

A woman wearing a white headscarf and a maroon garment is looking upwards. The background is a dramatic sky with dark, swirling clouds and patches of bright, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

Amir Mir

THE
BHUTTO MURDER TRAIL

From Waziristan to GHQ

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AMIR MIR

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I dedicate this book to Pakistan's first elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who chose to lay down his life for the sake of his principles, his equally daring daughter, Benazir Bhutto, who breathed her last while struggling against the forces of extremism and dictatorship, and hundreds of other unnamed martyrs who lost their lives at the hands of the military and the militants while striving for the cause of democracy and to make Pakistan a truly liberal and secular state, as envisioned by the founder of the nation, Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

1. Extracts from Benazir Bhutto's books, *Daughter of the East* and *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West*, were first published by Simon and Schuster, UK, in 2007 and 2008, respectively.
2. The author's interview with Benazir Bhutto a few weeks before her assassination was first published by *DNA (Daily News and Analysis)*, Mumbai, under the title 'General's Time is Up', in the issue dated 15 November 2007, and the author's news report, 'Pakistan Intelligence Officials Planned Attack on Bhutto*', in the issue dated 4 December 2007.
3. The editorial, 'A Costly Non-Probe' was first published in the *Daily Dawn*, Pakistan, in the issue dated 20 July 2009.
4. Extracts from the following articles first appeared in *The News*, Pakistan:
 - 'Mystery Murderers', 30 December 2008
 - 'Why Zardari Delayed UN Report', 1 April 2010
 - 'UN, Pakistan at Odds Over Benazir Murder Report', 2 April 2010
 - 'Maj. Gen. Nadeem Ijaz in the Dock for Many Crimes,, 26 April 2010
5. Extracts from the news report, 'Doctors Cite Pressure to Keep Silent on Benazir' by Emily Wax and Griffie Witte were first published by the Washington Post Foreign Service on 1 January 2008.
6. Benazir Bhutto's poem, 'Benazir's Story', is reproduced with the permission of the Bhutto Legacy Research Foundation.
7. All pictures used inside the book have been provided by the Bhutto Legacy Research Foundation.

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PART ONE

FROM TRIUMPH TO
TRAGEDY

THE DEEPENING MURDER MYSTERY

THE TRAGIC ASSASSINATION of Benazir Bhutto – former prime minister of Pakistan and chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) – on the evening of 27 December 2007 in the garrison town of Rawalpindi, hardly a few kilometers from the general headquarters (GHQ) of the Pakistan Army and the head office of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), raised two important questions: who actually orchestrated her murder, and what were the motives behind it? These key questions remain unanswered even after a high-level inquiry conducted by a three-member United Nations Commission, to investigate the events and circumstances surrounding the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

The UN team, which took almost nine months to complete its inquiry report, cited a major lapse in her security plan and squarely blamed Pakistan's former military dictator, General (retd) Pervez Musharraf for her murder. The report released by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on 15 April 2010, twenty-eight months after the assassination, made it abundantly clear that Benazir Bhutto had been left completely at the mercy of her killers, who took advantage of the poor security arrangements and assassinated her. Those who masterminded her murder still remain nameless, although the UN Commission had asked the Pakistan government to carry out a criminal investigation of both the suicide attacks on Benazir Bhutto, the first in Karachi on 18 October 2007, and the second in Rawalpindi on 27 December 2007 (which resulted in her death), to expose all those involved not only on an operational level but also in the conception, planning and financing of the murder.

Having spent nine years in exile, Benazir Bhutto had returned to Pakistan to lead her party's election campaign for a third term in office. She had left Pakistan in 1998 along with her three children, to live in Dubai and London, two years after being deposed as prime minister, in November 1996. She had been in self-imposed exile after the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had arrested her husband Asif Zardari, and booked her in several corruption cases. Although the Sharif government was toppled by General Musharraf in October 1999, Benazir Bhutto continued to lead the PPP while staying out of the country. She was eventually joined by her husband in 2004, after he was freed from jail.

Benazir Bhutto subsequently decided to return to Pakistan on 18 October 2007 to campaign for the 2008 general elections. As she landed at Karachi airport, the streets of the city were flooded with hundreds of thousands of jubilant PPP workers and

supporters who had come out to welcome her. But while she was being taken to the mausoleum of Mohammad Ali Jinnah to address a rally, her homecoming procession was attacked by a couple of suicide bombers near the Karsaz area of the port city. Fortunately, Bhutto escaped unhurt but the twin suicide attacks killed over 170 people, including innocent women and children and six police officers. At least fifty security guards from the PPP who had formed a human chain around her truck to keep potential bombers away were also killed.

Bhutto's cavalcade had been inching through Karachi for nearly ten hours, and it so happened that she had gone down to the command centre of the truck to remove her sandals and rest her swollen feet, moments before the bomb went off. She was escorted unharmed from the scene. However, exactly seventy days after her return to Pakistan, and barely two weeks before the holding of the general elections, which were originally scheduled for 8 January 2008, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated.

Benazir Bhutto's murder was only the most recent in a bloody South Asian political terrain, rife with assassinations. Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, was shot dead in 1951 inside the same park—it was subsequently named Liaqat Bagh in his honor—which Bhutto was leaving after a meeting, when she was killed. In India, Mohandas Gandhi was shot dead in 1948, soon after Independence. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984, and her son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi, who was Benazir Bhutto's contemporary and counterpart, was also killed, in 1991, by a suicide bomber who belonged to a Sri Lankan Tamil separatist group. In Sri Lanka itself several politicians, Sinhala and Tamil, were killed; and in Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—the first prime minister who later became President of the country—had been shot dead in a bloody military *coup* in 1975. In 1981, another Bangladeshi President, Ziaur Rahman, was killed in yet another abortive *coup*. In 1988, Pakistan's third military dictator, General Zia ul Haq, was killed in a mysterious plane crash along with others in the top rung of the country's military hierarchy. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto knew quite well that her return to Pakistan was fraught with serious risks.

A few moments before being killed, she had addressed a mammoth election rally in the historic Liaqat Bagh of Rawalpindi. She was happy as the rally had gone quite well. After it was over, she got into her bulletproof white Toyota Land Cruiser and left Liaqat Bagh, travelling in convoy. The fleet of vehicles consisted of a black Toyota Land Cruiser, which was being used by Tauqir Kaira, followed by Bhutto's white armoured Land Cruiser with two of Kaira's vehicles on either side of it—a Mercedes-Benz van on the right and a four-door double-cabin car on the left. Immediately behind those vehicles were two Toyota Vigo pickup trucks, positioned side by side. A bulletproof black Mercedes-Benz, which was the backup car for Bhutto, had already left the parking area ahead of her Land Cruiser. Tauqir Kaira, who was responsible for providing the first line of defence around Bhutto's convoy, was inside the lead vehicle with his private security men. Kaira was also in charge of handling the logistics of getting Bhutto's

convoy on the way – checking the vehicles and ensuring that they were in the proper place, and so on.

Accompanying Bhutto in her vehicle were Javed-ur- Rehman (driver), Major (retd) Imtiaz Ahmed (chief security officer), Makhdoom Amin Fahim (senior vice chairman of the PPP), Naheed Khan (Bhutto's political secretary), Safdar Abbasi (senior PPP leader), Khalid Shahenshah (a PPP activist) and Razaq Mirani (Benazir's personal attendant). Kaira's two vehicles on either side of Bhutto's Land Cruiser carried his men and the Vigo pickup trucks carried her personal security guards. Riding in the black Mercedes-Benz were the driver, PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar, Rehman Malik (now federal interior minister), Babar Awan (now federal law minister) and Lieutenant General (retd) Tauqir Zia, a former corps commander who had joined the PPP a few weeks ago.

As her vehicle was moving slowly, she noticed that many of the PPP workers and supporters carrying banners and placards were waving at her. So a smiling Bhutto emerged from the sunroof of the jeep to wave to the cheering crowd. Someone from the crowd shouted, '*Bhutto de naray*' (The slogans of Bhutto) and she joined her supporters to yell '*wajan ge*' (shall go on being chanted).

Those were her last words. While she was waving to the crowd, a man wearing dark glasses appeared on the left side of Bhutto's bulletproof Land Cruiser. He suddenly pulled out a pistol and fired three shots at her from a close range of two to three meters. All three shots were fired in less than a second. Bhutto's white scarf (with which she had covered her head) and her hair flicked upwards after the second shot, and she was seen falling into the vehicle after the third shot was fired. The gunman, who was near the left rear corner of her vehicle, then lowered his gun, looked down and detonated his explosive-laden jacket, wreaking havoc. Those accompanying her believe at least one bullet hit her on the right side of her head, slightly above her temple, and that the bomber had blown himself up after she had slumped back inside the vehicle and hit the seat.

Collapsing thus, she fell in Naheed Khan's lap, away from the senior vice chairman of the PPP, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, who was sitting on her left. Seconds later, those inside the vehicle with Bhutto noticed that her face and neck were badly bloodied. As blood poured from her left temple and pooled in the back seat, Bhutto lost consciousness. According to Naheed Khan, she cradled her leader's head in her lap and tried to stem the flow of blood with her *dupatta*. Naheed's husband, Dr Safdar Abbasi, who was sitting at the back, immediately checked Bhutto's pulse, but there was no sign of life. According to him, she seemed to have died instantly because of the severity of the head injury.

Major Imtiaz Ahmed, Bhutto's chief security officer who was driving her vehicle at the time, had the presence of mind to drive the badly-damaged jeep as fast as he could,

from the site of the blast towards the Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH). After a kilometer, the vehicle came to a halt as its tyres gave out. Imtiaz found a vehicle belonging to Sherry Rehman (PPP's central secretary, information) parked at the curb with only the driver behind the wheel, waiting for passengers. A bleeding Bhutto was quickly shifted to that vehicle, and her aides desperately sought to get her medical care. Once they reached the hospital, a seven-member team of surgeons and doctors worked to save her life, and even resorted to open-heart massage. The political heir of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was, however, declared dead on the operating table at around 6.30 p.m.

It was left to Dr Safdar Abbasi to break the news to Asif Zardari, who was in Dubai. He is reported to have said, 'I won't believe it unless I see it myself,' But soon, Zardari had the difficult task of telling his children that their mother had died.

In one of her interviews, Benazir Bhutto had said that she would like to see her children get married before she died. 'I remember, when I met my father for the last time in jail, he told me that he would not see any of his children get married. I would say that I'd like to see my children get married and then see my grandchildren. I pray God protects my life till then . . . ? But it was not to be.

Almost three years after her assassination, the ghost of Benazir Bhutto continues to haunt distraught Pakistanis amid allegations and counter-allegations about her possible assassins, thus augmenting the assumptions and conclusions that seek to make sense of her assassination. The people of Pakistan may never know who actually planned her murder, yet there is no dearth of probable culprits to choose from: al-Qaeda and Taliban-linked Islamic extremists, rogue elements within the powerful Pakistani military intelligence Establishment, or contract killers hired by her political rivals like General Pervez Musharraf who was the country's President at the time of the murder. . . . The conspiracy theory keeps getting denser every day.

The murder of Benazir Bhutto, who had struggled against the military regimes of General Zia ul Haq (July 1977-August 1988) and General Pervez Musharraf (October 1999-August 2008) for almost three decades to restore democracy, marked the end of the long political legacy of the Bhutto family. Like the Nehru-Gandhi family in India, the Bhuttos of Pakistan are one of the world's celebrated political dynasties. Benazir's father, the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was the prime minister of Pakistan in the early 1970's, while Benazir Bhutto was the first woman elected to lead a Muslim state, and was the prime minister of Pakistan (from 1988-1990 and from 1993-1996). She was sworn in as prime minister for the first time in 1988 at the age of thirty- five, but was removed from office twenty months later by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who was backed by the military. In 1993, she became the country's prime minister for the second time but was once again removed in 1996, this time by President Farooq Leghari. She followed her legendary father into politics and both of them met with an unnatural death because of it.

The assassination of Benazir Bhutto was described by some sections of the Western media as the 'JFK assassination replay' because of the glaring parallels. John F. Kennedy, the thirty-fifth US President, was fatally shot on 22 November 1963, in Dallas, Texas, while riding with his wife Jacqueline in a presidential motorcade and waving to the crowd. The subsequent ten-month investigation of the Warren Commission (1963-1964), the US House Select Committee on Assassinations that investigated the Kennedy assassination (1976-1979), and several other government investigations concluded that the President was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald, who was murdered by Jack Ruby before he could stand trial.

The findings of all these investigations were, however, questioned by the general public, and the JFK assassination remains the subject of widespread debate even today, besides spawning numerous conspiracy theories. In 1979, the US House Select Committee on the JFK Assassination found both the FBI investigation and the Warren Commission Report to be seriously flawed. The committee also concluded that there were at least four shots fired, that there was a high probability that two gunmen fired at the President, and that it was probable his assassination was the result of a conspiracy.

In terms of wealth, power and popularity, the Bhuttos have long been described as Pakistan's answer to America's Kennedy clan. The Bhutto family has inspired many Pakistanis in a manner reminiscent of the Kennedys in the US, particularly John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy. Four members of the Bhutto family died an unnatural death. Benazir's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was ousted in a military *coup* by General Zia ul Haq in July 1977 and subsequently executed in April 1979. One of her two brothers, Mir Shahnawaz Bhutto, died under mysterious circumstances in France in 1985. He was most probably poisoned. Her second brother, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, was shot dead on 20 September 1996 in Karachi, the commercial capital of Pakistan, in a police encounter near his residence, during Benazir Bhutto's second tenure as prime minister of the country.

Benazir Bhutto was of the view that her brother was killed by the Pakistani military and intelligence Establishment in a bid to erode the authority of her government, and eventually topple her. Her fears soon came true as the President of Pakistan, Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari, while working in unison with the Establishment, dismissed the Bhutto government on 5 November 1996 under renewed charges of corruption and misrule. The presidential action came hardly forty-five days after the murder of Mir Murtaza Bhutto.

Like John F. Kennedy, Benazir Bhutto too died from a bullet wound while waving to her supporters from an open vehicle after addressing an election rally. In both the murder cases, allegations of lax security and a government cover-up ensued. While the Kennedy murder was probed by the Warren Commission and the Federal Bureau of

Investigation, the Bhutto assassination was investigated by Scotland Yard, the United Nations Inquiry Commission and the Federal Investigation Agency. Many in Pakistan refused to believe in the Musharraf regime's findings pertaining to the Bhutto murder, as had been the case in the USA with the Warren Commission's report on the JFK assassination.

Another similarity in the Bhutto and JFK assassinations: the alleged killers of both the leaders died a violent death before they could be put on trial. Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin of JFK, was arrested eighty minutes after the assassination, for killing a police officer who had spotted him in the residential neighborhood of Oak Cliff. Oswald was captured in a nearby movie theatre after he was seen sneaking in without buying a ticket. He was charged with the murder of Kennedy later that night. Oswald denied shooting anyone and claimed he was a patsy who was arrested because he had lived in the Soviet Union. Oswald could not be tried because hardly two days after his arrest, he was shot and killed, on 24 November 1963, by Dallas nightclub owner, Jack Ruby, while the accused was being escorted to a car for transfer from Dallas Police Headquarters to the Dallas County Jail.

The Musharraf regime had declared Commander Baitullah Mehsud, the ameer of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement of Pakistan—TTP), the mastermind behind Benazir Bhutto's murder, hardly forty-eight hours after the tragic event. Closely allied with al-Qaeda, the TTP is the main Taliban militant umbrella group in Pakistan, and is responsible for most of the suicide bombings and fidayeen attacks carried out in almost every nook and corner of Pakistan in recent years. Among the TTP's stated objectives are resistance against the Pakistani army, enforcement of the Shariah, and the targeting of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Like Lee Harvey Oswald, Baitullah Mehsud too had denied having anything to do with the assassination. He had blamed the Pakistani intelligence agencies for the murder, saying that the modus operandi and precision of the Rawalpindi strike clearly indicated that the assassination, which had been carried out by using a skilled sniper first, followed by a suicide bomber, was committed by some highly-trained professionals. Baitullah Mehsud was killed in an American drone attack on 5 August 2009 in South Waziristan, before he could be arrested and put on trial.

Even before Bhutto decided to end her self-imposed exile, she had been talking publicly of threats to her life. That was probably the reason she did not bring her husband and their three children back to Pakistan. In the months before her death, she had emerged again as a strong contender for power, and her assassination occurred against the backdrop of a political power struggle in Pakistan, the issue being the continuation of military rule under General Pervez Musharraf as opposed to the restoration of a democratically elected civilian government. And Benazir Bhutto's return to Pakistan in

October 2007 was a flashpoint in that struggle, the outcome of which would have significant consequences for the country's major political actors.

Shortly before being assassinated, Bhutto had expressed these fears in her book, *Daughter of the East*,¹

As I prepare to return to an uncertain future in Pakistan in 2007, I fully understand the stakes not only for myself and my country, but the entire world. I realize I can be arrested. I realize that like the assassination of Benigno Aquino in Manila in 1983, I can be gunned down on the airport tarmac when I land. But I do what I have to do, and am determined to fulfill my pledge to the people of Pakistan to stand by them in their democratic aspirations. I take this risk for the children of Pakistan. It is not about personal power. It is about simple decency and respect for the right of men and women to live in security and dignity and in liberty. And now, in this new age of danger, extremism and terror, it is about something more. Democracy in Pakistan is not just important in Pakistan, it is important for the entire world. So I plan my return from exile to lead yet another campaign. I know it sounds idealistic and to some unrealistic, but after all of these years, I still maintain my faith that time, justice and the forces of history are on the side of democracy. Some people might not understand what drives me forward into this uncharted and potentially dangerous crossroads of my life. Too many people have sacrificed too much, too many have died, and too many people see me as their remaining hope for liberty, for me to stop fighting now.

She ended her book with a quotation from Dr Martin Luther King:

'Our lives begin to end the day we remain silent on things that matter.' With my faith in God, I put my fate in the hands of the people of Pakistan.

The legendary American civil rights activist, Dr. Martin Luther King, had been shot dead on 4 April 1968, at the peak of his political career. Many believe that he had been the target of the American FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (Cointelpro), which was created by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to destroy the Black Liberation Movement.

The director general of the ISI, Major General Nadeem Taj, had an unusual early morning meeting with Benazir Bhutto at around 1.30 a.m. on 27 December 2007, the day she was killed. During the meeting, Nadeem Taj, who was also a close relative of Musharraf; reportedly told Bhutto that she should not go to Liaquat Bagh to address the rally because there were intelligence reports that there could be an attempt on her life during the Rawalpindi meeting. Bhutto, however, decided to stick to her earlier plans, and requested Nadeem Taj to ask those in authority in the Musharraf administration to

¹ Simon & Schuster, UK, 2007.

take stringent security measures for her protection, if they already had intelligence reports of any such possible terrorist attack. It is strange that despite the prior knowledge of a possible assassination attempt, adequate security arrangements were not made for her.

The UN Commission's report too criticized the security arrangements made by the Musharraf regime on the day of her murder:

The Commission finds that the security plan was flawed as it placed inadequate focus on Ms. Bhutto's protection and concentrated more on the deployment of the police for crowd control. Furthermore, it was not implemented properly. Video footage and photographs examined by the Commission raised questions as to the number of police officers deployed at Liaquat Bagh. PPP officials who accompanied Bhutto do not recall an Elite Force unit box around Bhutto's vehicle on the way to the Rawalpindi event, only a traffic escort. Overall, video and photographic materials as well as the Commission's interviews establish that there were very few police deployed outside the outer gate and on Liaquat Road as Ms. Bhutto's convoy attempted to depart the scene.

Twenty-four hours after Benazir Bhutto was assassinated, *Asia Times Online*, a Hong Kong based web newspaper, reported that through a phone call from an unknown destination an al-Qaeda spokesperson had claimed responsibility for her assassination. It added that the death squad consisted of the Punjabi associates of the underground anti-Shia Pakistani militant organization Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), operating under al-Qaeda's orders. 'We terminated the most precious American asset who had vowed to defeat the mujahideen,' said an al-Qaeda spokesperson, Mustafa Ahmad Mohammad Uthman Abu al-Yazid. 'This is our first major victory against those who have been siding with the forces of the infidels [the West] in the fight against al-Qaeda . . .'

No such statement, purported to have been made by al-Qaeda claiming responsibility for Bhutto's assassination, appeared on any of the websites of the radical Islamic groups that regularly post such claims from the Osama-led terror outfit, and other militant groups. The authenticity of such a claim was questionable also because of the fact that al-Qaeda never claims responsibility for its successful strikes so fast (within forty-eight hours in this case) and that too through telephone calls. Secondly, al-Qaeda and pro al-Qaeda Pakistani jihadi organizations usually do not specify the ethnicity of a Muslim. For them, a Muslim is a Muslim, and it is very unlikely that either al-Qaeda or Lashkar-e-Jhangvi would say that a Punjabi suicide bomber carried out the assassination.

Commonly known as Sheikh Saeed al-Misri, the al-Qaeda spokesperson Mustafa Ahmad Mohammad Uthman Abu al-Yazid, who claimed responsibility for Benazir Bhutto's murder on behalf of the organization, was an Egyptian militant and a close aide of al-Qaeda's second in command, Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri. According to American

intelligence findings, he had once been al-Qaeda's chief financial adviser and had transferred several thousand dollars to Mohammad Ana, the ring leader of the 9/11 hijackers, before the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York.

Almost two-and-a-half years after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, the Pakistani authorities claimed that Yazid had died in an American predator attack in North Waziristan on 8 September 2009 along with Commander Ilyas Kashmiri, the ameer of the Azad Kashmir chapter of the Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HUJI). But these claims eventually proved to be false as both Kashmiri and Yazid had reappeared a few weeks later, refuting reports of their death.

Almost ten months later, however, Yazid was finally killed on 21 May 2010 in Saidabad village in the troubled Dattakhel subdivision of the North Waziristan tribal region, after an American drone targeted his hideout. He had reportedly moved to Dattakhel from Mir Ali after US spy planes continued targeting the hiding places of the Arab fighters there, and killed several people. The drones had fired five missiles that struck three houses in Saidabad village near Land Mohammad Khel, and Yazid had been killed along with ten members of his family. Al-Qaeda announced his death, on 1 June 2010, in a message to jihadi websites, stating that its number-three leader and Osama bin Laden's one-time treasurer, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, had been killed along with his wife, three of his daughters and his granddaughter, in an American drone attack. 'His death will only be a severe curse . . . upon the infidels. The response is near,' the al-Qaeda announcement said.

Significantly, two days after Benazir Bhutto's murder, a visibly furious Asif Zardari had, at a press conference in Naudero, accused the PML-Q leadership of murdering his wife, besides describing the party as 'Qatil League'. Hitting back the same evening, the Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi had charged Zardari with Bhutto's murder, saying, 'Who has benefited the most from the assassination? Zardari and only Zardari. Check the authenticity of Benazir's will. Find out the amount for which she was insured.' Incidentally, Zardari had already been elected co-chairman of the PPP by that time.

On 18 October 2008, on the first anniversary of the terrorist attack on Bhutto's procession, the Karachi Police finally lodged a second FIR on the Karsaz attacks, on the basis of her letter, in which she had mentioned the names of three persons who, she had cause to believe, were plotting her assassination. (The first FIR had been lodged by the Musharraf administration against unidentified persons despite the fact that Bhutto had named the prime suspects in the Karsaz attacks, in her application to the Karachi Police.) The national newspapers reported, on 20 October 2008, that those named in the second FIR were a former Punjab chief minister and close associate of Pervez Musharraf; Chaudhry Pervez Elahi; a former director general of the Intelligence Bureau and also a personal friend of Pervez Musharraf Brigadier (retd) Ejaz Hussain Shah; and

a former director general of the Inter Services Intelligence and a vocal supporter of the Taliban, Lieutenant General (retd) Hameed Gul.

Confirming the lodging of the second FIR, the Sindh chief minister Qaim Ali Shah said Bhutto's own attempts to lodge a second FIR of the Karsaz tragedy had been foiled by the Musharraf regime. Benazir Bhutto had forwarded a written request to the SHO, Bahadurabad police station for the registration of an FIR on her behalf maintaining that the FIR was originally lodged on behalf of the state against 'some unidentified persons,' without mentioning those she had named in her letter to Pervez Musharraf. But the police did not lodge the case saying it was not possible to file two FIRs of a single incident.

A year later, however, a second FIR of the Karsaz tragedy was lodged by the Bahadurabad police station under Sections 324 (attempt to commit *Qatl-e-Amd* or intentional murder), 302 (*Qatl-e-Amd* or intentional murder), and 427/34 (mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees) of the Pakistan Penal Code and Sections 3 (causing explosion likely to endanger life or property) and 4 (attempt to cause explosion or making or keeping explosives with intent to endanger life or property) of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908, after the Sindh government declared the findings of the previous investigation team irrelevant. (The Karsaz attacks were earlier blamed on the TTP ameer, Baitullah Mehsud, by the Musharraf regime.)

The Sindh home minister, Dr. Zulfiqar Mirza, subsequently told newsmen in Karachi that the fresh FIR was registered in line with the court orders, suggesting conversion of Bhutto's letter into an FIR. 'In Benazir Bhutto's request, she had mentioned a letter she had written to Musharraf two days before her 18 October 2007 return to Pakistan in which she said her life could be harmed by three persons,' Zulfiqar Mirza said, and added that the new police team led by Ghulam Qdir, deputy inspector general, investigation, Sindh, would take into account every possible aspect during the course of the investigations as the previous team had only established that the Karsaz blasts were suicide attacks.

On 20 October 2008, the Sindh chief minister Qaim Ali Shah declared while talking to newsmen in Karachi that the three persons mentioned by Benazir Bhutto would be arrested soon for interrogation. Hardly ten days later, however, on 1 November 2008, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi claimed in an exclusive interview with the Pakistani English daily, *The News*, that the President had stopped the Sindh government from implicating him in the Benazir Bhutto murder case.

Pervez Elahi revealed that following the registration of a second FIR in the Karsaz case, he and his first cousin, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, had gone to see Asif Ali Zardari's close aide, Dr. Qayyum Soomro, and that he had delivered their message to the President. 'After our meeting with Dr. Soomro during which we protested on the issue,

Dr. Zulfiqar Mirza was told by the presidency not to talk about the case anymore? The Sindh home minister, Dr. Zulfiqar Mirza, the Sindh chief minister, Qaim Ali Shah, and the rest of the PPP leadership subsequently maintained a mysterious silence on the Bhutto murder.

On 27 December 2008, while speaking on the first anniversary of his wife's death, President Asif Zardari claimed that he knew who the killers of Benazir Bhutto were, and that he would reveal their identity at the right time. Commencing on his statement, *The News* stated in its editorial on 30 December 2008, titled, 'Mystery Murderers':

This is mystifying. If Mr. Zardari is indeed able to answer the question as to who killed Benazir Bhutto, there seems to be no plausible reason why he should keep up the suspense. Almost every citizen wishes to know the answer.

The investigation has been stalled despite the fact that Ms. Bhuttos PPP is the senior partner in the governing coalition, and her husband, Asif Zardari, wields enormous influence as the Party's leader. All kinds of questions have been raised from various quarters as the first death anniversary of Benazir was observed. Many doubts, many suspicions remain. These have in fact grown. Zardari must take note of prevailing sentiment. If the President can indeed name the killers, now is the time to do so when the government is in a position to bring them to justice and thus act to avenge a murder that shook nearly everyone in the country regardless of political affiliation.

Subsequently, President Zardari went on to blame his predecessor General Pervez Musharraf for the murder of his wife, claiming that she died because of a bullet wound and not the bomb explosion, which a Scotland Yard report had identified as the cause of her death. 'I wish Musharraf had looked after my wife as I can look after myself,' President Zardari told the British newspaper, *The Telegraph*, in an interview, probably implying that Musharraf was to blame for Benazir Bhuttos murder as he had not provided adequate security cover to her by design, although he could have done that being the all-powerful President of the country.

WHO MASTERMINDED THE ASSASSINATION?

'YOU CAN NAME Musharraf my assassin if I am killed.' Those were the very words Benazir Bhutto had uttered twice during a one-on-one, off-the-record conversation with me, hardly a few weeks before her tragic assassination. My meeting with her had taken place on 13 November 2007 at the residence of Senator Latif Khosa, a few hours before she had been placed under house arrest by the Punjab government, in a bid to stop her from leading a long march to Islamabad against the Musharraf regime. Talking about the attempt on her life in Karachi, Bhutto said that she knew full well even before returning home that such a cowardly attempt would be made on her life. 'And let me tell you that the Karachi suicide bombings could not have been possible without Musharraf's blessing.'

Almost a month after returning home and barely escaping a horrifying suicide attack on her cavalcade in Karachi, Bhutto had reached Lahore and was staying at Senator Latif Khosa's residence in the Defence area. My meeting with Bhutto actually took place after a dinner, which was attended by a few senior Pakistani journalists, including myself I last had the privilege of meeting her about three years back, in 2005, during her days of self-imposed exile in London and Dubai.

Dressed in a turquoise *shalwar kameez* with a white *dupatta*, Bhutto arrived in the dining room in the basement of the house at around 8.00 p.m. She seemed radiant, relaxed, happy and full of plans for the future. The dinner meeting was a charming event, peppered with Bhutto's comments on political issues, although she seemed more interested in listening to the views of everyone from the media.

As the meeting came to an end and everyone started walking out of the dining room, bidding her farewell, we came to know that while we had been having dinner, warrants had been issued placing Benazir Bhutto under house arrest, and the entire place had been surrounded by armed personnel. This was to make her give up her plans for the long march towards Islamabad. As I approached Bhutto and said goodbye, she replied, 'No, please, you cannot go for I have something very important to talk about.' The people around us looked surprised. Quickly, she took leave of her other guests, and asked me to go with her to the drawing room. But when she saw the small groups of people scattered all over the house, she changed her mind and said instead, 'There are still a lot of people around and it won't be possible to talk here. It would be better to move to the next room.' A PPP leader reminded her that she was due for a meeting with

the American consul, General Bryan D. Hunt. 'I remember, just let me know when he arrives,' she replied.

In one corner of the room, there were two armchairs in which we settled down. Bhutto must have had a long day for she took off her sandals to rest her feet and started massaging her right hand, as if in pain. I asked her, 'Are you feeling all right?'

She replied, 'Yes, thank you. My hand hurts because I use the Blackberry constantly.' Then she came down to business. 'I read your story about me.² It was a very detailed and descriptive write-up and I read it with great interest.' I thanked her. She continued, 'I have also read your book, *The True Face of Jihadis*,³ and it is now a part of my library. And I must tell you that your book has educated me a lot about the Pakistani jihadi mafia, she paused briefly, then smiled and said, 'If you had given your book the title, *The True Face of the Jehadi*, even then it would have conveyed the crux of the book.' It was a veiled allusion to Pervez Musharraf as she believed that he was a jihadi at heart, despite claiming to be a liberal and moderate person. I mentioned that 'Is Musharraf a Liberal or a Jehadi?' (the last chapter of my book) makes the same point.

She went on to say, 'I actually want to share some important information with you, but you must promise me that you will never quote me as your source.' I agreed and Bhutto began, 'Do you know who was involved in the suicide attack on my welcome procession, on 18 October?'

I replied, 'Those whom you have mentioned in your letter to General Musharraf?'

She had another question for me, 'Do you know for whom these people work?'

I replied, 'For Musharraf?'

She probed further, 'So what does this mean?'

It was now my turn to ask questions. 'Do you doubt General Musharraf's intentions?'

'Off the record, I would say I do not doubt his intentions. I am sure of his involvement and my assumption is based on reliable information.'

I was taken aback. I asked her, 'If this is true, why don't you make it public?'

She said, 'I can't do that because of the reconciliatory milieu. The general did not want me to return to Pakistan before the elections, and he is furious that I have come home

² 'Who Wants Her Dead', *Outlook* magazine, 5 November 2007.

³ Roli Books, New Delhi, 2006.

before the polls as it could disturb his game plan.' (Despite her sharp criticism of the Musharraf regime during her stay abroad, Bhutto had returned to Pakistan following a deal brokered between her and Musharraf by the Western powers. The deal was meant to facilitate her return as she wanted to get back home to lead her party's election campaign. She, however, feared that any aggressive action on her part could prompt Musharraf to create problems for her.)

Bhutto then told me that a couple of weeks before her arrival, Musharraf had sent her this message: 'The law and order situation in Pakistan is awry. Also, the religious fanatics and jihadis are outraged because of your anti-jehadi statements that were lapped up by the Pakistani media, especially in the aftermath of the Lal Masjid episode. So you are advised not to come to Pakistan before the 2008 general elections.'

Then she added, 'But I conveyed to him in clear terms that whatever the circumstances, I would definitely come to Pakistan to lead my party in the polls. In return, I was given yet another warning: "The government is concerned about your security since we have credible intelligence information that several extremist groups and individuals are planning to kill you."'

She had pointed out that if the agencies had prior information of the murder plans, they were, of course, in a position to arrest the planners as well. Her rebuttal had fetched her no reply from Musharraf or his administration.

'I have come to know, following investigations by my own sources, that the suicide attack on my welcome procession in Karachi, on 18 October 2007, was masterminded by some highly-placed officials in the Pakistani security and intelligence Establishment. My enemies in the Establishment had first engaged a jehadi leader linked to al-Qaeda, Qari Saifullah Akhtar [the ameer of the Pakistan chapter of the Harkatul Jihadul Islami, who had been involved in a failed coup attempt against her government in 1995]. He, in turn, hired one Maulvi Abdul Rehman Otho alias Abdul Rehman Sindhi, a Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) militant from the Dadu district of Sindh, to carry out the Karachi suicide attacks., Bhutto said that according to credible sources Abdul Rehman Sindhi (who was reportedly arrested in June 2004 from the Khuda Ki Basti area in Kotri, near the Hyderabad district of Sindh province, for his involvement in the February 2002 suicide car bombing outside the US Cultural Center building in Karachi) was mysteriously released by the Pakistani authorities shortly before her return home, citing lack of evidence to proceed against him.

I could not help saying, 'How could Qari Saifullah Akhtar be a suspect when he himself is behind bars for his alleged involvement in masterminding the twin suicide attacks on Musharraf in Rawalpindi, way back in December 2003? As far as I know, Qari is still in jail.'

'I also thought so. But his release has already been confirmed by those close to the Musharraf administration. I subsequently conveyed to some of Musharraf's key people, through my close aides, that various events such as the strange release of a dreaded jihadi like Qari Saifullah Akhtar, have convinced me that any attack on me would not be possible without the consent of those in power.'

I asked her whether I could report a few bits of the information she had shared with me. She smiled and said, 'The reason I wanted to see you alone was to pass on some news which you can report. It is related to the 18 October 2007 terrorist attack. You should, however, countercheck whatever information I provide, and if you find any discrepancies, please let me know.' She continued, 'Actually, while I was still in London during the second week of October [2007], I had been informed by my sources in the [Pakistani] intelligence that there was every chance of someone trying to kill me; and that the blame would then be shifted to the jihadis. I had also been informed that some retired and serving army and intelligence officers had tasked some jihadi elements with my assassination.'

'When I probed deeper, I was amazed to find that the handlers had paid thirty million rupees to their agent, Abdul Rehman Sindhi, so that he could arrange suicide bombers to target my procession in Karachi. My sources say Sindhi had once worked for the former chief operational commander of al-Qaeda, Abu Zubaidah, who was arrested from Faisalabad in March 2002. I was surprised to learn that a man with such strong connections with al-Qaeda was simply set free by the security agencies because they claimed that they did not have enough proof to proceed against him. I had written a letter to Musharraf before coming to Pakistan, after I had received information from the Karzai government in Afghanistan, about the plans for my assassination. I passed on this information to him and had also furnished the names of some of the people who were directly involved in the planning of the assassination.'

When I tried to find out the names of the people involved, Bhutto only said she had put down their names in her letter to Musharraf besides naming them in the FIR application lodged with the Karachi Police after the suicide attacks on 18 October, stating that those mentioned in the letter need to be investigated. According to her, most of those who had planned and carried out the Karachi bombings were affiliated with the ISI. They included a close aide of General Pervez Musharraf—the director general of the IB, Brigadier (retd) Ejaz Hussain Shah who was earlier the provincial chief of the ISI, Punjab. 'That Ejaz Shah has close contacts with jihadi elements is not a hidden fact,' said Bhutto. 'It is a reality that [Sheikh Ahmed] Omar Saeed who is the prime accused in the murder of an American journalist, Daniel Pearl, was acting as an agent of the ISI and his handler was none other than Ejaz Shah himself. And it was the same Shah who had, as home secretary of Punjab, provided asylum to Omar Saeed for many days before he had finally surrendered.'

Bhutto said that the classified information that had been given to her by the Karzai government also contained the names and addresses of some of the people who had been involved in the Karachi suicide attack and that she had forwarded it to Musharraf although she later came to know that the Karzai government had already shared the same information with the Pakistani authorities. The most tragic part of the whole episode is this: in spite of having every minute bit of information about the 18 October assassination bid, no action was taken, and the Karachi suicide bombings targeting my homecoming procession were still carried out, resulting in the death of over 170 people whose only crime was that they were cheering their leader, who had returned home to struggle for the restoration of democracy.

'It was only after the Karachi attack that I realized what a blunder I had committed by writing to Pervez Musharraf and naming his stooges alone. It did not occur to me at that time that I was in a way signing my own death warrant by not naming my number one enemy as one of my possible assassins. It later dawned upon me that Musharraf could have exploited my letter to his advantage.'

'What does that mean?' I asked.

'While writing that letter to General Musharraf it never occurred to me that I was actually giving a clean chit to my worst enemy—a mistake that could bear serious consequences for me,' she replied after a pause. Bhutto then said that while realizing her blunder after the Karachi attack, she had already written yet another letter to someone important, naming her would-be assassins.

