plausible explanation in an article in the New York magazine *Vanity Fair*, a low-intensity explosion destabilizes the plane's navigation controls and sends it out of control, at the same time releasing a gas in the cockpit that incapacitates the flight crew and inhibits them from taking corrective action. Plainly, all this would require quite a bit of rigging and manipulating of the aircraft's controls and an unusual degree of precision and co-ordination. The drill for the president's travel was that three aircraft were always standing by for his use, one of which was chosen at random just before the flight. Thus all three would have had to be

[16] RAW, Research and Analysis Wing, is the Indian intelligence agency. *Al Zulfikar*, a militant group, was founded by the late Zulfikar Bhutto's sons to avenge his execution. It hijacked a Pakistan International Airlines plane in 1980 but botched a number of attempts on Ziaul Haq's life.

booby-trapped and then the remaining ones de-rigged immediately afterwards to avoid detection. The time and motion that all this would take and the number of people who would need to be involved made the whole thing rather improbable and almost impossible to keep secret.

But however it was done and whoever was behind it, the operation could hardly have been carried out without some inside involvement at some level, presumably a level that would be high enough and sufficiently extensive to allow the sabotage to be arranged and afterwards to be covered up as effectively as has been the case. The fact is that the security surrounding Ziaul Haq, contrary to the general impression, was quite slack. The New York Times ascribed this to Zia's 'fatalism', but more likely it was simply the casual Pakistani style of doing things. I was told at the Foreign Office that, for instance, when some document had to be sent to the presidents they would simply phone President's House to say that it was being sent over with so and so. The man would thereupon be allowed to enter merely on affirming that he was the FO man. It would not have been too difficult for someone who knew the ropes to slip an unauthorized person into the president's house or office. One of the stories about the air crash was that before Ziaul Haq's C-130 took off on its fateful last trip, a crate of mangoes, sent as a present by a local worthy, was taken on board without a proper security check.

When I mentioned the *Vanity Fair* article to Benazir, she was emphatic in discounting its theory. Benazir had from the start accepted that it was an accident—the hand of God meting out divine retribution. 'It may be superstition,' she said, 'but I believe it. Look how all those involved [in Bhutto's hanging] came to a bad end—Tara Masih [Bhutto's hangman] died of cancer, a swarm of bees attacked the funeral of Maulvi Mushtaq [the Lahore Chief Justice, who had sentenced him to death], another judge died of a heart attack!'

3
Aftermath

Ziaul Haq's death changed all assumptions and calculations, both at home and abroad. In the West, especially in the United States, heavily engaged as it was in the Afghan war, there was a fear that, at a time when things were going well and the Soviet Union was facing its Vietnam in Afghanistan, Zia's exit could throw everything into question. Zia was considered the architect of Pakistan's Afghan policy and a staunch supporter of the West, whereas PPP leaders had spoken on the subject in different voices. *The London Times* editorial on the event carried the title: 'A Bad Death for the West'. Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski was so carried away that, in an article in *The New York Times*[17], he urged the Pakistan army's 'younger surviving senior officers to create a transitional government'; in other words, to carry out a military *coup*, perhaps even a mutiny! Brzezinski's admiration for the late General was unqualified for he considered him to be the architect of the Soviet Union's greatest defeat'. However, even in the West, with its cold war stake in the martial law regime, not everyone shared such unalloyed admiration for the works of Pakistan's dictator.

The Economists in its issue of 19 January 1985, had put the dilemma in the following words: 'General Zia's Pakistan is a good ally, but a bad advertisement for the West.' Richard Weintraub wrote in *The Washington Post*[18] that, behind his outward demeanor of a self-effacing man mainly interested in promoting religious values, Ziaul Haq was a shrewd political manipulator. Patrice De Beer's obituary in *Le Monde* spoke of Zia's Islam as an 'Islam revised and corrected by a sergeant-major', and of the man himself as 'solitary and autocratic,' a man who, 'with his plastered hair, his carefully trimmed Indian Army moustache, a look sombre and sometimes frightening, never succeeded in winning over the people, who merely tolerated him for lack of a better choice,' History will retain a not very shining image of Ziaul Haq's Pakistan,' he concluded.

In *The Times* of London, Anatol Lieven wrote that Zia had regularly outmaneuvered all those who 'thought themselves smarter'—which included many erstwhile friends. 'The probability is that without the explosion that claimed his life yesterday, he would have repeated the process in the parliamentary and municipal elections he had called for November...' It is likely,' he concluded, 'that General Zia's successors will be still more

[17] 'Pakistan Needs Help, Not Lectures,' reproduced in the International Herald Tribune, Paris, 31 August 1988. in a rejoinder published on 6 September, I pointed out that Pakistan's Afghan policy was not a one-man show hut had broad national backing. I added: 'The vacuum that exists in Pakistan after General Zia's death is the vacuum after eleven years of one-man rule. It can only be filled by a return to constitutional government and democratic institutions.'

[18] 18 August 1988.

generals. They will be lucky, however, if they possess his political intelligence and stamina.'

In Pakistan this fear was uppermost in many minds, that another strongman might step in to 'save' the country from its people and impose martial law all over again. The pretexts for doing so were all there: the country was still deeply involved in the Afghan war, some of the army's top brass had died in the crash along with Zia, and the ever-present Indian bogey could always be invoked.

However, and for a variety of reasons, the odds this time were against a resort to martial law. The small doses of Zia's 'democracy' had whetted the country's appetite for the real thing and people were all keyed up for the scheduled elections. Perhaps even within the army itself, satiety had set in with the unconstitutional exercise of political power, year after year after year, without any purpose, object, or justification except to keep one man in power. There were surely officers who were fed up with the army being used in this manner and impatient at the door remaining closed to the top post. The obvious candidate for a new martial law chief, deputy chief of staff Mirza Aslam Beg, was not cut out to pull off a coup, partly because he did not belong to the so-called 'martial races', was not even a 'non-martial' Punjabi like the East Punjabi Ziaul Haq but a *muhajir*,[19] without a tribal network to back him up. Nor, like Ziaul Haq, had any potential chief martial law administrator had the time and forewarning to prepare the ground for a take-over. Ghulam 'shag Khan, who had assumed the office of acting president under the Zia constitution, moved quickly to set in motion other relevant provisions of the constitution, fixing a definite date for the holding of the elections and lining up GHQ and the civil establishment behind this course of action. Zia's American patrons had been pressing him to let up and make more determined and substantive moves towards democratic reforms, if not full-fledged democracy. They too did not want things to go back to square one and would be well content if the post-Zia scenario promised the continuity of Pakistan's Afghan policy.

[19] *Muhajir*—in an allusion to those who had accompanied the Prophet (PEUH) on his eight from Mecca to Madina, the description adopted by Urdu-speaking immigrants from India to identify themselves as a community.

4
An Uncertain Transition

As Benazir toured a country that was again politically galvanized, it became increasingly clear that the PPP would be returned to power under her leadership. This was not a prospect to gladden the hearts of the followers and beneficiaries of the Zia regime who now packed the establishment, Some members of the caretaker government argued vehemently against the holding of elections. A senior Pakistani official whom I happened to meet in Washington at the time remarked ironically: 'The people who are the most optimistic about the PPP's prospects are not members of the PPP but of the caretaker government for they are fretting that holding elections means handing over power to the PPP on a silver platter.'

A critical move, admirably devious in its ingenuity, was made by a member of the dismissed National Assembly, Hail Saifullah, when he filed a petition in the Supreme Court against Ziaul Haq's dismissal of the Junejo government and the National Assembly in May 1988. If the Supreme Court accepted Saifullah's plea that the dismissal was *ultra vires* of the constitution, it would follow that the 1985 Assembly would stand restored and perhaps also the Junejo government. This would also mean that there would be no fresh elections, for which the campaign was already underway, until 1990, and that the PPP and Benazir would be kept waiting at the door for another two years. That, in fact, was how matters were going to go. Speaking to me about the event some years later, Justice Dorab Patel of the Supreme Court said that Mohammad Khan Junejo was invited by the court to be present when it delivered its decision on Haji Saifullah's petition and he arrived escorted by outriders and the usual paraphernalia of what in Pakistan is called 'VVIP status'. It was assumed that the court was going to uphold Haji Saifullah's plea, restore the dissolved Assembly, and put Junejo back in the prime minister's chair. Then something caused the judges to postpone their decision. When at last the decision was announced it, it was to the effect that Ziaul Haq had indeed acted wrongfully in dismissing the Assembly. But it was accompanied by an injunction to the Speaker of the dissolved Assembly not to reconvene it as this would interfere with the holding of fresh elections that had already been scheduled.

As the days passed, it became clear that elections would indeed be held. But not all the electioneering took place at the hustings. In the time-honoured fashion of Pakistan's crypto-politics, the powers that be set about arranging matters so that no single party, least of all the PPP, should be returned in such strength as to loosen the establishment's hold on the levers of power. The intelligence agencies, old hands at the game, helped to put together the IJI (in English, Islamic Democratic Alliance), an electoral alliance of Zia cronies and protégés, Islamist parties, and political careerists who shared the common

aim of hanging on to their advantages and keeping the PPP, and specifically Benazir, out of power.

One morning, after all this was history and Benazir had been sworn in, while we were sitting in the ante-chamber of the Prime minister's office, ex-Air Chief Zulfikar Ali put a blunt question to General Hamid Gul, Director of ISID (Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, Pakistan's CIA) about his role in the matter during Zia's time and afterwards. The General neither confirmed nor denied anything and merely asserted, 'In whatever I did, I was carrying out orders.' Well, that said it all!

Benazir referred to this affair in her response to the reference filed against her in the Supreme Court by Ghulam Ishaq Khan after dismissing her government in 1990. When she was prime minister, she affirmed, the 'authority concerned' had told her that, under superior orders, he had helped to set up the IJI. The 'authority' seemed indeed to expect some thanks for his efforts, for he maintained that elections would not have been held at all if the PPP had had the whole field to itself.

I happened to be visiting the United States when the election campaign was getting under way. I went to Washington to get a feel of the thinking there about the Pakistan situation and to brief key people on Benazir's behalf about the PPP's aims and policies. She wrote me a letter setting out her view of the situation. Elections could not be fair and impartial, she held, if the present interim governments, headed by Muslim League Chief Ministers, remained in power in the provinces. They were intriguing with elements in the establishment, including the armed forces, opposed to allowing the elections to be held. She had called for a neutral caretaker government composed of non-partisan elements who themselves would not be contesting the forthcoming elections. She was not happy with Ghulam Ishaq Khan's attitude and actions: '..so far the Acting President has not matched words with deeds and no steps have been taken to reassure the Opposition that the elections will be fair, free, and impartial?

Two years later, when Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed her government and filed a reference with the Supreme Court about its alleged misdeeds and failings, in her response she was less circumspect in describing his role:

> ... as soon as the Referring Authority (Ghulam Ishaq Khan) seized power following the mysterious death of General Zia ... he did everything in his power to preclude the PPP and myself from winning the election ... party funds were not released to the party ... Political parties were not allowed to participate in the elections and we had to go to the Supreme Court to get relief ... the election symbol with which people were familiar was denied to the party...

A serious handicap for the PPP was the caretaker government's decision that voters must produce their ID cards in order to get their voting papers. The ostensible purpose

of this requirement was to prevent double and false voting, but in the specific circumstances that prevailed, it put the PPP at a disadvantage since the majority of its supporters were from the rural areas where people generally do not bother to get ID cards. A PPP petition against the decision was upheld by the Lahore High Court, which declared that, in the absence of an ID card, any other valid identification ought to do. But the caretaker government went into appeal and won a favorable decision from the Supreme Court—in the rather curious form of a stay order on the Lahore decision. To make doubly sure, the relevant government agencies were proceeding very slowly in issuing new ID cards and a lot of PPP voters stood to be disenfranchised.

On a gimmicky level, on election eve a Karachi magistrate issued a warrant of arrest against Murtaza Bhutto for the 1980 hijacking of a PIA plane—the idea being to catch the headlines as people went to the polls. Pictures of Nusrat Bhutto dancing with President Gerald Ford during Zulfikar Bhutto's Washington visit in the 70s were distributed all over Lahore and other places to demonstrate the un-Islamic ways and 'shamelessness' of the Bhuttos. Ziaul Haq's son appeared on TV to make an appeal in the name of his 'martyred' father for the preservation of Islam.

In the United States, too, it was election year, and Vice-President Bush was facing Governor Dukakis of Massachusetts in the race for the presidency. Election news and domestic affairs dominated the media and the political scene. However, there was considerable interest in what was happening in Pakistan because of concern over the continuity of Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post-Zia scene and, at the popular level, on account of the personality and media image of Benazir. She had visited Washington earlier in the year and impressed important policy-makers, journalists, and other influential persons whom she met. Her visit had gone some way in reassuring American officials about her stance on Afghanistan.

I found that neither the Administration nor the Dukakis camp was taking an apocalyptic view of Zia's exit from the scene. Certainly no one in any responsible position that I met wished for a military takeover in Pakistan. Just to make sure that no one got the wrong idea, Senator Edward Kennedy read into the Congressional record a strongly-worded statement cautioning all concerned that US relations with Pakistan would be adversely affected if there was another *coup*.

The fact was, however, that American officials had worked closely with the Zia regime for nearly a decade, and a network of personal relationships had been developed with Pakistani counterparts—gift carpets on office floors, signed photographs in silver frames, and such other tokens of the relationship could be seen in some of the offices I visited. In the West, Ziaul Haq was seen primarily not as a dictator who had thrown out the constitution, but as a staunch and fearless fighter of the good fight against the Russian Bear, a defender of Western interests at the frontline of freedom!

The reaction of Don Gregg, Vice-President Bush's National Security Adviser, was typical. He looked genuinely surprised when I suggested that Ziaul Haq was not a popular person in Pakistan. But he was a good man! I personally liked him very much.' I did not argue the point but said, 'Be that as it may, the General is gone. The United States should now look to institutions and not to individuals if they wish to see a stable and friendly Pakistan.' He asked why it was assumed that the PPP would win a majority in the elections, what was the party's constituency, what kind of people it could rally to man the government, and what were Junejo's chances? It was clear that, having been closely involved with the Zia regime for all those years, the Administration was still under the influence of ideas and suggestions coming from that direction.

The State Department's assessment was that no single party would get a large enough majority to be able to form the government by itself, This assessment may have been influenced by the briefings given to American officials in Islamabad by the sort of people who had made a similar assumption about the outcome of the fateful elections of 1970 which led to the secession of East Pakistan.[20] There may have been a bit of wishful thinking on the pan of the State Department itself, for they had apparently placed their bets on Junejo. The Administration had been working for a couple of years to build him up and watching as he established his credentials as a man of integrity and independent mind, one who had not shrunk from standing up to Ziaul Haq on major issues. He was seen as the man to bring democracy back to Pakistan without making waves or rocking the boat—just the way the United States wanted it done. The Americans undoubtedly wanted the return of democracy to Pakistan, but in a gradualist way, an easing and eventual removal of martial law, acceleration of Ziaul Haq's own tentative steps towards constitutional rule, and so on. They did not view the return of democracy to Pakistan as a complete scrapping of the system with which they had been working and which was helping to run the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Junejo had indeed shown unsuspected qualities of leadership and personal integrity. While he stood up to Ziaul Haq, he kept his cool on being dismissed. He attacked Ziaul Haq and his policies but managed to keep personal rancor out of it, and when Ziaul Haq died, he attended the funeral.

In my meetings in Washington I noticed a certain reticence in official circles with regard to Benazir. It was not that in the Administration there was any hostility towards her or any specific grounds for objecting to her (except perhaps a general disquiet associated with the Bhutto name). On the contrary, Benazir had impressed officials and the media with her eloquence and moderation during a visit to Washington earlier in the year. But some PPP workers in Washington had the impression that the Administration would

[20] During her visit to China in 1989, on the flight to Shanghai Benazir suddenly turned to me to say, wonder if these people would ever have held elections if they knew that we were going to win.' I said, 'You owe your prime ministership to the intelligence agencies who, as always, gave the government a wishful assessment of how the elections would, or could be made to, turn out.

prefer to see her do a 'probation' on the Opposition benches, or as a member of a coalition government, before taking on the prime ministership. There was an underlying doubt that a young woman, with the highest educational qualifications, true, but without experience in government, would be up to the job. There was also some concern that, having gone through all that she herself and the PPP as a party had suffered at the hands of Ziaul Haq, she might be motivated by the all too natural urge to wreak vengeance on their tormentors.

The questions that kept coming up in my meetings were the ones Benazir had anticipated in her letter to me: was Benazir likely to get a stable majority in the elections, would the army allow her to assume power, did she have the maturity to handle the job, did she have in her party, or among her entourage, people with the qualifications and experience to run the government?

In my discussions, the line I took was that God himself had taken care of the matter of vengeance. As for Benazir, she had declared categorically that no such sentiment would guide the PPP's actions if it were to come to power. To the other questions the answer was twofold. Maturity was not a matter of grey hairs. This young woman had gone through the crucible and come out with her faith and will unshaken, bent not on getting even but on righting the wrongs that had been done to the nation and its institutions during Ziaul Haq's dictatorship. As for her being able to run the administration, unlike the United States, in Pakistan the heads of government do not bring in their own people to run the government; the same civil service that had served Zia, and before him her father, would continue to run the government regardless of which party formed the government after the elections. The question remained whether the new political leadership would have the ability and experience to give the civil service the necessary political direction. This was a pertinent question. Pakistan's political institutions had been emasculated during repeated periods of military rule and therefore a mature, experienced, and knowledgeable leadership had not developed. In that environment, many a political parry had come and gone without leaving a trace. What one could say about the PPP was that it had successfully withstood an eleven-year onslaught aimed at breaking its ranks and destroying its will. Surely such a party had the inner strength and coherence and sense of purpose to set the government's agenda and see to it that it was followed.

An interesting meeting in a somewhat wider context was one with Henry Kissinger in New York. Almost the first thing he said to me was, 'I don't know Benazir personally but she has been attacking me for the overthrow of her father. Please assure her that I had nothing to do with it, nor did the CIA in my time.' He recalled that he had gone to Lahore in 1976 in the course of his Middle East shuttle and, on the nuclear subject, had cautioned Bhutto that if the Democrats won the presidency, he should expect a much harder time from the new Secretary of State than he was getting from the Republican Administration. I referred to his alleged threat that the new Administration would

make a `horrible example' of Bhutto. Kissinger was quite emphatic, 'No, no, that language is much too strong.' There was, nonetheless, the implication that some kind of threat or warning had been uttered during the Lahore talks. What actually happened when Carter came in, and whether the Administration had moved against Bhutto, about that, Kissinger said he knew nothing. 'Why, I liked Bhutto,' he affirmed, throwing up his hands, 'he was the most interesting of all the Third World leaders I have met.' Bhutto, he said, really overthrew himself. He was under no compulsion to hold elections when he did and, in Kissinger's view, he had done so mainly in order to be one-up on Mrs. Gandhi who, he said, was always putting on superior airs about India's democracy.

5
A Snared Compromise

The election results surprised everybody. The PPP did not bag enough seats to enable Benazir to receive power on a silver platter, but neither did the Establishment obtain the gaggle of miscellaneous parries that could have been herded together into a docile coalition. The III with fifty-five seats was way behind the PPP, and the PPP's lead of forty seats was too big to be whittled away. Moreover, the PPP was able to sew up the support of the MQM (in English, the Muhaiir National Movement), the party that represented the *muhajir* community and had a compact block of fourteen seats. Thus, although Benazir had not made a triumphal return, she was in a strong enough position. A major factor in Benazies favor was the fact that everyone of the prime ministerable Sindhis—Junejo, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Illahi Baksh Soomro—had fallen by the wayside in the election. Of course, the president was not bound to call in a Sindhi to head the government, but after Bhutto's execution and a decade of Punjabi rule under Ziaul Haq, it was considered politic that the post should go to a Sindhi.

Thus the PPP did have a plurality that in normal circumstances would have got its leader an immediate summons to try to form the government. But in the conditions that prevailed and the particular political traditions of Pakistan, there was room enough for maneuver and machination. Ghulam Ishaq Khan took a full ten days before indicating that Benazir might be asked to form the government. During this incubation period, various schemes were hatched to make it difficult for her to do so, and to put together a coalition that would leave control essentially in the hands of the Zia-period establishment as personified by Ghulam Ishaq Khan. There was much coming and going among and around the powers that be and many auguries and signs and portents. The Chief of Army Staff sent his congratulations to Benazir; the American ambassador paid a courtesy call, A variety of eminent aspirants beat a path to the doorsteps of the intelligence agencies.

Ghulam Ishaq himself said nothing but let it be known that he needed time to assess the comparative strength of the various parties in the parliament before making a final decision. One of the kites flown was that he might first summon the Assembly to elect a Speaker—the tally to show which parry had the majority in the House would also provide the opportunity to arrange things to the president's satisfaction!

Ghulam Ishaq Khan's shilly-shallying did not go down well with the public and was criticized even by newspapers such as *The Muslim* of Islamabad and *The Nation* of Lahore that were not sympathetic to the PPP and still less to the Bhuttos. *The Muslim* saw the president's tactic as conducive to the usual palace intrigue and backroom politicking and called on him to 'bite the bullet' and respect the peoples' verdict in

Benazir's favor. Benazir herself had this to say about Ghulam Ishaq Khan's moves, when in 1990 she defended her government's record against the charges he had brought against her in the Supreme Court:

> The Referring Authority [the president] chose to call my rival before he called me, to signal to the MNAs that he wished my rival to form the government although [the latter] had only 53 seats and I had 108... land) a clear-cut majority ...the RA did his best to break my MNAs between 16 November and 2 December 1988....[21]

In Washington, the PPP group held a press conference to expound PPP policies, *inter alia* on Afghanistan. We took the occasion to decry the president's dilatoriness in calling the leader of the largest political group in the Assembly to try to form the government. Washington itself was keeping its thoughts to itself, but our ambassador there, Jamshed Marker, said to me, 'As long as democratic forms are observed, the Americans won't bother about the rest.' This may or may not have been the thinking of the US Administration, but it certainly reflected the Pakistani Establishment's frame of mind and hopes.

When at long last Ghulam Ishaq Khan brought himself to ask Benazir to form the government, he declared that his own preference would have been for a coalition government, seeing that there was hardly any difference of substance between the platforms of the two main parties. He now adopted a fatherly attitude towards Benazir and said some nice things about her. Describing her as 'an educated young woman possessing great qualities of statesmanship and political sagacity,' and one who was imbued with immense love for the country and spirit of service to the people, he said that he prayed for her success and hoped that she would bring glory and pride to the nation. (His prayers, seemingly, were not answered, for twenty months later he booted her government out of office and took back all the fine things he had said about her.)

In principle the old man had a point about the merits of having a national government, but it was not quite correct that there were no essential differences between the PPP and the IJI. True, the PPP's programme was no longer 'socialist', but the party did stand for a different kind of Pakistan—progressive, modern, secular—from the military-cum-*maulvi* status quo that the IJI was likely to continue. Policy questions aside, on one side stood people who had been persecuted and hounded by the Zia regime, and on the other, those who had been pillars of the regime and had benefited from it. They had tried to prevent the elections from being held at all, urged the army to re-impose martial law, and schemed and plotted to retain the power and perks they had enjoyed for many

[21] When, after being sworn in, she called a vote of confidence in the National Assembly, she actually received 148 votes.

years. It was not impossible, but it would be difficult for two such sides to come together in happy reconciliation and work for common ends.

However, in the end she did form a government. It was not the formal coalition that Ghulam Ishaq Khan advocated, but represented instead a sharing of power between the PPP and the Zia Establishment. Ghulam Ishaq Khan himself, among the foremost of the Zia-era stalwarts, was to be president, and Yaqub Khan, another confidant of the late General, was to stay on as Foreign Minister. In fact, tone can hardly say that power was shared, for, armed with the viceregal powers given to the president by Zia's amendment of the constitution, Ghulam Ishaq retained the freedom to act at will in almost every field of any importance—the armed forces, foreign policy, judicial appointments. Above all, he had the power to dismiss the government and the legislature. In practice, under the so-called compromise, Benazir had to put up with all the limitations of a coalition government without any of its benefits.

In the Supreme Court reference mentioned above, Benazir put the matter thus:

> He [Ghulam Ishaq Khan] got me to make him president so that he could get a further opportunity to rid the country of the elected government and the elected prime minister. The RA told me to keep on his Foreign Minister [Yaqub Khan] for three months until the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan. In retrospect I realize that the three months was not meant for him, it was meant for me. I was to be sent packing in three months.

A curious expression, 'He got me to make him president.' How did he get her to do it? Why did she give in? Did the army threaten martial law otherwise? Were the Americans going to cut off all aid if she did not? The actual story of what transpired in those immediate post-election days has not been told. In retrospect, it does not matter much how the deal was worked out—Benazir herself dismissed suggestions that there was anything like a deal. Then what led Benazir to accept a compromise that was loaded against her from the start?

In an interview he gave to *The Observer*[22] of London some months later, her brother Mulitaza explained her possible frame of mind: 'The PPP had been out in the cold for ten years and Benazir was afraid that if the army launched another *coup*, we would be out for ten more.'

This was certainly the mood that prevailed among the PPP workers in Washington, where I was at the time. Their eagerness to emerge from the political wilderness in which the party, and some of them personally, had wandered for eleven years was of course understandable. They seemed fearful, now that the prize seemed within grasp,

[22] 5 February 1989.

lest it should be snatched from their hands again. They worried that the Establishment might buy off some of the newly-elected PPP members who had held office under Zia and joined the Party only when it looked like the winning horse. In awarding party tickets for the election, Benazir herself had decided to give preference in many constituencies to such 'winning horses' to make sure of a majority in the Assembly.

The Party leadership, and in particular Benazir, with her mixture of nervous impatience and heady over-confidence, may have calculated that the portion of power that was being formally denied to the Party could be regained gradually through a process of erosion and a nibble here, a nibble there. After all, if the politically feeble Mr Junejo had been able to make some headway against Ziaul Haq himself in this way,, then why not a popular party led by someone with the charisma of Benazir?

This was a gamble and, worse still, a tactic that would take the PPP into the labyrinth of cabal politics, palace intrigue, and back-door wheeling-dealing—the same means and methods that have been the bane of Pakistani politics from the beginning and at which Benazir's opponents were past masters. Had the PPP reined in its impatience for office and been willing to go into Opposition, the acting president would soon have realized the difficulty of trying to proceed without the PPP.

In the *Observer* interview mentioned above, Murtaza Bhutto expressed the fear that his sister had made too many concessions—to the army, to party-men eager for the benefits of power, to the Americans—to run an effective government. 'If it had been me,' he said, would have taken the PPP majority and gone into Opposition and watched if they could find another government.'

In point of fact, although the PPP had failed to get a clear overall majority, it was not in so weak a position as to be obliged to accept any terms it was given. Ghulam Ishaq, Aslam Beg, *et al* also faced difficult and limited choices at that juncture. In the first place, after a long Punjab-dominated martial law, they had to find a prime minister from one of the smaller provinces, preferably Sindh, where disaffection was rife. But, as mentioned. above, all the likely prime ministerial Opposition politicians from Sindh had been defeated in the election, and the other small provinces, Balochistan and the NWFP, had no politician at the time with the national stature to fill the bill. But even if one left aside these regional consideration, the plain fact was that the Punjab's Nawaz Sharif, who headed the second largest group in the newly elected Assembly, simply did not have the numbers to put together a viable government at the Centre.

In truth, at that stage of the game Benazir, rather than Ghulam Ishaq, was in a position to set terms. For one thing, there was little chance that without the PPP's vote Ghulam Ishaq Khan could have ensured his own election as president. She was far from being in a situation where he could tell her, 'Take it or leave it.' He himself had few options, and

eventually would have had to swallow hard and let Benazir have the government—and then bide his time. And that is what he did in the end.

But he was a better poker player than Benazir, who says in her autobiography that she believes in putting all her cards on the table. That a party which had stood its ground for more than a decade in the face of Zia's 'carrots and sticks' showed weakness in the moment of its triumph and vindication was, in my view, not a political problem but a psychological one—a failure of nerve.

The so-called compromise further vitiated the PPP's qualified win in the elections. It resulted not in reconciliation, but in giving the Establishment time to plot Benazir's downfall at its leisure and meanwhile to strew her path with thorns and brambles and lay around her booby-traps of all kinds.

The other serious setback for the PPP was in the provinces. This, too, was a setback that could have been avoided. In the provincial elections the party positions were the reverse of the results at the centre. Except in Sindh, the PPP was in a minority in all provincial legislatures, though it was in a position to form governments in coalition with other parties or with the support of independent members. The PPP's Achilles' heel was in the Punjab,where the IJI had a plurality. This was a surprise, for hitherto the province had been considered as a special fief of the Bhuttos. Benazir alleged that there had been rigging by the caretaker Chief Minister, Nawaz Sharif. On the other hand, even some senior PPP men from the Punjab felt that the Party had already begun to lose ground in this key province, a trend that became more evident in subsequent elections. In 1988, the simple fact was that the PPP was outpaced by Nawaz Sharifs quicker footwork in cornering the swing vote of the independently-elected members. In Pakistan, such members are usually available to the highest bidder. The number of non-Party persons elected to the Punjab Assembly was substantial. Nawaz Sharif corralled the whole lot and took them off to the Changa Manga forest outside Lahore. Here they were put up in Forest Department rest houses, lavishly entertained, and kept out of harm's way until it was time to go and vote for Nawaz Sharifs government. Why the PPP did not make a bid for the independents remains a mystery.

The PPP's failure to form the Punjab government was more than a setback at the provincial level for the Party and the Benazir government. It was the canker in the apple which caused the whole basket to go rotten in the PPP's hands. It was the cause of much of us discomfiture through the brief twenty months of its first tenure and one of the levers for its overthrow.

6
'Nation of the Year'

In the chandeliered hall of President's House, amidst liveried guards, the sounding of trumpets, and other marks of military ritual, Benazir took the oath of office from the man who had been her father's nemesis. It was a moving moment and it was enacted in a setting that was symbolic. The Establishment phalanx, the *ancien regime*, sat on one side in serried ranks of black *sherwanis* or vests, red collar-tabs, and beribboned jackets, and wearing inscrutable expressions. Opposite them sat members and guests of the ruling party to be, many in lounge suits and some of the women, including Begun Nusrat Bhutto, in saris, in defiance of the dress code that had come to prevail in the Zia period. Benazir herself not only wore a *shalwar qamiz* in emblematic green and white but went to conspicuous pains to keep her head modestly covered—and kept it covered throughout the ceremonies and forever afterwards. The oath, besides the usual pledge to uphold the constitution, reaffirmed belief in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the last prophet, an addition devised during the Zia period, presumably to sniff out any Qadianis trying to sneak into the prime minister's post. As she resumed her seat after taking the oath, Benazir flashed a quick smile at her mother. It was not a smile of triumph but radiant and touching, with something in it of a girl at her graduation saying, 'I made it, Mama!' Nusrat Bhutto, when I offered congratulations, had a pensive, wistful look. 'It's a happy day but a sad happy day.' Zulfikar Bhutto's sister, Begum Munawar Islam, wept silently. Zulfikar Bhutto was assuredly in everybody's thoughts on this solemn day those for whom he was a hero and a martyr whose honor was vindicated today and those for whom the name itself, even when borne by his daughter, was an object of fear and loathing. However, at tea and cakes afterwards, all mingled in an atmosphere of self-congratulation and outward amity.[23] Everybody looked happy, though no doubt for quite different reasons. There was a justifiable feeling of pride at the smooth, amicable, and mature way in which Pakistan had made the transition from dictatorship to democracy. The world's eyes, too, were fixed on Pakistan, in admiration for once. The world's reaction was well summed up by a French newspaper when it wrote: 'Benazir is indeed the woman of the year, but more than that Pakistan itself deserves to be called the nation of the year.'

Ghulam Ishaq Khan took the oath of office the following week and delivered the presidential address to a joint session of the parliament. In parliamentary democracies this annual statement is prepared by the government and sets out its policies and programmes for the year. But Ziaul Haq had said, 'What is the fun of making a

[23] Such was the bonhomie that an old acquaintance who had been in Ziaul Haq's cabinet asked me to recommend him for a post in Benazir's government on the basis of his past experience. Geniality prevailed also when Benazir took her first vote of confidence in the Assembly. Opposition members joined the applause and vied with each other m offering congratulations.

statement written by other people!' and the country was operating under his constitution. In its split executive, the president made his own speech, in which he was free to criticize the government of which he was the nominal head. Not that Ghulam Ishaq's speech, which was drafted in various ministries and departments, contained anything to which the PPP government could object. In one part of it, written no doubt by Ghulam Ishaq himself, he declared that the greatest error of the past had been deviation from the constitution and from that had arisen another error and then many other mistakes had followed. This oblique allusion was presumably to Zulfikar Bhutto's denaturing amendments rather than to Ziaul Haq's 'suspension' of the constitution. For Ghulam Ishaq Khan had been a pillar of Zia's unconstitutional regime for a decade and had played a prominent and complaisant role in the service of a man who had treated the Pakistan constitution as a scrap of paper that he could use and abuse however he wished. But the sentiment was impeccable and one could only say Amen! to it.

7
Taking Charge

The morning after Benazir took the oath of office, her cabinet was sworn in. It was a mixed bag in terms of experience, competence, and commitment. It included men who had gone to Zia's fails and endured other kinds of persecution, and others who had served Ziaul Haq and had jumped on board the PPP bandwagon when it began to roll, but there were enough men of substance and integrity by Benazir's side to help her chart a new course for the country.

The cabinet held its first meeting immediately after being sworn in and straightaway got down to brass tacks. Decisions were taken to release political prisoners[24] and to review all such laws, ordinances, and regulations of the Zia regime as were not compatible with the constitution, democratic practices, or human rights. By January, restrictions on trade union activities had been removed. Zia's special courts had been abolished, and some of his amendments to the criminal and penal codes repealed. When, at another of the early cabinet meetings, it was reported that Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif was allowing his party-men to use government transport in the coming bye-elections in the Punjab, it was decided that administrative and legal action be taken to stop such misuse, but Benazir cautioned that this must cut both ways and that PPP candidates must fend for themselves or ask the Party's help instead of looking to government officials and facilities for help with their electioneering.

Over the years it had become the practice to grant extensions of service to senior civil servants beyond the retirement age of sixty years. The original intent of permitting such extensions was to retain the services of officials with special competence and experience for a particular task. In practice it became a way of bestowing favors and of keeping the civil service on the leash. Benazir readily accepted my suggestion that, in order to restore a measure of integrity and self-respect to the Civil Service, this practice should be ended. She showed, at that point, a sophisticated approach on the matter of public relations. At the first cabinet meeting, when the government-controlled TV cameras, following their reflexes, were tending to focus entirety on Benazir, she told the minister concerned that overexposure could be counter-productive and that PTV (the state-owned television organization) should be cautioned to go easy on personal publicity.

[24] The move involved some 17,000 persons sentenced by military courts for a variety of offenses. The relief was not granted in a sweeping or arbitrary mariner. Those condemned for crimes of a heinous nature were not released but their cases were to be vetted by a special committee. Those tried and condemned in absentia were to be given a fresh trial in ordinary courts. Death sentences handed down by military courts were commuted.

In three fields of vital importance the government faced imminent deadlines. The most complicated of these was the Afghan war and the rapidly approaching date for the departure of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Another major event that lay just ahead was the annual summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The particular significance of this event arose from the fact that, it being Pakistan's turn to host the gathering, Rajiv Gandhi would be coming to Islamabad. This would be the first time (not counting Lal Bahadur Shastri's airport stopover in 1964) that an Indian prime minister would be visiting Pakistan since Rajiv's grandfather, Pandit Nehru, had come to sign the Indus Basin Treaty more than a generation before.

Hitherto, Rajiv Gandhi had been rather offhand about relations with Pakistan. He had spoken of Pakistan as 'a small country' of little consequence on which India should not waste its attention. In particular, he had been very uppity about paying a return visit to Pakistan.[25] Ziaul Haq had, uninvited, paid several visits to India on the excuse of watching cricket matches. The Indians had received him with formal politeness, but Rajiv had taken little notice otherwise of this so-called 'cricket diplomacy'. He had refused to set a date for a visit in response to Prime Minister Junejo's pressing invitation to visit Islamabad, and went to the length of removing from his post a Foreign Secretary who told the Press that the prime minister was planning to visit Pakistan. Despite this rather discouraging background, the cabinet decided that Rajiv should be invited to extend his SAARC visit by a day or two to allow for discussions on bilateral issues.

The third, equally pressing, question that faced the Benazir government was that of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for standby credit to Pakistan's depleted kitty. On this particular matter the country had little choice, and at the very first cabinet meeting Benazir decided that we should come to terms with the Fund quickly so that such of its conditions as were acceptable could be implemented while the PPP's popular standing was still high.

All told, Benazir had made a vigorous start and shown the right instincts in political as well as administrative matters. In meetings of the cabinet she was firm, business-like, quick to take a point and to keep the discussion on track. The message sent out by the new government was that the Zia era was over and the slate would be wiped clean of the legal iniquities and constitutional trespasses of that period; that the administrative machinery would again function efficiently, impartially, and according to the rules; government would be mindful of citizens' rights and would strengthen civil society. Altogether, the feeling one had in those initial meetings of the cabinet was that, after a long period of arbitrariness and personal rule, here was an elected government that was not showing the inconstancy, opportunism, and self-interest of which democratic

[25] In 1987 Rajiv Gandhi made a brief stop in Peshawar on the way to Jelalabad in Afghanistan to attend the funeral of the Pathan leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, but he made it a point not to seek a meeting with Ziaul Haq.

governments in Pakistan are often accused, but was moving forward in the right direction and in the right way.

But then, somehow, somewhere, not too far along the way, the endeavor seemed to lose momentum, and bit by bit, things began to fall into the usual grooves and meanders of the Pakistani style of governance. Ministers were besieged in their homes from morning to night by petitioners, job-hunters, favor-seekers, and all and sundry. It was the same inside the National Assembly, where every minister's seat was a little beehive with members and backbenchers hovering around and going back and forth with little chits of paper. (In this hubbub, Sahibzada Yaqub and I, with no favors to dispense except when someone required a visa, usually sat in serene isolation.) How the ministers ever got their official work done is a mystery, but in any case policy took a back seat to attending to the importunities of relatives, friends, and constituents. When ministers found that the rules were irksome, they also discovered that it was possible to twist the letter of the law. There was no great shortage of civil servants willing to oblige in this regard—and to share and share alike.

Some of this is intrinsic to democratic government and happens all over the world to a lesser or greater degree. It is a price worth paying because the same thing happens under a dictatorship and with greater impunity. In a democratic order, the ill effects can be kept within limits by devolving decision-making to the local level and by a civil service that runs things strictly by the rules and is itself governed by the rules. In Pakistan, things began moving in the opposite direction almost from the start. The prevailing ethos was illustrated by the complaint of one backbencher at a meeting of the PPP parliamentary group. He had gone personally with a petition to the Secretary of a Federal ministry, fully expecting the sort of affirmative response reserved for members of the ruling party, but to his astonishment and chagrin, the official, after reading the petition, marked it down to his office 'for disposal according to the rules'. 'Why should I go personally to submit a petition if it is to be dealt with according to the rules!' exclaimed the member in genuine indignation.

Another factor was specific to the Benazir government and the circumstances in which it had come to power and had to operate. The Opposition's fight against it was an all-out fight with no holds barred. The Opposition, in this case, was not just the people sitting on the Opposition benches in the parliament, but the Presidency, the Punjab government, and all the phalanxes of the establishment, open and occult—GHQ and the intelligence agencies, the bureaucracy, and so forth. Combative by nature, Benazir hit back blow for blow—not always on target—and answered back word for word, at which she did better. But the end result was that a drift set in and the government was no longer moving along its chosen path but was forced to the barricades. Survival became its first priority and, in the end, the principal pre-occupation.

8
A Mixed Welcome

The Establishment had only accepted Benazir as prime minister on sufferance. General Aslam Beg did not always miss the opportunity of drawing attention to his kingmaker role: 'Had *we* made such conditions (as the Afghan in government was being asked to fulfill), *Mohtarma*[26] would not be prime minister today, was one of his refrains. On another occasion, reacting testily to a press comment that GHQ had hijacked foreign policy from the Foreign ministry, he said, 'We have bigger things to hijack, if we want to.'

Like her father, Benazir aroused passionate devotion and intense animosity. For her followers and fans, she was a princess dethroned, the tyrannized and persecuted daughter of a martyr, and a beacon of hope for the dispossessed. For others, it was as if this young woman who had suffered as few others, in the killing of a father and in her own person, was not the victim and the wronged one, but—arrogant, haughty, headstrong, power-hungry—was herself the wrong-doer and usurper. Typical of an indictment of this kind was a critique of her book *Daughter of the East* that appeared, oddly enough, in the leftist-liberal *New York Review of Books*.[27] The writer affirmed that there are two Benazirs—belonging respectively to Larkana and Radcliffe[28]—and the two were in conflict. In what way? The first one was feudal and arrogant and was launched on a crusade to avenge her father and return the Bhuttos to power. The other one was not to be taken seriously, for hers was a life of sports cars and May Balls and being squired around town by dashing young men. The latter Benazir did talk about democracy and human rights, and indeed had left her glamorous deb life to risk torture or death. She had spent five years under appalling conditions in Zia's jails and now her return had given hope to millions. But the writer felt that the truth must be told however churlish it might seem to do so. And what was the truth? Benazir had been in office barely a few weeks when the article appeared, so there was not much on which criticism could be based. The critic turned accordingly to her long dead father and criticized his economic policies, his stance on Bangladesh, his ambiguity on democracy. And he criticized the daughter for not criticizing the dead father and for speaking of him as a martyr.

Still short of material against Benazir, he turned to her brother Shah Nawaz, who died of poisoning in mysterious circumstances, and affirmed that he 'was playing dangerous

[26] *Mohtarma* (respected lady), with its overtones of age and social conservatism, was chosen by Benazir, herself as the appropriate way for her to be addressed.
[27] 'The Two Benazirs,' by S.A. Burrumma in *The New York Review of Books*, 2 March 1989.
[28] A Harvard college that was exclusively for girls at the time but has gone co-educational since.

and nasty games'. This *ex cathedra* statement was based on Shah Nawaz having said to Benazir, When you become Prime Minister, just remember you have a little brother who can help you if you give him a high post in Intelligence.'

What of Benazir herself? Grudgingly, the writer conceded that 'so far' she had done well; she had compromised, played it by the rules, kept her cool. This was not good enough, however. He turned to the method of rhetorical questions to cast doubt on Benazir's capacity to do the right thing in the long run:

> The Radcliffe Benazir realizes that polities must be divested of mythology to be lawful and subject to reason. Does the Larkana Benazir know this? Are the Radcliffe Benazir's political ideals perhaps part of the Larkana Benazir's myth? Are her politics, and by extension, the politics of Pakistan, to be a matter of compromise, regular elections, and the same rules applying to alt? Or will it remain a contest between Good and Evil, between Great Leaders and reactionary, obscurantist, wicked, uneducated thugs?

Even in a country where politics is a no-holds barred power contest, the verbal assault against Benazir throughout her twenty-month tenure was exceptional for its rancor, virulence, and tenacity, for the lack of tolerance, and the absence even of ordinary civility. Thus, when she went to Lahore as prime minister, the Punjab Chief Minister did not think fit to go to the airport to receive her. Her critics whether these were Opposition politicians or sniffy society matrons—kept up a ceaseless barrage of criticism and gossip, finding fault with and carping about everything and anything that Benazir did or failed to do. Talking to me on one occasion, a senior politician waxed indignant on the corruption of the Benazir government. When I demurred that previous regimes had also been accused of corruption, he exclaimed, 'Ah, but it has never been *this* bad. One used to measure corruption in lakhs, now it goes into crores![29] As if the reprehensible thing was not that officials and politicians were on the take, but that they were charging too much!

[29] Lakh = 100,000; care = 10,000,000

9
Dirty Tricks

Nor was it a matter just of faultfinding and carping. The intrigues and machinations that had been deployed to prevent Benazir from coming to power did not cease with the swearing-in and the compromises that had been imposed upon her; on the contrary, the 'dirty tricks' multiplied in variety and ingenuity, with the aim of impeding and obstructing the exercise of such power as she had been left with.

First there was the gender question. There had been mutterings among the theocrats that a woman could not rule an Islamic country. When the National Assembly gave her a vote of confidence, one member belonging to a religious party walked out in protest. In her speech of thanks she reminded this conscientious objector that religious parties had actively supported and electioneered for Miss Fatima Jinnah's candidature against Ayub Khan in the 1964 elections. In Lahore, a group of *maulanas* issued a *fatwa* that a woman could not be head of government in an Islamic country. Nobody took any notice. But a more sinister piece of mischief was afoot. Shortly after she took over, we learnt that the Jurisprudence Committee of the Islamic Conference that was then meeting in Kuwait was about to take up the question of whether under Islamic law a woman could be head of government or state in an Islamic country. A Saudi Shaikh had already issued a *fatwa* citing a Sunnah (a saying or practice of the Prophet (PBITH)) to the effect that a nation that entrusted the charge of its affairs to a woman would not prosper. The move had manifestly been instigated with Benazir in mind and with the object of embarrassing her and providing ammunition for the Opposition's campaign against her. It had been initiated before the Pakistani elections in anticipation of Benazir being elected. The Foreign Ministry had been aware of the move for some time but had remained strangely passive. Not a single telegram had gone out to our envoys in the member countries to try to preempt a discussion that would constitute a gross interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, or to find out who had put this item on the agenda and why. To stop it now, at the eleventh hour, was not going to be easy, for diplomatic procedures are slow and deliberate: the ambassadors concerned have to be summoned to the Ministry, our own envoys alerted, foreign ministries solicited to obtain a decision from the ministries directly concerned, instructions sent out to the Committee delegates, and so on. Fortunately, as it happened, Arab League foreign ministers were meeting in Geneva right then. We were able to reach some of them on the phone and by evening the move had been scotched.

To me there seemed something calculated about the Ministry's lackadaisical attitude in this affair. I could not help noting the contrast with the high-powered effort that had been deployed ten years earlier to prevent the Islamic Conference from offering condolences to the family on Bhutto's execution. It was an example of the spider's web-

like network of opposition and obstruction with which the Benazir government had to contend. You brushed away one strand and there was always another getting into the hair.

An incident that was more serious—because it cost lives—occurred over Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*. On 13 February 1989, on Benazir's flight back at the conclusion of her state visit to China, news was received that there had been an outbreak of violence in Islamabad, provoked by a protest demonstration against the book. Now, Rushdie's book had come out more than a year earlier. It had been banned for blasphemy by the Pakistan government, which also made diplomatic representations in London and Washington. There was not much else that the government could do in the matter.

The demonstration was organized by, among others, Maulana Kausar Niazi, who had spent much of his political career leaving and rejoining and leaving the PPP. At that point he was out of it and had his own axe to grind against Benazir. Students were bussed over from religious schools to participate in the demo. The main event, as usual, was to be the storming of the US Cultural Center, the burning of books, and so forth. It was a cynical operation aimed patently at blotting Benazir's copybook in America, for CNN (the ubiquitous American TV news service) was expected to be around and flash to American audiences news shots of the American flag being burnt and US missions attacked in Benazir's Pakistan. That is exactly how things did turn out. Police opened fire and killed five of the demonstrators.

The operation was also meant to embarrass Benazir personally, for it so happened that Rushdie's publishers were the same people who had brought out her autobiography, *Daughter of the East*. One of the demands made by the demonstrators was that *all* books by that publisher, on whatever subject and by whomsoever written, should be banned in Pakistan!

However, the one thing that emerged at the end of the affair was the fact that, despite the highly inflammatory nature of the occasion and five deaths, the movement died down in a few days. The whole affair thus tended to disprove the conventional wisdom on the street power that the religious lobby can mobilize.

Another event that may also have been targeted at Benazir's American lobby was a meeting of the Pakistan World Affairs Council in June 1989 at which a statement was adopted calling on Pakistan to go nuclear. The timing of the meeting, on the eve of Benazir's first official visit to Washington, could justify a suspicion that the statement was intended to make things awkward for her during the visit. One person who seemed to think that that was the idea was US Ambassador Oakley, for, talking to me about it and mentioning the names of some participants, he made a snaky motion with his hand.

There were other 'happenings' and incidents of a similar nature, some relatively minor, some less so. On a visit to Lahore in December 1988, an explosive device was discovered in a flowerpot just outside the VIP room during Benazir's reception at the airport. She thought it was a plot to create panic in the welcoming crowds, provoke retaliatory violence by the PPP rank and file, and force the army to intervene to control the situation.

As soon as it was known that Rajiv Gandhi was to come to Islamabad for the SAARC summit, Azad Kashmir President Abdul Qayyum announced that he would organize a protest demonstration against India's occupation of Kashmir. Of course he denied that there was any intention to embarrass the government, but surely he realized that some violent incident would almost inevitably occur or would he created during the demonstration, compelling the police to use force. On the other hand, if permission to hold the protest was denied, the government could be damned for being 'soft' on India. In the end, a compromise was reached whereby permission was given for staging the demonstration but on condition that it was held in Rawalpindi, far away from where Rajiv would be staying in Islamabad.

In February, the case of the people of Bihari origin in Bangladesh (also known by the pre-emptive description of 'stranded Pakistanis' whom no one had remembered during all of Ziaul Haq's eleven years, suddenly came to the fore again. At the 1947 partition of British India, these Urdu-speaking people had moved, for one reason or another, into what was then East Pakistan. During the Pakistan army action against the Bangladesh movement, some of them had joined semi-official militias and taken part in the action. Their position in Bangladesh was anomalous and unenviable and many of them wanted to join their fellow-Urdu speakers in West Pakistan. A large number had been allowed to do so by the Zulfikar Bhutto government. Over the years since then, many had trickled into Pakistan in the clandestine traffic that goes on across the Indian borders. Meanwhile, the question had become highly politicized on account of the fear among the Sindhi people that the Bihari influx into Sindh, where most of them were likely to gravitate, would upset the demographic balance in the province. They suspected that it was precisely with that end in view that the MQM had made the 'repatriation' of Biharis to Pakistan one of its major objectives.

In a gesture towards its new-found MQM allies and as a humanitarian matter, Benazir's government gave permission to 496 Biharis who had close family members in Pakistan to join them. Immediately a rumor spread in Sindh—or was spread—that 'the Biharis are coming'. Sindhi mobs went on a rampage in Karachi streets, smashing cars, burning buses, stoning buildings. The government took fright and quickly withdrew the permission. Smelling game, some opposition stalwarts announced that they would go to Dhaka to see for themselves the plight of the Biharis and meet their representatives. The unspoken but transparent pose of this belated humanitarian concern was to create a

rift between the PPP and its MQM allies. Fortunately, the MQM reacted soberly and refused to make an issue of the matter, which then subsided.

During Benazir's official visit to the United Kingdom in July 1989, a demonstration was organized at the entrance to her hotel and went on for a couple of days. The vociferating participants were probably hired hands many of them did not look like Pakistanis but seemed to be Afghans, Somalis, and Bengalis. But they were carrying placards declaring: 'We don't want a play-girl prime minister.'

During the same visit a 'bug' was found in Benazir's suite by the British security people. Who had installed it? Our own security people who had done a sweep of the place? Or the Brits who had 'discovered' it in order to score a Brownie point (and perhaps leave behind another one)? Opinion on the subject was divided in the entourage.

In the ultimate analysis, none of these tricks and happenings achieved anything beyond exacerbating the atmosphere of mistrust and ill-feeling that prevailed in the country and confirming the public perception of politics as a 'dirty business'.

10
Hit and Miss

The PPP had its own little bag of tricks and played these to equally small effect. But since the PPP was running the government, the outcome was not simply frustration but damage to the credibility of its effectiveness as a government, not to mention the ideas of clean government and the rule of law.

The primary target was Mian Nawaz Sharif whom the PPP, partly through its own default, had allowed to get away with forming the Punjab government. Now it was decided to go for him *ex post facto* and dislodge him by the traditional method of buying off some of his party members. A no-confidence motion against him was moved in the Punjab Assembly after a good bit of fanfare and on the basis of some half-baked deals. But the Mian was good at this game himself and had more patronage, money, and menace at his disposal. He was able to line up 162 votes out of 250—an even better score than when he took office. Benazir ended up with a setback that she need not have gone looking for.

A puerile attempt was made to transfer the Punjab Chief Secretary, an official who was a Nawaz Sharif loyalist, unabashedly partisan, and fully involved in politics (not unlike many others, let it be said). It was thought that by replacing him with someone chosen by the central government, Nawaz Sharifs mischief-making capacity could be curbed to some extent. The Chief Minister simply refused to let his Chief Secretary go and, after a lot of fuming and fretting, the whole exercise ended in another reverse for Benazir.

Then it was thought that Nawaz Sharif and family could be had by attacking the source of their power—the Ittefaq industrial empire. The Ittefaq Foundry and Iron Works had grown from small beginnings into one of the largest and most diversified industrial enterprises of the country. The growth had come not only by dint of hard work and business acumen, but thanks also to official patronage, tax-breaks, and special favors received by the enterprise at a time when the one who granted the favors was the then provincial Finance Minister, none other than Mian Nawaz Sharif himself. Charges of tax evasion, loan default, and a variety of other misdemeanors could be, and were, brought against the Ittefaq group. At one time as many as 160 cases of one sort or another were pending against Nawaz Sharif and other Opposition figures. (None of them, however, were brought to a decision and, in keeping with the country's legal precedents, they vanished into thin air when there was a change of government). At the same time, Pakistan Railways suddenly discovered that it could spare no wagons for transporting imported scrap iron from Karachi port to the Sharif foundries in Lahore. As a consequence, at one point their production came to a virtual standstill (with, no doubt, a corresponding setback to the national product).

Earlier, Benazir had suspended for further review the official sanctions issued by her predecessor for the setting up of sugar mills. Undoubtedly, the permits had been issued to the former prime minister's political favorites, as has always been the case and as would be the case again In fact, the main reason why Benazir suspended the permits was that she wanted to transfer them to PPP favorites. Fair enough, given the prevailing political culture, but, as one of her advisers said to me, at least those projects whose sponsors had already incurred expenditure, ordered machinery, started work, ought to have been allowed to go on in order to avoid losses, not only to the individuals concerned but to the national economy.

A major bone of contention between the government and the Opposition and between the central government and the non-PPP provincial governments was the distribution of federal funds under the 'Peoples' Development Programme'. This was a rural works programme which, besides the substantive benefits it would bring to the countryside in terms of roads, drainage and irrigation channels, schools, etc., was also a major source of patronage and thereby, of building up a vote bank for the next elections. Provincial governments that were in the hands of the Opposition parties, that is Balochistan and the Punjab, asked that the funds for their provinces be placed at their disposal to be spent on projects approved by them. A reasonable request on the face of it, but there could be little doubt that the funds would be used to undermine the PPP position in these provinces. Benazir's position was simple: money is power, she said, and she was going to use federal funds to strengthen the federal government (in short, the PPP); let the provinces raise their own funds for any programmes they wanted to plan. The upshot was that not one of the projects in the two opposition provinces of the Punjab and Balochistan got off the ground.

Benazir's relations with President Ghulam Ishaq were from the start tense and prickly. This was hardly surprising. He had been the right-hand man of the man who had executed her father and persecuted her, yet he was also the man with whom she was compelled to share executive power and who enjoyed all the powers that Ziaul Haq's constitutional amendment had invested in the presidency including the power to send her government packing. He sometimes exceeded even these large and ill-defined powers, for instance, by refusing to sign ordinances and bills sent up by the prime minister. She fumed, 'He says he wants to apply his mind but he has no business applying his mind to anything recommended by the prime minister. He is bound to go by her advice.' Ghulam Ishaq's last word was, 'Impeach me, if you wish!' for he knew that she did not have the majority required to do so. He also had, at that stage, the support of the bureaucracy and the army and the establishment as a whole in trying to circumscribe and restrict the PPP government's authority and freedom of action.

The Pakistan establishment is a diffuse entity not as clearly identifiable as had been, in its time, Britain's 'old school tie' network or the 'WASP' (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant)

meritocracy of the American East Coast. But in the vacuum of Pakistan's civil society, it has been and remains a very decisive and powerful factor in the country's politics and administration. It is a popular political cliché in Pakistan to blame everything on feudalism and the 'feudals'. That feudalism has kept the country back there is little doubt, but to describe the establishment as 'feudal' would be an over-simplification. The big landowners have money and political power, but a lot of the power now comes from marriage alliances with the civil, and military plutocracy which has been in the driver's seat for much of the time. Over the years, the civil and military bureaucracy has undergone changes in its class composition, outlook, and orientation. Increasingly risen from the ranks, the officer class is now not only more 'indigenous' in dress and lifestyles but also more involved in politics, less concerned with administrative norms and proprieties and more with self-advancement and building fortunes. These were individuals who had enjoyed power and perks during Zia's extra-constitutional system. They felt threatened and cheated by the return of the Bhuttos.

Of course, one should not look on the establishment as a single-minded monolith with a clear-cut purpose and outlook. Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Aslam Beg, its two main pillars at the time, did not see eye to eye on everything, nor were the army chief and the head of the intelligence service always on the same wave-length; the various intelligence agencies had their own particular agendas and sometimes worked at cross purposes, The Pakistan establishment could perhaps best be understood as a tendency, a certain outlook—socially conservative and protective of vested interests, favorable to authoritarian methods, contemptuous of the idea of democracy, and impatient with the restraints of the rule of law.