I had a volley of questions for her. Had she named Musharraf in that letter; and if yes, why would he hurt her when she was trying to negotiate with him; and to whom was the letter addressed. She smiled and said, 'Mind one thing, Amir Sahib. All those in the Establishment who stand to lose power and influence in the post-election [2008] set-up are after me, including the general. I cannot give you any more details at the moment. You can, however, name Musharraf as my assassin if I am killed.'

I said, 'God forbid, but as far as we know, General Musharraf had given the Americans a guarantee for your protection in Pakistan.'

'No, the general hasn't given any such assurance to anyone. And he can be more vindictive than you can imagine. Even otherwise, a popular politician should never trust a military dictator.'

And the reason for Musharraf's animosity against her? 'I have almost made him shed his military uniform, which was like a second skin to him,' she said. (Musharraf had to quit as the Chief of Army Staff on 28 November 2007, almost two weeks after my Lahore meeting with Bhutto.) 'Now that I have staged a comeback, the general is

between a rock and a hard place. He is under tremendous pressure to quit the presidency, shed his military uniform, and go home.'

'Does that mean that the US wants to get rid of Musharraf now?'

She responded, 'Any such thing would be possible only if the people of Pakistan want it to happen. The general has a fair idea that the people are still siding with Benazir and her People's Party. That's why he detests me and wants me to get out of his way, for I am the biggest hurdle for him.'

I had more questions, 'If you are so convinced that Musharraf could go to any extent and that the Karachi attack would not have been possible without his consent, have you made any move to protect yourself? Will you ever make this public?'

'When it's time, you will know more about it. For now, as I told you earlier, you can name Musharraf as my assassin in case I am murdered.'

'I hope no such thing ever happens, but even if it does, and I do name Musharraf as your assassin, what difference is it going to make? In my personal opinion, you should go public about these facts so that if he does have any such plans he'll get defensive, and might not proceed with them.'

Bhutto responded, 'I believe he would get on the offensive if I made any such move, and would create even more problems for the party leadership, especially with regard to my participation in the forthcoming general elections. But this doesn't mean I won't do anything and let him get away with whatever he wants. I have already taken into confidence some important people. I have kept them informed of all these developments as well as my fears, so that my opponents understand that even if they are able to kill me, they could always be investigated, just as the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri's assassination was investigated by the United Nations.'

It was long after her death that I understood what she had meant when she had hinted at being in touch with the 'right quarters'. She had sent an email to her US adviser, Mark Siegel, which was dated 26 October 2007, a few days after the Karachi bombings targeting her welcome procession. Bhutto was eventually killed, her email was made public, but no action could be taken against her assassin because he himself was supervising the investigations.

She was still talking to me when a man entered the room with a small chit in his hand, which he handed over to her. She glanced towards the messenger and told him, 'Please usher him to the drawing room and serve him tea. I am just about to finish the meeting.' Bryan D. Hunt, the principal officer at the US Consulate in Lahore had arrived and was waiting to see Bhutto. When it dawned upon me that our meeting was to last a little

longer, I requested an interview and she said, 'I would be happy to oblige. Just make it a quick interview . . . and the rest of it you could add from the conversation we had at the dining table.' So I asked her five or six questions and wrapped it up.

Bhutto stood up and said, 'If you find anything about Abdul Rehman Sindhi, especially his whereabouts, do email me. And when this interview gets published please send it to me as well; I am curious to know what you make of our conversation.'

I replied, 'I shall surely do that. The published version will be in your email inbox in a couple of days.'

She smiled and said, 'I am just like an elder sister to you, your father [the late Professor Waris Mir] was also a well-wisher. We should stay in touch.' I took my leave and stepped out of the house. She was now officially under house arrest and Latif Khosa's residence had already been surrounded by large police contingents.

A couple of days after our Lahore meeting, the Mumbai-based newspaper, *DNA (Daily News and Analysis)*, published my interview with Benazir Bhutto under the title, 'General's Time Is Up'. The text of the interview is given below:

Former Pakistani Prime Minister and Chairperson of the PPP Ms. Benazir Bhutto says the time is up for General Pervez Musharraf and he will have to quit both the offices of the Chief of Army Staff as well as that of President before the January 2008 general elections. She said so in an exclusive interview with this correspondent in the Defence area of Lahore where she has been placed under house arrest for one week by the Punjab government to prevent her from leading a long march to Islamabad. Sitting relaxed with a palmtop computer in her hand, Bhutto sounded candid as she began to talk about the most serious issues her country currently faces. Three streets from every direction leading to the posh bungalow of PPP Senator Sardar Latif Khosa in the X block of Defence, Lahore, had been cordoned off by the police. Anyone wanting to see Bhutto had to pass through scanners installed at the main gate of the house as well as the entrance, to be followed by a body search with detectors, being carried out by the private security staff of Bhutto.

Most of the questions that were put forth by this scribe were answered by Ms. Bhutto but she requested that a few of them be kept off the record. Asked about Musharraf's fate, she said, 'Having deceived the international community and betrayed the Pakistan People's Party by imposing Martial Law in the country, [the General had already clamped a state of Emergency in Pakistan on 3 November 2007 besides suspending the 1973 Constitution and issuing a Provisional Constitutional Order] Musharraf has lost whatever international support he had been enjoying before November 3 [2007]. As things stand,' Ms.

Bhutto said, 'he is an isolated commander under whose leadership the morale of the Pakistan Army has touched the lowest fathoms. Musharraf . . . has illegally and unconstitutionally sacked over fifty judges of the superior courts by invoking the Emergency, primarily to retain his presidency. Keeping in view his lust for power, I don't think fair and free elections are possible under his supervision as he is most likely to rig them to keep the People's Party away.'

. . . Bhutto said she couldn't see Musharraf holding power at the time of the general elections as the elections would be rigged, with Martial Law still in vogue. Asked as to who would make General Pervez Musharraf quit—the United States or the Pakistan Army—Bhutto said she did not want to get into any controversies, 'but one thing' she said is for sure . . . the people of Pakistan won't let him keep playing with the destiny of the nation any longer, for the sake of his personal ambitions. Eventually, the people of Pakistan will come out on the streets in large numbers to make Musharraf leave. And that is bound to happen very shortly.'

Talking about the consequences of her power sharing talks with Musharraf she conceded that the parleys did affect her popularity among the masses [more so] as she was the daughter of the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. [After being toppled by Pakistan's third military dictator General Zia ul Haq in 1977, Prime Minister Bhutto had been given two options by the military regime: he could either leave Pakistan or remain in the country but behind bars, and he had rejected the former. He was eventually tried on trumped-up murder charges and sent to the gallows in 1979.] However she said her talks were actually meant to give a 'safe passage' to the Pakistan Army [which had been ruling the country since Musharraf's 1999 military takeover] so that it could go back to the barracks besides ensuring that a power hungry general did not resort to another spell of Martial Law. As a result of the talks, she said, the PPP was given a commitment that Pervez Musharraf would shed his uniform by 15 October 2007. 'However, while betraying everyone, Musharraf not only kept his uniform beyond 15 October but also decided to impose Martial Law while declaring it an Emergency. Under these circumstances, there is no justification left for us to hold any further talks with the general because he cannot be trusted any more by anyone.'

About the assassination attempt during her welcome procession, she said, 'Such a well-organized attempt could not have been possible under the very strict security arrangements by the government, without the involvement of those who matter in the corridors of power.' Ms. Bhutto said, the plan clearly was to assassinate her, and she had been receiving warnings about an attempt on her life if she decided to return home. She added: 'Soon after the bombing, I received a message from the government . . . saying it might have been planned by the

MQM [Muttahida Qaumi Movement led by Altaf Hussain] although I believe the government and its agencies were involved in the attack and they wanted to shift the blame elsewhere. This is one of the reasons why I had written a letter to General Pervez Musharraf before returning home, naming the would-be assassins. I remember the example of the Lebanese leader, Rafik Hariri, whose assassins were investigated and hunted down after his death . . . with the help of a letter that he had written, naming his would-be assassins.'

Elaborating on her controversial . . . statement about giving access to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to interview the father of the Pakistani nuclear bomb, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, Benazir Bhutto said such a move would benefit Dr. Khan as well as Pakistan. Further explaining she said, Dr. Khan could only have been instrumental in the nuclear proliferation to which he has already confessed. As a matter of fact, she said, whatever Qadeer was doing was under instructions from those under whose supervision the country's nuclear programme was being run and is still being run. 'It could not have been possible for a civilian . . . to himself arrange for a C-130 plane and then transport centrifuges to another country. That's why I would like the IAEA to interview Dr. Khan so that he is given a chance to expose those high and mighty in the Establishment who are actually involved in nuclear proliferation.'

Benazir Bhutto said she did not agree with those in the Establishment who were opposed to dealing with the extremist jihadis with an iron hand, maintaining that they are our fellow Pakistani Muslims. This argument was being put forth despite the fact that the jihadis are pursuing an extremist agenda and trying to impose it on the people of Pakistan through the barrel of a gun. ' . . . then one might question why the nationalists in Baluchistan are being killed by the Army including people like Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, the former elderly Governor and Chief Minister of the province. [Bugti was killed, along with thirty-seven tribals, in a military operation, carried out under instructions from Musharraf in the Bhamboor hills of Dera Bugti district of Baluchistan on 26 August 2006, making him the legendary hero of the Baloch freedom struggle.] While ruthless military might is being used against these fellow Pakistani Muslims from Baluchistan who are being treated as enemies of the state, negotiations are being carried out and peace deals struck with Islamic terrorists in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan? [Many in Pakistan believe it was the 'peacemaking' policies of the Musharraf regime that actually led to the rise of dreaded terrorists like Baitullah Mehsud as powerful Taliban leaders. For several years, there had been a consistent pattern in the negotiations going on between Islamic terrorists based in the Pak-Afghan tribal belt and the Musharraf regime: there would be a military operation, then negotiations, followed by a cease-fire. Then the ceasefire would be violated by the Taliban who would again strengthen their positions militarily, and there would be a repetition of the same pattern.]

'In my opinion,' Ms. Bhutto said, 'terrorists have no religion or nationality because those who are killing innocent people can themselves not belong to any creed or nation.' Asked about the future of Pakistan, she said that under the present circumstances with Musharraf ruling, the future of Pakistan appeared bleak and with this one-man rule, the federation of Pakistan was in great danger. 'The process of disintegration always begins from the peripheries and not from the centre—look at the examples of Afghanistan, Iran and Russia. And whatever is happening on the peripheries of Pakistan today is quite clear—it is highly volatile and full of disgruntled people.'

I emailed a copy of the interview to Benazir Bhutto on 15 November 2007, the day it was published, and received a reply from her the very same evening: 'Thank you for an excellent story. I read my interview with great interest. However . . . while the substance of the narrative is correct, there are some issues which I may have been unable to convey properly and which we can discuss . . . when we meet again. Meantime I am most happy to have met up with you again . . . [I had seen you long ago] with your father when you were probably too small to remember.'

I later got to know that she had not been happy with the following lines of the story: 'Talking about the consequences of her power-sharing talks with Musharraf she conceded that the parleys did affect her popularity among the masses [more so] because of her being the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.'

I wrote back to her: 'Thanks a lot for your kind words and sorry for having misunderstood some parts of your conversation. I agree we should meet again to discuss these issues in detail. Secondly, as per your desire, I am still in the process of collecting information about that SINDHI guy [Abdul Rehman Sindhi] you talked about. He is still at large but I am not sure whether or not I should send information about him by email. But do let me know if it is safe to do so.'

Bhutto replied very briefly to me: 'Not safe to send sensitive emails to me. Wait till I am freed.'

We could not meet again. After the restrictions on her movement were lifted, she left Lahore. We still stayed in contact discussing several issues by email. During this time, I also filed a story about Abdul Rehman Sindhi based on the information Bhutto had given me.⁴ I sent the story to her the day it was published. The news item was uploaded on the official website of the Pakistan People's Party and can still be seen there.

⁴ It was published under the title, 'Pak Intelligence Officials Planned Attack on Bhutto', in *DNA (Daily News and Analysis)*, 4 December 2007.

My story on Abdul Rehman Sindhi said:

The 18 October 2007 suicide attacks on the welcome rally of Benazir Bhutto in Karachi were masterminded by some highly-placed officials in the Pakistani intelligence Establishment and the investigation into the deadly attack has already been wrapped up under instructions from the Musharraf regime. To carry out the bombings, at least three militants were hired by Maulvi Abdul Rehman Otho alias Abdul Rehman Sindhi, an al-Qaeda-linked LeJ militant, who originally comes from the Dadu district of Sindh. Sindhi had sought shelter in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime and obtained training in militancy and terrorism tactics before returning to Pakistan. Sindhi was also linked to al-Qaeda's logistics manager, Abu Zubaida, already arrested by the FBI from Faisalabad. The sources believe Abdul Rehman Sindhi had the approval of some highly-placed individuals with jihadi leanings, in the Pakistani intelligence Establishment, to carry out the bombing. Abdul Rehman had finalised the 18 October 2007 Karachi bombing at his hideout in Karachi's Gulistan-e-Johar locality.

After having met her in Lahore, I had made it a point to email Bhutto all my writings, which appeared in various international publications. (I was not allowed to work for any Pakistani publication because of my refusal, in May 2006, to accept the Best Investigative Journalist Award of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society, from General Pervez Musharraf; who was the chief guest at the award distribution ceremony.) Bhutto would always reply with her comments, mostly words of encouragement. On 25 November 2007, I received an email from Bhutto as she wanted me to double-check a piece of information for her. Then, on 27 December, hardly a few hours before her death, I received another email from her at 1.12 p.m. She was in Islamabad and had just reached home after having met the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai. She wanted me to talk to someone about a certain issue as early as possible, and give her the feedback. I did that in a couple of hours and sent her the information she had asked for, at 3.06 p.m. the same day.

This was around the time she reached Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi to address her last election rally. Only God knows whether she read my email or not, for I received no reply from her. Almost three-and-a-half hours after that, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated. My television was switched on and I was watching the live coverage of her rally when the breaking news of a suicide attack targeting her outside Liaquat Bagh suddenly appeared on the screen. A few minutes later, I wrote a brief email, typed 'GOD BLESS YOU' and sent it to her address—*sazdubai@emirates.net.ae*. The news of her assassination, however, came in at around 6.30 p.m. I was devastated and could only utter the words, 'GOD BLESS YOUR SOUL!'

THE PLOT TO RIG THE ELECTIONS

JUST HOURS BEFORE being assassinated, Benazir Bhutto was apparently trying to expose a suspected ISI operation to rig the general elections (which were originally scheduled to be held on 8 January 2008) in favor of the Musharraf-backed Pakistan Muslim League (PML—Quaid-e-Azam). She had been collecting information about a rigging cell allegedly established at a safe house of the ISI in Islamabad. Bhutto was informed by one of her close confidants, on 25 December 2007, that the Musharraf regime had set up a cell to manipulate the 2008 elections. Bhutto was also briefed that the cell, headed by one Brigadier (retd) Riazullah Khan Chib, was working in tandem with the IB director general, Brigadier (retd) Ejaz Hussain Shah.

According to the information she had received, the so-called Election Monitoring Cell would ensure that stamped ballot papers in over one hundred constituencies of Punjab and Sindh were all set to be cast, on 8 January, in favor of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) candidates. (The PML-Q was formed in 2001 with the backing of Musharraf when the Pakistan Muslim League led by Nawaz Sharif fractured and split into several parties, following his government's premature dismissal in 1999. The PML-Q eventually emerged as the majority party in Parliament after the general elections in October 2002, and had formed the government at the centre.)

The special cells set up at the provincial headquarters of the ISI and the IB would ensure that the ballots were polled in a smooth manner at the ghost polling stations in the district headquarters of Punjab and Sindh and counted in the final tally before the official election results were notified to the candidates by the presiding officers. Bhutto's source also added, 'All this is being done because General Musharraf simply can't afford a hostile Parliament as a result of the 2008 polls.'

In her reply, Bhutto said: 'I was told that the ISI and the MI have been asked not to meddle [in the polls]. But I will double check.' In her second message to the same confidant a day later—just five hours before her assassination—Bhutto wrote: 'I need the address of the safe house [in Islamabad] as well as the phone numbers of the concerned. Plz try and obtain ASAP.'

The confidant wrote back to her again at 3.06 p.m., hardly three hours before Bhutto was assassinated:

I have re-checked the information with the same source which earlier said the ISI and the MI have been asked not to meddle. The source claims Brigadier

Riazuliah Khan Chib retired from the ISI a few months ago but was re-employed, since he belongs to an arm of the artillery and is considered close to Musharraf who also comes from the same wing of the Army. The source says Chib's cover job is somewhere else but he is actually supervising a special election cell, which is working in tandem with the chief of the Intelligence Bureau. I have further been told that Brigadiers Ejaz Hussain Shah and Riazullah Chib are close friends because of their having served in Punjab as the provincial head of the ISI and as the Punjab Regional Director of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), respectively, in the past. Both are considered to be loyalists of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, the president of the PML-Q.

The rigging cell/safe house in question is located on Shahra-e-Dastoor, close to the Pakistan House bus-stop in Sector G-5 of Islamabad. It is a double storey building, without any address inscribed on it, as is the case with most of the safe houses. The cell consists of some retired and serving military and intelligence officers, and will show its magic on election-day.

Notably, Bhutto was due to meet two senior American politicians to show them a confidential report, compiled on the basis of information ascertained by her own contacts within the Pakistani security and intelligence services, alleging that the Musharraf regime was using some of the ten billion dollars in American military aid that it had received, to rig the elections. Patrick Kennedy, a Democrat Congressman, and Arlen Specter, a Republican member of the US Senate's sub-committee on foreign operations, were scheduled to have a dinner meeting with Benazir Bhutto on 27 December 2007 (the day she was assassinated), during which they were to be given this report.

According to a news item published in the British daily, *The Times*, on 1 January 2008, Asif Ali Zardari had confirmed the existence of a report pertaining to the Musharraf regime's alleged rigging plans, its basic contents, and that Benazir Bhutto was scheduled to have a meeting with the American lawmakers. Asked if the report was in his possession, he said, 'Something to that effect.' Asked if the report contained some evidence that the ISI was using US funds to rig the elections, he said, 'Possibly so. The confidential report could have been one of several motives for killing her. It was a general combination of all of these things. The fact that she's on the ground exposing everybody, I guess, would have been one reason.'

Bhutto's concerns pertaining to the Musharraf regime's possible rigging plans were not all that wrong – and popular perceptions about the integrity of the electoral process in Pakistan have always been gloomy. From her past experience, Bhutto knew that the State's resources, intelligence agencies as well as the armed forces had been used indiscriminately in the past to maneuver the outcome of the elections. And those illicit activities were eventually successful in manipulating the results of the elections. The ISI

was accused of manipulating the 1990 elections in favor of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (Islamic Democratic Alliance—IIJ), an alliance of rightist and Islamic parties led by Nawaz Sharif which had been formed by Lieutenant General (retd) Hameed Gul, the then director general of the ISI. Gul had already admitted his role in this, in an interview in February 2008, 'I admit my role in rigging the 1990 general elections and seek a formal apology from the Pakistani nation. And I am ready for any punishment—even a trial.'

A case pertaining to the role of the ISI in rigging the 1990 general elections has been pending with the Supreme Court of Pakistan for almost fifteen years now. Proceedings were initiated on 16 June 1996 with a letter from Air Marshal (retd) Asghar Khan to the then Chief Justice of the apex court, Sajjad Ali Shah, asking him to take appropriate action on the statement of the then interior minister, Major General (retd) Naseerullah Khan Babar, in the National Assembly. Babar said on the floor of the house, 'The ISI collected some Rs. 140 million from the Habib Bank Ltd and distributed it among a number of politicians prior to the 1990 general elections.' Asghar's letter was subsequently converted into a constitutional petition by the CJ under Article 184(3) of the country's unanimously adopted Constitution (1973), envisaging the human rights jurisdiction of the apex court.

According to the petitioner, he had actually sent the letter with the sole purpose of exposing the role of the ISI in maneuvering the election results and supporting its favorite politicians to fulfill the political ends of the mighty military Establishment. 'You'll never know how many elections have been rigged and manipulated by the ISI in the past.' Asghar Khan had stated in his letter to the Chief Justice, adding that the ISI moves since the restoration of democracy in 1988 were actually aimed at defeating the Pakistan People's Party and, therefore, the matter had to be adjudged and action taken against those found guilty. Mirza Aslam Beg, former Chief of the Army Staff Lieutenant General Asad Durrani, ex-director general of the ISI Directorate, and Younas Habib, former chief of the Mehran Bank Ltd, who was then confined in the Karachi Central Jail, were made respondents in the case.

In his written reply submitted to the Supreme Court in response to Asghar's allegations, General Mirza Aslam Beg conceded that it had been routine for the ISI to support its favorite candidates in the elections under the directives of successive chief executives. 'The receipt of Rs. 140 million by the ISI from Younas Habib in 1990 was also under the directions of the chief executive. The ISI director general also informed me that funds so received were properly handled and the accounts were maintained. I had also briefed the then President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, on the matter.'

Similarly, a former ISI director general, Lieutenant General Asad Durrani (retd), submitted an affidavit to the then director general of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Rehman Malik, admitting that his political cell received Rs. 140 million from

Younas Habib for distribution among anti-PPP parties and politicians at the behest of Aslam Beg. The election was subsequently won by the IJI led by Sharif who had allegedly received Rs. 3.5 million from the ISI fund, for his election campaign. Sharif however, denied receiving any money from the ISI.

It is widely believed that the Musharraf regime failed to rig the 2008 general elections because of multiple reasons including the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, Pervez Musharraf's stepping down as the army chief and his successor General Kayani's decision to keep the armed forces away from politics. Musharraf was forced to quit the presidency in the wake of the 2008 general elections, which routed his Pakistan Muslim League—Quaid-e-Azam. Eight years after his military takeover, Musharraf politically isolated, hated by his own people and no longer in command of the Pakistan Army, had to quit as the army chief on 28 November 2007, hardly twenty-four hours before he was to be sworn in for a controversial third term as the President of the country. Also, on 16 August 2008, almost eight months after he had shed his uniform, Musharraf had to quit the office of President too, in a bid to avoid an imminent impeachment by the newly-elected Parliament, which was about to vote him out for abrogating Pakistan's Constitution twice.

It was on 25 February 2008, a week after the general elections—originally scheduled to be held on 8 January but postponed to 18 February 2008, in the wake of Bhutto's assassination—that Major General Ehtesham Zamir, a former aide close to General Musharraf and a wheeler-dealer who had acted on behalf of the ISI during the 2002 elections, came out of the closet and admitted his role in rigging the 2002 polls (which were won by the PML-Q), under direct orders from Musharraf.

In an interview with *The News*, Ehtesham Zamir, the head of the ISFs political cell in 2002, said the ISI together with the Nationality Accountability Bureau (NAB), was instrumental in pressing the lawmakers to join the pro-Musharraf camp to form the government, to ensure that the general stayed in power. Looking back and recalling his blunders which, he admitted, had pushed the country back instead of taking it forward, Zamir said he felt ashamed of his role and conduct. He termed the 2008 elections 'fairer than [the] 2002 [elections]', the reason for this being that there was relatively less interference from the intelligence agencies during the 2008 elections as compared to the previous time, because Musharraf was no more calling the shots as the army chief and was only a civilian President.

Shortly before her assassination, Bhutto had been publicly talking about the plans of the Musharraf regime for rigging the elections. Hardly three weeks before her assassination, she had warned the Musharraf administration that any attempt to manipulate the elections would lead to a countrywide movement by the opposition parties. Talking to reporters in Rawalpindi on 7 December 2007, she said that her party wanted a peaceful transition to democracy through fair elections, and had decided to

participate in the polls, under protest, to accomplish the objective. She alleged that the government had a 'rigging scheme' in place, which had forced the opposition parties to plan a countrywide stir in case their demands for fair polls were not met.

'The regime initially wanted to run away from the elections by imposing an Emergency, but under great pressure it had to set a date for the elections. It has, therefore, now drawn up plans to rig the polls,' Bhutto claimed. She said that the opposition parties were drawing up a charter of minimum demands for fair elections and would give the regime a date by which to implement it. 'If our demands are not met and the rigging plan is pursued, all the major opposition parties will launch a massive movement against the Musharraf regime,' she maintained.

On 1 January 2008, hardly four days after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, a senior PPP leader, Senator Latif Khosa, disclosed that Bhutto was about to release a report on vote rigging shortly before she was assassinated. 'Ms Bhutto was poised to reveal proof that Pakistan's Election Commission and shadowy spy agency were seeking to rig an upcoming general election the night she was killed,' he said. Latif Khosa, who authored a 160-page dossier with Bhutto, documenting rigging tactics, said they ranged from intimidation to fake ballots, and were in some cases unwittingly funded by US aid. He too confirmed that Bhutto had planned to give the report to two visiting US lawmakers over dinner on 27 December, the day she was killed. Khosa said the report titled, '*Yet Another Stain on the Face of Democracy*', detailed how the spy agency was planning to issue 25,000 pre-stamped ballots for each of the 108 candidates contesting the National Assembly seats in Punjab from the party that backs Musharraf – the PML-Q. 'Ms Bhutto was supposed to hold a press conference. It was going to be distributed to everyone, but unfortunately that did not arise because she was assassinated,' Khosa added.

The United Nations Inquiry Commission, which investigated Benazir Bhutto's murder, also mentioned her fears about the rigging plans of the Musharraf regime: 'Ms Bhutto's underlying distrust of Musharraf and her fears that the elections would be rigged, led her to carry out a very active election campaign, with much public exposure, despite the risks she faced.'

According to the UN Commission's inquiry report of 15 April 2010, Benazir Bhutto's assassination occurred against the backdrop of a political power struggle in Pakistan. The issue of the continuation of military rule under General Pervez Musharraf versus the restoration of a democratically- elected civilian government had polarized public opinion. Bhutto's return to Pakistan was a flashpoint in that struggle, the outcome of which would have significant consequences for the country's major political actors. In addition, 2007 was an exceptionally turbulent year in Pakistan. The country saw a sharp increase in the acts of violence carried out by Islamic extremists and by the state in the aftermath of the July 2007 bloody military operations against the fanatic clerics of the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Rawalpindi.

Bhutto's assassination was the culmination of a year of intense internal political conflict in Pakistan. This revolved around the elections scheduled for 2008, with their potential both for facilitating a transition to democracy after eight years of military rule—General Musharraf had been in power since October 1999, after having toppled the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif—and for engendering significant changes in the political forces that would head the new government. The Musharraf regime had first suspended the Constitution and then modified it to provide a legal framework for the government and to strengthen presidential powers. Within that framework, power was concentrated in the person of General Musharraf who, after the elections in 2002, was both Chief of Army Staff and President of Pakistan. With this dual authority, General Musharraf drew on the power of the military, while at the same time building an alliance of political parties in the national and provincial assemblies, which ensured additional control over other important power centers. This alliance included the Pakistan Muslim League—Quaid-e-Azam (PML- Q), which controlled the provincial government in Punjab (the country's largest and wealthiest province), and in Sindh; the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) with its historic base in Karachi; and, during most of the period, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which comprised the bulk of the Islamic parties.

General Pervez Musharraf's decision to consent to the American request for Pakistani collaboration in the war on terror, after 11 September 2001, meant that he also enjoyed the firm backing of the US and its Western allies. Besides, Musharraf had the full support of what is known in Pakistan as the 'Establishment', the *de facto* power structure that has, as its permanent core, the military high command and intelligence agencies, in particular, the powerful military-run Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), as well as Military Intelligence (MI) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB). The Establishment has the capability to exercise power in Pakistan largely because of the central role played by the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies in the country's political life, with the military having ruled the country directly for thirty-three of its sixty-three years as an independent state. Musharraf finally had to step down as Chief of Army Staff on 28 November 2007, hardly forty days after Bhutto returned to Pakistan. He handed over the coveted position of Army Chief to his hand-picked successor, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani. But this did not change the nature of the regime because Pervez Musharraf was still clinging to the position of President, and thus calling the shots.

The fact remains that on the heels of the 2008 general elections there were increasing pressures, both internal and external, for an end to direct military rule. Also, Pakistan's two mainstream opposition political parties, Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), had put aside their long-term rivalry since early 2005, and announced that they would work together to define a common framework for a return to democratic rule. This agreement, called the Charter for

Democracy, was signed in May 2006 by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif; the respective leaders of the PPP and the PML-N.

In her final book, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West*,⁵ Bhutto wrote of the difficulties of being persona *non grata* for years in international political circles because of the corruption charges leveled against her. Her determination to return to full political life in Pakistan led her to engage in a dialogue towards this end with Musharraf, despite her sharp criticism of his military government. Going by the UN Commission's report, serious efforts at rapprochement between Bhutto and Musharraf had begun in 2004. Some of Musharraf's closest advisers told the commission that they had encouraged him to open channels of communication with Bhutto, believing that it would be better if General Musharraf had a broader base of political support for his next presidential term, and that there were sufficient common interests among the two to make such an alliance feasible. A discreet process was set in motion, with at least five meetings in 2005 and 2006 between Benazir Bhutto's and General Musharraf's teams.

While these meetings were important for identifying areas of common interest, they did not produce any concrete agreements. To break the stalemate, a direct meeting between Bhutto and Musharraf was arranged, and the two met secretly on 24 January 2007, and again on 27 July 2007, in Abu Dhabi. According to the UN report, those discussions were facilitated by the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States, which were deeply involved in the process. Both the governments gave priority to ensuring a continued leadership role for General Musharraf, as they believed that was vital for the ongoing war against terror. At the same time, they also believed the effort could be strengthened with a credible civilian partner heading the government. The United Kingdom played an early role (2004-2005) in urging Benazir Bhutto and General Musharraf to engage in discussions and in encouraging the United States to see Bhutto as a potential partner. Later, the United States would play an increasingly active role in persuading Musharraf to agree to an 'accommodation' with Bhutto. Both Musharraf and Bhutto had been in contact about the process with US State Department officials at the highest levels, throughout 2007.

Finally, in September 2007, after Bhutto announced her schedule for returning to Pakistan, she began to raise her concerns and requirements for ensuring her personal security, in these discussions, especially with her contacts in the US government. Its representatives later told the United Nations Inquiry Commission that they provided advice to Bhutto on hiring Pakistani private security firms used by diplomatic missions, and spoke at least once with the Musharraf camp about her security arrangements. The same officials said that the United States, however, had not accepted any responsibility for her security in Pakistan. Other sources close to Bhutto told the UN Commission that

⁵ Simon & Schuster, UK, 2008.

she had expected the US to play a strong role in urging Musharraf to provide her with all of the security support she needed.

According to the UN Commission's report, Bhutto's homecoming announcement was a major point of contention as General Musharraf and others close to him believed that he had a firm agreement with her that she would return only after the 2008 general elections. Several persons who had first-hand knowledge of the situation told the commission that Musharraf was furious when Bhutto made her announcement and, according to one source, believed that her action represented 'a total breach of the agreement'. The PPP, however, had decided at a Central Executive Committee meeting in London in July 2007, much before her return in October, that Bhutto's participation in the campaign was critical to raising the chances of the party's victory, and that she would announce the date for her return, in September.

Interestingly, according to the UN Commission, throughout the negotiations with Bhutto, Musharraf's principal arguments for insisting that she should postpone her return until after the elections were security concerns. He and his team emphasized the threats against her by extremist groups and the great risks of campaigning. When Bhutto announced her decision to return anyway, Musharraf's team reiterated those arguments to her, as they continued to do after her arrival in Pakistan. While Bhutto expressed to many of her closest associates her fears about these and other threats, their impression was that she did not fully believe the warnings or threats that General Musharraf and his government communicated to her. And although, she had a clear understanding of the serious risks she faced, Bhutto believed that Musharraf was using the security issue as a ploy to intimidate her, to keep her out of Pakistan and to prevent her from campaigning. It was this conviction that compelled her to go ahead with a very public campaign, despite the obvious threats to her life.

Bhutto finally returned to Pakistan from exile on 18 October, flying into Karachi from Dubai. Her husband stayed behind—a deliberate decision made on security grounds. Enormous crowds met her at the airport in Karachi and along the Shahr-e-Faisal highway, slowing the progress of her cavalcade. Her destination was the mausoleum of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, where she intended delivering a speech. Shortly after midnight, around the Karsaz neighborhood, there was an explosion near the armoured truck in which she was riding. A second, more powerful explosion followed. Bhutto was not hurt, but many others were. According to official figures, the death toll was 149 while 402 people were injured. In the FIR she wished to file on the Karsaz attack (which was registered only long after her death, and after a protracted court process), Bhutto referred to the threat posed to her by persons she had named in a letter sent by her to Musharraf on 16 October 2007.

According to the UN Commission's report, the relationship between Musharraf and Bhutto deteriorated further with Musharraf's decision, on 3 November 2007, to declare

Emergency Rule, suspend the Pakistani Constitution, promulgate a series of measures that amounted to martial law, and again sack Chief Justice Chaudhry, together with a number of other high court judges. The Chief Justice and two-thirds of the country's senior judges were also put under house arrest. Musharraf explained that such measures were necessary for containing the rise in extremist violence. Virtually all those who spoke to the UN Commission about this decision, including some close to Musharraf; believed that the decisive factor was, instead, the imminence of the Supreme Court ruling regarding the legality of Musharraf's recent re-election as President and his eligibility to hold dual posts as President and Chief of Army Staff. Musharraf believed that the court was going to rule against him.

Led by the PPP and PML-N, political protests flared throughout the country against the Emergency Rule measures and military rule. Violent confrontations between police and protestors occurred in a number of cities, with hundreds of casualties reported in the media. On 9 November 2007, Bhutto was briefly placed under house arrest. The next day, in a speech in Islamabad, she broke with General Musharraf denouncing his actions, calling for an end to the military government and announcing that any deal with him was off. A number of sources close to the situation told the UN Commission that once back in Pakistan, Bhutto increasingly understood that by contemplating plans for governing together with Musharraf she risked having to share with him the growing public ire against his government. She feared her on-going political relationship with him could weaken her politically, diminish her legitimacy and lessen the possibility of a solid PPP victory.

Bhutto turned more of her energies towards her campaign and to strengthening her relationship with Nawaz Sharif who had also been allowed by the regime to return to Pakistan from Saudi Arabia, on 25 November 2007. The PPP and the PML-N continued to discuss strategies for the elections, and in some districts decided to run a single candidate. Both Bhutto and Sharif reconfirmed their commitment to the Charter of Democracy and believed that there could be a strong PPP and PML-N alliance after the elections.

Eventually, Musharraf lifted the Emergency Rule measures on 16 December 2007, and Benazir Bhutto was assassinated eleven days later. To quote the UN Commission's inquiry report: 'By the time of her assassination, the possibility of rehabilitating the relationship between the two (Musharraf and Bhutto) had clearly waned.'

CONTROVERSY OVER THE ACTUAL CAUSE OF DEATH

THE ACTUAL CAUSE of Benazir Bhutto's death has been widely discussed and debated, despite claims by her close aides that she had died of a gunshot wound. Nevertheless, two separate investigations conducted by Scotland Yard (in 2008) and the United Nations (2009-10) could not confirm this. According to a seven-member team of doctors at the Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH) that examined her body after her demise, the former Pakistani prime minister died because of 'an open head injury with depressed skull fracture, leading to cardiopulmonary arrest'. But the doctors did not pinpoint the actual cause of the skull fracture. This was primarily because no autopsy was performed on Bhutto's body, for inexplicable reasons. The following is the official medical report on Benazir Bhutto, issued by the Rawalpindi General Hospital:

On 27 December 2007, at approximately 5.35 p.m. a female patient was brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of the Rawalpindi General Hospital. She was brought to the Resuscitation Room and was received by Dr. Aurangzeb Khan and Dr. Saeeda of Surgical Unit-II. The patient was identified as Benazir Bhutto. Dr Habib Ahmad Khan, medical superintendent of Rawalpindi General Hospital also arrived immediately. The condition noted at the time of receiving the patient was as follows: the patient was pulseless and was not breathing. She was markedly pale. Her pupils were fixed, dilated and non-reacting to light. A wound was present on the right temporoparietal region through which blood was trickling down and whitish material which looked like brain matter was visible in the wound. Her clothes were soaked with blood.

Immediate cardiopulmonary resuscitation was started. She was ventilated by Ambu bag and within a minute was intubated with endotracheal tube. Blood mixed with secretions was noticed in the throat. That was suctioned out before intubation. External cardiac compressions were started. A cannula was passed in her right hand and intravenous fluids were pushed in. Inj. adrenaline was given. No response was seen. The patient was shifted to emergency operation theatre while resuscitation was continued. In the operation theatre, Dr. Arshad, Anaesthetist joined the team. Prof Mussadiq Khan also joined the team at 5.50 p.m. As external cardiac massage was not leading to any success, open cardiac massage was started via left antero-lateral thoracotomy. No blood was seen in the left thoracic cavity or the pericardium.

There was no cardiac muscular activity seen. Artificial assisted ventilation, internal cardiac massage, and intravenous fluid resuscitation were continued. She was given intra cardiac adrenaline, calcium gluconate. These drugs, along with sodium bicarbonate, were repeated intravenously. Though no cardiac activity was seen but in order to treat fine ventricular fibrillation, electrical defibrillation was carried out. No cardiac response was seen. By that time, Prof Azam Yusuf and Dr Qudsia had also joined the resuscitation team. Pupils were fixed and dilated, no evidence of any cardiac or respiratory activity was observed. ECG showed no electrical activity. At 6.16 p.m. it was decided to stop resuscitation and patient was declared dead. The thoracotomy wound was closed. Fractured rib due to resuscitative thoracotomy was noticed. Prof Arif Malik and Prof Saleem had also reached by then.

The following is the description of Bhutto's wound from her medical report, prepared by a team of doctors at Rawalpindi General Hospital:

There was a wound in the right temporoparietal region. Shape was irregularly oval, measuring about 5x3 cm, just above the pinna of right ear. Edges were irregular. No surrounding wounds or blackening was seen. There was a big boggy swelling around the wound. Blood was continuously trickling down and whitish material that looked like brain matter was seen in the wound and in the surrounding hair. Sharp bone edges were felt in the wound. No foreign body was felt in the wound.