Unlike her father, who knew how it worked and what made it tick, Benazir was an outsider, neither part nor product of the system.[30] Benazir's own attitude and outlook were not very clear at the beginning, but in time and with the exercise of authority, one discovered that her thinking seemed to be evolving in the same direction, and in the end it was, in some respects, not very different from that of the establishment. One had expected Benazir, after her tribulations at the and of an authoritarian regime and arbitrary laws, and with her Oxford and Harvard background, to be liberal in word and deed and in 'the marrow of her bones'. The authorities had hounded her; the laws and regulations had worked against her. She had seen the whole apparatus of state arrayed against her and fully at the service of whoever had his hands on the levers of power. The conclusion she seems to have drawn was not that institutions need to be strengthened and the system reformed, but that the system and its cogs could be harnessed, when one had the power, to attain whatever ends one desired.

[30] *The Nation* Lahore, 2 October 1987—'Bhuttos: father & daughter' by Mushahid Hussain, who also noted that she was 'keen to enter the "system" and to be accepted by the establishment'.

In the situation that she faced, Benazir had two choices. Having accepted as president a man of Ghulam Ishaq Khan's views, antecedents, and influence, she could try to make the best of it by coming to some sort of working arrangement with him. Of course, it was far from certain that he was disposed to come to a reasonable understanding with Benazir. They came from very divergent backgrounds and belonged to different generations. Human nature being what it is, sometimes the person hardest to forgive is he who has suffered the most at one's hands. Though he was not personally and directly answerable for her father's execution or the persecutions she had suffered, Ghulam Ishaq Khan was among the closest advisers of the man who was, and he could hardly disown a part of the collective responsibility for these events. Nor did he ever try to do so by word or gesture, or give any sign that he felt the slightest rapport with Benazir personally. The shades of the Ziaul Haq years certainly darkened relations between president and prime minister.

But all said and done, the source of Ghulam Ishaq's legitimacy came from his being the president under the constitution. Pragmatically, the shrewd course for Benazir might well have been to swallow her chagrin and try to work with him within the limits that Ziaul Haq's constitution allowed and what the Soviets would have called 'the objective correlation of forces'. And to bide her time.

Instead, Benazir tried to get back at him, sometimes in rather petty ways, as when she reduced his sumptuary allowance on the grounds that he had less entertaining to do now since there was a prime minister to share the burden. This simply added an element of personal spite to their relations without affecting his powers in any way. And when she thought she would redefine their respective spheres of authority, she chose to do so by making an issue of the tenure of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Admiral Sizohey. Under the Zia constitution, the power to appoint the Service chiefs had been taken away from the prime minister and vested in the president. When the Admiral's three-year term was due to expire, Ghulam Ishaq decided to extend it for a further period. Benazir, on the other hand, decided that he should be retired on the day that his existing term expired. One of her legal advisers had taken the line that the president might appoint the military chiefs but the prime minister was the one who retired them. Even granting for argument's sake the convoluted logic of this approach, the president would still be the one appointing the successor to whomever the prime minister chose to retire. In terms of power politics, the equation between them would not have changed in the latter's favor. Thus the whole exercise was not only egregious but also pointless. For the post in question was without operational responsibilities, belonged to a service of secondary importance in Pakistan's armed forces, and the man himself, Admiral Sirohey, was not made of the stuff from which ambition and power is wrought. As it was, the attempt came to grief, and Benazir came out of it looking inept and powerless.

Then a difference arose over who should appoint judges of the higher courts, and the question had to be taken to the Supreme Court for decision. In this first of several 'Judges' cases' that mark Pakistan's most recent constitutional vagaries, she was on strong ground in asserting that the prime minister's advice in the matter was binding on the president. It was assumed all round that she would carry the day in the Supreme Court but curiously, suddenly, and without explanation of any sort, she decided not to pursue the case and the question was left in limbo to resurface another day.[31]

The other option open to her was to take a stand on principle, show firmness in asserting her constitutional powers, and build up her own political strength, even if, for the moment, she did not have the required parliamentary majority and even if it meant that she would have to take on the establishment. I myself thought that, in the long run, this course was the best one to take, even if it was the most difficult one. In one discussion with me on the subject, she reacted sharply, 'We have to proceed slowly, gradually. If I were to rush things, neither I nor any of you would be in the government!'

This sort of pragmatism led her to vacillate between the two options, seeking room for maneuver in the letter of the law and its loopholes, and in the bye-lanes and back-alleys of traditional Pakistani politics, hoping to attain her ends by a process of attrition or through policies of preemption and ingratiation. But in this domain Benazir and her wise men and whiz-kids were babes in the woods compared to the wily old man on the hill and his loyal liegemen.

While admitting that much of the mischief was initiated by Benazir's opponents, and that the PPP was more often on the receiving end, Benazir's tit-for-tat and impulsive responses had the effect of leaving the initiative in the hands of the adversary. Petty bickering between the government and the IJI gradually took the place of politics and of policy. Political contention and rancor reached a stage where the IJI declined to join the government in celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Muslim League's so-called

[31] In October 1988, Acting President Ghulam Ishaq Khan appointed eleven judges of superior courts on his own and without consulting the prime minister. (This was just before the elections, when government was being run by a caretaker cabinet without a prime minister). A Lahore advocate filed a writ petition in the Lahore High Court challenging the procedure but his petition was dismissed *in limine* with an observation to the effect that the prime minister's recommendation was not necessary for such appointments. The Federal government did nothing about the matter until October 1989, when Ghulam Ishaq Khan proposed, on the strength of the judgment, to make appointments in his discretion to the Supreme and other Courts. The Benazir government then decided to appeal to the Supreme Court against the Lahore judgment. Ghulam Ishaq Khan for his part declared his intention to make a reference to the Supreme Court on the matter. However, one of the lawyers whom he asked to act on his behalf, S.M. Zafar, declined to do so because he felt that the presidents obligation under the constitution to act in accordance with the prime minister's advice was riot open to question. Clearly, the real question at issue was, more than an interpretation of a constitutional provision, two conflicting views of the parameters of the parliamentary form of government. However, for reasons unknown, Benazir found it expedient to accept a compromise whereby the impugned paragraph of the Lahore High Court's decision was struck down and the issue was Left to be interpreted by experts of different dispositions according to their own convenience.

'Pakistan Resolution' and refused to allow the government the use of Lahore's *Minar-e-Pakistan* (Pakistan tower) for the purpose.

The IJI did not have much to lose, but the PPP government paid for this state of affairs in terms of effectiveness and political credibility. Much time and energy were spent on reacting to opposition schemes and stratagems that could have been, and needed to be, put to better use in getting on with the PPP's own agenda. It distracted the government from giving its entire attention to the two central and interwoven problems of the country that should have been its top priorities—getting social and economic development under way, and reestablishing the rule of law.

11
The Administration

An article that appeared in *The New York Times*[32] in 1986, two years before the elections, stated that Benazir's quest for power seemed to lack an over-arching purpose other than the vindication of her father's name. *The Times*' assessment was superficial in two ways. Firstly, while the PPP paid verbal homage to the elder Bhutto, for instance in prefixing the title *Shaheed* (martyr) to his name, the truth is that Benazir had moved the People's Party away from the ideological, demagogic orientation that he had given to it. Her father's example and precepts influenced not her policies but her political style and speech. Once in a while she would let fall aphorisms that carried an echo of the father's cynicism: 'Most of the time the art of politics is to make people suspect each other,' or, 'Information is power. He who knows everything can do anything!' But coming from her, this sort of Machiavellianism was not without a touch of undergraduate showing-off.

The New York Times' criticism was inappropriate for another reason, and this has to do with the question of ideology. It is a moot point whether a democratic polity is compatible with having an 'over-arching' purpose or ideology. The People's Party that Zulfikar Bhutto had founded was not a truly ideological party; it was a populist party that was driven as much by the impulses and ambition of its founder as by the faith of its ideologues, The PPP's Founding Declaration was couched in the language of the radical-chic of the time:

> Capital has enslaved labour. The rich get richer. Exploited classes are not represented in political parties. A great nation is a passive onlooker of its own downfall. The exploited working classes wait to participate in the fight against the capitalist. New hopes have arisen. The time has come. Etc., etc.

Bhutto probably went along more with the resonance of the language than with the thinking behind it, which was contributed by the PPP's revolutionaries-in-residence, former ambassador J. A. Rahim and Dr. Mubashir Hasan (both of whom were, in due course, sent their ways). But now Benazir had decided to shed the PPP's ideological idiom and trappings and opted for a pragmatic approach. Her government, therefore, would be judged not for its adherence to ideological postulates but by its performance.

What the PPP intended to do was set out in the Parry's manifesto. Of course, election manifestos are not to be taken literally. They tend to be wordy and hi-falutin' documents, drawn up by the party's ideologues and wordsmiths, and they manage to

[32] Steven Weisman: 'The Return of Benazir Bhutto—Struggle in Pakistan', *Sunday Magazine*, 21 September 1986.

find room for everybody's pet notion and panacea. The PPP's 1988 manifesto was no exception. It set forth impeccable principles and admirable aims. Thus, the PPP would seek broad political consensus with maximum participation of all groups and individuals in order to give lasting stability to civilian rule; exercise financial discipline and increase spending on social sectors; it would maintain a well-trained, adequately equipped, and highly motivated defence force, and do so without taking away resources from other vital national needs. All this was easier said than done.

In practical terms, the new democratic government's first job was a negative one: clearing up the constitutional and administrative debris left behind by a decade of absolutist rule and restoring democratic institutions and the rule of law. The process had in fact already started under Junejo. It continued under Benazir, though one cannot say that it made steady progress.

Benazir's major handicap in this regard was the fact that she did not have the two-thirds majority needed to repeal the constitutional amendment introduced by Ziaul Haq whereby the president, besides a variety of other powers, was invested with the power to dismiss, at will, federal and provincial governments and elected Assemblies. A sword of Damocles thus hung over the head of every government, never mind that it had the support of the majority in the House. On the face of it, it was in the interests of all political parties to take away this arbitrary power from the president's hands, but the Opposition refused to support any such move for the very good reason that, with an ally in the presidency (or so it seemed to him at the time), Nawaz Sharif looked to him to smooth his way to power by removing Benazir. This is what eventually happened but, in due course, Nawaz Sharif did not measure up to the president's high standards either, and then it was Benazir's turn, sitting in the Opposition benches, to look to the Eighth Amendment lever to reopen the doors for her return (and in the fullness of time that too came to pass, and then yet again...)

Benazir's attitude to the administration was ambivalent. The PPP ministers and Benazir herself did not, generally speaking, know the administrative system or the individuals who operated it. They only knew that it had worked against them and that men in senior positions had been among Zia's close advisers and the primary beneficiaries of his regime. There was a tendency in the PPP government to treat the civil servants as an undifferentiated mass of adversaries who must be constantly watched for any mischief they might be getting up to and swiftly brought to heel if caught at any. On one occasion, when Benazir asked me to take action against a mid-level official for some minor mishap, one of her close advisers urged that in order to have effect, the punishment must be swift and condign even if the person concerned was himself not at fault!

Right at the start, Rao Rashid, the Adviser on Establishment Affairs, called a meeting of federal secretaries at which he first set the tone by giving them a good dressing down

for their past collaboration with a military dictator and then called for their sincere co-operation with the new democratic government. Macho new ministers, lacking governmental experience and self-confidence but eager to assert their new-found authority, shunted secretaries and other officials from one post to another or side-lined them as Officers on Special Duty—a well-understood euphemism in Pakistan for being put on the shelf. This had the opposite of the desired effect for, in their nervousness and disaffection, the civil servants turned for reassurance to the gran'-daddy of them all, the old man on the hill, Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

What Benazir really would have liked best was, like newly-elected American presidents, to be able to bring in her own set of people into all key posts. There is merit as such in the idea of an exchange of personnel between the government and the private sector, but Pakistan does not have a large enough reserve of trained and experienced manpower for the purpose. Anyway, what Benazir was looking for was people she knew personally or felt she could trust in positions of responsibility. So she brought in a set of advisers at various levels in the major ministries and departments—not all of whom she knew personally; some were 'friends of friends'. But these people themselves were outsiders to the system and lacked experience and therefore were not of any great help to her. Many of them had their eyes on the main chance and were, at least in part, responsible for earning for the government its reputation for cronyism and carpet bagging. Pakistan has a civil service that is (in theory) apolitical and supposed to get on with its job regardless of which political party is in power. Over the years, the theory had lost a lot of its force. What was needed, for the country and for Benazir's own security and performance, was to take the bureaucracy out of politics and restore it to its impartial and non-partisan role.

Benazir was also under pressure from party men and was herself so inclined—to grant favors to 'our own people' to compensate them for their sacrifice and suffering during the Zia years. Not all had suffered equally and some may not have suffered at all. One aspirant who came to see me about getting into the Foreign Service mentioned among his qualifications that he had been in tail under the Zia regime. When I asked him which jail he had been sent to, he stammered in confusion and then fell back on metaphor: 'Sir the whole country was a jail under Zia!' The fact, however, was that thousands of Zia opponents had suffered jail and punishment, lost their jobs, or been denied employment opportunity, and their claims for redress could not be brushed aside. Moreover, there was widespread unemployment, particularly among young people coming out of school and college. Wherever Benazir went, multitudes gathered waving applications for jobs as peons, clerks, postmen, whatever. She sent these applications down to various ministries, where they got lost forever—or so it seemed to her. At one cabinet meeting she blew up over the fact that, of the 106 job applications she had sent down to various ministries not one had received a positive response and, she accused the civil service of willful obstructionism. Cabinet Secretary Hassan Zaheer explained recruitment rules and regulations, the need to advertise, and so forth. One

cabinet minister cut him short to assert, 'The prime minister's orders surely override all rules and regulations.' Even Benazir felt that was going too far and said, We are not saying that unqualified persons should be appointed.' She said that she was not simply trying to find jobs for her party-men and explained, 'Wherever I go, throngs of job-seekers crowd around me, cling to my car and push applications through the window! How would I know whether they belong to the PPP or what? Surely, she concluded, such persons must be given preference over those who are just sitting at home and answering newspaper ads! The logic of this was not altogether evident, but the cabinet decided that advertising for jobs was to be stopped for the present and a 'Placement Bureau' set up to find jobs for the unemployed. It was a typically *ad hoc* way of dealing with one of the basic social and economic problems facing the country. Moreover, it was vitiated by a preoccupation with patronage and, inevitably, by the bureaucratic attitudes developed soon enough by the personnel of the Placement Bureau—unmitigated even by the pro-forma respect for rules and regulations shown by the regular bureaucracy.

This *ad hoc* approach was in evidence when the cabinet took up the next item: the employment of Pakistanis overseas. It had before it a good paper from the Labour Ministry on the subject of overseas employment for Pakistani manpower, with a number of practical suggestions on how to find new avenues of employment, and on methods of recruitment and training, labour welfare, and so forth. However, few cabinet members seemed to have read the paper and none of these suggestions and proposals received any attention. The cabinet's attention was focused exclusively on one single item the recruitment of 1,000 seasonal workers, (water-carriers, sweepers, and other such personnel) required for the Haj season in Mecca. Each cabinet member and every PPP member of the national and provincial Assembly was to receive a quota of twenty for his respective nominees.

A shortcoming of a more basic nature in Benazir's administration was the absence of a clear-cut programme of action. Unlike her father, Benazir had not come to power with plans, projects, and reforms ready to be put into effect. Her government focused on undoing the martial law regime's iniquities but was not ready with measures of its own, Thus Zia's ban on trade union activity was removed at once, but a long while passed before the formulation of a new labor policy was taken in hand. The PPP manifesto was a shopping list hastily cobbled together, without priorities or a timetable for implementing any of the proposals. A year earlier the PPP had, at budget time, produced an '*Awami*' budget, an alternative Peoples' budget, the purpose of which was to embarrass the Junejo government by proposing measures that they could not, or would not, adopt (nor, for that matter, would the PPP when its turn came—for example, a tax on agricultural incomes).

Nevertheless, between them the two documents contained a number of proposals that were essential and feasible,[33] though they needed a good bit of homework before they could begin to be implemented. A practical way to proceed would have been to draw up a 'must' list of proposals that the government could and would execute in, say, the first three years of its mandate. I wrote to Benazir from Washington just after the election results came in: 'Nothing would strengthen the PPP government and counter the inevitable anti-PPP machinations so much as actually carrying out even some few of the many things the party's manifesto has promised.' I suggested that a cabinet committee might be set up to draw up such a programme with the assistance of senior civil servants and eminent non-official persons (for instance, Akhtar Hameed Khan[34] on social policy).

At times it seemed that Benazir was not clear in her own mind about exactly what could or should be done. Thus, whereas the manifesto declared that entrepreneurs were to be free to set up any kind of industry anywhere they wished without having to obtain government sanction and prior approval, during one cabinet discussion on deregulating the economy, she said, 'Well, we can't let businessmen just set up whatever industry they like and wherever they like!'

So proposals came to the cabinet in bits and pieces, many of them put up by the bureaucracy and carried over from the Zia regime and carrying its stamp. Thus the Law Ministry sent up a summary to the cabinet proposing several measures that would, it suggested, counter and defuse the agitation against a woman being prime minister. Among these was one for adopting a *Salat* (prayer) ordinance which would authorize policemen, or some similar law-enforcers, to use force, if necessary, to make all Muslims offer their five daily prayers. The suggestion was contrary both to fundamental rights and to the letter and spirit of Islam, which clearly says that there must be no compulsion in the matter of religion.[35] The measure would have ended not in producing better Muslims but, like the *Hudood* ordinance,[36] in furnishing another source of income to venal officials. However instead of turning down the proposal on these grounds, in a straightforward way, Benazir decided that its consideration was to be 'deferred'.

[33] Inter alia, easy loans to rural youth to start a trade or improve farming; an Engineer Corps constituted by unemployed engineers; crop insurance; commissions to prepare urban transport and low-income housing plans.

[34] Akhtar Hameed Khan resigned from a senior position in the civil service in the early sixties and devoted himself to social work, first on rural development in the then East Pakistan and later in the Frontier province. His work in upgrading living conditions in Karachi's slum areas has received international recognition.

[35] La ikrah fi-din—there must be no compulsion in religion.

[36] Hudood are extreme punishments prescribed by the Sharia—amputations, floggings, lapidation, etc. Despite the Ordinance, none of these punishments has ever been carried out in Pakistan, but the law relating to adultery is routinely abused by men to harass and persecute their wives and by the police—who have the power to book a person under Sharia or the less draconian ordinary laws—to add to their take-home income.

At another cabinet meeting the agenda included a proposal seeking approval for a Zia-era paper on what particular sports women may be 'allowed' to play and which ones they may not (for example, polo, though in Mughal miniatures women are depicted playing the game), and especially what they may wear. This was to be a modified full track suit which, on the one hand, must appear 'decent', and on the other, not be such as to put our athletes at too great a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* their competitors. Nobody questioned under what law or regulation, passed under which provision of a constitution that guaranteed equal rights for men and women, could the government prohibit a section of the population from playing this game or that or what would be the punishment for a woman who failed to perform the sartorial-athletic feats prescribed in the proposal. The plain answer would have been that it was none of the state's business, but of course no one gave it. Instead, the cabinet spent half a morning playing to the obscurantist gallery on this non-issue.

Benazir's approach was not to take such issues head on but to diffuse them by playing along. Such circumspection did not fool the Establishment old guard but they got the message: Benazir was going to be defensive in dealing with such matters. Ziaul Haq's legatees were riot only perched on the topmost levels of the establishment but entrenched in its nooks and crannies, and they tried in various ways to promote their agenda.

The one field in which Benazir's record was certainly noteworthy, and has not been bettered, is that of human rights. Briefing a meeting of Pakistani diplomatic envoys in early 1989, Law Minister Iftikhar Gilani declared that hitherto the principle of governance in Pakistan had been, 'You don't agree with me, so you must go to jail.' Now he could, rightly and with justifiable pride, claim that, for the first time in Pakistan's history, there was not one prisoner of conscience in the country.

Benazir also devoted much attention to a subject that has ranked low on the country's political priorities—the harsh and discriminatory treatment reserved for women, not so much under Pakistan's laws as on account of its male-chauvinist social customs. Some of these constraints and repressive measures had been given legal sanction under Ziaul Haq in the name of Islamization. She could do nothing to repeal the *Hudood* ordinance, which weighs particularly heavily on women, because she did not have the majority required to undo the Eighth Amendment of which it was a part, but her government took a number of practical and innovative measures to improve the condition of women.

I was struck by her down-to-earth approach to the subject. 'It is all very well to pass laws on women's rights,' she said in the course of a discussion on the subject,

> but how many women in the rural areas and among the poorer classes can even understand what such laws mean or are in a position to claim the rights that they

confer? What our government has to do is to improve the economic condition of women, create jobs for women, and give them economic independence. The rest will follow!

She gave her own example: 'If I had not had money of my own, how could I have carried on the struggle against Zia's tyranny for all these years?'

Among the measures taken by her government were the opening of a women's bank and police stations for women, as well as recruitment of women to the police force and fixing a 5 percent quota for them in other government services. In her second term a number of women were appointed as High Court judges and to important civil service positions.

Benazir's attitude on Press freedom was less clear-cut. At the first cabinet meeting she had asked that Pakistan Radio and TV should be cautioned against giving too much exposure to the prime minister's image. This sounded almost too good to be true. It was. Both government-owned organizations continued as fulsomely as always—both before and since—to regale their audiences to satiety with the comings and goings of their rulers—and received no further guidance to the contrary. Moreover, both remained firmly under the government's control and direction, even though the PPP manifesto had promised to give them complete autonomy. The pledge to wind up the government-owned National Press Trust was similarly ignored and it remained in the business of publishing newspapers and journals that echoed and applauded the government's policies and actions—and that were read by few and convinced even fewer.

However, it is only fair to note that in Benazir's time the Press was able to consolidate and expand the freedom it had already begun to enjoy under Junejo. The criticism and carping directed by the Press at everything she did and said was unrelenting and naturally she chafed at it, but she put up with it. I sat in on one session she had with a group of senior columnists in which she was grilled and cross-examined about her government's policies and actions and her husband's alleged money-making. I was impressed—and so was even the most censorious of her press critics—with her coolness in dealing with the most blunt questions and her refusal to be provoked or irritated.

12
Islamism

I mentioned Benazir's defensiveness in matters Islamic. This attitude extended to almost the entire social sphere. Perhaps she would have been less defensive if she had not been what she was—a young woman of striking good looks and personality, educated in the best Western institutions, coming from an elite background, and projecting a modem image.

In Pakistan's conservative circles the word 'modern' has a suspect connotation, raising the spectre of blue jeans and long hair and pop music, of young women free and easy in their ways and liable to make marriages of their own choice. After Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed Benazir's government in 1990, Pakistan TV held the now customary parade of aggrieved citizens and indignant patriots to denounce the misdeeds and failings of the dismissed government. One university professor came on to assert that what Benazir had been up to was nothing less than furthering an insidious Western plot to turn Pakistan into a 'modern' country.

This attitude of mind was reflected in the *obiter dicta* of the Supreme Court's judgment in the celebrated Saima Waheed case. This young lady, having been refused her father's permission to marry her English-language tutor, ran away from home to marry him. The father took the matter to court and, after long and tortuous litigation, the Supreme Court decided on the girl's appeal that, being an adult, she could marry whom she pleased. However, one of the Justices while going along with the decision, made it clear that he was doing so against his better judgment because of what he considered a lacuna in the existing law.

In his view, the very idea of a young girl venturing out in search of a spouse ('husband-shopping' in his phrase) was alien to the teachings of Islam. He suggested that the parliament should forthwith adopt a new law that would make 'suchlike immoral relationships and secret marriages' a penal offence and empower the courts to annul any marriage that a parent, or in the absence of parents, a brother, or in the absence of a brother, any meter — an uncle, cousin, nephew, or any near relative—considered unsuitable in any way.

In a 53-page separate opinion, the Justice cited a variety of *imams* and scholars from the eleventh century backward to make the following recommendations:

a) Females should ordinarily stay indoors;

b) If a woman needs to go outdoors she must extend her veil over her face, must cover her chest, and should not indulge in any act which could attract any man;

c) If it becomes unavoidable for her to talk to a man, then she should not talk in a mild and pliable tone and further, if someone needs to ask her for something, then she should talk to the man from behind a screen or a veil.

As for Benazir, certainly no one could accuse her of speaking in 'a mild and pliable tone's but she set out, it would seem, to fulfill as many of the other conditions as she could. She wanted, apparently, to create a counter-persona to what *The New York Review of Books* had called the Harvard-Oxford Benazir—she of the May Balls, fast cars, and handsome escorts. Thus her insistence, reiterated beyond all measure and need, that her marriage had been arranged the pains she took to keep her head-scarf on; the shrinking away from shaking hands. As to this last item of conservative etiquette, she was not content to keep her own hands to herself: one morning cabinet ministers, senators, Assembly members, government servants, and other such privileged persons found on their desks a circular from the Cabinet Division of the Interior Ministry pointing out that their wives, or themselves if they happened to be women, should emulate the worthy example set by the prime minister and refrain from shaking hands with persons of the opposite sex.

I personally thought she was wasting her effort. It was my view that even if she muffled herself up head to foot in a *burqa*[37] she would not win over the religious lobby to her side—and even if they were won over, it would not make any great difference to her political strength for their own lack of strength at the polls had been repeatedly demonstrated. But it was a sort of protective coloring that she adopted for melding into a hostile environment and she has gone on covering her head and twirling her worry beads regardless.

The make-believe spread to other parts of the government. Within days of its being sworn in, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Khan Bahadur Khan, was going around declaring that the PPP would work for the Islamization of society and that the ulema would be coopted to help with the work. He declared, moreover, that the PPP was wedded to introducing *shariat* law in the country. All this would have been well and good if the PPP had come on the scene with the declared aim of carrying on the mission of Ziaul Haq,[38] or if it was seriously and sincerely meant, but it was simply a clumsy

[37] A tent like covering that conceals the woman's entire person from head to foot and has a grill-like aperture at eye level to allow her to see where she is going.

[38] Ziaul Haq's own Islamism was ambiguous—in part the result of his conservative background, in part political tactics. In an interview in *Time* magazine of 11 March 1985, he explained himself: must eventually, without hysteria, Islamize society, but in an acceptable manner. The manner that is not acceptable is fundamentalism. The manner that is acceptable is evolutionary. Those who were turned out in this (1985) election were fundamentalists.'

and transparent attempt to neutralize what was believed to be the great hold of the mullah on the peoples' hearts and minds—a notion that has little basis in reality, as the latest election results have shown once again.

A survey by a Karachi monthly, The *Herald*, in its annual issue for 1997, had some surprises for the conventional wisdom concerning what Pakistanis feel about various religious and social issues. Seventy-two percent believed that the religious parties had done more harm than good and 74 percent were for banning sectarian parties. Sixty-seven percent opposed the Taliban type of restrictions on women, and 87 percent did not want the police to be checking papers of couples in public places (a money-making racket for the police that had originated in the Ziaul Haq regime's '*chadar* and *chardivari*'[39] phase). Sixty-three percent thought a woman's testimony should have the same weight as a man's in courts of law and 59 percent favored equal right of divorce for women. On the other hand, 87 percent favored arranged marriages and 65 percent would not allow their daughters to choose their own husbands. Seventy-five percent were against satellite TV but 71 percent favored family planning.

In the way of Islamization, one of Ziaul Haq's most-consequential acts had been the setting up of a theocratic court with the power to strike down any existing law that it held to be contrary to the letter or spirit of Islam. This power made the Federal Shariat court (along with the appellate Supreme Court) a supra-legislative body more sovereign than the elected legislature, more powerful than any *Khalifa* (caliph) ever was, subject to no restraint except its own reading of the meaning and intent of the Koran on any given point, and against whose decision there could be no appeal for there is no higher authority than the Supreme Court. Nobody in the government seemed to be much troubled by these implications and Law Minister Iftikhar Gilani's warnings went unheeded.

In. September 1989, the Shariat court declared that the 1972 Land Reforms Act was un-Islamic and set a date by which actions taken under the Act must be undone. Thus after the deadline set by the court, all the land that had been distributed to tenants and farmers would be taken away from them and given back to the original landowners. There were the makings of a social upheaval here, except that the 1972 Act had perhaps not been too faithfully and zealously enforced. The landowners in the Party and the cabinet were only too delighted at the decision and quietly proceeded, when the time came, to reclaim the ceded land. In another, earlier decision, the Shariat court had delayed the completion of the vitally needed Hub power project, and caused an increase in its costs, by ruling that payment of any and every kind of interest—including interest on credits extended by foreign banks for this project would be contrary to Islam.[40]

[39] 'Veil and four walls'—the conservative credo regarding a woman's dress and place.

[40] Some ten years later, the Supreme Court dismissing the government's appeal. upheld this decision and has given the government a short deadline for instituting an interest-free economy.

13
Rajiv Gandhi

The first of Benazir's foreign-policy ventures was also connected with the realm of religion. This was the performance of the *umra*[41] pilgrimage at Mecca. Ziaul Haq had started the practice of regular visits to Saudi Arabia for the purpose, accompanied usually by a large retinue, flying in the presidential plane and at the tax-payer's cost, of course. Since then, such expense-account piety has acquired the status virtually of a constitutional obligation for Pakistani leaders and officials. Benazir continued the practice and was a frequent pilgrim at the holy sites in Saudi Arabia. But on this first occasion, in the month following her swearing in, besides wishing to offer thanks to God for the end of her travails, she also had on her mind the domestic scene, where the religious lobby was providing propaganda ammunition to her political opponents. It was important in that context that on her first visit to Saudi Arabia as prime minister she should be able to have a meeting with the Saudi monarch. This was not as simple a matter as one might think. A Saudi Shaikh had proclaimed that a woman could not head the government in an Islamic country, and the Saudi government had refrained from sending congratulations on her election as prime minister. Moreover, it was the king's policy not to receive visiting VIPs when they came to Saudi Arabia for *umra* or Haj, be they prime ministers, presidents, or kings, for the evident reason that, if he did, he would have little time left to do anything else. However, after a bit of diplomatic footwork and through the good offices of Yasser Arafat, King Fahd was persuaded to make an exception on this occasion. The meeting in Jeddah, at which Foreign Minister Yaqub and I were also present, was not particularly significant in its substance. For Benazir, its significance lay in the fact that the ruler of the most Islamist of Islamic states and the Keeper of the Holy Shrines had formally received her as the head of the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. It was a little like the Holy Roman Emperor going to Rome to receive the Pope's blessings and it put Benazir definitely one up on those who were agitating that a woman could not be head of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The government's major challenges in the field of foreign policy lay in Afghanistan and the perennially troubled relations with India. In regard to both questions, as mentioned above, Benazir faced deadlines when she was sworn in. In the case of Afghanistan, it was the middle of February 1989, a little over two months away, by which time the withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country was to be completed. Different people looked forward to the event with different emotions and expectations—euphoria,

[41] *Umra* comprises some of the rites of the annual Haj pilgrimage but can be performed at any time of the year and as often as a person may wish Unlike the Haj, *umra* is not among Islam's religious obligations but is considered highly meritorious.

triumph, trepidation, incertitude—depending on which side of the political divide they stood and what was their assessment of the post-Soviet scene in that war-torn country. The one objective fact, the undeniable reality, was that there was no agreement on who would replace the defeated side, who would run the country, once the foreign occupiers were gone and the regime that their presence had propped up, was brought down.

As for India, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi himself was now all too keen to come to Pakistan in order to meet Pakistanis charismatic young prime minister and readily agreed to the proposal that a bilateral visit should be dovetailed with his visit for the MARC summit. The PPP was committed to mending fences with India and making a new start towards settling the disputes between the two countries. The Indian prime minister's visit, coming so soon after Benazir's advent, seemed to provide just the occasion to set the ball rolling. The Foreign Office and other ministries and departments concerned were asked to dust up any proposals and draft agreements that could be concluded, or moved forward, on the occasion, in order to give the process a start. The Americans told us that Rajiv had also instructed the Indian External Affairs Ministry and others concerned to look into their files for any agreements that could be reached.

On 24 December, Rajiv sent a special envoy, Ronan Sen, to Islamabad to discuss arrangements for his visit and with an invitation to Benazir to visit India. Benazir accepted the invitation, but it was decided that announcement of the visit should be deferred until after Rajiv's discussions in Islamabad. Going over the agenda with me, Ronan Sen said that during his visit Rajiv was ready to sign an agreement between the two countries to refrain from attacking each other's nuclear installations and he believed it would set the tone for the relaxation of tensions.

This agreement was signed, but in the end not much else came of this visit or another one that he paid on his own initiative on his way back from the Belgrade Non-Aligned Summit some months later, nor of the official-level meetings on various issues that took place subsequently.

On the personal level, the visit got off to a good start. Rajiv had brought along his family—wife Sonia and their two teenage children, Priyanka and Rahul. The first evening in Islamabad, they dined *en familie* with Benazir, husband Asif, and Nusrat Bhutto. Benazir told me that at this first meeting they had kept off heavy politics and got on quite well. The next evening, Yaqub and I joined Benazir and Rajiv for their bilateral discussions.

Rajiv spoke of the significant improvement that was taking place in India's relations with the three great powers: cooperation in science and technology with the USA, a qualitative improvement in the long-standing relations with the Soviet Union, and of particular interest to as was what he said about the outcome of his recent visit to Beijing. A working group had been set up to deal with the border question, and regular

consultations were to take place between their foreign ministers and foreign secretaries. On the nuclear issue, Rajiv said that China remained a worry for India but less so than before; he did not believe that India was a Chinese target. Trade between the two countries was to be boosted, and a Joint Ministerial Committee would promote co-operation in science and technology.

Rajiv's Beijing visit had obviously not made any headway on the long-standing border dispute between the two countries, but there was no doubt that Sine-Indian relations were warming up. The process had been given conspicuous and visible form during the Indian prime minister's visit by the very cordial and exceptionally long handshake bestowed upon him by Deng Xiaoping. For some time we had been watching with interest—not unmixed with concern—the gradual thawing of the long chill between India and China. What we now heard from Rajiv about the matter did not allay that concern, but neither did it add to it. China, with the upper hand on the border issue, was adjusting to the evolving international situation, as were most other countries. Pakistan too would need to make some adjustments, though at that juncture our room for maneuver was restricted by the involvement in Afghanistan. Benazir said to Rajiv Gandhi that Pakistan was not worried by the Sine-Indian warming-up. She believed that it could be a factor for peace in the region. The nuclear issue figured prominently in the talks. At Benazir's behest, I summed up for the Indian prime minister Pakistan's position on the nuclear issue and outlined the various proposals Pakistan had made to prevent nuclear proliferation in the region.[42] He was fully familiar with our position, and responded by referring to India's 'Action Plan' on nuclear disarmament with which we, for our part, were equally familiar.

The nuclear issue is global, he affirmed, and it is difficult to reduce it to the regional level. One could not speak of a nuclear weapons-free zone in South Asia, he affirmed, when the Indian Ocean was already nuclearized. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was unfair and discriminatory, and the nuclear powers had not fulfilled their part of the bargain. Rajiv said that there were now three sets of countries in the nuclear context: in the first place, the five recognized nuclear powers; next, the NPT signatories; and finally, the threshold powers—countries that had demonstrated nuclear capability, whether or not they were signatories of the NPT. These different groups of countries, he said, could hardly be lumped together and treated in the same way while considering the question of nuclear proliferation. Rajiv proposed that a new Non-Proliferation Treaty ought to be worked out to take into account the realities on the ground, when the term of the current NPT expired in 1995.

[42] These were: a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone in South Asia; mutual acceptance by India and Pakistan of international or reciprocal inspection; joint accession by both to the Non-Proliferation Treaty or acceptance of full-scope safeguards; a South Asian declaration renouncing the acquisition and building of nuclear weapons; a bilateral India-Pakistan nuclear test-ban treaty; a bilateral declaration to abjure nuclear weapons.

I said that Pakistan had no difficulty with a great deal of the Indian prime minister's exposition of the subject. There were elements of India's Action Plan on which Pakistan and India could indeed take a common stand. Pakistan's quarrel was not with the global approach to disarmament, but, we asked, meanwhile what? Despite the fact that the nuclear issue was one of the most critical ones between them, Pakistan and India had never sat down for a serious face-to-face discussion on the subject. Both countries were under sustained pressure on the nuclear issue and a fundamental change was taking place in world politics as a whole. It was time for our two countries to review their established positions, instead of merely restating our conflicting views for public consumption.

Rajiv did not argue with this position and, to our surprise, said, 'Yes, I agree that we *should* talk about the nuclear issue.' Then he added, 'But we shall have to begin in an "invisible" manner.' He went on to suggest the names of a couple of Indian officials who could, on the quiet, meet somewhere with Pakistani counterparts 'to do a bit of brain-storming' on the whole issue and try to thresh out mutual differences.

Rajiv was equally amenable on two other key issues that were raised by Benazir: the reduction and control of conventional arms, and re-opening the stalled negotiations on Siachen. This latter issue, it was agreed, should be taken up at the next regular meeting of the defence secretaries and a serious effort made to reach a settlement. Also on the table was a proposed agreement between the two countries not to attack each other's nuclear targets. The draft of this agreement had already been negotiated by officials and was ready for signature.

It was not much and, as stated above, in the end it came to nothing, but at the time it appeared that an interesting new phase in India-Pakistan relations might be opening, even though the pot-holes and speed-breakers that had always made the road such a bumpy one had not been cleared.

Rajiv said that we must break the present mind-set and open up our countries to their peoples. They shared a common cultural heritage, and it would be well to exchange programmes via the electronic media, improve press coverage beyond political issues, and remove travel impediments such as visa restrictions.

Benazir responded by pointing out that the two countries also shared the 'poverty heritage'. She said that the arms race between them was eating up resources that should be spent on developing their economies, and the leaders must find peaceful ways of solving disputes, of which Kashmir was the oldest and the most difficult. To this Rajiv made no reply, but when he came back again some months later for a brief stop-over, he took the usual hard line on the subject in a joint press conference with Benazir: 'Kashmir is an integral part of India,'

Thus, despite the evident personal sympathy between the two young leaders, they were back at the old chicken-or-egg conundrum of the India-Pakistan relationship—good relations first or a Kashmir settlement first.

The undercurrent of mistrust that runs between the two countries surfaced at the MARC summit over the matter of an apparent *coup* staged in the Maldives by alleged Tamil mercenaries a short while before the conference opened. A group of armed men had suddenly erupted in Male, the Maldives capital, shot their way through the town to the presidential palace, and lobbed shells on it. The panic-stricken Maldives president had immediately turned for help to India and very promptly—altogether too promptly, according to our intelligence people—an Indian commando unit had reached the scene and put an end to the attempted *coup*, or whatever it was. In Pakistan the tendency was to see it as a drama staged by the Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) itself, in order to gain for India a military foothold on the island. Besides the suspicious alacrity with which the Indians had arrived on the scene—as if they had been ready and waiting to go — our intelligence pointed to the fact that the mercenaries had done little damage despite the heavy firing in which they had indulged all day long and, most significantly, that they had omitted to cut off the island's communications, thus allowing the President to contact Delhi for help. Nor had the 'rebels' spelled out their demands or declared what exactly was the objective of their exercise.

In Islamabad for the SAARC summit, the Maldives president, realizing Pakistan's touchiness about India's role, was apologetic to Benazir: We should have liked to call on Pakistan for help but we have no ambassador in Islamabad.' Now he was asking that the Conference's communiqué should condemn the *coup* attempt. Pakistan saw in this an oblique approval of India's intervention and stressed the need for 'prior consultation' before any military action of this sort was taken in the region a thing that was difficult to do, the Maldivian president said, while armed mercenaries were advancing on his palace, firing away with everything they had.

At the 'Retreat' (an informal, hair-down meeting among the Heads of State) the problem, not of the *coup*, but of how to draft a reference to it in the Joint Communiqué, took up much of the time of the participants. It was odd to see presidents, prime ministers, and kings exercising their minds and drafting skills, just like a lot of embassy secretaries, to the task of drawing up the conference's joint communiqué.

The conference itself, Benazir's first major international venture as prime minister, presented a challenge to her poise and self-possession. She inaugurated the summit with a speech written up in the Foreign Office. It was the usual humdrum stuff and it sounded even more so as she read out the text. Benazir is an effective extempore speaker, but when reading out a prepared text, she tends to sound like a schoolmistress taking a class in adult literacy. She was followed by the other Heads of State, four of whom thought fit to offer condolences for the death of Ziaul Haq. We were all taken by

surprise; Benazir was put out of countenance, for there was no diplomatic or proper way in which she could react and she had to sit through these adulatory references to the man who had taken her father's life and hounded and persecuted her family and herself. For Pakistanis in general, celebrating the return of democracy, these encomiums were grating and quite out of place. The Heads of State were not unaware of these factors, but each had his own reason for remembering the Pakistani dictator. President Jayawardene of Sri Lanka, who started the ball rolling had apparently developed a strong personal relationship with Ziaul Haq. His foreign minister, Abdul Hamid, told me afterwards that the condolence was not in the text given to Jayawardene by the Foreign Ministry and that the president had added it on his own. General Irshad went quite overboard about Zia as the 'founding father' of SAARC and a great benefactor of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh strongman perhaps meant all this quite sincerely, but in saying it at that time and place he may have been trying to get his own back on Benazir for having acknowledged a congratulatory message from Hasina Wapd, Shaikh Mujibur Rahman's daughter and a leader of the opposition to Irshad's dictatorial regime.

Benazir kept her cool but, in her closing address, she tried to even the score by paying tributes to Shaikh Mujibur Rahman and Sirimavo Bandaranaike as among the great past leaders of South Asia. She spoke of all that the people of Pakistan and the country as a whole had suffered in a decade of military dictatorship. By way of example she recalled the case of a man who was acquitted of a murder charge by a civil court, whereupon Ziaul Haq sent the case back for retrial by a special military court which promptly condemned him to death. He was hanged without further ado or appeal.

After the meeting she got it off her chest. Speaking to Yaqub and I she said, Zia was a tyrant and dictator and a man who was guilty of high treason under the constitution. The government and people of Pakistan don't care much for tributes being paid to such a man! She wanted the Foreign Office to make sure that there would not be any more of this stuff. Yaqub, who had been the same tyrant's right-hand man and confidant for many years, looking as blank a possible, said that he would speak on the subject to the delegations.

14
Siachen

The cease-fire line in Kashmir established by the 1949 agreement was demarcated by the United Nations Observers up to a point indicated on the maps as NJ 9842. Local commanders of the two sides were supposed to take care of the rest but, in practice, no one had given much thought to drawing the line through the treeless, snow-covered wastes that stretched north of that point up to the Karakoram Pass into Chinese territory. The reason was that the area in question had not been the scene of any fighting and most of it was uninhabited and inaccessible. In practice, the area west of a notional line from point NJ 9842 to the Karakoram Pass and the Pass itself were treated as lying within Pakistan's control and administration. India had acknowledged it as such in its communications. Foreign mountaineering expeditions wishing to visit the area had sought permission to do so from Pakistan. In the small villages and settlements at the lower reaches, the connections were all with Pakistan—roads, trade, currency, local administration.

The Siachen glacier, 72 km long and 2 to 3 kin wide, lies in this region and has no strategic significance as such. It had not occurred to anyone, at least not on the Pakistan side, that this place of steep ridges, precipitous ravines, and vertiginous heights rising to 20,000 feet and more, with temperatures falling to 8 below zero Fahrenheit even in midsummer and 50 below in winter, could be a field of bank.

But the Indians seem to have had an eye on it—why they did was not clear then or now. The idea that they wanted to threaten Pakistan's link to China via the Karakoram Highway is a bit fanciful for at its nearest point, Siachen is some 120 km away from the highway, through extremely rugged and barely passable country. More likely, India wanted to establish on the ground the alignment of the Line of Control[43] (LoC) through this region and cut Pakistan-controlled territory from the Chinese boundary. But to what end? At any rate, when Indian probes and patrols in the region did not meet effective resistance, the place seemed to be there for the taking and they just moved in.

At a press conference he held on 13 September 1989, the Chief of Army Staff, General Aslam Beg, declared that Pakistan first learnt of the presence of Indian troops in the Siachen area from reports in the Indian media as early as 1982. The Pakistani commander in the area was asked to do a recce but could not carry out the mission for lack of the necessary equipment. The following year a company of Pakistan's Special Service Group (SSG) managed to clear the area of the Indian intrusion, but the place

[43] The phrase 'line of control' (LoC) was used, at India's insistence, in the Simla Agreement and has been used since then instead of 'cease-fire line'.

was left unoccupied during the winter months and come spring, the Indians beat the Pakistanis to it by landing heliborne troops. The Chief of Army Staff explained that the Indians were at the time better prepared and equipped for snow warfare, thanks to the expeditions India had been sending to the Antarctic over a number of years. Whatever the reason, instead of taking prompt military steps to counter the Indian action, Pakistan was content at that stage to lodge protest notes with India's External Affairs Ministry and the UN Observers.

Now, Pakistan was better placed in the region, with shorter and easier lines of communication than India's. India was obliged to maintain a larger force at the top, at a far higher cost in men and *materiel* than Pakistan, but the fact remained that India had the higher and more commanding positions. This was not a matter of greater military prowess but simply that they got there first a key factor at these altitudes.

Siachen is a place where the troops fight the elements and terrain more often than the enemy. There is a ten to one ratio of casualties due to nature and war.

In the summer of 1987, Pakistani troops launched an attempt to dislodge the Indians. A six-day battle was fought at above 20,000 ft and it left many dead. The frozen bodies of our men could not be returned for burial until a year later. Pakistan managed to contain the Indians but could not expel them from the heights they occupied.

For evident reasons, Ziaul Haq had not allowed the Siachen events to be publicized. They had been brought to public attention in Pakistan when Benazir launched her campaign against Ziaul Haq on her return to the country in 1986. She castigated the military regime for losing Pakistan-held territory and Zia himself for negligence and faint-heartedness in not even having gone to the area to encourage the *jawans* fighting in extreme conditions.

In an attempt to put a brave face on what was indeed a grievous intelligence and military failure, Ziaul Haq responded with a flippant remark: the place is just a pile of rocks where not even a blade of grass can grow. But General Beg revealed in his press conference that, as a result of the Indian incursion, Pakistan had lost 70 km of common border with China and three important passes to the Saltoro glacier region.

Following the Benazir-Rajiv meeting, talks between the Defence Secretaries, which had been given up as a bad job some time previously, recommenced. The mood at the working level was by no means euphoric but, in the initial meetings, our man, Ijlal Zaidi, detected signs of flexibility in India's stance. On the other hand, General Aslam Beg was skeptical: 'There is no instance of India voluntarily withdrawing its troops. In Siachen it will be the same.' The General's skepticism was shared by the Press in Pakistan and indeed, in four rounds of talks, the two Defence Secretaries appeared to be going round in circles and not getting anywhere.

Meanwhile, in May 1989, there was a sudden outbreak of heavy fighting in the area. Was someone trying to put a spoke in the wheels of the Siachen talks? If so, who—our side or theirs? At GHQ we were informed that the whole thing had actually started three weeks earlier when, upon observing certain suspicious movements by the Indian forces, Pakistani troops had made a pre-emptive move and flown a party of seventeen men by helicopter to a point at 21,000 ft. This position was now under heavy artillery fire from the Indians. One senior officer talked in a gingerly way about 'readjusting our position to improve the logistics,' but Aslam Beg put matters more plainly: the alternatives were to pull back or let the occupying party fight it out to the last man. Actually, lives were being lost mostly due to physical conditions—avalanches, accidental falls, pulmonary oedema (a high-altitude condition, in which the lungs fill with blood and the victim dies a horrible death, from suffocation).

Suddenly, in the fifth round of talks held in Rawalpindi in the middle of June, it was announced that the Defence Secretaries had reached an agreement to seek a

> comprehensive settlement based on the redeployment of forces in order to reduce the chances of conflict, avoidance of the use of force, and the determination of future positions on the ground so as to conform to the Simla Agreement[44] and to ensure durable peace in the Siachen area.

In a meeting with the Press at the Islamabad airport on 17 June, Foreign Secretary Humayun Khan, who was seeing off his Indian counterpart, Shilendra Singh, declared that the Defence Secretaries' agreement was a 'significant advance' in that all troops in the area were to be relocated to the positions held by them at the time of the Simla Agreement. He added that army authorities of the two sides would be meeting soon to determine the positions held by each at that point of time. Shilendra Singh, asked by the Press for his comment, said, 'I fully endorse everything my friend and colleague Humayun Khan has said,' and added some words about a future of friendship and co-operation.

The Defence Secretaries' agreement had referred in a rather roundabout way to 'redeployment' of troops; what was to happen in actual fact was a withdrawal largely of Indian troops, for it was they who had advanced beyond the Simla positions since 1982. When news of the Humayun-Shilendra airport comments broke in the Indian Press, the expected ruckus erupted. Charges of a sell-out of India's sacred territory, etc., flew thick and fast. One had thought that the Indian side would have anticipated all this and known how to deal with it. The talks had been going on for months and agreement had only been reached in the fifth round of a long and tedious negotiation.

[44] On the Line of Control (LoC) established at Simla, the agreement says, 'Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from threat or use of force in violation of this line.

The day after the Indian delegation left, Ronan Sen called me on the phone from New Delhi and said: Awfully sorry, there had been a flap in the Press and they would have to soft pedal the whole thing for a while. The Indian Press was accusing the government of agreeing to a retreat and the government was denying that anything of the sort was going to happen. In fact, one Indian spokesman went rather farther than that and asserted that there was to be no pullback of troops to the old Simla positions but only a redeployment to avoid confrontation. There was, of course, the awkwardness of Foreign Secretary Shilendra Singh's enthusiastic and quite unequivocal endorsement of the Pakistan Foreign Secretary's summing up of the agreement. The only thing they could do was to brazen it out: reports of what the Indian Foreign Secretary had said were 'confused and muddled'—in fact Mr. Singh was speaking only about his separate talks with the Pakistan Foreign Secretary on various other matters and not at all about the agreement on Siachen between the Defence Secretaries! We restated the facts, which seemed clear enough, but decided not to make an issue of it at that stage or try to score debating points, since Indian officials were assuring us *sotto voce* that everything would turn out all right in the end. As Benazir said to British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe in London a month later, 'We are keeping our fingers crossed and taking on trust the Indian Foreign Secretary's private assurances that everything is on track.'

The next step under the Rawalpindi agreement was for the military delegations of the two sides to 'determine future positions on the ground to conform to the Simla Agreement'. In Paris with Benazir for the bicentennial of the French Revolution, I had a long session on the subject with Ronan Sen, who had come there with Rajiv Gandhi. We had received a cable from the Foreign Office in the morning stating that in the military talks in New Delhi the Indian side wanted to talk about everything except the one thing they were required to do in terms of the Defence Secretaries' joint statement, which was to define the positions to which the two sides would redeploy in order to conform to the Simla positions and end confrontation. The Indians were insisting that first of all the positions that the troops were occupying at the present time should be defined and marked out on a map. Then arrangements had to be devised for monitoring the redeployment, for what would happen after the redeployment, and so forth. The demand that the sides should define and mark out their present positions was new and could have only one purpose—to establish these as the parameters for the negotiations on drawing an extension of the LoC, In fact, the Indians also broached the question of drawing the LoC beyond the point at which it now stops. Moreover they did not want to let everything go back to the *status quo ante* after the pullback, hence their reference to post-redeployment 'arrangements'

As for the LoC, Pakistan claimed that from its present defined position (NJ 9842), the line ran north-east to the Karakoram Pass Ca cartographic aggression' was Ronan Sen's comment) and India, that it should run due north, that is, up to the Chinese border in a ruler-straight line. This was a long-standing difference and was to be sorted out by a

working group in due course, and until a new LoC was drawn up in the sector, ground rules could be worked out to prevent future incidents or mischief. The purpose of the Defence Secretaries' agreement was to get everybody back to where they were before the trouble started, and to do so on a no-gain, no loss basis. Ronan muttered something about reaction time, that is, the rime it would take for one side to get back to where it now was in the event of the other side pulling a fast one after redeployment—in that respect the lie of the land gives Pakistan an advantage. Clearly, although Benazir and Rajiv had established a good personal rapport, it was not easy to overcome the chronic, almost congenital, mistrust that exists between the two countries. At any rate, now the Delhi talks had gone off at a tangent and everything was again left hanging in the air.

Benazir's spontaneous reaction on seeing the FO telegram was that India was going back on the clear intention and terms of the Defence Secretaries' Agreement. Ronan must have been perfectly aware of this himself for, in Islamabad six weeks earlier, he had been emphatic that when Rajiv came to Islamabad on 16 July, on his way back from Paris, he wanted to join Benazir in making an announcement about the Siachen settlement. So now Ronan was obliged to indulge in tricky talking, delving into history, making a long-winded story out of it, splitting hairs, going around in the same little circles.

I said to Ronan that the Defence Secretaries' agreement had to stand on its own terms—if either side tried to achieve larger purposes under its cover, then the agreement simply would not go through and the two sides would just go on sitting on the mountain tops and shooting it out. I told him to urge Rajiv to look at the situation in a new light and consider the fall-out from the breakdown of the very first major agreement the two countries had reached after his groundbreaking meeting with Benazir. There would be a tremendous sense of let-down in Pakistan—and not only in Pakistan but among our mutual friends, the United States and Britain and others who had been keyed up to expect an early and smooth implementation of the agreement. In Pakistan, the Opposition was in any case accusing the government of a sell-out, and it would now deride Benazir for having been taken for a ride by India.

When Rajiv Gandhi stopped over in Islamabad on 16 July, I missed the prime minister's banquet for him (gastronomically, no loss) and took Ronan Sen home for another session on Siachen. The discussion in my study went on into the small hours. The way Pakistan saw it, the Agreement was to be implemented in three stages: First, army types meet and define the 'future positions' to which the respective sides are to move; second, they draw up a schedule for the movement, setting out the positions from which the forces are to move on D-Day minus, say, 20, D-Day minus 19, minus 18, and so forth; the schedule will also provide for monitoring and other necessary arrangements to see that everything goes as agreed; in the third stage, the question of defining the LoC beyond point NJ 9842 is to be taken up. In the nature of things, this stage was likely to take more time and, if we took it up now and sought a 'comprehensive settlement', then

the purpose of the present exercise and of the Defence Secretaries' Agreement would be defeated.

Ronan demurred that there must be provision for what happened on D-Day plus 1, plus 2, etc.—in other words, who would be entitled do what, and refrain from doing what, in the vacated areas. This made explicit what he had implied in Paris—the Indians did not want to give up the gains they had made in moving forward in the area, the principal gain being that thereby India was able to negate Pakistan's notional control over the triangle of territory up to the Karakoram Pass. Our position was that, as regards administrative and other arrangements in the region, one would revert to the situation that obtained before the Siachen conflict erupted. But more than once Ronan said, 'We don't want to be told that civilians sold out on Siachen.' Obviously Rajiv had run into difficulties with his top brass, and must also have been thinking of the coming general elections.

As the night wore on, others joined us: Defence Secretary dalZaidi, and from the Foreign Ministry, Director-General Khalid Mahmud. Happy Minwala sauntered over, and then Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan dropped in for a while. On the Indian side, reinforcements came in the persons of High Commissioner Dixit and Aftab Seth, the Indian Prime Minister's Information man. It was becoming a party! Around midnight, after the Prime Minister's banquet and the genial after-dinner speeches were done, Benazir, and then Rajiv, phoned to ask how things were progressing. They were not.

The Indians had brought along the draft of a proposed joint statement. The bit on Siachen was naturally the sticking point and the traditional India-Pakistan diplomacy was in top gear, chopping and changing the draft and engaging in wordplay. We were no longer discussing the Siachen agreement but what to say about it. Minwalla, who hadn't played this game before, waxed enthusiastic when an occasional verbal compromise was reached. 'We're getting there! We're getting there!' In the end we did get a formulation that would pass muster for public relations, but it wasn't going to get the negotiations back on track. We succeeded in getting the Indians to drop any reference to 'present positions' of the troops at the glacier, and even to include a mention of the Kashmir problem. It was a verbal gerrymander for the purpose of future dialectics and media consumption. The Press, however, was not impressed. At the Indian High Commissioner's reception the next evening for Foreign Minister Narasimh.a Rao, some pressmen said to me that the statement emphasized nothing so much as the gulf between the two sides on major issues.

Before Rajiv left for Delhi, the two prime ministers and their advisers did make a last-minute stab at ironing out the differences but it was no use. Benazir, talking about the Siachen agreement, said, 'What bothers your people, I understand, is the monitoring mechanism after the redeployment has taken place?' 'Yes,' said Rajiv, and he was talking about the joint statement, 'that, but also just mentioning one thing and not

another gives an unbalanced picture and leads to difficulties.' He spoke of the importance of 'textual balance' and then added ruefully, 'If only your Foreign Secretary had not mentioned the 1972 positions in talking of redeployment, we would not be having all this trouble —a confirmation that he was having problems with the Opposition and, probably with the army.

As he was leaving at the end of the night-long meeting, Ronan had said to me, 'There is a military maxim: whoever gets to the top of the hill does not come down.' That proved to be India's last word on the subject. However, the ball was kept in play. The military met again, in Pindi then in Delhi, but made slight headway. After the Delhi meeting, High Commissioner Dixit came to see me with a new set of propositions:

> (a) As Pakistan wanted to maintain a military post south-east of K2,[45] India proposed to keep a parallel post across the glacier; alternatively, each side could maintain a civilian post on its side;
>
> (b) As for the glacier itself, whereas Pakistan would like the Indians to withdraw to the eastern flank, they would like to maintain a series of posts on its western side.

This was well and truly dialectics at their most dialectical! It presented India's extreme position as the Indian position and India's fallback position as the Pakistan position, and then proposed a compromise. The Pakistan post at the approach to K2 was not a military post but an outpost of the IHEC (International Himalayan Expeditions Centre) whose job was to assist mountain-climbing expeditions to the peak. Pakistan warned nobody at all on either flank of the glacier for, if the Indians were to maintain a series of posts on one side or the other, then what was the meaning of the 'redeployment' agreed upon by the Defence Secretaries?

Then Dixit said that he would like a word with me alone. When the note-takers left, he put his pipe aside and leant forward confidentially to say:

> What I have stated on Siachen was India's formal position. In fact, Rajiv Gandhi wants a settlement and that can be reached only at the political level. In case Prime Minister Benazir decided to visit Delhi on her way back from Kuala Lumpur, Rajiv would like to announce on that occasion 'the framework of an agreement', namely, the timetable of withdrawals and other steps.

Dixit went on to say that Rajiv fully realized Benazir's constraints and compulsions and the importance, if she came to Delhi, of there being something concrete to show for it. If agreement was reached at a political level, the Indian prime minister was fully prepared

[45] The world's second highest mountain, on Pakistan's side of the Line of Control in Kashmir.

to make it stick with his generals. Ronan had also been hinting at problems over Siachen with the military. That there should be problems was not surprising, for they had gone up those forbidding heights and shed their blood. Still, a suspicion remained in my mind that this might be another negotiating ploy.

The one thing that came through from Dixit's talk, and had been apparent also in other asides and references, was that Rajiv very much wanted Benazir to visit India and wanted it to happen soon. Some in the Indian opposition alleged that he was keen to get Benazir to visit before the coming general election in order to firm up his Muslim vote bank. This was evidently a partisan view. I believe he sincerely wanted the deadlock in relations between the two countries to be broken and felt that Benazir's visit might be the catalyst that would unblock them.

Rajiv had promised Benazir a welcome such as India had not given to any visitor in her history. Benazir, for her part, was equally keen to go, because the idea intrigued her and because one of the main foreign policy planks of the PPP was to improve relations with India. When I reported Dixit's conversation to her she said, 'So you think that in order to get me to go to Delhi, Rajiv will settle over Siachen?' I did not think so, but it was agreed that I would try to find out the following week at the Non-Aligned Summit in Belgrade, where she was not going but Rajiv Gandhi would be present.

At lunch in Belgrade, Ronan Sen and I went over the ground again. The military teams had met again and this time their discussions were not fruitless. They had come to terms on the lines of redeployment below Siachen; agreed that withdrawals would be completed in four months' time; agreed also on the need for some monitoring to ensure that neither side abused any temporary advantage it might gain during the withdrawal process. However, they had failed to clinch matters on account of the Indian insistence on maintaining a presence at the glacier even after the redeployment. These were new demands and they would nullify the effect of the redeployment. I asked Ronan to tell me more about the message from Rajiv Gandhi that Dixit had conveyed to me in Islamabad. What exactly did the Indian prime minister intend to announce in case Benazir paid a visit to India on her way back from Kuala Lumpur? Ronan did not address this question but instead elaborated on what India meant by a 'comprehensive settlement'. There must be proper monitoring arrangements—for instance, joint air patrols of the vacated zones; arrangements for administering the civilian settlements in the region; some principles must be established for extending the line of control beyond point NJ 9842—a specific mandate should be given to the working group that would define the line.

I said that we would be glad to hear India's ideas on the LoC extension but that one must bear in mind that this was disputed territory and that we could not proceed as if we were defining a definitive boundary between two distinct entities. As we saw it, the purpose of the exercise was to separate the forces in the region and prevent a recurrence

of the kind of incident that had occurred. Ronan said in reply that Pakistan was trying to have it both ways; if we wanted conformity to the Simla positions, then we should give up claiming that the LoC went up to the Karakoram Pass since no such line existed on any map. He said that what Pakistan was seeking essentially was a return to the mums quo ante. If the Indian government were to accept this, the military could turn round to ask, 'Why then did you send us up to the glacier where we have been fighting and dying for two years?' The military may well ask that, I said, but the alternative was that they would go on sitting on the mountain tops, fighting and dying, for God knows how many years more. The glacier area as such had no strategic significance and led nowhere. If the redeployment resulted in an agreement on where the LoC went for the rest of its length, that would be a distinct gain; even if it did not, nothing was to be gained by continuing to shoot it out on the mountains. To us it seemed that India saw the agreement as a way of retaining the gains of her Siachen adventure while reducing the cost in men and money of doing so.

All this made eminent good sense but I must say that Rajiv's envoy did not look very convinced. However, his mode was not argumentative or contentious. Rather, he spoke in an elliptical manner, leaving his sentences half-finished and often dropping his voice to a whisper, as if afraid of being overheard. He said he would report back to Delhi everything that I had said, consult all concerned, and get back to me at Islamabad. Then he asked, 'Now what about Benazir's visit to India. Do you have any dates in mind? Or is that matter now tied up with the Siachen issue?' I said I could not give him a definite response at that point but should be able to do so when he got back to me in Islamabad after his consultations concerning Siachen.

Rajiv must have been disappointed when Benazir was unable to visit India. So was Benazir herself. I think both leaders sincerely wished to make a break with the past and establish a relationship between the two countries and peoples that would be free of tension and futile acrimony. I too was disappointed. In my mind's eye I had visualized Benazir standing before the Red Fort with a vast concourse of people responding to her presence and to what she had to say. It would have been wonderful if the emotional surge and catharsis of the occasion had wiped away the burden of history and brought about a reconciliation between the two peoples. But alas, history and politics do not move to a desired denouement as in a movie script.

Soon thereafter, Siachen and the prospect of any improvement in relations were overtaken by a renewed upheaval in Kashmir of such intensity, extensiveness, and tenacity as had not been witnessed in the fifty years of India's occupation of the place.

15
The Armed Forces

In between these palavers, Benazir paid a visit to the troops at Siachen in order to show them that the government and the nation were behind them. I was in the party, which included a number of other cabinet members as well as Christina Lamb of the *Financial Times* (who was soon to fall foul of the government).

On 21 August, an Air Force C-130 took us to Skardu on the second attempt, the first one having been abandoned twenty-four hours earlier when we were halfway there, on account of bad weather en route. One could see the justification for not taking chances. The lumbering aircraft carefully nosed its way through narrow defiles, cruising at an altitude lower than the mountain tops, and then had to make a tight S-turn between the mountains that skirt the airport in order to align with the runway. From Skardu, Puma helicopters took us to the brigade HQ at Dansam, a 9,000 ft high plateau at the foot of towering cliffs that rise thousands of feet above the valley floor, A stream of glacier melt comes hurtling down a sheer rock face making a steady roar that fills the valley. From there on to Gyeri, a boulder-strewn basin surrounded by glaciers, and then we were ferried, two at a time in bubble-top helicopters, to Ali Barngsa a, the forward post at 17,000 ft above sea-level. I arrived to see Benazir signing the visitors' book. I wondered whether many people came visiting here. Ziaul Haq had not. Junejo had come but not up to this frontline post.

From Ali Brangsa one can see the Bilafond La saddle, on both sides of which were positions taken from us by the Indians. Looming straight up was a peak on top of which was the Quaid post, another position lost to the Indians. Our men had now established a position just below the top and were ensconced (if that is the right word for that perma-frosted perch) on a narrow ledge at 19,800 ft.

The men looked fit and cheerful and did not complain or tell stones of hardship, of which there was every sort the weather, the isolation, lack of recreation, absence of electricity and running water, indeed of any amenity—and living with the constant awareness of sudden death. Inevitably, most of them were from the Punjab, from little villages and towns in the hot, dusty plains, sent here to guard this alien and unreal land and give their lives for it. What made them do it?

Generals Imranullah and Ayaz (both comrades and family friends of Ziaul Haq), officers with good professional reputations and a clean-cut, straight-forward bearing, who gave us a briefing at Dansam, offered an answer. They told stories of the velour, fighting spirit, unmatched heroism, and military prowess of the officers and men under their command who volunteered for dangerous missions and threatened to resign if

denied the opportunity for martyrdom; of a two-man detail that put to flight an entire Indian platoon; of Lieutenant Naveed who, in order to pre-empt an advancing Indian column, volunteered to be lowered onto a 22,000 ft ridge in a basket slung from a helicopter spar. The lieutenant held his own against the Indians and succeeded in denying them the post, now known as the Naveed post.

The generals also spoke of the alleged faint-heartedness of the enemy—Indians fleeing at the mere sight of Pakistani troops, of asking for negotiations as soon as the going got tough, and so on. How was it then that they were occupying positions just as perilous as our men, some of which they had taken from us and which dominated our positions? Benazir asked General Ayaz why the Indians showed such a lack of combativeness. The general paused, hesitating a little perhaps because of Benazir's 'secular' image, then proffered an explanation: 'I don't know whether you would agree, Mohtarma, but it is a question of motivation. When our men fight they are fighting for Allah and Islam. They go forward with the cry of "*Allah-O-Akbar*" on their lips.' In one particular area, he told us by way of example, the two sides are separated by a distance of no more than fifty yards, and when, five times a day, the call to prayer reverberates across the mountains, the Indians fall silent. The *azan*, the general affirmed, had a very uplifting effect on the morale of our men and the opposite effect on that of the enemy.

The generals recounted all this without bombast and with complete conviction. No doubt they sincerely believed it. And no doubt such faith and belief fortify morale and give confidence—but only up to a point. Beyond it, bravery becomes bragging and faith, a form of escape from responsibility. On another occasion, a former army over, talking to me about India's greater military strength, assured me that if Pakistan kept up an attack for three days, Indian troops, whatever their numbers, would lose their nerve and run for it.

'One Muslim is good for ten Hindus' was true when Muslims had arrows to the Hindus' spears, artillery and fast horses against the enemy's elephants and muskets. Today both have similar weapons and the Indians have more of them. While our men may be fired by religious zeal, there is no reason to believe that Indian troops arenot equally motivated by nationalism, historic memories, Hindu pride (though we were told that there were also some Muslim soldiers among the Indian troops). In fact the Indians were taking casualties on a daily basis and generally facing greater difficulties than our side. And they were hanging on as tenaciously as were our men.[46]

Muslim soldiers of the pre-independence Indian Army fought under British officers just as valiantly, winning VCs, DSOs, and MCs, and in First World War they fought against Muslim co-religionists in Palestine. What inspired them then?

[46] As Brig. A. R. Siddiqui, editor of *The Defence journal* puts it, 'notion of invincibility generally flows from—over-estimating one's own and under-estimating the enemy's combat potential... Motherland, it should be remembered, exists on either side of the firing line.'

The war aims of the British themselves in the Second World War were defined by Field Marshal William Slim in the following words:

> We coveted no man's country; we wished to impose no form of government on any nation. We fought for the clean, the decent, the free things of life, for the right to live our lives in our own way, as others could live theirs, to worship God in what faith we chose, to be free in body and mind and for our children. to be free.[47]

Should one dismiss this as hypocrisy, coming from the military chief of one of the world's greatest imperial powers, one that has much to account for in Palestine, Kashmir, Ireland? Perhaps. But the Field Marshal was certainly right as to the British attitude on matters of individual freedom and faith. I quote his observation as reflecting a spirit that is a far cry from what is often expressed as the 'ideology of Pakistan', from a certain way of thinking in Pakistan that takes everything back to the crusades or the battles of Panipat, that meets the West's present anti-Islam prejudice with a counter-prejudice made up of xenophobia and self-delusion, that sees Muslim nationalism only in terms of animosity towards non-Muslims—Hindus, Jews, Christians.

The Pakistani Muslim thinks of himself as heir to the Muslim Empire, descended from a race of conquerors and rulers. There is therefore a streak of militarism in Pakistan's ethos, even at the popular level. Betel shops and painted buses often carry paintings of a man on horseback wearing Arab head-dress and brandishing a sword, of F-16 aircraft, and portraits of Ayub Khan and Ziaul Haq in military uniform.

When my wife, who is Belgian, decided to *Let us learn Urdu*, we bought a primer called Let Us Learn Urdu to start her off on day-to-day phrases. It contained such nuggets for daily use as:

> *Dushman ne hamari roti par gole barsaye* (The enemy fired she at our parry).
>
> *Hum dushman par toot pare* (We fell upon the enemy).
>
> *Ham raat ko khandaq mein sote thhi* (We slept in trenches at night).

What is the price of the hat of our Jamadar sahib's son?

Have the mules been fed?

And a good deal more in that vein.

[47] Quoted in *A Matter of Honour* by Phillip Mason. Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, New York, 1974, p. 499.

In a national newspaper's classified section there once appeared an ad which perhaps, says it all:

> Submitting as parents for a male, fair-skinned infant baby (armed forces blood preferred). Deprived of parents accidentally due to any reason. We will be honored to bring him up as a great soldier.

Even Benazir, a decade-long victim of martial law, could not, or would not, dispense with even the outward symbols of militarism. Following the practice started by her father, and unlike any other head of a democratic government, her staff included a Military Secretary and ADCs. At the flag-hoisting ceremony on Independence Day, trumpeters sounded off on the roof of the parliament building as Benazir came down the steps flanked by two strapping guardsmen wearing scarlet jackets and starched turbans. She appeared more like their hostage than their prime minister! Such militaristic displays were incongruous in a democracy and hardly appropriate for a civilian government restored after much tribulation and travail. But we love this sort of thing and it pleased the army to be on show.

Military intervention in Pakistanis politics and government began almost at the beginning. As early as 1948, General Grapey was apparently talking of the presence of 'young Turks' in the Forces. Besides the full-scale *coups* of Ayub in 1958, Yahya Khan in 1969 and Ziaul Haq in 1977, plots, conspiracies, and interventions took place or were attempted in 1951, 1954, 1968, 1972, 1978, 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1996.[48] What happened in
1988, after Zia died in an air-crash, was a singular affair an intervention, so to speak, to refrain from intervening. The corps commanders had convened at once and decided to 'allow' the constitutional process to take its course. In the letter of the law their decision was in fact the only proper one, but in terms of practical politics it could so easily have been otherwise, never mind that it would have been a capital offence under Article 6 of

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- 1951, the Rawalpindi conspiracy, a leftist-cum-nationalist attempt—half-Byronic, half Bonapartist—by General Akbar Khan, Fait Ahmad Fait, and a number of others.
- 1954, intervention by Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad which led to the appointment of C.-in-C, Ayub Khan as Defence Minister.
- 1968, Agartala, involving Bengali naval officers and civil servants.
- 1972, move by a group of senior army officers, after the army's surrender in Dhaka, to compel Yahya than and other Martial Law leaders to hand over power.
- 1978, Mai,-Gen. Tajammul Hussain, Cdr 23 Division, attempted an Islamist coup. Also the so-called London Plan for a joint civil-military attempt from the Left, allegedly with the help of Indian intelligence.
- 1990, Aslant Beg connives with the MQM to bring down Benazir's government.
- 1993, General Abdul Waheed brings about the resignations of both President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.
- 1996, another abortive Islamist plot by brigadier-level officers.

the constitution. One had reason to be grateful to the military leadership for not subverting the constitution.

General Aslam Beg, for his part, never tired of pointing out that the army could have taken over again on the day Ziaul Haq was killed. The thought that such a thing was contrary to the constitution would hardly deter a state functionary for whom the supreme law was not the constitution of the state but the knowledge that whatever order he issued would be carried out at the point of a gun.[49] However, the General's democratic professions did not evoke the public's unqualified gratitude. A constitution, albeit in Ziaul Haq's amended form, was in force and the Senate Chairman, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, had taken over as acting president under its provisions. There was no need or call for a GHQ consensus on the matter. 'The generals have taken it upon themselves to stand guard over democracy and they have decided to do it for reasons of their own,' wrote one commentator. Another held that Aslam Beg's assertions were 'meant to make civilians grateful to the generals for restoring democracy and tended to denigrate the role of the unknown political agitator who died fighting a dictator.[50]

But in the higher echelons of the army there were no doubts or soul-searching over its past role. When Ben it paid her first formal visit to GHQ in Rawalpindi, in the course of the briefing that she received, a suggestion was mooted that a 'Democracy Medal' should be struck to commemorate the return of democratic rule! The officer who made the proposal seemed oblivious to its irony. Rendered momentarily speechless, we civilians could do no more than exchange glances. In due course, the medal was struck, and why not? It was better, after all, to overlook the irony and to hope that the idea of democracy might begin to take root in the military mind through such symbols.

Then there was the curious business relating to the dismissal of the Junejo government by Ziaul Haq in 1988. As mentioned in Chapter 4, on a writ filed on behalf of Mr. Junejo, the Supreme Court held that the dismissal was not lawful but that Mohammad Khan Junejo should nevertheless not be restored as prime minister. Some years later, General Aslam Beg explained the inconsistency by affirming that none other than he himself had intervened to prevent the Supreme Court from restoring the Junejo government. He did so because he felt that the holding of the fresh party-based elections that had already been announced should not be thwarted. Later, summoned to court on a charge of contempt and faced with criminal proceedings, the General, now in retirement, retracted his statement and was let off with some sort of reproof. Nevertheless, the proceedings in court—dramatic in a tragicomic manner—threw an instructive and lurid light on the working of Pakistanis institutions.

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[49] General K.M. Arif, Ziaui Haq's Chief of Staff, in an interview with the monthly *Herald* of Karachi in July 1989 said: 'Technically speaking martial law is no law. It is the law of the commander. The word of the general commander becomes the law. Martial law is not imposed by the army as an institution but by the individual who takes control at the top.'

[50] Shah Khan in *The Muslim*, Islamabad, 19 September 1989.

General Aslam Beg is a strange man with something curious and contrary in his make-up. He had become Chief of Army Staff thanks only to Ziaul Haq's accidental death. He was a *muhajir* and therefore a rather unlikely candidate for a post that had throughout been occupied by Punjabis or Pathans. Rather on the short side and not military in mien, he was soft-spoken and a man of few words. When he did speak, it was without vehemence or bombast. In public he repeatedly affirmed his faith in democracy and his adherence to constitutional government. Questioned by the Press about rumors of a fresh *coup* that were going around in mid-1989, he protested, 'Have we gone mad that we would stage a *coup*? If we had wanted to, we would have done it on 17 August 1988 ... We have neither the intention nor the audacity to stage a *coup*.'[51] 'The armed forces,' he added, 'are subservient to political authority and committed to democracy.' Indeed, he said, he had received many letters from Sindh urging the army to take over but he had declined. 'I will not repeat the mistake of 1977!'

Again, the Press was not inclined to accept these professions without a pinch of salt: 'It is one man's word against our long history.' In private, Beg emphasized just as frequently that if democracy had been restored and was surviving in the country, it was thanks to the grace and favor of the army, which therefore—it was implicit—could be withdrawn as easily as it was granted.

Behind the scenes he was not above dabbling in politics and political maneuvers. The Pakistan Muslim League leader Chaudhri Nisar Ali acknowledged Aslam Beg's role in getting the MQM (then a nominal but restive ally of the PPP) to switch its sixteen National Assembly votes to the Opposition in the 1989 no-confidence motion against Benazir. Aslam Beg was close to the MQM, and Benazir told me that she knew that he spent hours on the phone with its chief, Altaf Hussain, and I suppose she also knew what they charted about.

He could, with a perfectly straight face and in all innocence, confess to actions that were manifestly unlawful and made him liable to prosecution under criminal law. The case of the retracted intervention in a judicial decision was possibly a borderline case, but one fine morning, sometime after he had retired, the general revealed to the startled country that he had obtained 140 million rupees from a banker (a shady character who was later sentenced for embezzlement and fraud) and had used the services of General Durrani, the head of the ISI, to distribute it among some of the top anti-PPP candidates in order to manipulate the outcome of 1990 election against Benazir. What possessed the general to make this announcement is hard to fathom.

In Pakistan, not only the military budget but almost everything and anything that might reflect badly on the armed forces has been out of bounds as a subject of discussion and

[51] The daily *Dawn*, Karachi, 14 September 1989.

debate. Only the armed forces' own public relations outfit occasionally lets out bits and pieces of news about them—always of a laudatory nature of course. Even the PPP government's Minister of State for Defence saw fit to admonish journalists not to comment on matters relating to national security or the military.

But Aslam Beg surprised everyone by speaking his mind on many such taboo subjects and criticizing what he viewed as past mistakes and misjudgments. In a three-hour press conference that he gave on 13 September 1989, on the eve of a large-scale military exercise code-named '*Zarb-e-Momin*' ('Blow of the True Believer') he described the 1965 and 1971 wars with India as 'a pathetic story of how not to fight a war'. Both wars, he said, were fought with only tactical aims and without clear strategic objectives. As a result, the army had won some tactical victories but Pakistan lost the wars. He said that he was evolving a new offensive doctrine based on taking the war into the enemy's home and fighting the war on the enemy's territory on every front. The Press described this briefing as Aslam Beg's glasnost[52] and found it all most refreshing.

Aslam Beg carried his openness to unprecedented lengths when he publicly took issue with Prime Minister Nawaz awes decision to send Pakistani troops to join the UN action against Iraq. He applauded Saddam Hussain's 'strategic defiance' (whatever that might be) of the USA whence came most of the teeth of the army that he himself commanded.

The General's openness was certainly new but the doctrine itself was not revolutionary. The 1971 war, a civil war for most of its duration, necessarily had to be fought on home territory. However, in 1965 Ayub too had planned to carry the fighting into enemy territory, and Pakistani troops and tanks did cross into the Indian Punjab and capture some pieces of territory. They might have achieved more with better execution of the operation, but basically, the Pakistani forces were not large enough to take and keep sizeable chunks of Indian territory. We did not have the numbers then, we do not have them now, and there is nothing to be done about the disparity in the population and size of the two countries. In war size is not all, but nor is it something that can be wished away.

Aslam Beg thought the equation could be corrected by a 'strategic consensus' with Iran and Turkey. He was not the first person to whom the thought had occurred of forging a special relationship between Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. The idea had taken form first in Ayub Khan's time as Regional Co-operation for Development, an association for economic co-operation among the three countries. But Beg and his think-tank were encouraged and inspired by what at the time seemed to be the imminent collapse of the Soviet-supported Afghan regime and its replacement by one that would be linked to

[52] The word glasnost, meaning openness in Russian, originated in Mr. Gorbachev's attempts to reform the Soviet system and has acquired world-wide currency.

Pakistan by ties of eternal gratitude. The Oxus,' some of these starry-eyed strategists affirmed, 'henceforth will be Pakistan's strategic frontier! It was indeed exciting to visualize a vast and populous grouping, sprawling across half of Asia, in one of the strategically most important regions of the world, endowed with resources and riches of every kind, possessing powerful armed forces, and united by the transcendent bond of a common faith. It was easy—if one had the strength of dearly-held wishes—to ignore the reality, which was that the three countries did not have a common enemy or strategic target. Attempts to promote trade and economic cooperation and to build communications links among them had made little headway in thirty years, and even in the field of religion, they had very different, if not conflicting, concepts. Secular Turkey's gaze was fixed on Europe and it was a close military ally of the United States, which treated Iran as public enemy number one; Iran looked askance at Pakistan's rhetorical Islamism; and neither Turkey nor Iran had any quarrel with India, which was the aim and target of Pakistan's strategic planning. I doubt that Aslam Beg or even the ideologue-general, Hamid Gul, head of the ISID, were such dreamers that they could not see these plain facts. Their 'strategic consensus' seemed to me to have a more immediate purpose, which was to keep a handle on Benazir's foreign policy, in particular with regard to Afghanistan and India.

Zarb-e-Momin was a smaller exercise than India's Brasstacks, held three years earlier, but still a very large-scale affair, involving some 125,000 men, 1,000 tracked vehicles, and 16,000 soft-skin vehicles. To avoid the crisis atmosphere created by Brass-tacks, it was conducted in an area about 200 km away from the Indian border and the Indian military were informed about its purpose and scope. Aslam Beg explained in his press conference that the exercise was designed to strengthen 'our professional and conceptual capabilities, improve upon national security, and fulfill ideological and professional obligations...'. Elaborating on the ideological function, the general declared, 'Allah ordains on all Muslims to always remain in a state of preparedness and the Pakistan Army, by holding this exercise, has complied with a Divine Order and fulfilled its religious duty.'

At a down-to-earth level, however, the position, in the words of a military analyst,[53] was that the home forces (Blueland) did not win and the 'enemy' (Foxland) would not lose; on the contrary, the latter were poised to launch a vigorous counter-offensive when the umpires brought the exercise to a close. General Beg conceded that a 'tactical mistake' by Blueland caused it to fail in its objective of fighting the war on enemy territory.

The notion that the armed forces are required to defend not only the clearly marked geographical frontiers of the country but also its undefined 'ideological' frontiers could in practice only mean that they must carry out the political agenda of their commander.

[53] Brig, A. R. Siddiqui, *The Nation*, Lahore, 8 January 1990.

The idea was introduced by Ziaul Haq for self-evident reasons, but could be called into service should the military again feel like intervening in the country's politics.

In France the army is known by the nickname of '*La Grande Muette*'—the Great Mute. In Pakistan too the military as such has not been given to expressing its views on national issues. But both Ziaul Haq and Aslam Beg had a sense of mission and were not loath to talk about it. Nevertheless, one cannot be sure that either of them was expressing, in what he said, the view and outlook of the army, or indeed whether there is such a thing as an army view of all things and issues. Pakistan is a highly politicized country with sharp dividing lines between ethnic groups, languages, sects, provincial loyalties, and social classes. Even allowing for the fact that the armed forces come overwhelmingly from the Punjab, it would be surprising if the divisions and political fractiousness so apparent in civilian life were without any echo in the armed forces.

Over the years a change has been taking place in the make-up and class composition of the army's officer corps. The officers taken into the army during the British period came generally from land-owning or other upper-class families. They were moulded by training and example into replicas of their British counterparts, sometimes to the point almost of caricature—mustachios, crisp speech, spit and polish, and hard-drinking evenings at the regimental mess. At a dinner in the Baluch Mess in. Hyderabad, Sindh, some years after partition, when the meal was over, the youngest subaltern, having sought the CO's permission, proposed a toast—in orange juice—to the Queen (Pakistan was still a Dominion and Queen Elizabeth its head). Even today, many regiments continue to celebrate their centenaries, commemorating bravery in action against the so-called Mutiny of 1857 as well as the independence achieved in 1947 'as if the line between the British Indian Army and the Pakistan Army stretched unbroken from the past to the present'.[54] But the old ersatz *Koi Hao's*[55] have made way for the sons of non-commissioned officers, *jemadars*, *havildars* and so on, men from modest rural backgrounds or the urban middle classes. These officers come from conservative backgrounds, strongly imbued with religious values, and are not open to, even hostile to, western ideas. These trends got a powerful fillip during the Ziaul Haq period because he was of the same breed and because 'Islamizing' the armed forces fitted in with his justification for retaining power. He made a systematic effort to introduce the Islamic ethos into the army, with emphasis on prayers, fasting, and other ritual observances, and he enhanced the role and standing of the army *maulvi*. The 'Islamic' element was given greater prominence in the courses taught at military academies and other training institutions, whereas apparently, or so I was told by a cadet, there were no courses on subjects of contemporary importance such as development economics or international economic relations.

[54] The monthly *Herald*, Karachi, July 1989.

[55] Is anyone there?'—the way a sahib called for a servant, hence the sahibs themselves.

The monthly *Herald* of Karachi quoted a tutor from the Pakistan Military Academy:

> For the old breed of army officer, the army was not a bread-winning vocation, but an institution a gentleman would join to enhance his reputation or keep up a family tradition. Today, the vast majority are in the army to earn a living, and this has had a profound impact on their desire to make good.

The desire to make good soon took a materialistic form as opportunities opened up. There were land grants in new irrigation schemes in Sindh, special allowances, civilian jobs during martial law periods, foreign service perks, and real-estate speculation in housing schemes sponsored by the defence services.

Where are the bicycle-riding colonels of yesterday? lamented one cabinet minister during a discussion on the defence budget They were riding around in chauffeur-driven Mercedes Benz limousines and similar vehicles allocated to senior and middle-ranking officers during the Ziaul Haq period. When Junejo became prime minister, he ordered that senior civil servants, who went about in large government cars, would henceforth be entitled to only the modest, locally-assembled Suzuki and added, 'We shall put the generals also in Suzukis.' This did not go down well in the circles concerned and Ijaz Azim, a retired general, gave vent to his umbrage in a series of articles in the Press entitled 'General-bashing'. The articles made interesting reading on two counts: firstly, for what they said about how the armed forces (or at any rate, their senior officers) saw themselves or wished to be seen; and secondly, for the public reaction to the general's protestations. General Azim's grievance was that Prime Minister Junejo's remark held generals up to ridicule in the eyes of both the public and the men under their command. He spoke of a 'mystic bond between the leaders and the led' that was the mainspring of their fighting spirit, and of the efficiency of the armed forces. 'The citizen can sleep in peace because they guard the nation's ideological and territorial frontiers; break or weaken this bond and woe betide the country.'

It is a theme to be found in the biographies and memoirs of a hundred retired British generals of the old Indian Army. It was a glamorous entity, the British-officered Indian Army, with its resplendent uniforms of scarlet and blue and gold, regimental bands and banners and battle colours, its parade-ground discipline and spit and polish. It was a gallant body of officers and men, brave, motivated, fine looking, and well-disciplined.[56] They had won medals and honours and battle colours in many parts of the world. But the colours were won on foreign battlefields, in the service of foreign arms. The British officers fought for King and Country and Empire. For whom did the Indians fight Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, side-by-side? What explained their fighting spirit and valour

[56] I recall an observation of General Sher Ali Khan, former Chief of General Staff of the Pakistan Army, drawing a distinction between the drilled discipline that produces precision on the parade ground and the self-discipline that comes from motivation and knowing what you are about, from the knowledge and skills underlying the occasional outward sloppiness of dress and manner of, for example, the American GI or the Israeli soldier.

and devotion to their regiment and its officers? For all its panache and valour, the Indian Army was an army of professionals, men for whom the profession of arms was their livelihood—as it was for the European armies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, made up of men of different nationalities, or the Mughul armies, even those of Aurangzeb, with their Rajput and other Hindu contingents and commanders. They fought for pay and perks, but also for honour and glory. Nationalism was not then a force and had little to do with it at the time in Europe, and nothing at all in colonial India.

Of course there was personal loyalty and affection between the native enlisted men and their British officers. It was an important element in the cohesiveness and discipline of the Indian Army and was carefully cultivated by British officers taking part in native festivals, learning and using Urdu and other local languages, engaging in sport with the men, showing concern for their families and personal problems. But this comradeship, much celebrated in the literature of the Raj,[57] this 'mystic bond,' after all is said and done, was a somewhat contrived thing, made up of subordination on the one side and condescension on the other.

To quote a former C.-in-C., Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck:

> Those who have served for many years with Indian troops, as I have done, have always recognized that the loyalty of our men was really to the officers of the regiment or unit, and that although there may have been some abstract sentiment of loyalty and patriotism to the government and the King, the men's allegiance for all practical purposes was focused on the regiment, and particularly on the regimental officers, on whom they depended for their welfare, advancement and future prospects. In these officers their faith and trust were almost childlike, as events have proved time and time again.[58]

In the event, Ijaz Azim's attempt to arouse sympathy by invoking the cliches and legends of the Raj only brought forth a series of scathing rejoinders in the press, telling the generals some home truths. A letter in one newspaper said that the question to be discussed in Pakistan was not general-bashing' but 'generals-cashing', an allusion to the reputation the armed forces had acquired in the long years of Ziaul Haq's martial law. The army's actions in East Pakistan, the Dhaka surrender, and the loss of the Siachen glacier positions all were brought up.[59]

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[57] See, for instance, Philip Mason, *op. cit*.

[58] In his memorandum on the Indian National Army trials, February 1946, quoted in Auchinkch by John Cowie, (Cassell & Co., London, 1959).

[59] The late General Ijaz Azim, whom I had known since we were children, was admired in the army as an able professional and later served a successful tenure as ambassador at Washington. I have cited his articles to illustrate a certain frame of mind that is to be found in the army. I do not by any means intend to cast any aspersions on him personally.

Another subtle but significant shift in the make-up and outlook of the armed forces had taken place, gradually but surely, after the 1950s, when Pakistan entered into military pacts sponsored or led by the United States. The British veneer is still there, in the appearance and bearing of the forces uniforms, drill, salutes, and so forth—but the influence and inspiration, and the arms and training, have increasingly come from the United States—inconstant and fitful as the connection has been. In the years of the Afghan war, the links between the two military establishments grew into fairly close operational collaboration. For the United States itself, the army has been the principal lever for exercising influence and pursuing its interests in Pakistan. The military *coups* of Ayub Khan and Ziaul Haq had America's support and approval and are widely believed to have been encouraged and instigated by the United States. During Prime Minister Benazir's visit to Washington in June 1989, President Bush thought fit to pay tribute to the Pakistan armed forces for their 'adherence to the constitutional process [that] was so important in bringing about democracy' in Pakistan. A Karachi monthly took this as a coded message to the armed forces about the importance that the United States continued to attach to their role in Pakistan's politics and constitutional set-up. If so, it was certainly better than the message sent by President Caner to Ziaul Haq after his 1977 coup, in which he commended him for the 'good work' he was accomplishing. (However, Mr. Carter's hope that the 'good work' would include a halt to Pakistan's nuclear programme, was to be dashed.)

Benazir's own attitude towards the armed forces was wary. in response to a pressman's question about whether her government would try to cut the defence budget, she had said: 'Not unless we want the army to take over again,' This wariness remained throughout her two periods in power in the earlier term, she said to an interviewer from the German weekly *Der Spiegel*: 'W e must proceed extremely carefully if civilian politicians are to make a success of democracy and if civilian opportunists, who see in the military the key to power and glory, are to be defeated...' Elaborating, she added, 'Do we want to rival (vie) with the army or do we want to bring the country to a constitutional, democratic form? In doing so, we cannot pretend to be living in a perfect world.. ,We have to cope with the fact that Zia has politicized a large part of the army.'

Speaking to *The Daily Express* of London on the risk of another military coup, she said, 'Ultimately it depends on the commitment of the armed forces to democracy. If they are committed they will not intervene. If they are not, they do not need any pretext—they will simply make any.' A military analyst saw in these statements 'a rare combination of pragmatism and far-sightedness' on Benazir's part.[60] True, but they reflected also an element of fatalism and passivity in her attitude. It led her to adopt a policy towards the

[60] Brig. A. R. Siddiqui in 'Benazir and the Army', *Dawn*, Karachi, 1 May 1997, from which the foregoing quotations are also taken.

military that was a combination of ingratiation[61] and an artful kind of interference, as in the Sirohey affair, or when she tried to give an extension of service to General Mahsud Alam.[62] In the end the pragmatism proved fruitless. The army accepted the ingratiation for what it was and resisted and thwarted the attempts at interference.

The risk of military intervention was ever-present in Zulfikar Bhutto's mind. In 1972 he appointed a committee headed by a retired officer, Lieutenant-General K. M. Akhtar, to study the subject and suggest ways of guarding against the danger in the future. According to the General's report, some of the main problems were: weakness of democratic institutions, lack of education and the colonial tradition of using the army to maintain law and order. To reduce the risk of 'Bonapartism', he proposed separating the posts of Chief of Army Staff and Chief of the Field Army, as in West Germany, or the adoption of the Indian system, in which there were several field commanders. Bhutto adopted a three-pronged approach in the hope of bringing the armed forces, once and for all, under civilian control. In the first place, he provided for a drastic legal deterrence in the shape of Article 6 of the 1973 constitution, which prescribed capital punishment for any attempt to overthrow or subvert the constitution in any way. Then, while the specific proposals made by General Akhtar's committee were not adopted, Bhutto's reorganization of the armed forces' command structure replaced the single C.-in-C. by separate chiefs of staff for each of the services and a Joint Chiefs' Committee headed by a non-operational officer. The ostensible objective of the reorganization was to ensure better coordination among the three arms of the defence force, but Bhutto no doubt expected that the new structure, with supreme command vested in the president, would also make things more difficult for an army chief wanting to stage a *coup*, Finally, in picking the unobtrusive, low-profile Ziaul Haq as Chief of Army Staff, Bhutto thought that he had really battened down the hatches against all further danger.

When it came to the crunch, however, none of this worked. The armed forces are trained and programmed to unquestioning obedience, so when an order comes down the proper chain of command, the man who is to cam it out is unlikely to check it first with his copy of the constitution. Even so, it is equally unlikely that a chief of staff would just get up one morning and send a detail out with instructions to take the prime minister to jail. The truth is that neither of Pakistan's three military coups took place in a vacuum. Ayub Khan had prepared for his move over the years in collaboration with two heads of state, clearing the decks at GHQ by moving possible rivals or conscientious objectors out of the way, and testing the waters as defence minister in a

[61] One Islamabad journalist remarked to me, 'One sees altogether too much cosying up between the prime minister and the military, too many *iftar* parties, too many dinners'—like the one she offered in honor of General Hamid Gul after transferring him out of the ISID.

[62] A straightforward professional officer opposed to military intervention in civilian affairs. 'When a soldier also tries to be a *thanedar* (police chief), soldiering suffers' he said in an exclusive interview to eveninger, *The Daily News*, of Karachi in 1992.

caretaker cabinet.[63] His way to power was eased by the prime ministers who kept on extending his term of service, hoping thereby to co-opt the army's influence in their own infighting. Yahya Khan too only moved after Ayub had exhausted all political resources. Would ZiauI Haq have ventured to move in 1977 if Bhutto had bitten the bullet and called fresh elections as soon as it became clear that there was no other way out of the crisis? It is unlikely. Indeed, some of the most eminent political leaders of the anti-Bhutto coalition were calling on the armed forces to forget about the constitution and overthrow Bhutto. It is another matter that when Ziaul Haq finally heeded the call, he quickly dashed whatever personal hopes some of them might have pinned on the military's intervention.

The American connection was mentioned above and has been an important factor in the occurrence of military coups in various parts of the world. In Pakistan the belief prevails, not only that the United States has been the author of all military coups in the country, but also that no army chief would move without getting a nod from Washington. This is one of those half-truths that has all the power of a popular myth, Benazir herself seemed to share it, for on one occasion, when she asked General Hamid Gul to persuade the Punjab Chief Minister, Nawaz Sharif to come off his high horse, the message she sent was: the army is not going to intervene at this stage, the kitty is empty and the country is broke, American aid would stop if there was another martial law and the army would have to run the country on an empty treasury.

The United States' preoccupation with checking Soviet influence and expansion seemed to make it oblivious to its own declared goals in the cold war—the promotion of democracy and protection of human rights. At one time, some CIA-inspired analysts advanced a doctrine that military rule was actually better than democracy for the Third World's immature societies because, as the most disciplined, motivated, and well-organized segment of society, the armed forces could be the most effective vehicle for economic development, social reform, and modernization.

In Pakistan this may to some extent have been true of the early phase of Ayub's martial law; exactly the opposite was the case of Ziaul Haq's eleven years. For the ability to organize maneuvers is not the same thing as the ability to coordinate government policies. In general, empirical evidence does not support the pseudo-theory of the army as an instrument of progress—frequently the contrary is rather the case, for instance, in Latin America's banana republics, In the majority of cases, the military intervenes in order to maintain the *status quo* and to support the ruling establishment against any threatening social change— one of the first acts of Chief Martial Law Administrator Ziaul Haq was to annul Bhutto's decision to tax agricultural incomes. Moreover, in the view of one writer, military regimes in ethnically divided countries frequently

[63] Pir Mahfuz, a Karachi businessman and a friend of Ayub Khan's, recalled the general saying: don't ever call in the army to take over power for an army can be dislodged only by another army. Very apt, even if it seems surprising that Ayub, who had taken over without anyone calling on him to do so, should say something of the sort.

'concentrate even more power in the hands of the already dominant ethnic group and thereby accentuate social frictions'.[64]

Thus military intervention is a more complicated matter than the military's commitment to democracy, or the policy of the United States. The deciding factors lie in the complex of interests and groups, domestic as well as foreign, that might stand to gain in various ways, at a given time and in prevailing circumstances, from such intervention. In 1990, the complex of interests did not require the military to intervene directly, nor was any nod or wink required from Washington. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the army, and Nawaz Sharif were on the same wavelength, and the President had simply to use his powers under Ziaul Haq's constitutional amendment in order to get rid of the Benazir government.

Our ambassador in Washington, the Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Zulfikar Ali, mentioned two other reasons that might have caused the military to hold its hand. Firstly, the fear that Sindh would go up in flames, and while that could be handled *per se*, the nature of India's reaction to the situation was an unknown factor and could not be ignored. The other imponderable was the American attitude. The United States' interest in Pakistan was waning anyway and was sustained for the moment only on account of Benazir's popular impact. A coup, the ambassador thought, would lead to an immediate suspension of US aid and, in Senator Moynihan's words, the Pakistan military 'would be left to eat grass.' On one occasion, referring ostensibly to the crushing of the Tiananmen protest in Beijing, Aslam Beg spoke of the 'awesome might of the army's power' once it was unleashed, as if he was revealing some profound verity in suggesting that the army can shoot down unarmed fellow-citizens in their own country. The army chief was in the habit, as I have mentioned, of every now and then letting it fall that if democracy had been restored and Benazir was prime minister, it was only because GHQ had decided to allow this to happen. Sometimes he could be more direct in implying that this boon could be withdrawn. In the aftermath of the strikes staged by the MQM in Karachi on 7 and 13 February 1990, strikes marked by wide-spread destruction and exceptional savagery,[65] he said to Benazir that the Corp Commanders had come out in favor of intervening. She said to him, 'Go ahead and do what you please, I can't stop you. But you should realize what the consequences would be.'

She said to me, 'What else could I say to him?' and recounted an earlier conversation with a brigadier, no less, who had said to her, 'Another strike like the recent one in Karachi, and the army would have to move in.' She had taken it coolly and had patiently explained to the man that years of trying to solve such problems by military means had only made them worse.

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[64] Cynthia Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers: Stare Security in a Divided Society*, Penguin Hooks, 1980.

[65] The 13 February strike left thirty-two dead—some of the victims having been quartered and burnt alive. Large numbers were taken hostage and, when their release was obtained, many returned with holes in their knee caps and shoulder joints made with electric drills, disabling them for life.

There is indeed no effective short-term solution to the problem of maintaining constitutional control over the armed forces. Once the taboo inculcated over generations is broken, the psychological rubicon crossed, nothing is needed by an ambitious army chief but an occasion or, as Benazir so rightly said, a pretext. But Benazir's attempts to cover her flanks by getting 'her own men' into key positions—such as a retired general as head of the ISM—were neither well-advised nor pertinent and proved useless. Worse than useless were the attempts to consolidate her position by using the methods, and sometimes the men, of the Ziaul Haq regime.

In truth, the challenge that faced Benazir was not that of an outright military take-over. For the reasons set out in an earlier section, Aslam Beg, for all his threats and warnings, was not the man for another martial law. The threat to her was more insidious and took devious forms. A month before Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed her government, she told me that ISID's General Asad Durrani was going around telling her ministers that she was about to be sacked for corruption and that they should get off the sinking boat before it went under.

The only proper way in the long view, the only effective way—Benazir could counter this kind of mischief was to rely on the constitution and the rule of law. Protection for both the citizen and the government—especially a government headed by a non-establishment figure like Benazir—lay in constitutional procedures, the restraints of law, and a strengthened civil society. The process was bound to be slow, difficult, and beset with hurdles of all sorts, but it was the only sure way. This was a view with which no one could disagree in principle but which did not prevail in the world of practical politics. This 'real' world was revealed to me when, upon taking office as National Security Adviser in Benazir's first government, I received a visit from the Director of the Intelligence Bureau. The good man said to me, perhaps tongue-in-cheek: Our main function abroad was to keep an eye on 'dissidents', but now the dissidents are all in the government and we await your orders on who to look out for. Quite early in Pakistan's history, rulers lacking the support of a well-organized and motivated political party turned for support to the bureaucracy and to the secret agencies—first civil and then militant—in order to consolidate their political position and confound their adversaries. The practice was wrong on three grounds: (1) it was unconstitutional; (2) the titbits the spooks picked up were rarely of great value and could be obtained equally well by alert party members; (3) the agencies got an excuse to interfere in politics and eventually develop an agenda of their own.

Actual experience bears out, in dramatic fashion, the validity of these objections. Notwithstanding all the snooping and sneaking and phone-tapping done on their behalf, the ground was cut from under Ayub's feet, Bhutto was overthrown, Ziaul Haq's plane was brought down in flames, and not one of these powerful leaders was forewarned by their intelligence people of the dire fate that lay ahead for him at the

very height of his power. Zulfikar Bhutto had the least need of all for spooks and spies, but he used them just the same and when the crunch came, these very people were the instruments of his undoing.

In the netherworld of political intelligence, there are no overriding principles, no larger loyalties; the men required to carry out political skulduggery on behalf of one leader can just as easily do it for another, or may use their official powers for purposes of their own. The annals of the most formidable secret services are not free of tales of double agents and traitors—Philby, Burgess and McLean, Aldrich Ames, Shevchenko. According to a story front-paged in *The New York Times*, the CIA for years 'knowingly gave the White House and the Pentagon inside information from sources it knew or strongly suspected were controlled by Moscow'.[66] Thus, at critical junctures in their relations, American policy towards Russia was in effect being shaped by the Kremlin!

It is almost beyond comprehension that some mid-level employees of the CIA knowingly allowed tainted information to be fed to their own superiors, to the Pentagon, and to the president of the country. *The New York Times* thought that the answer lay perhaps in the secret agency's institutional arrogance, an arrogance dating back to the years when the agency was created, the special dispensation from the rules of law and morality that CIA agents were granted, and an environment in which nations and peoples, national interests and political causes, are relegated to the background and conflicts concern not politics and morality, but turf and personality, organizational charts, and chains of command.

Pakistan's ISID was set up in 1948 by an Australian-born army officer[67] and, in its early years, was a low-profile organization with a strictly professional mandate. Its role and status began to expand when the army became involved in domestic politics with the advent of Ayub Khan. Under Zulfikar Bhutto, this role, instead of being curbed, was further enhanced. By the time Benazir arrived on the scene, the ISI and other so-called 'sensitive agencies' had acquired a position and power that extended way beyond their normal functions and also a political orientation and agenda of their own. To a considerable extent this was because Ziaul Haq, not having a political party, needed the agencies, more than any of his predecessors, in order to keep tabs on people and events. But above all, the enhanced power, prestige, and self-assurance of the ISID was the result of the key role it played in the Afghan war. It became a major policy-making

[66] The New York Times, 1 November 1995.

[67] General William Cawthorne of the British Indian Army, who opted for Pakistan at partition and, after leaving the Pakistan Army, returned as Australian High Commissioner in Karachi. He was on dose terms with both Iskandar Mirza and Ayub Khan, and was the only outsider allowed to set off Iskandar Mirza when he was sent into exile by Ayub Khan.

organ, and its field of activity expanded to include subjects that normally lie in the domain of the foreign, defence, and interior ministries.[68]

The ISI's head, General Hamid Gut, had become something of a kingpin in both domestic politics and foreign affairs when Benazir became prime minister in 1988. As mentioned above, he had played a role in putting together the IJI,[69] a coalition of anti-PPP groups to oppose her in the 1988 elections. After taking over as National Security Adviser in that government, I asked the General for a brine in on the prevailing situation in Afghanistan and his assessment of the future course of events. I found him not the least bit backward in taking credit for what was then considered Pakistan's imminent triumph in Afghanistan. He barely concealed his impatience with the Foreign Ministry's 'interference' in Afghan policy, and said that the Mujahideen had no time for Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan's gentrified ways. Nor did the general conceal his chagrin and resentment that a cruel fate had deprived the '*marhoom*' (the 'late, lamented' Ziaul Haq) of seeing the fruition of his decade-long personal crusade and that others' would now walk the last victorious mile and enjoy the fruits of victory that rightfully belonged to Ziaul Haq.

Not long afterwards, with Benazir barely a month in office, Hamid Gul expounded to me his thinking on national policy. Pakistan had again a political government running the country, the general said, and may it always be so. But a democratic government by its very nature tended to compromise, and political compromise might some run counter to the national interest. So, said the general, there must be some means of defining and promoting the national interest, some means of rising above political partisanship and compromise on issues of high policy such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, or relations with India. General Aslam Beg proposed the establishment of a National Security Committee to permit consultation among all concerned on matters of this kind. In his view it was the absence of such consultation that had led to repeated bouts of martial law. In other words, if political leaders would fall in line with the thinking of the armed forces in behind-the-scene confabulations, then the armed forces wouldn't have to use force to impose their ideas. This was a military version of the 'Islamists' demand for a supra-sovereign body of *ulema* to test the '*Islamicity*' of actions taken by elected bodies. Both proposals are as old as Pakistan and, despite experience, neither has disappeared—nor, on the other hand, has either ever been given concrete shape.

With regard to both Islam and the armed forces, Benazir was careful not to step on any toes. I have mentioned above her assiduous playing to the Islamist gallery. On the

[68] Foreign Minister Yaqub told me that in a meeting of the Ziaul Haq cabinet, he had remonstrated strongly against the usurpation of his ministry's responsibilities by the intelligence agencies. As was his fashion, Ziaul Haq agreed entirely with his minister but nothing changed.

[69] The *Islami Jamhoori Ithehad* or Islamic Democratic Alliance. The General freely admitted to having done so, disingenuously explaining to Benazir that the army would not have permitted elections if these had meant a walk-over for the PPP.

matter of the 'agencies' too she moved in gingerly fashion. Almost the first question that she had to face on becoming prime minister was what to do with and about the ISID and its grey eminence, Hamid Gul. Dark-brewed and intense in appearance, Hamid Gul was of the new breed of army officers—a pseudo-ideologue, class conscious, ambitious, with a head full of simplistic political solutions for the country's problems. Some thought him all-powerful and dangerous; he himself may have been carried away by the power that he exercised as Director-General of the ISID. He had played a key role and, after the death in Zia's crash of General Akhtar Abdur Rahman, the leading role in conducting and directing the Afghan resistance. The Soviet defeat at the hands of the Mujahid *lashkars* was an event of legendary proportions, so extraordinary that one could understand someone like Hamid Gut seeing Pakistan's, and perhaps his own, role in the event in larger-than-life terms. But now, with the Soviet troops out of Afghanistan, Hamid Gul, with his ideas and visions, was decidedly not the right man to be in charge in the political phase of the Afghan conflict. Hamid Gul had ideas of his own on almost everything, including domestic politics. When, shortly after Benazir took office, the general fell due for promotion, some of her close advisers, including myself, urged her to seize the occasion to get him out of the way into some post where he would not have his fingers in the political pie. She seemed strangely hesitant to do so, and not until six months later did she send him off to command a corps in Multan (giving him a farewell dinner to say, 'No hard feelings').

Much was made of this move, and much was said about it in the Press at home and abroad. Some saw it as the culmination of a civilian-military tussle in which Benazir had scored a major point. Others saw 'hidden hands' behind the scenes—the CIA's, India's, and so forth. But all said and done, it was a routine move, the transfer of an army officer from one important post to another. The removal of an individual would not by itself change everything or anything, the political connections and networks established by the agencies over years of involvement in domestic politics would not disappear, and the set-up would carry on under its own steam under a new boss.

There could be no real change until there was proper policy control over the workings of the whole intelligence apparatus. This was essential with regard to Afghanistan, where the conflict was moving out of an operational phase into a political phase. Men like Hamid Gul, who had been responsible for operations—and had indeed discharged the responsibility very ably—were not best suited to make the larger policy choices required by the new situation. It was time to bring policy-making back to where it belonged the elected national government. Moreover, in my view it was even more important that we should get the intelligence agencies completely out of the business of domestic politics. As stated above, their role in this field is of little use and could be baneful. Discussing the question of the agency's future role, Harmd Gul himself said to me (with perhaps more vehemence than conviction) that the ISM would like nothing better than to be relieved of the 'demeaning' business of domestic political intelligence.

As a step in that direction, Benazir had agreed some months earlier to appoint a committee headed by retired Air Chief Marshal Zulfikar Ali Khan to examine the working of the various intelligence agencies and make proposals to ensure better co-ordination among them, improve the training, recruitment, and working conditions of their personnel, and provide for more effective policy control and direction over their functioning. The committee met over a period of several months and produced a report that proposed no radical changes but made some useful suggestions and proposals on the matters within its terms of reference. The report was carefully considered in high-level meetings presided over by the prime minister. Participants nodded at some of its suggestions, hemmed and hawed over others. Then the report was put away, never to be mentioned again, like all previous such reports made in the years gone by, and the agencies were left to carry on in their usual way. Benazir's own attitude towards the report of a committee that she had only agreed to appoint after a degree of hesitation was circumspect as well as equivocal. She was of course well aware of what the 'agencies' could do to her, but she may also have been tempted by the thought of what they might do for her. If so, it was an idle thought, one that had also occurred to many of her predecessors, and with equally disappointing results.

Benazir's crisis with the army came in the end over something that had nothing to do with the army as such or with any of the major national issues on which the army wished to have its say, such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, nuclear policy. It came over an incident connected with Pakistan's ethnic divisions, specifically over a botched operation by the police in the provincial city of Hyderabad, Sindh.

There is more than one ethnic divide in Pakistan — Sindhi-Punjabi, Punjabi-Seraiki, Pathan-Balochi, Pathan, Hazara, and so on and so on. Perhaps the most difficult to bridge is in Sindh, between Sindhis and *muhajirs*, the Urdu-speaking immigrants from India who settled in Sindh and have come to form a majority of the population in the main cities of the province.

The incident in question occurred in May 1990 when, after a series of bloody incidents between the two communities in the city of Hyderabad, the provincial authorities decided to come down hard on a hotbed of trouble—the city's Pucca Qila (a fort built by the eighteenth-century Kalhora rulers of Sindh) whence a lot of shooting was coming and where they believed that a large cache of weapons of various kinds was concealed by militants of the MQM. The police went at it in a ham-handed way—firstly, instead of pouncing on the arms caches, they went about making elaborate preparations to do so in broad daylight, calling on the militants to surrender and so forth; and secondly, when the hard-pressed militants sent out a procession of women and children carrying the Koran on their heads, the police fired on the procession, Causing casualties. At that point the army intervened, not in aid of civil power and at the request of civil authorities as provided in the constitution, but on its own, and in opposition to the forces of the provincial government. To leave no doubt about how matters stood, upon

arriving, the troops told the latter to clear out at once or else. The processionists received the troops with joy and acclaim and the police withdrew amidst jeers and insults. It was, as in a wild west movie, the US cavalry arriving in the nick of time to put the 'Injuns' to flight. Accounts vary of who was the first to do what to whom and as to the balance sheet of rights and wrongs—inevitably so, for the two groups were divided along ethnic lines: Sindhi police on one side and on the other, *muhajirs* and non-Sindhi troops.

At a high-level meeting a week later, the Sindh Chief Secretary, himself not a Sindhi, placed the blame for the incident on the MQM and questioned the justification and propriety of the role played by the army. The troops, he said, were not needed at the Qila, the police had the situation in hand by the time they arrived; they ought instead to have gone where they were most urgently needed at the time, the suburb of Latifabad, where an armed MQM crowd had gathered and was threatening local residents.

General Aslam Beg, whose troops they were, naturally disagreed with the Chief Secretary's view of the matter. He also took issue with the prime minister over a statement that she had made concerning the incident that the army was not trusted by Sindhis, only by *muhajirs*. He said that he was 'deeply pained, deeply hurt.' We are not perfect, we can and do make mistakes,' he added, 'but the army is a national institution.' Benazir explained that what she had referred to was the Sindhis' perception of the matter; similarly, when the *muhajirs* greeted the troops at the Qila with flowers, that too was a reflection of their perception of the army's role. Benazir did not add that the general's own conduct, and that of Admiral Sirohey, could not but shown such contrary perceptions—two of the most senior officers of the armed forces, had both rushed to Hyderabad to be with the troops' as if the troops were facing a foreign invasion or some major threat to the nation! Beg, returning from an official visit to Bangladesh, had gone directly from Karachi airport to Hyderabad without stopping to see the prime minister, who was in Karachi for the specific purpose of defusing the rising Sindhi-Muhajir tension.

The crux of matter was that the army chief had used troops to deal with a domestic problem in a manner that was not visualized in the constitution and, indeed, that could be considered as contrary to its letter and spirit. Aslam Beg was well aware of this and claimed that he had received a written request for help from the Governor of Sindh, but later conceded that the request was post-dated a week after the intervention. But he had a bigger surprise up his sleeve. In his quiet monotone he announced, have sent troops into Sindh without a requisition from the government,' and 'Insh'allah' he hoped to bring the situation fully under control and restore complete peace and harmony within four weeks![70]

[70] In an exclusive interview to the daily The News three years later, retired Gen. Mahsud Alam said, 'At a stormy conference of formation commanders in Rawalpindi, I disagreed with Beg's contention that the army could put

The man had simply taken over the government in Sindh and was calmly giving the prime minister the news! Benazir did not even wince at this direct, oven, unambiguous affirmation of the army's self-assumed, supra-constitutional authority. I said to myself, 'This is the moment for her to turn to the army chief and say to him, "General, for what you have done, you should be removed from office instantly, but realities being what they are, I am going from this meeting to the president to hand him my resignation. Let those who will, assume their responsibilities under the constitution and before history".'

But this was not Truman dealing with a MacArthur.[71] Under Zia's constitution, the prime minister did not have the power to appoint or dismiss the Service Chiefs, so Benazir simply sidestepped the issue and, pale and tense, talked at length about the need for a 'political' approach and the importance of coordination between the civil and military authorities in dealing with lawlessness in Sindh. She urged that action be taken against identified criminals who were on a list prepared over the last four years, that is, before her advent, and which was therefore a non-partisan list, not weighted for or against any political or ethnic or other group. The general's response was perfunctory—'It will be done'—and patronizing 'This is *your* army, it is acting under *your* command.'