The wound was not further explored . . . aseptic dressing was used to cover the wound. Bleeding from both the ears was seen, more so from the right ear. Slight trickle of blood was seen from right nostril also. Blood mixed with secretions was seen in the oral cavity also. Detailed external examination of the body did not reveal any other external injury. X-rays of the skull AP and Lateral views were done after she had been declared dead. Findings are as below:

Comminuted depressed skull fracture involving right temporoparietal bone is observed with inwards depressed fracture fragment measuring approx. 35 mm (on X-ray measurement). Depressed fracture fragment distant from intact bony skull measures 12 mm from outer to outer skull table and 12 mm from inner to inner skull table. Two to three tiny radio-densities underneath fracture segment are observed on both projections. Associated scalp soft tissue swelling and moderate degree of pncumocephalus is observed. Rest of the bony skull is intact. Radio-opaque dental fillings are evident.

Despite official claims by the Musharraf regime soon after the murder that some Islamic extremists might have been involved in her assassination, the Pakistani media reported that those closely associated with Bhutto had said that rogue elements in the Pakistani

military and intelligence Establishment had persuaded religious extremist groups to pool their resources and even rehearse the fatal attack on her. The PPP leadership, therefore, demanded a high-level inquiry by the United Nations to establish the identity and motives of the assassins, along the lines of the one into the assassination of the former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri, who was killed in a car bombing in Beirut on 14 February 2005. President Pervez Musharraf however, ruled out any UN involvement in the investigation of what he had described as a simple murder which, he insisted, could be handled internally with the help of Scotland Yard. Subsequently, a five-member Scotland Yard team was requisitioned by the Pakistan government.

On 11 January 2008, the British High Commission in Islamabad made public the terms of reference agreed between the Scotland Yard team and the Pakistan government. According to this, the Pakistani authorities were the principal investigators while the British investigators were only mandated to assist the Pakistani authorities in providing clarity about the precise cause of Bhutto's death. It was obvious that the Scotland Yard team was invited to probe the murder after all the important clues and evidence that might have led them to a reliable conclusion were washed away by the Musharraf regime, to limit the scope of their investigations to certain areas. The regime further barred the Pakistani intelligence agencies and the investigating agencies from providing any sort of information to the Scotland Yard detectives, who were also not allowed to either interview or interrogate any of the murder suspects belonging to the Pakistani military and intelligence Establishment.

The Scotland Yard detectives were not supposed to go beyond the following thirty-eight points, and their brief was only to unveil the cause of Bhutto's death: reconstruction of the crime scene, search of the crime scene, search of the vehicle, epicentre of the blast, angle of fire, trajectory of fire, line of fire, bullet mark, entry and exit points, distance travelled by the bullet, caliber of the weapon, inspection of the weapon, inspection of the fired case (empty), laboratory reports of the fired case and pistol, analysis of the pistol recovered, size of the pellets, trajectory of the pellets, preposition of the pellets, wave of blast travel, type of explosive, quantity of explosive, residue of explosive for laboratory test, search of surrounding area to find any kind of sniper fire, observation of the post, venue of the rally, security arrangements, inner cordon of Bhutto's security, outer security cordon, security arrangements for the departure of the VIP, interview with police personnel deployed for Bhutto's security, time of occurrence, time of shifting/arrival in RGH, interview with the doctors involved in Bhutto's treatment, independent verification of X-rays, independent verification of the medical report, interrogation of the other passengers in the jeep including Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Naheed Khan, Sherry Rehman and Major Imtiaz, who was driving the vehicle, interrogation of all police officials concerned and interrogation of the eyewitnesses.

The murder investigation report, made public by Scotland Yard on 8 February 2008, concluded that Bhutto had died after hitting her head against a hard object (possibly the sunroof of her vehicle) as a result of the suicide bombing, and the gunman and the suicide bomber were one and the same. The following is the text of the executive summary of the three-page Scotland Yard inquiry report, which was handed over to the caretaker interior minister of the Musharraf regime, Lieutenant General (retd) Hamid Nawaz, by Detective Superintendent John MacBrayne, accompanied by a senior official from the British High Commission in Islamabad, during a meeting in the Pakistani federal capital:

On the 27th December 2007, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), died as a result of being attacked in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Following discussions between the Prime Minister and President Musharraf it was agreed that officers from Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command (SO 15) should support the investigation into Ms. Bhutto's death. The primary focus of the Scotland Yard team was to assist the Pakistani authorities in establishing the cause and circumstances of Ms. Bhutto's assassination. The wider investigation to remain entirely a matter for the Pakistani authorities.

The SO 15 team was led by a Detective Superintendent (Senior Investigating Officer), and comprised two forensic experts, an expert in analyzing and assessing video media and an experienced investigating officer. The team arrived in Pakistan on 4th January 2008 and spent two-and-a-half weeks conducting extensive enquiries. During the course of their work, the team was joined by other specialists from the United Kingdom. The team was given extensive support and co-operation by the Pakistani authorities, members of Ms. Bhutto's family and senior office bearers from the PPP. The task of establishing exactly what happened was complicated by the lack of an extended and detailed search of the crime scene, the absence of an autopsy, and the absence of recognized body recovery and victim identification processes. Nevertheless, the available evidence seemed sufficient to draw reliable conclusions.

Within the overall objective, a particular focus has been placed on establishing the actual cause of death, and whether there were one or more attackers in the immediate vicinity of Ms. Bhutto. Considerable reliance has been placed upon the X-rays taken at Rawalpindi General Hospital following Ms. Bhutto's death. Given their importance, the X-rays have been independently verified as being those of Ms. Bhutto by comparison with her dental X-rays. Additionally, a valuable insight was gained from the accounts given by the medical staff involved in her treatment, and from those members of Ms. Bhutto's family who washed her body before burial.

Ms. Bhutto's only apparent injury was a major trauma to the right side of the head. The UK experts exclude this injury being an entry or exit wound as a result of gunshot. The only X-ray records, taken after her death, were of Ms. Bhutto's head. However, the possibility of a bullet wound to her mid or lower trunk can reasonably be excluded. This is based upon the protection afforded by the armoured vehicle in which she was travelling at the time of the attack, and the accounts of her family and hospital staff who examined her.

The limited X-ray material, the absence of a full post-mortem examination and CT scan, have meant that the UK Home Office pathologist, Dr Nathaniel Cary, who has been consulted in this case, is unable categorically to exclude the possibility of there being a gunshot wound to the upper trunk or neck. However, when his findings are put alongside the accounts of those who had close contact with Ms. Bhutto's body, the available evidence suggests that there was no gunshot injury. Importantly, Dr. Cary excludes the possibility of a bullet to the neck or upper trunk as being a relevant factor in the actual cause of death, when set against the nature and extent of her head injury. In his report, Dr Cary states: 'The only tenable cause for the rapidly fatal head injury in this case is that it occurred as the result of impact due to the effects of the bomb-blast. In my opinion Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto died as a result of a severe head injury sustained as a consequence of the bomb-blast and due to head impact somewhere in the escape hatch of the vehicle.'

Given the severity of the injury to Ms. Bhutto's head, the prospect that she had inadvertently hit her head whilst ducking down into the vehicle can be excluded as a reasonable possibility. High explosives of the type typically used in this sort of device detonate at a velocity between 6000 and 9000 meters per second. This means that when considering the explosive quantities and distances involved, such an explosion would generate significantly more force than would be necessary to provoke the consequences as occurred in this case.

It is also important to comment upon the construction of the vehicle. It was fitted with B6 grade armour and designed to withstand gunfire and bomb-blast. It is an unfortunate and misleading aspect of this case that the roof escape hatch has frequently been referred to as a sunroof. It is not. It is designed and intended to be used solely as a means of escape. It has a solid lip with a depth of 9 cm. Ms. Bhutto's injury is entirely consistent with her head impacting upon the lip of the escape hatch. Detailed analysis of the media footage provides supporting evidence. Ms. Bhutto's head did not completely disappear from view until 0.6 seconds before the blast. She can be seen moving forward and to the right as she ducked down into the vehicle. Whilst her exact head position at the time of the detonation can never be ascertained, the overwhelming conclusion must be that

she did not succeed in getting her head entirely below the lip of the escape hatch when the explosion occurred.

There has been speculation that two individuals were directly involved in attacking Ms. Bhutto. The suggestion has been that one suspect fired shots, and a second detonated the bomb. The available evidence points toward the person who fired shots and the person who detonated the explosives being one and the same person. Body parts from only one individual remain unidentified. Expert opinion provides strong evidence that they originated from the suicide bomber. Analysis of the media footage places the gunman at the rear of the vehicle and looking down immediately before the explosion. The footage does not show the presence of any other potential bomber.

This footage when considered alongside the findings of the forensic explosive expert, that the bombing suspect was within 1 to 2 meters of the vehicle towards its rear and with no person or other obstruction between him and the vehicle, strongly suggests that the bomber and gunman were at the same position. It is virtually inconceivable that anyone who was where the gunman can clearly be seen on the media footage could have survived the blast and escaped. The inevitable conclusion is that there was one attacker in the immediate vicinity of the vehicle in which Ms. Bhutto was travelling. In essence, all the evidence indicates that one suspect had fired the shots before detonating an improvised explosive device. At the time of the attack, this person was standing close to the rear of Ms. Bhutto's vehicle. The blast caused a violent collision between her head and the escape hatch area of the vehicle, causing a severe and fatal head injury.

The Scotland Yard inquiry, however, raised more questions than it attempted to answer, and was rejected by Bhutto's party. The PPP leadership maintained that the so-called findings only corroborated the account of events provided by the Musharraf regime, immediately after the assassination. In fact, the theory that Bhutto's death had been caused by 'head injury' was important for the Musharraf government because it helped promote the notion that the general had provided the best security but, eventually, it was Bhutto who hit her head on the sunroof. This was crucial for circumventing any criticism of the security measures, despite which a fifteen-year-old suicide bomber had managed to get close enough to fire shots from a distance of a mere three meters.

Moreover, the government also hoped to divert the attention of the Pakistani public and the media who were demanding a criminal probe to uncover the hidden hands behind the murder. The Musharraf regime, by exploiting the head injury theory, tried its best to bury the important questions and evidence surrounding the assassination, such as the bullets used in the shooting which, had they been recovered, would have indicated the type of weapon used, or given some clues regarding the identity of the real assassin.

Hence in order to cover up the security lapse on the part of the Musharraf regime and conceal important facts about the assassination, his administration took shelter under the umbrella of the 'head injury theory'.

When Bhutto was in hospital, an ISI officer, the Rawalpindi detachment commander Colonel Jehangir Akhtar, was also present there. According to the UN Commission's inquiry report, at this point, the ISI deputy director general, Major General Nusrat Naeem contacted Professor Dr Mussadiq (senior physician who treated Bhutto) from Colonel Jehangir's cell phone to confirm the news of Bhutto's death. The ISI apparently wanted to ensure that the doctors would eventually support the head injury theory and would not reveal any other information to the media. And hardly a few hours later, the Pakistan government formally proposed the head injury theory at a press conference. This, however, failed to convince the public.

By endorsing the findings of the Musharraf regime and further complicating the Bhutto murder mystery, Scotland Yard proved instrumental in history repeating itself. The same thing had happened after the assassination of the first prime minister of the country, Liaqat Ali Khan, on 16 October 1951 at the same venue, Rawalpindi's Liaqat Bagh, which at that time was called Company Bagh (Company Gardens). Khan was shot twice in the chest during a public meeting of the Muslim City League. Despite having overpowered him, the police immediately shot the assassin who was later identified as Said Akbar. Prime Minister Khan was rushed to a hospital and given a blood transfusion, but he succumbed to his injuries.

The exact motive behind Liaqat Ali Khan's assassination could not be discovered. Soon afterwards, the Pakistan government appointed a high level judicial commission to inquire into the assassination. The investigation team was headed by a senior police officer and assisted by Britain's Scotland Yard. It took ten months to produce a report that did little but present various conspiracy theories. The main focus appeared to be on the 'insiders', Punjabi politicians who resented the supremacy of the 'outsider' prime minister, who was a migrant from India to the new Muslim State. Further investigations were being conducted when the senior police officer in charge of the case was asked to bring all the documents to the new prime minister. The plane he was taking to his meeting with the prime minister crashed en route, killing him and destroying all the documents. Therefore, the mystery of Khan's death was never solved, and thick clouds of doubt continue to surround the murder of the country's first prime minister even today.

Almost forty-five years after the murder of Liaqat Ali Khan, a second British team arrived in Karachi, in September 1996, to investigate the murder of Mir Murtaza Bhutto. The Scotland Yard team, led by Roy Herridge, travelled to Pakistan at the request of the PPP government, which was then in power, and led by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The British team, however, was abruptly ordered to leave the country before they could

complete their investigation, in the wake of the sudden dismissal of the second Bhutto government, almost six weeks after Murtaza Bhutto's murder.

Following the murder of Benazir Bhutto, Scotland Yard's help was once again sought by the Musharraf regime, but the investigators were allowed to examine only the evidence that had already been collected by the Punjab Police. The British team was only allowed to interview police officials on duty on the day of the tragedy and the doctors who had attended on Benazir Bhutto at the Rawalpindi General Hospital. The Scotland Yard report said nothing about who might have been behind the murder. The PPP leadership further questioned Scotland Yard's conclusion that only one killer was involved, given the fact that a taped conversation of Baitullah Mehsud, which was released to the media by the Pakistani Ministry of Interior on 28 December 2007, had spoken of the involvement of at least two killers.

The Scotland Yard investigation was bound to be incomplete as the British detectives had a very narrow area to work upon. If analyzed carefully, it seemed just eyewash to distract the foreign media and the anxious public at home. The Scotland Yard team was unable to unearth any startling revelations from this complex web of events, and there was no satisfactory closure. Many of the critics were of the view that the nature of the crime was multidimensional because it was not only an act of terrorism but an act of political murder too, which was why the Musharraf regime wanted someone from the West to endorse the findings of the Pakistani Police.

Questions were also raised about Scotland Yard's conclusions as no autopsy had been carried out, and crucial forensic evidence had been washed away by the Pakistani authorities.

According to Naheed Khan, Bhutto's political secretary who was sitting beside her leader at the time of the attack, Benazir Bhutto died of a bullet wound, which made her slump into the vehicle just seconds before the suicide bomber exploded himself. Naheed Khan was quoted by the Pakistani media as saying, in several of her television interviews after Bhutto's murder, that the sharpshooter and the suicide bomber merged into the crowd surrounding her vehicle outside Liaquat Bagh, by taking advantage of the pitiable security arrangement at the venue of Bhutto's public meeting.

According to eyewitnesses, when the vehicle ferrying Benazir Bhutto was about sixty-nine feet from the VIP gate of Liaquat Bagh, the sharpshooter opened fire. By that time, Bhutto had become an easy target, as she had already removed the sunroof of her bulletproof vehicle. The sharpshooter fired at her three times, as shown in the video footage, fatally injuring her on the second attempt when Bhutto had already turned her head in confusion after hearing the gunshots. Her skull cracked when penetrated by the bullet, apparently from a 7.63 mm pistol, which was found at the crime scene by the

authorities. Bhutto instantly collapsed into the vehicle; and seconds later a powerful bomb exploded.

It has been said in PPP circles that had Bhutto still been standing, the sheer intensity of the suicide blast would have blown off her head, or at least inflicted severe wounds on her. Dozens of her supporters were surrounding her vehicle at the time of the blast, and most of them died on the spot. The theory effectively belies the official claim that she died because the intensity of the explosion smashed her head against the lever used to open the sunroof of the armoured vehicle. Some senior police officials involved in the Bhutto murder investigations are convinced that the suicide bomber was sent to eliminate the shooter and obliterate evidence of his crime. They believe it was not the suicide bomber who triggered the explosion, but that a powerful bomb was planted at the venue and a remote-controlled device might have been used to trigger it.

Nonetheless, it had been the intention of those who had planned Bhutto's assassination to conceal the role of the shooter. All explosions yield a variety of clues about the type of explosives used and the trigger devices employed—forensic evidence considered vital for establishing the possible identity of the groups involved in the crime. But, inexplicably, a few hours after Bhutto was assassinated, the administration pressed in the fire brigade to wash the spot where the suicide bomber had wreaked havoc, consequently spawning theories about the possible role of the Establishment in the assassination. One cannot help but wonder at the great hurry in hosing down the crime scene the same evening, instead of preserving it in accordance with the standard procedures of international criminal investigations.

According to Aitzaz Ahsan, a barrister and senior PPP leader who had been an interior minister in the first Bhutto cabinet, the destruction of evidence is itself a very serious crime:

The design of washing the crime scene is evident from the fact that this was not the first such deliberate destruction of material evidence. There were two suicide explosions in Karachi on 18 October 2007, targeting Ms. Bhutto's truck in the procession that had received her upon her homecoming. She narrowly escaped but as many as 170 persons were martyred. It was a gory scene. But, as she herself wrote in her book, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West*, she was shocked later to learn that instead of the site being cordoned off to protect evidence, it was scrubbed clean within hours and the evidence was destroyed. No one from the police or the government was collecting testimony from the victims of the attack. A cover-up seemed to be under way from the very first moments of the attack.

Aitzaz Ahsan went on to add that when a murder takes place even in the remotest village in this country, the crime scene is preserved until it has been thoroughly examined, measured and mapped:

Footprints are carefully preserved for days in cases of theft and housebreak. So why was the crime scene washed after such horrendous crimes? If you keep in mind the significance of the tell-tale cell phone chip in the investigations into the attempts on General Musharraf it is perhaps easy to discern why. After the twin abortive assassination attempts on Musharraf on 24 December 2003 in Rawalpindi, the crime scene was sealed for several days. Not a fly was allowed inside the cordoned area. Nothing was touched or moved except by experts, who went over the place with a fine-tooth comb. Finally one telling piece of evidence was found: a cell phone chip. The miniscule find was crucial. It led to the identification of the perpetrators of the crime who were arrested, tried by a military court and sentenced. That one chip did it all. The investigation concluded within two to three weeks. In stunning contrast, and within an hour of Bhutto's assassination, firefighters were washing the site with powerful hoses. In the not so distant Liaquat Bagh they were certainly making sure that no tell-tale phone chip was recovered.

Multiple bullet wounds were found on several dead bodies after the 27 December suicide bombing targeting Bhutto, which hinted at the presence of a ring of sharpshooters, who might have positioned themselves at strategic vantage points to target the PPP chairperson after the rally was over:

In February 2008, a private TV channel blew the lid off the 'death by bomb blast' theory. Injured eyewitnesses testified that many of the dead bodies bore evidence of multiple firearm injuries on vital parts such as the foreheads of several of the dead. They also pointed out the spots from which the shots had been fired. The media has done more than the investigators to track the tell-tale footprints. Evidence of the numerous fires [shots] hitting different people would lend some credence to the theory that the bomb blast was meant only to incapacitate the bomb-proof vehicle necessitating the . . . transfer of the [passengers] to another vehicle. She, and others around her, would then be shot by the sharpshooters. That she came out of the escape hatch herself according to this belief was fortuitous for the assailants. A private TV channel's investigative report has carried another stunning piece of evidence. Its footage of the tragedy conclusively shows that an injured Benazir Bhutto had already fallen down into the open hatch before the bomb blast. There is thus no question of her having died of blast shrapnel or of a consequential impact with any lever or car part. The projectile that killed her was thus none other than a bullet fired at her. Multiple bullet injuries establish the presence of other pre-positioned marksmen.

Aitzaz Ahsan further said that the evidence of well-positioned sharpshooters could also have been collected through other means:

They must have used cell phones. Now, if all persons who made calls via the cowers of cell phone companies linking the site at Liaquat Bagh with their mainframe had been questioned the circle could have been narrowed. Suppose 5,000 calls were made during the hour before the Bhutto assassination and the half hour thereafter through these towers. Each caller could be identified from company records. Each person, without exception, should then have been grilled, narrowing the inquiry down to 20 or 30 suspect calls. But have the 10,000 persons, each caller and recipient, been questioned? Not to anyone's knowledge. The evidence of recall and memory may have been irretrievably lost or degraded by now. Besides the tell-tale chips lost to the drains of Rawalpindi, this would be the best evidence. Is it lost too?

That the Musharraf regime had been tying itself in knots over the assassination case is evident beyond any doubt. First, on 28 December, barely twenty-four hours after the murder, the interior ministry spokesman, Brigadier (retd) Javed Iqbal Cheema claimed that Benazir Bhutto died because her head had been smashed against the lever of her vehicle's sunshade. This could as well have become the official version of the murder. Much to the Musharraf regime's discomfiture, however, several privately-run television channels released, on 29 December 2007, chilling images of a sharpshooter firing at Bhutto a few seconds before the deadly explosion took place. It was only then that the Musharraf administration sought Scotland Yard's assistance in the investigation. And, in any case, it eventually endorsed the official government version.

The controversial Scotland Yard findings were presented despite the Met that the caretaker government of Prime Minister Mohammedmian Soomro had already apologized for the claim made by the interior ministry spokesman that Bhutto had died after hitting the lever of her bulletproof Land Cruiser. At a high-powered briefing by the caretaker prime minister, on 31 December 2007, where his foreign minister, interior minister and the information minister were present, the interior minister Lieutenant General (retd) Hamid Nawaz asked the media and the people to forgive and ignore the comment made by Brigadier Cheema, which had caused a huge uproar as private TV channels had obtained footage showing the assassin pointing the gun at the PPP leader and shooting her. The media lambasted the government for its cavalier attitude towards the tragedy, especially the statement that Benazir Bhutto had died by hitting the lever and not because she had been hit by a bullet or shrapnel.

Premier Soomro first tried to defend the interior ministry spokesman, saying he was just relating the facts which he had been told, especially about the cause of death. 'We are conducting an investigation and all TV footage, all evidence that would be available will help in reaching a definite conclusion.' Soomro said.

But the issue did not subside. More questions were asked with reference to Bhutto's medical report prepared by the doctors at RGH, and it was pointed out that the report quoted by the spokesman did not mention the cause of Bhutto's head injury. It only said that there was a head injury that had resulted in a broken skull, which caused cardiopulmonary arrest. A visibly embarrassed Soomro then referred the issue to the interior minister. He explained in detail the security measures that were taken, and asserted that Bhutto had a bulletproof vehicle, which could not be damaged by any bomb or bullet. Once she was inside it, she was secure and police vans were trying to keep her vehicle clear of other vehicles. But when she emerged from the sunroof she exposed herself to an attack. 'Nothing would have happened to her even if everyone in the world had wanted to hurt her [had she stayed inside the vehicle],' Hamid Nawaz said.

An editor again asked why Cheema had said that a car lever had killed her when the manufacturers of the car and Asif Zardari had already stated that there was no metallic lever which could have caused the wound to her head. The medical report also did not mention any such cause of death. The interior minister responded that the spokesman's comments might have been a mistake. 'We are faujis and we are not so articulate to present our views as you journalists are,' he added. 'I am sorry . . . and please forgive us and ignore the comments made by Javed Iqbal Cheema.' Premier Soomro was repeatedly asked whether he would allow a foreign investigation into the Bhutto murder but he continued to assert that the Pakistani experts were fully competent to do the job.

In a related development *The News* reported, on 6 January 2008, that the Toyota Motors Corporation of Japan had reportedly approached the government the day after the interior ministry issued a statement that Bhutto had died of a skull fracture caused by a lever attached to the sunroof of her B-6 bulletproof Land Cruiser. (At the time of her assassination, Bhutto had been using this vehicle, which is usually used in hostile zones and is considered to be the best from a security point of view.)

The Toyota Motors Corporation officials reportedly made it clear to the concerned government quarters that in a complete departure from the internationally accepted approach of finding the criminal from the crime scene, the authorities had first identified the criminal—Baitullah Mehsud—and had then been struggling to establish his link to the crime, saying that Bhutto had died of a head injury caused when she hit her head against one of the levers of the sunroof through which she had emerged to wave to her supporters around the vehicle. They informed the Pakistan government that the company would not hesitate to come up with a lawsuit in case Bhutto's death was attributed to unfounded manufacturing faults in the Land Cruiser. According to *The News*, Toyota's pressure subsequently compelled the Pakistani authorities to drop their 'death by lever' theory.

A senior Pakistani journalist, Shakil Anjum, has claimed in his book, *Who Assassinated Benazir Bhutto*, that most of the doctors on the seven-member team that had attended on Bhutto at the Rawalpindi General Hospital admitted, off the record, that they were under tremendous pressure from government quarters to conceal the actual medical report as well as the cause of Bhutto's death. One of the seven doctors told Shakil Anjum: 'A complete ban was imposed on our movement. Our activities were being monitored and telephone calls were being bugged by the agencies during the period when the government had created controversy about the actual cause of Benazir Bhutto's death.'

The controversy pertaining to the pressures faced by the seven-member team of doctors was also taken up by the international media. According to a report dated 1 January 2008, 'Doctors Cite Pressure to Keep Silent on Benazir', co-authored by Emily Wax and Griff Witte for the Washington Post Foreign Service:

The authorities had pressed the medical personnel who had struggled for Benazir's life, to remain silent about what had happened in her final hour. They had also confiscated the medical records of her treatment from the facility. The doctors who were at the side of Bhutto at Rawalpindi General Hospital revealed that they were under intense pressure to avoid sharing details with anyone about the nature of the injuries that the opposition leader had sustained in the lethal attack . . .

'The government took all medical records right after Ms. Bhutto's time of death was read out,' said a visibly shaken doctor who spoke on condition of anonymity. Sweating and putting his head in his hands, he said: 'Look, we have been told by the government to stop talking.'

Babar Awan, a senior PPP leader said he had seen Bhutto's body after the attack and identified two clearly defined bullet wounds—entry and exit points. According to him, the principal professor of surgery at the hospital, Mussadiq Khan, was extremely nervous, but eventually told him that Benazir had died of a bullet wound. 'Why was this man so nervous? He told me first hand that he was under pressure not to talk about how she died,' Babar Awan added. When contacted at his home in Islamabad, Dr. Khan declined to comment, saying he worked for a public hospital and was only trying to carry out his professional responsibilities as a doctor. In various reports, Dr Khan changed his story on numerous occasions. He initially spoke about bullet wounds and later backtracked.

The Washington Post quoted Benazir Bhutto's medical report, which was separated from documents that doctors alleged the Pakistani authorities had confiscated. It described a

deep wound in Bhutto's head that was leaking brain matter. Wax and Witte further stated in their investigative report:

The actual truth as to what happened has serious repercussions in Pakistan. The ability of a gunman to fire at Bhutto from close range, as alleged by her supporters and demonstrated by the video clipping, would lead to the conclusion that the flaw of government security in a city, which serves as headquarters of the Pakistani military, made her vulnerable to the gunfire of the mercenary. This, in turn, would lend credence to the claims of Bhutto's supporters that the government had failed miserably in providing her with appropriate security measures. The government faced another dilemma: if a gunman were to blame, it would raise eyebrows as to why the government had for days stubbornly argued otherwise. Suspicious of the government's motives, Benazir Bhutto's supporters have resorted to a call for an international investigation as the only impartial and transparent option.

Subsequently, the UN Commission's inquiry report into Benazir Bhutto's murder stated, in paragraphs 107 and 108, that the suicide blast took place just over two-thirds of a second after she had disappeared from view. But in paragraph 190, the UN report summarized the cause of death in these words: 'Ms. Bhutto died of a severe head injury caused by impact in the area of the escape hatch lip, as a result of the blast.' Therefore, the question that immediately comes to mind is this: if the blast occurred soon after Bhutto disappeared from view, how could it be the reason of her death, especially when every other person in her vehicle remained safe?

The UN Commission's report added that at least one of the doctors at the Rawalpindi General Hospital had initially told some PPP leaders that Bhutto had suffered gunshot injuries, implying that they must have deliberately altered their findings subsequently. The commission was, however, unable to verify it. Its report said that although a number of PPP leaders asserted publicly and in private shortly after the assassination that Bhutto had been shot, none of those interviewed by the commission could confirm that assertion. 'Rather, some doctors do indeed acknowledge that they openly discussed the possibility of gunshot injuries early in their efforts to resuscitate Ms. Bhutto, but excluded that possibility in their final assessment. There is one doctor who arrived during the evening at Rawalpindi General Hospital who continues to assert that there was a gunshot wound. He was not, however, an examining doctor and does not base his views on direct observation of a gunshot injury.'

The report added that the UN Commission was not provided with any credible new information showing that Bhutto had received bullet wounds. A senior PPP official, who had earlier publicly asserted that she had seen Bhutto's gunshot injuries, retracted that statement when interviewed by the commission:

In fact, she had not seen Bhutto's head wound and had been told to tell the media that she had seen bullet wounds. The commission found that although her supporters may have justifiably assumed that Ms. Bhutto had been shot, in the confusion surrounding the assassination, the continued assertion that she had been shot, without evidence, as well as the assertion of untrue eyewitness accounts, was (and remains) misleading. The commission recognizes that the confusion and urgency at the Rawalpindi General Hospital when Ms. Bhutto was brought there would naturally have generated some discussion among the staff about the possibility of a gunshot wound. Such discussions may have been misinterpreted by some as a medical finding.

THE BIG COVER-UP

IN HER POSTHUMOUSLY published book, Benazir Bhutto had named jehadi kingpin, Qari Saifullah Akhtar, as a key suspect in the attempt to kill her in Karachi, but she wanted Musharraf to be named her assassin in case she was murdered. Instead, the Musharraf regime was quick to blame Baitullah Mehsud, as the mastermind behind the suicide attack outside Liaqat Bagh in Rawalpindi.

The TTP ameer had first been accused of masterminding Bhutto's murder by the Pakistani interior ministry spokesman, Brigadier Cheema, and afterwards, by Musharraf. At his press conference on 28 December 2007, hardly twenty-four hours after Bhutto's murder, Cheema claimed that the suicide bomber who blew himself up near Benazir Bhutto's bulletproof vehicle was an al-Qaeda operative hailing from the Baitullah group. In his televised address to the nation on 2 January 2008, five days after Bhutto's murder, Musharraf asked Scotland Yard to help the Pakistani investigators in identifying the culprits. Yet, in the general's mind it was obviously clear who was to be blamed.

Educated till the age of twelve in a deeni madrassa (religious seminary), Baitullah was barely literate. According to his close associates, as a young madrassa student, he was greatly inspired by the Taliban ideology of Mullah Mohammad Omar, and frequently went to Afghanistan as a volunteer to join the Taliban drive for the enforcement of the Islamic Shariah there. At the time of his death, Baitullah had grown from strength to strength to emerge as a powerful Taliban commander in his own right, diligently pursuing Mullah Omar's jehadi agenda on the Pakistani side of the Afghan border. He had pledged himself to Mullah Omar in March 2005 in the presence of five key Taliban commanders and had been a staunch follower of the fugitive Taliban ameer. Baitullah shunned the media and refused to be photographed, just like Mullah Omar. The private army of Baitullah too, like Mullah Omar's Taliban militia, had hundreds of foreign fighters, mostly Uzbeks, who were also involved in imposing the Shariah in the Pakistani tribal areas for preventing 'vice' and promoting 'virtue'.

At his news conference, Brigadier Cheema had said: 'We just have an intelligence intercept that was recorded this morning in which Commander Baitullah Mehsud congratulated his people for carrying out the cowardly act of Benazir Bhutto's murder.' He was quick to distribute among the media persons the English and Urdu transcriptions of the taped conversation, which he claimed had taken place between

Baitullah Mehsud and one Maulvi Sahib. The following is the English transcription of the conversation in Pushto that Cheema said had taken place between them:

Baitullah Mehsud congratulates Maulvi Sahib, who explains that the attack was carried out by three of their own operatives.

Maulvi Sahib: Congratulations, I just got back during the night.

Baitullah Mehsud: Congratulations to you, were they our men?

Maulvi Sahib: Yes, they were ours.

Baitullah Mehsud: Who were they?

Maulvi Sahib: There was Saeed, there was Bilal from Badar and Ikramullah.

Baitullah Mehsud: The three of them did it?

Maulvi Sahib: Ikramullah and Bilal did it.

Baitullah Mehsud: Then congratulations.

Despite repeated demands by the newsmen attending the press conference, neither was the original tape provided nor was it proved that the recorded voice was that of Baitullah. The next day, the PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar refuted the Musharraf regime's claim. He told newsmen that after the suicide attack in Karachi, Bhutto had received a message from Baitullah: 'Identify your enemy, I am not your foe, I have nothing to do with you or against you or with the assassination attempt on you on 18 October.' The top PPP leadership believed that the message was genuine, Babar said, adding that Baitullah's message was conveyed through two different emissaries, both of them reliable. He said Mehsud had conveyed to Bhutto that his activities were limited to South Waziristan and were of a defensive nature. He had also added, 'I neither have the resources to fight outside Waziristan nor have I any plans to target you.'

A day after the first assassination attempt, Bhutto had stated during a press conference in Karachi that people like Baitullah Mehsud were mere pawns, and what worried her was the threat from within the Musharraf regime. On his part, Baitullah too was quick to issue denials. His spokesman, Maulvi Omar, said, a day after the interior ministry spokesman's press conference: 'Why on earth would we kill Benazir Bhutto? We had no enmity with her and more importantly, she had done no wrong to us. . . . By blaming us for the murder of Benazir Bhutto, Musharraf is attempting to portray the tribal areas as centres of terrorists so as to earn dollars from his Western masters. We are equally

grieved by the tragic death of Benazir Bhutto and extend our sympathies to her family as well as the Pakistan People's Party workers. . . '

Maulvi Omar said that Commander Baitullah Mehsud, after learning about the allegations against him and sensing the gravity of the charges, had convened an emergency meeting of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan's *shura* (council) at a secret location somewhere between South and North Waziristan. Addressing the participants, he made it clear that harming a woman -is against the teachings of Islam and the Shariah, as well as the centuries-old rich traditions of the Pushtun tribal people. Baitullah accused the Pakistani intelligence agencies of the murder of Benazir Bhutto and said the *modus operandi* and precision of the Rawalpindi strike clearly indicated that the grisly murder, carried out by using a skilled sniper first, followed by a suicide bomber, was committed by some highly-trained professionals.

But the Musharraf regime was determined to prove that the Bhutto murder was masterminded by none other than Baitullah Mehsud. Reacting to the TTP ameers statement, Brigadier Cheema, speaking on behalf of the interior ministry, reiterated on 30 December 2007 that the TTP chief had threatened to kill Benazir Bhutto upon her return to Pakistan, and was also behind the first attempt on her life in Karachi the same month, which killed over 170 and wounded hundreds of others. He claimed that Baitullah Mehsud had, on 6 October 2007, threatened to launch suicide attacks against Bhutto, and quoted Mehsud as saying that his bombers were waiting in the wings: 'My men will welcome Benazir Bhutto upon her return. We don't accept Musharraf and Benazir because they only protect the Americans and see things through American glasses. They are only acceptable if they wear Pakistani glasses.'

On 31 December, Baitullah Mehsud reacted strongly to Cheema's accusations and rejected any type of involvement in the Karachi suicide attack, saying he had neither issued such a statement nor thought of ordering an attack that would kill innocent civilians in such large numbers. Chaudhry Aslam, the protocol officer who had accompanied Bhutto on the fateful day and had been with her at the time of her death, also ruled out Baitullah's involvement because she had spoken to the TTP ameer just days before her murder and he had assured her that he had nothing against her. Aslam claims the telephonic conversation was arranged by a PPP leader and former interior minister in the Bhutto government, Major General (retd) Naseerullah Khan Babar, when she was staying at Arbab Alamgir's residence in Peshawar during her election campaign.

Nevertheless, on 1 March 2008, Baitullah was declared a proclaimed offender, and a warrant was issued for his arrest, by an anti-terrorist court in Rawalpindi. The haste with which the Musharraf regime proceeded against Baitullah and tried to establish that he was Bhutto's killer, and that too without any solid evidence, gave the impression that he was being made a scapegoat for the purpose of covering up the truth in one of

the most high-profile murder cases in the recent history of South Asia. In the shadowy world of the numerous jihadi organizations, rebel elements of the Pakistani military and intelligence Establishment and rival politicians who hated Benazir Bhutto, Baitullah had registered his presence more clearly in the public eye. Therefore, the Musharraf regime deemed it fit to hold him responsible for the assassination.

To tell the truth, Baitullah Mehsud was the same person with whom the then corps commander, Peshawar, Lieutenant General Safdar Hussain had signed a peace pact in South Waziristan on 7 February 2005, despite the fact that he had been a wanted terrorist even at that time. About 1000 people, including the locals, and government and military officials attended the signing ceremony of the peace deal with Baitullah Mehsud near the Sararogha Fort, some 80 kilometers from Wana in South Waziristan. Speaking on the occasion, Baitullah said the peace agreement was in the interest of the tribal regions as well as that of the Government of Pakistan, since hostile forces like India and the Russian- backed former Northern Alliance fighters were benefiting from the lack of unity between the government and the tribesmen.

The signing ceremony ended with the corps commander, Peshawar, declaring Baitullah 'a soldier of peace' and the militants raising slogans of 'Allah-o-Akbar' (God is great) and 'Death to America'. As part of the Sararogha peace agreement between the military and the Taliban militants, Baitullah had pledged not to provide any assistance to al-Qaeda and Taliban militants and not to launch attacks against the Pakistani security forces.

As the deal between the military and the militants gave Baitullah a free hand to recruit and motivate more youngsters, the strength of his private army in South Waziristan reportedly went up from a few thousands to around 20,000 within weeks, enabling him to establish a virtually independent zone in the South Waziristan region. Within a year of the so-called peace agreement, Baitullah's private army gunned down over 120 pro-government tribal leaders of his area on charges of spying for the American and Pakistani agencies. But his biggest achievement was on 30 August 2007 when his private army captured 200 soldiers of the Pakistan Army in South Waziristan. While demanding the withdrawal of the security forces and the release of his comrades in exchange for freeing the soldiers, Baitullah had threatened to put the arrested soldiers on trial for violating the peace agreement the Army had signed with him in February 2005, by launching a military operation in his area.