He had his own ideas of how he was going to go about the job: he wanted the government—*ex post facto*—to call on the army to come to the aid of the civil authorities under the constitution; time would be needed, the general said, to rehabilitate the administration and the police in Sindh both of which were virtually non-functional; only then would it be time to conduct joint operations; the army would go for specific targets and do some selective nabbing. Beg added that, at the start, he might be accused of being partisan but he assured the Prime Minister that he was not, and that the armed forces were not supporting the *muhajirs*.

There are two articles of the constitution dealing with the role of the military in civil disorders. Under article 145, a provincial government may, with the consent of the federal government, call upon the armed forces for assistance in meeting a threat to law and order and entrust certain functions, conditionally or unconditionally, to the armed forces. This is good enough for most situations and was adequate for the prevailing situation in the rural areas and cities of Sindh. Article 247 goes further, in that when the military is called in for help in any pan of the country under this article, the High Courts cease to have jurisdiction in that region for as long as the military is exercising authority In other words, a sort of martial law prevails. This was the provision under which Aslam Beg now wanted to be authorized to act in Sindh, with absolute powers to

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everything right in Sindh in two to three weeks' time. I said that this could not be done even in two to three years or even decades. The army itself had caused the situation to deteriorate by the policies it followed during 1983-8.'

[71] General Douglas MacArthur, hero of the Allied victory over Japan in the Second World War, was supreme commander in the 19505 Korean war. President Truman summarily removed him from his command when, in opposition to government policy, he publicly advocated extending the war to China.

arrest, try, and sentence people in military courts, under military laws and procedures.[72]

This particular demand became a bone of contention between the government and the army in the coming weeks, and Benazir's refusal to give Aslam Beg *carte blanche* was cited by Ghulam Ishaq Khan as among the reasons for dismissing her government some weeks later. The meeting had been tense but not stormy, thanks mainly to Aslam Beg's low-key personality and Bona 's refusal to be flapped. After the meeting ended she went into a long huddle with the COAS while some of us—feeling that the moment had come for making difficult choices waited to review the situation with her. When Beg left and she called us in—Amin Fahim, Aitzaz Ahsan, the Sindh Home Minister Rafiquzzaman, and myself—I found her looking tired but relaxed, almost happy. 'That was a good meeting with Aslam Beg,' she said, 'he was very forthcoming...basically Beg is all right...,' and so forth. I was unable to see things in such a cheery light. Little by little, power was being taken from her—Punjab was lost from the start, Balochistan went next, and now, if Aslam Beg did what he was planning to do in Sindh, he would turn the Sindhi voters away from the PPP and into the arms of the Sindhi nationalist parties. To me it seemed clear that there was going to be, not another military *coup*, but a gradual usurpation of real power by the president and Aslam Beg. Benazir would be left to enjoy the perks of office and provide the civilian, democratic front—'to be the icing on the cake', as she herself put it on another occasion.

Benazir did not agree with this pessimistic assessment and said that things did really need to be put right in Sindh, something that the Sindh government had not been able to do on its own. As for what the army might do in Sirldh, she claimed to have got Aslam Beg pinned down to arresting the wanted men on a non-partisan list to which she had referred in the meeting. But she was whistling in the dark. insisted and insisted and I made him do it, he *said* he would do it!'

Nobody mentioned the word 'resignation' but it was implicit in everything that was said, it hung in the air like an evil spell. She brought it up herself eventually and said, It may come to that in the end but I must choose the time when, morally and politically, I am on the high ground.' To me it seemed that such a moment had arrived, but then I am not a politician and not attuned to the vibes that move and motivate politicians. I expressed the opinion that it would not be easy for the president to find a successor, to which Benazir said with a wry smile, 'You have another guess coming!'

As it happened, within six weeks or so Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed her government and appointed a hostile interim administration to hold fresh elections.[73] Had she

[72] Ironically, this provision was added to the constitution during the 1977 troubles by Zulfikar Bhutto after the Lahore High Court's decision that martial law could not be applied to limited regions or cities.

[73] In his interview with The News (see note 24) Gen, Mahsud Alam said that the decision to remove Benazir was taken at a corps commanders' meeting an 21 July 1990.

resigned, under the constitution she would have stayed on as caretaker prime minister and been in a position to prevent the election management that led to the PPP's unexpected defeat.

16
Afghanistan

On 15 February 1989, Lieutenant-General Boris Gromov, commander of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, marched slowly across the Friendship Bridge on the River Oxus and into what was then still the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan. The last Soviet soldier had left the soil of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union's eleven-year long misadventure in Afghanistan was over. It was assumed all round that, with the Soviets gone, the Kabul regime which they had been propping up would crumble by itself. In Kabul there was panic among the PDPA[74] cadres who, according to a report sent by our Chargé d'Affaires in early December 1988, had already started fleeing to India at the rate of 200 per day.

Ziaul Haq's vision, it seemed, was about to assume concrete shape. He had looked to victory in the Afghan war as the stepping-stone to a grand Islamic alliance spreading across the heartland of Asia, from Pakistan through Afghanistan and Iran to Turkey, and including also, when they regained their independence, the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union; over it all would fly the flag of Islam, raised by the Pakistan army under his command. But even those with more modest expectations were confident that, after all that Pakistan had done for Afghanistan for over a decade, the friendship between the two countries was now hewn in rock and the old disputes and contentions were a thing of the past. As for the United States, while there was some concern over the post-war relationship, it was assumed that our American ally would continue to take into account Pakistan's own security and vital interests in the region. No one could have foreseen that only a few years later Pakistan's embassy in 'liberated' Kabul would be set on fire and burned down by one of the Mujahid groups nurtured by Ziaul Haq and that Pakistan's Charge d'Affaires would be brought home on a stretcher.

As for the American ally, even while Pakistan was still acting as the conduit for American aid to the Afghan guerrillas, we received the first warnings that Pakistan was liable to be penalized under America's anti-terrorist laws on account of its alleged support of the guerrilla movement in Indian-held Kashmir. In the end) sanctions under these laws were not applied, but all American economic and military aid to Pakistan was abruptly cut off anyway under America's uni-directional non-proliferation laws. This turn of events constituted a reversal and turn-around that has few precedents in modern diplomatic history.

[74] Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan) the ruling coalition of the Khalq and Parcham factions of the communist party and other leftist and liberal groups.

As for Afghanistan itself, the Soviet intruders are gone but so are the allies and benefactors who brought help and assistance. Afghanistan is now on its own, exhausted by a war with itself, a war without purpose or end, with millions of its people still in refugee camps, its cities lying in ruins, the countryside devastated and riddled with land-mines. No one can tell when real peace will come or, when it comes, whether Afghanistan will still be one country. Meanwhile, much of it is being made over into an Islamic system of a type that has no parallel in the world or in the history of Islam.

The Soviet exit from Afghanistan was not a rout. The Soviet troops did not leave in chaos and disarray as had the Americans from Vietnam; they departed under the terms of an agreement negotiated at Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations, and they did so on the date they had themselves set. It was a defeat nevertheless, the worst defeat suffered by the mighty Soviet Union in all its history. It was surely one of the reasons for the sudden and catastrophic loss of self-confidence suffered by the Soviet system and for the break-up of the Soviet empire that followed not long afterwards.

What had led the Soviet Union into this quagmire? Was it expansionism, was it an extension of the Brezhnev Doctrine[75] beyond the recognized Soviet sphere of influence? Talking to me at a seminar in Aspen, Colorado, a senior official from Poland (where, as in the other Soviet satellite countries, the Soviet invasion was viewed not as the rescue of a fraternal socialist regime but as an ominous precedent) said that what had provoked the Soviet Union to intervene directly was the suspicion that Hafizullah Amin was hobnobbing with Beijing.[76] He thought that the Soviets were also uneasy about US intentions concerning Iran after the departure of the Shah. In his view the Soviet action was basically defensive and the Soviets had no illusions that the Afghan Muslims could be turned into communists. UN Under-Secretary-General Vasily Safronchuk, who was Deputy Chief of the Soviet Mission in Kabul at the time of the invasion, had a simpler explanation. The fault lay, he said to me, in the stupidity and gullibility of Soviet officials on the spot in 1978 who had fallen for the rhetoric of the so-called revolutionaries in Kabul and who believed that a short, sharp intervention would quickly put things right for pro-Soviet groups in Kabul.[77]

[75] A doctrine which meant, in effect, that once a country became part of the 'socialist bloc' there was no opting out—as had been discovered in turn by Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

[76] Academician Szczepanski (pron. Shepanski) of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a friend of President Gomulka. He quoted Khrushchev as having said to American envoy Averell Harriman: It has taken the USSR fifty years to put five million people into Siberia; in five years, China could move in a hundred million.

[77] In their book Out of Afghanistan, (Oxford University Press, New York), Selig Harrison and Diego Cordovez cite recent Russian publications (e.g. 'Russian Roulette' by Gennady Bocharov and The Hidden War by Artyom Borovik), based on declassified official documents, in which Babrak Karmal is quoted as saying: 'If the sending of troops to Afghanistan was a mistake, it was caused by a failure to understand Afghanistan—by a poor knowledge of the country and the Afghan character.' Karmal is said to have disclaimed responsibility for inviting Soviet troops into the country and criticized the actions of Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, despite the ascendancy established by the Durranis in the eighteenth century, remained essentially a confederacy of chieftains and warlords who owed nominal allegiance to the monarch but enjoyed substantial autonomy in their tribal and ethnic fiefdoms. When Sardar Daud overthrew the monarchy and declared a republic in 1976, he removed what had been the focus of political legitimacy and authority in Afghanistan's loose federation and replaced it by a more centralized system. When he in his turn was overthrown by a leftist *coup*, the so-called Saur revolution, the power of the state was further reinforced, to the disadvantage of various ethnic groups, tribal chiefs, and warlords. The Saur revolution was essentially an internal upheaval rooted not in ideology, but in Afghanistan's long-standing social, economic, ethnic, and tribal problems.

Pakistan's initial reaction to the Saur revolution was one of concern rather than alarm. Pakistan gave implicit recognition to the change in Kabul by continuing to deal with Afghanistan under President Noor Muhammad Taraki. When Ziaul Haq met him at the Non-Aligned Summit in Havana in 1979, their discussion was friendly and they agreed to maintain good relations and cooperation between the two countries. Ziaul Haq's policy towards Afghanistan at that stage was prudent and realistic, though later he would be accused of using the Afghan crisis to further his own ends and ambitions. Nor did Hafizullah Amin's *coup* and his hardline references to the differences with Pakistan unduly perturb Islamabad. Even after Soviet troops crossed the Oxus into Afghanistan, Pakistan remained cautious, and Ziaul Haq disdained President Carter's offer of $400 million as aid. It was only after the advent of President Reagan and America's full-scale commitment to the Afghan liberation struggle that Pakistan itself became fully involved in it.[78]

The 'jihad' aspect of the struggle evolved as the fighting spread and intensified. It suited Ziaul Haq's temperament and political objectives to play up the religious element. He knowingly and deliberately built up the position and strength of the more religious-minded resistance groups, and he did so, let it be noted, with the approval and support of the United States and other Western countries. He also believed that if he could install a like-minded regime in Kabul, there would be no more irridentist trouble from Afghanistan. But for all the talk about jihad against the infidel, the war was being fought with the help and guidance of another set of infidels.[79] The war, in reality, was a war between the Red Army and the CIA, and the ambivalence and contrariness that were implicit in treating it as a religious war came increasingly to the surface after the Soviet exit With the departure of the common foe, the religious war cries could not conceal the complexity of the Afghan situation—the shifting rivalries and coalitions

[78] American military aid to the Mujahideen rose from $30 million in 1982 to 1640 million a year in 1987.

[79] When military action by the Mujahideen did not work, out as intended or seemed to be bogged down, one was told, 'But this is 'jihad'. It has its own norms and time scale.' Speaking in that vein on one occasion, General Aslam Beg urged, 'We have to stick with the Mujahideen until somehow or the other they make it into Kabul', but then he added a caveat: 'This strategy will work only if the Americans stick with it to the end.'

among the Afghan groups, between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, between Shins and Sunnis, and within the Pushtuns themselves, between Durranis and Ghilzais; the whole witches' brew was further stirred up by regional tensions involving Iran and Saudi Arabia and, later, some of the Central Asian republics. The continued fighting was not even a regular civil war between two clearly identifiable sides but a many-sided contest for advantage, turf, and spoils, as well as a proxy war for external interests.

Throughout their history, the Afghans have resisted the foreign intruder—be he Greek pagan or Muslim Mughal, 'infidel' Sikh or Englishman. The same xenophobia inspired the struggle against the Russian invader, heightened undoubtedly by the fact that he was a *shuravi*—a godless communist. But the fight against the outsider did not create any internal cohesion among the mujahid groups. They fought the same enemy side-by-side but did not cease to be representatives of the rival ethnic, tribal, and sectarian communities of Afghanistan. Hikrnatyar represented the Pashtuns while Rabbani had been agitating, even before the Russians came and before Saur, for the liberation of the Tajiks from Pashtun domination.[80] The Mujahideen all fought the Soviet intruder with equal fervor but, in eleven years of struggle, they did not coalesce into a united organization and no single resistance group or individual emerged as the uncontested leader. After the abolition of the monarchy, there remained not even that symbol of Afghan unity. The liberation war was fought in a political vacuum, under the guidance and with the material assistance of foreign intelligence agencies.

In the eyes of the world, specially the Western world, if there was a leader of the Afghan resistance to the Soviet aggressor, it was Pakistan's Ziaul Haq, 'architect of the Soviet Union's greatest political and militant defeat', 'a man of integrity and modesty' whose fortitude had prevented Moscow from achieving its ends. These words are from Brzezinskes eulogy and, while not everyone shared his unqualified admiration of Pakistan's dictator, many in the West did fear that tie anti-Soviet front might not hold under a democratic Pakistan. Nusrat Bhutto, chairperson of the PPP, had indeed given them some cause to worry by declaring to a London newspaper a couple of years earlier that when her party came to power, it would recognize the Karma' regime and riot allow the rebel groups to operate from Pakistan.

However, Benazir did not share these views. In March 1988, speaking at the Round Table Conference called by Premier Junejo, she set forth her own position in clear terms. The PPP, she declared, stood for the unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the establishment of a non-aligned and independent Afghanistan which would maintain friendly relations with all its neighbors including the USSR; the PPP recognized the need for social justice and reform in Afghanistan but these were matters for the Afghans themselves to decide. A swift end to war on the basis of these

[80] This was true also of the other side—the communist factions of Khalq and Parch am were identifiable more by their ethnic and tribal affiliations than by revolutionary differences.

principles, she declared, would remove the focus of super-power confrontation in Afghanistan and bring to an end a 'tragic and unnecessary conflict'. Stating that the PPP's only concern was to protect the security of Pakistan now and in times to come, she raised some pertinent questions in this context:

> What is to happen in Afghanistan during the ten to twelve months of Soviet withdrawal? What measures can be devised to prevent bloodshed and the breakdown of law and order; to guard against a further influx of refugees into Pakistan if civil war continues? We are not suggesting a tutelage for the country; it is not for outsiders to decide what should be the nature and complexion of the future Afghan government. Our concern is that in the transition that follows Soviet withdrawal, nothing should happen that would lead to continued instability. A peaceful transition is possible only if the order that follows the Soviet withdrawal enjoys the confidence of all elements involved in the Afghan war.

The other question related to the border between the Pakistan and Afghanistan, a question that had plagued their relations in the past. Benazir urged that the Geneva Accords, then about to be signed, should incorporate the understanding reached between President baud and Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1976 definitively confirming the Durand Line as the international border between the two countries.[81]

Benazir's statement was well-received by the national Press which described it as one of her best and noted that Ms Bhutto was the only one who had underscored the importance of making arrangements for the transition period following the Soviet withdrawal and the need to settle the border issue once and for all. However, the Geneva Accords did riot contain any provision with regard to either of these points. Ziaul Haq himself had been insistent on the need to put together an interim government of some kind to takeover when the Soviet forces and their Kabul protégés left the scene. On this subject he said to the representative of a British newspaper,[82] Why not have one-third representing the Afghan freedom fighters, one-third the Afghan refugee movements, and yes, as we shall have to give something to those chaps on the spot, one-third the present communist regime?'

When military, economic, and political support from the United States and elsewhere was flowing into Pakistan at the height of the Afghan war, Oleg Troyanovsky, the Soviet Permanent Representative at the United Nations, joked with me, 'Now Pakistan has found its oil-field!' But Ziaul Haq's Afghan policy, based on a canny mix of Islamic

[81] This agreement would have put an end to Afghanistan's irridentist claims on Pakistan's tribal territories in the north-west, but the draft was not signed and the treaty was stillborn when both leaders were overthrown and killed.

[82] Gordon Brook-Shepard of *The Sunday Telegraph*, 29 November 1987, cited in *Out Of Afghanistan*, Harrison and Cordovez, *op. cit.*

fervor and calculations of profit and loss, did not exclude compromise and conciliation. In another interview[83] he had expressed the view that the Soviets would not withdraw unless they were assured that their friends would not be massacred, and 'that requires accommodation'.

However, a spirit of accommodation was not in evidence among Zia's legatees, nor did they show a proper awareness of realities. They considered themselves the guardians of the nation's security and felt that they alone knew what was in its best interests. They were the 'Last Milers' who affirmed: 'Having inflicted on the Soviet Union the greatest defeat it has suffered in its history, now is not the time for us to stop. We must go the last mile! True enough, but go where? Some among the military favored taking Kabul by storm and wanted a military victory for its own sake, perhaps seeing in it (as an ex-general said to me) a vicarious redemption for the surrender at Dhaka twenty years earlier. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan was an ideological intransigent. When the chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, sent an envoy to Pakistan to advocate an Afghan compromise, the president said to him: 'This is a war against Marxism and it will not be won until Marxism is extirpated and Islam restored! When the Marxist Mugabe's envoy asked, 'Then the only solution is a military solution?' Ghulam Ishaq Khan's succinct answer was, 'Yes, unless Najib and the PDPA quit of their own volition.'[84]

At one meeting of the Afghan Cell (set up in the Foreign Office at Benazir's behest), a presentation on the military situation turned into a sermon on the nature, purpose, and significance of jihad: 'In Afghanistan the jihad had started before the Soviet invasion, not merely to oppose communism but in order to establish an Islamic state.' We were informed that a jihad had its own laws, principles, tactics, and time frame, and 'time can be no limiting factor for one who fights in the way of Allah!'

When Benazir was sworn in as prime minister in December 1988, there were just a few weeks to go before the Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan. In the last days of the year, President Najibullah sent a personal letter to Benazir in which, welcoming the return of democracy to Pakistan and of the PPP to power, he asked for her help in setting up a broad-based government which would be representative of all sections of the Afghan people and could takeover after the Soviet exit. We were inclined at the time to see the move as a sign of Najib's desperation, and it may well have been that, but no reply was

[83] With Phillip Rezvin of *The Wall Street Journal* on 1 December 1987. Cited in *Out of Afghanistan, ibid.*

[84] Ghulam Ishaq, a humorless man generally, told a good story to make his point. A dog fell into a village well and the carcass polluted the water, making it stink. The villagers went for advice and remedy to the local mullah, who told them to draw a pail of water from the well, read a certain prayer over it, and then throw the water back into the well. After a few days the villagers were back, complaining that the stench was worse than ever. The mulah asked if they had done everything exactly as he had asked them to do. 'And what did you do with the dog?' asked the divine, 'Oh, he is still in the well, you never said anything about the dog!'

sent to that missive and no attempt made to probe the opening it may have offered for bringing about Najibis own orderly exit from the scene.[85]

At that point, in fact, there were not many who favored a negotiated settlement. Not only our own Last Milers, hardliners, and daydreamers, but the United States, too, did not see the need for, or the advantage of, a compromise. The Americans had not forgotten Vietnam and were not disposed to let the Soviets march out of Afghanistan with flags flying and leaving their puppets still in place in Kabul. The American ambassador in Islamabad was Robert Oakley, a tall man with the gaunt, rough-hewn appearance of an Abraham Lincoln. When he paid his first call on me, we talked about the various ideas that were afloat for setting up a broad-based interim government. Oakley was of the view that Kabul was ripe to fall and that we should not be pressing the Alliance leaders too much at that stage to accept compromises. He did not say it in so many words, but clearly the Americans would not mind having the Russian nose rubbed in the dirt.

The Soviet representative in Islamabad, the dour Ambassador Yakunin, was something of a Comrade Komissar type—unsmiling and inclined to be dialectical, even overbearing, if allowed the leeway. Talking to me at a dinner party in Islamabad one evening he held out a big stick: Najib has extended a hand of friendship but, if it is not grasped tomorrow, his outstretched hand could turn into a fist.' But .the Comrade also proffered a big carrot: 'You want a friendly government in Kabul, a settlement of the Durand Line. All that is possible.'

Yuli Vorontsov, Soviet special envoy for Afghanistan, came to Is soon after the PPP government assumed office. He too displayed great touchiness on the score of 'face'. 'There are some in the United States who would like to see the Afghan war end as a Soviet Vietnam—to see the Soviets leave Kabul in a rout, clinging to helicopter spars,' he said. 'That is America's little game with us. Why should Pakistan want to get involved in it, what will you gain by joining America in trying to humiliate the Soviet Union?' He bristled when Sahibzada Yaqub, meaning to be considerate, said that the main object now should be to see that the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan took place in an orderly and peaceful manner. 'That is not at all how we see the problem. I am not here begging to be allowed to leave in peace. We are concerned about the future of Afghanistan and peace in the region.' Again, when Yaqub said that the Foreign Office was trying to arrange a meeting for him with the Alliance leaders, Vorontsov said, 'Let

[85] When Shevardnadze came to Islamabad in February 1989 he tried to promote a direct contact between Ben it and Najibullah. A member of his entourage took me aside to convey to her a one-to-one message: a fundamentalist victory in Afghanistan would be bad not only for Afghanistan but for Pakistan's new government. Najibullah had considerable influence in the tribal areas and among some political parties of the NWFP and Balochistan and would be glad to help Benazir in whatever way she wished; he also had the friendliest relations with Rajiv Gandhi and could be of help with India. However, that was the last kind of help Benazir needed, and she laughed it off.

them not get the idea that we shall be going to meet them with bowed heads. We are not the representatives of a defeated nation...'

At President's House, Ghulam Ishaq Khan's tone was uncompromising. The only way to ensure a peaceful and orderly transition in Afghanistan, he said to the Soviet envoy, was for the Soviet Union to drop its support of the PDPA, which was the source of all the turmoil and bloodshed suffered by Afghanistan for more than a decade. Vorontsov was outraged. 'Never! We shall never abandon our friends.' He said that the revolution in Afghanistan was a real revolution, the PDPA had popular support and was capable of going on fighting for a long time. Kabul was willing to compromise but was equally ready to defend itself, and Vorontsov warned that the Soviets would give its client all the weapons and *materiel* that it may need to do so.

The Soviet envoy's meeting with Benazir on the following day was a long one and went on over lunch. He repeated his familiar piece: there were only two ways out, war and bloodshed or peace and order through the establishment of a broad-based government that should include representatives of the PDPA. If war it was to be, then Kabul had the weapons and the USSR would give it more and better ones and the war would go on and spread and could even end up in a proxy war between Pakistan and the USSR.

Benazir's response was temperate but incisive and summed up the parameters and pros and cons of the Afghan crisis. She assured the Soviet envoy that Pakistan's wish was to see Afghanistan emerge from the war as a moderate, progressive, and non-aligned state. However, she went on, in the Zia years of Islamization, a certain pattern had been created and this set a limit to what could be done in regard to a settlement in Afghanistan. (Hamid Gul, who was at the meeting, listened in silence, staring blankly into empty space.) Her government would do everything in its power to pre-empt the military option. The Mujahideen had fought the PDPA for nine years and it was not realistic to ask them to accept a coalition with the PDPA. The best way would be to help the Mujahideen to set up a Shoora[86] with places in it for elements from Kabul and elsewhere. 'Let us find a way out together,' Benazir urged the Soviet envoy, and went on to say that, like the Soviet Union, Pakistan too was in a period of transition to democracy and as here, so in the Soviet Union too, there must be divided opinions on Afghanistan. To give more arms and encouragement to Najibullah was not the best way to go; the example of the Shah of Iran showed that military force, however impressive it might seem, was of no avail if political realities were not recognized. am told that Mr. Najibullah is a nationalist,' Benazir said in conclusion. 'If so, he should step down for the good of the country.'

Vorontsov said, 'Yes, Najibullah is prepared to step aside but...'

[86] In an Islamic polity, a consultative assembly or gathering that is representative of various groups and interests; it is not necessarily an elected body.

A month later Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze himself came, making a long detour on his way home from a visit to Beijing. It was a flying visit but significant for more than one reason: it was undertaken at the Soviet Foreign mister's own initiative; it was the first visit by a top Soviet leader since Kosygin had come after the Tashkent conference in the late l960s, and; above all, it was important for its timing, for as yet no military or diplomatic bluffs had been called, our side appeared to be in a strong position in both respects, and the Soviet Union, facing uncertainty on all fronts, was anxious for a settlement. (Indeed the first signs of Moscow's readiness to compromise had come three years earlier when Babrak Karmal was unceremoniously dumped and replaced by Najibullah.) My impression was that the Soviets were not interested in keeping the PDPA as such in power but wanted to get out of the place 'with honor', that is, with a settlement which showed that they were riot throwing their Afghan clients to the wolves.

Shevardnadze called for a cease-fire and said that reality must be recognized by providing some room for the Kabul regime in a broad-based interim government. Benazir praised Gorbachev's farsightedness in revising the Soviet Union's misconceived Afghan policy. She hoped that the General Secretary's salutary effort would not now be lost in a vain attempt to find a niche for the discredited and beleaguered Kabul regime. She called on the Soviet Union to lend its full support to an orderly transfer of power to an interim government that would include some Kabul elements and some neutral persons from elsewhere.

I said that if the Soviets gave them weapons, the PDPA would of course be able to fight on, but that that was not likely to change the eventual outcome. Among the realities that could not be ignored were the feelings and sentiments that had resulted from a decade of war and bloodshed. To this Shevardnadze said, 'But there should be two phases in the process of a settlement. First of all the shedding of blood must stop,' thus implying that a cease-fire could be linked to Najibullah's exit. Benazir said:

> We want to look beyond Afghanistan to stabilizing the situation in our region where there is much flux and movement but there are also some positive developments. In Afghanistan the formation of a broad-based government could be the prelude to a big international effort of reconstruction and development in which the Soviet Union might also want to participate. We consider that friendly and good-neighborly Afghan-Soviet relations would be to Pakistan's advantage.

It was noticeable that Shevardnadze himself focused much of his attention on improving the Soviet Union's bilateral relations with Pakistan and developing cooperation in the economic field. He mentioned, in this context, help in increasing the capacity of the Karachi steel mill to three million tons and, more significantly, expressed

the Soviet Union's willingness to consider building a nuclear power station in Pakistan. 'Your recent nuclear agreement with India[87] has improved the prospect in this regard. It takes care of many questions,' he said.

It was a good moment to begin a reappraisal and readjustment of our overall policy which, for more than a decade, had been concerned almost exclusively with one issue and had become excessively dependent on the relationship with the United States. Of course, no one could have foreseen that the Soviet Union would simply disappear as such, but it was possible to sense a change in the wind. US-Soviet relations were beginning even then to lose some of their acerbity. In the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, other—and mutual—regional concerns were coming to the fore in the relations between the two superpowers. Already in October 1989, while discussing the Afghan situation with a staff member of the National Security Council in Washington, I caught an early whiff of the veering wind: the Soviet Union was concerned, he said with evident sympathy, over the sort of Islamic fundamentalism[88] represented by some of the mujahid groups.

The Soviets did not give up trying. In June Benazir received a message from Gorbachev in reply to her message of good wishes on the eve of his visit to China. Noting the emphasis on a political settlement during her meetings in Washington earlier in the month, the Soviet leader affirmed that for its part the Soviet Union was ready for practical steps towards reaching such a settlement. The tetchiness of Pakistan-Soviet relations could come out in small ways. The Soviet Charge d'Affaires who delivered Gorbachev's message did so in an amusing manner, though that was the opposite of his intention. No doubt aggrieved at having been given only fifteen minutes for the meeting, he came in precisely at 5 o'clock, walked up to the prime minister in a brisk mariner and, looking at his watch, said, have fifteen minutes, so one minute for introduction, two minutes for reading the letter, and then for twelve minutes we can discuss.'

After reading the letter and expressing her thanks for it, Benazir spoke to the Soviet official of her difficulties, the refusal of any Afghan resistance group to deal with Najibullah, her government's attempts to find openings. A political arrangement that would keep Najibullah in place was simply not possible, she said. The Chargé d'Affaires riposted, 'Well, if Najibullah is to go, then Hikmatyar should also go!' At the end of fifteen minutes exactly, he glanced at his watch and, reverting to Urdu for his leave-taking, said 'Khuda Hafiz,' and marched out as briskly and huffily as he had come in.

[87] An agreement, finalized during Rajiv Gandhi's Islamabad visit, between the two countries not to attack each other's nuclear facilities.

[88] However, when I brought up this matter with him in Moscow, Shevardnadze laughed wryly: 'The fundamentalists we are worried about right now are our own Marxist fundamentalists!'

When I went to Moscow in February 1990 to brief the Soviets on the renewed tension in Kashmir, Shevardnadze spoke to me about an article he had written in a Soviet newspaper putting forward a ten-point plan for an Afghan settlement. He hoped that we would give it careful consideration and let the Soviet government have our reaction. This too, he suggested, could take the form of an article in the Press. The advantage of this form of communication was that each government could put forward a position and probe the other's reactions without formally committing itself to anything. There was in fact nothing notably new in Shevardnadze's proposals, but his initiative and what he said about it indicated the Soviet Union's anxiety to find a way out of the impasse.

When Benazir assumed office, the Afghan crisis appeared to be moving towards a victorious climax, but the political atmosphere was marked to an equal degree by hopes and fears. By the time her government was dismissed, most of the hopes had been foreclosed and the fears had begun to come true. The mood prevailing in Islamabad was reflected in General Hamid Gul's observation, mentioned in the previous section, on the 'fruits of victory'—hubris and triumphalism, mixed with anxiety that Benazir might give it all away by compromise or take the levers of Afghan policy-making out of 'safe' hands.

The atmosphere of mistrust and rivalry that prevailed was epitomized in a column that appeared in a Lahore daily.[89] The subject of the column was a Pakistani offer to the United Nations to allow it to establish check-posts in order to verify that clandestine arms supplies were not being funneled to the Mujahideen through Pakistan. The columnist did not like the proposal as such, but what worried him in particular was that it was made in the UN Security Council by a 'PPP loyalist' (namely myself) and not by either Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan or Permanent Representative Sardar Shahnawaz who, in his eyes, were the repositories of the continuity of Pakistan's Afghan policy. The move led him to suspect that the PPP was making an 'agonizing reappraisal' of Afghan policy with a view to reducing the power of the Pakistan army, more specially of the ISI.

The columnist, the late Ghani Eirabic, certainly did not suffer from a lack of intellectual clarity but he was close to establishment circles, and the line of thought in his article reflected the acute political partisanship and deep-seated animosity that Benazir had to face throughout her term. At the climacteric stage of the Afghan crisis, policy-making in Pakistan was beset by a conflict of aims and ambitions and a confusion of perceptions, and that was a major obstacle to an orderly denouement of the crisis.

At quite an early stage after she assumed office, it was put to Benazir that, though as prime minister she was in charge of overall policy, she would do better to let the day-to-

[89] 'How Many Foreign Policies Do We Have,' *The Nation*, Lahore, 19 April 1989.

day running of the Afghan effort be handled, as it had been in Ziaul Haq's time, by a male 'central figure' such as President Ghulam Ishaq Khan or General. Aslam Beg. The Mujahideen leaders, being all religious figures with conventional attitudes and coming from highly conservative backgrounds, would, it was implied, be more at ease dealing with such a person than with the Westernized, modern young woman that she was.

This was specious reasoning. The reason why Ziaul Haq had seemed to be more masterful in dealing with the Mujahideen lay not in his gender or personality. Ziaul Haq was in charge when the Afghan crisis was in a largely military phase. His advice, guidance, and direction were in the domain of military tactics and were easy to impose on the Mujahideen.[90] Now the rules of the game had changed, indeed now a different, more complex game was being played in the field of politics. The contention was over the sharing of power and the shape of the power structure in post-Soviet Afghanistan; on these matters the Afghan leaders were not willing to accept guidance, let alone any sort of paternalistic direction, from a 'central figure'. In point of fact, neither the president nor the army chief was able to make more headway than Benazir in persuading the Mujahid leaders to get their act together. As for talking straight to the Afghan divines and macho men, Benazir did a rather better job of it than anyone else. Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Aslam Beg thought they could make their case by laying it on about Islamic duties and Islamic brotherhood and so forth but the Mujahideen knew all about that already.[91]

She had the first of her many meetings with the Alliance leaders—'Bibi's *jirgas*'[92] as some of us called them—soon after taking over as prime minister, It was a weird, almost unreal tableau as this young woman sat at the head of the table, surrounded by these big, dour, battle-hardened, and ruthless men. There was Burhanuddin Rabbani, who looked (misleadingly, as it later turned out) meek and self-effacing, rather like one of Christ's gentle and smiling apostles in a renaissance painting. Abdul Rasul Sariaf, a tall, big-boned man with a long, flowing beard, was another character from a biblical painting, a stern, adamantine Michelangelo patriarch. He was a strict Sunni of the Wahhabi school of Saudi Arabia, from where he received political guidance and also a good deal of his funds. Ahmad Shah 'Engineer' (so-called because he had attended classes in an engineering school) was a tall, gangling figure with a straggly grey beard and a diffident smile that lent an engaging air to his otherwise unkempt appearance. Hikmatyar, who had also attended engineering school, also had a boyish smile, but above the smile, the gaze was unsmiling and hard and seemed to bear out his

[90] Pir Effendi Gailani said to me that in the late dictator's time there were no discussions and consultations—the Muiahideen were told what was expected and it got done.

[91] One member of the Afghan Interim Government said to me, 'Aslam Beg is only meeting the AIG and that restricts his knowledge of things as well as his ability to influence them.'

[92] A jirga is a gathering of elders and notables of a tribe that settles disputes between its members, deals with matters of common interest, takes decisions on issues of war and peace. Bibi (lady), a word play on her initials, was how those not on first name terms called Benazir in informal conversation.

reputation for ruthlessness. Nasirullah Babar (Benazir's special assistant) once accused him of having his enemies heaved into the river from high bridges. He did not reply but smiled disarmingly, as if caught at a boyish prank. He was known as a hard-line fundamentalist, but ambition rather than ideology was his driving force. To some policy-makers in Pakistan, he was Pakistan's 'Friend-for-Life', but as he never got to exercise effective power in Kabul, the belief was not put to the test. Abdul Nabi Mohammadi, tall, gaunt, and Rasputin-like, with a beard dyed jet black, spoke little but spoke plainly. Two relatively worldly figures relieved this sombre tableau: Fir Effendi Gailani, a person of Edwardian elegance and physical proportions, who sometimes wore three-piece Savile Row suits, silk tie, and matching *pochette*; and the moderate Sibghatullah Mujadaddi, whose uncle, the late Mullah Shorbazar, had been a staunch supporter of friendship with Pakistan during the worst of times in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Both men were enlightened 'Islamists' and they were monarchists. The one absentee from the meeting was Maulvi Yunus Khales, the fundamentalist's fundamentalist. A big, taciturn, unsmiling man with large hands and flat feet, dyed hair and beard, and a censorious frown on henna-colored brows, he was the very image of the village mullah and had ideas to match.

All these men had been Ziaul Haq's protégés, though not all of them considered him a special friend. The general's sudden and tragic end had left them shocked and grieved. They were doubtful and worried about the position that the new government might take on the Afghan issue. That this government was headed by a woman only added to their misgivings.

The atmosphere at this first meeting was wary. The Afghan leaders listened to Benazir with expressionless faces but must have been impressed by her poise and self-confidence. She dealt with them very deftly, drawing parallels from her own struggle against Zia with the situation the Mujahideen were facing. 'A struggle in the field of battle calls for courage and self-sacrifice,' she said, 'a political struggle also calls for courage and sacrifice but of a different kind, the courage of patience, of endurance, the sacrifice even of dearly cherished goals.' We had to swallow many a bitter pill!' she said.

The Mujahideen leaders spoke in turn, each explaining the position of his group or party. All were worried that Pakistan might make a deal with Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, who was coming to Islamabad the following week. They were against 'negative symmetry' (the halting of military supplies to both sides), fearing that it would put them at a disadvantage *vis-a-vis* Kabul, which had huge accumulated stocks to draw upon. (In this regard, the Mujahideen were not badly off either and in fact, 'negative symmetry' would have given them an advantage over Kabul since they could still manage to get the weapons needed for the kind of war they would be fighting.) Their struggle would not end, they said to Benazir, until the communists were ejected from Kabul and an Islamic government was installed in their place. Will you help us in this enterprise?' they asked her.

But the sharp differences within the Alliance were apparent even at this first meeting. Moves had been initiated to try to put together an interim government that could lay claim to Kabul after the Soviet withdrawal. The moderate Sibghatullah Mujadaddi foresaw much bloodshed if an acceptable interim government was not set up, but warned also that he would not participate in one that was headed by Engineer Ahmad Shah. He said that differences had been created by 'past mistakes' (meaning presumably, Ziaul Haq's tilt towards the more hard-line Alliance groups) and fanned by external meddling.

Some months later, after the Afghan Interim Government (AIG) had been formed, Benazir took a stronger line with its members in telling them to broaden the base of their government and, in particular, to get some Iran-based refugees on board. 'Make the Tehran group an offer of eight seats in the cabinet and some key ministries, call their bluff!' she urged. Again, she recalled her own experience with the smaller parties in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) whom she had given whatever they asked for; it did not matter much, she said, because when the elections were held, these small parties just went under But the AIG leaders were cautious: 'Suppose they call *our* bluff and accept the offer!'

In June 1990, a couple of months before her government was dismissed, Benazir read the AIG leaders the not act: if there was no progress in making the AIG more representative and more effective, they would lose the support of the United States. She chided the AIG for still acting like seven distinct parties rather than a coherent government. They ought to be speaking with one voice, not airing their differences in public. Why, she asked, had no field commanders been persuaded to join the AIG, why had none been appointed as governor, why, despite promises, had no Soviet prisoners of war been released, why had the agreed declaration of amnesty not been issued? How could the Mujahideen expect the Kabul troops to surrender when some of those that had done so had been led out of hand, contrary to the laws of war and the precepts of Islam?

The preliminary moves to set up an interim administration were already under way when Benazir came to office. At the first meeting of the Afghan Cell in January 1989, General Hamid Gul reported that a *Shoora* was to meet the following week to approve an interim government under Engineer Ahmad Shah, that it would hold elections before 31 July, and that a permanent government would be set up by 30 September. It all sounded too good to be true and so it was.

The next day Pir Effendi Gailani, one of the 'moderates', came to see me. He minced no words in opposing Ahmad Shah: 'We shall take up our Kalashnikovs if they try to impose this man on us.' A few days later Foreign Minister Yaqub and I had a meeting with some Alliance leaders who complained at length about the Engineer. He was a

weak character, they told us who would just be the front man for Hilanatyar. Moreover, they said, he had no following inside Afghanistan and was strongly opposed in the refugee camps as well as by the Iran-based and *émigré* groups. Burhanuddin Rabbani, the Tajik leader, was opposed to a dominant role for a hard-line Pushtun like Hikmatyar.

The Engineer listened to these strictures without protest and defended himself in a mild tone (in English, perhaps to show that he was not such a (undo after all). He had no personal ambition and was not seeking the post, he affirmed, and he could not understand why everyone seemed to think that he was a weak person. What reason was there, he asked plaintively, for refusing even to propose his name to the *Shoora* for its consideration?

The whole *Shoora* proposal came in for severe criticism. The 'moderates' asserted that it was designed to be a rubber stamp for the hard-line fundamentalists. Abdul Nabi Mohammadi was dubious about organizing elections, not only because of bad weather and difficult terrain but because, he held, 'in the Afghanistan of today, electoral contests are likely to be decided by bullets rather than ballots'. Maulvi Yunus Khales' representative opposed the very idea of elections as being contrary to Islam. 'Maulvi Sahib believes not in counting heads but in weighing them!' he explained in an echo of the poet Wipes unhappy phrase. No doubt Maulvi Sahib also thought that a woman's place was in the kitchen, though his representative tactfully refrained from saying so!

As the argument among the Mujahideen leaders went on well past midnight, it was apparent that the problem was not only the conflicting policies and ambitions of the Peshawar Seven. The differences were not simply ethnic or ideological, despite the use of labels such as moderate, extremist, fundamentalist, but also of an intensely personal nature and therefore more tenacious and more difficult to resolve.

In the beginning, Hikmatyar had been the blue-eyed boy of American officials, had received a substantial share of military and economic aid, and been fussed over and hyped-up by Western media. But now the gloss was off and the black-turbaned, narrow-eyed strongman was out of favor and decried in the West as a 'fundamentalist'. However, he remained a favorite of the Pakistani establishment, and even Nasirullah Babar, a close adviser of Benazir's, considered him to be the right man for the job. It was, in fact, General Babar, Commanding Officer of the Frontier Constabulary in the elder Bhutto's time, who had arranged asylum in Pakistan for Hikmatyar—and for Rabbani as well—when the Afghan police were after both men in connection with the anti-government rioting in Kabul in 1974. 'We took them under our wing because we knew that someday there would be trouble in Afghanistan. We wanted to build up a leadership to influence events,' the retired general explained to a newspaper.[93] But as

[93] *The New York Times*, 23 April 1989.

the *Shoora* got under way, Benazir put her foot down with regard to Hikmatyar. She made it clear that she did not want someone installed in Kabul who would be hobnobbing with her political opponents in Pakistan and creating ruble for her.

Ghulam Ishaq Khan grumbled later that Benazir had vetoed Hikmatyar at America's behest and as a result the interim government that was established was a weak one. That is a moot point. Hikmatyar was a strong character who knew what he wanted and how to get it, of that there was little doubt—he was ruthless and could be merciless. He was a fundamentalist, true, but no more so than some of the other Alliance leaders and certainly a lot less so than the Taliban who now have the country in their ultra-pious grip, Hikmaryar was pragmatic in pursuing his aims and did not hesitate, as recounted later, to line up with Najibullah's defence minister when the latter tried to carry out a *coup*. In Baghdad, Iraq's Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, told me of Hikmatyar's occasional visits to Baghdad to meet representatives of the Soviet Union and the Najibullah regime. When I asked Hikrnatyar about this, he admitted straightaway that he had been meeting these people and explained that it was in order 'to arrange for Najibullah to quit voluntarily'!

The pertinent question, however, was, would Hikmatyar have reconciled the interests and legitimate claims of all the diverse and rival groups that make up Afghan polity? Would he have offered fair terms to the Tajiks, Hazaras, Shia s, and other minority groups? In Tehran, when he was pressed over Shia representation in an interim government, his answer was the riposte, 'How many Sunni ministers do you have in the Irani government?'

The massacre of Ahmad Shah's men at Takhar by Hikmatyar's group and his failure to punish the perpetrators were not encouraging portents. If his strength was used merely in the service of his ambition and his own ethnic group, then a Hikmatyar regime would be strong in terms of ruthlessness and brutality but not ideal for putting Afghanistan together again.

In the search for someone who might be able to accomplish this, a name that kept coming up from time to time, was that of King Zahir Shah. He had his supporters among the Mujahideen and he had some sympathizers in Pakistan too. However, many Afghans were fiercely opposed to him as a person and for the discredited order that he represented. The King gave no indication that he recognized the need for social change or that he would provide firm government. He himself had little ambition; by all accounts he was content to be living a quiet life in his villa outside Rome. Moscow, for lack of anyone else, had come round to seeing him as an acceptable compromise figure, though according to Soviet officials, the King himself responded to their feelers on the subject always with prevarication. 'Not now, not now, maybe later. Let us think about it.'

Nevertheless, egged on perhaps by his ambitious son-in-law, Shah Wali Khan, the King did make efforts to involve himself in the crisis and asked to be allowed to pay a visit to Pakistan. To these requests he received no response. In July 1989, on the eve of Benazir's official visit to Washington, the King wrote to her proposing that they might have a meeting in Europe on her way there or back. She did not consider it politic to take up the King's proposal but it was suggested that, at some stage, either Foreign Minister Yaqub or myself should pay the King a discreet visit and probe his ideas on the future of his country. This suggestion did not materialize, either. The fact is that the King had become irrelevant in the new situation and, like Hikmatyar, he was likely to divide rather than unite the Afghans. Moreover, to many in Pakistan, King Zahir Shah represented a period when Afghanistan had pursued irredentist claims against Pakistan and collaborated with India's anti-Pakistan policies.

An Afghan Interim Government was finally cobbled together in February 1989, made up of the seven Alliance chiefs—hardly a surprise because the body that 'elected' the AIG was a *Shoora* nominated by the same seven movements. The *Shoora* had included, for effect, a scattering of *émigrés* and other 'moderate' elements. Some of these persons alleged that they had been cautioned not to push their ideas in the *Shoora*. One, whom I knew from the United Nations in New York, complained that the *émigrés* simply sat around all day while a so-called 'government' was being put together without their views being taken into account or even asked for. Another visitor, Humayun Assefi, King Zahir Shah's brother-in-law, was less restrained in his criticism and fumed at what he described as the 'conspicuous, overpowering, and grotesque' Pakistani presence at the *Shoora*.

The *Shoora*, in effect, only provided a larger forum for the airing of differences between the Alliance leaders. These proved difficult to reconcile and the problem was thrown into the lap of a fourteen-man sub-*shoora* which was instructed to remain cloistered until it came up with an agreed list of names for the proposed cabinet. This too did not work, and eventually a vote was taken in the Shoora as a whole, with the understanding that the person with the highest number of votes would become president, the next highest, prime minister, and so on. Thus Mujadaddi emerged as president, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf as prime minister, Pir Effendi Gailani as minister of justice, and Gulbadin Hikmatyar as foreign minister.

The AIG suffered right from the start from two deficiencies that proved to be irremediable and that defeated the purpose of its creation. In the first place, the AIG was just another guise for the Peshawar Seven and ignored all the other groups and elements needed to make up a truly broad-based interim government—the Iran-based Shia groups, the King's men (that is, the pre-war class of technocrats and professionals who had the capability and experience to run the administration), and the leftist, liberal, but non-communist elements (covered by the blanket term, 'Good Muslims') from the Kabul regime.

Sayyaf was contemptuous of these technocrats and moderates. 'These people cannot run Afghanistan,' he scoffed, they are terrified if they see war scenes even on television!' The Mujahideen controlled Afghanistan, he asserted, and no one else could even stir there without Mujahideen support; only the Mujahideen could enforce any amnesty and prevent revenge killings. But of course they did not, or could not, do any of these things because, as Sayyaf himself said on another occasion, the Mujahideen were an assemblage of seven armies, not a coalition of political parties.

This was the other grievous shortcoming of the AIG: reincarnating the Alliance Seven as an interim government did nothing to overcome the differences that had prevented them from developing a common policy and leadership in the course of a decade of fighting a common enemy. Throughout its relatively brief, barren, and ineffectual existence, the members of the so-called Interim Government remained at sixes and sevens among themselves, their internecine bickering and feuds as bitter as their hatred of the Kabul regime.

The immediate question, once the AIG was in place, was that of granting it recognition. There was a strong lobby that favored immediate and unconditional recognition of the Interim Government by Pakistan. Foremost among these was General Hamid Gul, who had been the prime mover in setting it up. He pleaded the cause with fervor and passion ten hard years of struggle were at stake, it was our responsibility before history, what would the world think if Pakistan failed to support its own protégés, and so forth. At his wits' end for something to goad the government into doing what he wanted, he tried a little *hocus-pocus* by coming up one morning with a scare story—India was about to recognize the AIG!

Saudi Arabia had meanwhile gone ahead and granted recognition to the AIG, having been given to understand, so Foreign Minister Saud bin Faisal explained afterwards, that Pakistan would be quite happy to see Saudi Arabia do so. Given to understand by whom? This was, in fact, the exact opposite of what had been decided some days previously at a working lunch at which Hamid Gul was present. As it turned out, Saudi Arabia was the only country to recognize the AIG.

The Benazir government stood firm in declining to follow suit, despite much wringing of hands and shaking of heads AIG partisans. The interim government that had emerged from the made-to-measure Serra, was not the broad-based entity that could rally the support needed to reconcile the various communities and factions and provide a credible and effective alternative to the Kabul regime. However, the government did give the AIG every sort of support and counsel, and accorded protocol honors and privileges (including perks, such as the duty-free import of cars) to its members. We also lobbied successfully for their admission to the OIC at a meeting of the OIC foreign

ministers in Jeddah, avoiding a split with the pro-Soviet Arabs thanks to the efforts of Prince Saud bin Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister.

Hikmatyar, the AIG 'foreign minister', took his seat amidst a standing ovation when Saud bin Faisal said, 'I now say the words I have waited long years to utter: "I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Afghanistan"? In a private meeting before the session, Saud also offered Hikmatyar sound advice on the need for tolerance, magnanimity, and national reconciliation, sentiments that perhaps were not uppermost in the mind of his Afghan colleague at that point.

Pakistan had withheld formal recognition in the hope, which turned out to be vain, that the promise of recognition might impel the members of the Interim Government to correct what might be considered as its basic defects, that is, lack of political credibility and of administrative and military effectiveness—it should be noted that the military aim was not now the conquest of Kabul, but principally to shake the self-confidence of the Najibullah regime and of its supporters.

The occasion to test the military track came almost immediately and ended in a fiasco that put paid to the military option for all practical purposes. This was the attempt to take Jalalabad by main force. *The New York Times*[94] gave an account of the event that can be summarized as follows: At a meeting of top civilian and military leadership at which the American ambassador (but no Afghan leader) was also present, Prime Minister Benazir's government approved a frontal assault by the Afghan guerrilla forces on the key eastern town of Jalalabad. The decision was taken against the advice of General Hamid Gul, Director-General of ISI. In the general's view, the mutually antagonistic guerrilla groups were incapable of concluding such a large-scale act of conventional warfare as seizing a major city by storm; instead he proposed a somewhat lengthier campaign of attrition against the city's links to Kabul, accompanied by stepped-up talks between Kabul and the guerrilla leaders to bring about the surrender of the city.

The story (whose author was identified by *The Washington Post* as Hamid Gul) was accurate in all particulars except one—the general had not opposed the decision; if the government was prepared to allow for a certain degree of bloodshed, he anticipated that Jalalabad could be taken in a week of fighting. One can easily imagine the tenor of the press interview if things had indeed gone that way!

The Afghan Cell, which I co-chaired with Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan, followed developments closely. General Hamid Gul reports in the first days were upbeat: on 4 March we were informed that the Mujahideen had begun preparations to capture Jalalabad and the attack should come in a week or two at the latest. A couple of weeks later the Mujahideen were across a river and poised to make a break-through at any

[94] *Ibid*.

moment. These tidings were confirmed when Samarkhel, an important garrison on the outskirts of Jalalabad, fell within a few days and the way seemed open to Jalalabad itself.

But then weeks passed with no further news, good or bad. A month later Hamid Gul, impassive, admitted that his estimates regarding the fall of Jalalabad had been optimistic, but 'fall it will.' Ten days later the Mujahideen were reported to be 'inching forward' to Jalalabad. The town would be taken, the general assured us, not by assault but by strangulation: the defenders were running out of supplies, the Kabul road was closed, the airport interdicted, only a handful of helicopters came in daily with a trickle of supplies. A week later a convoy of sixty-seven trucks from Kabul carrying ammunition broke through to Jalalabad, and three days later more convoys got through. It was suspected that there was connivance on the part of the Mujahid commander who was in charge of the blockade. However, Hamid Gul affirmed that everything was still going well in Jalalabad, the enemy's counter-attacks merely showing its desperation. The general promised 'an important development' in ten days that should change the whole picture, and concluded with a theological '*fin de non-recevoir*.[95] 'The Mujahideen are fighting a jihad that has its own momentum and rhythm and time scale. Why are we losing patience?'

We were not losing patience, we were losing credibility, and we were losing the international support without which the Mujahideen would not be able to keep up the fight. Moreover, the longer the stalemate lasted, the greater would be the strains on the thin glue that held the AIG together. The defenders at Jalalabad held on doggedly, demonstrating the Kabul regime's hold on the loyalty of its followers. The determination with which they fought can only have been redoubled by the killing, looting and rapine that had taken place when the Mujahideen took Konduz some months earlier. In July, during Benazir's visit to Britain, came news that the Kabul government's garrison had re-taken Samarkhel. The whole Jalalabad venture came to an end in a fiasco.

In his pep-talk to the Afghan Cell, General Hamid Gul had sermonized, 'There can be no cease-fire in a jihad against the Marxist unbeliever, war must go on until *Darul Harb* is cleansed and becomes *Darul Amn*.[96] However, the prospects of a military conclusion dwindled after the failure at Jalalabad. It demonstrated not only the continued strength of the Kabul regime but, even more strikingly, the disarray and disunity within the ranks of the Mujahideen. For them the relevant question with regard to any military action was, who among them would gain out of the outcome? It was all very well for someone like Sayyaf to say that the Afghan jihad would continue with sticks and stones if necessary. In due course the 'capitalist unbelievers' who were equipping and

[95] In diplomatic terminology, the definitive rejection by a government of a communication from another government.

[96] House of War (Enemy Land) and House of Peace (Islamic country), respectively.

financing it saw it for what it was, a fight for turf among tribal chieftains and warlords, and left them to their own devices.

During a visit I paid to Beijing in April, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen was forthright. He saw that, two months after the Soviet pull-out, the Mujahideen struggle was deteriorating into faction-fighting that could turn into a civil war, the consequences of which would be felt by neighboring countries (meaning Pakistan). He warned that the Mujahideen were losing international sympathy. The following day, Premier Li Peng was even more plainspoken. China, he said to me, was providing aid to the Afghan resistance under a number of agreements which would be honored—until they ran out.

Notwithstanding the failure in Jalalabad, the Mujahideen kept up the fight, but it was sporadic and not in pursuit of a well-defined strategy. Fighting kept breaking out here and there, in a hit and miss way. These localized actions were undertaken without proper political control and, in the absence of motivation, failed to yield decisive results. Spurts of fighting ended in local truces arranged on local terms; at other times action became bogged down in a deliberate stalemate. Thus, we were told that in the Khost fighting, the local commander, who was taking his cut from the supplies coming in for the action, deliberately held back because he did not want to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. War can be good business,' said a GHQ officer in a briefing on the situation to the Afghan Cell. He summed up the situation with an aphorism: before the Soviet withdrawal, the Mujahideen were winning by not losing; now, Najibullah was winning by not losing.

A year after Jalalabad there occurred another long-sought-for event but again, it only ended by closing off the alternative option on which hopes had been pinned for bringing the Afghan war to a successful conclusion. This was the defection of Najibullah's defence minister, Gen. Shahnawaz Tanai. In March 1990, on my way home from a visit to the European Union headquarters in Brussels, I was met at Amsterdam airport by our ambassador to Holland with first reports of the event. At Islamabad the next morning, I went from the airport straight to the prime minister's house, where the cabinet's defence committee was meeting to consider the situation, which was confused, as were the reports that were coming out about it—heavy fighting going on around Kandahar and other places, the Bagram airbase outside Kabul in rebel hands, Najibullah's palace had been bombed, Najibullah himself had taken refuge in a friendly embassy, and so forth. The upbeat reports and effervescence continued for another day and the cabinet met in a special session to which opposition leaders Akbar Bugti and Nawaz Shari(were also invited as a gesture of national solidarity. However, the only piece of confirmed news was that the pro-Tanai 40th Division had been overpowered by Kabul troops. Another piece of news received late the previous evening was that two Afghan helicopters had landed at Parachinar in Pakistan, carrying Tanai and his family!

So the *coup* was over in less than a day. Najibullah, shaken no doubt, was still on top of things. In the aftermath, he felt strong enough to summon the PDPA Congress to consider changes in its manifesto in order, among other things, to give it an 'Islamic' complexion.

As to the Interim Government, the episode provided another demonstration of the mutual discords among its members and the irrelevance of the AIG as a whole. For months they had been counting on the Kabul forces to mutiny, defect, or capitulate, yet when a major defection like that of the defence minister took place, they were not able to rise above their internal dissensions and profit from it. Mujaddadi responded to Benazir's urgings on this score by saying, Why should we intervene? Let the communists bleed each other!' What disturbed Mujaddadi more than lanai's being a 'communist' was his connection with Hikmatyar. Hikmatyar, as stated above, had his contacts among Khalqi military officers in Kabul. As long as a year earlier, discussing the prospect of taking Kabul, he had said to me, 'The army in Kabul may solve the problem.' Now when it appeared that he might reach Kabul with Tanai's support, Mujaddadi's reaction was to have a *fatwa* issued declaring him a *kafir* (infidel) for joining hands with a communist.

The Tanai episode raised a larger question: if it was possible for the Mujahideen to collaborate with Tanai, no less a tyrant than Najibullah and every bit as much (or as little) of a communist as Najibullah, then why could not the MG come to terms with, if not Najibullah himself, the PDPA? Talking to me about the number of Kabul people who had collaborated with the Soviets and should not be allowed to participate in elections, Hikmatyar said, 'About a hundred, the rest are all right' Pakistan's own position in this matter was anomalous, to say the least: in the same breath that the AIG were being egged on to fly to the aid of Tanai, we continued to hold that under no circumstances whatsoever should they be advised to settle with the PDPA. The ideological confusion was flagrant.

After the Soviet exit, the Mujahideen had made the removal of Najibullah the be-all and end-all of their crusade, but, as seen above, the military option had not worked either in the way of conquest or in the shape of surrenders and defections. It had become evident that if Najib was to go, and Kabul to be taken by the Mujahideen, it would have to be done through some process of give and take. There were repeated hints to that effect from the Soviets. In October 1989, I went to Washington to discuss the situation with National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft. He told me that, in recent talks in Wyoming with Secretary of State Baker, the Soviet foreign minister had for the first time spoken of 'transitional arrangements' in Kabul—suggesting thereby the possibility of an interim administration in Kabul minus Najib and Co. In Islamabad, Ambassador Yakunin was more specific in speaking to General Aslam Beg: If Najibullah is to go, he will go only as a result of negotiations.

But the Mujahideen had no inclination to consider the question asked by a number of well-wishers, including the UN Secretary-General: What is to be offered to Moscow and to Kabul in return for Najibullah's exit?' As the Zimbabwe foreign minister had put it: The Mujahideen wanted an unconditional surrender by Kabul without having won an unconditional victory.

In the initial euphoria after the Soviet exit, there was very little disposition to compromise or to explore the possibilities of compromise. Not only were the Mujahideen riding their high horse of 'jihad' but the West also did not favor compromise. In June 1989, during Benazirs visit to London, Mrs. Thatcher advised her that the Muiahideen must be allowed to regain the military initiative before being pressed to make a political settlement. The State Department's view, as Assistant Secretary of State mm it put it to me at about the same time, was that the 'Good Muslim' approach should not be widened to allow any prominent PDPA personalities entry into the AIG; the Soviets, he said, should not get the idea that, having removed their forces from Afghanistan, they could deal themselves back into the game through the back door.[97]

In Pakistan, the establishment had adopted as its own the Mujahideen intransigence with regard to the Kabul regime. Even Benazir had come to adopt (or display) a similar attitude, though in her case it seemed to be a matter of political correctness rather than conviction. When Arafat came on a visit to Islamabad, he professed to have brought an offer from Najibullah to concede 80 percent of all official posts and positions to the Mujallideen. 'Najibullah is not giving up 80 percent seats but wants to keep 20 percent!' replied Benazir.

It was a quick-witted riposte but it illustrated the oddity and anomaly of Pakistan's position in regard to the Afghan issue. After the Russians left it was natural that the focus of Pakistan's—and in the initial stage, also the United States—strategy would shift to bringing about the exit of their satrap Najibullah and his regime, but from the failure at Jalalabad and of the Tanai *coup*, two conclusions emerged. Firstly, that whatever might be said of Najibullah, the PDPA did have a certain following in the country and could not simply be dismissed as Ghulam Ishaq Khan's 'dog-in-the-well'. The PDPA had introduced land reforms, laws on women's rights, and other social measures. Why was it assumed, the Nepalese foreign minister asked me during a visit to Kathmandu, that such a party had no support at all in the country? The Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, during a brief stopover at Islamabad airport, expressed the opinion that the PDPA could not be ignored in a dialogue among the Afghans. Even our own military eventually came round to seeing the necessity of taking into account the liberal,

[97] But he added that the United States was not seeking to humiliate the Soviet Union; in time, Western intransigence towards the Soviet Union would change and be replaced by a shared concern at the 'fundamentalism' of the Afghan warriors.

progressive elements of Afghan society represented by the PDPA with its 250,000 adherents, not all of whom had been Soviet collaborators.

The second conclusion, equally ineluctable if not more so, was that the exit of Najibullah or the defeat of the Kabul regime would not end the war.

Within months of the Soviet withdrawal, the assumptions on which our policy was based were being proved wrong one by one. There had been no defections or uprisings in Kabul or other PDPA-controlled areas and Jalalabad was holding out. The AIG had failed to gain significant acceptance in Afghanistan—not one of the Afghan intellectuals or technocrats invited by the AIG to join them had agreed to come over. Najibullah the Nefarious was as firmly seated on his seat as ever.[98]

In the circumstances, it no longer made much sense to focus Pakistan's Afghan policy wholly and solely on the removal of Najibullah, even less so on getting rid of the PDPA. For Pakistan it was more important to pay attention to the post--Na jib scenario, bearing in mind that in an Afghan settlement lay the key to our future relationship with Iran, the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union (even before they emerged as independent nations), and the Soviet Union itself. These relationships would have an important bearing on Pakistan's place in the new international configuration that was taking shape as the cold war drew to a close.

Pakistan was obviously anxious to ensure that there would be a friendly government in Kabul after Najibullah's exit. In trying to manipulate the situation in that direction, we ran the risk of creating a feeling among Afghans in general that it was now Pakistan that was encroaching on Afghan independence for its own ends. There was really no reason to suppose that any post-war Afghan government would be unfriendly towards Pakistan, even one that included PDPA elements. The risk for Pakistan at the time was not that there might be an unfriendly government in Kabul, but one that was not stable or representative.

It was not long before it became clear, even to some of its initial backers, such as General Aslam Beg and the Saudis, that the AIG was not up to the job. Its inability to function cohesively and effectively could be judged from the fact that, within every one of its ministries, 'advisory committees' had been set up consisting of a member from each one of its seven constituent parties, to ensure that none got an advantage over the others. In Hikmatyar's sardonic comment, the state of AIG unity was such that its members talked to each other only through Pakistani officials. Hikmatyar, of course, was disaffected from the start because he felt that he had been cheated out of his just

[98] Our ambassador to Syria quoted Vice-President Abdul Hamid Khaddam as having said at the time of the Soviet withdrawal, 'If Nlajib cannot be ousted by force in the next two months, he will be around for a long time.'

desserts. In his view, the *Shoora* had been unfair in giving the top posts to the smaller movements.[99]

Few of its members showed any great confidence in the interim government. Finance Minister Mohammad Arsala spoke to me of 'purists' among the Mujahideen who wanted to establish 'a certain kind of Afghanistan' that would not be acceptable to the Afghan people as a whole, but even the 'purists' seemed to be whistling in the dark. A month after the AIG was formed, I met three of the top leaders, Mujaddadi, Sayyaf, and Rabbani, and found them not very sure of themselves, not confident of being able to stick together as a government, not sanguine even about the military prospect. Not one major field commander had come out in support of the AIG up to that time and not many ever did. Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, the prime minister, when pressed by Benazir to appoint some from amongst them as governors, explained the difficulty: every party had its own loyal commanders. How to choose one among them?

In order to become credible and effective, the AIG needed, above all, to be enlarged to include some representatives of the Iran-based refugees — that is, of the Shia community—and some 'Good Muslims', a euphemism for acceptable PDPA members and Kabul bureaucrats; to gain the support of major field commanders; and also to find room for some of the former officials and politicians of the Zahir Shah period who had the experience and skills to run an administration.

All this was easier said than done and, to put it briefly, none of it ever happened. The Mujahideen factions did not come to terms with the Shia groups in Iran and did not even contact any 'Good Muslims' in Kabul. Iran tended to view the AIG as an instrument of Saudi and US interests and therefore, while Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati paid lip service to the idea during his frequent visits to Islamabad at that time, Iran's support for the expansion and consolidation of the AIG was far from whole-hearted. Iran's strategic aim was to obtain an appropriate share in Afghanistan's power structure for the Hazaras, Tajiks, and other minority groups, and this meant breaking the Pashtun monopoly over it. Moreover, while it joined in reviling the Kabul regime, Iran was not for jihad but favored a Mujahideen dialogue with 'acceptable communists'. Given the state of its relations with the United States and Saudi Arabia, one could understand that Iran did not want to burn its bridges with the Soviet Union.

However, the Saudi line was evolving towards greater pragmatism. In September, Sahibzada Yaqub returned from a visit to Riyadh during which King Fahd had expounded the Saudi position as follows: Saudi Arabia supports the Mujahideen as such and has no preferences among them. There are no Mujahid groups with greater

[99] Hikmatyar warned the matter of power sharing to be settled by elections on the basis of proportional representation. I said to him that the system of proportional representation was supposed to favor the smaller parties. He replied with a broad smile, 'Exactly. We would like to give the smaller parties a chance!'

claims on Islam than any of the others. Islam should not be used as a pretext for the pursuit of power. The exploitation of religion for political ends is not acceptable.

Speaking to Law Minister Iftikhar Gilani sometime later, the King went further. The world was changing, he said, and so should the Mujahideen. The King recognized that the Soviets needed a face-saving settlement and that there had to be a scenario for Najibullah's exit. He feared that if the Mujahideen lost the present opportunity, the Soviet Union and the United States might settle the issue on their own terms. Saudi Arabia, he said, was prepared to bring around 'hot-headed' Mujahid leaders.

The attempts to enlarge the AIG and make it more representative took the form of pep-talks, sermons, and veiled threats, as well as a plethora of formulas and plans for *Shooras*, election commissions, *jirgas, loye jirgas*,[100] and so forth. In September, Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan and I went to Peshawar to try some pressure-cum-persuasion in a meeting with the AIG and we straightaway got the measure of the problem. The AIG president, Sibghatullah Mujaddadi, did not come to the meeting because he would not sit at the same table with Gulbadin Hikmatyar. In a separate one-to-one meeting earlier, he said to us that he could no longer abide the insults and insubordination of his foreign minister.[101] We told the AIG some home truths. Yaqub Khan pointed out that in the six months since the Soviet troops had left, a reversal of roles and fortunes had taken place between the Mujahideen and the Kabul regime—Najibullah appeared to be more firmly entrenched whereas the Mujahideen were marking time, militarily as well as politically. To this I added the obvious—that instead of uniting their forces against the common enemy, each party appeared more anxious to position itself to take maximum advantage from a victory that was as yet nowhere in sight.

On another occasion, urging on the AIG the need to accommodate Kabul, I recalled that in 1946, on the eve of independence and partition, the Indian Congress and Muslim League, bitter adversaries though they were, had served together in an interim government under the British Governor-General.

In April, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan called in the AIG to tell them that time was running out for putting in place a credible government that could take over in Kabul and that therefore they must now get on with summoning a new *Shoora* on the basis that they had agreed upon in many discussions over the previous year. His message was conveyed with many compliments and appeals to Islamic brotherhood, but it was a warning, and it was coming from one whose credentials as a hawk on Afghanistan were

[100] Great *jirga*.

[101] Hikrnatyar had well-founded grievance. When the AIG was set up, k had been with the stipulation that elections to choose a permanent government would be held within six months. The six months ended on 10 August and Hilanatyar took the position that as of that date the AIG would cease to exist and he himself would have nothing more to do with it.

not open to question. The Mujahideen listened to him impassively and said they would need time to think it all over.

The only definitive comment at the meeting was made by Engineer Ahmad Shah: none of what the president had asked for and nothing of all that the AIG, seemingly, had agreed to do was ever going to get done because the seven parties would never agree among themselves, so he proposed that unless the Mujahideen agreed to take decisions by majority vote, the Pakistan government should impose a decision on the seven brothers.

There was indeed a bit of shadow play about our efforts to cajole and coerce the Mujahideen leaders. The nagging and chiding irritated them without putting them under any real pressure. However, after much prodding, the AIG did come up with an 'election' plan for setting up a new *Shoora* and National Assembly—a plan that was complex, tortuous, and impractical, and that could scarcely qualify as an election in the normal sense of the word. The way they proposed to go about it was to send delegations out to each of the 217 *uluswalis* (districts) that were not under Kabul's control; these delegations would 'advise' local notables as to the kind of person who ought to represent their district; each constituency would then elect, select, or nominate, as it pleased, ten representatives to a *loye jirga* and designate one from among the ten to be a member of the National Assembly. In addition, each of the seven AIG parties would have the right to pack the Assembly with Steen nominees. The plan was clearly the result of hard bargaining among the AIG parties and designed to keep power within their ranks. Even so, it was put forward on behalf only of six out of the seven Alliance parties, and of the six, Maulvi Yunus Khales was against using the word 'elections'. The very notion of elections, in his view, was contrary to Islam and he was getting a *fatwa* out to that effect.

The abstainer was Hikmatyar, who had taken no part in drawing up the plan. A credible *Shoora*, he said, could emerge only through elections and not by 'selection among ourselves'. He called for elections on the basis of proportional representation, with each party's share in the parliament being proportionate to the election results a reasonable stipulation as such.

We proposed some modifications to the AIG plan designed to extend suffrage to all adult Afghans (including, by implication, women) and to provide for supervision of the elections by the UN and the OIC. These amendments were not acceptable to all the AIG parties. It is worth noting in passing that Iran generally took an enlightened position on the matter of elections, favoring one-man-one-vote and voting rights for women. However, in the end nothing came of the AIG plan and the whole process became lost in prevarications and evasions.

Meanwhile, the real-life situation was indicated by the fact that another eighty thousand Afghan refugees had arrived in Pakistan since the Soviet withdrawal. For the ordinary Afghan, one year after the Soviet withdrawal, insecurity and economic hardship had increased. Among Western and other benefactors, 'donor fatigue' was starting to set in; by January 1990, a steep decline had taken place in international aid for refugees, partly as a result of the competing claims from East European countries, but also because some donors thought that the refugees could be compelled to return to their homes by cutting off aid. The result in practice was that the burden of supporting the refugees was passed on to Pakistan. In one cabinet meeting, Benazir pointed out that Pakistan was spending Rs. 350 million every month on Afghan refugees and as a consequence faced a $46 million bill for food imports .

The threat to Pakistan was not only economic. In May 1989, a scud missile carrying a 1000-kg warhead fell near the northern Punjab town of Bhakkar, making a crater fifty feet wide and twenty feet deep. Had it fallen on a populated area, it would have caused heavy casualties, but it was only a warning shot intended to give substance to Najibullah's threats. The first scuds had arrived in Afghanistan a year earlier. Now a new, more accurate type of missile had been installed at sites from where Islamabad and other sensitive areas could be hit.

At a high-level meeting called to consider the situation, there were mixed reactions. There were some advocates of the stiff upper lip: 'We must play it cool, the people should be prepared to pay a price for the cause.' But other observations were less blithe. If a scud fell and killed a lot of people, it was pointed out, there would be a great outcry and revulsion; people would ask why they should be paying with their lives for a cause that amounted to keeping the AIG leaders in office or setting up a puppet government in Kabul. People should not be expected to make sacrifices for a policy that was leading nowhere. A senior military officer from Karachi said that people were preoccupied with day-to-day problems—inflation, shortages, crime—and did not understand the vicissitudes of the Afghan war or feel that these concerned them.

Another aspect of reality was that other concerns were gradually moving to the fore in American policy and in US-Soviet relations. When I met Henry Kissinger in New York before the 1988 election, he had cautioned even then that the US Administration had no interest in Afghanistan beyond getting the Soviets out of the place. Now in May, only three months after the Soviet withdrawal, Ambassador Jamshed Marker was reporting on the change of mood in Washington. Afghanistan was being put on the back burner, he said, and already signs were discernible that Pakistan's Afghan policy was no longer seen as coinciding with American interests in the region to the extent that it had while the Soviets were still there. The right wing was pressing for a more direct US role to

protect American interests regardless of what Pakistan might want;[102] the left was warning the Administration against helping to install a fundamentalist regime in Kabul. During a visit to the Congress a year before the Soviet exit, I got a glimpse of the shape of things to come from Peter Galbraith, who was then Congressional Assistant to the Senate majority leader, Claiboume Pell. In Galbraith's view, the Afghan situation was a problem and a danger for Pakistan and it was Pakistan that needed the United States' help to meet it, not the other way around; there was therefore little risk that Pakistan would cut a deal with the Soviets on this matter over America's head. 'So,' he said to me, 'the US need not relax its pressure on the nuclear issue for fear that Pakistan would stop supporting the Afghan resistance.'

There was disappointment in the United States over the failure in Jalalabad, and some distrust of Pakistan's judgment and intentions. In April 1989, I discussed the situation with National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft in Washington. The Soviets had withdrawn their troops three months earlier and the AIG had been formed, but already things appeared to be marking time. At the end of our talk about the prospects he said, Please do not assume from anything I have said that we are in any way losing patience! It was a reassurance that carried an underlying hint that there was a limit to US patience. When I talked to him on the subject again in October, he said, 'We are getting tired!'

Signs of American impatience and dissatisfaction gradually became more evident In November, Mujaddadi was received for a forty-minute talk by President Bush, who was accompanied by his top foreign policy men Secretary of State James Baker, National Security Adviser Scowcroft, and Special Assistant Sununu. 'It has been nine months since the Soviets left,' the Afghan leader was warned. 'The Americans are not a patient people...'

Meanwhile, the superpowers were also proceeding on their own to test the ground for an Afghan compromise. There was some movement in that direction at the informal summit between George Bush and Gorbachev in Malta in November. The Soviet leader said, 'Let us make Afghanistan the first example of regional cooperation between the superpowers.' President Bush assured him that the United States did not seek to install a regime in Kabul that would be hostile to the Soviet Union, but had to reckon with the fact that the Mujahideen were united against Najibullah and that King Zahir Shah did not enjoy their unanimous support. When Gorbachev referred to 'transitional' arrangements, Bush proposed something that was a new departure in the US position: he saw 'transition' as a process in which Najibullah could be at the table at the beginning of the process but not at the end of it. In other words, Najibullah would go, as the Soviets had been asking, as the result of negotiations; the Americans clarified that

[102] The Soviets, for their part, mourned an effort in Washington to win over the staunchest right-wing supporters of the Mujahideen, such as Representative Charlie Wilson, in favor of a reconciliation with the PDPA.

the Mujahideen would not be required to sit at the same table with Najibullah, and that negotiations would be held on the definite understanding that Najibullah would step down at the end of the process.

Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly, who came to Islamabad to brief the government on these talks, added another qualification: the United States have no further interest in Afghanistan now that the Soviets have left; their present interest in it is through their connection with Pakistan and the effects and consequences of the continuing crisis on and for Pakistan. The United States would therefore be guided by Pakistan's assessment of developments and Pakistan's interest in the situation.

What was Pakistan's assessment and what, in specific terms, were Pakistan's interests? The answers to these questions were not unanimous and therefore one should first answer the question, who was running Pakistan's Afghan policy? Ziaul Haq had run the Afghan war on his own with the help of the intelligence agencies—the country's own as well as foreign—leaving to the foreign ministry the job of explaining the policy to the world and conducting the UN-sponsored negotiations at Geneva—not pursued too seriously in the beginning—for a peaceful settlement. It was widely believed that, in order to be allowed to form the government in 1988, Benazir had had to agree to continue Ziaul Haq's policies on Afghanistan (as well as on India, the nuclear programme, and other such issues) and to keep on some of the late dictator's chief aides. In both the domestic and foreign media she was pictured as a showpiece prime minister with a strictly circumscribed mandate. She denied that she had cut a deal but the fact is that, in post-martial law Pakistan, the civilian government had to take into account the army's concepts and feelings on Afghan policy and other foreign and security issues. However, it would be a distortion of the facts to suggest that she was a mere onlooker in these matters. Indeed, Benazir's pragmatic assessment and level-headed view of Pakistan's interest in Afghanistan were very far from the ideological fervor, wistfulness, and mythomania that prevailed among a section of the policy-makers. She did not hesitate to assert her views and to emphasize the crucial importance for Pakistan of bringing the war to a quick and tidy end. 'The Afghan war of liberation is slipping into tribal warfare,' she warned. 'We must act boldly before we are pre-empted and denied all credit and advantage. Pakistan must not be turned into an outsider in the game.'

Nor was hers a lone voice in favor of pragmatism and accommodation on Afghanistan. At a conference of diplomatic envoys called by Benazir in March 1990, the two motifs that emerged from the discussions were that an attempt to set up a compliant regime in Kabul would be futile and counter-productive, and that Kabul's defeat would not bring the war to an end. The foreign ministry had always been 'dovish' on Afghanistan, so these conclusions were not surprising. But a month later, at a meeting held in the President's House, an analysis presented on behalf of GHQ was not very dissimilar in substance. Its conclusion was that the breakthrough had to be sought in the political

field and that military action should be undertake only in support of a political settlement. Without such a breakthrough, GHQ foresaw only stalemate on all fronts—military as well as political.

An example of a rather different state of mind was provided by the president. In the course of one meeting, he made a perceptive analysis of the prevailing military and diplomatic situation. Referring to the changing international context, he said that external support for the Afghan struggle was not likely to continue for much longer; it was more likely, in his view, that the superpowers would reach an agreement between themselves, over the heads of the Mujahideen as well as of Pakistan. And then came his conclusion: But 'jihad' is a duty nevertheless.'

The fervor of faith, let it be said, was not unmixed with considerations of a more down-to-earth order. Ghulam Ishaq Khan was not reconciled to being a constitutional head of state, even with the extraordinary powers with which Ziaul Haq had invested the office. He wanted a say in policy-making and a handle on the day-to-day running of the government. His ideological stance against Marxism was no doubt genuine, but in the ambiguities and contradictions of our Afghan policy he also found room to assert his own authority and to circumscribe that of the prime minister.

There were other, more sordid interests inevitably, considering the vast amounts of money and *materiel* involved in running the Afghan war and relief operations. Even a small leak could make individual fortunes, and indeed huge fortunes are said to have been made in the process and were the talk of the world Press.

But it was not that Pakistan's 'Afghan establishment'—to give the group a name—had a long-term Afghan policy of its own that was opposed to the government's policy, The 'hawks' nurtured a set of hopes and wishes that did not always take account of realities. The fallacy lay in believing that, because Pakistan had effectively guided and directed military action against the Soviet invasion to a successful conclusion, it could equally effectively manage the post-war scene, and that our support for the 'jihad' had established a bond that would override everything else. The fact is that the Afghan struggle had its origins in the typical Third-World syndrome of pressures for economic and social change and the resistance of vested interests; the situation was further complicated in Afghanistan's case by ethnic and sectarian factors that caused divisions in the revolutionary camp itself. The conflict had started before the Soviet Union entered the scene, and the long and bloody war that followed settled none of the underlying issues. The Soviet Union would have done well to let the Afghans conduct their own revolution. The Soviet Union intervened on the side of the Left, to its loss and sorrow. An attempt by Pakistan to do the same thing on the side of the Right in the name of Islam was likely to lead to similar results.

To revert to the question of who was in charge of Pakistan's Afghan policy after Ziaul Haq, the simple answer is that no one was. Pakistan's important policy-makers had pinned all their hopes on Ziaul Haq's creation, the Peshawar Alliance of seven religious parties. It appears from some of his statements that the dictator himself might ultimately have bypassed his creature and found a compromise settlement, but those who claimed to be heirs to Ziaul Haq's legacy clung to the belief that Pakistanis interests would be served only if the Peshawar Seven, that is the AIG, were installed in power in Kabul. Pakistan's policy became hostage to what, for the General, had been a political and military expedient.

The simplest thing after the Soviet exit would have been to hand Afghanistan back to the Afghans. But to which Afghans? In eleven years of fighting the foreign invader, the Afghans had not managed to forge a united front or to rally round any one leader. In the circumstances, one way of leaving them to their own devices was to cut off arms supplies to all sides. Had this happened, there was a fair chance that when the weapons ran out, and perhaps before that, the Afghans would sit down and work out some understanding in the traditional tribal way. At all events, Afghanistan would have been spared the senseless destruction caused by the heavy guns, rockets, and other infernal engines that were supplied in profusion to all sides. The initial mistake in this regard was the Soviet Union's in not agreeing at Geneva to 'negative symmetry'. Later, the Soviets realized their mistake. At the Soviet-US summit held in Malta in 1989, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze told Secretary of State James Baker that the Soviet Union was ready to accept negative symmetry. He repeated the offer when I met him in Moscow in February 1990, and indeed went further, proposing to take back some of the more lethal weapons delivered to the Kabul regime, such as the scud missiles that threatened Pakistan. This was a reasonable proposal, but it was not pursued on account of the continuing suspicion of Soviet intentions and also because divided counsels, conflicting aims, and mistaken assumptions made it difficult at that time to pursue logical courses.

A year after the Soviet exit, the logic of the situation plainly called for a political settlement. The stages on the road to a political settlement were: a cease-fire and negative symmetry; a broad-based interim government in Kabul; then internationally-supervised elections that would lead to the establishment of a representative and popular government and, at some stage along the way, Najibullah's exit from the scene. But the logic did not prevail, even though the major outside powers involved in the Afghan war—the two super-powers, Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia—seemed to go along with it. The reason lies, so to speak, in the small print, in questions of honor and prestige and face, in personal and psychological factors. The Soviet Union's position concerning Najibullah is a case in point. Why, after Gorbachev had admitted that the whole Afghan adventure had been a strategic error and the Soviet Communist Party had disowned the PDPA as a comradely party, did the Soviets make such an issue of Najibullah's personal fate? Probably because Najib was the one they knew and they had

no substitute in view, and because they did not want to give in 'ignominiously' on this matter to America—in Vorontsov's words, 'to flee Kabul hanging on helicopter spars'.

Saudi-Iran rivalry in Afghanistan was a spill-over from the wider tensions between them in the Middle East. The Saudis did not want to let Iran get a foot in the door in Afghanistan out of a general fear of Iranian intentions and ambitions in the region. The tolerant attitude reflected by King Fahd's observations on Islam cited above was not reflected in Saudi policy in Afghanistan or in its attitude towards the different Mujahid factions. This indicated that, in the Saudi government as in Pakistan, there were divergent opinions on these matters.[103]

The West had applauded and supported the Mujahideen's religious zeal in the fight against the Soviet Union. Fundamentalism had not been seen as problem as long as it was directed at communists, but with communism defeated in Afghanistan—and in the world at large Western countries began to worn] about the threat from a supposedly aggressive resurgence of Islam. As mentioned above, the one-time American favorite, Hikamtyar, now found himself under suspicion for his alleged fundamentalism.

Nobody had heard of the Taliban at the time, but already there were straws in the wind of the different kind of fundamentalist xenophobia that was to sweep Afghanistan a few years later. Western NGOs working in refugee camps suddenly found themselves under attack for doing what they had been doing for years. One was accused of ruining the morals of war widows by teaching them to sew and embroider in order to earn a living; another, which ran a school, of using 'idols'—teddy bears, Barbie dolls, etc.—teaching aids! The AIG 'premier', Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, declared that he wanted Kabul razed to the ground and rebuilt after being purified of its un-Islamic vices.

Now the Taliban have taken possession of much of the country and have put an end to the disorder and anarchy. The ordinary Afghan seems to have accepted the new regime and perhaps welcomes the respite from the violence and uncertainties of the Mujahideen's infighting. But the country's ethnic and sectarian antagonisms remain entire and the Taliban, who are for the most part Pashtuns, give no indication of how they propose to resolve them. Their attitude to social problems can be seen from the ban on women working or going to school. Afghanistan never had a history of *mullah* rule, never had a highly centralized regime—still less one that regulated the measure of the citizen's beard and the length of his trouser bottoms and kept women out of sight. It seems an incongruous end to eleven years of an epic struggle against one of the world's greatest powers. Where Afghanistan will really end up, as the new rulers try to herd the people into a never-never land of Puritanism, no one can foretell, and not many in the world seem to care.

[103] We were also told of highly-motivated Saudi individuals and groups who had their fingers in the Afghan pie, and with plenty of money to spend, who were using it to promote their own fundamentalist agenda in Afghanistan. The name of Osama Bin Laden was not current at the time.

Of all the outside players, Pakistan had the most at stake in Afghanistan: much to gain if peace and stability were established and more to lose if war and bloodshed continued. I have described above the calculations and illusions that governed Pakistan's Afghan policy in the crucial climactic phase of the war. These resulted only in limiting Pakistan's options. Pakistan is one of only three countries to have recognized the regime of the Taliban, and many suspect that it was actively involved in their advent. Whether or not this is so, Pakistan, more than any other country, is liable to feel the effects, good or bad, of developments in Afghanistan.

While Pakistan's Afghan policy was getting into a tangle that became more difficult to sort out with every passing year, other important and established relationships and situations were beginning to unravel. With India, things had gone back to square one very quickly and deteriorated sharply after trouble broke out in Indian-held Kashmir. A change in the close relationship with the US had been expected as the Soviets moved out of Afghanistan, but when it came about, it did so with an abruptness that told its own story. Relations also took a downturn with Iran and with some of the Central Asian republics whose independence had been greeted in Pakistan with great expectations. The fruits of victory did not prove sweet either for Afghanistan or for Pakistan.

17
Kashmir

In the years of preoccupation with Afghanistan, not much attention had been paid in Pakistan to the Kashmir problem. Indeed, it had lain dormant since the 1971 war and throughout Ziaul Haq's eleven years. Ziaul Haq had grander things in mind—a 'strategic consensus' with Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey that would create a powerful new grouping on the world stage and also enable Pakistan to settle with India on equal terms. I have described in the previous chapter the gradual unraveling of these expectations. Now the Kashmir issue had come to the fore again and this time the Kashmiris had done it on their own.

The Kashmiris, generally thought of as a meek-spirited and uncombative race, surprised everybody by suddenly rising up to challenge the Indian occupation. The trouble began in a small way in 1989 with protest demonstrations and strikes, but soon it turned into an armed guerrilla war that paralyzed the State administration and tied up some half a million Indian troops, At the time of this writing, the uprising has been going on for almost a decade in the face of sustained and systematic repression—mass killings and torture, gang rapes, the torching of entire villages, round-the-clock curfews, confiscation of property, and deportations.[104] Between forty and sixty thousand Kashmiris have been killed in these years.

What ignited the trouble was the particularly blatant manner in which the previous year's elections in the territory had been manipulated in order to ensure a majority for the pro-Indian Congress party. The rigging of elections was nothing new in Indian-held Kashmir —every election held there during the fifty years of Indian occupation has been fixed to make sure that there would be a pro-India majority in the State legislature—but this time, it would appear, the Kashmiris' cup had run over. What it was really all about was made clear when four hundred thousand protesters marched to the United Nations' office in Srinagar to reassert Kashmir's demand for a plebiscite to decide the future of Kashmir.

Fifty years of Indian occupation has led the international media tacitly to accept the *status quo*, describing Kashmir as 'India's only Muslim majority state', the insurgents as 'secessionists', and so on. Possession may be nine points of the law but, in the long run, the tenth point—legitimacy, acceptance—does matter. After fifty years of wars and revolts, after all the obfuscation of endlessly repeated argument and counter-argument,

[104] Detailed accounts of the situation can be read in reports issued by well-known international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the International Commission of jurists, and by a number of Indian human rights groups.

the evident fact is that India has never been able to enjoy its possession of Kashmir in peace and tranquility, and there is little prospect that it ever will.

It is not my purpose in this book to go over the whole Kashmir story, on which much has been written and said. However, to recall the essentials: when, in 1947, Britain quit its Indian empire and it was divided between India and Pakistan, the process was accomplished on the basis of the expressed wishes of the people concerned—firstly in the general elections of 1946, in which the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress emerged as the representatives of the Muslims and the Hindus respectively of the subcontinent; and then through specific popular referendums in areas over which doubt remained, that is, the North-Western Frontier Province and the Sylhet district of Assam. But the process was confined to what was known as British India—the eleven provinces under direct British rule—and left out the princely states (covering about a third of the subcontinent's total area) that were ruled by princes and princelings under British 'paramountcy'.

Paramountcy was a pragmatic concept that recognized the historic identity of a state and the formal sovereignty of its ruler but allowed the British overlord to intervene if the ruler fell out of line. The simplest thing at partition would have been to dispose of the princely states on the same basis as the provinces, that is, on the communal composition of the population concerned and through popular consultation in doubtful cases, but the British government, taking cover under its pseudo-legal treaty commitments to the princes, chose not to do so. In this act of omission lies the root cause of the Kashmir problem, but it was not the only one. Jinnah, for his part and for his own reasons, went along with the British thesis on the treaty rights of Indian princes and took the position that it was for the ruler to decide whether his state would join India or Pakistan or remain independent. The rulers he may have had specifically in mind were the Muslim princes of Hyderabad and Bhopal. They ruled important territories with large Hindu majorities, and Jinnah wanted them to have the option of independence, or at least some leeway to negotiate the terms of accession to India. One supposes that he took for granted Kashmir's eventual accession to Pakistan since, in the notional border between the two emerging countries, Kashmir had no direct land link with India. The stand of the Indian National Congress, on the other hand, was that the people of the state and not the rulers must decide the future of the state—a position that was based on democratic principle as well as self-interest, since in all the affected cases except that of Kashmir, the majority of the people were Hindu and likely to go for India. Nehru, who above all else wanted to take Kashmir for India, was confident that, with Shaikh Abdullah[105] on his side, India would be able to carry the popular verdict there,

[105] Shaikh Abdullah had led the Kashmiris' struggle against the Maharaja's autocratic rule since the early thirties and expanded it from a purely Muslim movement into one that was supported by Kashmiri Hindus as well. The movement had the support of the Indian National Congress, and a strong personal friendship had come to exist between the Shaikh and Pandit Nehru. However, at the time of partition his movement was losing ground to the

too. As for the problem of India's link with Kashmir, he took care of it by getting Viceroy Mountbatten to gerrymander the boundary.[106] Pandit Nehru had hoped to win the hearts and minds of the Kashmiri people for India, but these hopes foundered on the Hindu-Muslim antagonism that is the bedrock of the subcontinent's politics.[107]

There is material for endless argument on where lies the responsibility for the Kashmir dispute—Britain's dereliction, Pakistani miscalculation, or Indian chicanery but the history is fairly clear-cut. Tribesmen from Pakistan went into Kashmir to assist a popular revolt against the Maharaja that his troops were putting down with all the bloodthirstiness of Hindu-Muslim conflict. The tribesmen snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by failing to take Srinagar airport—at the time India's only means of reaching Kashmir—so Indian troops were able to fly in and India, having obtained from the Maharaja the instrument of accession (in dubious circumstances), went to the United Nations with a complaint against alleged Pakistani aggression. The UN Security Council, turning away from India's complaint, sent a high-level commission to the subcontinent which brought about an agreement between Pakistan and India that the future of the state would be decided by its people in a plebiscite to be held under UN auspices and supervision. India not only accepted the agreement but, through statements and declarations by its leaders, notably Prime Minister Nehru, repeatedly affirmed and re-affirmed that the Maharaja's accession was provisional and that the final decision on Kashmir's affiliation would be made in a UN-sponsored plebiscite.

Even at that stage, India was looking for ways of getting round these commitments and beginning to stonewall, and in time, and went back completely on the agreement with Pakistan and the United Nations. India now takes the position that Kashmir is its to keep, regardless. That, in a nutshell, is the story of the Kashmir dispute.

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general communalization of politics, and pro-Pakistan sentiment was predominant. Eventually, the Shaikh spent some been years in his friend Tel 's jails for trying to assert the State's autonomy.

[106] As the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League could not agree on the definitive boundary between the two countries, they agreed to accept without question or appeal the boundary award of the British chairman of the boundary commission, Cyril Radcliffe. This distinguished lawyer discharged his trust by altering, at Mountbatten's behest, the Punjab award in order to allow India access to Kashmir.

[107] To illustrate the kind of problems that arose: in 1982, the (Indian-held) Kashmir Legislative Council passed a bill which would allow a person who was a citizen of Kashmir before May 1954, or his descendant, the right to return. Even though the person concerned was required to swear allegiance to the constitutions of both India and Kashmir, the proposal created an uproar in India and the Indian authorities effectively obstructed its adoption. Shaikh Abdullah, who had moved the bill, accused its opponents of being Hindu communalists who wished to convert Kashmir into a Hindu-majority state, And this from Farooq Abdullah, Kashmir's Prodigal Son by Aditya Sinha (UBS Publishers, New Delhi, 1996): '...the percentage of Muslims working in central government offices in Jammu and 'Kashmir was only 5 percent (55 out of 611 posts); in the banking sector only about 1.48 percent (8 Muslims out of 448 employees); there were no Muslims in the Customs and Central Excise departments; only 18 percent of the staff at HMT Watch Factory were Muslims while only 10.52 percent were Muslims in the Accountant General's office. In the State government only 2,795 employees were Muslims out of a total staff strength of 8,570 a mere 33.39 percent in a state where more than 60 percent of the population was Muslim... [In 1986] Governor Jagmohan changed the criteria for job reservation so that the percentage of Muslim candidates selected by the Subordinate Services Recruitment Board came down drastically.'

In a candid moment, J.N. Dixit, who was India's High Commissioner in Islamabad at the height of the crisis, is reported to have said: We know that we can keep Kashmir only by force and we shall use the force that is needed. When all is said and done, that comment sums up the Indian case on Kashmir.

Benazir summed it up for Pakistan in a telling comparison. Speaking at a public rally in Azad (Free) Kashmir some time after trouble had broken out in the Indian-held part, she declared:

> I stand here, Pakistan's Prime Minister, a woman, alone, unarmed and unguarded, amongst you, the people of Kashmir Would Indies Prime Minister, Mr. V.P. Singh, be able to do the same thing in Srinagar in the midst of hundreds of thousands of his troops?

When the Kashmir trouble broke out, tile Indian government laid the whole thing at Pakistan's door, accusing it of instigating, supporting, and masterminding the Kashmir insurgency—even while it rejected Pakistan's proposal for the situation to be monitored by the United Nations or any other impartial third party. The truth is that reactivation of the Kashmir issue was not one of Benazies priorities. On the contrary, a major plank of her election platform was to improve relations with India and this remained her objective, even after the setback on Siachen. One of her great disappointments was that, after India's about-turn on the Siachen agreement, it became difficult for her to accept Rajiv Gandhi's invitation to pay a state visit to India, We will give you a welcome such as no foreign visitor to India has ever received,' he had said to her. Her political opponents accused her of being 'soft on India' and, in the beginning, there was a view, at home and abroad, that the Kashmir operation was being run behind Benazir's back by 'powers-that-be' who were themselves opposed to improving relations with India. In fact, there was no fundamental difference between Benazir's government and the Brass on the substance of the Kashmir issue or an how to deal with it. When news began to trickle in of the growing unrest in Kashmir, she sent Ambassador Abdul Sattar as a special envoy to Delhi to caution the new prime minister Mr. V.P. Singh,[108] that Indo-Pakistan relations would be adversely affected if Delhi used force against the Kashmiri movement.

'It is difficult to keep up the momentum for normalization while the situation in Kashmir is daily going from bad to worse,' she said ruefully at a meeting held in January 1990 in the President's House to consider the situation, but she was emphatic in expressing her government's policy on Kashmir: 'We are not going to be defensive

[108] In the general elections held in November 1989, Rajiv Gandhi's Indian National Congress was defeated and V.P. Singh became Prime Minister with the help of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

about our position. We support self-determination for Kashmir, to be exercised through a plebiscite and no one must be left in any doubt about that.'

Later she paid a visit to Muzaffarabad, the Azad Kashmir headquarters, and made hard-hitting speeches in the Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly and at a public rally. V.P. Singh complained to a Pakistan emissary that these speeches had fuelled the agitation afresh at a time when things were beginning to settle down. Oddly, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, whose perspective on Kashmir was quite the opposite of the Indian prime minister's, also criticized Benazir for needlessly 'raising the rhetorical temperature' by her speeches in Azad Kashmir.

At the President's House meeting the atmosphere was far from bellicose or gung-ho, and there was no thought of war. Benazir, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, and the military were at one in not wanting to let the situation slide into an India-Pakistan conflict, Delhi was making bellicose noises, but the military and intelligence chiefs who attended the meeting reported that the Line of Control was quiet and they did not expect any action across the Line, nor had any abnormal Indian troop movements or activity *vis-a-vis* Pakistan been observed. On the other hand, in Kashmir the Indians were said to be moving fast and in strength to put down the trouble as quickly as possible. The new man appointed by India as governor, Jagmohan Singh, had a hard-line reputation but was expected to combine toughness with socio-economic measures in order to pacify the territory.

As for the Kashmir movement, there were more questions than answers at the meeting. Was it a nationalist uprising or the eruption of accumulated discontents? What were the aims and objectives of the movement? How was it organized, armed, financed? By whom was it led? Clearly the Kashmir outbreak and the way it was gathering steam had caught the Pakistan government by surprise as much as it had the Indian government What was known at that stage was that, in place of the conventional leadership, a new, more militant generation of leaders, most of them under thirty years of age, seemed to be in place. The movement was indigenous and spontaneous but it was not a mass movement. It was made up of small, divergent groups that were not centrally organized or controlled and did not have a common programme In March, some of these parties came together to form an alliance called *Tehrik-e-Hurryat-e-Kashmir* (Kashmir Freedom Movement). Even so, though the movement was united in its demand for a plebiscite, there were differences among the groups as to means and ends.

The mainstream were not communal in approach, and a notable feature of the movement at that stage was the absence of Hindu-Muslim clashes. Later, sadly, there were some attacks on Hindus, but these were isolated incidents and they were generally condemned in Kashmir (and in Pakistan). However, gradually, Kashmiris began turning more and more to religious symbolism, and fundamentalist groups came to the

fore.[109] This was perhaps inevitable given that the Indian security forces who were brutalizing and tyrannizing them were overwhelmingly Hindu. As for ends, some favoured independence but the majority appeared to be for Kashmir's accession to Pakistan, an assumption also made by India in describing them as Pakistani terrorists. Indian Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey, arguing the latter point with me, exclaimed, 'But their Kalashnikovs and rockets and missiles must be coming from somewhere!' Of course, but these days weapons are not difficult to find if one has the money to buy them, and the money for the Kashmir movement was coming mainly from Kashmiri emigrant communities abroad.

In Pakistan, the reaction to the movement was highly emotional and the instinct was to give it full and unreserved support. There were those who saw the spontaneous uprising of the Kashmiris as a 'historic turning point', 'a now-or-never' opportunity to settle the Kashmir dispute, although prudence largely prevailed, not only among the decision-makers but, in political circles in general. The leader of the opposition party, Mian Nawaz Sharif, expressing his views at a meeting of all political parties called by Benazir, showed himself no less concerned than the government to avoid a war with India. There was a broad consensus that:

- war must be avoided;
- all legitimate support, moral, material, and political, should be extended to the Kashmiri struggle;
- international support should be sought to stop Indian repression in Kashmir and for a settlement of the dispute;
- an attempt should be made to renew the dialogue with India on Kashmir and other issues.

In calling a meeting of all political parties on Kashmir, Benaziris twofold purpose was to establish a non-partisan, 'national' position on the question and to pre-empt any mischief her political adversaries might try to create for her government on its Kashmir policy. The meeting was held on 4 February and all the leaders showed up, but one could see that they did not want to be seen on Benazir's side even on Kashmir; by calling this joint meeting, she had spoilt their fun. Nawaz Sharif was the only one who spoke on the Kashmir situation and spoke sensibly. Others either did not speak at all, or carped about side issues. Why was Nusrat Bhutto presiding over the meeting; where was the Prime Minister herself? (She, as everyone knew, was in hospital recovering from the birth of a baby a day or two earlier). Why had she not been more forceful ill answering Rajiv Gandhi's assertions on Kashmir a year earlier? To Foreign Minister

[109] The Americans as well as the Soviets expressed their disquiet at this phenomenon. In Geneva, during a discussion on Kashmir in the Human Rights Commission, India ceaselessly used the phrase 'religion-based terrorism' to describe the Kashmiri movement. This was directed not only at Western countries but also at Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, and other Muslim countries that were having to deal with fundamentalists trained during the Afghan war.

Yaqub's briefing in elaborate Urdu, Nawabzada Nasrullah responded with equally flowery compliments on the beautiful language in which, he said, the minister had presented his ministry's record of failures.

The next day the whole country from sea-shore to mountain top was shut down by a sympathy strike for Kashmir, a strike called by the Punjab Chief Minister, Nawaz Sharif. Kashmir is not a subject that figures among the constitutional responsibilities and powers of a provincial government, and Nawaz Sharifs purpose was no doubt to be one up on Benazir. Benazir's dilemma was that she could not very well allow government offices, banks, and other institutions join the strike but nor could she appear indifferent to Kashmir by defying it. So she tried to pre-empt Nawaz's game by declaring a public holiday on 5 February, the day of the strike.[110] Shaikh Rashid, another opposition Assembly member, got into the act by setting up a so-called 'training camp' and calling for volunteers who would be lodged, fed, and trained to fight in Kashmir. This was a challenge to the government either to try to stop him and be accused of accepting 'Indian hegemony', or to do nothing and be seen by the world as providing sanctuary to 'terrorists'.

More foolhardy were attempts by sundry groups to cross the Line of Control (cease-fire line) in Kashmir. On the same day as Nawaz Sharifs strike, a crowd, 4,000 strong, of students, workers, farmers, etc., got fired up by Jamaat-i-Islami speakers and started moving across the Line near Sialkot. Some were carrying Pakistani flags that they intended to plant on the other side in place of Indian flags. At the first attempt, Indian border guards scuffled with the crowd, took away the Pakistani flags, and sent the boys back across the Line. The crowd regrouped and made another foray, to which the Indians responded by firing into the air. At the third attempt, they fired into the crowd, killing one boy on the spot and wounding about a dozen, some seriously. Six days later, another attempted crossing of the Line, near Uri, resulted in six deaths by Indian fire.

Such ventures were of no help at all to the Kashmiri fighters and distracted attention from their struggle. Those who went forth and got themselves killed or wounded surely did not realize this, but those who organized these displays of jingoism were interested primarily in embarrassing the government by defying it to take action against Pakistani protesters. Benazir had to seek Ghulam Ishaq Khan's intervention to persuade the opposition to stop. The verbal flack, however, did not stop, and the opposition refused to take part in the all-parties National Council on Kashmir that Benazir proposed to set up to co-ordinate a national response to events in Kashmir.

The opposition's partisan agenda was very much in evidence at the joint session of Parliament that met on 10 February. Benazir opened the session in the afternoon with a

[110] Now this strike has become an annual feature which causes considerable economic loss and disruption in Pakistan, no inconvenience to the Indian government, and is of doubtful moral solace to the Kashmiri freedom fighters.

speech delivered alternately in Urdu and English sounding, as a result, 'somewhat disjointed and not very coherent', as one newspaper wrote the next day. Here again, the opposition's primary target was the Benazir government rather than what was going on in Kashmir, and they heard her out in silence, holding back applause even when she reaffirmed the 'Kashmirisi inalienable right to self-determination'. As against this, when Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi spoke for the opposition, the treasury benches—ignoring his side-swipes at Benazir—made it a point to thump their desks at every reference he made to Kashmir. In general, opposition speakers took a polemical line, reserving their vitriol for the government and whipping dead horses—the Simla agreement,[111] what Rajiv Gandhi had said or done, what Benazir had failed to say or do, and so forth. The situation in Kashmir provided only the back-drop for these shenanigans.

However, the speech delivered by the opposition's co-leader, Khan Wali Khan, struck an unexpected note and set the dovecots aflutter on all sides of the House. Kashmir, he said, was a problem inherited by the present government and it would be unfair to blame it for the existing situation. Kashmir was lost long ago, he went on, by Pakistan's own repeated mistakes, recalling that it was Jinnah who had insisted that the rulers of princely states and not their people should decide the affiliation of a state with India or Pakistan. Wall Khan also referred to Pakistan's rejection of Sardar Paters supposed offer: you lay off Hyderabad, we lay off Kashmir.' Why, the Khan asked, had Jinnah accepted the accession of Junagadh, a state with an overwhelming Hindu majority and not contiguous to Pakistan? He blamed Jinnah also for giving carte blanche to Cyril Radcliffe and agreeing that his award should be final and not subject to appeal, whereas India had wanted to provide for an appeal. As for the Simla Accord, Wali Khan reminded members that it had been ratified by the National Assembly, and if now they wanted to renounce it then the Assembly would have formally to abrogate it.

Wali Khan got a big hand from the treasury benches. On the opposition side there was First a rustle of surprise and then an embarrassed hush as the Khan spoke on.

The point session had started with a full house but, as the days passed, attendance dropped, and towards the end speakers were addressing their thunder to empty benches. Then the session was abruptly prorogued when the government got wind of the opposition's plans to use the occasion to move a vote against it (for in a joint session of the National Assembly and the Senate the opposition could muster the requisite majority to do so). These parliamentary games and gimmicks did not mean that the opposition was not as concerned over the Kashmir situation as the government side; they were manifestations of politics played as a no-holds barred affair, where there is no

[111] The Simla Agreement was reached between Zulfikar Bhutto and the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1972 after Pakistan lost the war in 1971. Under its terms, 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war were released and pieces of territory taken by Indian troops were returned to Pakistan. It called for a settlement of the Kashmir dispute through bilateral negotiations between the two countries. Pakistani critics of the agreement—and India—claim that this provision prevents Pakistan from taking the Kashmir dispute to the United Nations.

referee, no common ground. I am not sure whether, had roles been reversed between the government and the opposition, the situation would have been very different. The phenomenon is not peculiar to Pakistan but, in Pakistan, where democracy has a chequered history, there is something heedless about it.

Meanwhile, in Kashmir, the situation was deteriorating for India and tension was mounting between Pakistan and India. The State was placed under Governor's rule, then under the direct rule of Delhi, but the administration as such had virtually ceased to function. The only thing that worked was the repressive machinery of occupation. Srinagar was a city besieged; curfews were constant in the capital and other major centres. Indian security forces were at every turn and corner, and streets were empty except for Indian troops. Not a soul moved without their permission and except under their watching eyes. They were given a free hand against the insurgents and used it freely—shooting at sight, calming out house-to-house searches and out-of-hand executions, demolishing houses or entire localities where suspects were thought to be taking cover. Mass rape was used as a means of demoralizing the Kashmiri population. To get round possible legal complications, Indian intelligence set up counter-guerrilla groups to assassinate leaders and sympathizers of the Kashmiri movement. When Maulvi Farooq, the *Mir Waiz* (a hereditary religious leader) of Kashmir, was assassinated, presumably by some such persons, virtually the entire city of Srinagar turned out for his funeral. Indian troops fired on the procession, killing a hundred people. Even so, the guerrillas had the upper hand and kept the occupation forces on the run.

In January 1990, Ambassador Oakley of the US conveyed to us a message from Prime Minister VIP. Singh that the Indian High Commissioner did not wish to convey himself. In choosing this circuitous route, the Indian prime minister presumably wished to pass on his thoughts to the Americans as well. The burden of the message was that he was facing difficulties with his MP coalition partners, from the opposition under Rajiv Gandhi, and from the army, which was not happy at having been pulled out of Sri Lanka before a political settlement was reached there. India, he declared, would have no option but to respond vigorously to any Pakistani provocation in Kashmir or to any hostile activity across either the international border or the Line of Control. Furthermore, India would not play the game by Aslam Beg's *Zarb-e-Momin* rules (that is, on Indian territory); if there was war, it would not be confined to Kashmir and would not be wound up in fifteen days at the behest of interceding great powers. will not allow my government to be humiliated by Rajiv Gandhi or by Pakistan,' warned V. P. Singh, but he concluded on a relatively conciliatory note: 'Let us defuse the situation!

At the same time, the Indian Press was publishing 'leaks' from cabinet discussions to the effect that the hawks were pressing for the administration of 'shock therapy' to Pakistan

in order to bring the Kashmir trouble under control. The threats gained some substance from reports from our Intelligence of Indian troop movements towards the border in the Punjab.

All this indicated that India was not getting on top of things in Kashmir. The 'shock therapy' could take various forms, such as activating the Line of Control in Kashmir, attacking the alleged training camps in Azad Kashmir, declaring a blockade of Pakistani ports, or attacking Pakistan's nuclear facilities at Kahuta[112] and elsewhere. There was also the danger that India might seek Najibullah's collaboration and take out Kahuta with an Afghan scud missile. There was, of course, the possibility of general war and a full-scale Indian attack on Pakistani territory. The Indian war party must have found the prospect of a short, successful, war risky but tempting—it would put an end not only to the trouble in Kashmir but also from the Sikhs in East Punjab, stir up the trouble already brewing in Sindh,[113] bring to an indefinite halt US military aid to Pakistan, and perhaps knock out Pakistan's nuclear capability.

So, while the government did not dismiss the Indian threats as simple scare tactics, the general view was that there was at that point no imminent danger of war. India knew that it could not expect a walk-over in a general war and that, even in taking limited punitive measures, would have to reckon with the risk of escalation, and consequent international reactions. To deter any monkey business with Najibullah's help, India was to be cautioned that any attack on Kahuta, even if launched by Kabul, would be assumed to come from India and we would respond accordingly. The considered professional conclusion was that Pakistan's operational response to Indian military moves should be measured, i.e., tactical attacks would be given a tactical response: we should be on the look-out but not get all worked up.

Pakistan's emphasis was on diplomacy: pressing India to fulfill its commitment under the Simla Agreement to settle the Kashmir issue, and mobilizing international support for a fair settlement.

To this end, in February I made a round-the-world trip, visiting Beijing, Moscow, and Washington to lobby these powers, and taking in the UN headquarters, Canada, and the European Union at Brussels on the way back.

In Beijing I was warmly received and lodged in Diao Yutai, the guest-house complex for distinguished visitors. Premier Li Peng received me on the very day of my arrival, and next day Foreign Minister Qian Qichen hosted a lunch at which a number of officials were present. These amenities were a token of the traditional good relations between our countries, but were also an unspoken thank you for Pakistan's silence during the

[112] Kahuta, a village not far from the capital, Islamabad, is the site of a uranium enrichment plant.

[113] The Indian analyst K. Subramaniam said to the Pakistan High Commissioner: 'If you have us by the short hairs in Kashmir, don't forget that we have you in Sindh.'

world-wide outrage at the Chinese government's harsh action against the pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square.

But much water had flowed under the bridge since 1965, when China had given an ultimatum to India during the India-Pakistan war and Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi had spoken of Pakistan as a comrade-in-arms. I delivered Ben is letter to the Chinese Premier and told him that . she had sent me to give the Chinese government two assurances and to seek their help in three ways. The assurances were that Pakistan was not responsible for the turmoil inside Indian-held Kashmir and that Pakistan was not going to be provoked into war or adopt war-like postures. From China we asked for help in deterring the outbreak of a new India-Pakistan war, in calling a halt to India's brutalities against the Kashmiris, and in reaching a settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmir; people. Premier Li Peng enunciated China's policy on Kashmir in terms that can be summed up as follows: China was concerned at the situation prevailing in Kashmir; the dispute was one 'left over from history' and the two countries should resolve it through negotiations on the basis of the five principles of co-existence and in accordance with UN resolutions and the agreements between them (namely, though Li Peng did not name it, the Simla Agreement). China was ready to help in this matter in any way it could.

At Qian Qichen's lunch, discussion ranged over a wider field —Afghanistan, developments in East Europe and the Soviet Union, China's doubts regarding, in fact disapproval of, Gorbachev's *perestroika*, China's own evolving relations with India, and so forth. (On an, earlier occasion, Qian had said, 'The trouble in negotiating with the Indians is that, even after an agreement is reached, one finds them trying to take things back to square one and putting their own unilateral interpretation on what has been agreed,') On Kashmir, the Chinese Foreign Minister said what his Premier had said to me the previous evening—that Kashmir was 'a dispute left over from history'. This formula henceforth became the standard Chinese format in speaking of the issue. Its subtlety lay in recognizing the disputed status of Kashmir without having to specify who was to blame for it. As for the help we were asking from China, Qian Qichen promised, at once and without conditions, China's support if Pakistan decided to take the matter to the UN Security Council and move a resolution. 'That would be no problem,' he assured me, but he was mildly skeptical that anything useful could come out of the exercise for Pakistan or for Kashmir, given the composition of the Council and the possibility of a Soviet veto.

The Foreign Minister said that he was going on an official visit to Delhi shortly and would take up there the other points I had raised. (A month or so later, the Chinese ambassador in Islamabad came to the Foreign Office to brief me on its outcome. Qian Qichen, he said, had faithfully conveyed to his Indian counterpart Pakistan's position as I had expounded it in Beijing the previous month. Speaking for China, he had urged India to enter into bilateral talks with Pakistan as agreed at Simla, bearing in mind past

UN involvement and resolutions on the subject. To this the Indians had responded with their usual line and by reproaching China for taking sides with Pakistan).

An intriguing remark was made by the Chinese Defence Minister at Ambassador Akram Zaki's dinner for him that evening, on the eve of the minister's departure on an official visit to Pakistan. He said: 'Not only in external relations but even in dealing with internal situations, governments must not use force but should take into account what the people want. In the end it is the people who triumph.' This particular remark was made in the context of developments that were then taking place in Eastern Europe, though it was equally applicable to Kashmir, about which I had been talking to the minister. But it could, even more pertinently, be taken as a criticism of 'his own government's harsh action against student protesters in Tiananmen Square not so tong before. Ambassador Zaki told me afterwards that the minister was indeed a man of liberal views who had not supported the Tiananmen action and, as a Long March comrade of Mao Zedong, was not afraid to speak his mind.