'Just as the government side has put my people on trial and sentenced them to imprisonment, I will put the Pakistani Army soldiers on trial. I have my own courts, which will try the soldiers for violating the peace pact,' Baitullah Mehsud was quoted as saying, on 5 September 2007, by his spokesman. As three of the abducted soldiers were beheaded in the next three days, Musharraf ordered the release of twenty-five hardcore

Taliban militants who were already under trial on terrorism charges. The remaining khaki hostages were released in the first week of November 2007.

Baitullah Mehsud's military might further multiplied on 12 December 2007 when a council of 40 senior militant leaders commanding a pooled force of 40,000 gathered in Peshawar and decided to come together under a single banner, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Baitullah was appointed the TTP ameer, Mauiana Hafiz Gul Bahadur of North Waziristan the senior naib ameer (senior vice chief), and Mauiana Faqir Muhammad of the Bajaur Agency was appointed the third in command.

At a news briefing in Islamabad on 1 December 2008, in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks and the ensuing war of words between India and Pakistan, a spokesman for the Pakistan Army said all the main militant groups fighting in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan had contacted the government after the Mumbai bombings and had offered a ceasefire if the Pakistan Army also stopped its operations in the tribal belt. 'We have no big issues with the Pakistani militants in FATA. We have only a few misunderstandings with Baitullah Mehsud, which could be removed through dialogue,' the army spokesman added. He also termed Baitullah Mehsud a 'patriotic' Pakistani.

On 23 December 2008, Baitullah Mehsud warned the Indian authorities that he had provided suicide jackets as well as explosive-laden vehicles to hundreds of his would-be bombers, who had been deployed on the Indo-Pak border alongside his country's armed forces, to counter any possible aggression by the enemy forces. Talking to *The News* from an undisclosed location, Baitullah even declared that the Taliban were ready to fight under the command of the Pakistan Army. 'Thousands of our well-armed militants as well as suicide bombers are ready to fight alongside the army if a war is imposed on Pakistan. Our mujahideen would be in the vanguard if fighting broke out with India. Our fighters will fall on the enemy like thunder,' he declared.

With the departure of Bush and after Obama became the new American President, the US State Department announced, on 26 March 2009, 'head money' of five million dollars for information leading to the capture of Baitullah. He subsequently became the only Pakistani fugitive with head money separately announced by the Pakistan government and the American administration. The head money of five million dollars announced by the FBI placed Baitullah just below Mullah Omar in terms of his importance to the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The reward for Mullah Omar is ten million dollars, and for Osama bin Laden and Dr Ayman Al Zawahiri it is twenty-five million, each.

The Obama administration's efforts to hunt down Baitullah Mehsud and other important Taliban commanders were believed to be motivated by US intelligence reports that the Taliban leaders had chalked out a three-pronged strategy for the spring

offensive—cutting off the NATO supply lines running from Pakistan to Afghanistan, recruiting fresh volunteers, and the creation of a strategic corridor running from Pakistan all the way to the Afghan capital, Kabul. The US bounty was announced a few weeks after the Taliban militants active in North and South Waziristan decided, on Mullah Omar's advice, to stop attacking the Pakistani security forces and, instead, join hands to fight the NATO forces in Afghanistan. They had subsequently formed a new alliance in February 2009—Shura Ittehadul Mujahideen (Council for Unity of Holy Warriors)—in the twin tribal agencies, after burying the hatchet.

The alliance leaders declared the ameer of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Omar, as their supreme leader and al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden, as their role model. According to an announcement by the Pakistani Taliban, the new alliance would comprise the groups led by the central chief of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Baitullah Mehsud, and two pro-government key commanders—Maulvi Nazir from South Waziristan and Hafiz Gul Bahadur from North Waziristan. The three met at an undisclosed location and decided to resolve their differences to foil the designs of external forces to divide the multiple Taliban groups based in Pakistan. 'As Jews, Christians and Hindu infidels stand united against the Muslims, under the leadership of the US, the Mujahideen have set aside internal differences and joined hands,' the Taliban announcement said, and added, 'The alliance has been directed by Mullah Omar to devise a new strategy to counter the occupation forces in Afghanistan.'

On 1 April 2009, hardly four days after the US State Department had announced the bounty for Baitullah, the fugitive TTP chief broke his silence and claimed responsibility for a series of terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, besides threatening that his militants would soon attack the Americans in their own country, to teach them a lesson by targeting the White House. On 4 April 2009, he again claimed responsibility for an attack on a US immigration centre in New York, on 3 April, in which fourteen people were killed. 'I accept responsibility. They were my men. I gave them orders in reaction to American drone attacks,' Mehsud told the Reuters correspondent by phone. But an FBI spokesman refuted Baitullah's claim: 'Based on the evidence, we can firmly discount his claim since the shooter was an abnormal Vietnamese who eventually committed suicide.'

There was, however, a consensus in the American and Pakistani intelligence circles that Baitullah could be using his rhetoric in an attempt to steer the more nationalist jihadis in Pakistan and Afghanistan towards his transnational agenda, and that he should be hunted down. Yet, Mark Hosenball of *Newsweek* magazine claimed, in his investigative story on 5 April 2009, titled, 'Mehsud's Pals in High Places', that Baitullah had been dodging death because he had influential friends. 'He has a curious gift for escape. On several occasions over the past couple of years, security forces in Pakistan launched operations to kill or capture him, and each time he vanished without incident. . . . Officials in both Washington and Islamabad suspect that Mehsud has contacts inside

Pakistan's inscrutable and sprawling agency, the ISI. Mehsud's contacts, the theory goes, are tipping him off before the Pakistani security forces can pounce.'

A few days later, on 8 April 2009, Richard Holbrooke, the US special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, described Baitullah Mehsud as a 'terrible man' and a great danger to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Addressing a joint press conference with Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Holbrooke said: 'His (Baitullahs) threats against the US are not backed up but he is bad as any bad actor can be.'

These remarks were followed by a reported understanding between Islamabad and Washington to stage 'coordinated military operations' in South Waziristan to kill Baitullah. Baitullah retaliated and stepped up his suicide bomb attacks all over Pakistan, especially targeting the Punjab province. In a deadly attack on 27 May 2009, following a heavy exchange of fire between the TTP terrorists and the Pakistani security forces, a human bomb riding a wagon ripped through the provincial ISI headquarters in Lahore, killing 35 people and injuring over 300. A few days later, on 9 June 2009, yet another suicide bomber riding an explosive-laden truck struck Peshawar's five-star Pearl Continental Hotel, adjoining the residence of the corps commander, Peshawar, and that too following an exchange of heavy fire between the attackers and the security personnel.

The Pakistan government therefore announced, on 15 June 2009, the launching of a decisive military offensive against Baicullah Mehsud, by declaring him Pakistan's public enemy number one. Officially announcing the operation, the governor of the NWFP, Owais Ghani, described Baitullah as 'the root cause of all evils'. The very next day, the Pakistani military spokesman said Baitullah and his network of fighters and suicide bombers had wreaked havoc on Pakistan, while his tribal areas had been serving as a major safe haven for al-Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and a host of Punjabi and Kashmiri terror groups. He announced that the Pakistani forces were about to launch a massive operation against him in South Waziristan. On 16 June 2009, the Pakistani Army Chief, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, said that the head of the Taliban in Pakistan must be eliminated. 'Baitullah Mehsud has a hand in virtually every major terrorist attack in Pakistan and he is not fighting for Islam,' he said. It was, perhaps, the first significant indication from the army leadership that the military Establishment—long derided for avoiding a head-on confrontation with the chief of the Pakistani Taliban—had had enough.

In the wee hours of 5 August 2009, the ruthless, unforgiving and vindictive Baitullah Mehsud, a friend-turned-foe of the Pakistani military Establishment, was finally killed in an American drone strike in the Zangarha area of South Waziristan along with his wife and bodyguards. Although the authorities failed to retrieve his dead body, government circles insisted that the TTP chief was targeted by a drone while he was

getting a leg massage on the roof of his father-in-law's house where he had gone to see his second wife. Twenty days after the American drone strike, Commander Hakeemullah Mehsud finally conceded to the BBC in a telephonic interview that Baitullah Mehsud had died on 23 August 2009, after remaining in a coma for eighteen days.

On 30 September, a brief video showing the dead body of Baitullah was released by the BBC. The video of less than two minutes duration showed the bodies of Mehsud and his wife moments after they were hit by missiles fired by a US drone. The video, which was shot with a mobile phone, was received by the Urdu service of the BBC and the clipping showed Mehsud's body lying on a plain surface and covered with a white cloth. His injuries were not visible and it showed only a few cuts on the right side of his face. The silent video featured a few people sitting near Mehsud's body.

Almost twenty-eight months after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and eight months after the death of Baitullah Mehsud, the United Nations Inquiry Commission probing Bhutto's murder more or less absolved him of the murder charge by trashing the earlier findings of the Punjab Police, whose investigations had been carried out during the Musharraf regime:

The then government's assertion that Baitullah Mehsud was behind the murder of Ms. Bhutto was premature at best. Such a hasty announcement of the perpetrator prejudiced the Punjab Police investigations which had not yet begun. Other flaws in the Joint Investigation Team's approach to investigating the alleged role of Baitullah in the assassination are also inconsistent with a genuine search for the truth.

The UN report made it abundantly clear on whose orders Baitullah had been implicated:

The decision to blame Baitullah was taken on the morning of 28 December 2007 during a high-level meeting at a facility in General Headquarters known as the Camp Office and presided over by General Musharraf. That meeting, at which General Musharraf was briefed on the intercept and on medical evidence, was attended by the directors general of the ISI, MI and IB

The Musharraf regime set out its conclusion, through a press conference held by Brigadier Cheema, that Bhutto must have hit her head on the lever of the vehicle's escape hatch. This was met with widespread public skepticism and media outrage in Pakistan

The PPP and others accused the government of a cover-up. Many questioned the sudden and timely appearance of the telephone intercept as well as the speed

with which its contents were analyzed and interpreted. Many challenged the view that Ms. Bhutto had not been shot and questioned how quickly that purported analysis had been done. Furthermore, many senior PPP officials believed the government was suggesting, in an effort to demean Ms. Bhutto, that she had caused her own death by emerging from her vehicle. In short, the press conference not only failed to provide credible answers to essential questions arising from the assassination, it triggered widespread suspicion that government authorities would not be conducting a genuine search for the truth .

..

The communication intercepted by the ISI is purported to be a telephone conversation between Emir Sahib (said to be Baitullah Mehsud) and Maulvi Sahib. In it, the two speakers congratulate each other on an event which Brigadier Cheema asserted was the assassination . . . The Commission is not in a position to evaluate the authenticity of the purported intercept. Any further investigation into Ms. Bhutto's assassination must include steps for such authentication . . . It is not clear how or when the intercept from the ISI was recorded . . . The Commission is not in a position to assess the credibility of this information from the ISI.

THE ISI MOLE BEHIND THE FIRST SUICIDE ATTACK

THE TRAIL OF events following the mysterious assassination of Benazir Bhutto took a new turn in the second week of February 2008 when Qari Saifullah Akhtar, the ameer of the pro-Taliban Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HUJI) or the Movement of Islamic Holy War, was named by the slain PPP leader in her posthumously published book, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West*, as a principal suspect in the attempt to kill her in Karachi, a few hours after her homecoming.

For almost ten hours, on 18 October, the people of Karachi had choked the streets, cheering Bhutto on her return home. As her cavalcade threaded its way through the enraptured throng towards the mausoleum of Jinnah, where she was scheduled to address a public gathering, a visibly emotional Bhutto stood atop a specially fortified, bulletproof truck, waving proudly to her followers. At 12.09 a.m. on 18 October, the cavalcade had reached the Karsaz Bridge, still ten kilometers from her destination. But Benazir Bhutto was not to be seen—nineteen minutes earlier, she had gone down to use the makeshift washroom in the lower deck of the truck.

It was then that someone apparently tossed a hand grenade to the right side of her truck,⁶ hoping the explosion would break the three rings of the security cordon around it. The outer ring consisted of policemen, the inner two of the Jaan Nisarane Benazir (JNB)—an Urdu phrase, which means 'those willing to give their lives for Benazir'. The JNB's main task was to form a human chain around Bhutto to stop suicide bombers from reaching her, but they also performed additional security duties. Her personal guards valiantly held their ground. In the ensuing confusion, a suicide bomber cried to break the security cordon to get close to the truck from the left. Challenged by the security men, he detonated himself. The carnival mood soon turned funereal. Human flesh and limbs flew around, people wailed in agony and grief; the final death toll was a chilling 179.

The explosion was powerful enough to rip a door off her truck; what saved Bhutto was that she wasn't atop the truck at that fatal moment. Subsequent investigations revealed prior knowledge of the security architecture around Benazir Bhutto. Not only was the attack three-pronged, the masterminds chose a suicide bomber to evade the jamming devices fitted to the two police vehicles immediately in front and behind her truck. The jammers could have prevented any explosion triggered by a remote-controlled device,

⁶ Bhutto's cavalcade was attacked just a few minutes after midnight (strictly speaking, on 19 October) but the date of the event is usually given as 18 October.

as had happened during one of the two attempts on Musharraf's life, in December 2003 in Rawalpindi. The nature of the explosives used in the Karachi twin suicide bombings indicated intricate planning. Fortunately for Bhutto, the two police jeeps accompanying her welcome procession bore the brunt of the explosion.

Following the suicide attack, Bhutto submitted an application for the registration of a First Information Report at the Bahadarabad police station in Karachi, on 19 October. The PPP had moved to make Bhutto the complainant, maintaining that following the registration of the FIR, the police would consult her during the investigation proceedings. The following is the text of the FIR:

The Pakistan People's Party's government which I led was undemocratically dismissed from power during my second term in office in 1996 although I enjoyed the confidence of the Parliament and people. With a view to eliminating my leadership, special laws, bureaus and courts were established to persecute and keep me trapped in a web of litigation and prevent me from having a fair chance to contest elections or promote the views of my party. Consequently, I was compelled to go into exile in 1999 due to this persecution by the state apparatus. From exile, I led my party, which obtained the highest number of votes in the general elections of 2002, proving that the people of Pakistan had confidence in my leadership. To prevent my party and the people from forming the government, the session of the Parliament was indefinitely postponed and a coalition government with only one majority vote was installed after forcing defections from my party. I continued striving for the rights of the people and announced my homecoming for the 18th of October 2007.

I was informed by the government that certain militant groups wanted to attack me. After receiving this information I wrote a letter dated 16th of October, 2007, to the President of Pakistan informing him of my grave concern regarding my security and specified the forces and persons . . . I suspected were likely to harm me physically. On 18th October 2007, I took off from Dubai via Emirates Airlines reaching Karachi airport around 1.40 p.m. After necessary formalities, I with my party men boarded the truck, which proceeded slowly due to the millions of people who had come from across the country to receive me. We travelled only a couple of miles towards the *mazar* of the Quaid-e-Azam where a public address was scheduled, reaching near Karsaz in about ten hours.

While I was on the truck two powerful bombs exploded in quick succession. The human shield around my truck bore the brunt. About 140 people, including the police squad, were killed and several hundred gravely wounded. Vehicles near the front left side of my truck were blown up and burnt. I narrowly escaped the assassination attempt on my life. The dastardly attack was aimed at my physical elimination and elimination of the top leadership of the party and devoted

selfless supporters, in an attempt to derail the democratic process and stop the people of Pakistan voting for a leader of their choice. This attracts [penalties] under the Pakistan Penal Code, Anti Terrorism Act, as well as the Explosive Act . . . [It has resulted] in the death of nearly 140 and [injured] more than 350 innocent Pakistanis. You may please register a case and investigate so that the accused and their conspirators may be brought to book and punished according to the law.

The Special Investigative Group (SIG) of Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) issued a technical report after investigating the first murder attempt on the welcome procession of Benazir Bhutto, in Karachi. The report submitted to the then President, General Pervez Musharraf, through the Ministry of Interior had stated that a 'manual trigger mechanism' was used in the attempt to assassinate her at Karsaz. The report confirmed that two human bombs had detonated themselves close to Bhutto's bulletproof truck and that no remote-controlled bomb had been installed in any police van or private cars, as had been suspected. The technical report of the FIA, which was prepared by Major (retd.) Shafqat Mahmood of the SIG stated that:

High powered explosive materials were used with Russian devices while no grenade was used in the two explosions, which were meant to target Ms. Benazir Bhutto's truck. The bomb used in the second blast was approximately 12 to 14 kg as . . . [calculated from] the blast effect and intensity of detonation wave while the first was less than 7 kg, calculated through the same technique. Ball bearings were embedded in the explosive belt for more lethal effect on men and material. Their quantity was very high when compared with the other suicide attacks carried out in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Steel ball sheets were used containing almost 2000 steel balls. One sheet is normally used in each pocket of the explosive belt, which were 6 in number. Pellet holes were observed on Bhutto's truck stationed about 10 feet from the epicentre.

To further establish the assumption that both the attacks were carried out by human bombs, the FIA report added:

Both the human skulls found from the crime scene were affected from the inside, even the brains of both . . . were completely blown out, which confirms that the attacks were suicidal. The evidence was substantiated through the exit wound found on these scalps, carrying steel ball wounds on probably the first suicide bomber. It was evident that the scalp of the suicide bomber bore the pellet holes entering through the face and the lower jaw and exiting from the top and side of the skull, proving that they were suicide bombers wearing suicide vests. The second suicide bomber after breaking into the security circle amidst chaos caused by the first blast pulled the safety pin of the striker sleeve to detonate the explosive belt. The striker sleeve MUV2 found at the crime scene substantiated

the finding. The strike under the compression of the spring struck the detonator, which in turn exploded the main charge wrapped around the suicide bomber in the shape of the explosive belt. The triggering mechanism used to detonate the explosive belt is mechanical and non-electric.

That a highly explosive material was used in the attack seems very plausible as no residue was recovered at the epicentre. The Mach effect of the detonation wave caused maximum damage to the people due to the thick crowd. Pellets of steel balls were hurled in all directions. A definite pattern and propagation angle was observed on the metal parts of the truck and other vehicles. The pellet holes were varying in sizes from 1 inch to 2.5 inches. The different sizes of holes indicate the immensity of the detonation. It also revealed that the pellets were embedded in the layers of the explosive. It was a target killing as the moving of the truck seems to be well calculated and detailed reconnaissance was carried out by some resourceful group. The striker sleeve MUV2 found at the crime scene had been used in many previous blasts in various parts of the country. The factory lot and code and batch embossed on the striker sleeve are identical and resemble suicide attacks carried out at the Kohat Army Mosque, Dera Ismail Khan, the police training school, Peshawar, and the Charsadda blasts, with little variation of the manufacturing year.

The crime scene analysis and evidence found at the spot revealed that the second suicide bomber was intercepted by the private security guards before he blew himself up. The investigative report also made a significant revelation that the *modus operandi* used by the bombers resembled the technique of the Baitullah Mehsud group. Therefore, one can say both the government and Benazir Bhutto knew that she would be targeted upon her return to Pakistan. There were elements which wanted to eliminate her from the scene and had set their plan rolling immediately upon her arrival and they never stopped till the time they hunted her down eventually in Rawalpindi on 27 December 2007.

Benazir Bhutto has narrated in detail the suicide attacks targeting her homecoming procession in her book, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West*, where she recalls her landing at Karachi airport, her subsequent journey towards the mausoleum of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, where she was to address a public rally; the subsequent attempt on her life, as well as the involvement of Qari Saifullah Akhtar in the assassination bid:

Like most women in politics, I am especially sensitive to maintaining my composure, to never showing my feelings. A display of emotion by a woman in politics or government can be misconstrued as a manifestation of weakness, reinforcing stereotypes and caricatures. But when I stepped down onto the tarmac at Quaid-e-Azam international airport in Karachi on 18 October . . . I was overcome with emotion. After eight lonely and difficult years of exile, I could not

stop the tears pouring from my eyes. I felt that a terrible weight had been lifted from my shoulders. It was a sense of liberation. I was home at long last. I knew what I had to do.

I had departed three hours earlier from my home in exile, Dubai. My husband Asif was to stay behind with our two daughters, Bakhtawar and Aseefa. Asif and I had made a very calculated, difficult decision. We understood the dangers of my return, and we wanted to make sure that, no matter what happened, our children would have a parent to take care of them. It was a discussion that few husbands and wives ever have . . . thankfully. But Asif and I had become accustomed to a life of sacrificing our personal happiness and any sense of normality and privacy. The people of Pakistan always come first. My children understood it and not only accepted it but encouraged me.

I said farewell not knowing whether I would ever see their faces again. The stakes could not have been higher. Pakistan under military dictatorship had become the epicentre of an international terrorist movement with two primary aims. First, the extremists' aim to reconstitute the concept of the caliphate, a political state encompassing the great *Ummah* (Muslim community) populations of the world, uniting the Middle East, the Persian Gulf states, South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, and parts of Africa. Second, they aim to provoke a clash of civilizations— between the West and an interpretation of Islam that rejects pluralism and modernity. The goal, the great hope of the militants, is a collision, an explosion between the values of the West and what the extremists claim are the values of Islam.

Few on the aeroplane that carried me from Dubai to Karachi knew that in my briefcase I carried with me the manuscript of this book exploring the dual crises confronting the Islamic world—both internal and external. Within hours of my reaching Pakistan, some of the pages would be symbolically charred by fire and splattered with blood and flesh of dismembered bodies thrown up by devastating terrorist bombs. The carnage that accompanied the joyous celebration of my return was a horrific metaphor for the crisis that lies before us and the need for an enlightened renaissance both within Islam and between Islam and the rest of the world. When I returned, I did not know whether I would live or die. I knew that the same elements of Pakistani society that had colluded to destroy my father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and end democracy in Pakistan in 1977 were now arrayed against me for the same purpose exactly 30 years later.

Indeed, many of the same people who had collaborated with an earlier military junta in the judicial murder of my father were now entrenched in power in the Musharraf regime and the intelligence apparatus. There could have been no

more dramatic statement to me than General Musharraf's recent appointment as attorney general the son of the man who had sent my Either to the gallows. We had, of course, been discouraged from returning. Musharraf had told me in private meetings and conversations that I should come back only after the elections he was planning. When it was clear that I would not postpone my return, he sent messages to my staff that I should have no public demonstration or rally and I should fly directly by helicopter from the airport to Bilawal House, my family home in Karachi.

Musharraf said that he was concerned about my security and my safety, but his supporters did very little to provide the necessary protection we needed: jammers that worked, street lights that worked, roads that had been cleared of empty cars that could carry improvised explosive devices—protection to which I was entitled as a former prime minister. I had become aware, through messages sent by Pervez Musharraf that suicide squads might be sent from the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to try to assassinate me immediately on my return. I had actually received from a sympathetic Muslim foreign government the names and cell phone numbers of designated assassins. I was told by both the Musharraf regime and the foreign Muslim government that four suicide bomber squads would attempt to kill me. These included, the reports said, squads sent by the Taliban warlord Baitullah Mehsud; Hamza Bin Laden, a son of Osama Bin Laden; Red Mosque militants; and a Karachi-based militant group.

Musharraf's regime knew of the specific threats against me, including the names and numbers of those who planned to kill me, and the names of others—including those in his own inner circle and in his party—whom we believed were conspiring. Despite our request, we received no reports on what actions were taken before my arrival as a follow-up to these warnings. I wrote a letter to Musharraf I told him that if I was assassinated by the militants it would be due to their sympathizers in his regime, whom I suspected wanted to eliminate me and remove the threat I posed to their grip on power. Even as we landed, the General's people were calling to stop me from returning, stop me from giving a speech at the tomb of the Quaid-e-Azam [Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founder], to cancel my cavalcade from the airport to the mausoleum. But I knew that those who believed in democracy and my leadership were awaiting me in the streets of Karachi.

As the sky darkened and my armoured campaign truck progressed almost by inches through the growing masses, I noticed that street lights began to dim and then go off as we approached. The jamming equipment that was supposed to be blocking cell phone signals (chat could detonate suicide bombs, or even remote-controlled toy planes filled with explosives) for 200 meters around my truck did

not seem to be working. My husband, watching the live coverage on television in Dubai, begged me not to expose myself directly to the crowd from the top of the truck. I said no, that I must be in front and greet my people.

Sometime after 11 p.m. I saw a man holding up a baby dressed in the colors of my party, the PPP. He gesticulated repeatedly to me to take the baby, which was about one or two years old. I gesticulated to the crowd to make way for him. But when the crowd parted, the man would not come forward. Instead he tried to hand the baby to someone in the crowd. Worried that the baby would fall and be trampled upon or be lost, I gesticulated no, you bring the baby to me.

Finally he pointed to the security guard. I asked the security guard to let him up on the truck. However, by the time he reached the truck, I was going down to my compartment in the vehicle's interior because my feet hurt. We now suspect the baby's clothes were lined with plastic explosives. My feet had swollen up after standing in one place for 10 hours, and my sandals were hurting. Downstairs I unstrapped and loosened them. A little while later my political secretary, Naheed Khan, and I went over the speech that I would be delivering later at the tomb – one of the most important of my life.

I was saying that perhaps we should mention my petitioning the Supreme Court to allow political parties in the tribal areas to organize as part of our plan to counter extremists politically. As I said the word 'extremist', a terrible explosion rocked the truck. First the sound, then the light, then the glass smashing, then the deadly silence followed by horrible screams. My first thought was: 'Oh, God, no.' A piercing pain tore my ear from the force of the blast. An eerie silence descended. Then a second explosion – much louder, larger and more damaging went off! Almost simultaneously, something hit the truck, which rolled from side to side. (Later I saw two dents clearly visible on the left side of the truck, where I had been.)

I looked outside. The dark night was bathed in an orange light, and under it crumpled bodies lay scattered in the most horrific scene. I now know what happened to the baby. Agha Siraj Durrani, a PPP parliamentarian, was watching the access to my truck. When the man tried to hand the baby up, Agha Siraj told him to get lost. The man then went to a police vehicle to the left of the truck, which also refused to take the baby. The man moved to the police vehicle in front of the first. A woman PPP councilor, Rukhsana Faisal Baloch, was on this vehicle, as was a cameraman. As the man tried to hand the baby to the second police vehicle, the first police vehicle warned: 'Don't take the baby, don't take the baby, and don't let the baby up on the truck.'

Both these police vehicles were exactly parallel to where I was sitting inside the truck. As the man scuffled with the police to hand the baby over, the first explosion took place. Everyone in that police van was killed, as were those around it. Within 50 seconds, a 15-kilogram car bomb was detonated, scattering pellets, shrapnel and burning pieces of metal. According to some eye-witnesses, snipers began firing.

There seemed to be some chemical in the air. Although I came out of the truck about eight minutes later, I suffered like others from a perforated eardrum and a racking dry cough, the likes of which I had never had before. Dr Zulfiqar Mirza, who helped take the dead and wounded to hospital, told me of the strange state of the bodies. The clothes of some were totally burnt off. Others were clothed, but when one moved to pick up the body, it would melt and disintegrate. Many with pellet wounds subsequently died, making us suspect that the pellets had been soaked in poison.

I was whisked away through backstreets in a jeep. Security boys clung to it, providing a human shield around me. We were unarmed and we wondered whether assassins might have a backup plan to kill us, knowing we had to reach my home. I entered the house that my husband had built for us after our marriage, which was named in honor of our son Bilawal. Going up the stairs, I saw the pictures of my three children peering back at me, and I realized the absolute terror they must be experiencing, not knowing if I were dead or alive. I had been traumatized by my father's arrest, imprisonment and murder, and I know that such mental scars are permanent. I would have done anything to spare my children the same pain that I had undergone— and still feel—at my father's death. But this was one thing I couldn't do; I couldn't retreat from the party and the platform that I had given so much of my life to.

The enormous price paid by my father, brothers, supporters and all those who had been killed, imprisoned and tortured—all the sacrifices had been for the people of Pakistan. I spoke to my husband and assured him that I was not injured. I could not speak to my children. Thankfully they had gone to bed and had not seen the blast on television. My daughter told me later she went to bed happy thinking of the warm reception I was getting, only to wake to a text message from a friend: 'Oh, my God, I am so worried. Is your mother all right?' With her heart pounding, she ran to the room of her father, who gathered her in his arms, reassuring her, 'Your mother is fine.' When all the bodies had been counted, the number of those killed went up to 179 dead and nearly 600 wounded, some disabled for life.

Later I was informed of a meeting that had taken place in Lahore where the bomb blasts were planned. According to this report, three men belonging to a

rival political faction were hired for half a million dollars. They were, according to my sources, named Ejaz, Sajjad and another whose name I forget. One of them died accidentally because he couldn't get away fast enough before the detonation. Presumably this was the one holding the baby. However, a bomb maker was needed for the bombs.

Enter Qari Saifullah Akhtar, a wanted terrorist who had tried to overthrow my second government. He had been extradited by the United Arab Emirates and was languishing in the Karachi central jail. According to my second source, the officials in Lahore had turned to Akhtar for help. His liaison with elements in the government, according to this source, was a radical who was asked to make the bombs and he himself asked for a fatwa making it legitimate to oblige. He got one. The bomb blasts took place in the army cantonment area in Karachi. When army officials arrived on the scene, the wounded hooted them down. Rightly or wrongly, the perception in Pakistan is that the military is responsible for the rise of militancy and all the horrific consequences that it entails for Pakistan and its people.

On 26 February 2008, the Musharraf regime arrested Qari Saifullah Akhtar for the purpose of interrogating him, although there were many in Establishment circles who believed that Qari had actually been taken into protective custody by his spy masters from the ISI. As a matter of fact, the HUI ameer is generally considered to be a handy tool of the Pakistani intelligence Establishment. Whenever required, he is used and then dumped by his spy masters. Qari was seized by the security agencies along with his three sons (Asif Ali, Abdul Rehman and Mureed Ahmad) in Ferozwala, near Lahore. He was grilled by a joint interrogation team comprising operatives from the Punjab Police, Inter Services Intelligence and the Special Investigation Group of the Federal Investigation Agency.

During interrogations, Qari Saifuilah claimed that he had already adopted the path of Sufism since his release in May 2007 and had been living for the past few months in the secluded *khanqah* (memorial) of a renowned Sufi-cum-militant of the eighteenth century, Syed Ahmed Shaheed. Although Syed Ahmed's tomb is situated in Balakot, his followers had established a *khanqah* in his name near the Sagian Bridge in the Ferozwala area, close to Lahore, from where he was seized. Qari told his interrogators that upon his release, he went to Masjid-ul-Huda Lane in Hamza Town, Lahore, to meet his *pir* (mentor) Syed Nafees Shah, also a follower of Syed Ahmed Shaheed, who ordered him to stay in the Ferozwala *khanqah* and work for the spiritual guidance of the people.

Qari Saifullah described himself as a staunch follower of Syed Ahmed Shaheed and Ahmed Shah Abdali who fought and laid down their lives for the creation of an Islamic state. He further conceded that his failed Operation Khilafat (Operation Caliphate) of 1995 to topple Benazir Bhutto's second government, with the help of like-minded men

in the army, was meant to bring in the Khilafat system in Pakistan and to enforce the Islamic Shariah in accordance with the teachings of Syed Ahmed Shaheed. Saifullah also told his interrogators that his *pir*, Syed Nafees Shah, had declared him Khalifa (Caliph) in his place, shortly before his death on 5 February 2008, and he was duty bound to fulfill his mission of converting Pakistan into a pure Islamic state, to be ruled by a Khalifa who had the traits of both Syed Ahmed Shaheed and Ahmed Shah Abdali.

Ironically, his arrest established the fact, for the first time, that despite all the charges leveled against him Qari Saifullah had been released much before Benazir Bhutto returned home. Qari Saifullah, who was born on 8 January 1959 in South Waziristan, is a graduate of the Jamia Binoria in Karachi, the infamous religious seminary which had produced several known pro-Taliban Deobandi kingpins like the Harkatul Mujahideen chiefs Maulana Fazalur Rehman Khalil, and the Jaish-e-Mohammad chiefs Maulana Masood Azhar. He was arrested and extradited from the United Arab Emirates on 7 August 2004, on charges of plotting the twin suicide attacks on Musharraf in Rawalpindi, in December 2003.

Instead of trying to prosecute and convict him after his arrest, the Pakistani intelligence agencies chose to keep him under detention for the next two years and nine months, without even filing any criminal charges against him, giving credence to reports that he was a handy tool of the Pakistani intelligence Establishment. His 'unprovoked' arrest was challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the first week of January 2005. On 18 January 2005, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition against Qari's arrest and directed the petitioner to first move the high court by filing a habeas corpus writ petition. A Supreme Court bench of Justice Hamid Ali Mirza and Justice Falak Sher ruled that the arrest in this case was not a matter of public importance and hence a constitutional petition could not be filed directly in the Supreme Court.

However, following Benazir Bhutto's murder, it emerged that Saifullah Akhtar had been quietly released by the intelligence Establishment—it transpired that he was one of the 'missing persons' being sought by a Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. Qari's name was in the list of persons being held by the agencies without any formal charges having been filed against them. But the federal government of Pervez Musharraf had told the Supreme Court, on 5 May 2007, that Qari Saifullah Akhtar was not in the custody of the state agencies. The concise report presented by the National Crisis Management Cell to the court revealed that he was engaged in jihadi activities somewhere in Punjab, and not under detention. Two weeks later, on 21 May 2007, Qari Saifullah suddenly reached his hometown in Mandi Bahauddin of the Punjab province. The Pakistani newspaper, *Daily Times*, reported on 22 May 2007 that Qari Saifullah was actually released by an intelligence agency earlier that morning, when he was thrown out of an official car in a deserted area near the Chakwal district of Punjab.

The release was subsequently brought to the notice of the apex court by the Ministry of Interior. Hashmat Habib, the counsel for Qari Saifullah Akhtar, having confirmed the release of his client, told the court that while setting him free the intelligence officials had informed his client that had they not picked him up, there was a strong possibility of the American Federal Bureau of Investigation taking him away for interrogation because of his alleged al-Qaeda and Taliban links. At the time of his dramatic arrest in August 2004 and his subsequent extradition from the United Arab Emirates, the Pakistani authorities had described the development as a major blow to the al-Qaeda sponsored terrorist network and its local affiliates in Pakistan. The then information minister, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed, went to the extent of painting him as a close aide of Osama bin Laden and Mullah Mohammad Omar, and as the operational head of al-Qaeda in Pakistan. 'We confirm that we have arrested Qari Saifullah Akhtar. He was on our Wanted list for a long time,' he had stated during a news conference.

On 4 March 2008, hardly a few days after Qari Saifullah was rearrested, two suicide bombers blew themselves up at the Navy War College building on Mall Road in Lahore, killing eight navy employees. A war-related course was in progress in a lecture room adjacent to the parking lot of the college when the human bombs forcibly made their way into the building and blew themselves up. Six days later, on 11 March, terrorists once again struck in Lahore, using suicide bombers. The first batch targeted the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) headquarters on the busy Temple Road, and a few minutes later a second batch targeted a safe house of the FIA in the Model Town area, killing thirty-six people, mostly FIA officials. Subsequent investigations by Pakistani agencies indicated that all the three attacks were carried out by the Harkatul Jihadul Islami as a reaction to the arrest of Qari Saifullah Akhtar. As a matter of fact, six of the HUJI activists, arrested after the suicide attack on the Naval War College on 4 March, were then being interrogated.

On 20 March 2008, almost three weeks after his arrest, Qari Saifullah Akhtar was produced before an anti-terrorism court in Karachi for his involvement in the attacks on Bhutto's welcome procession in Karachi. He was subsequently remanded in custody for twelve days, so that he could be grilled thoroughly by the Karachi Police. On 20 March 2008, Hashmat Habib, Saifullah's counsel, told the media in Karachi that he had sued the printer, publisher and beneficiaries of Benazir Bhutto's book for falsely accusing his client of being involved in the Karachi bombing and thus damaging his reputation. 'I have moved the suit under Section 8 of Defamation Ordinance 2002 . . . seeking damages of \$200 million.'

Almost a week later, Justice Khawaja Naveed Ahmed ordered the release of Qari Saifullah on bail, after the investigation officer reported to the court that no evidence had been found to link him with any terrorist activity. The investigating officer, Nawaz Ranjha, submitted a report to the court stating that during the initial investigations he had not obtained enough evidence to file a charge-sheet against Qari Saifullah: 'The

suspect was interrogated during the twelve-day period given by the court but he denied involvement in the blasts. Under Section 497 of the Criminal Procedure Code, when a person accused of a non-bailable offence is arrested without warrant by an officer-in-charge of a police station, he may be released on bail when he is brought before a court, but he shall not be so released if there are reasonable grounds to believe that he is guilty of an offence punishable with death or imprisonment for life or imprisonment for 10 years.'

Although the judge accepted the report and ordered Qari Saifullah's release on bail, the jihadi kingpin was rearrested under the MPO (Maintenance of Public Order) and shifted to a Karachi safe house. Two months later, on 8 June 2008, Qari Saifullah was released by the Sindh Home Department as the two-month term of detention set under the MPO had expired. 'He is a free person. There is no case against him anywhere in Pakistan,' Saifullah's lawyer told the media. However, there were many in the Establishment who believed the release might have been facilitated by the agencies, in an apparent bid to stop the deadly wave of suicide bombings that were being carried out by the followers of Saifullah.

Though Qari Saifullah's role in the Karachi suicide attack could not be explored further due to the lack of interest shown by the PPP government, his previous involvement in a failed coup plot in 1995 had projected him as one of the most deadly militants who, from the intelligence Establishment's viewpoint, had gone astray. The group of potential plotters busted by Military Intelligence at that time included four serving army officers, headed by Major General Zaheerul Islam Abbasi. Brigadier Mustansar Billa, who had also been arrested, was described as the ideologue of the religiously motivated army men. The arrested army officers were accused of plotting to first take over the GHQ of the Pakistan Army in Rawalpindi during the Corps Commanders Conference, and later overthrow the Benazir Bhutto government to eventually enforce their own brand of Islamic Shariah in Pakistan.