My next destination was Moscow, where I headed after an overnight stop in Tokyo. I wondered what my reception would be in a country which, for many years, had blocked a Kashmir settlement with its vetoes in the UN Security Council and which, after the role we had played in the defeat of its Afghan adventure, had little reason to be amenable to Pakistan. The Indian Foreign Secretary, Shilendra Singh, had recently visited Moscow and, on his return, claimed that the Soviet Union fully appreciated Indian policy in Kashmir and continued, as always, to back the Indian case. But our man in Moscow, Ambassador Abdul Uttar, who briefed me at dinner on the day of my arrival, was of the view that Soviet support of the Indian position on Kashmir was not as unreserved as S.K. Singh's exposition of it suggested. The Soviets had not used the veto since 1984 and were anxious not to have to do so again. The ambassador's assessment was that, while a veto as such could not be ruled out, given the importance of Soviet relations with India, the Soviet Union's general position would depend on what Pakistan tried to get, Next day I had a session with Yuli Vorontsov, whom I had met some months earlier in Islamabad in connection with Afghanistan. He now bad the rank of Deputy Foreign Minister and was accompanied by officials from the Soviet foreign ministry. The meeting was a long one and went on over an elaborate lunch in a very elegant room in the foreign ministry's guest house. The discussion covered a lot of ground besides Kashmir—the East Europe situation, German reunification, the problems of *perestroika*,[114] and, of course, Afghanistan. On Kashmir, the Soviets heard me
out on the history and the rights and wrongs of the issue and on the crisis that now prevailed in the Indian-held part of it. Vorontsov did not argue with my presentation

[114] *Perestroika*, meaning reconstruction, was the name given to Gorbachev's attempt to turn the Soviet command economy into a mixed economy. Vorontsov mentioned, as an example, the problems faced in privatizing farming by breaking up large state farms. Who among the individual farmers gets which piece of land? Where to find the thousands of small tractors needed; the only ones made locally were the large ones used in huge collective farms.

but was blunt in talking about the subject. He mentioned S.K. Singh's visit to Moscow some, time before mine and said that he had found the Indians quite 'jittery' about the Kashmir situation. There was a feeling, Vorontsov said, that perhaps Pakistan was trying to 'test' how far it could go with the new government in Delhi. He asked, 'So what exactly are you trying to get, what do you expect from the present situation? Do you think this weak Indian government is in a position to hand Kashmir over to Pakistan?' In his view, V. P. Singh's minority government, depending for survival for support from the left and the extreme right, was not going to be able to move an inch on Kashmir.

The meeting with Vorontsov had not been unfriendly by any means, but he was, as I said, inclined to be argumentative and to play the 'devil's advocate'. He expressed concern over the fundamentalist complexion of the militant groups in Kashmir. However, a two-hour meeting the next morning with Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze had a different tone altogether. He started, as I have recounted in the previous section, by talking about Afghanistan and the suggestions he had put forward in an article in a Soviet journal. On Kashmir he listened attentively as I spoke of the situation prevailing in Indian-held Kashmir and expounded Pakistan's case—the entire territory up in arms; hundreds of thousands of Indian troops with the power of life and death over the population; India using the methods and rationale of all occupying powers—France in Algeria, Portugal in Angola, and South Africa in Namibia—of claiming rightful ownership and accusing the freedom fighters of being terrorists. The Kashmiri revolt was not instigated by Pakistan but lay in the genesis and history of the dispute—the Nehru-Mountbatten-Radcliffe gerrymander of the Punjab boundary, the fraudulent accession extracted from a Maharaja in flight, and India's reneging on a solemn agreement among three parties—the United Nations, Pakistan, and India herself—to resolve the issue by a plebiscite.

Shevardnadze listened to my lengthy and sometimes forceful presentation without saying a word, and when I was done, did not take me up on any of the points I had made. Instead he said straightway that he believed in the sincerity of our assurances that Pakistan was not interfering in the Kashmir situation. On the other hand, he wished to reaffirm, only as a general principle, he added, the Soviet Union's opposition to foreign interference in the internal affairs of a country. As for the matter of self-determination, he affirmed that the USSR not only upheld it as a principle but was applying it, and doing so not only in East Europe but within its own borders (i.e. in the Baltic states,)[115] I demurred that to treat the Kashmir situation as an internal affair of India amounted to begging the question, since the very matter that was in dispute was Kashmir's ultimate affiliation, The example that the Soviet Union had itself set in the

[115] The three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 in the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Nazi Germany and the USSR. In 1989-90, as the Soviet system began to loosen up under Gorbachev, one by one these republics declared their independence and, after some initial to-do and threats, the Soviet Union gave them recognition.

Baltic republics was the one that we hoped it would commend to its Indian friends. The Soviet Union, in the light of its own experience and political evolution and also given its special relationship with India, I said, was well-placed to play a helpful role in resolving the Kashmir dispute. Shevardnadze reacted positively to this plea and seemed intrigued by my suggestion that the Soviet Union might join China and the US in a three-power effort to end the repression in Kashmir and the danger of conflict in the subcontinent, and to bring about a final settlement of the dispute. 'It is a difficult, very delicate, very "fine" matter,' he said. 'We shall have to proceed very carefully.' But he was willing to give it a try. The Soviet Union, he said, would test the ground in Delhi and then get back to us.[116]

In closing, I referred to India's scare stories about fundamentalist influences on the Kashmir movement. I pointed out that the movement was not ideological and that the common aim of its various constituent groups was to obtain the right to self-determination. The Indians were trying to exploit current Western phobias concerning Islam and, no doubt, to alarm the Soviet Union over (what still were) its Central Asian republics. Shevardnadze laughed it off: We don't treat that as a serious problem. The Soviet government's concern right now is not with Islamist fundamentalist but our own Marxist fundamentalists.' But I think Vorontsov was nearer the truth in expressing Soviet concern at what a fundamentalist advance in Kashmir could mean for Central Asia. Indeed it is possible that, from the beginning, this factor had something to do with the Soviet Union's backing for India's case on Kashmir.

After the Soviet Union, the next place on my itinerary was the United States, where I spent a week between Washington and New York, meeting officials, Congressmen, and the Press. The American ambassador, Robert Oakley, had cautioned me in Islamabad that while he himself did not believe the Indian charges against Pakistan, in Washington I might find the atmosphere not entirely receptive to Pakistan's case. Even so, I was in for some surprises. The meeting with the National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, who had with him his number two, Robert Gates, and State department officials, went well enough. Scowcroft said that from its own sources the United States had knowledge that some aid, assistance, and training was being provided to the Kashmiri fighters from Pakistan. But in response to my presentation he said, 'Yes, we will help to get talks started on Kashmir and try to see that they are meaningful.' This last bit was most heartening but quite out of line with the usual 'hands-off attitude of successive US administrations towards India-Pakistan contentions. I wondered therefore whether it represented a shift in US policy or whether the National Security Adviser, who had many other matters on his plate, had not fully read the brief on Kashmir. This was undoubtedly the case with Vice-President Dan Quayle, who, after hearing me out in a brief but cordial meeting, asked whether Pakistan intended to take

[116] When Robert Gates of the US National Security Council came to Islamabad in May, he confirmed that Kashmir was discussed in Moscow between Secretary of State James Baker and Shevardnadze but that on this subject the Americans found no perestroika (new thinking) among the Soviets.

the issue back to the UN Security Council and assured me that the United States would certainly try to be helpful.

Meanwhile, offstage so-to-speak, Congressman Stephen Solarz had got into the act. Solar; an advocate of democracy and supporter of human rights in various parts of the world, had spoken out for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan and had befriended Benazir during her years of persecution and exile. On the other hand, he was elected from an area in New York with a large Indian community which contributed substantially to his campaign funds. Moreover, he was an active supporter of Israel and Israeli policies, which continued to be denounced and condemned in Benazir's Pakistan. So, despite his friendship with Benazir (and a Pakistani decoration that had recently been conferred on him), he was not altogether comfortable in his new-found role of 'friend of democratic Pakistan'. Now he was proposing to hold hearings on the Indian charge that Pakistan was fomenting 'terrorism' in Kashmir, but his purpose was not to look into the truth or otherwise of the charges but to play them up. The hearings were obviously intended to furnish material to the lobby that was agitating for action against Pakistan's alleged support of 'terrorism' in Kashmir. Ambassador Zulfikar took me to see the Congressman in Washington as he was preparing to start on his proceedings. He looked sheepish when I asked whether he intended also to look into the actions of the Indian security forces in Kashmir and to listen to what organizations such as Amnesty International and the Indian human rights groups had to say about their actions. Would he also give a hearing to the representatives of the thousands whom the Indian forces had orphaned, widowed, tortured, gang-raped, rendered homeless? Solarz defended his intentions but had no answer, and after a while no more was heard of his hearings.

However, the rude awakening came at the State Department when I met Under-Secretary of State Robert Kimmit, whom previously I had encountered on the common wavelength of the Afghan war. After listening to all that I had to say about the repression in Kashmir and to my plea for American intervention to remedy the situation and settle the dispute, the Under-Secretary gave me his news: the Senate Intelligence Committee had spent a half hour the previous day on Kashmir and some members had raised the issue of Pakistan's support of 'terrorism' in Kashmir, which, if established, he informed me as a friend, could cause all United States aid to Pakistan to be cut off under the existing anti-terrorist legislation. This 'friendly warning' was coming from an official with whom at my previous meetings the talk had been about the weapons and supplies to be funneled with Pakistan's help to the Afghan freedom fighters the 'terrorist? of the Kabul and Soviet governments!

Like Scowcroft, Kimmit also said that they had independent information regarding Pakistan helping the Kashmiri 'mujahideen'a At the Pentagon, Acting Secretary Atwood, who was sympathetic to the Pakistan case on Kashmir, hinted obliquely (and this was echoed at the CIA) that aid from Pakistan was being furnished in a clandestine way to the Kashmiri movement at some level of the Pakistan government without the

knowledge of the political leadership. In other words, the Administration believed that the intelligence agencies or the army were conducting a covert operation in Kashmir, behind Benazir's back.

Was there any truth in these allegations? Obviously, if the prime minister did not know anything, then as her National Security Adviser, I would know no more. All I can say is that there was no hint, direct or indirect, no circumstantial indication at any of the meetings on the subject, or in the papers that I saw, or in the various events and happenings, to suggest that an operation was being carried out without her knowledge. When I asked the Americans for details and sources of what they claimed to know, Teresa Shaeffer, the State Department's Pakistan desk officer, would only say, 'Where there's smoke there must be fire!' And no doubt where there is a mole-hill, one may see a mountain. Perhaps the United States found in these charges a means to counter Pakistan's importunities on Kashmir or to put pressure on Pakistan on other issues. For the United States, the Afghan adventure had ended with the exit of Soviet troops, and now threats of sanctions on one thing or another were beginning to loom on Pakistan's horizon. This particular sword of Damocles was kept dangling over Pakistan for some years and then was withdrawn although the Kashmir revolt continued unabated.

Some years later, a Pakistani newsmagazine published a report on a religious organization in Pakistan that was training and equipping men to go and fight in Kashmir. However, such organizations are working essentially on a domestic political agenda and their Kashmir ventures have scarcely even a marginal role in a movement that spans the spectrum from a nationalistic left to the religious right. It runs against reason to hold that such a broad-based movement, one that has cost tens of thousands of Kashmiri lives and which half a million Indian troops have not been able to subdue in ten years, is not driven by a passionately-held national purpose but is a covert intelligence operation or an amateur crusade.

In New York, UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar told me of India's low-key approach on the Kashmir question. This was not surprising, since the Indians hold that the United Nations has nothing whatsoever to do with Kashmir, and any suggestion to the contrary makes them very nervous. In token whereof, Perez de Cuellar told me, S.K. Singh, who had come to brief him on Kashmir, requested to be received at the Secretary-General's residence and not in his office—demonstrating that there is a thin line between diplomatic subtlety and silliness.

In deep-frozen Canada, a member of the Security Council that year, the Indians had been doing their homework and I found myself facing a censorious cross-examination. 'Why has Pakistan started this thing at this time?' was the first question fired at me, and others followed in that vein. I was able to put the Kashmir picture in perspective after

several sessions, but not to mobilize Canadian help in the event that we took the issue to the Security Council.

At the European Community's headquarters in Brussels, the atmosphere was less chilly for Pakistan. The European Parliament was considering the adoption of a resolution on Kashmir providing, if possible, for the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to the territory. The president of the Parliament and the Belgian foreign minister saw merit in letting the people of Kashmir decide their own future. All this was very encouraging. However, there were snags. One was that socialist members succeeded in taking out references to UN resolutions. Another was the United Kingdom, whose views on the subcontinent were treated by the other Europeans as the last word on the subject. Britain, whose last viceroy was responsible for the Kashmiri bone of contention between the two successors to the Raj, now took the view that Kashmir was best left to the two countries to settle, or fight out, between themselves.

The question was how to hold bilateral negotiations when Pakistan wanted to discuss it as the core issue with India and the cause of war and conflict between them whereas India wanted to discuss everything and anything except Kashmir. There was a contradiction in India constantly invoking the Simla Agreement on normalizing relations between the two countries but balking at what the agreement said on Kashmir. High Commissioner Dixit said to me that when he raised this with some of his colleagues, he was told to pipe down because, hailing from Kerala, he was not expected to understand the finer points of the Kashmir dispute.

When Rajiv Gandhi's government fell and V.P. Singh assumed office, we sent Ambassador Abdul Sattar to Delhi with a goodwill message from Benazir. As High Commissioner in Delhi, Sattar had established friendly personal relations with the new prime minister and his foreign minister, hider Kumar Gujral, when they were in the opposition. They received him cordially enough but the visit ended on a sour note because the situation in Kashmir was deteriorating and the Indian Press was raising a storm over Pakistan's alleged interference in Kashmir.

As things became increasingly difficult for India in Kashmir, there were reports of some rethinking on the subject in Delhi. William Clarke, the American ambassador to India, brought a hint to that effect when he came to Islamabad on an area visit. Indian newspapers wrote about Foreign Minister Gujral's readiness for 'talks' with Pakistan on Kashmir without any conditions. Prime Minister Kaifu of Japan, who came to Islamabad at about this time, said he had detected signs of flexibility in Delhi, whence he had lust come. So Foreign Minister Yaqub went to Delhi to see the lie of the land, but he came back with nothing new to tell except a quotable phrase by Guiral: 'Don't forget, Minister, that every Indian carries on his shoulders the burden of a thousand years of history.' When Yaqub reported to the cabinet on his Delhi talks, some of his colleagues thought that he had not been clear and forceful enough in expressing Pakistan's

position on Kashmir was therefore surprised when, at a seminar in Islamabad some years later, Mr Gujral, who was again out of office, said to me that Sahibzada Yaqub had read them a virtual ultimatum during his visit to Delhi. I found this surprising because I knew the Sahibzada as a man of smooth and circuitous phrases, not one to lay about him with ultimatums.

Then we tried a direct line to Prime Minister V.P. Singh. Our channel was a person, prominent in public life in Pakistan, who happened to be connected to the Indian prime minister. A secret meeting between them was arranged in Delhi with the help of a common connection. On return from Delhi, he described to me in cloak and dagger terms his meetings in Delhi. The meeting with the prime minister took place at one o'clock in the morning and he conveyed Benazir's message: Pakistan does not want war, is not training or sending terrorists into Kashmir; she has sent me to you to establish the sincerity of her intentions and to ask you to rein in the Indian security forces and halt their depredations in Kashmir. V.P. Sing a man of few words, chewed on that for a while, then said, 'Don't leave Delhi until you hear from us. You will shortly receive a response to the message you have brought.' On the third evening, our man received an anonymous phone call asking him to await a message, then a man came to his place and drove him to a house somewhere in the city—fully furnished and equipped but not lived in, evidently a 'safe house'. There he was received by a man who did not introduce himself but whom he took to be someone high up in the intelligence service. The man said: I know where you have come from, and carrying what message from whom. We also know, that Pakistan is preparing for war and a sudden pre-emptive attack on India. We know that Pakistan has the capacity to put together five to nine nuclear bombs. We know also exactly how long it would take to put them together, cart them to Sargodha, and mount them on your F-16s. But he warned, Pakistan will never be allowed the time to accomplish this design for, if it were allowed, it could have India at its mercy forever. We are watching and monitoring your every move, therefore be warned.

So, in the way of direct diplomacy, that was that. Sometime after that, without design or specific instructions, I myself had the occasion for a brief exchange with Mr. V.P. Singh. In Windhoek, to represent Benazir at the independence ceremonies of Namibia, I saw Rajiv Gandhi (now leader of the opposition) standing with the Indian delegation. When he saw me, he waved in friendly recognition across the crowd of VIPs and VVIPs. Later, running into me as we were both coming out of the National Stadium, he stopped to say to me, 'What on earth is going on between our countries? Why all this tension all of a sudden? Benazir and I had made such a good start. It must not be allowed to go waste.' Then he asked whether I was going to meet V.P. Singh, who was there leading the Indian delegation, and was surprised that no meeting had been set up. He said he would see to it that contact was made. 'You must have a heart-to-heart talk with V.P. before we all leave.'

At Sam Nujoma's reception that evening, Rajiv came straight up to me and said, 'The Premier is about to come. Let us go and wait by the door to catch him before he gets lost in the crowd.' While waiting I took the occasion to disclaim Pakistan's responsibility for the current trouble in Kashmir. Rajiv smiled ironically and said, 'Well, we do know a thing or two about that, you know.' And his eyes glazed over when I went on to urge that the time had come to resolve this dispute once and for all. Then the Premier arrived, Rajiv introduced me, saying to him, 'You must have things to discuss with Akhund. Perhaps you can get together after the banquet.' Then he himself slipped away, leaving me with V.P. Singh. But conversation with the Premier was not easy. He just stood there blinking at me and saying nothing. I told him, 'Mr. Prime Minister, you will prefer not to believe this, but Pakistan has no hand in the situation you are facing in Kashmir—at which he laughed a small laugh. I went on to talk about our desire to resolve the dispute and to live in peace with India. I reminded him that when he took office, Benazir had sent a special envoy, Ambassador Abdul Sattar, to convey her good will towards the new Indian government and Pakistan's readiness to continue the process of normalization that had began under Rajiv Gandhi. Sattar had also been asked to caution them about the trouble looming in Kashmir, and that a heavy-handed Indian response would provoke an emotional reaction in Pakistan. India, I said, always talked about the Simla Agreement but, in all the years since it was signed, there had been no attempt to resolve the Kashmir issue, no bilateral negotiations had taken place. After more than forty years of war and tension, surely some conclusion ought to be drawn; or were we to continue on the same thorny path, was it beyond the capacity or wisdom of our two peoples to find a solution that would leave no winners and no losers and bring lasting peace to the subcontinent? And so forth. Hackneyed words that had been said over and over again to no effect, words of good sense and moderation that the Indians would see as signs of Pakistan's military weakness.

The Premier himself said little that was new: Let us keep communications open, various sub-committees should meet as scheduled, settle what can be settled, and we will go on from there. On Kashmir he muttered words to the effect that the correct approach was to proceed step-by-step and improve the climate, although he now saw that something would have to be done about Kashmir. Almost the same words that had been spoken by Lal Bahadur Shastri to President Ayub in Tashkent thirty years earlier. A meaningless phrase, a ploy to bring an awkward conversation to a close. Having said his say, V. P. Singh moved on, followed by his wife, who had been standing behind him, still and silent as a shadow.

Then, somewhere along the way, a note was received from India proposing talks on all outstanding issues and suggesting a number of confidence-building measures (CBMs). Among these were a pledge of non-interference in each other's internal affairs (namely, Kashmir!), joint patrols, the right of 'hot pursuit', and some selective references to the Simla Agreement In short, India wanted Pakistan to stand by and not get in the way while it tried to clobber the Kashmiri into submission. I imagine India did not expect

Pakistan to take these proposals seriously, and indeed we did not take them seriously, not even by entering into polemics about India's lack of seriousness, but the two countries reached agreement on holding talks, at the level of foreign secretary, on all issues, including Kashmir. Plainly though, the two sides were entering into talks with diametrically opposite tactical aims—India in response to diplomatic pressures from friendly countries; Pakistan in the hope that the talks might result in relieving military tension and the repression in Kashmir. For Pakistan, though we had no illusions, in terms of abstract diplomacy it meant something that for the first time since the Bhutto-Swaran Singh talks in 1963, India would formally engage in bilateral discussions on Kashmir. We countered the Indian CMBMs with proposals of our own—joint patrolling not by Indian and Pakistani units but by each side on its own side, along with UN observers; troop redeployment, and the lifting of the draconian security measures in Indian-held Kashmir.

The talks began in mid-July and, even more quickly than expected, started to go round in small circles. India's Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dubey, said straight away that he had come with only a listening brief on Kashmir, and told his Pakistani counterpart, Tanvir Ahmad, that he had already exceeded his brief in letting *him* talk about the issue at length. But in a tête-à-tête afterwards, he said to Tanvir that if Pakistan co-operated with India in stabilizing the situation, India was prepared to give the Kashmiris 'anything' short of self-determination. On the matter of troop deployment, Dubey declared that Indian troops were at the Pakistan border precisely for the purpose of intimidation and would not be pulled back until Pakistan ceased its interference in Indian-held Kashmir.

In point of fact, Pakistan was not intimidated, for our military people also took the Indian troop deployments to be intimidatory and nothing worse. By July 1990, some Indian troops had gone back to their peace-time stations in Rajasthan and the Punjab. From there they could be reassembled quickly and therefore the threat remained, but our GHQ felt they had sufficient warning time if the Indians decided on any serious military action. However, 'alarums and excursions' were not absent and there were reports of troop movements, calling up of reserves, effacing of markings on transport vehicles, and so forth.

There were reports of nervousness on the Indian side. Within India's military establishment, some were of the view that Pakistan's forces were strong enough at the time, given the situation inside Kashmir, to do a repeat of India's action in Dhaka and seize Srinagar through a paratroop attack. In the last days of May, US ambassador Oakley told me that the Indian air attaché had come 'huffing and puffing' to the US embassy in a great state about an intelligence report that five nuclear bombs had been observed being moved from Kahuta to an air base. Oakley himself laughed off the story as a typical piece of misinformation—by Pakistan, trying to put the wind up the Indians.

On the Pakistan side there were those who talked about 'teaching India a lesson it will never forget'; if only the government would give the signal, the armed forces were ready to do it, and do it in very short order! But in the government, and on the whole also among the Brass, more sober counsels prevailed. The overwhelming weight of opinion was in favor of avoiding actions that could lead to war and confining Pakistan's support of the Kashmir struggle to the political, diplomatic, and humanitarian domains.

However, some of the military bravado had reached Washington's ears, causing 'profound surprise and anxiety'. Thus, in the middle of April, we were sent a warning not to count on an American bail-out if Pakistan got itself into a war with India and, for good measure, also a reminder that if Pakistan was found to be encouraging 'terrorists' in Kashmir, it could be in trouble with the law in the United States.

This warning shot was followed by a personal visit to Islamabad by some big guns from the American security establishment, namely, the Deputy National Security Adviser, Robert Gates, accompanied by Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly and Richard Haas, one of the whiz-kids at the National Security Council. They came at a rime when Benazir, accompanied by Foreign Minister Yaqub, was away on a tour of the Middle East. Robert Gates later complained that they had been 'stood up' by Benazir. This cannot be so—she had no reason to avoid meeting an envoy who was bringing an important message from President Bush. In fact, there was a flurry of cables back and forth, trying to arrange for Gates to meet her at one of her stops somewhere on the way, but it did not prove possible to match the place, times, and dates.

In any case, Bush's message was addressed to the president and meant for him and other establishment 'hawks'. Gates arrived at President's House at noon and delivered the letter to Ghulam Ishaq Khan. It expressed concern at the mounting tension between Pakistan and India, called for the disengagement of troops and their withdrawal from forward positions, and offered American technical help—monitoring by satellites and that sort of thing—in verifying troop withdrawals. (The 'non-paper' Gates was carrying to Delhi, of which we were given a copy, proposed similar measures to India).

The rest of the message was oral. Robert Gates, polite but blunt and admonitory, came to the point at once: there had been reports that some among our military thought that Pakistan could score major territorial gains in a short war before the world community stepped in to stop the fighting. This would be a 'tragic miscalculation'. Pakistan should not bank on the international community stepping in to stop the war after a few weeks of fighting. The US had done war-gaming which indicated that even a short, indecisive war of two or three weeks' duration would end with the Indians on a line somewhere inside Pakistan; a long war would end in Pakistan's defeat. One third to one half of the forces and their equipment would be destroyed on either side. Gates also enumerated the various circumstances in which US aid to Pakistan could be cut off; war was

foremost among these. Thus war would have dire consequences for Pakistan's economic development, security, and democracy (that is, the Benazir government) but would not gain Kashmir for Pakistan.

These warnings and admonitions came as a surprise and seemed misplaced in the light of the situation on the ground. There was tension, and a lot of warlike words were flying back and forth, but it was by no means a situation 'more frightening than the Cuban missile crisis' and 'as close as [the world has] come to a nuclear exchange,' as a CIA official put it in an article in the *New Yorker* magazine.[117]

According to the article, what alarmed the Americans was something that General Aslam Beg had said to General Schwarzkopf, C.-in-C. of the US Central Command, to the effect that: 'Now we are in good shape. With the support that Iran has promised me, we will win in case of war with India.' Gates himself did not mention any names, and for his part, General Aslam Beg, who was at the meeting, did not utter a word throughout the meeting or at the lunch that followed. Anyway, whoever said what to whom, the mere idea of a war between India and Pakistan, each with nuclear bombs in its basement, and a war in which Iran, America's current bogy-man, would weigh in, was bound to set the alarm bells ringing in Washington. 'Beg's pro-Iranian kick was scary to us,' the magazine quotes Ambassador Oakley as saying.

However, the idea that the two countries were pulled back from the brink of a nuclear war by timely American intervention is quite without substance. *The New Yorker* article painted a dramatic picture of the situation on the basis, it was claimed, of satellite and other intelligence: '...signs of a truck convoy moving from the suspected nuclear-storage site in Balochistan to a nearby Air Force base ... secure zones shifted all over the convoy route. Then a frightening sight ... F-16s pre-positioned and armed for delivery—on full alert, with pilots in the aircraft ... ready to launch on command ... etc., etc.' Ambassador Oakley, in the same article, described this analysis as 'overwrought' and said, 'We never had any hard indications that any nuclear warheads had been delivered to an air base.' I mentioned above that in the US ambassador's view, our side may have put on the whole show as a deterrent in case India was thinking of some sort of pre-emptive action.

I do not think that Washington really thought that Pakistan and India were about to go to war. More probably, the purpose of the American message, delivered bluntly and without amenity, was to put Pakistan to rights in case it thought that its role in Afghanistan had earned it American sympathy, if nothing else, in pursuing its own ends in Kastunir. On Kashmir, the American envoy had this to say:

[117] 'On the Nuclear Edge', by Seymour Hersh, *New Yorker*, 1993.

> The root cause of the trouble lies in local factors—India must therefore enter into a dialogue with the Kashmiri people and address their political, economic, and social grievances. Don't give India pretexts for not doing so, Pakistan should help instead by expressing private and public support for a dialogue between India and the Kashmiri people and encourage the idea of greater autonomy for them. Taking the issue to the UN or the OIC only aggravates matters and pre-empts possibilities of compromise.

Gates said he had spoken bluntly because, between friends, it was best to be frank. He was taking an equally forthright message to India on the matter of human rights violations and its troop deployments.

When Gates had finished, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who had listened to the American envoy's statement impassively, showing signs of neither indignation or irritation, said that he would be equally frank and clarify Pakistan's position for the benefit of our American friends. In the first place, what Mr Gates had now said constituted a clear shift in the US position since January when, in a note on the subject, they had called for negotiations between India and Pakistan under the Simla Agreement, whereas now they were proposing that India settle matters directly with the Kashmiris, as if Pakistan was not a party to the dispute. Where, in all of what we had heard that morning about the US position, the President asked, are principle, morality, concern for human rights?[118]

As for war, the President said, if war games could decide the outcome of wars, none would ever have been fought. Rut, he said, we know the costs of war, and even though the people of Pakistan have shown that they are capable of making sacrifices for the nation, we do not intend to provoke or be provoked into war. We value democratic government, but a democratic government must be responsive to the people, and the people of Pakistan fully support the Kashmiri struggle. Mr. Gates had mentioned the many ways in which Pakistan could lose US aid. Pakistan had already, on a number of previous occasions, had to face such aid cut-offs. The truth was that the US too often used its aid as a lever. We did not succumb in the past and we would not give up our principles for the sake of American aid or from fear of war.

Gates, perhaps feeling that he had somewhat overdone the friendly candor, back-pedaled a bit and said that of course the United States recognized Pakistan's interest in Kashmir and did want India and Pakistan to talk about Kashmir; he would be stressing this in Delhi. However a definitive solution did not appear feasible at that stage; in time, political realities might change. Ghulam Ishaq said that if self—determination or the separation of Kashmir from India were excluded as a basis for discussions, then what

[118] Oakley, who had perhaps caught a touch of the diplomatic malady known as localities—that is, sympathy for the host country's point of view, was quite impressed with what Ghulam Ishaq Khan said and how he said it; he tended to discount Gates' presentation as only the State Department's brief.

would Pakistan negotiate with India or India with Pakistan? To this John Kelly said that the United States saw India-Pakistan talks as a way to end the repression in the Valley.

The American message was frank, it was blunt, but, all said and done, it was not surprising.. American policy on Kashmir, after initially supporting self determination, had gradually veered to the position that the problem could not (or perhaps, should not) be resolved by holding a plebiscite. The United States favored instead what it called the 'Sikkim' type of solution, that is, a quasi-independent status under India's formal suzerainty. In the Islamabad talks, the Indian foreign secretary had held out the prospect of 'anything' short of self-determination. Under the accession agreement, Kashmir had retained the widest measure of autonomy, but it had soon discovered that that did not mean what it said. In Pakistan we know how easy it is for a powerful central government to get around constitutional guarantees of autonomy. The Kashmiris were not going to buy this line. As for Sikkim, it had simply been gobbled up by India one morning.

Thus India could find no valid interlocutors with whom to settle the issue on the basis on which it wanted to settle it. The Indians kept on talking about holding elections as a step towards such a settlement, but put off doing so year after year because elections were likely to result in a violently anti-Indian majority in the Kashmir Assembly. Some years later, when India- finally took the plunge and held elections in Kashmir, voters were taken to the polling booths at gun-point and, as always, the results had to be rigged. A government was set up under Farooq Abdullah, son of the legendary Shaikh Abdullah, but even Farooq, who had often served India as the joker in the pack whenever it had no other cards to play, could not restrain, once in a while, a 'cry from the heart'. In 1984 he had declared, 'Kashmir is for Kashmiris, and anyone who thinks otherwise is living in a fool's paradise.' On another occasion, he burst out, 'I'm sick of repeating *ad nauseam* that I am an Indian and that Kashmir's accession to India is irreversible. Why don't the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have to say the same thing?[119]

Thus the US position on the basic Kashmir issue was not far from India's. On the other hand, on the immediate issue—defusing tension, redeploying troops, ending repression—the American proposals favored Pakistan's position. Relaxing tensions and troop withdrawals would work to the advantage of the Kashmiri movement provided, of course, that it was flexible enough to adjust to a long-term strategy. But nothing came of the American initiative, either in defusing India-Pakistan tension, or in initiating India-Kashmiri talks, or in ending repression in Kashmir. The carnage at the funeral in Srinagar of the *Mir Waiz* mentioned earlier took place on the very day that Robert Gates was in Delhi conveying his 'forthright' message on the subject. The flaw in the

[119] Both quotations are from *Farooq Abdullah, Kashmir's Prodigal Son* by Aditya Sinha CUBS Publishers., New Delhi, 1996).

American approach was that, while it urged India to address Kashmiri grievances, it was at one with India in excluding their principal, indeed their only, demand—the right of self-determination. They were mistaken in believing that the problem would go away if only Pakistan could be made to pipe down.

Kashmir, by virtue of its geography and history, always had an identity of its own, and it would be surprising if, over the years, Kashmiri self-awareness had not grown stronger. The Azad Kashmir-based Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), the principal Kashmiri political organization, had begun to lean towards independence for the state. In June 1990, the JKLF head, Amanullah Khan announced that he was going to set up a 'Provisional Government of Independent Kashmir' (but dropped the idea on second thoughts). According to some Azad Kashmir leaders, sentiment in favor of independence had grown to the point where pro-Pakistani Kashmiris were being derided as toadies. Wall-side graffiti declared that any friend to Pakistan was a traitor to Kashmir (*Pakistan ka yaar, Kashmir ka ghaddar*). But others, such as the Azad Kashmir president, Sardar Abdul Qayyum, held that talk of independence was to be found more on the Pakistan side than in Indian-held Kashmir. In Azad Kashmir, he said, there was resentment at being ignored and taken for granted by the central government, irrespective of the party in power. But the idea of independence, he said, would nullify and undo forty years of Kashmiri struggle and sacrifice. What the people of Kashmir really wanted could best be seen across the cease-fire line on the Indian side, in the slogans people raised for Pakistan, the Pakistani flags they flew, and their celebration of Pakistani national days.

The foreign Press sometimes questioned whether Pakistan could accept independence for Kashmir. There were mixed opinions on the subject in the country. The government's position was that the agreed settlement laid out in the UN resolutions spoke only of two options Pakistan or India—but individual opinions differed. In practical politics, the question was not whether the Kashmiris should be given two choices or three, but whether they would be allowed any choice at all. The answer to that lay not with Pakistan but with India.

Some years later, at the annual session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, I was leading the Pakistan delegation and the leader on the Indian side was Farooq Abdullah. In the course of the habitual polemics between the two sides, Farooq Abdullah asked, 'What does Pakistan have to say about the third option? What would happen to Jammu and Ladakh in a plebiscite?' These questions were intriguing—they hinted at possibilities of a compromise that India had always shunned, fearing that on Kashmir, if it gave an inch it would have to give a mile. I wondered whether Farooq Abdullah was flying a kite for India or for the United States, or if he was speaking for himself.

Some India-Pakistan meetings on Kashmir have been held since then, always starting and ending in the same way—and never getting down to discussing specific possibilities of compromise. India will not give up Kashmir but is unable to keep it except by force. Pakistan has been unable to loosen India's grasp, either by force or by diplomacy. The dispute is neither settled nor about to go away. Now both countries have shown off their nuclear weapons, skiing rise to fears that it could all end in a war of annihilation.

In the immediate aftermath of the Indian tests, some Indian leaders started to swagger and bluster. But, after Pakistan's nuclear response, another kind of post-nuclear thinking was exemplified by the Indian General D.K. Palit, for whom the really 'frightening possibility' was that:

> Pakistan could declare that it would use its weapons in a defensive capacity only, that is, as a deterrent to an Indian attack on Pakistani territory, for in that case, India's conventional deterrent against a pre-emptive Pakistani attack on Kashmir—its threat of a counter-offensive with the vastly superior army, navy, and air force, would not be credible.[120]

This is the sort of approach that justifies Pakistan's objection to an agreement on the non-first use of nuclear weapons.

There was also the view that, despite the consistent absence of rationality and common sense in India-Pakistan relations, the nuclear danger might help to keep the peace between them, to prevent even conventional war, as the 'balance of terror' had done between the United States and the Soviet Union, It is indeed possible, but we must bear in mind two critical differences between the conflict in South Asia and the Cold War situation. Firstly, unlike the superpowers, India and Pakistan are not separated by an ocean and will have no warning time to annihilation an incentive to trigger-happiness. Secondly, the bone of contention between them is not an abstract ideological contest but a specific territorial dispute. Moreover, neither India nor Pakistan possess at this point the safety systems or the command, control, and communications mechanisms that might give some stability to their strategic balance.

The major powers, in particular the United States, are concerned at the situation, and their initial punitive reaction is giving way to thoughts of helping to stabilize it. Their attention has also re-focused on the Kashmir dispute, over which Pakistan and India might go to war again, this time with nuclear weapons. Is there hope, therefore, for a new international effort that might bring about a settlement of the Kashmir dispute once and for all?.

[120] Hersch, op. cit.

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The United States

For Pakistan, 'international effort had come to mean, in effect, US intervention to settle the Kashmir dispute. After America's emergence as the sole superpower, this seemed more than ever the case. America's Cold-War victory owed a great deal to the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan which in turn owed not a little to Pakistan's role therein. But the American ally had 'astonished Pakistan with its ingratitude'[121] even before the Afghan war was quite over, by threatening to cut off aid over a variety of Pakistani transgressions. There was a whole panoply of laws relating to nuclear proliferation, carrying the names of Symington, Glenn, Solari, Pressler, under which this could be done, indeed had to be done, as soon as Pakistan ceased to be useful to the United States for whatever was the current purpose. We could also be had for not doing enough to stop drug production and trade. But the 'unkindest cut' was the threat to bring Pakistan to book for aiding and abetting 'terrorism' in Kashmir. As mentioned in the previous section, this particular sword, in the end, was not dropped on Pakistan's neck, but meanwhile economic and military aid was cut off any way under the Pressler Amendment. This happened in 1990, a very short while after the President dismissed the Benazir government.

In the circumstances, Pakistan's long-standing belief that the United States' mediation might bring about a 'just and honorable' solution of the Kashmir dispute seems paradoxical, but it is no more so than the PLO's reliance on the United States to get what it can from Israel, In both cases the phenomenon can be summed up in the phrase, 'facts of life,' or '*realpolitik*'.

The American position on Kashmir had evolved over the years. The UN resolutions calling for a plebiscite in Kashmir had been an Anglo-American initiative, and the person nominated to supervise the plebiscite was the late Admiral Chester Nimitz of the US Navy. The United States had continued to support the UN resolutions until as late as 1965, when Secretary Dean Rusk referred to a Kashmir plebiscite as forming part of an overall settlement between India and Pakistan. The United States' attitude, though not its formal stand, began to change in the sixties, and particularly after the Sine-Indian border clash, when winning India over to The West took priority over making peace in South Asia.

In the previous section, I outlined what the American envoy Robert Gates, speaking within the four walls of the President's House, said on the subject to Ghulam Ishaq

[121] So, even more astoundingly, had the Mujahideen.

Khan. Ms. Robin Raphel, the State Department's South Asia desk officer, laid it Out publicly in her testimony before a Congressional body[122] some years later:

> A lot of history has gone by since [the UN adopted its resolutions on Kashmir], India does not share the view that these resolutions are relevant, and in practical terms, it is time to move forward ... It is time not to look at past prescriptions but to come up with a prescription that suits the situation on the ground and the current political reality.

But political reality often lies in the eye of the diplomatic beholder. The United States chose to see it in terms of local economic, social, and political grievances that could be taken care of if Delhi would just sit down and talk things over with the people of Kashmir, and if Pakistan would stop 'interfering' and leave the Kashmiris alone to realize that there was no other way.

The United States was surely aware that the Kashmiris were disaffected not over 'local' grievances, but principally because Kashmir was being kept in India against their will. No movement can go on as the Kashmiri movement has done, off and on, for half a century, with no end in sight, and in the face of overwhelming force and repression, unless there is a powerful inner momentum sustaining it To some extent, the change in US policy may have been influenced by the Indian argument that self-determination could fragment multi-ethnic states[123] and that, in India's case, it would encourage Sikhs and other separatist groups and jeopardize India's secularism and the position of the Muslim minority. Bearing in mind what had happened in Afghanistan, America's initial commitment to self-determination may also have cooled off on account of the growing presence and role of Islamic fundamentalist groups in the Kashmiri movement. The policy of states is, after all, based not on abstract principles or friendship or gratitude, but on what they perceive to be their interest and what they think they are able to do. On issues between Pakistan or India, most countries try to look for ways of saying and doing something that would not offend either.[124] When all is said and done, that was also the attitude of the United States.

In her statement, Ms ph el put it as follows:

> The situation cries out for dialogue—between India and Pakistan, between India and Kashmiri leaders, and among Kashmiris ... We have urged India to take the necessary steps to engage Kashmiris in a genuine dialogue on their future. We

[122] The House of Representatives' International Affairs Committee's sub-committee on. Asia and the Pacific, 7 December 1995.

[123] This argument carries weight with other countries facing ethnic and tribal divisions, for example, in Africa, as we discovered during debates in various UN bodies, such as the Human Rights Commission.

[124] One of our special envoys sent to lobby for Kashmir in the Gulf Sheikhdoms was told at one of his stops, 'Pakistan is our brother) India our friend...'

have repeatedly urged Pakistan to end material support for Kashmiri militants as a step toward lowering tension. We have also engaged Kashmiri leaders in an effort to get them to think creatively about political solutions.

All this was rather vague, but its redeeming feature lay in admitting the Kashmiris as a necessary party to any settlement. Moreover, the State Department official also offered: 'We stand ready to help but only if all parties agree that our assistance is welcome.'

Pakistan has indeed been eager for the United States to play such a role because, as the weaker party interested in changing the *status quo*, it needs outside help to even the scales in any negotiations with India over Kashmir, indeed merely to get them started. For India, the *status quo* is the final, definitive settlement of the Kashmir issue;[125] any change could only be to its disadvantage, so India rejects any third-party role in Kashmir—indeed, the mere suggestion that Kashmir is a dispute that needs to be settled makes it quite nervous. In the ultimate analysis, would United States' intervention justify India's fears or disappoint Pakistan's hopes?[126] The probability is that the United States does not know quite what to do about Kashmir and is feeling its way towards, not a 'just and honorable' solution, but one that can be made to work in the given circumstances and one that, if it does not further its own interests, will at least not damage them.

In both countries a larger-than-life role, is ascribed to the United States in the affairs of the subcontinent, certainly one larger than the United States itself seems inclined to play. Every word and gesture of American envoys is scanned for its deeper meaning and, when a State Department official lets fall some observation about some matter concerning one country or the other, a wave of speculation sweeps the subcontinent as to whose side America is coming down on or what conspiracy it might be hatching.

Addressing a conference in Delhi, the American author and historian of the Indian and Pakistani armies, Stephen Cohen, said, 'The US has no vital interests in South Asia, but the fate of a quarter of the world ... that possesses a potential for nuclear war and massive dislocation demands some degree of attention.[127] Cohen was a little too categorical and defined vital interests rather narrowly as 'something worth going to war over'; but there is undeniably a lack of depth about the relationship between the United States and the two South Asian countries which, together, account for one fifth of the world's population, occupy a significant position on the globe, and are substantial

[125] For dialectical purposes, India holds that the territories on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control also belong to it but it would, u a concession, let Pakistan keep them.

[126] At the Tashkent conference in 1966, the Soviets made one point about the uses and abuses of mediation and arbitration that is worth bearing in mind. Would there be a Kashmir quest ion today, Foreign Minister Gromyko asked, if the drawing up of the India-Pakistan boundary had not been left to the unquestioned judgment of a third party, Cyril Radcliffe?

[127] Conference on Emerging Issues in India-American Relations, New Delhi, 7-9 March 1993.

military powers. Indeed, India's principal grievance—and the complaint of its American lobby—is that the United States does not recognize India as a great power[128] or treat it with the same seriousness and respect that it gives to China. However, a recognition bestowed from outside would be no substitute for the real thing. India has the world's fourth largest military force equipped with very modem (and now nuclear) weapons whose main purpose seems to be to jump-start its drive to great-power status. But India produces less steel than South Korea, has a smaller trade than Singapore, and a lower GNP per capita than Sri Lanka. As for Pakistan, its armed forces try to keep up with India's but, partly as a result, its economy has failed to take off, despite its potential and some promising starts.

The objective reality is that the two countries have a relatively small share in the global economy, and even India, in spite of its large size and population and one of the world's largest armed forces, has a marginal impact on the world stage. Each country is largely concerned with the other, and each evaluates its relations with the United States in terms of the latter's relations with the other. The recent emergence of both on the nuclear scene has sharpened American security concerns but has not noticeably enhanced the influence of either in world affairs or on American policy.

Of course, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru are household names in America, and India's large size and population do create an impression—India is not 'just another country' declared a Carnegie report[129] in awe. 'India's democratic institutions, rile of law, and freedom of the press are values that America shares and appreciates and sees as providing a model for the Third World India also has a vocal and active American lobby that sees it as a country of Gandhian non-violence and peace and is lured by the prospect of a strategic partnership that could promote American interests and influence in a large part of Asia.

In Pakistan's case these Indian advantages are either missing or not as impressive, arid the long-standing American connection has throughout been a contingent one, sustained by specific and transitory US objectives. During the Afghan war Pakistan became the third largest recipient of US aid, and there was the closest cooperation between the two countries at the highest levels of government. Yet the Afghan episode also illustrated the essentially tactical nature of the US-Pakistan alliance. 'Never a romance,' according to one writer, 'the relationship was born of mutual need and

[128] But even the more zealous lobbyists are not clear about how this is to be done. Mostly it comes down to stopping military supplies to Pakistan so that 'natural balance' may allow India to assert its 'unchallenged supremacy. in the region.

[129] *India and America: After the Cold War*, by Selig Harrison and Geoffrey Kemp, Carnegie Endowment, Washington DC, 1993.

strategic necessity.'[130] Ziaul Haq, for his part, had no illusions about the relationship and described it as 'a handshake, not an embrace.[131]

On Pakistan's part, the main reason for the alignment with the United States (besides the innate anti-communism of the leadership) was to muster support against India's growing military preponderance. The Americans surely knew this was the case but did not ask too many questions. They were content to have a major Asian country stand up and be counted on the West's side at a time when few others were willing to do so. They provided weapons but no security guarantees against India. Thus there was an element of reciprocal make-believe in the Pakistan-US relationship from the beginning. Except in the Afghan war, there were really no common strategic interests between the two nominal allies. On many issues of importance to the United States and American public opinion, Pakistan stood on the opposite side. The most conspicuous of these was the Arab-Israeli conflict, in which Pakistan was unreservedly and vehemently on the Arab side.

At the popular level, not many Americans know much about Pakistan, and what they do hear and see does not project a very shining image of Pakistan: repeated bouts of military rule; a poor record on human rights; child labor; record-breaking corruption; the fundamentalist rhetoric and postures of its leaders, and so on and so forth. In an article explaining the importance of Pakistan to the USA, an American writer spoke of it as 'a US partner that is so little loved for itself.[132] One reason for being specially unloved is Pakistan's gratuitous (because often it seems to exceed that of the Arabs themselves[133]) hostility towards Israel, which is the apple of America's eye and whose sympathizers have a powerful voice m the media and among policy-makers. No less complex were Pakistan's feelings towards its American ally and patron. As an ally, the US had been found wanting at the most crucial moments, and there was a shouldering resentment at the unreliability of American aid and the continuing need for it. The resentment went beyond bilateral relations. In the pan-Islamist essence of the Pakistani psyche, American partiality towards Israel, its hostility to Iran and Iraq, its double standards in the Balkans, could have only one source: the age-old Christian hostility to Islam, a continuation of the medieval crusades by other means.

None of these mutual antipathies and misgivings, qualms and reservations were in evidence when Benazir arrived on her state visit to Washington in June 1989. As she emerged from the helicopter, bearing in her arms her new-born son, she stood on the steps as an icon of beauty, power, and motherhood—media-wise, an image hard to beat. When she addressed a joint session of the Congress two days later, she received a

[130] Robert Pear in *The Washington Post*, 1 September 1988.
[131] Rodney Jones in *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1989.
[132] *Ibid*.
[133] For example, one of Pakistan's religious parties demanded that if the Arabs recognized Israel, they should be expelled from the Islamic Conference.

standing ovation that went on and on and on.[134] On Capitol Hill[135] she managed to gain liberal support for Pakistan without losing that of the conservatives. At a joint meeting of the Senate and House Foreign Affairs Committees, Edward Kennedy, Patrick Moynihan, and Stephen Solarz from the Left and Charlie Wilson and Gordon Humphrey from the Right beamed with equal satisfaction as she spoke up for democracy and human rights and pledged to stand firm in Afghanistan until the last communist was out. She reassured them about Pakistan's nuclear intentions. They were prepared to give her on a silver platter all she wanted—F-16 fighters, more weapons for the Mujahideen, enhanced economic aid. The IMF head, Michel Camdessus, paid a call and seemed happy to accept everything she said and give whatever she asked for—which was more loans to make do and more time to administer the IMF medicine. American aid to Pakistan was not only augmented but was 'appropriated' in full—that is to say, it could not be juggled with or trimmed in subsequent legislative proceedings.

I should add here a brief digression on the F-16 matter that subsequently assumed large and complicated proportions and became for many years a major issue in Pakistan-United States relations—the epitome of a built-in unfairness. At the time, not everyone in Washington had qualms about selling these aircraft to Pakistan. Many in the Administration were as keen to sell then to Pakistan as our people were to buy them. We were going to pay for them cash down. For the manufacturers, there were no other buyers on the horizon, and indeed without the Pakistani order, the production line was liable to be closed down. At the Pentagon, the question put to me was, 'The main thing is, does Pakistan seriously intend to buy these sixty planes?' When I said that we did indeed, the Assistant Secretary of Defence, Richard Armitrage, slapped the table with the palm of his hand to express his satisfaction saying, 'That is all we need to know.' Personally, I had reservations about the deal on two grounds. In the first place, although the Administration had cleared the sale following Benazir's Washington visit, the threat of an aid cut-off under the Pressler Amendment could materialize at any time during the years that it would take for the planes to be delivered. Secondly, although we were buying as many as sixty planes and paying for them in cash, the transfer of technology in our case was much smaller than for Indonesia, which was buying far fewer of these aircraft. Turkey was getting a virtually complete F-16 manufacturing plant. For both political and technical reasons, and if simply to improve our bargaining position, Pakistan would have done well to look elsewhere—to France, or to China (for a joint production project)—before making a final decision. True, French planes were more expensive and the project with China required a long gestation period. But with hindsight, the favored F-16 deal saved neither money nor time.

To revert to the Washington visit, President Bush, whom she had met already at Emperor Hirohito's funeral in Tokyo (and, going farther back, along with her father

[134] The notes of dissent tended to come from within the Pakistani delegation. One Begum sniffed, 'This is not a state visit, it is a pop festival!'

[135] The site of the United States Congress.

during the Bangladesh debates in the Security Council, when she was a Harvard co-ed) put on a grand show—a Guard of Honor dressed in eighteenth-century red coats, a banquet, and a recital by violinist Izhak Perelman (who managed to get a rare Benazir handshake). The meetings with the President and senior cabinet members and officials were less effusive and more businesslike but equally cordial. Afghanistan was still on the active US agenda, and a good deal of the discussion centred on what were Soviet intentions, how to get Najibullah to go, how to get the Mujahideen to work together and get on with it. Bush spoke of his discussions with Gorbachev and reassured Benazir that the US relationship with Pakistan transcended Afghanistan and would continue. He said that the United States greatly admired Pakistan's courage in standing up for the Afghans 'under the very eyeballs of the Soviet Union', The United States, the President said, would hate to see another Khomeini-type of regime come up in Afghanistan. Famous last words, one might say, in the light of all that has befallen the Afghan people since then. (Khomeini, on his deathbed for some time, died just as Benazir's flight took off for Washington and she sent a condolence message as it passed over Iranian territory).

In Beijing at about the same time, troops had rolled into Tiananmen Square in their tanks and very bloodily broken up the songs and dances and democracy demos that students and workers had been staging for weeks. The subject came up in the White House discussions. Benazir was deeply shocked at some of the stories that had come out about the event and was in some embarrassment as to what face Pakistan, China's friend and ally, was to put on it. Even more troubled was the US President, for whom the US-China relationship was important but who was facing very vocal popular and Congressional pressure to impose economic sanctions on China. He had condemned the Chinese actions in strong language and also applied some—not very painful—sanctions, but he did not want to go any further. Here, behind closed doors, he took a more pragmatic view of the situation and said to Benazir, 'Taking the long view, Pakistan's and America's relations with China must remain strong.'

The nuclear issue came up. Before the Pakistan elections, (then) Vice-President Bush's National Security Adviser Don Gregg had mentioned it to me in a cowboy metaphor as 'the only burr under the saddle' of Pakistani-US relations. Throughout the Afghan war, the issue had been down-played in order not to put at risk Pakistanis whole-hearted cooperation in that venture. But even then, as I mentioned earlier, there were policy-makers like Peter Galbraith who felt that Pakistan's arm could safely be twisted because the Soviet presence in Afghanistan threatened Pakistan itself and Pakistan would in no case turn around and come to terms with the Soviet Union. Anyway, now the Soviets were out of Afghanistan and the nuclear question was back at the top of the US agenda on Pakistan.

In January 1989, soon after Benazir took office, a CIA team came to Islamabad on one of its periodic visits. In the course of a meeting at the President's House, Ambassador

Oakley raised the issue without beating about the bush. There were laws on the American statute book that required the US President to provide Congress with certification regarding Pakistan's nuclear programme. In all frankness,' Oakley said, 'from year to year it is becoming more difficult for the President to certify that it is of a peaceful nature.' The CIA Deputy Director, turning to the farmyard for his metaphor, added, 'It looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, but you would like us to believe that it isn't a duck!' 'Ghulam Ishaq Khan, a country man himself, was emphatic: he had seen no ducks around, nor anything that walked like a duck or quacked like one.

Aslam Beg was listening with a scowl on his face. Oakley passed me a slip of paper on which he had written, 'The general will be a lot unhappier if the US stops all co-operation with his army.' Two days later the ambassador called on Benazir and told her plainly that if Bush was not able to make the required certification to Congress, all US aid to Pakistan would automatically stop.

So at the White House meeting, Benazir plunged into the issue with equal directness. She affirmed that Pakistan would not produce a nuclear device, would not enrich uranium to weapons-grade strength, and would not transfer nuclear know-how to third countries, but she also reaffirmed that the subcontinent's nuclear problem could only be solved on a regional basis and not by unilateral measures. She urged America to help in finding such a solution. Pakistan, she said, was ready for its part to discuss a bilateral test-ban treaty and arms reduction with India. She cautioned that cutting off aid to Pakistan would create problems for Pakistan's nascent democracy and would have repercussions in the region and beyond, She had said the same thing to him a few months earlier when they met in Tokyo at the funeral of Emperor Hirohito. Bush had listened to her then without betraying any reaction one way or another, expressed full support for democracy in Pakistan, but warned, 'Don't let anyone tell you that this is not a very complex issuer—in short, Pakistan should not assume that in the present atmosphere of sympathy for Benazir and restored democracy, the nuclear issue would be overlooked.

The US non-proliferation policy had evolved in the years since Jimmy Carter's obsession with Pakistan and plutonium reprocessing. It was now accepted that non-proliferation in South Asia required attention to the matter of regional balance. Pakistan was therefore not being pressed to join the NPT or accept full-scope safeguards unilaterally. However, there was the so-called Pressler Amendment, which solely and by name targeted Pakistan and left the president relatively small leeway in the matter. If he failed to certify that Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons, all US aid, both economic and military, would be cut off. It was discriminatory, it was unfair, and in the end it did not work—but there it was.

At the White House, Bush spoke of the importance of the nuclear issue for relations between the US and Pakistan and the compulsions of the laws under which the

president must operate, but he said that the US was willing to help the two South Asian countries to find a regional solution to the problem. In a separate meeting with Benazir, Secretary of State James Baker also refrained from threats and warnings but singled out the nuclear issue as the only US difference with Pakistan. He cautioned that Pakistan must keep in mind the 'political dimension' of the issue, that is, the particular concern felt by Congress over Pakistan's nuclear programme. Meetings with other officials took place in a similar atmosphere of discretion and tact, and at that point the Americans were not pushing things to conclusions. Even several months later, when Benazir sent me back to Washington to brief the Administration on the Kashmir situation, the only reference to the nuclear issue came when, at the end of my discussion with him, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft said, 'Now I would like to make a 30-second reference to another important question....'

But, though muffled for the moment, the drumbeat of the nuclear difference was there and could be heard in the background. A month after her American triumph, when Benazir paid a visit to the United Kingdom, Mrs. Thatcher said to her, 'The Americans are not quite reassured by your assurances on Pakistan's nuclear programme.'

The guillotine fell the following year and all US aid to Pakistan was cut off. This happened just after Ghulam Ishaq Khan, using his controversial constitutional powers, had dismissed the Benazir government for a variety of alleged failings and misdemeanors. The aid cut-off happened because the president failed to certify that Pakistan did not have a nuclear device; it had nothing at all to do with the dismissal of Benaziris government. During her American visit, giving the commencement address at Harvard University, Benazir had put forward a proposal that, in view of the prevalence of military *coups* in the third world, the newly-restored democracies and their sympathizers should loin together in order to forestall and prevent forever the overthrow of democratic governments. The whole thing was based on the idea, though it was not put in so many words, that potential *coup*-makers would not monkey around with democratic governments if they knew that foreign aid would be stopped. The idea had originated, I think, in the well-meaning head of Peter Galbraith, but it was full of holes. For Pakistan there were awkward questions about who would be included, who excluded: on the one hand were many brotherly countries that were not democratic, and on the other Israel, which was, but with which Pakistan would not have any dealings. The scheme was based on an abiding and misplaced faith in the power of US aid. Thus, while Ziaul Haq was still in power and playing cat-and-mouse with the opposition, a PPP official asked my opinion on whether the US Congress could add a rider to the aid bill insisting on the restoration of democracy and the lifting of martial law in Pakistan. I thought this was most unlikely, among other reasons because the main channel for American influence and intervention in Pakistan has always been the army and, in the middle of the Afghan war, this was more so than ever.

At any rate Benazir was quite taken with the proposal for a democratic states' association: 'Imagine, it is being launched from the very same place as the Marshall Plan!' Nothing came of it, however, nor of other projects of the same sort (such as Mrs. or Aquino's Association of Democratic Nations in Manila).

Benazir seemed to believe the popular myth regarding the all-powerful and all-encompassing influence of the United States on everything that happened in Pakistan. Why people believed this does not matter; the mere fact that they did made it true. A myth it was, but a self-realizing myth.

Thus at one meeting, a senior party member spoke anxiously of a rumor that had come to his ears to the effect that the United States embassy did not particularly mind whether the PPP or the IJI held power at the centre. So what? one might ask. The party member knew perfectly well that the government could only be replaced if enough of its supporters switched sides. What he feared was that, sensing which way the wind from America was blowing, enough flag-waverers and band-wagon riders on the PPP side *would* begin to sidle up to Nawaz Sharif.

A Western journalist once wrote, 'Pakistan catches cold when America sneezes!'[136] Over the years, America had not merely sneezed, but imposed sanctions, scolded, admonished, and sometimes (as on the F-16s) ill-used Pakistan on one issue or another without Pakistan catching cold or giving ground. Pakistan had defied the USA on key issues such as relations with China and the nuclear programme, and had often opposed it in the UN and other international forums. Yet Pakistani politicians and officials and journalists will still often shake their heads over even some purely domestic issue and mutter, 'What counts in the end is what the Americans want.' It is a self-imposed vassalage of the psyche, the power of myth!

The American reaction to Benazir was a mixture of fascination and, especially in official circles, of wariness. I mentioned above that they had rather hoped that the 1988 elections would lead to a Junejo government—possibly in a coalition with the PPP. During Benazir's triumphant state visit to Washington, the bipartisan support she had evoked in Congress evoked only forced smiles among some officials. Why this was so, I cannot tell. When I spoke to an editor of *The Wall Street Journal* about a critical article concerning the PPP government, he said bluntly, 'Why does your government expect sympathetic treatment from American newspapers given that Benazir is known to be anti-American?' The fact was that she had, on the contrary, moved the PPP from the left to the centre and had seriously upset some of the Party's old guard by her pro-American stance and speeches. Perhaps echoes of her father's anti-American invective, and of her own statements at the time blaming the US for his downfall, still lingered. American officials had worked closely for more than a decade with Ziaul Haq and

[136] Anatol Lieven in *The Times*, London, 7 July 1989.

admired and appreciated him. Her attacks on Zia and on his decade-long dictatorship that they had supported may have grated on their nerves. Nor were her opponents inactive in this regard, and at one point opposition leader Nawaz Sharif engaged an American PR man to project his anti-PPP views in Washington.

At a more banal level, it is possible that members of the Republican Administration may have been irritated to see so many Democrats among her supporters and advisers. When, in her after-dinner speech in Washington, she cracked a joke at the expense of the guest of honor, Vice President Quayle,[137] a senior Republican official sitting next to me did not appreciate the humour and said, 'That is just the sort of thing Mark Seigel would put into her speech.' Also, as mentioned above, there were doubts in the Administration about the policies she might follow and her ability and competence to run the government—doubts that were not fully set at rest by some of the PPP government's actions and attitudes.

When Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed the PPP government in 1990, there was no great stir in Washington, not even among circles sympathetic to Benazir. *The New Yorker* article cited elsewhere in fact stated that some members of the American embassy in Islamabad had sympathized with Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Aslam Beg in their power struggle with Benazir. When her party suffered a defeat of hard-to-believe proportions in the 1990 elections (which were widely believed to have been flagrantly rigged), an American team that had come to observe the elections on behalf of the Democratic Party certified that they had been fair and free. Clearly, Benazir had overestimated her hold on American sympathies.

On the broader plane, there remained the question of Pakistan-United States relations in the changing international environment. It was all well and good for President Bush and other officials to say that the relationship with Pakistan transcended Afghanistan and would continue, but what would be its shape and substance? For decades the sheet anchor of the country's foreign and security policies had been to ensure support from the USA, if not directly against an Indian threat, then in enabling Pakistan itself to maintain a credible defensive posture. Now that policy not only had become hostage to the nuclear question but, after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the approaching end of the cold war, lacked any self-evident purpose or convincing rationale in American eyes. In a sympathetic view, Pakistan's post-Afghan role lay in the following factors:

> Because Pakistan ... overlooks the Arabian Sea and the points of transit through the Strait of Hormuz to the Persian Gulf, it could help with, or try to frustrate major power access to that channel. Politically, Pakistan is an important

[137] Quayle was the butt of many political jokes about his IQ. The joke in question was that after a visit to Latin America, he said, am sorry I did not work harder at my Latin in school.' Seigel, a rather partisan Democrat) was Benazir's public relations Mail in Washington.

> anchorage in the Islamic world, a relatively stable polity. Militarily, Pakistan has the resources to help the smaller Persian Gulf states and the least developed Arab states to maintain internal security and cope with external pressure. Economically, Pakistan has technical, entrepreneurial, and administrative skills that already are being used to expedite the development of the Middle Eastern oil-producing countries. Pakistan brings considerable regional assets to the relationship with the United States...[138]

Some eminent establishment figures in Pakistan were also quite taken by the idea of a Pakistani role in protecting the 'free world's oil life-line' and other such chores in the Gulf, but what, in practice, would be the meaning of maintaining 'internal security' in the smaller Gulf states? Whose access to the Strait of Hormuz would Pakistan undertake to frustrate and how? And to further what interest of its own? Clearly, in this concept, Pakistan would be lending its services to American purposes in a region where these did not always coincide with its own interests and sympathies. The Americans themselves did not appear to have given the idea much thought; with the end of the Cold War and, the subsequent disappearance of the Soviet Union as such, the whole thing became rather academic. When a real crisis did occur in the Gulf with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Pakistan's contingent was among the largest to join the international action against Saddam Hussain, but it played a relatively marginal role in the exercise and was not involved in any action against the Iraqis. Even so, the government's decision to join the operation against Iraq was not well received in the country; a former Foreign Minister, Agha Shahi, led a street demo against the operation and no less a person than the Chief of Army Staff, General Aslam Beg, publicly criticized the Americans for making a Karbala[139] of the whole of Iraq.

Benazir had not opposed the dispatch of Pakistani troops to join the and-Saddam coalition; however, with her down-to-earth turn of mind, she did not go for the notion of Pakistan doing watch-and-ward duty for American interests in the Gulf. Her emphasis was on the moderating role that Pakistan as a democratic and enlightened Muslim state could play in a region of vital interest to the United States, where fundamentalism and religious fanaticism seemed to be gaining ground, but this role was not entirely convincing, and did not correspond to Pakistan's image in the world or to the complex reality of Pakistan's politics and society. Socially conservative Pakistan in fact lags behind some Muslim states in such matters as family planning and the status of women.

All said and done, America's own position on the matter was equivocal—it did not worry too much about the internal politics of Muslim countries, got on perfectly well with a fundamentalist Saudi Arabia, and had supported fundamentalists in

[138] Rodney Jones in the *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1989.

[139] The site in Iraq of the eighth-century battle in which the Imam Hussain, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), lost his life—and for Muslims, a highly emotive reference.

Afghanistan (even, up to a point, the Taliban). But those who threatened American—or Israeli—interests were another matter—and were hardly going to look to Benazir as .a role model.

So the paradoxes and ironies of the Pakistan-US relationship continued. To a considerable extent, these are intrinsic to a relationship so unequal in many ways. Pakistan was always among the largest recipients of American economic aid, while the military depended heavily upon American weapons and training. There are thousands of Pakistani students in American educational institutions. American culture and way of life have also made inroads into Pakistan in the shape of burgers, blue jeans, pop music, and now the internet. But there was no meeting of minds, not a great deal of intellectual affinity, little cultural interchange. To the Pakistani man in the street, America was not an enemy by any means, but nor was it a friend. In Pakistan too, America, feared and resented, envied, admired, and imitated, is 'not much loved for itself,'

19
Foreign Policy

Unlike her father, for Benazir foreign policy was a secondary interest. Her primary interest was in the domestic scene—social and economic development, jobs, human rights—and in consolidating her own political position.

In a speech at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs in Karachi on 1 December 1987 she explained her approach to foreign policy. Alongside the safeguarding of tile country's independence and integrity, she said, the principal and uppermost goals of national policy were to 'strengthen national cohesion and institutions', to develop the country's economic and social potential, raise the standards of living of the people, arid promote social justice. These objectives were intricately interlinked:

> Our frontiers cannot be secure if internal dissensions and divisions undermine the foundations of national unity. National cohesion cannot be fostered if democratic institutions are subverted. A nation like Pakistani created by an act of self-determination, can only survive and flourish by continually reaffirmed consensus ... Our independence is trammeled when our economy becomes yearly more indebted and our plans for development and progress depend upon the decisions of foreign legislatures and international banks.

At the time, the focus of much that she did and said was Ziaul Haq as she herself was the target of his political machinations. She assailed him for the loss to India of positions in the is hen glacier, his futile 'cricket diplomacy' *vis-à-vis* India, the set-backs in elections to UN bodies,[140] the international isolation in which the country found itself as a result of its one-item Afghan foreign policy, the fall-out within the country of the Afghan policy:

> The two-front conflict, the nightmare built into our geo-political situation, is now a reality ... [but] a veritable third front has come into existence within the country's borders. Kidnappings and dacoities take place routinely in Sindh under the very noses of the army. Bombs go off in hotel lobbies and crowded bazaars, notwithstanding draconian laws against terrorism and the establishment of special courts. In Karachi, curfews have become the normal mode of existence for many areas...

She declared that the search for security had become a search for weapons:

[140] Pakistan had run candidates for the International Court of Justice and the post of Director-General of UNESCO and lost badly in both cases.

> We are after ever more sophisticated weapon systems whether the country can afford them or not and regardless of their relevance to Pakistan's special circumstances and situation, giving little thought to their opportunity cost...let an estimate be made of the number of development projects—school rooms, hospital beds, village roads, irrigation pumps—that have had to be given up to pay for just the three F-16 fighters which we have managed already to lose in accidents caused by negligence or incompetence.
>
> Let us bear in mind, moreover, that most of our costliest weapons are paid for with borrowed money, and therefore the burden is being carried not only by the present generation but will be passed on to our children and grandchildren.

A great deal of all this was true but alas! not much of it changed or could be changed when she herself took charge. I mentioned the F-16 case in the previous section. The order for the planes (but for less than sixty) had been placed during Benazir's first term and advance payments were deposited (and continued to be made by the successor government). In her second term, a billion dollar-plus contract for submarines was signed with France without counting its opportunity cost—the number of schools, clinics, roads, etc., that might have been built with the money.

The most critical foreign policy issues facing the country when she assumed the prime ministership at the end of 1988 were peace in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal, and the perennial conflict and rivalry with India. She perceived an indirect nexus between the two, as she pointed out in her speech at the Institute of International Affairs:

> A stable and peaceful relationship between [Pakistan and India) is the keystone to peace in the region... many of the problems that are troubling the peace of the region, including the conflict in Afghanistan, may not have arisen if Pakistan and India were at peace with other.

I have described in the preceding sections how in both areas the Benazir government's efforts came to nothing. In the case of Afghanistan, the web woven over a decade by the conflicting ambitions and designs and rivalries of the Afghan factions and the outside powers involved with them snagged all efforts to bring the fighting to a conclusion and (as she said in the above-cited speech) to leave it to 'the Afghan people themselves to deal with questions of social reform and justice and resolve their problems without any interference from any quarter'.

In the case of India, a fair start was made in the Benazir-Rajiv Gandhi meetings in Islamabad, and an agreement was reached on Siachen that, had it been carried out, might have led the two countries to start moving away from the bitter antagonisms of

the past forty years. To me, at least, it seemed that Rajiv Gandhi did want to settle the Siachen affair, but, as recounted earlier, the Indian army may have held him back: 'How can you give away the territory that we have shed our blood to win for India?' The alternative, of course, was to go on shedding more blood, but perhaps Rajiv did not feel strong enough to take on the establishment on this issue, any more than Benazir was to cut through the web in Afghanistan.

Thus, in the case of Afghanistan as well as India, the plans and intentions and instincts of both leaders were foiled by entrenched positions on old disputes, the intellectual inertia of the diplomatic and security establishments, and their own political vulnerabilities. Eventually the eruption in Kashmir took everything back to square one.

In the previous section, I also dealt with the third critical foreign policy issue, that is, the post-Afghan relationship with the United States and the nuclear canker that could poison it. Benazir's advent coincided with the beginning of a period of change in the world that would completely transform global geo-politics—the fall of the Berlin wall, the unification of Germany, the collapse of communism, the implosion of the Soviet Union.

The South Asian ramifications of these developments were indirect but important. Non-alignment lost its *raison d'être,* and this diminished India's role as a Third-World kingpin. By the same token, America's cold-war connection with Pakistan also lost its basis. There was a cooling off in the relations between the Soviet Union and India. When Gorbachev paid a visit to India, instead of expressing the habitual endorsement of the Indian position *vis-à-vis* Pakistan, he declared that the Soviet Union desired good relations with both India and Pakistan. Welcoming the thaw in Sino-Indian relations, he advised India to also make up with Pakistan. The Soviets were not warming towards Pakistan but they were offering an opening, as one could sense during Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's discussions in Islamabad, and in the fact that he had come at all, and come at his own initiative. Some kind of deal on Afghanistan. with the Soviet Union—that is, a settlement that would have given the PDPA a share in the Afghan government might have put Pakistan back in the position that it had enjoyed during the Ayub years, of being on good terms at the same time with China, the United States, and the Soviet Union. But the 'ideological' stance of some of the Pakistan's Afghan policy-makers did not allow room for the required flexibility. Many were still fixated on the 'warm water' rationale of Soviet foreign policy[141] and tended to look on the Soviet Union as a permanent enemy of the US and of Pakistan. But US perceptions were

[141] Russia's ports are on seas that freeze solid during the long Russian winters. It was one of the (unfulfilled) strategic objectives of Peter the Great to extend his empire to an outlet on warm waters. Dennis Ross of the US National Security Council agreed with me that that the Soviets were not in Afghanistan en route for the warm waters of Balochistan, but he said that a Soviet air base in Kandahar could completely neutralize the US fleet in the Gulf.

changing and the end of the cold war appeared to be in sight. In the words of Henry Kissinger, 'Pakistan was not required to be on the cold war barricades.[142]

Benazir paid a great many foreign visits, but an important visit that she did *not* pay was to Moscow. Gorbachev had invited her to do so and she had accepted, but her government was dismissed before she could go, and in the end it did not matter: Gorbachev fell, and then the Soviet Union came apart. She was criticized and derided for her many foreign visits, for the large retinues that she took along, and for the tax-payers' money that was spent on these events. These Mughal progressions had become a well-established practice, having been initiated by the elder Bhutto as a cost-effective way of satisfying party-men and other favor-seekers to whom he could offer nothing substantial. Some of the visits were for flag-showing or to see and be seen, but many were indeed substantive and essential. The visits to Tokyo for Emperor Hirohito's funeral and to Paris for the bicentennial of the French revolution were dictated by protocol, but Tokyo provided the occasion for Benazir to make her first contact with President George Bush after her election. In Tokyo she also met President Mitterand and broached the subject of Pakistan's need for a nuclear power plant.

On the side-lines of the nuclear difference with the United States—indeed as an offshoot of it—there was also a lingering dispute on the nuclear matter with France. I have described in detail elsewhere[143] how, after signing an agreement in 1975 to supply Pakistan with a plutonium reprocessing plant, France went back on the contract, apparently under strong US pressure. As a result, Pakistan put in a claim for the financial loss caused by France's breach of contract. France had accepted the claim, but differences over the terms of settlement and over the amount had been dragging on for years. Mitterand was quite forthcoming in Paris, about both settling this dispute and supplying power reactors to Pakistan, as was Prime Minister Rocard, who said to Benazir that France was a strong believer in nuclear energy as clean and safe and used it for 80 percent of its power needs. So France could not oppose nuclear energy for Pakistan. Then when Mitterand came to Pakistan, it was announced that France had agreed in principle to provide Pakistan with two 900 MW nuclear reactors, subject of course to agreement on terms and conditions. But it came to nothing, apparently because France was unable to provide credit and Pakistan was not able to raise it elsewhere. France paid us compensation for the broken contract on reprocessing and got the affair off its back.

The reason for French shilly-shallying, as well as the reason why Pakistan could not raise credit for a credit-worthy project, was probably America's opposition to Pakistan's nuclear programme. Pakistan continued to be denied a nuclear power plant even though it would have been under tight international safeguards. Canada went to the

[142] Conversation with author, October 1988.
[143] See Chapter 12 of Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1997

length of refusing to furnish safety devices for the Karachi nuclear plant that it had itself furnished to Pakistan some twenty-five years earlier—an attitude that the Canadian High Commissioner himself described as 'anti-nuclear fundamentalism'. A nuclear policy that was intended to be preventive, at least declared as such, had become wholly punitive. And ultimately it proved to be futile, since the denial of nuclear power stations to Pakistan hurt the energy-starved economy of the country but in no way hindered the nuclear programme.

The Soviets (who had recently agreed to build two power reactors in India) had hinted that if we played bail on Afghanistan, they could consider supplying similar plants to Pakistan, but, as recounted above, the government's hands were tied by the Afghan situation and we did not explore the offer. In the end, it was again China that came forward and agreed to provide the nuclear power plant that no one else was willing to give us. It was to be a smaller plant but would come with transfer of technology, so that eventually Pakistan could become more self-reliant in this field.

China's action was a sign that, in a fast-changing world, the China-Pakistan relationship continued on its steady course. What gave it such stability, what in fact was its substance and moving force, are questions that require a more profound examination than is possible in the present work. Ideologically, the two countries are poles apart, and commercial, cultural, and other links between them are marginal. The relationship had grown closer in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962, and its high point came during the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, when China issued an ultimatum to India and moved troops near the border and it began to look as if China itself might join the fray. But it would be simplistic to explain the Sino-Pakistan relationship in terms of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. Right from the beginning, and even before its territorial dispute with India erupted, China had been careful not to take sides between the two South Asian rivals. This was so during the euphoric days of '*Hindi-Chini, bhai bhai*' (Indians and Chinese are brothers) euphoria and at a time when Pakistan had joined SEATO,[144] the US-sponsored, anti-China military pact. China apparently chose not take this as a hostile move on Pakistan's part. Passing through Karachi in 1967, Prince Sihanouk said that, on the contrary, China appreciated the fact that Pakistan's membership had helped, especially in later years, to moderate the organization's stance *vis-à-vis* China.[145]

China's interest in Pakistan thus had a long-term strategic dimension. China may not have seen a direct threat in India's militant build-up and nuclearization, but it could not simply ignore the fact that India was developing a blue-water navy, long-range missiles, and a military machine designed to establish a sphere of influence in the

[144] South-East Asia Treaty Organization, which included the United States, United Kingdom, and France, and whose regional members were Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Thailand.
[145] Conversation with author.

region and assert its great-power status. In the circumstances, it made sense for China to have some kind of counterweight in the region, and the only candidate was Pakistan.

This did not stand in the way of China trying to normalize and improve relations with India. On the contrary, normalization would tend to confirm the territorial *status quo* which China had established in the 1962 fighting. For India, the border question remained politically sensitive but, *de facto*, it too had come to accept it as given. When he went to Beijing in 1988, Rajiv Gandhi would not agree to the use in this connection of the expression 'mutual accommodation' in the joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of the visit, as it might imply cession of territory, but the two countries got around this stumbling block by satin up a working group to examine the question. When Premier Li Peng came to Islamabad in November 1989, he said that he foresaw many setbacks on the way to the settlement of the border issue with India, and indeed, ten years later, there has been no progress on it.

However, Rajiv's visit did break the ice between the two countries, and the event was symbolized by Deng Xiaoping's marathon handshake with his Indian guest. With Benazir, handshakes were out, but Deng greeted her at the door of his office with a friendly, happy smile. China and Pakistan were 'special friends' he said, and in gr personal reference recalled the elder Bhutto's friendship with the Thou Eli family[146] and with Mao Zedong. He recalled his own meeting with him in 1974.[147] We should have helped him in his trouble but our means were limited,' Deng said, recalling Bhutto's execution.[148] The friendship between China and Pakistan had survived the changes of regime and Pakistan's stability was important to China, he said, 'therefore greatly value your policy of not seeking revenge for the past,' the veteran Chinese leader said to his young guest. 'All parties are friends of China and they should not entangle themselves in past grievances. You can regard this as my suggestion,' the old man concluded. Rajiv Gandhi had told Benazir of his impression that the Chinese had been 'uncomfortable' with Ziaul Haq. But the Chinese are pragmatists and had done business with him even though he had rejected their pleas on Bhutto's behalf. Deng's avuncular advice to Benazir was meant to indicate the stability of the Sino-Pakistan relationship at a time when China was adjusting its relations with the Soviet Union, the United States, India, and other countries in a rapidly changing world.

[146] Some twenty years earlier Benazir and her siblings had spent a holiday in China as the guests of Premier Zhou Enlai and his family.

[147] I too had an occasion to meet Deng Xiaoping in 1975 when, just out of a period of disgrace for advocating pro-Western policies, he came to the United Nations as leader of the Chinese delegation. With me was a Leftist Pakistani delegate who held forth on the evils of Western capitalism, imperialism, and so forth. Deng's response was an inscrutable 'Hmmm'.

[148] Like many other countries, China had tried in vain to dissuade Ziaul Haq from carrying out Bhutto's execution. However, a Chinese delegation's presence in Islamabad at the time was instrumental in delaying it by a day or two as Zia did not want it done while they were in town.

Among Pakistan's most important neighbors was Iran, a country with which, next to India, we had culturally the most in common and with which we had, since independence, maintained the closest political ties. But relations had been ambiguous ever since the fall of the Shah because, among other reasons, Pakistan's number one ally, the United States, had become Iran's enemy number one. In Afghanistan the two countries followed divergent purposes and backed different horses. Fraternal words and gestures papered over the cracks, but the undercurrent of discord and rivalry remained, not only adding to the difficulty of bringing the Afghan war to a tidy conclusion but, for the first time, introducing an element of contention and conflict between the two neighbors.

Iran, under the Shah, America's most privileged client, was now its principal adversary in the region—in American eyes, a 'rogue' state that incited and supported terrorism, threatened its neighbors in the Gulf, opposed the Middle East 'peace process', and called for the extinction of Israel. During Benazir's American visit, Dennis Ross, head of the State Department's Policy Planning Bureau, said to me most emphatically that, even after Khomeini (who had just died), there were going to be no US overtures towards Iran, a country that had held American diplomats hostage, continued to abuse and malign the United States, and, in Khomeini's testament, described it as the 'Great Satan'. It seemed odd to find emotionalism in a policy planning outfit, but behind it lay specific US concerns—oil and Israel's security. When the Shah's fall appeared inevitable, the first concern of the United States was to prevent Iran from falling into the hands of the pro-Soviet Tudeh party or some other socialist group that might threaten the West's oil supplies. One theory was that, with this end in view, while the US itself propped up the Iranian army, France co-operated by giving asylum to the anti-communist Khomeini and letting him operate freely from a Paris suburb. That the anti-communist Khomeini would be just as anti-Western had not been foreseen.

So, the closest of allies had almost overnight turned into mortal enemies. The isolation, if not the overthrow, of the Ayatollah's regime became a prime US objective in the Middle East. The Iran-Iraq war served that purpose very well and, as an Israeli general put it, the best thing that could be imagined was to keep that war going for ever.[149] The Ayatollah seemed only too happy to oblige and accepted a cease-fire only when the Iranian forces, now reinforced by 14-year olds, could fight no more.

Pakistan had played a role in trying to bring the fighting to an end when, at the beginning of the war, Ziaul Haq and Yasser Arafat had shuttled between Baghdad and Tehran on behalf of the Islamic Conference. Talking to Benazir about this mediation,

[149] This is what a senior UN official had to say on the subject: 'Following negotiations between the Secretary-General and the two adversaries, a cease-fire ended the hostilities on 8 August 1988. But some powers did not wish the conflict to end when it did, a fact known to the Secretary-General. Constant interplay between the Secretary-General and the Security Council nevertheless continued, even though they did riot always agree on the politics...' (Giandomenico Pico in Foreign Affairs Quarterly, New York, September-October 1994).

Saddam Hussain recalled that Ziaul Haq had proposed that Iraq should declare a unilateral cease-fire. Saddam said that his military comrades as well as the political leadership of the Ba'ath party were against the proposal, which he too found 'very strange coming from a military man'. Nevertheless, he had accepted Ziaul Haq's proposal and, indeed, had ordered Iraqi troops to cease fire at a given hour. But when Ziaul Haq took the cease-fire offer to Tehran, Khomeini rejected it outright.

Benazir's meeting with Saddam Hussain took place towards the end of May 1989 at Baghdad, in the course of another visit that combined diplomacy and piety, with visits to sacred sites in the Najaf and of the battle of Karbala; to shrines such as those of Abu Hanifa, the founder of the lanai school of Islamic law, and Ghaus al Azam, ancestor of the Gillard dynasty of divines, as well as the walled enclosure marking the place where the sufi mystic Al Hallaj died under torture for heresy. Many of the shrines had been restored and refurbished, everything glittered and shone—solid silver doors, walls decorated with mirror-work mosaic, rich carpets, chandeliers—but the aura of ages, the serenity that comes with the centuries was missing.

Saddam is a tall, well-built man, more swarthy than I had thought. He had no extra fat on him and told Benazir, have an optimum weight for all officers and they have to keep within it.' He had a saturnine expression but looked one straight in the eyes when he spoke.

The cease-fire had stopped the bloodshed but nothing had been settled between Iran and Iraq. add am said that for Khomeini, in his own words, the cease-fire was 'a cup of poison' that he was obliged to swallow. Khomeini had accepted it only when military defeat was staring him in the face; he did not choose peace as a political option. 'Let the Iranis not fool themselves that they can take half of the Shatt el Arab[150] from us!'

Saddam refuted the idea that Iraq had won because of its superior air power and armour. The five battles that brought Iran to its knees, he said, were fought in terrain where armour could not be used, nor was air cover of any importance. At Faw, Majnun, Shilamaha, it was man-to-man. Iraqis were fighting, Saddam declared, to defend the new way of life and thinking introduced by the Arab Ba'ath party. Islam, he said, came to liberate man. It was a force for change and progress but Khomeini was a reactionary. In Iraq, Saddam pointed out, Shias and Sunnis, Muslims and Christians, Kurds and Arabs, had all fought shoulder to shoulder to defend the country.

[150] The Shatt is a strait in the Gulf that divides Iran from Iraq. The British had drawn the dividing line not through the middle (thalweg), as is usually done in such cases, but a few kilometers off the Irani coast, for the very good reason that at the time they controlled Iraq (Mesopotamia) under a League of Nations mandate. At the height of his power in the seventies the Shah was able to bring about a revision of the line and obtain half of the Sham for Iran.

Benazir said that an internal power struggle seemed to be going on in Iran. Khomeini had had an operation and was still in a serious condition. It was difficult to determine who was making policy and taking decisions: the government had two defense ministers; there was a group that took a hard line and wanted to export the Khomeini revolution—such people also opposed the peace process with Iraq—and there were others who took a more moderate line and were relatively open to the world. She clarified that she was not speaking on behalf of any group or person and that no Iranis had approached us with any proposals, but on the basis of an objective assessment, it was our feeling that if leaders such as Rafsanjani and Motazari consolidated their position, it would be better for Iran and for the region.

Saddam agreed that there were signs of uncertainty in Iran at present. 'A "Moderate",' he said, 'is the one who wants peace, "fundamentalist", he who does not. We shall keep our eyes open.' Iran should be the one to take the initiative and call for peace, he said, Iraq shall respond at once.

The following month we received an Iranian delegation that threw some light on the extent and nature of differences within the country's leadership. It was led by Ali Shamkhani, Chief of the Iranian National Guards (the Pasdaran).[151] A thickset man of around thirty-five, Shamkhani looked like a real tough, but he was on the moderate Rafsanjani's side in the latter's tussle with Khamenei. At the prime minister's dinner in the evening for the Irani delegation, Deputy Minister for Defence Beheshti was seated to my right and spoke to me of the progress they were making in producing their own defence equipment, by using reverse engineering and other such means. He said that they were now making armoured vehicles, submarines, frigates, and other heavy equipment. The Shah, he said, had spent a lot of money buying technology from the West but with nothing much to show for it; now, he said proudly, we are relying on our own efforts and in many fields we are better than them. 'Better than the Western countries?' I asked, trying not to sound incredulous. 'No, no!' Beheshti explained, 'better than the regular army!'

Shamkhani had come to seek better 'cooperation' in dealing with the bad lot who had escaped from Iran by slipping into Pakistani Baluchistan. Ziaul Haq had been surprisingly liberal in allowing this traffic to go through Pakistan, for it included not only smugglers and drug dealers but also members of the leftist *Mujahideen-e-Khalq* as well as Millais and Jews. Sharnkhani wanted us to catch such persons and hand them back to the Iranian border police (who would, no doubt, make short work of them).

Benazir sent Foreign Minister Yaqub to Tehran to test the waters after Khomeini's death and Rafsanjani's election as President. This was because President Bush had phoned

[151] During a discussion with the Pakistani delegation to a Non-Aligned summit at Belgrade in 1989. Arafat claimed that it was at his suggestion that Khomeini had established the Pasdaran as a counterweight to the regular any. Arafat said that eighty-four PLO officers had helped to raise and train the force.

Benazir late one night to ask if Pakistan could seek Iran's help in obtaining the release of a group of American citizens whom the Hezbollah had taken hostage in Beirut. The Hezbollah were generally supposed to have Iran's blessing and support. This was no doubt the case, but they had their own objectives and purposes and were not under Iran's thumb. The foreign minister was received in Tehran with signal honors but found no flexibility in its policy towards the United States.

Iran was also at odds with Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan had been making a desultory attempt to mediate an understanding between its two good friends. A month after the PPP government was formed, I accompanied Sahibzada Yaqub to Riyadh to pursue the effort. The specific difference was over the number of Iranian pilgrims Saudi Arabia would allow to come for the annual Haj and under what conditions. A couple of years earlier, the Iranians had staged politico-religious demonstration in Jeddah and Mecca, raising slogans against 'The Great Satan', burning the American flag and so forth. The demonstration had turned violent and Saudi police had used force to quell the trouble. The Iranians were packed off home and now the Saudis would allow only a limited number each year and only if they refrained from political activity of any kind. I had only a listening brief at this meeting; as I listened it seemed incongruous and unreal that, at a time when the Afghan drama was coming to a close, and in the great world beyond events were unfolding that would transform its political map, we were sitting here in the marble halls of this desert kingdom discussing questions of religious ritual and observance. It was like a throwback to the Europe of the Hundred Years War. But, then as now, behind the theology were geopolitics: Saudi fears of Iran's ambitions and intentions in the Gulf, the power struggle inside Iran, Iran's tilt towards the Soviet Union, and what all this portended for Saudi Arabia and the Saudi dynasty.

Another trip that Benazir did not make was to Libya, a visit that Muammar al-Qaddafi thought she owed him for the help he had given the Bhuttos in their difficult days. But Nusrat Bhutto called on him at Belgrade, where they were both attending the summit of non-aligned countries in September 1989. I accompanied the Begum on her call at the grand villa where the Yugoslav government had lodged him. we were led through a line of Qaddafi's bodyguards, busty blonde females, to a Bedouin tent that had been set up on the beautifully tended lawns of the villa. It was here that Qaddafi received the Be guru while camels—that had been brought along on his private jet browsed among the rose bushes and Bedouin horsemen cantered up and down the alleys. The first words, as soon as we had sipped the welcoming camel's milk, that Qaddafi addressed to her were, 'I am very angry with your daughter.' She disarmed him by saying, 'You are quite right to be,' and then explained why she had not yet been able to visit Tripoli. Benazir never did make it and when, later in the year, there was talk of a no-confidence move against her, he offered a reward to any PPP MNA who would switch sides and vote for it.

Two of Benazir's visits that had no specific object, but were friendly and pleasant, were to Turkey and the United Kingdom. In Turkey it was mostly visiting monuments and museums, but of course there were meetings with Prime Minister Ozal, whose bold, one might even say adventurist, economic policies had taken Turkey up the development ladder into the ranks of the upper-middle income group. Foreign Minister Yaqub and I also had a discussion with his Turkish counterpart, Mesut Yilmaz, on Turkey's application to join the European Community as a full member and Europe's endless procrastination in accepting it. Turkish officials had little doubt that this was so because Turkey is a Muslim country, but they were determined nevertheless to pursue the matter. In Turkey, the question had become tied up with the argument between secularists and Islamists. Turkey in Europe would be safe from any back-sliding from Ataturk's secularism.

In the United Kingdom, Benazir hit it off at once with Margaret Thatcher and received some helpful hints from her on how to win elections—'never call an election in mid-term if you can help it, but in the fourth year, when, instead of being resentful, parliament and the voters are again getting keyed up for fresh polls.' (This did not reckon with the fact that in Pakistan politics are not allowed to move at such a finely calculated pace). She also commended Rajiv Gandhi as 'a very nice boy' with whom Benazir should try to settle things, and was pleased to hear that Pakistan and India were trying to make up. She was of course also pleased that Pakistan was coming back into the Commonwealth, from which Benazir's father had taken it out fifteen years earlier, in anger over Britain's attitude during the war of 1971.

Benazir was derided by her opponents and critics for making too many foreign trips. But it was not one-way traffic. An impressive number of heads of state and government and other dignitaries visited Pakistan, sometimes at their own initiative. Among them were the presidents of France and Turkey, prime ministers of Australia, China, and Japan, the Gulf Sheikhs, the British Foreign Secretary, American Congressmen, and MPs from the United Kingdom. Pakistan's prestige was high at that time for the transition it had made from dictatorship to democracy, and so was that of its glamorous young prime minister, who had led the transition. In her after-lunch speech at Chequers,[152] Mrs. Thatcher welcomed the return of democracy to Pakistan and Benazir's accession to power, and neatly summed up the conjunction: '...now everything has fallen into place,' meaning that Pakistan had Ziaul Haq's pro-Western foreign policy still, but now democracy as well.

[152] The British prime minister's official country house.

20
Issues and Dilemmas

Back home, though, things were not at all in their place. To gain power Benazir had made a compromise with the heirs and beneficiaries of the Ziaul Haq regime. It turned out to be futile and fatal. It had not even earned Benazir a period of probation. To these men, she was basically unacceptable, and they waited only for the appropriate time and occasion to get rid of her. Meanwhile she was kept under constant pressure on all fronts—political, administrative, and psychological—and from all sides—the President, who could count on the complicity of the establishment as a whole, General Aslam Beg and his intelligence network[153] and political connections, the Punjab government, the religious lobby—and already, to some extent, her disappointed followers.

Benazir defended herself as best as she could and sometimes succeeded, as she did in foiling the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition in the National Assembly. The move was made on 1 November 1989, after weeks of warnings and threats that it was coming and that Benazir's time was up. The campaign of rumor was designed to unnerve her and subvert her followers. However, at a Turkish Embassy reception two days earlier, Benazir chirped away merrily, as if she did not have a care in the world, while Ghulam Ishaq, sitting beside her, wore a sour expression. The Press too found Benazir taking things coolly when she held a press conference on the eve of the motion. 'We are happy that this [no-confidence motion] has come at last, as we had been hearing about it for a long time,' she affirmed, salute my party members who are people of pride, dignity, and honor and who are not the type to sell out.[154]

The reality was not quite so impeccable. One journalist took a friendly view of what may have been going on when he wrote that Benazir might now have to 'fight against her own sincere and principled self and grant favors and privileges to party waverers. Another suggested that a posse was out looking for missing MNAs who, when found, were being lodged as guests at the houses of ministers in order to keep them out of the way of harm or temptation. The Minister for Labour and Manpower, Mukhtar Awan, had to take a round-about route to arrive for the vote, flying from Karachi to Peshawar by a special plane, and travelling from there to Islamabad via a narrow, little-used mountain track. The object of the exercise was to avoid touching Punjab territory, where Nawaz Sharif's provincial government had instituted a trumped-up murder charge against the minister and was waiting to pounce upon him.

[153] Aslam Begs Military Intelligence men followed her wherever she went—For your own protection,' the General explained when she remonstrated.
[154] *The Nation*, Lahore, 25 October 1989.

The PPP had done a bit of hostile raiding itself and managed to win over three opposition members to its side. The whole thing was being kept secret and, for dramatic effect, the turn-coats were to be produced only during the voting on the no-confidence motion. When the proceedings began, one little man actually darted across from the opposition side to the Treasury benches, quick as a bee, yelling, 'Save me, save me!'

This is how Benazir herself described the no-confidence episode:

> The no-confidence motion was moved by none other than the President and others whom I shall not name. Members of a sensitive intelligence agency were videotaped going to MNAs and telling them they must get rid of the PPP, they must get rid of the Prime Minister ... the name of the operation was Operation Jackal ... MNAs were picked up in Punjab government cars ... and taken to safe houses ... the country saw on television that Khurshid Cheema from Sialkot was produced in parliament by the IJI and crying '*bachao, bachao*' (save me), dashed to the PPP side and stated that his life had been threatened ... before the no-confidence was moved, MNAs belonging to the IJI and those who had been unwillingly picked up from the PPP parliamentary party were taken in Punjab government cars to Punjab government rest-houses in Murree and other places and the money of down-trodden and oppressed people of the Punjab was spent to feed and look after these MNAs. IJI came with briefcases full of money to tempt PPP MNAs but they honorably refused.[155]

The persons she did not wish to name probably included General Aslam Beg, who was publicly acknowledged by opposition leader Chaudhri Nisar Ali as the one who had 'delivered' fourteen MQM Assembly members, nominal PPP allies until then, for the no-confidence motion. Among other PPP allies who switched sides were MNAs elected from 'pocket boughs' in the North-West Frontier's tribal areas. These members almost always support a sitting government and expect to be suitably recompensed. Their defection indicated the dim view held at the time of the Benazir government's prospects. The defection of the MQM was a more serious affair and could, and did, have serious consequences. However, when the count came, the IJI could only muster 107 votes for its motion, twelve short of the required number. Though her majority was reduced, Benazir had won again, and in a hard-hitting speech she answered the opposition's case, which was presented by Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi. Benazir had decried the no-confidence motion as the result of a plot—which it was—and as undemocratic—which it was not. The opposition in a parliamentary system has every right to try to topple the sitting government in ways provided for in the constitution, and no-confidence moves are one of these. However, the relevant question was whether the opposition was capable of forming a stable government, if it did succeed in carrying its

[155] From statement on 8 April 1991 before the Supreme Court in response to President Ishaq Khan's Reference No. 10 /1990 (reproduced in Dilawar Mahmood, *Judiciary and Politics in Pakistan*, Idara Mutzla-e-Tareekh, Lahore, 1992, Appendix VIII).

no-confidence motion. The fact is that at that stage there was little chance of its being able to do so. The daily *The Nation* of Lahore lamented that in Pakistan this time-honored parliamentary technique had become a facade for unscrupulous horse-trading, and that a government was not called upon to defend its performance but to compete with the opposition in buying support and brow-beating dissidents. On the other hand, the paper anticipated that there would now be a drastic cut in the PPP's maneuverability and Benazir was likely to be bogged down in constant (self-rescue operations).[156] Christina Lamb of *The Financial Times* was caustic: The highest-return investment in Pakistan today, she wrote, is to become an independent politician ... with both sides eager to topple the other, horse-trading takes priority over administration.[157]

The MQM's defection led to the repudiation of the MQM-PPP accord that had been concluded, after long and laborious negotiations between the two parties, only a day before Benazir was sworn in as prime minister on 3 December 1988. News of its repudiation, less than a year later, was announced on the public address systems of Karachi mosques and was immediately followed by the firing of Kalashnikovs—for the moment, only in the air and with blank cartridges.

The MQM-PPP accord had been welcomed at the time as the best chance for bringing tranquility to the ethnically-divided province. It had no less than fifty-nine clauses, many of a general and hortatory nature but others, such as the admission into Pakistan of the Biharis living in Bangladesh, were highly controversial. Such demands would not be at all easy for the PPP, with its strong constituency in Sindh, to implement. Neither side could have been unaware of the problems and difficulties in the way of carrying out this much too comprehensive agreement, and each signed it for tactical reasons and with mental reservations. That was unfortunate for, given the necessary statesmanship and far-sightedness, an honest and realistic agreement between the MQM and PPP could indeed have laid the foundation for a lasting settlement of the ethnic problem in Sindh. Instead, the violence and strife that had been checked while the accord was in force now broke out again, and with a greater intensity. A strike called by the MQM in February 1990 left sixty dead and a hundred injured in Karachi. When Qadir Magsi, a Sindhi militant, was arrested in Karachi, thirty people were killed in the ensuing protests by his followers. Earlier, activists of the Sindh National Alliance demanding the creation of 'an independent Sindhu Desh' had occupied the Sukkur airport and burned the Pakistan flag. In Hyderabad, Sindhi policemen refused to fire on fellow Sindhis. Two *muhajir* brothers, both members of the PPP, were kidnapped and shot dead at their parents' doorstep in Karachi. Their killer was let out on bail by a sympathetic magistrate. In Karachi's industrial estate, a busload of workers going home from work

[156] 25 October 1989.

[157] She gave the following example: 'Mr. Enayatullah Gandapur is a master of the art. An independent member of the Frontier assembly, he promised support to the IJI in its plans to overthrow the PPP provincial government of Aftab Sherpao, two days later was sworn in as a minister in Mr. Sherpao's cabinet and by the end of the week agreed to back the IJI if it chose him as Chief Minister.' *Financial Times*, London, 3 July 1989.

was stopped and its twenty-one passengers were shot out of hand in retaliation for the killings by the Sindh police the previous day at Hyderabad's eighteenth century fort. The Hyderabad incident brought to a head the paroxysm of violence and blood-letting that had been intensifying for months between Sindhis and *muhajirs* and between the MQM and its dissidents. As described in Chapter 15, it also tolled the knell for Benazir's government.

In the decade since these events, Benazir went and Nawaz Sharif took her place, then he went and Benazir was back again, and then she was out and Nawaz Sharif in again. Throughout this political merry-go-round and in the brief interregnums of 'technocratic' administrations, the ethnic problem of Sindh remained entire and unresolved. The violence and resentments simmered under the surface when the MQM reached an agreement and formed a coalition with the ruling party, be it the PPP or the Muslim League, but the arrangements were in every case opportunistic, with each side trying to use the other for its own ends and purposes, and they invariably broke down.

Then the murder and mayhem started all over again and the government responded with draconian, sometimes extra-judicial, measures. In Benazir's second term, the police killed a large number of MQM militants in alleged armed encounters. The MQM, and later, when he dismissed her government, the president, charged that in fact these people had been shot out of hand while in police custody. When Nawaz Sharif became prime minister for the second time, the MQM were there again as coalition partners in the Sindh provincial government and they obtained the release of many of the party's jailed militants as well as monetary compensation for the families of those who had been killed during the previous regime. But the MQM-Muslim League agreement came apart in the habitual reproaches and recrimination from the MQM, and this was followed by renewed terror on Karachi streets and by the government's iron-handed response.

It is not within the scope of this book to make an in-depth study of Sindh's ethnic problem. The subject is controversial and laden with emotion. But I feel I owe the reader a brief digression to set out my own views on it. Such conflicts exist in many parts of the world, sometimes in much more acute form than in Pakistan, as in the Balkans, Ireland, and Lebanon, and even in well-settled and advanced countries, such as Belgium and Canada. In Pakistan too there are ethnic tensions in many regions—in Balochistan between Pathans and Balochis and in the Punjab among Punjabis, Seraikis, and liazaras. But the ethnic situation in Sindh is peculiarly complex and prickly. It goes back to before the refugees from India—*muhajirs*— arrived on the scene. It began when the first modern irrigation canal was built in Sindh in 1890 and Punjabi farmers were brought in to settle the new lands. As irrigation expanded, so did the presence of Punjabi settlers; after partition, the central government went to the length of dismissing a Sindh government that had a majority in the provincial legislature because it would not agree to grant a substantial portion of the newly-irrigated lands to (non-Sindhi) civil and

military personnel. The process confirmed after partition with the influx of Indian refugees, who were granted the lands and properties of Hindus who had left for India. In the Punjab, the mortgages that Hindu money-lenders had held on the lands of Muslim farmers had been written off, but in Sindh, a similar proposal was shot down by non-Sindhi authorities and the mortgages were transferred to refugees claiming compensation for properties they had, or claimed to have, left behind in India.[158]

Sindhis had grievances in other fields. They were poorly represented in the central bureaucracy; in Sindh itself, most of the police force was manned by Punjabis; a substantial percentage of the higher government posts were occupied by non-Sindhis; and the posts of Chief Secretary and Inspector-General of Police have rarely, if ever, been held by Sindhis. During Ayub Khan's regime, in a misguided effort to strengthen national unity, the use of Sindhi as a medium of instruction at high-school level was stopped. The *muhajir* have counter-complaints, some common to all poor people—unemployment, lack of water, housing, public transport, and so forth; others specific, such as the 'quota' system that limits the access of *muhajirs* to government jobs, educational institutions, etc., to their proportion in the population.[159]

But the essence of *muhajir* discontent goes deeper and lies in the very genesis of Pakistan. The struggle for Muslim rights had been conducted most fervently in India's Urdu-Hindi belt where Muslims had ruled in the past. Even after the rule passed to other hands, Muslim culture, language, and the role of Muslims in the administration and public life continued to enjoy their historically privileged position in this region. But with the advent of democracy and the rise of Hindu revivalism, these Muslim communities perceived a threat to their position and their cultural identity. These fears received confirmation in the policies followed by the Congress governments that took power in the Hindu-majority provinces in 1937. Thus Pakistan was to be the place where the cultural heritage, language, privileged position, and material interests of the Muslim minority would be protected and where it could break out of the status of a permanent minority. Indeed, in the beginning the *muhajir* leadership took over the reins of power in Pakistan, with Liaquat Ali Khan as prime minister and Urdu-speaking immigrants holding important positions in the bureaucracy, business, and industry. However, numbers count, and the *muhajirs* who constitute only four percent of the total population, saw their advantages gradually slipping away and their community

[158] In both India and Pakistan, the governments treated the property of emigrants to the other country as war booty instead of letting the owners dispose of it in the open market. Evacuee property was disposed of in a free-for-all, grab-as-grab-can process that allowed for a lot of hanky-panky and introduced a virus from which corruption spread into the entire body politic of the country.

[159] The quota system—despite its anomalies and unfairness—stays in force more than thirty years after it was adopted. Sindhis, Balochis, and others feel that without it they would be left out in the cold—as they are in the private sector and in public enterprises such as Pakistan International Airlines, the State Bank, the Pakistan Steel Mill. On the other hand, its effect on jobs is overstated, as it applies only to a limited category of government services.

reduced again to the position of a minority.[160] There is a contradiction inherent in the Pakistan idea: it was intended to protect the identity and interests of the Muslim minorities in India, whereas Pakistan was made up of Muslim-majority provinces that needed no such protection and whose languages and culture, and certainly the material interests of their people, are not identical with those of the Urdu-speaking immigrants. Therein lies, no doubt, the reason for the disillusionment, the sense of vain sacrifice, and a feeling of injustice, that seem to be immanent in the psyche of the Urdu-speaking community. So when Urdu-speaking immigrants came to Sindh, their influx—massive and rapid—added another, altogether more intricate dimension to the existing ethnic situation, for, unlike earlier immigrants—Balochis, Punjabis, Pathans—the new immigrants did dot merge into the scene, nor did they adopt the Sindhi language and ways. Their position was: We did not leave our homes to come to Sindh and become Sindhis. We are Pakistanis and we have come to Pakistan! But there is no Pakistan outside of Pakistan's four provinces.

The *muhajirs*' quest for identity eventually found expression in the MQM thesis of *muhajirs* as Pakistanis fifth nationality. Implicit in the idea is the demand for a separate space for this nationality the partition of Sindh to create a *muhajir* province. The proposal to divide up Sindh has been put forward from time to time and as often disclaimed. The practical question, leaving aside for the moment the hostility of the Sindhis, is, where do you begin to carve up the province? The *muhajirs* now constitute the majority of the population in all major cities of Sindh, but a series of *muhajir* city-states, separated by Sindhi rural areas, is hardly a practical proposition. Karachi alone may be separated, as it was in 1948, and put under an autonomous administration. But there is no guarantee that such an administration will forever be dominated by *muhajirs*. Up-country immigrants from the Punjab and the Frontier are already diluting *muhajir* numbers in Karachi, and it is far from certain that the *muhajirs* can maintain for all times to come, their numerical advantage in the cities of Sindh. Whichever way you cut it, across the middle, along the Indus, the division of Sindh cannot guarantee a permanent *muhajir* majority but is a certain recipe for civil strife.[161]

A Christian writer in war-tom Lebanon suggested that there were three ways for a minority to survive: i) by fusing into the majority; ii) by clinging to its separate identity; iii by letting time create a synthesis.

Sindhis expect the *muhajirs*—'New Sindhis—to assimilate and integrate and become part of Sindh, as did earlier immigrants to the province. Hamida Khuhro, a Sindhi historian, urges them riot to stay 'New Sindhis even after forty years: 'The word "new"

[160] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, President of the Indian National Congress at the time of Partition, opposing his Urdu-speaking co-religionists' zeal for Pakistan, is said to have cautioned them: Wherever you go, you will be a minority.

[161] Another variant of a separate *muhajir* homeland is 'Jinnahpur'—that is, Karachi as a sovereign and independent city-state, a Hong Kong on the Arabian Sea.

leaves some distance, some suspicion, some paucity of attachment, some lack of spirit to love Sindh and make sacrifices for it...'[162]

Urdu-speaking immigrants have made their home in Sindh. They filled the economic vacuum created when Sindhi Hindus left *en masse* for India. They have been active in promoting culture and humanitarian causes. But they are not Sindhis, and they will not become Sindhis even if they start speaking Sindhi or (like Ziaul Haq) take to wearing *ajraks* and embroidered caps. They are not likely to merge into the environment as the Baloch did. Moreover, the ethnic situation has many facets in Sindh: Sindhi-*muhajir* in Hyderabad; Pathan-Bihari in the suburbs of Karachi; Punjabi-Sindhi in Badin and Sanghar. In time, it is possible that social and cultural give-and-take among the various communities may allow parallel societies to develop that can rub along together without destructive friction.[163] But it will take time and it will take a great deal of tolerance, a virtue that is often at a premium in politics.

Politics in a developing country is driven by the economics of scarcity. In Pakistan, where economic growth barely keeps ahead of population growth, the competition for scarce goods, jobs, college admissions, economic advantage, and favors is fierce. There are two ways of softening the sharp edges of the ethnic divide: massive investment in job-creation, civic services, and infrastructure; and local self-government.

The prospect looked good when the PPP reached an accord with the MQM before taking power in 1988. The PPP had, since the time of the elder Bhutto, managed to stem Sindhi extremism and now, under Benazir, it had trounced the Sindhi nationalist parties in the elections. The MQM, representing an urban, relatively well-educated, middle class, could be the moving force for the transition of Pakistan from its feudal tribal order to a more democratic and pluralist society.

However, the agreement had a troubled existence during its brief life. Friction between the partners began almost at once over small matters. When Benazir came to Karachi after being sworn in, the MQM chief, Altaf Hussain, did not pay a call, on the pretext of sickness, and sent a delegation under a deputy. But to make his point, he showed up conspicuously at a wedding that same evening. The MQM delegation took umbrage when they had to be kept waiting because her meeting with an envoy of Rajiv Gandhi went on longer than expected. A more serious problem arose when Benazir withdrew the permission she had given for a small number of Biharis to come to Pakistan. On this

[162] Quoted by Wajid Shamsul Hasan in *The Daily News*, 17 November 1983.

[163] An expatriate Pakistani academic envisioned the future Sindh in Utopian (not to say cavalier) terms: 'The true demographic frontier of Pakistan ... is Sindh where a new Pakistani is growing out of the melting pot of *mohajirs*, Balochis, Punjabis and Sindhis. Speaking Pakistani-Urdu with unfamiliar local accents, this new Pakistani generation would take decades to make an impact, but with its appearance will develop an ethos of Pakistani nationalism. No tears need be shed on the demise of the old traditional Sindh, while one welcomes the birth of a new dynamic Sindh...' Dr. Hafeez Malik, Villanova University, Pennsylvania, in an unpublished paper entitled *'Problems of Regionalism in Pakistan'* (1970).

occasion, the MQM reacted in a measured way and refused to be drawn into a counter-agitation, but there were differences over a ghastly case of ethnic butchery. Shortly before the 1988 election, Sindhi gunmen had gone on the rampage with automatic weapons and killed a number of *muhajirs* in the streets of Hyderabad. Then *muhajir* militants had done the same thing to Sindhis in a village near Karachi. Now, the MQM wanted Benazir to let off its men on the ground that they were 'merely retaliating'. Benazir refused to do so (nor, under the law, did she have the power to).

The essential trouble with the PPP-MQM accord was that it was a 'marriage of convenience' between two parties that were divided by a basic incompatibility of approach and philosophy. The PPP has an ethnic base in Sindh, and its ascendancy over the Sindhi nationalist parties comes to some extent from the fact that the PPP's programme, at least in the eyes of the average Sindhi voter, subsumes the nationalist agenda. But, when all is said and done, the PPP remains an all-Pakistan party with country-wide roots and a national agenda. Its adversaries would like to reduce the PPP to a provincial party but, in the face of every provocation, Benazir has resisted the temptation to exploit ethnic issues. As a foreign observer wrote, she 'reinforced national symbolism ... she was cautious in her identification with specific Sindhi grievance.[164]

The MQM makes no bones about what are its concerns and who are its constituents: We do not support anything that does not contain the word *muhajir*![165] Such a stance can lead a minority either towards separatism or into a dead end. Indeed, after Aslam Beg and Ghulam Ishaq Khan lost their no confidence' gamble against Benazir, the MQM, which had lined up with them, found itself in a dead end. It struck back by calling strikes on virtually a daily basis, causing heavy damage to business and industry and scaring away investment. For a brief period, the MQM was given a free hand as coalition partner of Jam Sadiq Ali,[166] the man chosen by Ghulam Ishaq Khan to run Since
after he had dismissed Benazir. While Jam Sadiq and his men made hay in Sindh, the MQM used the time, to settle a fight for turf with malcontents within the movement. When, in due course, the new government of Nawaz Sharif turned to the army to put

[164] Rodney Jones in *The Washington Quarterly*, summer 1989.
[165] Cited in a series of articles entitled 'Sind Today' by Akbar Zaidi, Dawn, Karachi., 28-31 May 1990.
[166] Jam Sadiq Ali, a follower and partisan of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was a colorful personality and a political buccaneer. He was the quintessential Sindhi *wadera* (feudal lord), a generous friend and an implacable enemy; he affected an ostentatious humility behind which lurked an absolute willfulness. He was the rare politician who went through no pantomime to hide his drinking habits from the officially pious. He was involved in a murder case when Martial Lew came but, finding a buyer in a high place, he paid for his way out of jail and country, and spent the next decade in London. There, he kept up a precarious sort of prodigality, maintaining an open house for friends and visitors from near and far. After becoming prime minister, Benazir invited him back, but showed no great hurry or enthusiasm in doing so, and further chagrined him with the grant of a sinecure advisership without duties or power. He also seems to have had a Wing out later with her husband, Asif Zardari. These circumstances made him, in Ghulam Ishaq Khan's eyes, the most suitable choice as Sindh's interim chief minister and, indeed, the Jam more than fulfilled the President's expectations.

things right, the soldiers went for the MQM, and when they had finished, there were two MQMs in place of one: the original MQM under supremo Altaf Hussain, and a new, so-called *Haqiqi* or 'real' MQM—led by the supremo's former acolytes and present enemies.

The hope of resolving ethnic discontent through rapid social and economic development suffered a major set-back. In Karachi, the social and economic situation went from bad to worse, civic services were reduced to a shambles, and the massive new investments that were needed went north to greener pastures. Gunmen went about their business unhindered in the streets of Karachi. Thoughtlessly, tragically, the opportunity provided by the PPP-MQM accord had been frittered away.

With whom lies the blame? A definite answer can be given only by partisan spirits. The reciprocal opportunism of the PPP-MQM accord was plain enough; Benazir's motives were perhaps more transparent. She did not need the MQM's fourteen votes but was happy to add to her numbers in the National Assembly, to smooth the path for the PPP government in Sindh and, possibly, to get on the right side of General Adam Beg, of whose MQM links she was aware. The MQM leadership must surely have realized that Benazir would not be able to carry out many provisions of their portmanteau accord with the PPS for instance those relating to the Biharis and the quota system—without getting into trouble in Sindh. So what were the MQM's expectations and calculations? It all seemed to be rather *ad hoc*, a power-play without specific objectives. In due course, the MQM went through the same exercise with Nawaz Sharif in his first term, and again in his second term. The whole thing always ended in the same way—reproaches, recriminations, parting of ways, and then trouble on the streets, strikes and killings, party activists being hunted down, going underground, lying low. During one of these episodes, the MQM chief, Altaf Hussain, himself slipped out to England, where he remains up to the time of this writing. Yet throughout these vicissitudes, he has not lost his power over the Party, nor has the MQM lost its hold on the *muhajir* vote-bank.

The only comparable phenomenon is the late G. M. Syed, the Sindhi nationalist leader. A born rebel, his was a public career of agitation, denunciation, and opposition—to Sindhi
feudaIs (of whom he was a minor one himself), to Jinnah, to Pakistan, to the central government of every complexion, and above all to the Bhuttos, from Sir Shahnawaz through his son Zulfikar to his granddaughter, Benazir. As a result, he spent most of his adult years in jail or detention or house-arrest (except under Zia.ul Haq, who shared his antipathy for the Bhuttos). He died, at the age of ninety, without having achieved a single one of his political aims yet without losing the loyalty of his followers or his hold on public attention.

However, Benazir can be faulted on two counts. Firstly, she entered into an agreement that she knew she would not be able to carry out in full. Problems such as the quota

system and the Bihari question, controversial and emotional as they are, are best faced squarely—one way or the other—instead of being shirked year after year. Ziaul Haq before Benazir, and Nawaz Shard who came after, both followed a policy of equivocation in regard to these issues. I am not sure that Benazir could have cut through this prevarication, but, beset on all sides, she did not feel strong enough to try.

A more serious failure on her part was in the matter of local self-government. Devolution of power within local self-government is an essential element in a working democracy, and has been an important item on the PPP manifesto. This was something that needed doing, even though Benazir shied away from it for fear that the MQM would seize power in Karachi and other Sindh cities—and become a threat to her own position. MQM's policy and actions did nothing to allay these fears, but the MQM could also make trouble by being kept out and it was something that did need doing anyway. Taking the long view, the PPP could, if it addressed their concerns, make headway in the *muhajir* community and offer them a mainstream alternative.