Major General Abbasi was serving at the time as director general of the infantry corps at the Pakistani Army high command in Rawalpindi. With the help of sympathetic military officers, the group allegedly began plotting against the civilian government of Benazir Bhutto and the Army Chiefs General Abdul Waheed Kakar. It was claimed that they planned to assassinate Bhutto, Kakar, senior cabinet ministers and the military chiefs in order to bring about a corruption-free government in Pakistan. Acting on a tip-off from Major General Ali Kuli Khan, who was the director general of Military Intelligence (MI), the Chief of General Staff (CGS), Lieutenant General Jehangir Karamat, who later became the Chief of the Army Staffs suppressed the coup by arresting thirty-six army officers and twenty civilians from the garrison town of Rawalpindi and the federal capital, Islamabad.

Those arrested were charged by a Field General Court Martial (FGCM) with conspiring to assassinate military commanders with the help of a group of Kashmiri militants belonging to the Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HUJI) led by Qari Saifullah Akhtar, whose fighters had been provided with military uniforms and equipped with arms and ammunition to carry out the covert coup operation. However, once the FGCM formally started, Qari Saifullah saved his neck by becoming an approver on behalf of the prosecution, during the trial. His name was subsequently dropped from the list of the accused. Those conducting the court martial proceedings had admitted, at one stage, that without the testimony of Saifullah it would have been extremely difficult to convict the accused khakis.

Those who had plotted the coup were convicted by the FGCM and awarded different sentences ranging from two to fourteen years. The highest sentence was given to Brigadier Mustansar Billa (fourteen years). Major General Zaheerul Islam Abbasi was given a seven-year term in jail. Abbasi was, however, released from prison before the completion of his jail term, by Musharraf in October 1999, within four years of his arrest.

After the dismissal of the second Bhutto government in 1996, Qari Saifullah Akhtar was released; he went to Afghanistan and was inducted into the cabinet of the Taliban ameer, Mullah Mohammad Omar, as his adviser on political affairs. Once in Afghanistan, the militants in Qari's HUJI were called 'the Punjabi Taliban' and offered employment, something that other jihadi groups could not get out of Mullah Omar. Interestingly, the HUJI had members among the Taliban, too, as three Taliban ministers and twenty-two judges belonged to the group. The Harkat militants are known to have supported Mullah Mohammad Omar in difficult times.

According to international media, at least 300 HUJI militants lost their lives while fighting the Northern Alliance troops, prompting Mullah Omar to give Harkat the permission to build half-a-dozen more training camps in Kandahar, Kabul and Khost, where the Taliban army also used to receive military training. Before the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, HUJI had branch offices in forty districts across Pakistan. While funds were collected from these grass-roots offices and from foreign sources, the Harkat had accounts in a couple of branches of the Allied Bank in Islamabad.

Qari Saifullah Akhtar was one of the few jihadi leaders from Pakistan who had escaped with Mullah Mohammad Omar after the US-led Allied Forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001. He first took shelter in the South Waziristan Agency; then moved to Peshawar and eventually fled to Saudi Arabia, from where he decided to move to the UAE. Three years later, in August 2004, he was arrested by the UAE authorities and deported to Pakistan after it was revealed during the investigations of the December 2003 twin suicide attacks on Pervez Musharraf that he had been executing terrorist

operations in Pakistan with the help of his right-hand man, Amjad Hussain Farooqi. Qari Saifullah Akhtar's whereabouts are unknown since he was last released on 8 June 2008, but he is believed to be hiding in the Waziristan region.

The three-member UN Commission (which investigated Bhutto's murder) stated in its inquiry report that militants of particular concern to Bhutto and others included Qari Saifullah Akhtar, one of the founders of the extremist Harkatul Jihadul Islami, whom she accused of involvement in a failed coup attempt against her in 1995, during her second tenure as prime minister:

Mr. Akhtar, who was living in Pakistan when Ms. Bhutto returned from exile, was reportedly one of the ISI's main links to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and is believed to have cultivated ties with Mr. Bin Laden, who lived in Afghanistan during that period. Ms. Bhutto believed that Mr. Akhtar was connected to the Karachi suicide attack against her in October 2007. Mr. Akhtar's one-time deputy commander, Ilyas Kashmiri, who had ties with the Pakistani military during the Afghan and Kashmir campaigns, had been a senior aide to Mr. Bin Laden's deputy Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri. Such links and connections between elements in the intelligence agencies and the militants most concerned Ms. Bhutto and many others who believed that the authorities could activate these connections to harm her.

BHUTTO NAMES HER ASSASSINS FROM THE GRAVE

EVEN AFTER HER tragic assassination, Benazir Bhutto's old emails and interviews are still in circulation. In these, she had named her would-be assassins. Addressing his first ever press conference after the murder, Asif Zardari made public her email to Mark Siegel, in which she had mentioned the name of her would-be killers. 'The said email should be treated as Benazir Bhutto's dying declaration. She talks about her murderers from her grave and it is up to the world to listen to the echoes,' he said. Bhutto had sent the email, two months before her death, to her US adviser and longtime friend, Mark Siegel, who was to make this email public only if she were killed. Mark Siegel subsequently forwarded Bhutto's email to Wolf Blitzer of the CNN in Washington. She wrote to Mark Siegel:

Nothing will, God willing, happen. Just wanted you to know if it does in addition to the names in my letter to General Musharraf of Oct 16th, I would hold Musharraf responsible. I have been made to feel insecure by his minions and there is no way what is happening, in terms of stopping me from taking private cars or using tinted windows or giving jammers or four police mobile outriders to cover all sides could happen without him.

Bhutto had sent the email eight days after the Karachi attack on her welcome procession, pointing out that she had not been accorded the requested improvements to her security and was being prevented from making arrangements that were vital to her safety. Her requests, even those routed through her contacts in the USA, had not evoked a positive response from the Musharraf regime, although it was well aware of the risks she faced.

According to Mark Siegel, Bhutto had asked for permission to bring in trained security personnel from abroad, but the Pakistan government denied them visas, again and again. A US-based security agency, Blackwater, and a London-based firm, Armor Group, which guards UK diplomats in the Middle East, were not allowed to protect her. Bhutto urged Musharraf to improve her security after the Karachi suicide bomb attack, besides requesting American and British diplomats to pressurize Musharraf to provide her with adequate security. But Musharraf had taken no action.

Benazir Bhutto's security concerns and Musharraf's refusal to address them have also been highlighted by a Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist, Ron Suskind, in his book, *The Way of the World: A Story of Truth and Hope in an Age of Extremism*. Published in

August 2008, the book makes several disclosures about the Musharraf-Bhutto conversations and includes Musharraf's comment, 'You should understand something—your security is based on the state of our relationship.' The writer disclosed that the US intelligence agencies had tapped Bhutto's phone calls, prior to her arrival in Pakistan, in a bid to play their cut-throat games more effectively. About those who were tapping Bhutto's calls, Suskind writes, 'What they'll overlook is the context and her tone in the many calls they eavesdrop on—overlook the fact that she's scared and preparing for the possibility of imminent death.'

The book disclosed details of Bhutto's meeting with Senator John Kerry, during the course of which she had requested the US to ensure that proper arrangements were made for her security, and he replied that the 'United States is generally hesitant to ensure the protection of anyone who is not a designated leader'. In a subsequent interview on 15 August 2008 with Amy Goodman, an American broadcast journalist, Ron Suskind quoted Benazir Bhutto as having told him: 'Look at my situation. I'm now going to wash away the entire Musharraf power structure, because the fact is, I'm rising, and he's plummeting. That's one opponent. Also, the jihadis are realizing that I might create a counterpoint in this whole region to bin Laden. So now I've got two enemies, of course, who have been in an unholy alliance—dictatorial power, messianic radicalism—for many years, and I have no protection. Why? Because Dick Cheney won't make the phone call. We go on and on about this. Why? Explain it to me, the idea that they assured me Cheney would make the call to Musharraf simply to say, "You're the dictator, make sure she is protected. She has to make it to Election Day. If she doesn't, we're going to hold you responsible."'

Alluding to Musharraf's message to Bhutto that her safety was based on the state of their relationship, Suskind said: 'It was all but like a Mafia threat. And this is something that the US, frankly, deep down understands, too. They let this process unfold. And ultimately, folks around Bhutto now are saying that she was abandoned by America.'

As is typical with the Bush administration, before any evidence had been offered, and with the key facts about the whole gruesome episode still in question, it unequivocally ascribed Benazir Bhutto's assassination to al-Qaeda or a like-minded Islamic group. All President Bush seemed interested in was reminding Pakistanis how significant the upcoming national elections were in offering a way out for Musharraf's ongoing crisis of legitimacy. That the elections were being stage-managed by Musharraf was hardly a secret, and even Bhutto herself remarked that they would be rigged. But Bush insisted that Pakistan 'honour Benazir Bhutto's memory by continuing with the democratic process for which she so bravely gave her life'.

By linking Bhutto's killing to al-Qaeda, President Bush conveniently achieved several goals. First he reinforced the myth about al-Qaeda, something that was very useful to Washington at a time of growing global skepticism over the real intent of its War on

Terrorism, besides making Musharraf more valuable to Washington. Secondly, it gave Musharraf a plausible scapegoat to blame for the convenient elimination of a serious political rival, who stood in the way of his consolidation of one-man rule.

In a related development, a well-known American investigative journalist, Seymour Hersh, claimed in an interview on 12 May 2009 that a special death squad had assassinated Benazir Bhutto on the orders of the former US vice president, Dick Cheney. In an interview to an Arab television channel, the Washington-based Hersh, a Pulitzer Prize winner who writes for *The New Yorker* magazine and a few other prominent media outlets, also claimed that the former vice president had been running an 'executive assassination ring' throughout the Bush years. The cell reported directly to Cheney. Hersh indicated that this unit killed Bhutto because, in an interview with Al-Jazeera TV on 2 November 2007, she had said she believed that al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was already dead, and that Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed, an al-Qaeda linked activist imprisoned in Pakistan for killing US journalist Daniel Pearl, had also murdered Osama bin Laden.

Hersh said that the interviewer, veteran British journalist David Frost, deleted her assertion from the interview. Hersh believed Benazir Bhutto was assassinated because the US leadership did not want Laden to be declared dead. The Bush administration wanted to keep Osama bin Laden alive to justify the presence of the US Army in Afghanistan to combat the Taliban. He also claimed that the same assassination squad, led by General McChrystal, had killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri as well as the army chief of that country. Hariri and the Lebanese army chief were allegedly murdered for not safeguarding American interests and refusing to allow the US to set up military bases in Lebanon.

Earlier, on 10 March 2009, Seymour Hersh had mentioned in a seminar at the University of Minnesota that the unit Cheney headed was very deeply involved in extra-legal operations. 'Congress has no oversight of it. It is an executive assassination wing, essentially. And it's been going on and on and on. And just today in *The Times* there is a story saying that its leader, a three-star admiral named McRaven, ordered a stop to certain activities because there were so many collateral deaths. It's been going under President Bush's authority. They've been going into countries, not talking to the ambassador or the CIA station chief; and finding people on a list and executing them and leaving. That's been going on, in the name of all of us.'

Soon after Seymour Hersh's speech, CNN's Wolf Blitzer asked Dick Cheney's former national security adviser, John Hannah, about Hersh's claim: 'Is there a list of terrorists, suspected terrorists out there who can be assassinated?' Hannah responded: 'There is clearly a group of people that go through a very extremely well-vetted . . . inter-agency process . . . that have committed acts of war against the United States, who are at war with the United States, or are suspected of planning operations of war against the

United States . . . authority is given to the troops in the field and in certain war theatres to capture or kill those individuals. That is certainly true.'

When Wolf Blitzer queried the legality of such acts, John Hannah said: 'There is no question that in a theatre of war, when we are at war, and ... there is no doubt, we are still at war against al-Qaeda in Iraq, al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and on the Pakistani border, that our troops have the authority to go after and capture and kill the enemy, including the leadership of the enemy.'

So would it be too wild to speculate that the then Pakistani and American administration conspired together to murder Benazir Bhutto? On his part, when asked at a media briefing in Islamabad on 1 January 2008 if he had blood on his hands, General Musharraf said that although it was below his dignity to take cognizance of the question he, nevertheless, wanted to give a public answer: 'I am not a feudal [ruler], I am not a tribal. I have been brought up in a very educated and civilised family with . . . values. . . . My family is not a family which believes in killing people assassinating, intriguing. That is all that I want to say.'

On 3 January 2008, General Musharraf admitted for the first time that Bhutto may have been shot by a gunman, but said that she alone bore the responsibility for her death. Musharraf said in an interview on CBS's show, 'Sixty Minutes', that he had personally told Benazir Bhutto that she was under threat and that, in the circumstances, she should not have done the things that she did on that fateful day. She should not have stood up in her car as she left the rally. 'For standing up outside the car, I think it was she to blame alone—nobody else. Responsibility is hers.' He also said: 'I had asked her not to come before the election . . . that we will arrange—then she could come after the election, which she had agreed. But then she decided to come all of a sudden. She did not stick to her agreements with me to an extent . . . It upset me a little.'

Reacting to Musharraf's statement, the PPP spokesperson, Sherry Rehman, scoffed at the insinuation that Bhutto was responsible for her own death, saying, 'This is an insult to the martyred leader and all those who lost their lives with her. The despotic Musharraf regime is essentially trying to say that they all deserved to die because they attended a public rally, which is their constitutional right. Rather than admitting its own failure in safeguarding the life and property of Pakistani citizens, the regime is trying to tell people that you will be responsible for the consequences if you try to exercise your fundamental rights.'

General Musharraf's logic and the PPP's reaction apart, the fact remains that Benazir Bhutto must have had many powerful enemies in the Pakistani military and intelligence Establishment as well as among the militant organizations who first wanted to stop her homecoming and her subsequent political comeback, and later wished to see her eliminated physically. By her own estimate, no fewer than four different jihadi

organizations backed by certain powerful elements in the Pakistani military and intelligence Establishments wanted her dead, within hours of her homecoming. Furthermore, Bhutto was convinced of General Musharraf's involvement in the assassination attempt.

In fact, the day she was first attacked upon her arrival in Karachi, and the day she was finally killed in Rawalpindi, Ejaz Shah, the director general of the Intelligence Bureau (the country's only civilian security agency) was mainly responsible for her protection in the garrison town.

The bulletproof vehicle in which she was being taken by her supporters was protected by two cordons of security guards. The inner cordon consisted of the security guards called Jaan Nisarane Benazir, engaged by the PPP leadership.

The outer cordon consisted of police officers of the Sindh Police and plain-clothes security officers of the Intelligence Bureau. But quite astonishingly, the suicide bomber(s) managed to penetrate the security cordon of the police and IB officers without being frisked. Yet the human bomb(s) could not penetrate the inner cordon of the Jaan Nisarane Benazir, and blew themselves up at a distance from her vehicle upon being stopped by the guards. Ejaz Shah was strongly criticized by Bhutto for the security failure after the Karachi carnage, and she demanded his removal from the coveted slot of DG, Intelligence Bureau. But Musharraf refused to act against Ejaz Shah because he was the one who had created the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) – the party of turncoat parliamentarians that continued to support Musharraf till his ouster from power.

In her letter, Bhutto reportedly asserted that her life was in danger, particularly from Brigadier (retd) Ejaz Hussain Shah. Incidentally, it was Ejaz Shah who had arranged the surrender, in February 2002 in Lahore, of Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed (who had killed the American journalist, Daniel Pearl). Then, Ejaz Shah was the home secretary of the Punjab province. And Shah knew Omar's family quite well as both of them belonged to the Nankana Sahib area of the Punjab province. Ejaz Shah briefed Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed for a full week before remanding him in police custody; and this famous 'missing week' has never been accounted for in public. The actual relationship between Ejaz Shah and Omar Sheikh, however, was one of handler and agent, with both being attached to the ISI. Shah had been in regular touch with Omar Sheikh after his release by India in a hostage-swap deal negotiated to defuse the situation when an Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar was hijacked in December 1999, soon after General Musharraf came to power in a military coup.

Appointed in 2004 as the IB director general, Ejaz Shah became a controversial personality, and was accused of using his department for victimizing loyalists of the

Bhutto-led PPP and the Sharif-led PML. While with the ISI, he had directed the activities of jihadi groups fighting in Kashmir.

In an interview with the *Daily Times* on 13 August 2007, Benazir Bhutto said, 'Brigadier Ejaz Shah and the ISI recruited Sheikh Omar, who eventually killed US journalist Daniel Pearl. So I would feel very uncomfortable . . . [if] the Intelligence Bureau, which has over 100,000 people . . . [is] being run by a man [Ejaz Shah] who worked so closely with militants and extremists.' (Ironically, at the time of Bhutto's assassination, Ejaz Shah was the director general of the IB, which was responsible for her security, along with the police.) On 3 November 2007, two weeks after her return home, Bhutto, in an interview with Sir David Frost on the TV programme, 'Frost over the World', referred to 'three individuals' who wanted to kill her, one of them a key figure in security (Ejaz Shah) who, she claimed, had dealings with Omar Saeed Sheikh.

Asked in an interview on NBC television whether it was not risky to name a close friend of Musharraf as someone who was plotting against her, Bhutto said: 'Well, at that time I did not know whether there would be an assassination attempt that I would survive. And I wanted to leave on record the [names of the] suspects. I also didn't know that he was a friend of Musharraf But I asked myself . . . even if I knew that he was a friend and I thought of him as a suspect, would I have not written? No, I would have written.'

Having survived the attempt on her life upon her homecoming, Bhutto addressed a press conference in Karachi on 19 October and blamed the attack on what she termed 'Zia remnants'. She said: 'The Karachi attack was a message sent by the enemies of democracy to all the political parties of the country. It was intended to intimidate and blackmail all the political forces and elements working for democracy and human rights. It was a warning not only to me and the PPP but to all political parties; indeed to the entire civil society.'⁷

Bhutto then disclosed that she had informed Musharraf in a confidential letter, that three senior government officials were planning to assassinate her upon her return. 'However, I had further made it clear to Musharraf that I won't blame Taliban or al-Qaeda if I am attacked, but I will name my enemies in the Pakistani Establishment,' she told journalists. In an interview with the French magazine, *Paris Match*, the same day, Bhutto said: 'I know exactly who wants to kill me. They are dignitaries of General Zia who are behind extremism and fanaticism.' Although Benazir Bhutto did not publicly name the three persons, PPP circles later told the media that they were Ejaz Hussain Shah, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, and Arabab Ghulam Rahim.

⁷ Reported by the Pakistani newspaper, *Dawn*, on 20 October 2007.

The Federal Ministry of Interior stated that the threats she had mentioned had not been supported by any evidence and had no tangible basis. But there were those in the PPP circles who thought the men named by Bhutto actually posed a genuine threat to her security, because they were linked to the Establishment which, under Musharraf's command, had a long-standing enmity towards the PPP and the Bhutto family.

The UN Commissions report, while discussing the threats to her life that Bhutto faced on her return to Pakistan, stated that in her writings and speeches and discussions with her colleagues, she seemed outspoken about her perception of the threats being posed to her. The threats to Bhutto's life must be understood against the backdrop of Pakistan's recent history and the conditions there. Under the military dictatorship of General Zia ul Haq from 1977 to 1988, the country's once secular military was aligned with politicized Islam, and jihad was used as a tool to recruit and support insurgents in the fight against the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan. The Pakistani military organized and supported the Taliban, which took control of Afghanistan in 1996. Similar tactics were used in Kashmir against India after 1989.

These policies resulted in active linkages between sections of the military and the Establishment and radical Islamic elements at the expense of national secular forces. This led to the entrenchment of religious extremists and other militant groups in the tribal areas and Punjab. Benazir Bhutto's return from exile in October 2007 occurred against this backdrop. The forces that felt threatened by the possibility of her return to power in Pakistan included al-Qaeda, the Taliban and local jihadi groups as well as elements in the Establishment.

According to the UN Commission's report, Bhutto had concerns that al-Qaeda might have reasons to do her harm:

Her public position against al-Qaeda inspired Islamist violence, on the need to check extremism in the tribal areas, and on the perception among many that she was acting on behalf of the United States, are factors that could have made her a target for al-Qaeda and allied groups. She asserted in her . . . book [published posthumously] that Osama bin Laden funded the ISPs attempt to oust her first government in 1989 through a no-confidence motion in Parliament. A close associate remembered that during the election campaign, Ms. Bhutto told her, 'Osama bin Laden would take out a lot of money to have me killed.'

Al-Qaeda, however, posed a general threat to all Pakistani politicians (including Benazir Bhutto), who were not in line with their thinking. But as her return to Pakistan neared, and as she vigorously campaigned for the election, the threat to her increased and became specific. Soon after the Karachi attack, senior PPP leader and Bhutto's lawyer, Farooq Naek, received a handwritten letter at his office from a person claiming to be the 'head of suicide bombers and a friend of al-Qaeda' warning that Bhutto would

be assassinated in a gruesome manner. Naek, now the chairman of the Senate (the Upper House of Parliament), approached the Supreme Court of Pakistan, urging that the government be notified of the threat, and with a request to strengthen Bhutto's security. A further indication of al-Qaeda's role in the murder of Bhutto emerged two days after her death when al-Qaeda spokesman, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, claimed responsibility for her assassination, in a telephone interview.

The Pakistani Taliban is an agglomeration of Pushtun militant Islamic organizations operating in the tribal areas. And several of these groups and their splinters have established links with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. Going by the UN Commission's inquiry report, the Pakistani Taliban now constitutes a significant threat to Pakistan's internal stability:

Most of these jihadi organizations are Sunni groups based largely in Punjab. Members of these groups aided the Taliban effort in Afghanistan at the behest of the ISI and later cultivated ties with al-Qaeda and Pakistani Taliban groups. The Pakistani military and ISI also used and supported some of these groups in the Kashmir insurgency after 1989. The bulk of the anti-Indian activity was and still remains the work of groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba, which has close ties with the ISI. A common characteristic of these jihadi organizations is their adherence to the Deobandi Sunni sect of Islam, their strong anti-Shia bias, and their use by the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Given this background, it is not surprising that they posed a threat to Ms. Bhutto and what she stood for. Ms. Bhutto was not only a modernist politician and the leader of a major secular party, she also spoke out strongly and publicly against the extremist Islam espoused by these groups. Many believe that Benazir Bhutto's gender was also an issue with the religious extremists who believed that a woman should not lead an Islamic country. She was also perceived as a Shia, at least by some militants, because her mother (Nusrat Bhutto) and husband (Zardari) are Shia. The UN Commission, therefore, believes that the competent authorities of Pakistan should aggressively pursue the possible role of the TTP and Pakistani jihadi groups in Ms. Bhutto's assassination.

The commission report added that the determination of criminal responsibility for planning, organizing, funding, supporting and carrying out the Bhutto assassination could be made only by the competent authorities of Pakistan:

This Commission has neither the authority nor the means to reach such conclusions. Indeed, if it were to do so, it could jeopardize future prosecutions or make it difficult for future accused persons to receive fair trials.

THE PAKISTANI POLICE 'UNMASK' THE KILLERS

EARLIER, AMIDST ALL the developments that occurred in the aftermath of Bhutto's murder, the PPP leadership had approached the United Nations, seeking the formation of an international inquiry commission to thoroughly investigate the assassination and bring the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of the Bhutto murder to justice. The demand, raised in a letter signed by the co-chairman of the PPP, Asif Ali Zardari, had been sent directly to the United Nations Secretary General on 16 January 2008. Hardly two days later, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Punjab Police detained a teenager, saying he was part of a twelve-member terrorist squad, which had been assigned to kill Benazir Bhutto at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi.

According to the police findings, Bhutto's assassination had been masterminded by the ameer of the TTP, Baitullah Mehsud, and the suicide bomber who exploded himself in Rawalpindi was one Saeed alias Bilal, a resident of the South Waziristan Agency. A group of twelve militants had been dispatched to Rawalpindi, a day prior to Bhutto's election rally to physically eliminate her. The FIR of the murder case was registered by the Rawalpindi Police, and the investigations were conducted by a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) headed by the then additional inspector general, CID, Punjab Police, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed. The Bhutto murder case was finally filed in a Rawalpindi anti-terrorism court, which is now trying the five murder suspects.

According to the CID findings, four of the twelve militants tasked to kill Bhutto belonged to a Deobandi religious seminary—Madrassa Haqqania—located in Akora Khartak near Peshawar, the capital of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The seminary is also referred to as Darul Uloom Haqqania Madrassa, and was being run by Maulana Samiul Haq, the pro-Taliban ameer of a faction of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), a political party rooted in religion. According to the police, three of the twelve militants had already been killed. Of the remaining nine accused, five had been arrested and were being tried in Rawalpindi while the remaining four were still at large.

The three accused who were said to be dead included the human bomb, Saeed alias Bilal (a resident of Waziristan), Nadir alias Qari Ismail and Nasrullah (both attached to the Madrassa Haqqania, Akora Khattak). Four other accused in the Benazir Bhutto murder who are still at large and have already been declared proclaimed offenders include Ikramullah (from South Waziristan), Abdullah alias Sadam (of Mohmand Agency), Faiz alias Kiskit, and Abadur Rehman alias Noman alias Usman, both former students of the Madrassa Haqqania. The remaining five accused who are already in the

custody of the Rawalpindi Police and are being tried for the murder include Rafaqat, Hasnain Gul, Sher Zaman, Rasheed Ali and Aitezaz Shah.

The Pakistan Police claims that Baitullah Mehsud had given Rs 400,000 to one Qari Ismail, who subsequently dispatched a group of suicide bombers and sharpshooters to Rawalpindi to kill Bhutto. The assailants reportedly tried to target her in different cities, which she visited in connection with her election campaign, until she was finally killed in Rawalpindi. A fifteen-year-old boy named Aitezaz Shah (belonging to the Mansehra district of the NWFP) and his accomplice Sher Zaman (who was reportedly trained at a camp in the Miramshah area of Waziristan) were the first ones to be arrested from Dera Ismail Khan by the Punjab Police. Two more suspects, Hasnain Gul and Rafaqat, were subsequently arrested from Rawalpindi. Rasheed Ali was the last to be nabbed, and Aitezaz was the first to furnish some vital information to his interrogators, pertaining to the Bhutto murder.

As the police obtained physical remand of the accused who had been arrested, and broadened the scope of their investigations, they learnt that Aitezaz Shah had actually obtained jihadi training from a leading Deobandi religious school in Karachi—Jamia Binoria, also referred to as Jamia Islamia—which was known for its pro-Taliban leanings. According to the police report, after being brainwashed and trained to kill, Aitezaz Shah was sent to South Waziristan from where he had travelled to the Darul Uloom Haqqania Madrassa. Afterwards, Aitezaz was taken to a jihadi training centre in Akora Khattak and tasked with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

Before that, Baitullah had reportedly provided Rs. 50,000, a suicide jacket and other essential items to someone else, but the attack had not been carried out. After Baitullah's men failed to hunt down Bhutto in Karachi, Peshawar and other places, he entrusted the task to Qari Ismail of Akora Khattak, and had paid him to recruit helpers and execute the murder. The assailants reached Rawalpindi on 26 December, and stayed at a house in the Quaid-e-Azam colony. That same evening, they visited the Liaqat Bagh site in Rawalpindi in a taxi and, after conducting a detailed survey, decided on the logistics of the assassination, and the different points from which the target was to be hit, during or after the rally.

According to the assassination plan, Saeed alias Bilal was to carry out the suicide attack in case he failed to gun down Bhutto, while Ikramullah was to detonate himself if Saeed failed. Hasnain Gul provided Ikramullah and Saeed with the various devices required for carrying out the attack, including an explosive-laden suicide jacket, a pistol and an optical lens to magnify objects. The assailants had gone to Liaqat Bagh via Iqbal Road and College Road. An unarmed militant had gone inside Liaqat Bagh to keep his accomplices updated about Bhutto's movements, especially about her arrival and departure from the venue of the rally. The assailants first attempted to enter Liaqat

Bagh to carry out a suicide attack close to the stage, but their plan had failed due to foolproof security arrangements at the venue.

Several suicide bombers and sharpshooters were waiting for the PPP leader outside Liaquat Bagh after the failure of the militants to enter the venue of the rally. The assailants had started pursuing Bhutto as soon as she came out of Liaquat Bagh, and it was the PPP leader herself who gave them a golden chance to target her by emerging through the sunroof of her bulletproof Toyota Land Cruiser, to wave to her supporters. That was when the gunshots were fired. As Saeed alias Bilal failed to hit Bhutto, he blew himself up, killing her and twenty-three others, most of them on the spot.

The police sources added that thirty pieces of evidence had been collected before the crime scene outside Liaquat Bagh was hosed down. These included a 30-bore pistol, a damaged magazine, one bullet, several rounds of live ammunition, one 9 mm pistol, a black leather jacket, two empties of the 30 bore, a circuit plate, blood from the spot, Bhutto's Land Cruiser BF-7772, two damaged police vehicles, a damaged private vehicle, two steel plates, the head of the suspected suicide bomber, both his legs, Bhutto's black shoes, blood from her vehicle, a white fluid from the window of the Land Cruiser, a black explosive substance, pans of a skull, the limbs of the victims, shoes, pieces of clothing, visiting cards, photographs, mobile phones and watches. However, some crucial pieces of evidence were missing, including the SIM cards used by the suicide bomber and his accomplices, which may have been lost because of the hosing down of the crime scene. The white scarf which Bhutto was wearing at the time of the attack, could not be traced despite frantic efforts being made to find it.

Narrating the motivation for the crime, the Pakistani Police said that the accused had revealed, during their interrogation, that they were annoyed over Bhutto's pro-West bias. They believed that she had returned to Pakistan at the behest of foreign powers who wanted her to take decisive action against the militants once she was returned to office, after the general elections. The PPP leadership, however, had rejected the confession made by Aitezaz Shah and his other accomplices about their involvement in Bhutto's murder. Farhatullah Babar, Bhutto's spokesman and later the official spokesman for the Pakistani President, Asif Zardari, described Aitezaz's confession as 'a cock-and-bull story', which was intended to reduce the pressure the Musharraf regime was facing in the aftermath of the Bhutto murder. Farhatullah Babar said that the arrested youth, who has already been declared a juvenile by the court, had been made to narrate exactly the kind of things the Pakistani authorities wanted to hear, in order to back up the conclusions they had reached within hours of Bhutto's gruesome assassination.

In a strange move, on 17 August 2009, the federal government requested the Rawalpindi anti-terrorism court hearing the Bhutto murder case to postpone any further proceedings and transfer the case to the FIA, so as to enable it to arrive at a

definitive conclusion. Five days later, the judge of the anti-terrorism court accepted the government petition. A high-level FIA team was subsequently constituted on 25 August 2009 to re-investigate the murder. The Special Investigation Group of the FIA was assigned the task of fixing criminal liability for the gun-and-bomb attack. It was announced by the interior minister, Rehman Malik, that the SIG's investigation would be parallel to the probe being carried out by the United Nations Commission, as 'the commission's report would have no legal standing, and could not be used for prosecuting the assailants'.

On 10 December 2009, the Lahore High Court decided to proceed *ex parte* against Pervez Musharraf on a petition seeking the registration of a criminal case against him and others for allegedly plotting the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Justice Khawaja Imtiaz Ahmed of the Rawalpindi bench of the Lahore High Court took the decision after a special messenger reported that a man at Pervez Musharraf's farmhouse in Islamabad had refused to receive the court notice, which sought a response to the petition filed by Chaudhry Mahmood Aslam, Bhutto's former protocol officer. The court further decided to proceed *ex parte* against the former Punjab chief minister, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, former interior minister, General (rerd) Hamid Nawaz, and former spokesman for the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier Cheema, as they had not replied to the court notices.

On Bhutto's second death anniversary, 27 December 2009, Dawn published a story titled, 'BB Murder Probe: Investigators Groping in the Dark', which stated that although two parallel investigations were being conducted by the UN and the FIA into Bhutto's assassination, the country remained clueless about the identity of her assailants, even after a lapse of two years. The report stated: The PPP government has so far failed to unveil faces behind the murder of its leader, including killers, perpetrators, abettors, financiers and the mastermind of the attack, even though it has all kinds of resources at its command. Unfortunately, the entire nation is in the dark on the issue as no one from the government side has so far come up with any concrete statement about the progress made in the investigations.'

The same day, *The News* published a report titled, 'Benazir Murder Trail Goes Cold', which said that one would have expected her party to move heaven and earth, after assuming power, to unmask her killers. Two years after her assassination, however, the elusive killers were still at large and the murder case seemed to have been put in cold storage. In fact, the UN-sponsored probe had been assigned the entire responsibility for unearthing the killers, even though the UN investigators had already made it clear that finding the killers did not fall within the scope of their responsibilities.

Moreover, the UN Inquiry Commission had crashed the findings of the Joint Investigation Team consisting of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Punjab Police and the Rawalpindi Police, although they claimed that they had solved the case

way back in February 2008, by tracing the mastermind and the killers, who were then sent for trial at an anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi. The JIT had concluded, after the arrest of the five militants allegedly involved in Benazir Bhutto's murder, that the murder plot was masterminded by Commander Baitullah Mehsud.

The UN Commission was of the view that those already on trial were not the main accused. The commission's report pointed out that the charges against the five accused who had been arrested included aiding and abetting terrorism, murder and concealing information about the commission of a crime. The report added that the JIT had mainly focused its efforts on investigating the alleged role of individuals functioning at lower levels, and essentially ceased investigating the possibility of other perpetrators, particularly those involved in planning the murder through funding, or by facilitating the assassination in other ways.

It then questioned the conclusion reached by the Punjab CID about Baitullah Mehsud being the mastermind of the Rawalpindi suicide attack that killed Bhutto. The report described as premature the Musharraf regime's assertion that Baitullah was behind the assassination, adding that such a hasty announcement regarding the perpetrator had prejudiced the police before they had even begun their investigations. The commission also disputed the authenticity of the taped conversation produced by the interior minister hardly twenty- four hours after Bhutto's murder, wherein one Maulvi Sahib was said to be congratulating one Emir Sahib on the assassination. The report stated that the commission was not in a position to evaluate the authenticity of the purported intercept.

Also, the JIT had neither interrogated nor interviewed any of Musharraf's three aides whom Bhutto had described as a threat to her security, in her letter to Musharraf And, the JIT members admitted that virtually the most important details pertaining to the murder, including that which led to the identification and arrest of the five suspects still in prison, came from the intelligence agencies. The JIT hardly took into account any other hypotheses or leads, or developed its own evidence beyond the framework set by those agencies.

The UN Commission came down hard on Saud Aziz, the Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) of Rawalpindi at the time of Bhutto's murder, accusing him of having tried to impede the murder investigations, by ordering the hosing down of the crime scene outside Liaquat Bagh, and not letting the doctors at the Rawalpindi General Hospital carry out a post-mortem examination of Benazir Bhutto's dead body. Furthermore, the commission's report stated:

Many senior Pakistani Police officials have emphasized that hosing down a crime scene is fundamentally inconsistent with Pakistani Police practice. While they acknowledge that there is no uniformity of practice in crime scene management

in Pakistan, the hosing down of a crime scene is considered extraordinary. Indeed, with the exception of some Rawalpindi Police officials, nearly all senior Pakistani Police officials have criticized the manner in which this crime scene was managed. One senior police official has argued that hosing down the crime scene amounted to 'criminal negligence'. Several senior police officials who know Saud Aziz were troubled that an officer with his many years of experience had allowed a major crime scene to be washed away, thereby damaging his reputation.

Saud Aziz had ordered the hosing down of the scene of Bhutto's assassination on the instructions of the then MI chief Major General Nadeem Ijaz, who was not only a relative of General Pervez Musharraf's but also close to the military dictator.

According to many defence analysts, the conduct of Major General Nadeem Ijaz was highly suspicious. The DG, Military Intelligence, always takes orders from his boss – the Army Chief And General Ashfaq Kayani was holding that coveted post at the time of Benazir Bhutto's murder. Pervez Musharraf was only a civilian President then, as he had doffed his uniform and handed over command of the army to General Kayani. The UN Commission could not determine in his capacity as the DG, Military Intelligence, Major General Nadeem Ijaz took orders from his boss, General Kayani, to hose down the crime scene; acted on the advice of the President, General Musharraf; or acted on his own on the spur of the moment (which was highly unlikely).

It is no secret that General Musharraf always gave much importance to the advice, opinions and views expressed by his DG, Military Intelligence, and often took crucial decisions based on his khaki relative's advice. According to several colleagues of Major General Nadeem Ijaz, it was widely whispered amongst the higher echelons of the military that he was pulling Musharraf down with his poor advice, which was always prompted by sycophancy.

A few days after the UN Commission's report was released, *The News* declared in a front page story on 26 April 2010 (titled, 'Major General Nadeem Ijaz in the Dock for Many Crimes') that the former Musharraf aide was accused of kidnapping many political activists not only in Baluchistan but also in the Punjab province, and much else:

Background interactions with some top leaders of the mainstream political parties of the country revealed that the notorious Nadeem Ijaz had become a monster in the last days of the Musharraf regime. Even after the retirement of Musharraf as Army Chief Nadeem Ijaz was directly reporting to him, bypassing the new army chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani. Political circles in Islamabad believe that the role of Nadeem Ijaz was not limited to the hosing down of the crime scene on 27 December 2007. He had to be investigated thoroughly because he was directly or indirectly related to many other important events like the . . .

assassination of the elderly Baloch nationalist leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti [in 2006] . . .

Very few people know that Major General Nadeem Ijaz started his political role in December 1999 when he was a colonel posted in Lahore. He forced many Nawaz Sharif loyalists to leave the PML-N during the Musharraf regime. He also blackmailed many PPP leaders and compelled them to change their political loyalties and extend their support to the Musharraf regime . . . He remained in Lahore and was promoted as a brigadier there. Nadeem became director general of Military Intelligence in February 2005 and was assigned the task of ensuring the success of the Musharraf loyalists. He was the one who had advised General Musharraf to call the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry to the Army House and demand his resignation. When Justice Iftikhar refused, it was Nadeem who pressured him directly. It was the then DG, MI who had ordered the Islamabad administration not to let Justice Iftikhar reach the Supreme Court building after being deposed by Musharraf. As the Chief Justice came out of his residence, he was manhandled by officials in plain clothes . . .

Nadeem Ijaz was also involved in media affairs. He helped in arranging funds and investors in the launching of at least two pro-Musharraf television channels in 2007. He had threatened and blackmailed many journalists through different means and tortured some of them after getting them kidnapped. Many Baloch leaders alleged that Nadeem Ejaz was responsible for rigging the 2008 elections in many constituencies of Baluchistan. They say the DG MI did it directly on the orders of General Musharraf and not General Kayani. Sources in the military Establishment claimed that General Kayani fired at least three colonels from the ISI who were trying to help some politicians during the elections in 2008 but the DG MI clearly violated his policy. Kayani became Army Chief on November 29th, 2007, just a few weeks before the election and it was difficult for him to immediately change the DG MI.

According to the UN Commission's report, soon after the suicide attack on Bhutto outside Liaquat Bagh, CCPO Saud Aziz left the crime scene for Rawalpindi General Hospital; and SSP Yaseen Farooq followed shortly thereafter. The most senior Rawalpindi Police official remaining at the crime scene was SP Khurram Shahzad, who continued to take instructions from CCPO Saud Aziz by telephone. The management of the crime scene and the collection of evidence by the Rawalpindi Police during this time have generated considerable controversy. Video footage immediately following the blast shows that the people at the scene reacted with shock, fear and confusion, and there was little police control.

The crime scene outside Liaquat Bagh was not immediately cordoned off. The police collected some evidence. And so did officers from the intelligence agencies, including

the ISI, the IB and MI, who were also present, using, as one Rawalpindi Police officer noted, better evidence collection equipment than the police. Within one hour and forty minutes of the blast, however, SP Khurram ordered the fire and rescue officials present to wash the crime scene down with fire hoses. He told the UN Commission that the police had collected all the available evidence by then. Police records showed that only twenty-three pieces of evidence had been collected, although one would have expected it to run into thousands, under the circumstances. The evidence included human body parts, two pistols, spent cartridges and Bhutto's damaged vehicle.

According to SP Khurram and other senior Rawalpindi Police officials, including some who were not present at the scene, hosing down the crime scene was a necessary crowd control measure. They claimed that some at the scene, mainly PPP supporters were very upset when they learned that Bhutto had died, and began dipping their hands in the blood on the ground, which they believed was hers, and began rubbing it on themselves. SP Khurram asserted that many of the PPP supporters could have become disruptive. Therefore, the police needed to wash away the blood from the scene as a public order measure. SP Khurram and other police officials also stated that there were reports of vandalism not far from the crime scene, requiring the redeployment of the police who were at the scene. Once the crime scene was hosed down, they claimed, the crowd did disperse. Many made their way to the Rawalpindi General Hospital, and this permitted the redeployment of the police in other areas where the situation was in danger of getting out of control.

Others, including police officials familiar with the case, however, disputed the assertion that there was a public order problem in Rawalpindi. They further disagreed with the contention that the presence of an unruly crowd would have prevented the police from cordoning off the scene of the crime, and justified hosing it down. None, apart from SP Khurram, mentioned that they saw anyone smearing blood on themselves. Even SP Khurram himself ultimately admitted that he saw only one person doing that. Sources have also pointed out that Rawalpindi was not a stronghold of the PPP and, therefore, the police allegations were exaggerated. Sources have noted that even at the Rawalpindi General Hospital, where many of the PPP supporters were gathered, the disturbance was minimal.

One eyewitness told the UN Commission that there were about one hundred to two hundred people present at the crime scene after the blast and about twenty to thirty police officers. One police official stated that there were about forty police officers at the scene. Khurram had a number of options for controlling the crowd at the crime scene short of the drastic measure of hosing it down. He could have ordered the police officers present to form a cordon around the immediate vicinity of the crime scene; he could have redeployed any of the 1,371 police officers on duty; he could have called for reinforcements. Yet he made no attempt to do any of these things.

Many senior Pakistani police officials explained to the UN Commission that in law and practice, the ranking police official at the scene of the crime takes decisions relating to crime scene management. Khurram asserted that he made the decision to hose down the scene. Before issuing the order to the rescue and fire services personnel, Khurram called his superior, CCPO Saud Aziz, to seek permission, which was granted. Sources, including police officials familiar with the case, have questioned the veracity of Khurram's claim that the decision was taken on his initiative.

On 3 May 2010, *Dawn* reported that the Special Investigation Group of the FIA investigating the Benazir Bhutto murder case had detected that the telecommunication record book had been tampered with, and interviewed three officials of the police telecommunication wing, besides the superintendent of police on whose alleged order it was done. The report said that the FIA team also seized the records of four police stations in Rawalpindi, for the month of December 2007, which was when Bhutto had been assassinated. The investigation took a new turn after the assistant superintendent of police, Ashfaq Anwar, who was assigned to supervise the box security arrangements for Bhutto on the day she was to address her Liaqat Bagh rally, changed the statement he had earlier given the UN Commission, when he appeared before the FIA team, and maintained that he had been sent to Koral Chowk by CCPO Saud Aziz, to handle another incident.

The order by Saud Aziz left Bhutto devoid of any high- ranking police officer to oversee her security. Interestingly, the area where Saud Aziz had deputed Ashfaq Anwar did not come under the jurisdiction of the Rawalpindi Police. Instead, it was within the remit of the capital city police, Islamabad.

According to the *Dawn* report, in order to support his statement, Ashfaq Anwar produced a copy of the telecommunication record, but that was found to have been tampered with. (This came to light as the investigators were in possession of the original record.)

The FIA team subsequently called the DSP (tele-communication), Munawar Gill, and his two subordinate operators, Ahmed Nawaz and Bilal Ahmed, for interviews. The ASP, Ishfaq [Ashfaq] Anwar, who had been posted as the ASP Headquarters at that time, was interviewed by the FIA team for three hours. Ahmed Nawaz, the wireless operator, told the investigators that his deputy superintendent had asked him to take the log book of the wireless control room to the residence of Ishfaq [Ashfaq] Anwar. The sources said that on seeing the log book of December 2007, Ishfaq (Ashfaq) Anwar asked him who had been on duty at the time, and in whose handwriting the entries had been made. He then asked Ahmed Nawaz to take him to the house of Bilal Ahmed who was on second duty on 27 December.

The sources said that the ASP drove his car to Bilal's house and brought him back with him to his house, where he first offered him a cup of tea, and then, reportedly, asked him to write down that he was on duty at the Koral Chowk in Rawalpindi on 27 December 2007. The sources said the FIA team asked the DSP Telecommunication, Munawar Gill, why he had given the log book to a police officer who was only an Officer on Special Duty (OSD). The FIA team also seized the *roznamchas* (daily reports) of four police stations in Rawalpindi to verify the security duties of the police for 27 December 2007. When Ashfaq Anwar was contacted by this scribe, he was not available for comment on the development. However, he has already denied having been involved in any record tampering.

Even after the hosing down of the crime scene, questions continued to rise over the preservation of evidence by the Rawalpindi Police, particularly in the period before investigators from the Joint Investigation Team of the Rawalpindi Police and the Criminal Investigation Department of the Punjab Police started their work.

According to the UN Commission, Bhutto's Land Cruiser was initially taken to the city police station by Inspector Kashif Riaz, sometime after midnight early on 28 December, and then taken to Police Lines 5. In the early hours of 28 December, CCPO Saud Aziz went to the Police Lines together with others including ISI officers, who were the first to conduct a forensic examination of the vehicle. An investigating police officer, on the orders of the CCPO, removed Bhutto's shoes and took them to the city police station. Sometime thereafter, the shoes were ordered back into the car—clearly interfering with the integrity of the evidence. Furthermore, while the vehicle was parked at the Police Lines, it was not properly protected.

During a visit by some JIT members, people were seen cleaning the vehicle from inside though investigations were still going on. When the JIT carried out its physical examination of the vehicle, they did not find any hair, blood or other matter on the lip of the escape hatch. Forensic analysis of swabs of the lip of the escape hatch lacer carried out by the JIT and Scotland Yard also found nothing. But the commission said it was impossible to establish whether the interference with the vehicle resulted in the elimination of any matter that may have been present on the lip, or whether there was no such matter in the first place, '...but that such interference would have damaged any forensic evidence present'.

The UN Commission was told that CCPO Saud Aziz on three occasions refused the request of the doctors for permission to carry out a post-mortem examination on Bhutto's remains. Pakistani law provides that in the case of an unnatural death, the police must insist on a post-mortem examination report as part of their investigations.

This requirement places the responsibility for initiating the examination on the police and not the hospital authorities. Indeed, the hospital authorities must get a request from

the police before proceeding. Numerous people interviewed by the UN Commission, including all the doctors and nearly all the senior police officers, have reiterated this rule. Even Saud Aziz himself acknowledged that this is the law in Pakistan. Only a district magistrate may waive the need for a post-mortem examination. If the family of a deceased person does not wish to have a post-mortem examination carried out, it must apply to a judge for an order waiving the requirement.

Some people indicated to the commission that the practice followed is different from the legal requirement. 'Due to religious considerations, family permission is usually sought. There are sensitivities around conducting a post-mortem examination of a woman in Pakistani culture.' However, due to the importance of the forensic examination, the police might take steps to overcome any religious or cultural objections. One senior police officer explained that, in his experience, when the family is reluctant to have a post-mortem examination, the police have taken time to convince them to change their position since the post-mortem examination is so central to the conduct of any investigation.

While denying that the doctors requested his authority for a post-mortem three times, Saud Aziz explained that in the case of a person of Benazir Bhutto's eminence, he could not just authorize a post-mortem examination without first seeking her family's consent. He first sought the approval of the PPP's senior vice chairman, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, for a post-mortem examination. Mr. Fahim told him that he was not in a position to give such an approval and asked him to wait for Zardari, who was on his way to Pakistan from Dubai. When Zardari arrived at Chaklala airbase, the request for permission was made to him, and he declined. The doctors noted that autopsies were not normally conducted at RGH, but rather at the District Headquarters Hospital, also in Rawalpindi. Nevertheless, Bhutto's body could have been moved to a different hospital for the post-mortem examination, or a pathologist from another hospital could have gone to Rawalpindi General Hospital.

So there were no credible reasons for failing to carry out an autopsy on Bhutto's body when it had already undergone invasive medical procedures (when the open heart massage had been carried out). Moreover, a post-mortem examination limited to a complete external examination and not involving any invasive surgery could have been carried out. Even that was not done in Bhutto's case. While one doctor did take a general look at the body, the doctors admit that this did not constitute a proper external post-mortem examination.

Strangely enough, Benazir Bhutto's remains were moved to the Pakistan Air Force base (Chaklala airbase) in Rawalpindi before Zardari's arrival from Dubai. The body was taken from the hospital around 2300 hours, on 27 December. The note signed by Zardari accepting his wife's remains is timed 0110 hours on 28 December. The UN Commission maintained in its report that if the police had been genuinely waiting for Zardari's

permission before conducting a post-mortem examination, they should have left Bhutto's body at the hospital. Instead, they moved it to Chaklala airbase, thereby rendering such an examination more difficult. When questioned about this, senior Punjab officials stated that the plan was to carry out the examination at the base, which also had medical facilities. Nevertheless, the fact that Bhutto's coffin was not taken where such medical facilities were available, but placed in a room at the base makes this assertion doubtful.

In short, Saud Aziz did not fulfill his legal obligation to order an autopsy. Having failed in that regard, he sought to cover up his failing by putting Asif Zardari in a situation designed to elicit his refusal for an autopsy:

Saud Aziz's further effort to cover his failings by writing a memo pinning blame on Mr. Zardari was highly improper. These factors taken together strongly suggest a preconceived effort to prevent a thorough examination of Ms. Bhutto's remains. Saud Aziz, an experienced senior police officer, refused to allow a post-mortem examination. He certainly knew the requirements of the law and the practice of law enforcement in such cases. He need not have waited for Zardari. He was, furthermore, aware of the importance and status of the person involved. All these factors together support the view held by many Pakistanis that Saud Aziz did not act independently in this matter. Saud Aziz's insistence on justifying his actions has made it difficult for the Commission to inquire any further and attempt to unearth who might have been behind the decision.

The News reported on 22 April 2010, almost a week after the inquiry report was made public: 'Sources said at least three officers, including the then Home Secretary, Punjab, Khusro Pervez, Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Rawalpindi, Saud Aziz and the then District Coordination Officer (DCO) Irfan Elahi told the Commission in their respective statements that Zardari had stopped the police from conducting the autopsy of Benazir Bhutto. The UN report did not give any importance to these statements but reprimanded the then CCPO Rawalpindi for not carrying out the autopsy, which under the law was to be carried out even if the heirs of the deceased did not agree.' (*The News* story pointed out that just three days after Bhutto's assassination, Asif Zardari had admitted at a press conference that he had declined a police request for a post-mortem: 'It was an insult to my wife, an insult to the sister of the nation, an insult to the mother of the nation. I know their forensic reports are useless. I refuse to give them her last remains.')

Under the Anti-Terrorism Act, when a terrorist offence has been committed, the establishment of a JIT is mandatory. The relevant provision is broad, defining a JIT as an investigation team involving one law enforcement agency working together with other agencies, either law enforcement or intelligence. The JIT investigating Bhutto's murder was headed by Abdul Majeed, additional IG, Punjab. In addition to police

officials from Punjab, the JIT included three senior members of the FIA—an explosives expert, a senior CID police officer of the rank of DIG and an expert on forensic photography—and nine middle-ranking police officers. At the time the JIT was established, AIG Majeed was out of the country and, for the first two days, the JIT was headed by the next senior police officer on the team, the DIG CID in Lahore, Mushtaq Ahmad Sukhera. DIG Sukhera and his team started work on 28 December 2007.

The UN Commission's report clearly states that Saud Aziz impeded the investigations of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT). On the evening of 28 December, when members of the JIT went to the Police Lines where they met Saud Aziz—

Rather than proceeding directly to the crime site, Saud Aziz laid out tea for the JIT investigators in a conference room. While the JIT members were still in the conference room, the television aired the press conference given by Brigadier Cheema. According to a credible source, at the end of the press conference, the CCPO rhetorically asked the JIT members what they intended to investigate, since the perpetrator had been identified. When the JIT members pressed to visit the crime scene, Saud Aziz, noting that it was already dark, stated instead that he would arrange for a visit to the scene in the morning. The source noted above interpreted these actions as a means of hindering the JIT investigators' access to the crime site.

On 29 December 2007, the following day, the JIT investigators returned to the Police Lines where they were able to inspect Ms. Bhutto's vehicle. They discovered early in their inspection that there was no blood or tissue on the escape hatch lever that would be consistent with the gaping injury to Ms. Bhutto's head, suggesting strongly to the investigators that Ms. Bhutto had not hit her head on the lever. Following that inspection, rather than taking the investigators directly to the crime scene, CCPO Saud Aziz hosted a lunch that went into the late afternoon, at the end of which he again, according to the same source cited above, indicated that it would be dark by the time the team arrived at the crime scene. It was only at around 1700 hours that the JIT investigators were taken to the crime scene at Liaquat Bagh.

The Commission found it inexplicable that the investigators were not in a position to conduct on-site investigations until two full days after the assassination. Such conduct further hampered the gathering of evidence and, at the very least, was contrary to best practices. Once at the scene, the investigators could see that it had been hosed down. Despite the late hour, they spent seven hours there. They followed the water current, including wading through the drainage sewer and collected evidence from the debris. They were able to recover one bullet casing from the drainage sewer, later established through forensic examination to have been fired from the pistol bearing the bombers

DNA. The JIT members left the scene around midnight. The Rawalpindi Police provided security for them, and the road was cordoned off during the entire time. The next day, the team returned to continue the search. Upon their request, the scene remained cordoned off and the road closed. They eventually recovered other evidence in the course of their crime scene examination, including the partial skull of the suicide bomber from atop one of the buildings near the site.

It was on 31 December 2007 that AIG Abdul Majeed returned from his trip and took charge of the JIT. This change at the JIT's helm resulted in a shift in the internal dynamics of the investigation. Abdul Majeed effectively sidelined the senior and more experienced officers who had started the investigations and dealt directly with the most junior investigators of the JIT. Two senior officers invited to join the JIT from the Sindh Police decided to return to Sindh after only two days with the JIT. Much of the work carried out by the JIT from this point was led by information Chaudhry Abdul Majeed had received from the intelligence agencies, which retained sole control over the sharing of information with the police, providing it on a selective basis.

Chaudhry Abdul Majeed then announced at a news conference in Rawalpindi, on 19 January 2008, that the Bhutto murder case had been solved!



Ill-fated First Family: Benazir's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto founder of the Pakistan People's Party, fourth President of Pakistan (1971-73) and first elected Prime Minister (1973-77), who was executed in 1979 during the regime of Gen Zia ul-Haq



Benazir's mother, Nusrat Bhutto, who lives a reclusive life in Dubai



Benazir's elder brother, Mir Murtaza who was shot dead in Karachi in 1996 while Benazir was in power.



Shahnawaz Bhutto, her younger brother, who died in France in mysterious circumstances in 1986



Sanam Bhutto, Benazir's younger sister and only surviving sibling, who lives in London

Photographs: Courtesy Bhutto Legacy Research Foundation



Before and After: Benazir as a student in Oxford, 1975, (*left*), and as Prime Minister of Pakistan, 1988 (*right*)



First foray into politics: A young Benazir with her father and Indira Gandhi at the Simla Summit, 1972



Enter Mrs Zardari: A radiant Benazir with Asif Ali Zardari at their wedding in 1987



Family man: Asif Zardari with his children, Bilawal, Bakhtawar and Asifa



Last homecoming: Benazir on the flight from Dubai to Karachi on 18 October 2007. Two months later, she fell to an assassin's bullets.



Thanking Allah at Karachi airport on 18 October



Return of the exile: Benazir leading a mammoth welcome procession on her return to Pakistan in October 2007



Tragedy strikes: Benazir being rescued from the truck after the first attempt on her life on 18 October 2007 in Karachi



A semi-conscious Benazir surrounded by party workers



Bloodbath in Karachi after the 18 October assassination attempt



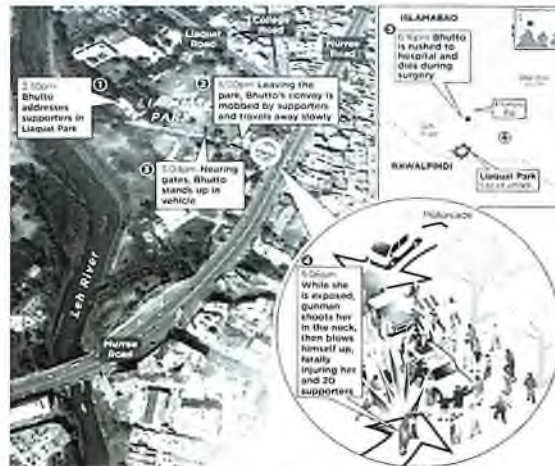
A human moment: Benazir applies lipstick as she prepares for the rally that led to her death



Waving goodbye to her supporters minutes before she was assassinated



Giving her last speech at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi, on 27 December 2007



Road to Liaquat Bagh: Timeline of Benazir Bhutto's death on 27 December



The crowd surrounding Bhutto's vehicle outside Liaquat Bagh. The suicide bomber can also be seen



Assassin's aim: The shooter targeting Benazir Bhutto



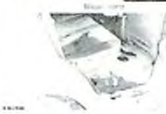
Another view of the suspected assassin in the crowd



Benazir's blood-spattered vehicle after the shooting



View of the sunroof lever that is believed to have caused the fatal injury, and interior of the car



A nation in mourning: Scene in Rawalpindi after the shooting

Information about Terrorists involved in Liaqat Bagh,
Rawalpindi Incident of 27th December 2007

Rs.1 Crore Cash Award



The public is hereby informed that the two individuals in the above photograph are the accused terrorists involved in the Liaqat Bagh, Rawalpindi Terror Attack, which resulted in the death of Mohanma Benazir Bhutto and others. The Government of Punjab has announced a Cash Award of Rs. 1 Crore for lead information and any solid evidence.

Any information about the identity of the terrorists and their collaborators shall be provided on the following phone numbers of CID Police, Rawalpindi:

051-5488455 / 051-5486586

The name and address of the person providing the information will be kept strictly confidential, and the cash award of Rs. 1 Crore will be awarded by the Government of Punjab

Cooperation of the General Public is requested
for dismantling of terrorist network.

Price on their heads: An official advertisement for the arrest of the suspected assassins



Faces of the accused



Weapon of crime: The pistol that was used to target Benazir Bhutto



Still in power: Benazir Bhutto meeting Afghan President Hamid Karzai in Islamabad, a few hours before she was killed

**The men behind
the scenes:**



Commander Baitullah Mehsud, who was accused by the Musharraf government of having masterminded the attack



Former IB DG Brig (retd)
Ejaz Hussain Shah



Former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry
Pervez Elahi

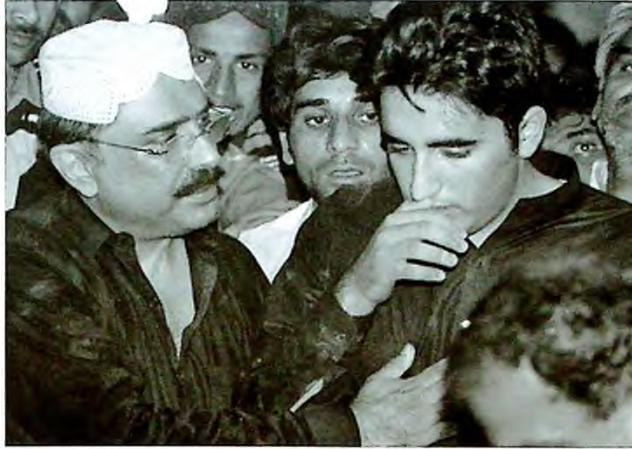


Former ISI DG Lt. Gen. (retd)
Hameed Gul

The three men Benazir Bhutto had named in her letter as those posing a threat to her life

Last journey:
The ambulance
carrying Benazir
Bhutto's coffin to
the burial site





Asif Zardari consoling son Bilawal at the funeral



Family in mourning: Benazir's children and relatives paying their last respects



The Bhutto murder site illuminated by her followers



A nation in mourning: Benazir's followers at her funeral. The Bhutto family graveyard can be seen in the background



Carrying forward the legacy: Asif Zardari and Bilawal

THE CREATION OF THE UN INQUIRY COMMISSION

THE UNITED NATIONS Inquiry Commission to probe the circumstances of Benazir Bhutto's murder was constituted by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, on 19 June 2009. By that time, General Pervez Musharraf had already been replaced by none other than Bhutto's husband Asif Ali Zardari as the President of the country. Ban Ki-moon announced that a three-member UN Commission led by Chile's permanent representative to the United Nations, Heraldo Munoz Valenzuela, would commence its six-month mandate on 1 July 2009.

The leadership of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had actually sought the formation of a UN Inquiry Commission with a view to ensuring a fair, free and impartial inquiry, which could not be influenced by the Musharraf regime. On 16 January 2008, Asif Ali Zardari, who had already been chosen co-chairman of the PPP after the murder of his wife, wrote a formal letter to Ban Ki-moon, urging him to set up a UN Commission to thoroughly investigate the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, to bring all those responsible, in whatever capacity or level, for this reprehensible act of terrorism to justice.

The letter was sent directly to the UN Secretary General after the Musharraf regime refused to forward it officially to him. Zardari's letter, along with supporting documents and annexure also apprised the UN Secretary General about the shifting stand of the regime with regard to the Bhutto assassination, the hosing down of available evidence and other supporting evidence that made it necessary to set up an independent international investigative commission under the auspices of the

The following is the full text of the letter:

The Honourable Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters

Request for the formation of a United Nations Investigation Commission into the assassination of Ms. Benazir Bhutto.

(a) In its meeting held on 22 October 2007, Security Council of the United Nations condemned the bomb attacks on Ms. Benazir Bhutto on 18 October 2007 in Karachi.

(b) In its meeting held on 27 December 2007 Security Council of the United Nations condemned the assassination of Ms. Benazir Bhutto on 27 December 2007 in Rawalpindi.

(c) Return of Ms. Bhutto to Pakistan on 18 October 2007

1. Ms. Benazir Bhutto, 'Daughter of the East' was Prime Minister of Pakistan and was the Chairperson of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the largest and most popular political party of Pakistan.

2. Ms. Bhutto after living in self-imposed exile in Dubai, UAE, decided to return to Pakistan on 18th October 2007 to lead her Party in the forthcoming General Elections.

3. On 16th October 2007 (2 days prior to her return to Pakistan) Ms. Bhutto wrote to President Musharraf that 'I have been informed by the Government that certain militant groups wanted to attack me. As such I wish to inform you of my grave concern regarding my security and I am specifying the sources and persons behind them whom I suspected were likely to harm me physically'.

4. Prior to her arrival in Pakistan Ms. Bhutto through her lawyer Senator Farooq H. Naek wrote many letters to the Government informing them of the need to provide security to Ms. Bhutto bearing in mind the 'very precarious and bad law and order situation in the country'.

5. Ms Bhutto wanted to import a bulletproof vehicle for her protection to be used by her when she arrives in Pakistan. No response was given by the Government to the request made by Ms. Bhutto's lawyer Senator Farooq H. Naek on her behalf in this regard. Consequently Ms. Bhutto was forced to move the Sindh High Court in order to compel the Government of Sindh to grant such a request.

6. Human Safety Foundation concerned about the threats made against the life of Ms. Bhutto on her return to Pakistan requested the Sindh High Court to direct that foolproof security be provided to Ms. Bhutto on her return. This request was granted by Sindh High Court vide order dated 11 October 2007 and it directed both the Federal and Provincial Governments to ensure security as prayed for, namely foolproof security and protection for Ms. Bhutto.

7. On 16th October 2007 Ms. Bhutto sent an email to her publicist in New York Mr. Mark Siegal expressing her apprehension for her security.

8. However the authorities failed and neglected to make adequate and proper arrangements for Ms. Bhutto's security on her return to Pakistan. This was notwithstanding the fact that as a former Prime Minister Ms. Bhutto was entitled to be provided by the State with adequate and foolproof security. The security requested was that considered appropriate in the circumstances of a returning exile of the major popular political party in Pakistan, committed to eradicating terrorism and promoting a secular mandate.

(d) Ms Bhutto narrowly escapes assassination on the day she returns to Pakistan on October 18th

1. The very day Ms. Bhutto returned to Pakistan, on 18th October 2007, she was subject to an assassination attempt through bomb attacks on the vehicle in which she was travelling, killing 179 people and wounding hundreds of others.

2. Ms Bhutto narrowly escaped being killed in this assassination attempt.

3. Under Pakistani law a criminal investigation is launched after the registration of a complaint known as a First Information Report (FIR).

4. Following the failed assassination attempt, Ms. Bhutto approached the relevant police station in order to register her FIR so that an inquiry could be started in connection with the attempt to murder her, which had already left hundreds dead and wounded.

5. In her proposed FIR Ms. Bhutto reiterated what she wrote in her letter dated 16th October 2007, namely, that she had informed him of the forces and persons behind the militant groups which she suspected were likely to harm her physically.

6. Instead of assisting Ms. Bhutto by registering and investigating under Ms. Bhutto's FIR the police refused to register Ms. Bhutto's FIR as they claimed that an FIR in respect of the incident had already been registered. The already registered FIR did not contain the names of the organizations and persons who Ms. Bhutto believed were behind elements out to cause her physical harm.

7. Under Pakistani law it is possible to register more than one FIR in respect of the same incident. Ms. Bhutto was therefore forced to approach the Court to permit her FIR to be registered so that her suspicions regarding her would-be assassins would be fully investigated.

8. On 5th November 2007 the District and Sessions Judge, Karachi East, on Ms. Bhutto's application ordered that her FIR be registered.

9. Notwithstanding the Court order the authorities again, rather than assisting Ms. Bhutto, went out of their way to ensure that her version of events would not be investigated by obtaining an ex pane order from the Sindh High Court staying the earlier Court order allowing the registration of Ms. Bhutto's FIR an event both perverse and extraordinary. The reaction indicates the politicized environment, making objective analysis by the government an impossibility.

10. To date no one has been apprehended in respect of this failed assassination attempt on Ms. Bhutto and the authority's investigation has been unhelpful.

11. Had the persons and organizations whom Ms. Bhutto suspected were behind those persons who wanted to cause her physical harm [been questioned] and had her FIR been registered and investigated then it is extremely unlikely that Ms. Bhutto would have been assassinated only 9 weeks later. The reasoning is simple; had the investigations been effective, the prospect of detaining those complicit would have reduced or even prevented the second unfortunate attempt.

(e) Continuation of inadequate security arrangements after 18 October assassination attempt.

1. Despite Ms. Bhutto's narrow escape on 18th October 2007 and the Court order to both the Federal and Provincial authorities to provide Ms. Bhutto with 'foolproof' security, Ms. Bhutto's security remained inadequate.

2. Senator Joseph Biden, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, along with 2 other Senators on Ms. Bhutto's request wrote to the Government of Pakistan shortly after the failed 18th October 2007 assassination attempt on Ms. Bhutto, urging the Government to give Ms. Bhutto the full level of security support afforded to any former Prime Minister, including bomb proof vehicles and jamming devices.

3. On 23rd October 2007 Ms. Bhutto's lawyer Senator Farooq H. Naek received a letter posted from Rawalpindi on 11th October 2007 written by the Head of Suicide Bombers and friend of al-Qaeda threatening to assassinate Ms. Bhutto. This letter was made public but the Government failed to pay any attention to it and took no proper or further steps to increase the quality and level of the security team. The position was that:

- a. The protection was not controlled by an effective security team.
- b. Any sensible government determined to protect a politically vulnerable leader would have immediately introduced close protection and the exclusion of direct ability for the public to approach the vehicle, which took the leader to and from political meetings.
- c. Equally there was no security protection by way of cordoning off the access for any potential assassin.
- d. The PPP had requested the jamming of mobile phones and other electronic equipment so as to hamper any potential bomber; that request was not acceded to by the government without any adequate reason.
- e. It is of concern that the scene of the crime was hosed down by government operatives, which prevents a proper investigation of the circumstances and lends suspicion as to the motives for the destruction of evidence.
- f. The government indicated at first, that Ms. Bhutto was not shot but apparently died as the result of banging the head upon the sunroof of the vehicle. That contradicted the evidence of those within the vehicle and television footage which shows a pistol shooting at Ms. Bhutto and making her reel from the impact of the shots. The Government itself recanted from such assertion, lending even more confusion.

4. On 23rd October 2007 Ms. Bhutto's Lawyer Senator Farooq H. Naek sent a letter to the Government of Sindh with copy endorsed to Federal Secretary, Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan requesting that foolproof security may be provided to Ms. Bhutto and she may be allowed to travel with her personal guards armed with licensed weapons in vehicles with colored/tinted glasses. The government vide letter dated 23rd October 2007 acknowledged the security concerns but failed and neglected to provide security as demanded. The provision of private security was pivotal and there is no obvious reason why it should not have been allowed.

5. On 24th October 2007 Ms. Bhutto's lawyer Senator Farooq H. Naek informed the Chief Justice of Pakistan about the letter which he had received threatening to attack Ms. Bhutto, and the other lapses of the Government in providing security to Ms. Bhutto, and asked him to take suo moto notice and thereby direct the Government of Pakistan to provide foolproof security to Ms. Bhutto. The Chief Justice of Pakistan failed to act on the request.

(f) Assassination of Ms. Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007

1. On 27th December, 2007, Ms. Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in Rawalpindi.

2. Security arrangements were so inadequate that one of Ms. Bhutto's killers was able to get within feet of Ms. Bhutto. According to a Russian newspaper report it is possible that multiple sniper teams were used to kill Ms. Bhutto using long range sniper rifles with laser guidance followed by rocket propelled grenades to destroy evidence of assassination as no evidence was found of a suicide bomber.

3. The Government of Pakistan in order to conceal their failure to protect Ms. Bhutto came up with the implausible explanation that the death of Ms. Bhutto was caused on account of her hitting her head on the lever of the sunroof of her vehicle. Such an implausible explanation is contrary to both video evidence of the assassination and eyewitness accounts.

4. Immediately after the incident the Government quickly washed the crime scene with water and blamed al-Qaeda and Commander Baitullah Mehsud for the assassination of Ms. Bhutto and relayed a conversation of 2 men discussing the assassination of Ms. Bhutto.

5. The fact that the crime scene was also not preserved is highly suspicious. It should be noted that when assassination attempts were made on other high-profile persons, crime scenes were preserved with the material being professionally investigated.

6. General Musharraf has expressed his dissatisfaction at the current investigation into Ms. Bhutto's assassination. Furthermore, in an interview with the US television network CBS, Musharraf admitted that Ms. Bhutto could have been shot. The disparity of good reason in itself demands an explanation.

The need for an independent international inquiry commission

1. The tragic murder of Ms. Bhutto is a national and international loss and leaves behind an indelible legacy – a pall of gloom and grief and a wave of anger both inside and outside Pakistan. Ms. Bhutto gave her life for democracy and to save Pakistan which is in danger of becoming a failed state riddled with extremists.
2. Ms. Bhutto's assassination has led to political instability in Pakistan. There is no leader in Pakistan who can be termed a leader of National standing having vast political and public support in the four provinces of Pakistan. Ms. Bhutto's assassination is a great setback to the unity of the federation.
3. The Government of Pakistan has already stated that al- Qaeda is involved in the assassination of Ms. Bhutto and allegedly has intercepts in support of this. According to the Government of Pakistan, al-Qaeda has bases and it operates from Afghanistan, which is a neighboring country, and other countries of the world.
4. It is imperative to discover the truth behind Ms. Bhutto's assassination. For instance, who planned it, in which countries were such plans made, and who financed and carried out the assassination?
5. The investigation process in Pakistan suffers from serious flaws and interference from powerful figures in the Establishment. Furthermore, they have neither the capacity nor the commitment to reach a satisfactory and credible conclusion, which is evident from the fact that the security services of Pakistan failed to provide adequate protection to Ms. Benazir Bhutto otherwise it would not have led to her assassination on 27 December 2007. Thus it is not possible for the security services of Pakistan to carry out either an impartial or credible investigation into the assassination of Ms. Bhutto which will lead to the truth being uncovered and bring the people who are behind this heinous crime to justice. Even detectives from Scotland Yard would not be able to reach any definite and credible conclusion as they are working with limited powers under the control, guidance and supervision of the Pakistani authorities, and with the inability to effectively access all of the evidence.
6. The family members of Ms. Bhutto and the people of Pakistan want to know the truth about her assassination so that the criminals, perpetrators, financiers and sponsors of this heinous crime are exposed and brought to justice as a mark of respect to the departed soul so that the sentiments and feelings of those concerned are given solace which, under the prevailing political situation,

in Pakistan, can only be achieved through the findings of an international investigation commission which is both impartial and whose findings will be credible to the family members of Ms. Bhutto and the people of Pakistan.

Advantage of the Inquiry Commission appointed by the UN Security Council

1. Such an Inquiry Commission will not be under the control of the Pakistani authorities and will report directly to the UN. As such its findings will be credible in the eyes of the Pakistani people who want to know the truth behind the assassination of Ms. Bhutto.

2. Such an independent inquiry is likely to help stabilize the precarious political situation in both Pakistan and the region as the people of Pakistan and the region will have confidence in such an Independent Inquiry. The UN Security Council is, therefore, called upon to constitute an international independent inquiry commission. A call for the constitution of such a commission has also been made by the International Crisis Group, a Brussels based HR think tank, and so also by Senator Arlen Specter of USA to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The UN itself has condemned the assassination of Ms. Benazir Bhutto, underlined the need to bring the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of this heinous crime to justice and has also confirmed its willingness to assist in the investigation of the assassination of Ms. Bhutto if requested by the Government of Pakistan. The Inquiry Commission should be mandated to investigate the circumstances leading up to the assassination of Ms. Bhutto and identify the perpetrators, financiers, conspirators, sponsors and/or organizations involved in the assassination of Ms. Bhutto with a view to bringing them to Justice.

On the failure of the Government of Pakistan to make a request to the UN Security Council for establishing an international investigative commission, the Security Council is hereby requested to invoke its suo moco powers to form an International Investigative Commission to be known as 'Ms. Benazir Bhutto Inquiry Commission', or any other name. In such circumstances, especially in the light of the aforementioned two Resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations, we humbly request that an International Investigation controlled by the United Nations be constituted forthwith to independently investigate the assassination of Ms. Bhutto and bring the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism to justice.

Asif Ali Zardari
Co-Chairman Pakistan People's Party

16 January 2008

In April 2009, almost fifteen months after Asif Zardari had sought the formation of the UN Commission, the UN Secretary General finally constituted the commission of inquiry to probe the circumstances of Benazir Bhutto's murder. Yet the UN spokesman was quick to make its mandate clear, in an official statement: 'In accordance with the agreed terms of reference, the United Nations Commission's mandate will be to inquire into the facts and circumstances of the murder. The duty of determining the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators of the murder remains with the Pakistani authorities. The Commission will submit its report to the UN Secretary General within six months of the commencement of its activities.' To a question regarding the mandate of the UN Commission, the spokesperson said the narrow mandate had been cleared by the Pakistani government. But many of Bhutto's associates were of the view that an internal effort to unravel the Bhutto murder mystery by the PPP government would produce more answers than the UN team could provide.

The United States, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, and Turkey jointly funded the UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate Benazir Bhutto's assassination, with Pakistan contributing an amount of \$5 million. However, while releasing the UN Commission's report in New York, Heraldo Munoz Valenzuela, the head of the three-member inquiry team, stated that the commission had utilized only half of the funds allocated for the inquiry.