In fact, the situation was not very different with regard to provincial autonomy. Benazir once joked: 'They say that Sindh has five chief ministers—Qaim Ali Shah, Nusrat Bhutto, Asif Zardari and the two Makhdum[167] brothers.' I said: 'The surprise is that Qaim Ali Shah (the incumbent) is included in the list!'

A flaw in Pakistan as it emerged on the partition of India, 'moth-eaten and truncated' in the words of its founder, was that one of its provinces outnumbered all the others put together in size of population—first East Bengal, then, when Bengal broke away, the Punjab. The fullest possible provincial autonomy is the evident solution for this congenital defect. A federal structure was embodied in all the constitutions with which Pakistan has experimented and has been nullified and negated in practice by all governments, whether democratic or dictatorial—not the least flagrantly by Zulfikar Bhutto, author of the constitution and himself from Sindh, where the demand for autonomy was the most strongly voiced.

With Nawaz Sharif as chief minister, during Benazir's first government, the Punjab was able to assert its autonomy to the full, indeed sometimes going beyond the limits defined by the constitution. In asserting the autonomy of the Punjab, Nawaz Sharif was expressing his rejection of Benazir's rule; by no means did he intend to set an example for the smaller provinces to follow. Many felt that the PPP government should have seized the occasion to strengthen the institutions and traditions of autonomy in all the provinces, but the temptations of power prevailed and, in Sindh in particular, the administration continued to be run from Islamabad—not only the nomination of the chief minister and his cabinet, but the postings and transfers of officials at all levels, the

[167] The Makhdums are an important Sindh family of land-owners-cum-religious leaders.

appointment of judges, etc. Benazir's joke made me think of Freud's observation, 'In joke, one can even tell the truth!'

One, if not the highest, priority of the democratic restoration was, or should have been, to repair the damage done to institutions and traditions of good governance in the years of arbitrary rule (under Zia's martial law as well as her father's emergency rule) and to strengthen the rule of law. But the temptations of power seem to have got the better of the lessons imbibed from a liberal education and any impulses Benazir may have retained as a victim of state arbitrariness. On becoming prime minister for the second time, she said that in her first term she had been ignorant of the intricacies of administration but 'now we know how the government runs'. What she had learned was the wheeling and dealing that goes on, how rules and regulations and laws might be circumvented or bent to the ruler's purposes., how civil servants can be manipulated and co-opted to further one's ends. As for knowing how to run an effective administration, one that is motivated and dynamic, gets things done, and gets them done honestly and efficiently—or even that simply gets things done—in that regard her record was about the average for Pakistan.

To be fair, in her case the struggle to survive had an equal share with the temptations of power. I have recounted the sustained pressures which she was constantly having to fend off from all directions and on many fronts. She decided that the only way to deal with Pakistan's hard-nosed, he-man politics was to play the game by the local rules: the politics of confrontation rather than compromise, of patronage not policy, and rhetorical spin instead of realism. Over decades of this kind of politics, the country's basic and essential problems—economic backwardness, illiteracy, population explosion—have taken a back seat, compounded and aggravated by incompetence, mismanagement, and bad or no policy.

With Benazir's advent after decades of arbitrary rule, the national priority should have been to democratize governance and give economic and social development a massive push, like Mahathir was doing in Malaysia and Ozal in Turkey. But she seemed unable to rise above the day-to-day commotion and attend wholeheartedly to these things. Instead, her political concerns came to be focused largely on protecting her majorities in the national and provincial assemblies. I have recounted how the PPP's move to unseat the Nawaz Sharif government in the Punjab came to nothing. A similar exercise in futility was the attempt, during Benazir's second term, to snatch the government of the Frontier province from the opposition coalition. In February 1994 the president (Farooq Leghari, the PPP's nominee) suspended the provincial legislature on the ground that the chief minister had lost his majority. (He had lost it only because the PPP had bought off two of his men with the promise of ministries and other good things of life). However, there exists a law against floor-crossing, and the Speaker promptly disqualified the members concerned from voting. There followed an involved and unseemly imbroglio that is not worth recounting and the matter ended up in the High Court.

A Supreme Court judge on one occasion pleaded with Benazir's Law Minister, Please don't send us all your political problems. That burden is too great for our shoulders,' but, increasingly, the courts became arbiters of political questions, and the appointment of judges was therefore a matter of key importance to the party in power.

Things came to a head in this matter in Benazir's second term, when her husband apparently tried to interfere in certain judicial appointments. The Chief Justice, Sajjad Ali Shah, whom she had recently elevated, felt that the time had come to straighten things out. He handed down a decision laying down in minute detail the criteria to be followed by the executive in making the higher judicial appointments. In a mature democracy such things do not need to be spelled out but are a matter of tradition, understood and accepted by all. Benazir reacted angrily to what she called judicial interference in the prerogatives of the executive, but there was no indication that she intended to defy the Supreme Court's writ. This conflict with the judiciary was among the grounds given by the president for dismissing her government later in the year.[168] He did so under the Eighth Amendment to the constitution,[169] leveling the usual gamut of charges—corruption, maladministration, abuse of power, intolerance of opposition, extra-judicial killings of terror suspects—of which the most troubling related to the death of her brother Murtaza at police hands and the suspect and bizarre manner in which the investigation was conducted.

The notable thing was that this time Benazir met her nemesis at the hands of her own hand-picked president, Farooq Leghari, who had been a party loyalist for thirty years and whose election to the presidency had set her mind at ease. Benazir cried betrayal and treachery and ingratitude, but what the episode proved, once again, was that in politics there is no such thing as one's 'own man', loyal to the core and eternally grateful. She was not the first Pakistani leader to make this mistake. Her own father paid for it with his life. Every president, prime minister, and chief minister has wanted his own men in key positions, all down the line to the *thanas* and *kutcheries*,[170] to safeguard his 'chair', keep adversaries in check, and to use or abuse the administration

[168] This was not the end of the story, however. Nawaz Sharif, who bad applauded the Supreme Court's judicial activism, got a taste of it himself after succeeding Benazir as prime minister. But this time the denouement was different. Hoodlums shouting slogans and threats against the Chief Justice burst into the Supreme Court at a time when it had on the tapis a contempt of court case against Nawaz Sharif that could have led to his losing the prime ministership. Police standing at the gates of the Court stood aside and did not hinder the mob, which was accompanied by legislators belonging to the ruling party. Such a scene had never before been witnessed in the country, but even more astonishing was what followed: the Chief Justice's brother justices held a session in which he was destituted of his office on the ground that he himself did not fulfill the seniority criteria laid down in his earlier decision.

[169] See, note 1 to Preface.

[170] Police stations and law courts.

at will.[171] Few have really succeeded not even Zia, who had all the establishment phalanxes under his thumb—except in reducing the administration to shambles. But for an outsider like Benazir, it was an illusion to think that she could bring the vast, intricate, runaway, and hostile machinery of state under personal control by planting nominees in key places and relying on personal loyalties. The only sure way was to strengthen and structure the system, follow established procedures, and restore the rule of law. But all that would take too long and, what is more, would place constraints on the government's ability to cut corners.

She came to see advantage in the arbitrary powers the dictator had given to himself under various laws and ordinances. The repeal of these 'black laws' was in the PPP's manifesto—for instance, an ordinance on arbitrary dismissal of civil servants—but they were allowed to remain on the statute book. Exasperated by the ceaseless nagging and needling of the Press, she once said, 'What we need is a General Mujeebur Rahman at the Information Ministry!' The general had been Ziaul Haq's Information Secretary, a subtle and effective practitioner of press control, but she was forgetting that he had held in his hands all the powers of the Press and Publications Ordinance to ban, to censor, to direct. Indeed, in her second term she gathered around her many of Ziaul Haq's men, the very men he had used against her.

A corollary to the reliance on the bureaucracy was that it extended also to matters that should have been attended to at the political level and by the Party. The Muslim League's so-called Pakistan Resolution had been passed in March 1940 in Lahore, and the government decided to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the event in a befitting manner. However, all arrangements, from start to finish, were entrusted to various ministries, government, departments and officials. The party that should have had a leading role in the celebration was nowhere in the picture.

Benazir had given the PPP a new orientation,[172] she had kept the party together in the face of Ziaul Haq's persecution, and she had led it to victory in 1988. In 1997, when she was again in opposition, she refuted the idea that the Bhutto's alone could keep the PPP united and that without Benazir the party would disintegrate.[173] But in practice she did little to build up its organization and structure, introduce democracy within, or wean it away from dependence on the Bhutto name and leadership.

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[171] At one cabinet meeting there was a demonstration of the politician-public servant symbiosis. Giving a briefing on the law and order situation, the Interior Secretary was not content with making an analysis of the aims and tactics of the opposition party, but went on to offer practical suggestions on how the PPP government could neutralize and check-mate the opposition campaign. Then, without batting an eyelid, he proposed that civil servants should be warned against getting involved in politics.

[172] Speaking to the British Labour Party leader, Neil Kinnock, she mentioned her difficulty in bringing the PPP from the left to left of centre. 'Ziaul Haq had the advantage of being in power and could and did take up more and more political space, forcing us to the margins. We had to fight hard to regain territory,' she said

[173] *Dawn*, Karachi, 12 March 1997.

Speaking at the Party's silver jubilee celebration in Lahore in 1992, she said,

> In November 1990, I approved a reorganization programme for the Party. The essence of the programme was a membership drive and election of office-bearers at ward levels ... for months and months we kept on forming committees, extending dates not for completing work but for starting work. A vacuum was the natural result. The very definition of 'organization' gradually reverted back to that of appointed office-bearers instead of elected office-bearers...

Why was this so? Benazir offered no explanation. In March 1999, the Party elected Benazir its president for life. Of all the charges against Benazir and her husband during both her terms of office, the greatest to-do, in the country and world-wide, has been over their alleged corruption and money-making—mega-million dollar commissions, country houses in England, marmalade-eating horses. Did they or did they not?[174] I have no perceptions of my own to offer in this regard, for the side of government which offers possibilities of this kind did not come within the ambit of the office of Adviser on Foreign Affairs and National Security. What I heard on the subject was hearsay and I would be adding nothing by repeating it here. Benazir herself, explaining the reasons for her Party's defeat in the 1997 election, recognized that people were influenced by the corruption charges against her government, 'some of which might be right and some wrong'.[175] In an earlier comment to *Newsline*, a Karachi monthly, she was somewhat offhand: 'Corruption is a two-level issue. Corruption is rampant in our country at the mid and lower levels. However, corruption is used as a pretext ... to defame politicians and parliamentarians...'

In fact, corruption is not only widespread across the country and up and down the social scale but is a very complex phenomenon. It ranges from money under the table for favors done, to the 'fee' charged by officials to do what they are required to do as a matter of routine, such as registering property transfers, or letting people have their pension papers, or repairing your telephones. There is also officially-sponsored corruption such as the grant of building plots and agricultural land at below-market prices, or the privilege given to the Top People—president, prime minister, provincial governors, service chiefs—to import duty-free cars.

A fascinating example of the way these things work was given in a series of articles in a Karachi daily.[176] To summarize: In August 1985 the state-owned Trading Corporation of Pakistan invited tenders for the import of 50,000 tonnes of refined sugar. Some days later it extended the last date by twenty-nine hours, during which period the international price of sugar went up from $163 to $176. None of the ministries

[174] At the time of this writing some of these charges are before courts of law whose verdict may have been pronounced by the time this book appears in print.
[175] *Dawn*, Karachi, 12 March 1997.
[176] 'Elusive Accountability' by Feraiduddin Ahmad in *Dawn*, Karachi 22-8 December 1997,

concerned, Finance, Commerce, or Food and Agriculture took notice of the event or its repercussions but two officials of the Corporation, the Finance Director and Director (Imports), raised various objections. The Chairman sent them off to Switzerland and Romania respectively on official duty a short while before the tenders were opened. The contract was awarded at $193 a tonne to a well-connected hotel tycoon. Not only was his the second lowest bid, but to favor him a number of other deviations were made from the terms of the tender, relating to time of delivery, packing, inspection, and penalty. Nor was that all: the specification was changed from white refined sugar to a cheaper brown variety priced at $123 per tonne. An investigation agency determined that the government had suffered a loss of ten million rupees on the transaction. Before it could pursue its enquiries further, the agency was ordered to drop its probe.

The issue was agitated in the Press and questions were raised in the National Assembly. Thereupon the Federal Investigation Agency's Economic Enquiry Wing restarted investigations and eventually sought permission to register a case of fraud, cheating, embezzlement, and doing undue favor, against the officials responsible. Seven years later nothing had happened. Meanwhile the Chairman of TCP was in due course promoted to the rank of Secretary and put in charge of the Ministry of Religious Affairs until he retired on attaining the age of sixty with full superannuation benefits.

It would seem that the entire ruling establishment and administrative machinery of the country—from the Top People through schoolteachers to the traffic policeman asking for tea money—is in a tacit partnership. Every new government comes on the scene swearing to put things right and to uproot the evil once and for all, but all their account-takings have been a cover for political vendetta and an attempt to put the political opposition out of business. No one believes that, in an impartial process, all our rulers would not be standing side-by-side in the same dock.

* * *

The picture of Benazir is performance as prime minister that emerges from the account given in this book may not be a very bright one, but an objective assessment does not support the image that her detractors and traducers have projected of her and of her government's performance. Her first term was notable for its focus on human rights and, especially, the attention paid to the condition of women. The government took action against drug barons, against terrorism in the cities and banditry in the countryside; in her second term, the economy showed promise and foreign investors were beginning to discover Pakistan. An objective assessment of her performance does not leave one with an impression of exceptional wrong-doing and malfeasance.

But it was a government without a clear-cut programme or commitment. This lack of focus was reinforced by the amateurishness of some of her advisers. Thus the idea of

local self-government was dressed up in fancy clothes as 'The New Social Contract', and it was proposed that the head of a district council should be given the title of 'governor' and should have a 'cabinet' of 'ministers'! Nothing came of all this, thank goodness, but devolution remained merely an item on the manifesto's wish-list.

Benazir was reluctant to face up to core issues lilt meant taking on the establishment or putting her government in jeopardy. When she did, she got hold of the wrong end of the stick, as in dealing with the Services—trying to dismiss a nonentity like Admiral Sirohey, or putting in her 'own man' to head the ISI—instead of reorganizing the institution and putting it under statutory control as proposed in the Zulfikar report.

To make a capsule judgment: On matters of human rights, sectarianism, and ethnic conflict she had the right instincts and her record was good even if she did not always take a firm stand. in the sphere of economic development, accusations of corruption and cronyism notwithstanding, the performance was positive, considering that in both her terms she had come into a difficult situation. In both terms, the government made major efforts to liberalize the economy, encourage investment, control population growth. It is in the field of governance that both her instinct and her performance were wanting and the cause, eventually, of her undoing.

Overall a sense of disillusionment crept into the party itself and affected some of her closest colleagues. It was given voice by a senior cabinet minister and party veteran in talking about the allotment of building plots to party-men and favorites: 'After eleven years of jail and suffering and wandering in the wilderness, this is what it has all come to!'

21
The End-Game

I have run, a little ahead of my story. To go back, Benazir's opponents had started firing their guns right from the beginning, and they kept up the drum-fire throughout. But she began to lose ground herself fairly early on. In the bye-elections held in January 1989, the month following her swearing-in, the PPP lost the seat vacated by her in Lahore; over-all the Party did not fare any better in the bye-elections than in the general elections of November. In another bye-election some months later, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi was returned to the National Assembly. Jatoi, comrade of Zulfikar Bhutto, ex-PPP veteran, and one of the 'uncles' she had sent on their way, had been badly defeated in the 1988 elections in his home constituency of Nawabshah in Singh Now another of the tiresome 'uncles', Mustafa Khar, came forward and offered Jatoi, for old times sake and with an eye on the near future, a safe seat in the Punjab. So the Alternative Sindhi was now available to take Benazir's place when the time came. I thought this was the first hint of what was brewing, but Benazir made light of it at the time There were other signs, portents, and warning signals that have been mentioned in the preceding sections. That a mere brigadier should warn the prime minister of the country that the army might bundle her out was surely a clear enough sign.

A more definitive indication came from the king-maker himself. In May 1990, a Formation Commanders' meeting was held at GHQ in Rawalpindi and the prime minister invited them over to the Foreign Ministry in Islamabad to receive briefings on major national issues from the ministers concerned. Vaseem Jafri spoke on the economic and budgetary situation, Aitzaz Ahsan on the domestic situation, and I spoke on Afghanistan, Kashmir, and national security in general. Benazir wound up with a speech on the overall national situation. Her speech went down very well and later, at a dinner she gave for the participants, General Jehangir Karamat, who was Director of Military Operations at the time, said to me that the officers had appreciated the candid and forthright mariner in which she had addressed the various difficult issues. However, Interior Minister Aitzaz did not make such a favorable impression in the quarters that mattered. The meeting was taking place not long after the Pucca Qila incident mentioned earlier. Aitzaz perhaps dwelt too long on MQM-Sindhi differences and, in explaining what had happened at the Qila, took a line that Aslam Beg may have found implicitly critical of the action he had ordered the army to take in the situation. Going out to the washroom, I ran into Aslam Beg, who stopped me to say, have a message for the Prime Minister. Her Interior minister has not the first idea about security and nothing can be put right as long as he remains in charge.'

The decision to dump Benazir was taken, according to General Mahsud Alam, at a corps commanders' meeting held in Rawalpindi on 21 July 1990. It seems that Aslam

Beg had decided to get rid of Benazir some six months before her government was dismissed and his purpose was to put things right in Sindh in a matter of weeks. The mastermind behind the operation was the president, Ishaq Khan, whose 'maliciousness, prejudice, and *malafide* nature' she denounced when she spoke in the Supreme Court against the dismissal of her government. The president, she affirmed, had from the beginning put obstacles in her way, and called her to form a government only after all his efforts to negate her majority had failed. He had asked her to keep Yaqub Khan on as Foreign Minister for three months until the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan. In retrospect I realize that the three months was not meant for him, it was meant for me. I was to be sent packing home in three months,' she said to the Court.

A couple of years later, when she was back in office, she told me that from what she had heard, the American Deputy National Security Adviser, Roben Gates, had given the okay to Ghulam Ishaq Khan for her removal during his visit to Pakistan in July. But I was at the president's meeting with Gates and I heard nothing said about the fate of her government. Ghulam Ishaq did not need US approval for doing what he did and, if the Americans wanted a new government, they would not have suspended aid as soon as an interim government took over.

The axe fell on 6 August 1990, as she put it:

> ... on the eve of my giving greater honor to Pakistan by appearing as the co-chairman of the World Summit on Children ... on the eve of a war [the Gulf war] which needed a Muslim leader of sagacity and foresight to bring about a political solution, the president dismissed my government.

Ghulam Ishaq Khan denied that his action was aimed at any individual or group (it just so happened that all the charges he filed in court were against Benazir and other PPP members); he had taken the decision after 'cool, dispassionate, and careful' consideration, after a 'long and agonizing wait', and out of concern for the future of democracy in Pakistan.

Roedad Khan, a retired civil servant and an qualified admirer of Ghulam Ishaq Khan, gives in his memoirs[177] an all too candid account of the episode, throwing a lurid light on how Pakistan's politics have been managed over the years.[178] Benazir, he writes, was

[177] Roedad Khan, *A Dream Gone Sour*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1997.

[178] Ghulam Ishaq's action was by no means the first—nor the last—time that the bureaucracy acted against a duly elected government enjoying a majority in the National Assembly. Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad set the ball rolling on 24 October 1954 by dismissing the Khwaja Nazimuddin ministry shortly after the Assembly had passed its budget; Iskandar Mirza followed on 7 October 1958, on the eve of general elections to be held under the recently-adopted Constitution; Yahya Khan aborted a meeting of the newly-elected Assembly on 25 March 1969; on 5 July 1977, Ziaul Haq declared martial law to pre-empt an agreement between Bhutto and his opponents; on 29 May 1988 he dismissed the Junejo government. Three years after he dismissed Benazir, Ghulam Ishaq Khan did

blissfully unaware of the axe that was about to fall on her government and went about her business as if all was well. Upon hearing rumors that something might be afoot, she sent Happy Minwala to the president to end out if there was any basis for these rumors. Happy returned with the president's reply that he had (no intention of doing anything against the Constitution,' an assertion that Roedad claims was perfectly consistent with the action he was about to take. But in the same breath he informs his readers that General Aslam Beg had been taken into confidence and his agreement secured, and that logistics and other details were worked out in a series of meetings with Maj.-Gen. Asad Durrani, Director, Military Intelligence, who represented the COAS. He also claims, '...There was no deception plan, no effort was made to conceal the operation...,' but the prevailing mood conveys a different picture:

> ...we were apprehending a pre-emptive move by the Prime Minister, but with every passing day, and D-Day approaching, and nothing happening, an eerie feeling gripped us all. Why was the Prime Minister not making any move? Was she going to spring a surprise? What if she went on the air, addressed the nation, and disclosed that a plan was afoot to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the elected government? The element of surprise would be gone.

The president was required to appoint an interim prime minister until fresh elections were held and a new government emerged. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi had been in the news for so many years as a potential prime minister that newspapers had dubbed him 'prime minister-in-waiting'. Now at long last his hour had come. But it was to be brief and circumscribed. Ghulam Ishaq Khan changed the government rules of business to make sure that all files would be sent directly to the president How things stood could be seen from the fact that when the Saudi envoy sought Pakistan's support in the war against Iraq, he went directly to General Aslam Beg, and only after getting the latter's approval did he approach the prime minister.

Ghulam Ishaq's dismissal order enumerated the Benazir government's misdeeds. Corruption and nepotism of 'such proportions that government had lost all credibility'; a rule of terror in urban and rural areas of Sindh; appointment of hand-picked heads of various state-owned financial organizations who gave away billions in unsecured loans to friends and political favorites. Similar charges had been leveled in the past—and would be again—when the president decided to dismiss a government. That is not to say that the president's charges against the PPP government were all completely unfounded, but his motives were suspect. He dismissed only PPP governments and left in place III governments of the Punjab and Balochistan, against whom charges of the same sort could well have been laid. Benazir was placed on the Exit Control List (that is, she could not leave the country) for a while and husband Asif was put in jug on a

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the same thing to her successor, Nawaz Sharif; and finally, Benazir was dismissed for the second time by Farooq Leghari (*et tu Brute*!), PPP loyalist of long-standing and her very own man.

manifestly cock-and-bull charge (his associates were alleged to have tied a remote-controlled bomb to a fellow's leg and taken him to his bank to sign away his entire fortune to Asif!)

Benazir denied most charges and explained away others ('Yes, she had given industrial permits to relatives and friends, but only to make up for their sufferings under Zia's rule?) She filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against her dismissal and appeared in person to defend her cause.[179] There poured forth from her a flood of words, impassioned, indignant, irate, not defending her own record so much as saying, 'what about the others, why are Nawaz Sharif and others nor being held to account for the same things I am charged with?' She protested at being tried under 'a law set up by a Chief Martial Law Administrator,' and denounced the 'proteges of a dictatorship' who had brought these 'poisonous and baseless charges' against 'the first lady prime minister in the entire Muslim world ... a prime minister who with honesty, with devotion, with dedication, with selflessness served her nation, helped her people, upheld the cause of Islam.' She even blamed Ghulam Ishaq for something that was not his doing. In her words,

> '...the day I was nominated, I went to the *Aiwan-e-Sadar* (President's House) to take my oath as Prime Minister. The entire international community, the Muslim world, the people of Pakistan, had their eyes fixed on this historic moment, when time stood still, a young woman, the youngest ever elected Chief Executive, was to take her oath. [Afterwards] over a cup of coffee, the President, by the way, mentioned to me, 'I did not want to bother you earlier but a Soviet airliner has been hijacked and the Soviet hijacker has sought asylum in Pakistan and the liner will soon be landing in Pakistan.'

Benazir's immediate concern was that the event would divert 'the attention of Pakistan and the world community totally from the historic event [her swearing-in] taking place; so, leaving the celebrations, she sped to her secretariat to issue orders that all the country's airports were to be shut down, their control towers closed and runway lights extinguished.

The purple prose does not sound quite like her own handiwork, but the substance reflects her frame of mind and feelings at the time. The court, following not precedent but its practice, decided against Benazir and held that Ghulam Ishaq Khan had acted properly in dismissing the PPP government.

Three years later, in an identical reference, filed by the same president, against Benazir's successor, Mian Nawaz Sharif, the same court held that the dismissal was not in

[179] Statement on 8 April 1991 before the Supreme Court in response to the president's Reference No. 101/1990.

accordance with the constitution. In his dissenting judgment, Justice Sajjad Ali made, inter cilia, the following points:

> it so appears that two prime ministers from Sindh were sacrificed but when the turn of the prime minister from the Punjab came, the tables were turned....right at the outset of proceedings indications were given that the decision of the court would be such as would please the nation...In my humble opinion the decision of the court should be strictly in accordance with the law and not to please the nation. What may please the nation may turn out to be against the letter and spirit of the law and constitution.

At any rate Benazir was still in the arena; none of the specific charges that Ghulam Ishaq had brought against her could stand up in court. He did not want to push his luck by disqualifying her from running in the elections that had to be held, in accordance with the constitution, within three months of her dismissal. But she had not been thrown out so that she could make a triumphal comeback three months later and indeed, when the election results came in, the party positions in the Assembly had been reversed. The IJI was triumphant with 105 seats and the PPP, which had had 93 in the previous Assembly, was now reduced to 45. In the Punjab provincial assembly, the PPP fall was truly spectacular—it got only 10 seats out of total of a 240!

On the eve of the elections, Ghulam Ishaq Khan went on the air to urge voters not to vote for parties not committed to Islamic values. There were thirty-nine deaths in scuffles during the voting even though 100,000 paramilitary troops had been deployed to prevent any disruption of the elections. The American Democratic Party's National Democratic Institute gave the elections a clean bill, but the Paris-based International League of Human Rights spoke of 'extremely sophisticated methods of fraud' used by the caretaker regime to rig elections.

A Lahore daily not known for its sympathy for the PPP did an analysis of the voting in Gujranwala District, near Lahore, to show how the IJI's unexpected triumph may have been accomplished. The total number of voters registered in the district was 1,519,285, an increase of 800 since the 1988 election, and the number of voters who went to the polls was 50,124 greater than in 1988. All these votes were cast in favor of the IJI. The PPP vote this time was 70,747 fewer than the IJI's, whereas in 1988 the difference was only 593 votes. According to the newspaper, the technique utilized to gamer votes for the IJI was that the 1988 voters' list was studied for persons who had not voted (126,909), then local officials were used to 'mobilize' these votes. Even a 25 percent 'mobilization' would do the trick for the IJI.[180]

[180] *The Nation*, Lahore, 16 December 1990.

If Ghulam Ishaq Khan's cohorts had indeed engineered Nawaz Sharifs accession to power, he very quickly found cause to regret it. What followed was a cloak-and-dagger episode of schemes and maneuvers that one might describe as Paki-baroque. When the Chief of General Staff, General Asif Nawaz, suddenly died of a heart attack, Nawaz Sharifs attempt to nominate a successor ran up against the president's power to appoint the service chiefs. This set-back caused Nawaz Sharif to start thinking about repealing the Eighth Amendment, a thing he would not hear of while Benazir was in power. And now it was the PPP that opposed the repeal! As the inevitable president-prime minister tussle started all over again, Benazir suddenly found herself sitting pretty and watching the fun from the sidelines. Husband Asif Zardari, under detention for a variety of crimes and misdemeanors, found himself a free man and allowed to proceed to London; when Benazir gave birth to a baby, a bouquet of flowers from Nawaz ha if arrived at the hospital; the air was filled with hints flying like homing birds from one side to the other.

For her part, Benazir opened lines to both Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the current rival, Nawaz Sharif. She was in her element and was receiving emissaries from both sides who came to her in London bearing offers. In the end she seems to have found it to her advantage to tilt to Ghulam Ishaq's side for the good reason that, while Nawaz Sharif could only promise to stop harassing her, the president was the one who could reopen the door to power for her.

Meanwhile, sick and forgotten, Mohammad Khan Junejo, former premier and Muslim League president, had died; his acolyte, Hasid Nasir Chathha, and Ghulam Ishaq's son-in-law, Anwar Saifullah, raised the banner of revolt within the Muslim League because Nawaz Sharif wanted to take over the party's presidency himself. The schismatics set themselves up as the Muslim League (J), after Junejo, whereupon the main body became the Muslim League (N), that is, Nawaz Sharif.

The emergence of this 'king's party' within the Muslim League obviously had the tacit support of Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Tension between the president and the prime minister continued to mount and extended even to the social sphere. Nawaz Sharif failed to attend a condolence meeting for the president's brother-in-law and passed up the president's *iftar* (breaking of the fast during Rarnazan) for service chiefs. Ghulam Ishaq hit back by not turning up for Nawaz Sharifs *iftar* party. At Junejo' funeral, the two leaders came separately, sat in separate rooms, and, when cornered into shaking hands, were seen to do so 'coldly and reluctantly'.

The climax came on 17 April 1993 when Nawaz Sharif went on TV to denounce the president, 'the threats, intimidation and blackmail' he was receiving from that quarter, and 'the unscrupulous and dim politics by those who are supposed to be guardians of democracy and symbols of federation,' and to declare that he would not be dictated to by anybody. General Waheed, Ghulam Ishaq's nominee as army chief, said to the Press

that there was no question of imposing martial law and that the army would support any action that the president took in accordance with the constitution. A clear enough hint, and next morning Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed the government and the National Assembly.

Then in May the Supreme Court overturned the president's decision and restored the Nawaz Sharif government, provoking Justice Sajjad Ali's dissent mentioned earlier. There followed an imbroglio in the Punjab and Frontier which recalled the succession struggles in medieval kingdoms. No blood was shed, but the lowest sort of intrigue, machination, and maneuver broke out assemblies were thrown out, provincial governors were dismissed, high officials were shifted around, the Centre's forces found themselves facing the provincial police. When the dust cleared both president and prime minister were out of their jobs and an interim government of 'technocrats' was in power pending fresh elections. Apparently at this stage Benazir promised to support Ghulam Ishaq's continued presidency if her party won—a promise that she did not intend to keep. Thus Benazir's second coming was brought about by another palace intrigue by the 'old Baba on the hill' but this time she outfoxed him.

Benazir won the election fair and square though still without a large enough majority, and so the Eighth Amendment remained on the books. But now all was going her way, and the sword of Damocles was in the hands of her own hand-picked and trusty president. Or so she thought, as did everyone else.

When the sword was used again, it was for the last time, and it was to cut her down again.

Much happened thereafter that involves Benazir, but it is beyond the scope of this book and the knowledge of the author. The 'Baba' retired, without grace but with the dignity of silence, to devote himself to a worthy educational project near his home. Perhaps, in quiet moments, he reflects on what, over the years, he, and others in his position, have done for, and to, Pakistan. And Benazir is back where she has spent most of her adult life, with her back to the wall and facing a sea of troubles and fortune's slings and arrows.

22
The Two Benazirs

Arriving at a cabinet meeting one morning, members found before each seat a paperback copy of a book entitled *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, by one Dale Carnegie. It was a best-seller when I was in school and I had read it then. To rediscover it after all those years, and alongside cabinet summaries on the trouble in Karachi, the Afghan situation, rural welfare projects, and so forth, was a matter of no small wonder and amazement. But it was the prime minister's tactful way of saying that her cabinet needed to polish up its charm and persuasive skills. I can now admit that I never got around to rereading the book. From what I remembered of the first reading, Dale Carnegie's thesis was that you could smile, smirk, and sweet-talk your way into getting what you wanted, when you wanted, and wherever. What is more, the author also insisted that it should be done with sincerity. Thus, if the surly shop assistant has a pointy nose but nice hair, try to melt her by exclaiming, (Oh my, what nice hair you have!' and then wait for the effect. It was a formula for fooling all the people all of the time, which is the basic principle of modern public relations. Perhaps it was the same transatlantic tutoring that had at first led Benazir, especially while speaking to foreign visitors, to affect a whispery articulation, eyes demurely lowered ('One must not be strident!'). It made the note-taker's lot a difficult one but soon enough, mercy be, she resumed her normal, assertive tone of speech.

One of the accepted journalistic formulae in writing about Benazir is to say that there are two of her. The *New York Review of Books* found a Larkana Benazir and a Radcliffe one. *The Sunday Telegraph* contrasted a scheming politician with a chatty, carefree woman who devoured Mills & Boon novels.[181] My notion in that line of thinking is that there is within her a Dale Carnegie trying to come to terms with Zulfikar Bhutto, and perhaps also the realpolitik side of the father with the mother, Nusrat's, unaffected ways and naturalness.

During Benazir's visit to London, one saw two examples, back-to-back, of the love and hate that seem to be her portion in life. I have already mentioned the crowd of Somalis, Bengalis, Afghans, and such who stood yelling outside her hotel, 'We don't want a play-girl prime minister.' The day before that, at the same place, another exuberant crowd had stood raising slogans and cheers for Benazir. A large woman rolled her head from side-to-side, chanting non-stop 'Bhutto, Bhutto, Bhutto', pretending to be in a trance of adulation, and a rotund man behind her bobbed up and down like a puppet, shouting '*Jiye Benazir*' in a squeaky voice. Both performances were bogus and embarrassing, and

[181] Isambard Wilkinson, 'Benazir's Last Stand', in the *Sunday Telegraph* magazine 'Night & Day', London, 26 July 1998.

served no purpose other than to baffle the English passerby. But Benazir can genuinely inspire dumb devotion among some of her followers, while she throws other people into paroxysms of indignation and unreasoning spite and malevolence.

Along with hate and devotion, she seems also to inspire purple prose among journalists. Thus, one columnist wrote about the, 'imperial duo of Benazir and Zardari, a union as strange as that of the Emperor Justinian and the Empress Theodora, which during its rule had earned such a wealth of ignominy as to have discredited itself once and for all.'[182] (A little bit steep this, in a country where the practice of creaming off the nation's wealth by the country's rulers, administrators, and guardians started decades ago and has by no means ended). A less feverish assessment of Benazir and her terms in office might present a more complex personality and a state of affairs that has greater nuances.

I had seen Benazir as a child with her father and then once or twice as a college girl. I was impressed with the clarity and articulation of her views in a paper she had written at the time, on Pakistan's foreign policy. I met her a few times when she was leading the struggle against Ziaul Haq, but I became better acquainted with her when she asked me to join her cabinet as Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs. During that period I saw a great deal of her over the Afghan situation, Kashmir, and such issues. Nevertheless, my acquaintance with her remained at a more or less formal level. What I say here about her character and personality is therefore only the personal observation of an outsider looking at her with sympathetic detachment.

When I called on her in Larkana a couple of years before she became prime minister, I was impressed by her appearance and bearing—composed and confident, though she was facing an uncertain future. But there was about her also an aura of loneliness—an elemental kind of inner loneliness. She had had the experience of being alone in its ultimate and most cruel form when Ziaul Haq put her through periods of solitary confinement. Denied paper, pen, radio, newspapers, '...there was simply nothing to do but stare at the walls'[183] day after day, week after week. She comforted herself with the words of her doomed father: 'These days shall pass. What is important is that we pass them with honor.'

She was no longer alone now. Her days were filled with political meetings and rallies, crowds surrounded her wherever she went But the memory must have been alive within her, one that no one could possibly share, of a father's life extinguished in the prime of his days, of standing outside the death cell in those last moments of his life, not able even to touch his hands in farewell. It is impossible that such a traumatic experience would leave the inner person unscathed.

[182] Ayaz Amir in *Dawn*, Karachi, 2 April 1999.
[183] The eveninger, *The Daily News*, Karachi, 30 April 1987.

The execution of Bhutto, as I had warned one of Ziaul Haq's close advisers at the time, would leave a scar across the soul of the nation. Now he was forever '*shaheed*' , a martyr, in the eyes of his loved ones and followers; and for the others, those who had wished him dead, beneficiaries, heirs, and admirers of his executioner, Bhutto had to be pursued even after his death, in the vilification and persecution of the daughter.

In education, background, beliefs, and vision, Benazir compares favorably with many of those who headed the government before and after her. But her most striking quality, by common consent, is her courage. Combative and scrappy, she seems to be at her best when she is alone and fighting with her back to the wall a courage that is physical as well as moral. In Sukkur jail, 'full of dust ... flies, mosquitoes, beetles, cockroaches...,' three men would turn up once a week and show her photographs of party workers meeting Ziaul Haq's ministers. They told her that her people were defecting, leaving her alone, that she was young and should not ruin her life for the sake of politics. The temptation must have been great but she did not succumb. 'Let the world do what it pleases, if I think something is right, I will do it.'[184]

Benazir is seen by many as arrogant, peremptory, and headstrong. From some of her statements quoted in this book, it can indeed be seen that a self-effacing modesty was not quite her style. All I can say is that she was by no means boastful in private—rather the contrary. Sometimes the arrogance and peremptory manner only reflected impatience with and mistrust (often perfectly justified) of the establishment and its ways.

Her career path had led in an almost straight line from college girl to political prisoner to prime minister. She was quick of wit and comprehension and a fast learner. She held her own in meetings with foreign heads and leaders and even with the intractable Afghan Mujahideen, She had self-confidence in abundance but was aware of her own inexperience. What seemed like arrogance and haughtiness perhaps hid a certain diffidence. Talking to her on one occasion, about UN relief work for Afghan refugees, I remarked that the man in charge seemed to lack the authority and presence to assert himself and thus the different UN agencies were tending to run off in every direction. She said, suppose that is what they say about me!'

Being a woman, no doubt, had something to do with it and she was aware of this. Speaking to *Time* magazine in 1985 before returning from exile, she said, 'I think my being a woman and young is something that (some) people have found very hard.[185] Sometimes, it came out in small ways. Early in her first term, President Evren of Turkey

[184] *Ibid*.
[185] Interview with Steven Holmes in London, *Time*, 11 March 1985.

came on a state visit. Although he was to have been received by his counterpart, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Turks were very insistent—such was her international image at the time—that Benazir should also be present at the airport. Dutifully, she went along and took her place at the welcoming dais. Then a sudden squall made it necessary to shift the ceremony to inside an aeroplane hangar and all the careful protocol arrangements went awry. Benazir was left on the reviewing stand to fend for herself. I saw her being jostled while protocol officials, pressmen, and photographers made a stampede behind the two presidents as they inspected honor guards, took salutes, and so forth. She was furious and indignant. 'I will not let them treat us like a lot of girls!' she said of herself and her mother.

She was not the first, or the only, woman head of government in the world, but she was the first one in the Muslim world in modern times. Even if she had wished to play down her role as a woman, her opponents were not disposed to let her, questioning her right under Islamic law to be prime minister. A foreign journalist remarked upon the fact that, unlike Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, or Golda Meir, who went out of their way not to be seen as *women*, it was as a woman that Benazir had achieved her success—and against all the odds that a traditional Islamic society set in her path.[186] The 'gender question' was therefore unavoidable in her circumstances.

It was also a factor in her marriage, in which the family had certainly taken a hand — her own insistence that the marriage was 'arranged' was a sort of protective colouring that she assumed in a highly conservative society, like the covering of the head and the twirling of worry beads. In an attempt to be all things to all men, she tried to create a persona that was in some ways the antithesis of her real self—an emancipated, modem, young Muslim woman, like thousands of others in Pakistan and elsewhere in the Muslim world. They were the ones who admired her and took her as their role model. But she also tried not to antagonize people like the dissenting judge in the Saima Waheed case.

Arranged husband Asif Zardari has travelled a long road, too, from playboy and polo player to prisoner under trial for a record number of crimes and misdemeanors. The gravest charge against him is that of conspiracy to murder his brother-in-law, Murtaza Bhutto. That the two kinsmen were not on the best of terms is common knowledge. Even Benazir acknowledged this, though in a considerable understatement: 'My brother wasn't very fond of my husband...'[187]

A word in passing about the Bhutto family chronicle. The tragedy did not end with the hanging of Zulfikar Ali but seems to stalk its members. One could draw a parallel with the story of the Kennedys in America, but the Kennedys have remained close-knit as a

[186] Anatol Lieven in *The Times*, London, 7 July 1989.
[187] Isambard Wilkinson, *op. cit.*

family. Benazir had spoken of the deep affection that bound their family, recalled her father saying that the five of them, the mother, the two brothers, and the two sisters, 'were like five fingers of a fist.[188] But she also said that the politics of her brothers were different from hers. Their hijacking venture, in particular, had been, she said to me some time before the 1988 elections, 'an awful mistake', coming just when her efforts to form a united political front against Ziaul Haq were beginning to bear fruit. She remembered it again when Ghulam Ishaq Khan told her that a hijacked Soviet airliner was to land in Islamabad just as she had finished taking her oath of office. '... it is interesting that at very convenient moments for the establishment a hijacking always happens to take place.'

Both brothers died in mysterious and troubling circumstances. I have recounted in the introduction those surrounding Murtaza's death. Shahnawaz died in his apartment in the French resort city of Cannes of a particularly deadly poison—the defoliant hexafluoro-ethenol, which kills surely but very slowly and painfully. His body was found on the carpet where he had agonized all night. It was impossible that his Afghan-born wife Rehana, sleeping in an adjoining room, could not have heard his cries of pain. After three months of inquest and inquiry, Rehana was sentenced by the French courts to two years' of imprisonment on the relatively minor charge of 'not assisting a person in danger', and she was allowed to leave for the United States.[189]

The Bhuttos' French lawyer declared that this 'derisory' sentence was the result of collusion between French and Pakistani officials. Passing through Paris when I was National Security Adviser, I tried to get a clarification from the French officials concerned. This I did not obtain, but it emerged that the French authorities had indeed intervened to bring the case to a quick and discreet conclusion. Why? In order, I was told, to forestall the distraction and embarrassment that a long-drawn-out trial might have caused to Benazir.

The mother's life is a saga in itself. Daughter of an Iranian businessman settled in Karachi, Nusrat Sabunii had moved from being the 'belle of the ball' in the semi-swinging Karachi of the fifties to wed the dynamic young Zulfikar Bhutto. Indeed, it was to her friendship with the Iranian wife of Iskandar Mirza, Pakistan's strong man, that Zulfikar owed his introduction into government and politics. When Mirza carried out a *coup* in 1958, his choice for a Sindhi for the Martial Law cabinet fell on Zulfikar Bhutto and, while Mirza himself soon fell by the wayside, Bhutto never looked back. And Nusrat was by his side through thick and thin, for better or worse. When he fell out with Ayub and was locked up for a spell, it was she who took up the challenge and, sitting in a two-wheeled *tanga*[190] carriage, drove through the city of Lahore at the head

[188] *Time*, 17 March 1997.
[189] *'La Figaro'*, Paris, 5 December 1988.
[190] A colorful horse-drawn two-wheeler that was a cheap means of transport. It has now virtually disappeared from the main cities, replaced by the faster but noisier motorcycle rickshaw.

of protesting crowds. After Bhutto's hanging, Nusrat shared with Benazir the co-chairpersonship of the PPP. Then, one fine morning, abruptly and without warning, she found herself divested of the office by the PPP Central Committee, controlled by Benazir. The trouble between mother and daughter had broken out when Murtaza came home from Damascus and claimed his place in the sun as Bhutto's son and heir. At Larkana to speak at a celebration of the late prime minister's birthday, I witnessed perhaps the opening scene in the internecine struggle for power and precedence. Driving past *Al Murtaza*, the ancestral house, I was surprised to see armed police all round the house, holding guns at the ready and looking very tense and nervous. Nusrat was in the house with Murtaza's militant supporters, threatening to march on Bhutto's grave and prevent the PPP delegation from going there because, she alleged, it was made up of former Zia followers and opportunists. Later we heard that there had been an exchange of fire between the police and the militants inside the house and some casualties had occurred.

I do not know whether the breach was ever healed. Nusrat, living abroad and in poor health, is said to have withdrawn completely from the world's affairs. Like the Kennedys, the Bhutto dynasty seems to have run its course. Could it also portend an end of the Bhutto mystique that has held the country in its spell for thirty years?

As for Asif Zardari, when, in the end, the slow-grinding wheels of justice will lead him is not something one can, or may, predict—the case being *sub judice*. However, in the eyes of many, foes as well as friends, he stands condemned, not necessarily of the charges he faces in court, but as the one whose baneful influence and insatiable greed, whose activism as the 'First Husband' and interference in the administration, led to Benazir's downfall and are the source of all her miseries and the misdeeds of which she herself is accused. She herself was enigmatic in talking about him to Time magazine: '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 the doubt.[191]

My own acquaintance with Asif was slight. I had met him at his fathers' house before the marriage and found him to be a polite, well-mannered young man, endowed with a degree of charm and a good deal of common sense. The acquaintance did not develop much further after Benazir became prime minister and I joined the cabinet as National Security Adviser. My work lay outside his fields of interest. But I heard murmurs from time to time of Asif's interference in the administration, and rumors of venality. Some of these came from interested quarters, as when Jam Sadiq Ali, with *inter alia* Asif in mind, told me to warn Benazir that she was going to be undone by the many snakes writhing about her. But allegations also came from less prejudiced sources.

[191] *Time*, 17 march 1997.

For the husband of a prime minister in a macho society like Pakistan's, where sycophancy is virtually an institutional feature of governance (thus, officials never write, 'The PM has decided...' but, 'the Prime Minister has been pleased to decide!) it would take a phenomenal degree of self-denial and high-mindedness to resist all the temptations that lie at hand. I mentioned earlier that, faced with a balky administration and a hostile establishment, Benazir decided somewhere along the line that the way to go was the Ziaul Haq way of carrot and stick, and she put both in the hands of the husband. Even so, not every failing of the Benazir government should be laid to Asif's account. What one can say is that her personal failings were highlighted by those of her husband, while these may have hampered her ability to recognize and deal with her own.

Benazir sees things clearly enough, her assessment and analysis of a given problem is often very perceptive and down-to-earth. If there was no follow-up, or sometimes it was the opposite of what one might expect, it was because her eye was too often on the immediate advantage and the main chance. That is an aspect of politics, and a rare bird indeed is the politician whose words match his deeds. Thus, even while she attacked Ziaul Haq and his works, she was defensive *vis-à-vis* Ziaism and ended up taking some of the pillars of the Zia regime into the fold. So it is, too, that, whenever she is out of office and in political difficulties, she gathers around her a motley crowd of 'has beens' and 'wannabees', groups and persons of conflicting views and with whom she herself has nothing in common, who bring her no strength, political or moral, except company in the political wilderness but who, thanks to her, gain a brief place before the footlights.

I have cited in these pages some examples of her pragmatism that sometimes seemed to slip into simple opportunism, but her pragmatism brought a certain civility to political dialogue that is not customary in Pakistan. Thus, after Ghulam Ishaq Khan had abruptly, and with the usual rude words, dismissed her government in 1990, she paid a call on him to discuss the matter. This led a Lahore newspaper to observe in pleasant surprise, 'In this country's political culture, those who disagree with each other do not talk and things are seen in black and white.[192]

Alter her second dismissal she went further. Speaking to a newspaper reporter, she denied that she was trying to set up an anti-Muslim League front and indeed welcomed the fact that Nawaz Sharif had got a majority that allowed him room for maneuver.

> It has become a fashion in Pakistan that as soon as a government is installed in power, the opposition parties launch a campaign to bring it down. I am making a

[192] *The Nation*, Lahore, 22 August 1990.

departure from this practice and would like to give Nawaz Sharif time to work and give the people too some breathing space.[193]

But the time for this sort of sophistication was not yet. There were scores to be settled. Soon, government and opposition were at it hammer and tongs and politics became again the familiar spectacle of threats and accusations, walk-outs and street demos, detentions and court trials.

In the middle of this din and commotion, some of it of her own making, Benazir stands dauntless and pugnacious as always, seemingly untouched by the charges she faces or the prospect of being judicially disqualified from politics for years. Indeed it is in opposition that her capacity to lead is seen at its best. After her second dismissal, a Karachi journalist wrote that it evoked the same mix of remorse and relief that the passing away of a terminally ill friend does. To me the elegy seems misplaced. The legal disabling of political opponents for abuse and misuse of power is nothing new in Pakistan. It has rarely stopped a politician from making a comeback and has had not the slightest effect on the performance and integrity of governments. I chose the word 'eclipse' in the subtitle of this book designedly, for I believe that her return to centre stage from behind the shades cannot be written off and there remains a role for Benazir in Pakistan's politics. Indeed it is difficult to visualize Pakistan politics, for the next few years at least, without Benazir, whether she is in or out of government. But she has to take up the challenge on more than the rhetorical plane and see the challenge for what it is. In so doing she may perhaps understand that the battle she must first win is not with her opponents but with her own self.

[193] *Dawn*, Karachi, 12 March 1997.

Afterward

The previous chapter was to have been the last chapter of this book, but in the six months or so since I wrote it, so much has happened, and at such a headlong pace that for the sake of relevance, some account ought to be taken of it; hence this brief afterword.

I had just written the last few sentences of that chapter when the Lahore High Court delivered its judgment in one of the numerous charges brought against Benazir and husband Asif after her government was dismissed. The sentence pronounced by the court would send them both into political oblivion and reduce them to penury (for each, five years disqualification from politics and an equal time in jail, a multi-million dollar fine, and, for good measure, the confiscation of all their properties). At the time of this writing the matter rests with the Supreme Court, where Benazir has gone in appeal.

Surprisingly, considering the unprecedented severity of the sentence, there was not the great public stir that one might have expected; some demonstrations were organized by party members but were quickly put down by the government's strong arm methods. Abroad too, where Benazir is well-known and admired and has been a media superstar, the reaction was muted. Undeniably, some of the shine had been taken off her image by her government's drift and mismanagement, and by the stories about the couples' venality (not that in either respect her performance was worse than those of governments that went before or came after, but she had aroused greater expectations). Moreover, as she is staying out of the country while her appeal is considered, Benazir has distanced herself from the scene—at some cost, eventually, to her political influence. Thus the immediate prospect is not promising for her. Nevertheless, I would not revise my opinion concerning her future in the country's politics. For one thing, despite pulls and tugs within the PPP, the party is still hanging together under her leadership. Even from afar, she retains control of the party machine. In the elections held after Benazir's exit, the Pakistan Muslim League scored a landslide win, but to some extent this was because the turnout of voters in the 1997 elections had been low and most of those who stayed away from the polls were Benazir's disillusioned voters. These things can change and, in the public eye, in spite of everything, she does stand for something different in Pakistan's politics. Thus if she is not disqualified (a big if), in a fair election Benazir could yet make a comeback.

Of course, Nawaz Sharif, if he could help it, was not going to let her have any chance of doing so. In the popular clamor for accountability he found the means of eliminating the hazard. In a democracy and under the rule of law a political leader must no doubt be prepared to answer for his deeds and misdeeds in office—as, for example, some Americans presidents have had to do. But such has not been the practice in Pakistan,

where only losers are called to account. The Muslim League government's 'accountability' was in this tradition—a blatantly one-sided process—and therefore has had little credibility in the public eye and may indeed have produced seine backlash of sympathy for her.

More even than Benazir in her second term, Nawaz Sharif began his second round under propitious circumstances, with advantages that she had not enjoyed: an absolute majority in the Assembly, a compliant civil and military establishment, the whole-hearted backing of the business community. He made a firm start by repealing the Eighth Amendment,[194] and he asserted civilian control over the military by dismissing a Navy chief for corruption and the Chief of Army Staff for making a political speech.[195] These were, in principle, good moves, but only if they served to strengthen the substance and spirit of democracy and not merely its form; otherwise, under the formal trappings of parliamentary democracy, the governance of the country would once again be in the hands of one man or group of men. The rule of the majority could easily turn into a majoritarian despotism without the rule of law and institutional restraints on the exercise of power—an independent judiciary, a parliament that is active and conscientious and that respects the rights of the dissent and by the existence of an active civil society. In Pakistan the situation in this regard has never been fully satisfactory—the judiciary does stand up to the executive but alas! not always; the opposition is hounded in and out of parliament; the opposition itself relies on agitational gimmicks—walkouts and strikes, street demos and public rallies looking always for a *deus ex machina* to put it back in office; the Press has to fight to remain free and outspoken; civil society in the shape of trade unions, business associations, student bodies, non-governmental organizations of various kinds, is in an incipient stage and subject to harassment and threats; local government, such as it is, is kept firmly under the bureaucratic thumb.

The Eighth Amendment was not a very good piece of legislation as such and was thoroughly misused in practice but, given the weakness of other checks and balances, it served as some sort of restraint on the arbitrariness of a government. Once it was removed, Nawaz Sharif was able to use his absolute majority to tighten his personal hold on power and to remove all political and constitutional restraints on it. The opposition was kept on the run; baton-charged on the streets, subjected to a one-sided 'accountability', and denied its right as a majority to form the provincial government in Sindh; dissent and free discussion within the ruling party itself was gagged; the Press was put under pressure and some top pressmen were persecuted; in the removal of the Chief Justice as he began hearings on petitions against Nawaz Sharif, the judiciary received grievous wounds to its dignity and independence. The culmination of Nawaz

[194] See, Preface, note 1.

[195] Indeed, General Jehangir Karamat told the government some home truths that Nawaz Sharif would have done well to heed; nevertheless, against Pakistan's background of military intervention in politics, the prime minister's assertion of civilian authority was, in principle, a step in the right direction.

Sharif's drive for power was a constitutional amendment, which in the name of promoting Islam, would have allowed the writ of the government to override any existing law or constitutional provision. Only the lack of the requisite majority in the Senate prevented Nawaz Sharif from carrying out a virtual *coup* against the constitution!

In his helter-skelter moves to gain absolute power, Nawaz Sharif went from being Pakistan's most powerful prime minister to perhaps its most unpopular one and ended up by being dismissed by the military, put under house arrest, and whatever else might follow. The French have an expression, *fuite en avant*, meaning a forward retreat, that seems best to describe the former prime minister's headlong progression. While Benazir left behind a trail of disillusionment and dashed expectations, Nawaz Sharif's policies and actions left people bitter and angry; his failure was unmitigated because it has brought the country back full circle to military rule for the fourth time in its short history.

This book has in the main been about Benazir's first term as prime minister. Now larger issues face Pakistan than the past, present, and future of individual leaders—questions concerning the why and wherefore of it all: why does democracy not seem to work in Pakistan, why nothing seems to work, is democracy incompatible with Islam, what should be the role of religion in the state, what is the cement of Pakistan as a nation—religion, history, common interest? After fifty years of debate and soul-searching, the nation has not been able to resolve these issues. Only the religious parties claim to have clear-cut answers to all national problems, but these parties have never been able to get more than a tiny fraction of the vote in any election.

The new military ruler, while speaking of restoring national cohesion, provincial harmony, national morale and so forth has defined the aims of the coup in specific terms: to rebuild investor confidence, increase domestic savings, reform the tax system, turn around state-owned enterprises, These are reasonable objectives and can be attained in a defined period of time. The military, the army chief affirmed in his first public address, will not retain power a day longer than is strictly necessary. A skeptic would say that we have heard all this thrice already; on each occasion, the military failed to perform what it promised and, instead of finding a remedy for the country's ills, caught the virus itself. Will it be different this time? It should not be long before the answer becomes apparent.

Meanwhile, two features of the latest military incursion into politics are worth noting. The military moved this time not in support of personal ambition or in pursuit of a deep-laid plot but in the words of General Musharraf, 'in extremely unusual

circumstances'. These were the prime minister's cloak and dagger maneuvers to dismiss the army chief and to replace him with his own man.[196]

The other notable difference this time is that, in a reversal of the past pattern, military intervention has been accorded a wide welcome within the country, whereas in the work, at large, especially in the West led by the United States, the move has met with disapproval, censure, and sanctions. The military regime is under pressure from powerful states and institutions to restore democracy at an early date.

The Western world's unaccustomed concern for democracy in Pakistan indicates the extent to which democratic values are becoming a factor in international politics in the post-cold war environment. It is, perhaps above all, also provoked by the fear that Pakistan—from where so much fundamentalist rhetoric has been heard of late—may fall into the hands of anti-western ideologues armed with nuclear weapons.

Within the country there was a sense of relief and dancing in the streets at the military's return. These initial reactions indicated the depth of popular discontent with the gamesmanship and virulence of Pakistani politics, rather than an unqualified confidence in military rule.

These domestic and foreign reactions, contradictory though they seem set the parameters of time and purpose for the military regime. The immediate questions are, how long the army will take to put things right and, more importantly, whether there is an agreed and coherent army view of what needs to be put right and how it is to be done.

Objectively, there exists a broad consensus in the country, and even in the programmes of the main political parties, on what the country's problems are and what needs to be done about them. The new leaders should find encouragement and guidance in the fact that the rancor and discord of politics and the bigotry of sectarians are not echoed much in day-to-day life, in which ordinary people—Sunnis and Slams, Sindhis and *muhajirs*, go about their business, facing the same problems and interacting with each other and always hoping, even against hope.

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[196] The specific circumstances were the souring of the prime minister's relations with the army chief, General Musharraf, whom he had appointed a year earlier. He dismissed the General and appointed his replacement while the General was at the end of an official visit to Sri Lanka and on his way back on a commercial flight of Pakistan International Airlines. To make sure that the move would go without a hitch, the aircraft was denied permission to land at Karachi airport and directed to proceed to any nearby foreign destination. As the plane did not have enough fuel to do so, it was directed to land at Nawahshah airport, a couple of hundred miles north of Karachi, where a police contingent was dispatched to apprehend the army chief and to take him to Islamabad. The plane, carrying 250 passengers, had been circling in the air for nearly an hour and had fuel let for only another seven minutes. Meanwhile, the army went into action, took over Karachi airport and enabled the plane to land, put the prime minister under house arrest, and the coup was on.