On 17 July 2009, the United Nations Inquiry Commission formally initiated its investigation into the Bhutto murder by meeting security officials and discussing with them Islamabad's own probe into the gory act of terrorism. The UN team also called on President Zardari besides holding separate meetings with the interior minister, Rehman Malik, and the foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Briefing newsmen about the meeting, the President's spokesman, Farhatullah Babar, said that at the outset the Pakistani President welcomed the team and thanked the UN and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for setting up the commission. The President reiterated the rationale behind the decision of the government to request a UN probe and said that the mission was faced with a challenging and onerous task.

'We decided to approach the United Nations because first of all we wanted transparent and above board investigations so that there are no accusations of bias. We also wanted to unearth any conspiracy to balkanize Pakistan, and let the world know how a democratic leader heroically laid down her life to foil the designs against the country and, thereby, to honor her internationally,' Zardari reportedly told the members of the UN Commission.

While addressing a news conference in Islamabad on 18 July 2009, the head of the three-member UN team, vowed to bring out the truth about the Bhutto murder case, but not

without making it clear that it would not seek to name the culprits. 'The Commission of Inquiry would ensure that its final report clearly establishes the truth regarding the facts and circumstances of the assassination of Ms. Bhutto. But if you think that there will be smoking guns in terms of names, our job is not that. Our mandate is to look into the facts and circumstances of the assassination of the former prime minister and the mandate does not include a criminal investigation,' he added.

The press conference by the head of the UN Inquiry Commission invited the wrath of the Pakistani media, with many leading national newspapers stating in their editorials that the murder investigation, which would cost Pakistan \$5 million, would be a waste of time and money if the commission only investigated the circumstances leading to the assassination and did not fix responsibility. One such editorial,⁸ stated:

The futility of asking the United Nations to investigate Benazir Bhutto's murder has now become obvious, with the probe team chief saying it would fix no 'criminal liability'. Then what is the probe all about?

. . . After all, the aim of every investigation into an act of crime is to find out who committed it and give justice to the guilty. As he defined it at his press conference, the UN Commission chief Heraldo Munoz said that the mandate of his mission was limited to determining the facts and circumstances of the murder and that the mandate does not include a criminal investigation. This means we have asked the UN to conduct a costly non-probe that in the end is programmed to prove nothing. We are also reminded of the investigation by Scotland Yard, whose finding limited itself to determining the cause of Ms. Bhutto's death. Again, the all-important question—Who killed Benazir Bhutto?—remained unanswered. . .

The Muslim world's first woman prime minister was killed at a time when the PPP was not in power. The party's demand that the UN should investigate the Pakistani icon's murder was indicative of its lack of trust in the Musharraf government. However, even after it came to power after the February 2008 election, the PPP still had a resolution passed by the National Assembly asking the world body to investigate what indeed was a crime that had stunned the world. One could understand the UN investigating the Rafik Hariri murder case. He was anti-Syrian, and Damascus had troops and influence in Lebanon. A situation like this did not exist in Pakistan on 27 December 2007. Before the assassins struck, Benazir had written a letter to Musharraf naming the persons she thought wanted to assassinate her. Indeed given her lineage and gender, she had reason to suspect that, with the elections approaching, the powerful lobby well-entrenched in the Pakistani Establishment since General Zia ul Haq's days

⁸ See 'A Costly Non-Probe, *Dawn*, 20 July 2009.

could eliminate her. Benazir's murder was a crime against a Pakistani citizen committed on Pakistani soil. For that reason, there is no alternative to a high-level investigation by Pakistan itself.

On 15 September 2009, President Asif Zardari conceded, at a dinner meeting with senior newsmen, that foreign powers with an interest in the South Asian region had guaranteed a safe exit to his predecessor, and he too had been party to the deal that was struck at the time of President Pervez Musharraf's resignation in 2008. A belated denial issued by the presidential spokesman two days after Zardari's meeting with the media people claimed that his remarks had been distorted and misrepresented. However, many journalists who had attended the presidential dinner-meeting insisted that President Zardari did talk in detail about the safe exit deal, which envisaged Musharraf playing golf in his post-presidential life.

In November 2009, making a U-turn on his earlier stance that no outside agency had any legal ground to question him, General Musharraf finally appeared before the UN Inquiry Commission. Earlier, following his refusal to be interviewed, the three-member commission had actually warned Musharraf that the UN Secretary General would be informed he was not cooperating with the inquiry commission. Once the commission formally asked the Pakistan government to arrange a meeting with him, Musharraf changed his rigid stance, saying he had no objection to meeting the UN Commission but would not record his statement. While being interviewed by the commission in Philadelphia on 27 October 2009, Musharraf refuted reports of his involvement in Bhutto's murder, adding that the people who had been involved in multiple attempts on his life in Rawalpindi in December 2003 were involved in the assassination of the slain PPP chairperson.

On 31 December 2009, the Pakistani media reported that the country's top military leadership and the ISI chief had declined permission to the members of the UN Commission to question the khaki top brass regarding Bhutto's murder. Quoting the Online News Agency, a Pakistani newspaper, *The Nation*, reported that through a letter to the federal government, the head of the UN Commission, Heraldo Munoz Valenzuela, had sought access to the Chief of Army Staff General Kayani, the ISI chief Ahmed Shuja Pasha, the former director general of the ISI, Lieutenant General Nadeem Taj, and the former director general of Military Intelligence, Major General Nadeem Ijaz.

On 7 January 2010, *The Nation* reported that the interior minister, Rehman Malik, had said in Islamabad that the Pakistan Army had nothing to do with Bhutto's murder and the UN Inquiry Commission would never be allowed to question the country's military top brass. Nevertheless, on 18 February 2010, the UN Inquiry Commission was finally allowed to question the former director general of the Intelligence Bureau, Brigadier (retd) Ejaz Hussain Shah (who had been officially responsible for protecting Bhutto),

mainly on two counts—firstly, about the arrangements he had made for Bhutto's security, and secondly, why she had named him in her letter as someone who could hurt her.

Almost a week later, President Asif Zardari, as the supreme commander of the armed forces, allowed the UN Commission to interview the army chief the ISI chief and others, in connection with Bhutto's murder. Talking to local journalists in Islamabad on 24 February 2010, the presidential spokesman quoted Zardari as saying that the nation awaited the findings of the commission and wanted to know the motive behind the assassination, and that, 'the stature of Ms. Benazir Bhutto called for an independent, transparent and above-board investigation so that no accusation of bias of any kind could be made by any circle. The terms of reference of the UN Commission clearly stated that it can interview anyone, including the military leadership.'

On 26 February 2010, quoting unnamed military sources *The News* reported that, 'It has already been agreed that only the head of the UN Commission would call on the military leadership. In fact the Army leadership had made a request to the government for meeting the UN team. The military leadership had made the request to ensure the outcome of the investigations must not remain inconclusive and that all the facts are brought to the front. Therefore, it is misleading to say that anyone from the government side had directed the military top brass to meet the UN Commission.'

On 14 December 2009, UN Secretary General Ban Ki- moon had announced that he was extending the mandate of the UN Commission investigating the Bhutto murder by another three months, as its head had sought more time to complete the work. (The commission was to have submitted its report to the UN Secretary General by 31 December 2009.)

On 13 March 2010, the Federal Investigation Agency sought more time to finalize the Bhutto murder investigations, while stating before the anti-terrorism court that it was waiting for the inquiry report of the UN Commission. Putting off the hearing, the ATC judge, Malik Mohammad Akram Awan, directed the FIA to submit a complete investigation report on the five (arrested) accused in the Bhutto murder, as the trial could not be halted for an indefinite period. An official of the FIA submitted before the court that the complete investigation report could only be furnished after the UN Commission concluded its investigations, and presented its report to the UN Secretary General, on 31 March 2010.

On 30 March 2010, the United Nations spokesman announced a delay in releasing Bhutto's murder inquiry report: 'The UN Secretary General has accepted an urgent request by the President of Pakistan to delay the presentation of the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the assassination of the former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto until 15 April 2010. The Commission

has informed the Secretary General that, as of today, all relevant facts and circumstances have been explored, and the report is now complete and ready to be delivered. No one other than the UN Commission member has seen the report. This is a technical delay and the Commission has not asked nor has it been given an extension so far.'

In Islamabad, the Pakistani presidential spokesman, Farhatullah Babar, was quoted as saying: 'The country had requested the delay so the UN Commission could attempt to question two heads of state who . . . had called Ms. Bhutto before her death warning her of "serious threats to her life",'

On 1 April 2010, *The News* reported in a front page story titled, 'Why Zardari Delayed UN Report', that President Zardari had quietly given the names of four international personalities (who had warned Bhutto)—former US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, Saudi Arabia's intelligence chiefs Prince Muqrان, and the UAE's interior minister, Sheikh Saif bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan—to the UN Inquiry Commission, so that enquiries could be made to ascertain how they knew in advance that Benazir Bhutto would be killed. The news story stated that the UN Commission had now been requested to first meet these four witnesses before submitting its report on Benazir Bhutto's assassination:

With this new information, the mystery finally stands resolved . . . [as to] which two friendly countries had actually warned Benazir about a possible attempt on her life before she decided to return to Pakistan. These countries were the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, whose intelligence agencies' chiefs had actually warned the PPP chairperson against threats to her life. Generally, it was believed that apart from the UAE, the other friendly country was Iran. But now it has been revealed that this was Saudi Arabia's intelligence chief Prince Muqrان bin Abdul Aziz who had warned the former Pakistani prime minister about threats to her life. . . .

After receiving the names of four new indirect witnesses from Islamabad, the UN Commission is making contact with them to ask how they already knew about the threats to Bhutto's life. President Zardari believed that inside information to be shared by these four personalities might greatly help the UN Inquiry Commission to identify the real killers whose secret plans somehow reached the intelligence agencies of Afghanistan, USA, UAE and Saudi Arabia, and which turned [out] to be prophetically correct. Talking to *The News*, the presidential spokesman Farhatullah Babar has already confirmed that the Pakistan government wanted three friendly countries to share their information with the United Nations . . . He said: 'We want the comments of the three friendly governments [which had warned Benazir of plots to assassinate her upon her return home] included in the UN report. One government has shared its

perspective with the UN Commission and we hope the other two governments will also share their perspective. That hopefully will help the UN Commission in its task. Hence the two-week delay.'

On 2 April 2010, *The News* claimed in a front page story titled, 'UN, Pakistan at Odds Over Benazir Murder Report', that the United Nations and the Pakistani government were on completely different pages as the UN had already rejected Pakistan's request to reopen the Bhutto murder probe, saying there was no need for including any further information as the report was complete and comprehensive. The report then quoted Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi as saying:

The statements from Saudi Arabia, UAE and Afghanistan would provide valuable leads. For example, if there is a puddle outside my office, and I tell you to be careful when you leave, how do I know? Similarly, it would give the report more credibility if the three important statements are also recorded. My sources tell me that three countries—Saudi Arabia, UAE and Afghanistan—have important information. I believe only one country had been approached. What we are saying is simple, 'Please don't overlook the statements from these three countries, as these were the three countries that had important information and that is why they had warned Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. What we are saying is: please don't overlook these three warnings.'

The News report added:

The UN spokesman, Martin Nesirky, has already made it clear to the international media at a briefing that the Bhutto murder inquiry report was complete and that there was no need to include any further information. Asked whether the UN Commission would reopen investigations . . . to include the version of the foreign governments in the report, Martin Nesirky said: 'The commissioners have seen a considerable amount of relevant information, including what has been in the news media in the recent days. After conferring in the light of the latest information, they continue to say that they have completed their work.'

The three-member UN Inquiry Commission that investigated the events and circumstances surrounding the assassination of Benazir Bhutto finally released its report on 15 April 2010.

UN COMMISSION BLAMES MUSHARRAF REGIME

ALTHOUGH THE COMMISSION did not directly accuse any functionary of the Musharraf regime of complicity in the murder, the sixty-five-page UN report, prepared after a nine-month-long inquiry, squarely blamed the Musharraf regime (particularly its police and security network), for its criminal negligence, which in turn led to the tragic assassination.

The commission conducted over 250 interviews, met Pakistani officials and private citizens, foreign citizens with knowledge of the events in Pakistan and members of the Scotland Yard team that had earlier investigated some aspects of the assassination. It also reviewed hundreds of documents, videos, photographs and other documentary material provided by the federal and provincial authorities and others.

If there was one definite conclusion that could be drawn from the UN Commission's report, it was this: Benazir Bhutto was left at the mercy of her killers. General Pervez Musharraf obviously did not pull the trigger or detonate the bomb that killed her, but on reading between the lines of the UN report it became abundantly clear that his administration did little to protect a daring woman who was perceived as a threat to his power and primacy. Paragraph after paragraph of the UN Commission's inquiry report referred to the lack of cooperation that its investigative team experienced at the hands of preeminent figures in the Pakistani Establishment. The commission report said its team members were mystified by the efforts of certain high-ranking Pakistani government officials to obstruct access to military and intelligence sources.

The UN Commission report declared that Bhutto's assassination could have been prevented if adequate security measures had been taken by the Musharraf regime:

The responsibility for Ms. Bhutto's security on the day of her assassination rested with the federal government, the government of Punjab and the Rawalpindi District Police. None of these entities took the necessary measures to respond to the extraordinary, fresh and urgent security risks that they knew she faced. The federal government under General Musharraf; although fully aware of and tracking the serious threats to Ms. Bhutto, did little more than pass on those threats to her and to provincial authorities and were not proactive in neutralizing them or ensuring that the security provided to her was commensurate with the threats. This is especially grave given the attempt on her life in Karachi when she returned to Pakistan on 18 October 2007.

The Commission added that the Rawalpindi District Police's acts of omission and commission in the immediate aftermath of Bhutto's assassination, including the hosing down of the crime scene and the dilute to collect and preserve evidence, proved highly detrimental to the investigation:

The investigation into Ms. Bhutto's assassination, and those who died with her, lacked direction, was ineffective and suffered from a lack of commitment to identify and bring all of the perpetrators to justice . . . Ms. Bhutto faced threats from a number of sources; these included al-Qaeda, the Taliban, local jehadi groups and potentially from elements in the Pakistani Establishment. Yet the UN Commission found that the investigation focused on pursuing lower level operatives and placed little to no focus on investigating those further up the hierarchy in the planning, financing and execution of the assassination.

Dispelling a popular Pakistani conspiracy theory, the head of the UN Commission said at a press conference after the release of the UN report that there was no evidence to suggest President Zardari had been involved in the murder of his wife. Yet the UN report offered encouragement to other conspiracy theories: 'While [Bhutto] died when a fifteen-and-a-half-year-old suicide bomber detonated his explosives near her vehicle, no one believes that this boy acted alone.' The report casts doubts on the official conclusion reached by the Musharraf regime—supported by the Scotland Yard detectives—that Baitullah Mehsud, then head of Pakistan's Taliban militants, was behind the killing.

The UN Commission's report reiterated, time and again, that it was the duty of the state to provide security for its citizens, especially when several threats against a high-profile target like Benazir Bhutto had been clearly identified. In a precise and methodical manner, it proceeded to expose the huge gaps and flaws in the pitiful security arrangements that were made by the federal and Punjab governments. In particular, the report was critical of the lack of coordination among the different agencies entrusted with the task of protecting Bhutto. Apart from the element of criminal conspiracy and the duplicitous attempts at a cover-up, the report underlined the woeful level of motivation, professionalism and competence in the Pakistani Police at every level.

Mindful of the complex security situation in Pakistan and of the threats against her, Bhutto and her aides had made frequent and specific requests to federal and provincial governments to augment her security. They asked for bulletproof vehicles and vests, frequency jammers, permission to use tinted windows for her vehicles, and additional trained security personnel as well as the Pakistani Rangers to protect her entourage and her residences. One of Bhutto's first requests had been for permission to be accompanied by foreign security personnel when she returned to Pakistan from exile.

But General Musharraf rejected the request on national sovereignty grounds, saying foreign security personnel could not be allowed on Pakistani soil. Just before Bhutto

returned to Pakistan, the government offered her two candidates to take charge of her personal protection and, more importantly, for liaising with the Pakistani authorities. She chose Major (ret'd) Imtiaz Ahmed, a senior superintendent of the Punjab Police whom she trusted, as he had served with her during her tenure as prime minister, between 1993 and 1996. The ISI also offered three other candidates, according to the ISI deputy director general, Major General Nusrat Naeem, but Bhutto turned them down.

Major Imtiaz Ahmed was the only permanent security officer that she was provided by the government. His main role was to be with Bhutto at all times and to liaise with the local administration and police. He also made requests to the federal and provincial authorities for specific security support such as jammers, bulletproof vehicles and vests and trained police personnel to escort Bhutto's entourage. Major Imtiaz Ahmed did not receive adequate support from the government to carry out his duties effectively. No support staff was assigned to him by the government; nor did it accede to many of his specific requests.

The UN Commission found that the federal government did not have a comprehensive security plan to protect Bhutto. It also failed to vest responsibility for her security in a specific federal official, entity or organization. Instead, the federal government expected provincial authorities to provide her with foolproof security, but did not issue the necessary, specific and detailed instructions commensurate with the threats, and never followed up to ensure that effective measures were undertaken. She was treated in a discriminatory manner in comparison to other ex-prime ministers. Despite being informed of the many threats to her safety, the provincial authorities, particularly in Punjab, failed to strengthen Bhutto's security.

The responsibility for her security rested with Musharraf's government, but she believed that it could not be trusted. Asif Ali Zardari was, therefore, deeply involved in planning Bhutto's security for her return to Pakistan, and both Bhutto and he relied, to a significant extent, on the people close to them. The PPP leadership, too, made its own security arrangements to augment whatever level of protection the government afforded her in each of the provinces, but focused attention particularly on Sindh and Punjab Provinces, with the initial focus being on Sindh.

The security arrangements for Bhutto's return to Karachi were organized by Zulfiqar Mirza (a former army doctor and currently the home minister of Sindh), who headed the PPP's reception committee in Karachi, to welcome her from exile. Mirza was supported by Siraj Durrani who, like Mirza, was a PPP leader from Sindh. They were soon joined by Major General (ret'd) Ahsan Ahmed, who was appointed to head the PPP's security committee for Bhutto's arrival. Mirza and Durrani, however, continued to function as the primary people responsible for Bhutto's security in Karachi. Mirza oversaw the construction of a bulletproof truck for Bhutto and her entourage to use, in the procession planned from Karachi airport to the mausoleum of Jinnah.

Mirza and Durrani drew volunteers from the PPP's student wings and organized them into the Jaan Nisarane Benazir (JNB). According to the organizers, the JNB numbered around 5,000, of whom about 2,000 were in uniform and formed the human chain around Bhutto's truck on 18-19 October. The UN Commission of Inquiry was told by Zulfiqar Mirza that he and some of the JNB volunteers were armed. The remaining three thousand were posted at key points along the procession route to deter potential troublemakers. Combined with the Sindh Police security cover, the PPP security arrangements formed a formidable barrier. Despite this, two blasts rocked the procession. Most of those killed were JNB volunteers, and Bhutto credited them with saving her life when her convoy was attacked in Karachi.

After that, the PPP leadership reviewed the security arrangements for their leader. In the light of the threat against her, Mirza and Durrani decided that a core group of 250-300 JNB volunteers would always travel with Bhutto throughout Sindh. A smaller number of them were also sent, on two occasions, to the Punjab Province as added protection, although they did not accompany her to Liaquat Bagh, where Bhutto held her last public meeting. The PPP's security for Bhutto in Punjab was not as elaborate as in Sindh, partly due to a lack of leadership and the absence of a JNB-like corps. Even so, Bhutto was surrounded by two groups of PPP security throughout her travels in Punjab. These groups also accompanied her to Peshawar and Azad Kashmir, the Pakistani administered part of Kashmir.

One group of PPP security comprised fourteen unarmed men under the leadership of Chaudhry Aslam, who coordinated his activities with Major Imtiaz Ahmed and Tauqir Kaira, the leader of the second group. These men travelled with Bhutto's entourage in Islamabad, Punjab, Peshawar and Azad Kashmir. Their main task was to form a security cordon around Bhutto. All were PPP activists who had been with her since 1986. The other group of PPP security around Bhutto was led by Tauqir Kaira, whose men were armed.

Khaled Shahenshah, a staunch PPP activist since his student days, accompanied Bhutto on her travels in Pakistan and served as her personal bodyguard. (He was killed in Karachi by unidentified men a few months after Bhutto's murder.) Her convoy included two main vehicles—an armoured white Toyota Land Cruiser and a bulletproof black Mercedes-Benz car and other vehicles for security staff and senior PPP leaders. She would choose one of the main vehicles for a trip, and the other would accompany it as the decoy and backup vehicle.

As part of Bhutto's hectic campaign schedule, she was to address a public meeting on 27 December 2007 at Liaquat Bagh, in Rawalpindi, a city of three million people in the province of Punjab, about thirty kilometers from Islamabad. The Pakistani Army is headquartered there. Liaquat Bagh is bordered by Liaquat Road to the north, Murree Road

to the east, and Press Club Road to the south. Adjacent to Liaquat Bagh, on the Liaquat Road side, an outer gate leads to a general parking area; and a second, inner gate, leads to a VIP parking area.

The Rawalpindi District Police prepared a written security plan on 26 December to cover the two political meetings scheduled to take place the next day, one of which was at Liaquat Bagh (a PPP event, in which Bhutto was to participate), and the other, at Gujar Khan (organized by the PML-N, which Nawaz Sharif was to attend). The security plan for Bhutto was more complex in that it envisaged security for her convoy by an Elite Force unit under the supervision of the assistant superintendent of police, Ashfaq Anwar, which was to establish a box formation around Bhutto's vehicle when it was on the move. During the course of the investigations by the UN Commission, the police said that the Elite Force unit formed a box around Bhutto's vehicle at the Faizabad junction, which is the jurisdictional limit between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The commission, however, believed that this did not occur.

The security plan listed a number of police officers responsible for various sectors in and around Liaquat Bagh. SSP Yaseen Farooq was responsible for overall supervision and was assisted by SP Khurram Shahzad. A command post was to be established at a building on the edge of Liaquat Bagh, called Rescue 15, which was used by local emergency services. CCPO Saud Aziz, the police chief of Rawalpindi, DCO Irfan Elahi and members of the intelligence agencies were present at the command post during the meeting. The security plan provided for two security cordons at the PPP event: an inner cordon securing Liaquat Bagh and an outer cordon covering the area surrounding Liaquat Bagh, including Liaquat and Murree Roads.

According to the plan 1,371 police officers were to be deployed at Liaquat Bagh. Three walk-through gates with metal detectors were placed at the public entrances to the park. The plan also provided for the deployment of police constables on the rooftops of the buildings surrounding Liaquat Bagh. According to the security plan, these constables were supposed to carry automatic rifles and binoculars. However, none of the seven constables interviewed by the UN Commission had binoculars; they were not even aware that they were supposed to have carried them. The police were also expected to conduct random searches of people attending the meeting. According to the police, the park was closed to the public by the Special Branch, who swept it for explosives and handed it over to the police at 0700 hours on 27 December.

The UN Commission declared that an effective security plan had not been formulated, nor adequate measures instituted to better safeguard Bhutto. The evidence available from various sources raised questions regarding the number of police officers deployed at Liaquat Bagh at the time and the nature of the duties allocated to them, as the emphasis had been more on crowd control and related issues. Also, there were several loopholes in various other matters related to the implementation of the security plan.

At about 1516 hours on 27 December 2007, Bhutto's convoy reached the main gate of Liaquat Bagh. But it had to wait for a few minutes before it was opened, and Bhutto remained standing at the escape hatch of her vehicle. As to the reason for the delay in opening the gate, while the PPP asserted that the police did not have the key, the police said that they did not want the large crowd following Bhutto to get into the VIP parking area. Altogether, Bhutto who had appeared from the escape hatch continued to stand there for approximately twenty minutes, the time that it took to drive from the Murree Road-Liaquat Road junction to the gate of the parking area. This calls into question the claim of the Rawalpindi District Police that they were surprised when Benazir Bhutto emerged from the escape hatch on her way out of Liaquat Bagh, shortly before she was killed.

Once the convoy passed through the inner gate, at about 1531 hours, it drove through the VIP parking area to the rear of the stage. At least the following three vehicles were in the VIP parking area: Bhutto's Land Cruiser, Kaira's lead vehicle and the black bulletproof Mercedes-Benz car. Temporary wooden stairs had been built to facilitate access to the rear of the stage directly from the parking area. Bhutto climbed the stairs, went to the stage to wave to the crowd, and then took her seat before her last public address. Near the rear of the stage, a scuffle broke out between some PPP workers and the police, who tried to prevent them from climbing onto the stage, and this created tension between the PPP workers and the police officers posted in that area.

The accounts given to the UN Commission by the PPP representatives and the police with regard to the magnitude and nature of this event differed significantly. The police version was that the dispute was a minor one and was settled immediately, whereas some of the local PPP supporters claimed it was serious and led to bitter reactions from the police during the rest of the rally. They said that the police felt insulted and became more passive in carrying out their security-related duties. The UN Commission found that the police had indeed been passive, and felt that if the Rawalpindi District Police had reduced their level of involvement and alertness as a result of wounded pride, their conduct was unprofessional.

The public gathering concluded and, at about 1710 hours, Benazir Bhutto descended the wooden stairs and entered her Land Cruiser. The black bulletproof Mercedes-Benz car carrying the three PPP leaders, Rehman Malik, Babar Awan and Farhatullah Babar, was the first to hurriedly leave the parking area, although as the backup vehicle, the Mercedes-Benz would have been an essential element of Bhutto's convoy on the return trip. Kaira's vehicle was the next to leave the inner parking area after the Mercedes-Benz, with Benazir Bhutto's vehicle right behind it, followed by another of Kaira's vehicles. The two Vigo pickup trucks then followed from the outer parking area located between the inner and outer gates.

At 1712 hours, Bhutto's armoured Land Cruiser exited from the outer gate. Crowds of people who were already on Liaquat Road drew closer to the vehicle as it began to turn right onto Liaquat Road. In addition, many people left the venue of the rally, swelling the crowd around the Land Cruiser, contrary to the police assertion that they did not allow anyone to leave the park before the departure of Bhutto's convoy. She emerged through the escape hatch of the vehicle and started waving to her supporters. When the vehicle approached the central road divider, it was slowed further by the crowd.

Questions remain as to the nature of the crowd that gathered around the Land Cruiser. The passengers in the Land Cruiser and some local PPP members recalled that they were mostly PPP workers, and they did not see any strangers or anyone moving suspiciously among them. The Rawalpindi District Police and other PPP members, however, suggested that a group of people had deliberately stood in front of the Land Cruiser to prevent it from moving. Regardless of the accuracy of either account, the police did not control the crowd effectively, outside Liaquat Bagh. As a result, the attacker was able to get as close as he did to Bhutto's vehicle.

The Rawalpindi Police authorities and some PPP workers disputed the exact exit route agreed upon for Bhutto's convoy. The Rawalpindi District Police and District Coordination Officer (DCO) Elahi claimed that the convoy was to turn right onto Liaquat Road and then left onto Murree Road, retracing its entry route. Only in case of an emergency was the convoy to make a left turn after exiting from the outer gate; and the decision to take the emergency route had to be made by the senior police officer in charge of security, on the scene.

Some local PPP workers who had attended the preparatory meeting with the police questioned this. They claimed that the original plan was to make a left turn onto Liaquat Road and that the minutes of the meeting provided by the DCO, which did not indicate this left turn, were inaccurate. In any event, photographs show two stationary police vehicles on Liaquat Road blocking the left-side drive lane where the left turn would have been made. As a result, even in an emergency, it would have been impossible for Bhutto's convoy to make a left turn and use the escape route unless those vehicles were quickly moved. Most of these were the official vehicles of senior Rawalpindi Police officers, and the UN Commission found it irresponsible that these vehicles were parked in such a way as to block the emergency exit route.

The Rawalpindi District Police told the UN Commission that police vehicles from the Elite Force unit, headed by ASP Ashfaq Anwar, were waiting outside the outer gate to escort Bhutto's convoy, and that they were about to go into a protective box formation when the attack on Bhutto took place. The commission, however, concluded that at that point such a maneuver was impracticable given the narrow width of Liaquat Road and the number of people who had already started to surround Bhutto's vehicle. In any event, video footage showed very few uniformed police on the scene available to push

back the crowd to create space for the box formation. Furthermore, the Elite Force unit was not in position to go into a box formation. The unit was in place neither for the entry nor the exit of the convoy and did not afford the protection it was tasked with, thus failing spectacularly in its duty. Overall, video and photographic materials as well as the UN Commission's interviews established that there were very few police deployed outside the outer gate and on Liaquat Road as Bhutto's convoy attempted to depart from the scene.

From the exit, Bhutto's Land Cruiser started to make a right turn onto Liaquat Road. As it slowly approached the central divider on Liaquat Road, the crowd began chanting slogans. There is some dispute over whether Bhutto made the decision to stand up, on her own, or was urged to do so. Before she stood up, Bhutto asked Naheed Khan to make a phone call to Nawaz Sharif the PML-N leader, to convey her condolences on the death of some of his supporters who had been shot during the PML-N rally earlier that day. It had been reported that supporters of the PML-N and those of the PML-Q parties had been involved in the shooting incident. While Khan was trying to reach Sharif Bhutto placed her hand on the cell phone and told her to call him later. She then asked Senator Abbasi, who was sitting in the rear seat, to chant slogans to the crowd using the vehicle's loudspeaker.

Bhutto then stood on the seat and appeared through the escape hatch, with her head and shoulders exposed. She waved to the crowd. And the vehicle continued to make a slow right turn into Liaquat Road. At this point, a man wearing dark glasses appeared in the crowd, on the left side of the Land Cruiser. According to the UN Commission's findings, at around 1714 hours, while the vehicle was turning right, the man pulled out a pistol, and from a distance of approximately two to three meters, fired three shots at Benazir Bhutto. After the third shot was fired, the gunman lowered the gun, looked down, and then detonated the explosives in his jacket.

At the time of the suicide blast, the gunman was near the left rear corner of the vehicle. Video footage showed that at the time of the explosion, the Land Cruiser was still making the right turn. According to the video analysis conducted by Scotland Yard, the three shots were fired in less than one second. The UN Commission also examined video footage taken from the back. It showed Bhutto's white *dupatta* (which was covering her head), and her hair flick upwards after the second shot. Her aides insisted that she instantly fell down into the vehicle after the second shot was fired as she was most probably hit. According to the UN Commission, however, there was no evidence of a link between the second shot and her fall.

Benazir Bhutto was received by the Accident and Emergency Department of the Rawalpindi General Hospital at around 1735 hours. In the resuscitation room, she was

treated by Dr. Saeeda Yasmin. The hospital staff was already busy in the resuscitation room, treating victims of the shooting at Nawaz Sharif's rally, earlier that day.

Dr. Saeeda told the UN Commission that Bhutto was pale, unconscious, and not breathing. There was a wound to the right side of her head from which blood was trickling and whitish matter was visible. Her clothes were soaked in blood. Dr. Saeeda immediately began efforts to resuscitate her. Dr. Aurangzeb Khan, the senior registrar, subsequently joined Dr. Saeeda and assisted her. Both the doctors said that they did not observe any other injury. As there was no improvement in Bhutto's condition, she was moved to the Emergency Operating Theatre and efforts to resuscitate her were continued. At around 1750 hours, Professor Mohammad Mussadiq Khan, the hospital's senior physician, arrived and took over. The doctors still had not detected a pulse. At 1757 hours, in a last bid to revive her, Professor Mussadiq Khan opened her chest and carried out open heart massage. But the effort proved futile.

At 1816 hours, Dr Mussadiq Khan stopped the resuscitation efforts and declared Benazir Bhutto dead. He ordered all the men to leave the room so that the female doctors and nurses could clean the body of the slain PPP chairperson. Dr. Qudsiya Anjum Qureshi cleaned Benazir Bhutto's head, neck and upper body and checked her body for further injury. 'She saw no wounds other than the one to the right side of her head and the thoracotomy wound. Bhutto was next dressed in hospital clothing and her clothes given to her maid,' the UN Commission's report added.

Many were critical of the report and pointed out that on certain matters where it was obligatory for the UN Commission to establish what the facts were, it simply failed to do so or, perhaps, just ignored the matter. For example, Benazir Bhutto's cell phone was a vital piece of evidence, but no question was asked about it. The UN report only mentioned the cell phone with Naheed Khan, and notes: 'Before she stood up in the vehicle, Ms. Bhutto asked Ms. Khan to make a phone call to Mr. Nawaz Sharif to convey condolences for the deaths of some of his supporters . . . [but then] stopped her.' If this was the cell phone being used by Bhutto, the UN Commission was in a position to find important leads that could have helped in its inquiry, but the UN report is silent on this.

The Commission also bypassed the mystery of Bhutto's missing *dupatta*: 'The doctors [at the hospital] stated that they had not seen her *dupatta*. The *dupatta* remains missing,' Although this awkward admission reflected adversely on its competence, the UN Commission chose not to pursue the matter to its logical conclusion! What prevented the commission from tracing how exactly the *dupatta* went missing? Many PPP leaders believe Bhutto's *dupatta* might have carried a bullet hole and that was probably why it went missing.

In addition to reprimanding the Musharraf government and its intelligence and security apparatus for their failure to make adequate security arrangements for Bhutto, the UN Commission also pointed out that the security arrangements made by her own party were insufficient: 'Ms Bhutto was left vulnerable in a severely damaged vehicle that was unable to transport her to hospital, by the irresponsible and hasty departure of the bulletproof Mercedes-Benz, which as the backup vehicle, was an essential part of her convoy,'

As a matter of fact, other than the bulletproof armoured car in a VIP convoy, the security configuration requires a backup bulletproof armoured car as well as an ambulance with a doctor. These are cocooned by a well-armed mobile escort team, including a point vehicle. VVIP convoys also have separate mobile communication vehicles. Because the prime target of any assassin's will be the lead vehicle carrying the VVIP/VIP, the backup vehicle is a must. The logic is that if the lead vehicle is immobilized for any reason, then the backup vehicle provides the only chance for the VIP to get away safely from the scene of the ambush; it is a secure means for transportation to a safe location. This is nothing out of the ordinary; it is standard operating procedure.

The driver of the backup vehicle should hug the lead vehicle at all times, and must ensure that no other vehicle comes in between. The backup vehicle cannot be separated from the lead vehicle; the two have to stay together as if they are Siamese twins. The backup vehicle is not meant as a passenger vehicle, but usually there are guards in the vehicle. These guards will disembark during an emergency and shift the VIP from the lead vehicle. The VIP can then be expeditiously spirited away from the ambush site. Under no circumstances can the backup vehicle have any persons other than guards as occupants. That would be a serious breach of security. In Bhutto's convoy at Liaquat Bagh, however, the backup vehicle had unauthorized occupants; it was being misused by one of the men in charge of Bhutto's security from the PPP, Rehman Malik.

Rehman Malik reportedly tried to convince the UN Commission that he was not in charge of Bhutto's security arrangements, but it refused to accept his denials, pointing to a body of evidence that suggested otherwise. Rehman Malik's denial and the UN Commission's rejection of it are crucial. Much can be read between the lines in this. As a matter of fact, Rehman happened to be one of the occupants of the backup vehicle which was moving ahead of Bhutto's vehicle. This backup vehicle, instead of transporting the bleeding PPP leader to the hospital, inexplicably bolted from the scene, minutes after the attack. But despite its questioning of Malik, it is surprising that the UN Commission failed to explain his irregular conduct.

The UN Commission's report generated fresh controversy in the Pakistani media – why was Rehman Malik made responsible for the security of the nation (he was, by then, the minister of interior) despite his failure to protect his own leader? And what was the

reason the UN investigators had not focused on the moot question: why did the backup vehicle leave the area ahead of Bhutto's, instead of following the lead vehicle? Did someone know that the bomb attack was about to take place and did not want to be caught up in it? This, by itself makes the speeding away of the backup vehicle (without stopping) very suspicious, and makes all those who departed in it seem guilty.

There are those in official circles who argue that connecting Rehman Malik with Bhutto's assassination on the basis of his departure from the scene is irrational and he should not be doubted. Yet others within the PPP point out his conflicting statements about his whereabouts soon after Bhutto's murder. On 27 December 2007, when the news of the suicide attack on Benazir Bhutto at Liaqat Bagh broke at 5.13 p.m., Rehman Malik first appeared on Geo TV at 5.37 p.m., saying he was in the vehicle in front of Bhutto's when he heard the blast. 'I have been told now that some bullets were also fired on Benazir but by the grace of God she is fine and God has given her another life. . . The blast was so powerful that my ears are still feeling the pain even after half-an-hour.'

Rehman Malik later appeared on other media channels, changing his previous statement and saying that he was at a distance of four feet from Bhutto's vehicle when the blast took place. 'When I looked back, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's vehicle was crawling and we led that car to the hospital,' said Malik, adding, 'I was present in the hospital at that time.' Malik once again changed his stance a few minutes later, 'I immediately called my brother Khalid Malik who told me that Benazir Bhutto Sahiba had gone down in the vehicle and we took a U-turn to the hospital but then her vehicle had already reached the hospital.'

Another passenger of the black Mercedes, Babar Awan, said in a live interview to Geo TV on the day of the tragedy that he rolled down the window of his vehicle and saw that Benazir Bhutto was hit in the neck. 'After being hit, she tilted a bit and then went straight in,' Babar explained.

This was in total contrast to what Rehman Malik sitting next to him had said. Exactly a year later, Rehman Malik in an interview with Geo TV had declared that neither he nor Babar Awan saw Benazir falling down. Contradicting what he had said previously, he stated in this interview that he rushed to Zardari House and then checked with the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Federal Government Services Hospital and Civil Hospital but could not find her. He was later told that Bhutto had been taken to the Rawalpindi General Hospital.

The third passenger of the same Mercedes, Farhatullah Babar, told Geo TV on 28 December 2008 that they were actually asked by senior police officials to take the vehicle to Zardari House as Benazir Bhutto was being brought there by another route. 'When we all reached Zardari House, she was not there. We were told that she is in the

hospital. Subsequently, Lieutenant General Tauqir Zia and I rushed to the Rawalpindi General Hospital.' Farhatullah Babar's statement clearly contradicted those made by Rehman Malik and Babar Awan.

On 4 May 2010, a Pakistani news channel interviewed Khizer Hayat, Bhutto's driver, who was driving her backup Mercedes at the time of her assassination. While giving an eyewitness account of the tragic event, the driver said none of the four PPP leaders in the backup vehicle bothered to get out and see what had happened to Bhutto. Rehman Malik (now federal interior minister), Babar Awan (now federal law minister), Farhatullah Babar (now the presidential spokesman), and Lieutenant General (retd) Tauqir Zia were in the car. According to Khizer Hayat all of them remained quiet and did not ask the driver to stop even after they knew that Bhutto had been attacked at Liaquat Bagh. The Mercedes was about fifteen feet ahead of Bhutto's Land Cruiser when she left Liaquat Bagh, waving to her supporters from the emergency escape of the bulletproof jeep.

'I first heard gunshots and after a few seconds we were literally jolted by a huge explosion which confirmed that something wrong had happened. I saw clouds of black smoke around Ms. Bhutto's jeep and at that time the police asked me to leave the place at once because they wanted to get her vehicle out of the place,' the driver said. He subsequently drove the Mercedes away and none of the other occupants asked him to stop. After some distance he himself stopped the car and waited for Bhutto's jeep. 'As no other vehicle was coming that way I again stopped the car near Chandni Chowk underpass. Policemen who were escorting us came to me and again asked me to move on. At this point, Rehman Malik alighted from the vehicle and talked to one of the policemen. He also received a phone call and informed others that Ms. Benazir Bhutto was safe and had been taken to Zardari House in Sector F-8 of Islamabad,' the driver said.

He further added that the leaders were talking to each other mostly in English, and they received several calls as the car moved towards Zardari House. After reaching there, Khizar Hayat said he switched on his cell phone and called Sardar Khalid, one of Bhutto's security guards who was supposed to be escorting her in a red double-cabin vehicle. Khalid was unaware of her condition and suggested that Hayat should call his brother Javed who was driving Bhutto's vehicle when it was attacked. 'As I called him, Javed told me that Ms. Benazir Bhutto had suffered injuries in the attack and fallen unconscious and had been taken to the Rawalpindi General Hospital. I handed over the phone to Rehman Malik so that he could talk to Javed,' the driver said. It was only upon receiving the information that Benazir Bhutto had been seriously injured in the attack that Rehman Malik had asked the driver to proceed to the hospital.

THE ESTABLISHMENT'S ROLE IN THE MURDER

THE ESTABLISHMENT IS a term used commonly by Pakistani and foreign writers and analyses while referring to the military-dominated oligarchy, which is the ultimate source of power in Pakistan. The group of individuals considered to be a part of the all-powerful Pakistani Establishment are the key decision-makers who decide the country's foreign policy, its nuclear weapons' programme, its defence budget, and so on. And Benazir Bhutto was considered to be the most popular anti-Establishment politician in Pakistan after her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The best description of the Pakistani Establishment has been given by Stephen P. Cohen in his famous book, *The Idea of Pakistan*. Cohen calls the Pakistani Establishment a 'moderate oligarchy' and defines it as 'an informal political system that ties together the senior ranks of the military, the civil service, key members of the judiciary, and other elites'. Cohen contends that membership in the Pakistani oligarchy requires adherence to a common set of beliefs: that India must be countered at every turn; that nuclear weapons have endowed Pakistan with security and status; that the fight for Jammu and Kashmir is unfinished business from the time of Partition; that large-scale social reforms such as land redistribution are unacceptable; that the uneducated and illiterate masses deserve only contempt; that vociferous Muslim nationalism is desirable but true Islamism is not; and that Washington is to be despised but fully taken advantage of. Underlying these 'core principles', one might add, is a willingness to serve power at any cost.

The military-led Establishment has dominated Pakistan's politics for most of its sixty-three years of existence as an independent country. Analysts say the priority of Pakistan's Establishment has been to create a centralized state, focused on the perceived threat from India, and with the help of the United States. American assistance is obtained by allying with Washington's strategic concern of the day, which in turn has led to over-engagement by the military on several fronts. Therefore, many of Pakistan's major problems, such as the growing influence of Islamic extremists, and its complicated relations with Afghanistan and India can easily be traced to the ascendancy of the strategic military doctrine being pursued by the Pakistani Establishment, at the expense of domestic stability and democratic decision-making.

Therefore, the relationship of the Pakistani Establishment with the country's political elite has been tense and uneasy ever since Pakistan came into being, leading to repeated military interventions. Interestingly, the UN Commission's report on Bhutto's murder also defined 'Establishment' as a term that is generally used in Pakistan to refer to those

who exercise de facto power; it includes the military high command and the intelligence agencies, together with the top leadership of certain right-wing political parties with a strong religious bias, high-level members of the bureaucracy and the business people allied with them.

While stating that the Pakistani military high command and intelligence agencies form the core of the Establishment and are its most permanent and influential components, the UN Commission report described Bhutto's assassination as a political murder, in which powerful elements of the Establishment might have been involved. The commission stated that its observation was based on the analysis of those having years of knowledge and experience of how the Pakistani Establishment works, although no specific evidence was offered with regard to Bhutto's assassination.

The UN Commission report added:

Several of these sources spoke of the existence of elements within the Establishment who saw her return to an active political life in Pakistan as a threat to their power. These elements included, in particular, those who retained links with radical Islamists, especially the militant jihadi and Taliban groups, and are sympathetic to their cause or view them as strategic assets for asserting Pakistan's role in the region. The development of these organizations and the spread of Islamist extremism, which marginalized secular democratizing forces, was promoted during the General Zia ul Haq military regime (which overthrew the civilian government headed by Ms. Bhutto's father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and later executed him); the ISI cultivated these relationships, initially in the context of the Cold War and the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan in the 1980s and later in support of Kashmiri insurgents. While several Pakistani current and former intelligence officials told the Commission that their agencies no longer had such ties in 2007, virtually all independent analysts provided information to the contrary and affirmed the ongoing nature of many such links.

The Establishment under General Pervez Musharraf was threatened by the possibility of Bhutto's return to high public office, and it was involved in or bore some responsibility for her death because her return to an active political life in Pakistan, in the aftermath of the 2008 general elections, was seen as a threat to their power. Benazir Bhutto, in her writings and public statements, was outspoken as to the sources of the threats she faced. And, foremost among those were elements of the Pakistani Establishment, whose tactics and reach she knew well. The UN report went on to state:

She and many others held the military and the intelligence agencies responsible for a number of 'dirty' campaigns against her when she ran for office in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as for orchestrating the sacking of her two elected governments in the past. She believed that the policies she advocated—a return

to civilian rule and democracy, human rights, negotiations with India, reconciliation with the non-Muslim world, and confrontation with radical Islamists— threatened the Establishments continued control of Pakistan. Ms. Bhutto's relevant policy proposals, including those laid out in the PPP's Manifesto for 2007, called for restrictions on the power of the military and intelligence agencies. She proposed bringing them under civilian, democratic controls, with provisions for transparency and control of the military budget and spending. She vowed publicly to use reforms to rid the intelligence agencies of elements driven by political or religious motives. . . .

Some of the positions adopted by Bhutto that could have invited the wrath of the Pakistani Establishment, included: (a) her publicly stated position on the need to eliminate all remnants of the military-militant nexus. Her proposal was to eliminate the military and intelligence ties to the Taliban and jihadis, although many in those institutions still publicly regarded these groups as important foreign policy tools to advance national interests against India in the sub-region. In this vein, Ms. Bhutto denounced the military's various truces with Taliban militants in Swat and the tribal areas, arguing that they amounted to appeasement; (b) her independent position on the urgent need to improve relations with India, and its implications for the Kashmir dispute, which the military had regarded as its policy domain; (c). her frequent denunciation of the role of the military and the intelligence agencies in domestic politics; and d. the perception of her willingness to accommodate the Western concerns.

While the Pakistani military and other powerful elements in the Establishment were willing to cooperate with the United States, United Kingdom and other Western states, Benazir Bhutto was portrayed as overly pliant. The UN report added:

Her alleged willingness to compromise Pakistan's nuclear programme and allow the West greater access to it was also a contributing factor, causing concern in the ranks of the Establishment. The Pakistani military had kept a tight grip on its nuclear secrets and persistently refused to allow international access to Dr A.Q. Khan, the Pakistani nuclear scientist who allegedly sold know-how on nuclear weapons to other countries. Ms. Bhutto had said she would give the International Atomic Energy Agency access to Dr Khan, although her statement was twisted in some media stories.

Benazir Bhutto's own concerns about threats to her by al- Qaeda and other militants resulted in part from her knowledge of their links with people who had worked with or been assets of the ISI. She feared that elements in the Pakistani Establishment could activate these connections, using radical Islamic elements to harm her, while hiding their own role in any attack. This was the basis for her allegations against Lieutenant General (retd) Hamid Gul and Brigadier (retd) Ejaz Shah, in her letter to General

Musharraf. Hamid Gul was director general of MI under General Zia ul Haq and then director general of the ISI when Benazir Bhutto was prime minister in 1988-90. Although the jihadi general was retired prematurely, Bhutto believed that he still maintained his former close ties with the militant jihadis.

The UN Commission report also stated that Bhutto had emerged as a potential threat to Musharraf; as she increasingly challenged his plans to maintain his hold on power, first by returning to Pakistan to campaign for her party in the forthcoming elections, then by focusing on the potential for election rigging, and finally by campaigning directly against the military dictatorship during the weeks of martial law. Some of those who were interviewed by the commission believed that Musharraf became increasingly angry at Benazir Bhutto for criticizing him and his regime so strongly, after having engaged in parleys with him. Similarly General Musharraf's allies, the PML-Q were also threatened by her, as they had the most to lose if the PPP were to win the 2008 general elections and displace them from their majority position in Parliament.

An email she sent to her US-based adviser, Mark Siegel, stressed her security concerns: 'I have been made to feel insecure by Musharraf and his minions.' The commission believed that the criminal investigation of both the attacks against Bhutto, first in Karachi and then in Rawalpindi when she was killed, must also focus on those who may have been involved in their conception, planning and financing and not only on the direct operational level: ' . . . the pertinent authorities should follow all leads and explore all reasonable hypotheses in this regard, including the possible involvement of those who form part of the Establishment.'

Many in Pakistan believe that Musharraf-backed elements in the intelligence agencies must have had something to do with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Pakistan has three major intelligence agencies. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) is the main civilian intelligence agency and focuses on domestic intelligence; however, it reports to the prime minister rather than the minister of the interior and has generally been led by a high-ranking military official. Military Intelligence (MI) is the section of the army that specializes in intelligence and reports to the Chief of Army Staff. The Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) draws on the intelligence capacity of the three military service branches, in addition to its own more autonomous capacity. Considered to be the preeminent agency among the three, nominally it reports to the prime minister, but generally, its effective practice has been to report to the Chief of Army Staff.

Even by the shadowy standards of spy agencies the ISI is notorious, to say the least. It is commonly branded 'a state within the state', or Pakistan's 'invisible government'. Although, the ISI has been actively involved in politics since the 1970s, it was the internal (political) wing of the agency that was generally responsible for dealing with political affairs, including the manipulation of the general elections, which is a known fact now. The ISI's overwhelming involvement in national politics certainly weakened

the mainstream political parties, gave a boost to horse-trading, and arrested the growth of the political culture in the country.

While the commission essentially concentrated on the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Bhutto, its report was scathing on the role played by the intelligence agencies—intimidating the police into deliberately scuttling investigations and creating an atmosphere where they acted only under instructions from the intelligence agencies. The report said that the Pakistani intelligence agencies, in particular the ISI, had carried out parallel investigations into both the suicide attacks, in Karachi and in Rawalpindi, and also made some arrests. However, the evidence gathered from such parallel investigations was selectively shared with the police. The commission opined that the failure of the police to investigate effectively Benazir Bhutto's murder was deliberate, as the officials, fearing a possible involvement of the intelligence agencies, were unsure of how vigorously they ought to pursue the action required of them as professionals:

A former intelligence official with direct knowledge of the matter told the UN Commission that the ISI had conducted its own investigation of the Karachi attack and had successfully detained four men who provided logistical support for the attack. None of the police or other civilian officials interviewed by the Commission regarding the Karachi attack reported any knowledge of such detentions. The same source told the Commission that ISI agents covering Ms. Bhutto's meeting in Liaquat Bagh on 27 December 2007 were the first to secure her vehicle and take photos of it after the attack there, among other actions. One very prominent and directly knowledgeable former government official informed the UN Commission that the ISI was, in fact, responsible for the investigation of Ms. Bhutto's assassination. Others have asserted that the Intelligence Bureau had and still has a significant role in the Bhutto murder investigation.

The members of the Joint Investigation Team that investigated Bhutto's assassination all but admitted that virtually all of their most important information, including that which led to the identification and arrest of those suspects now in prison, came from the intelligence agencies:

Several high-ranking law enforcement officials expressed concerns to the Commission that resources to build investigative capacity, especially in terrorism cases, have gone to intelligence agencies, while police resources and capacity lag. Indeed, in the aftermath of the attempts on General Musharraf's life, the capacity of the ISI was strengthened to allow it to engage more effectively in such investigations. This tendency has led to a distortion and imbalance in the functions of these institutions and presents a challenge for the future in ensuring the democratic rule of law. Given the historical and possibly continuing relationships between intelligence agencies and some radical Islamist groups that

engage in extremist violence, the agencies could be compromised in their investigations of crimes possibly carried out by such groups. . .

There was not an effective or active criminal investigation of either the Karachi or the Rawalpindi [suicide] attacks [targeting Bhutto]. This is inexplicable in terms of the basic principles of effective police work and contrary to the legal responsibilities of the relevant authorities. There is no evidence that the Rawalpindi Police made any attempt to seal the crime scene in the aftermath of Ms. Bhutto's assassination despite the purported 1,371 strong police deployment. The decision to use a fire hose on the crime scene within one hour and forty minutes of the attack – allegedly because of civil unrest and in order to prevent rioting—is not acceptable, and effectively destroyed evidence. This destruction made it extremely difficult if not impossible to gather more DNA evidence than the minimal amount already gathered. This massive loss of evidence did irreparable damage to the crime scene. Contrary to the 23 pieces of evidence gathered by the police, attacks of this type would typically result in the collection of thousands of pieces of evidence.

According to the three-member UN Commission's inquiry report, the investigators encountered abundant confirmation of the pervasive reach, control and clandestine role of the intelligence agencies in Pakistani society:

In the course of the UN inquiry, the Commission encountered confirmation of this not only in law enforcement matters, but also in various aspects of Pakistani political life during 2007. Particularly noteworthy was incense involvement of intelligence agencies in criminal investigations. While it is often necessary in terrorism- related cases, for intelligence agencies to provide significant assistance to police authorities, in the investigation of Ms. Bhutto's murder, the role of intelligence agencies far exceeded an assisting role, with the effect of subordinating law enforcement institutions.

The UN Commission outlined the dubious role of the ISI in trying to create a 'strategic depth' for Pakistan by inflicting 'a thousand cuts' on India, by supporting and funding terror groups operating in Afghanistan and India.

This, in turn, has come to haunt Pakistan, since the very forces that the ISI and the Pakistan Army once supported have turned against them—in the form of an umbrella formation called Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, which has during the last year indulged in large scale killing in Pakistan, with the death toll in four digits. The Pakistani military and the ISI used and supported some of these jihadi groups in the Kashmir insurgency after 1989. The bulk of the anti-Indian activity was and still remains the work of groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba, which has close ties with the ISI.

The intelligence agencies were active in several key aspects of the tumultuous events of 2007, which played an important part in shaping the circumstances and context of Bhutto's return to Pakistan:

This pervasive presence at times called into question the ability of other institutions to exercise their full, independent mandate and functions. The electoral process was one such area. The involvement of the intelligence agencies, and specifically the ISI, in influencing electoral outcomes in past elections is well-documented and was confirmed to the Commission by a former senior intelligence official. Ms. Bhutto had her own concerns and reportedly asked General Musharraf that ISI interference in the elections be curbed as part of guaranteeing free and fair elections. The day after her July meeting in Abu Dhabi with Musharraf; an aide to Ms. Bhutto was sent secretly to Islamabad on her behalf to review the work of the firm hired to create the new electoral lists; his site visits for this purpose were facilitated directly by General Kayani and other ISI staff. The former senior intelligence official also explained that in 2007 the ISI had guaranteed that there would be no rigging. While by all accounts, the 2008 elections were 'the most fair' in recent Pakistani history, constitutionally, the task of safeguarding the electoral process is the role of the Pakistan Electoral Commission.

The commission then reiterated the deep and direct involvement of the ISI, through its most senior leadership, in the political negotiations between Musharraf and Bhutto in all of its stages. The role of the intelligence agencies in the attempts to sack the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and influence the composition of the courts were additional examples of their central function:

This pervasive involvement of the intelligence agencies in diverse spheres, which is an open secret, has undermined the rule of law, distorted civilian-military relations and weakened some political and law enforcement institutions. At the same time, it has contributed to widespread public distrust in those institutions and fed a generalized political culture that thrives on competing conspiracy theories.

The commission's report added that Pakistan, like any other state, needs strong and effective intelligence agencies:

However, the autonomy, pervasive reach as well as the clandestine role of intelligence agencies in Pakistani life underlie many of the problems, omissions and commissions set out in this report. The actions of politicized intelligence agencies undermine democratic governance. Beyond some recent steps that have reportedly been taken [by the government] to curb the involvement of the intelligence agencies in political matters, the democratic rule of law in Pakistan

could be greatly strengthened with a thorough review of intelligence agencies, based on international best practices in this area.

In conclusion, the UN Commission's report stated:

The Commission found that security arrangements for Ms. Bhutto were fatally insufficient and ineffective. Therefore, Pakistani authorities should consider conducting an independent review to determine responsibilities and hold accountable those individuals who seriously failed in their duties. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto occurred against the backdrop of a history of political violence and was carried out with impunity. To address this issue, [the] Pakistan government should consider establishing a transitory, fully independent Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate political killings, disappearances and terrorism in recent years and to provide victims of political assassinations and terrorism, material and moral reparations. It is difficult to overstate the effect on the Pakistani people of the shock of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the loss to her country.

These events have been variously described to the Commission by Pakistanis as earth shattering and traumatic, and the loss as incalculable. This is made worse by the pattern of impunity for political crimes in Pakistan. Hence, it remains the responsibility of the Pakistani authorities to carry out a serious and credible criminal investigation that determines who conceived, ordered and executed the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and brings those responsible to justice. The Pakistani authorities should ensure that further investigation into the assassination of Ms. Bhutto is fully empowered and resourced and is conducted expeditiously and comprehensively, at all levels, without hindrance. The Commission hopes that this report will help shed light on the truth behind this heinous crime and support steps towards ending impunity. It is solely up to the competent authorities to make this happen.

CAN ZARDARI TAKE BHUTTO'S KILLERS TO TASK?

THE RELEASE OF the United Nations Inquiry Commission's report on Benazir Bhutto's assassination, once again revived the interest of the general public in the issue and all the mysteries that surround it. Although the UN Commission did not name her killers, it did go much further than anyone imagined in blaming the Musharraf regime and giving broad hints about the former Pakistani military dictator's role in the security lapses that paved the way for her assassination.

There were pages after pages in the UN Commission's inquiry report of evidence implicating the military's intelligence outfits, for their involvement in Bhutto's assassination. A long-established nexus between the Pakistani military and the militants too reinforced public suspicions of the military and intelligence Establishment's possible involvement in her murder. But the question of who actually masterminded her murder keeps echoing across the globe as powerfully as it did in the troubled days that followed Bhutto's assassination.

Despite the release of the UN Commission's report, carrying broad hints about her possible assassins, her own party's government which is currently in power seems reluctant to proceed against the culprits, including those Bhutto had herself named as her 'would-be assassins'. Therefore, the million-dollar question remains: Do Asif Ali Zardari and the PPP government have the guts to proceed against either General Pervez Musharraf or any of his former khaki associates?

There are many angles to Bhutto's murder that have not yet been explored by the Pakistani authorities. The UN Commission pointed out, albeit delicately, some of these, and there is clearly a great deal still hidden from the public eye despite the installation of her own party's government in Islamabad. The release of the UN report led to fresh calls for a new probe into her murder, but amidst skepticism that the masterminds of the plot would ever be brought to justice. Despite these calls, it appears that investigating the possible involvement of the military or intelligence agencies in the murder will be extremely difficult for the fragile civilian government in Islamabad.

Many in the PPP government circles concede privately that despite the UN Inquiry Commission's findings, the Zardari government will not be able to take Bhutto's killers to task, mainly for fear of upsetting the military leadership which, despite being nominally under the control of the civilian government, still pulls many of its strings. According to official circles, the main problem is that Musharraf was allowed to leave the country under an unannounced deal sponsored by the Americans and brokered by

General Kayani, under which the former dictator was given a safe passage and immunity from any type of prosecution by none other than Zardari, who succeeded Musharraf as the President of the country.

General Kayani is likely to stay in power for three more years given the fact that the PPP government, groaning under mounting pressure from the mighty Establishment, has already granted him a second three-year term as army chief—something that no elected government in Pakistan had done before. General Kayani, who was scheduled to retire on 28 November 2010, will hence stay on to command the army for another full term till 28 November 2013. It was on 21 July 2010, four months before Kayani's term in office was to end that Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani suddenly appeared on national television to address the nation. Pakistan is passing through a critical phase, he said, reading intently from a script on his desk and stealing only furtive glances at the camera in front of him. He praised the Pakistani army for its successes in military operations against Islamist militants and singled out its commander, General Kayani, for his 'excellent military leadership qualities and pro-democracy views'. For those reasons, Gilani said, despite the fact that General Kayani's term in command of the army was about to end, the civilian government had decided to keep him on for another three years.

The reappointment of General Ashfaq Kayani is, in fact, a reminder of the limits of the civilian government's authority. It simply can't afford to annoy even an outgoing army chief Kayani may have avoided interfering in the affairs of the government following Musharraf's exit, but he has left no one in doubt as to who calls the shots in Pakistan. In 2008, when President Zardari, in a gesture aimed at India, suggested that Pakistan might stand down on its first-strike nuclear capability, he was severely admonished by the generals. Later that summer, a government attempt to ensure civilian oversight of the Inter Services Intelligence collapsed in less than twenty-four hours. After the November 2008 Mumbai massacre, Prime Minister Gilani's decision to dispatch the ISI chief to New Delhi was reversed under similar pressure. Kayani also intervened in March 2009 to avert a political crisis by pressing a reluctant government to restore deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and sixty other judges of the superior courts. In June 2009, when the civilian government cheered the prospect of US legislation tripling non-military aid for Pakistan, the generals stepped in to denounce its conditions as humiliating.

In short, when it comes to policy planning with regard to the United States, Afghanistan and India, it is General Kayani who has been making the decisions since Musharraf's exit, and will continue to do so for the next three years, given the fact that Pakistan has spent most of its sixty-three-year history under military rule. Despite General Musharraf's unceremonious exit from the country's political horizon, the army remains the country's dominant force, and many believe that the government would not be able

to proceed against Musharraf for his alleged role in the Bhutto murder, especially after General Kayani's extension.

Currently languishing in self-imposed exile in London, General Musharraf is already well beyond the reach of the Pakistani authorities. And since the political clout of the army Musharraf had left behind refuses to diminish, many in government circles believe that the country's khaki top brass will not allow a potentially humiliating probe against Pervez Musharraf for his alleged role in the Bhutto murder, chiefly because he was one of the longest-serving commanders-in-chief of the Pakistan Army.

Despite Musharraf's ouster from power, and the apparent withdrawal of the military from Pakistani civilian life, the reality of present-day Pakistan is that the PPP government is weak and the all-powerful military is firmly in control.

According to a front page report carried by *The News* on 19 April 2010, hardly twenty-four hours after the release of the UN Commission's inquiry report into Bhutto's murder, which held the Musharraf regime responsible for failing to protect her, Musharraf had voiced his doubts about its validity. He had commented on the report to friends while attending the *mehendi* ceremony of the niece of a childhood friend of Sehba Musharraf the former First Lady of Pakistan, which was held at a restaurant in Long Island, New York: 'At about 11 p.m., General Musharraf was asked to join the dance and he accepted the invitation. Moments later, the former dictator was seen moving and shaking to the beat of the traditional Pakistani *dhol* (drum). According to one Boota Shaikh, who performed with his drum at the party, Musharraf actually danced upon his request and made the event memorable. "General Sahib and Begum Musharraf were so pleased with my performance that they even gave me money," Boota Singh was further quoted as saying.'

After the dancing was over and dinner was served, Musharraf reportedly told the people close to him that the findings of the UN Commission regarding Bhutto's murder were a bunch of lies, and that he was not at all perturbed by the commission's observations on his role in the assassination. Musharraf was further quoted by *The News* as saying that he could not be held responsible for Bhutto's murder because he had been neither the head of the government nor the army chief at the time of the assassination: 'I was only a ceremonial head of the state at the time of the murder, being the President of the country, and had nothing to do with the murder. However, I am seriously contemplating [whether] to sue the UN Commission members for unjustifiably implicating me in the Bhutto murder.'

Shortly after the release of the UN Commission's report, a high-level meeting of the ruling Pakistan People's Party chaired by President Zardari asked Prime Minister Gilani, on 20 April 2010, to take appropriate legal action against all the murder suspects, including Pervez Musharraf who had been named in the UN Inquiry Commission's

report as being responsible for Bhutto's assassination. The federal law minister, Babar Awan, went to the extent of stating that all necessary steps would be taken to bring Musharraf back to Pakistan so that he could be held accountable for his misdeeds, which also included his failure to protect Benazir Bhutto and eventually led to her assassination.

On 21 April 2010, amidst a growing demand for Musharraf's prosecution, the presidential spokesman, Farhatullah Babar, said the former military dictator would definitely be held accountable. Holding Musharraf responsible for the fatal attack on Bhutto in Rawalpindi, Babar said the former President had avoided action as he had been living abroad since the tragic incident. A week later, on 28 April 2010, the central secretary general of the PPP, Jahangir Badar, said that the party would file a murder case against Musharraf on the basis of the UN Commission's report on Bhutto's assassination. 'Let me tell you honestly, Ms. Bhutto's assassins would not be identified on the basis of personal enmity but by acting within the parameters of justice and rule of law. The Musharraf regime didn't provide proper protection to Ms. Bhutto despite repeated requests. The security breach left . . . room for a fatal attack . . .' he added.

Pervez Musharraf's close friends, however, shot back saying that no legal action could be initiated against him merely on the basis of the UN Commission's report, which had only held him responsible for security lapses. While reacting to the UN findings, Major General (retd) Rashid Qureshi, a spokesman for Musharraf said:

The Commission's report has neither absolved anyone nor held anyone criminally responsible for the murder of Ms. Benazir Bhutto. The so-called UN inquiry report is primarily based on interviews and not on a criminal investigation of the murder. Nowhere in its report has the UN Commission specifically fixed responsibility of the murder on anyone as this was not its mandate. Even otherwise, inaction on the part of the Musharraf regime in providing security to Ms. Bhutto is not tantamount to committing a criminal offence. Therefore, the Pakistan government cannot even request the Interpol to issue red corner notices for Musharraf's arrest on the basis of the UN report. Remember, no criminal case has been registered against the ex-President either in the country or elsewhere.

On 5 May 2010, President Zardari spoke for the first time since the release of the UN Commission's report, and said that his government would pursue investigations into Benazir Bhutto's assassination vigorously, to expose the culprits before the whole world. 'Investigations will soon be completed and [the conclusions] will be made public,' the President told a delegation of the Pakistan People's Party in Islamabad. Zardari said the UN report had strengthened the hands of the government and would help the authorities pursue the investigation. He said that some had objected to his decision to request a UN-led Inquiry Commission to investigate the murder, but that

'international inquiry was necessary for placing the facts of the Bhutto murder case in a correct perspective for historical record'. He said his party was seeking revenge for the assassination through democracy and the UN report would further their cause.

Almost a month after the UN Commission's report was made public, Musharraf travelled to the United States and addressed a press conference in New York (on 19 May 2010), denying his involvement in Bhutto's murder. Strongly rejecting the findings of the UN Commission, the former President said the government had provided Benazir Bhutto adequate security, but that she herself had made the decision to come out of her vehicle. He said involving him or any other retired or serving military official in the murder pointed to a conspiracy. The martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto, no doubt, was a great loss. But she is history now and Pakistan should be allowed to move forward,' said Musharraf who had launched a political party – the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) – shortly before the release of the UN Commissions inquiry report.

In a subsequent interview with CNN, General Musharraf said that he intended to return to national politics, although he did not set a time frame. 'I am certainly planning to go back to Pakistan and will join politics. The question . . . of whether I am running for the office of the President or the prime minister will be seen later.'

Musharraf also said he completely disagreed with the findings of the UN Commission. 'In fact, it was me who had warned her about the grave threat to her life. I had also stopped Ms. Bhutto from going to the venue [Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi] where she was later killed by Islamic extremists. Before her murder, a lot of aspersions were cast on me, that my administration was limiting her movements despite the fact that we were trying to protect her. But even then, she decided to go there [Rawalpindi] and had to face the consequences for what she did,' he added.

On 24 April 2010, the Pakistani prime minister, Yousuf Raza Gilani, constituted a high-power fact-finding committee to pinpoint responsibility for the hosing down of the crime scene outside Liaquat Bagh, soon after Bhutto's murder. It was led by the federal cabinet secretary, Abdul Rauf Chaudhry, and the other two members of the three-member committee were the deputy chief of general staff Major General Sajjad Ghani, and the additional chief secretary (home) for NWFP, Fayyaz Tooru. The committee was tasked with finding out (within seven days) whether the then director general of MI, Major General Nadeem Ijaz, had ordered senior police officials to hose down the crime scene.

The PPP government further decided to act against some senior officials who had been responsible for Bhutto's security, at the time of her assassination. The action taken in the light of the UN report was, however, limited to suspending five senior police officers and a civil officer of the District Management Group, and making them officers on special duty. The five suspended police officers included Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, an

additional inspector general of the Punjab Police, who led the Joint Investigation Team that probed Bhutto's murder and concluded that the PPP chairperson was killed by a fifteen-year-old human bomb, who had been dispatched to Rawalpindi by Baitullah Mehsud.

Also suspended was Saud Aziz, the CCPO of Rawalpindi at the time of Bhutto's murder, whose name was frequently mentioned in the UN Commission's report. Three of his subordinate police officers at the time who were also suspended were Yaseen Farooq, Ashfeq Sarwar and Khurram Shahzad. The only government official from the civil bureaucracy who was suspended for showing negligence in the aftermath of the Bhutto murder was Irfan Elahi, the district coordination officer of Rawalpindi who was serving as secretary to the Punjab government when the UN Commission's report was released.

The seventh official against whom action was taken by the PPP government was Brigadier Cheema who had been the head of the National Crisis Management Cell at the Ministry of Interior at the time of the murder, and had squarely blamed Baitullah Mehsud for Bhutto's murder, hardly twenty- four hours after the incident. He was the director general of civil defence under the PPP government when the UN Commission's inquiry report was released. Cheema's contract was cancelled and he was sent home. That was probably all the action the PPP government could have taken against Cheema, who had been a brigadier in the Pakistan Army, with influential connections. The names of all the seven officials were put on the Exit Control List (ECL) by the Ministry of Interior and they were barred from travelling abroad.

The names of three more people were put on the ECL on 19 April 2010, and these included Brigadier (retd) Ejaz Hussain Shah, the director general of the IB at the time of the murder, Lieutenant General (retd) Hamid Gul, a former director general of the ISI, and Syed Kamal Shah, who was secretary of the interior at the time of Bhutto's assassination. (Apparently, all three are moving around freely, belying the government's claim that they have been barred from travelling abroad.)

It was on 25 April 2010 that the three-member committee formed by the PPP government to investigate the crucial issue of the hosing down of the crime scene immediately after Bhutto's assassination, started its work. The committee was formed in view of the fact that the UN Commission had attached great significance to the washing away of evidence from the crime scene, which could have proved useful in the murder investigations.

Fingers were pointed at Nadeem Ijaz for allegedly ordering the then CCPO of Rawalpindi, Saud Aziz, to hose down the scene of Bhutto's assassination, outside Liaquat Bagh. In the light of the findings of the UN Commission's inquiry report, the role of Major General Nadeem Ijaz (currently serving as the log area commander of the

Gujranwala division in Punjab), emerged as one of the most controversial. While the UN report referred to his close ties to Musharraf and his role in hosing down the crime scene outside Liaqat Bagh in Rawalpindi, it failed to mention the pertinent fact that at the time of Bhutto's murder, Nadeem Ijaz, by virtue of his designation (MI Chief) and his position in the army hierarchy, would have had lines of communication that went directly to the Chief of Army Staffs General Kayani, and not to Musharraf.

As anticipated, the three-member fact-finding committee formed by the government simply cleared Major General Nadeem Ijaz on the basis of a two-page letter he had written to General Kayani, twenty-four hours after Bhutto's murder and the subsequent hosing down of the crime scene. Nadeem Ijaz had produced the letter as evidence of his innocence. 'The people involved in washing down the crime scene actually spoiled the evidence which could have been useful in criminal investigation of the murder,' he had written in his letter. While going all out to defend his khaki associate, the army chief reportedly took the letter to the prime minister as evidence of Nadeem Ijaz's innocence, even before the three-member fact-finding committee had begun its job.

The fact-finding committee recorded the statements of forty people, including the former MI chiefs officials of the Rawalpindi Police, the FIA and the Rescue 15 emergency service, saw about 150 pieces of evidence, including forensic evidence, and looked into the documentary record of the wireless communication of the police, and mobile phone records of the accused. While presenting its report to the prime minister on 31 May 2010, the head of the committee said that on the basis of the statements and evidence collected, it had reached the conclusion that the police had washed the crime scene outside Liaqat Bagh in Rawalpindi without any pressure or orders from higher authorities, in an apparent bid to forestall a law and order situation because the workers of the Pakistan People's Party were in an agitated state.

According to the report, Nadeem Ijaz refuted the findings of the UN Commission, and told the fact-finding committee that he had had nothing to do with the hosing down of the crime scene. The CCPO of Rawalpindi, Saud Aziz, admitted that he himself had taken the decision to hose down the crime scene without any pressure from anyone, and in consultation with his colleagues: 'I did not receive any phone call or any verbal or written orders from Major General Nadeem Ijaz or any other military official on 27 December 2007 to hose down the crime scene. However, I concede that it amounts to negligence of duty on my part as I should have paid attention to this important aspect of preserving the crime scene till the time the investigation agencies had exhausted their work.'

The Rawalpindi CCPO further presented to the committee the details of the evidence and other material the Rawalpindi Police authorities had collected, besides taking extensive photographs of the crime scene. Quite understandably, he disputed many of the findings of the United Nations Inquiry Commission, saying that they were not

based on facts because the crime scene was washed only after collecting all the available evidence. Saud Aziz further maintained that in many previous incidents of suicide bombing in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the crime scenes were washed even within half an hour of the incident. Therefore, the hosing down of the Liaqat Bagh crime scene a few hours after the incident was not at all that unusual.

On 26 May 2010, the much-awaited findings of the fresh investigation conducted by a Joint Investigation Team of the FIA into Benazir Bhutto's assassination were made public, but there were no surprises. The same individuals who had already been charged and arrested during Musharraf's presidency were mentioned as killers and conspirators. According to an interim report submitted by the FIA in the Rawalpindi anti-terrorism court, it was none other than Baitullah Mehsud who had ordered the killing of Benazir Bhutto. Shockingly enough, two-and-a-half years after her tragic assassination, the conclusions arrived at by the FIA were the same as those offered by the Musharraf regime, within days of the assassination: that the TTP ameer was responsible for Bhutto's death.

This was despite the fact that the fresh investigation was carried out by a high-powered FIA team constituted by the PPP government and supervised by none other than the interior minister, Rehman Malik, who had already been reprimanded by the UN Commission in its report for a 'serious security lapse', as he had escaped from the crime scene soon after the attack despite being in charge of her security. The FIA report also belied Zardari's assertion that he knew the names of the assassins but would divulge their identities at an appropriate time. His statement came much after the five young militants were arrested by the Punjab Police and the Bhutto murder FIR was registered against them. Zardari's statement clearly indicated that the people he had in mind were different from those arrested by the Musharraf regime for the murder of his wife.

To sum up, the JIT of the FIA was hastily established on 6 August 2009, some five weeks after the UN Inquiry Commission had reached Pakistan to investigate Bhutto's killing. Interestingly, the investigation team which was established by the interior minister, Rehman Malik, was headed by the director of the FIA's Special Investigation Group, Khalid Qureshi, who was also a member of the JIT established by the Musharraf regime to probe Bhutto's murder. But the interior ministry had ignored various legal aspects while creating the JIT and had not included even a single member of any other investigation or intelligence agency in the team. Although the second JIT was established for conducting a parallel investigation, it did not take any steps independently, and kept waiting for the findings of the UN Commission.

The FIA report was submitted on 26 May 2010 to a Rawalpindi anti-terrorism court (ATC) that was trying the Bhutto murder suspects. It pointed out that:

During the earlier investigation [carried out by a Joint Investigation Team of the Punjab Police], it was reported that some of the [Bhutto murder] accused had studied and resided in the Madrassa Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak [being run by Maulana Samiul Haq, the ameer of his own faction of the Jamiac Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), a fundamentalist religio-political party]. Therefore, the NWFP government was requested by the FIA to provide necessary assistance to the JIT to verify the madrassa record on the spot. On 12 May 2010, the FIA team headed by Inspector Naseer Ali Khan visited the Madrassa Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak and met Wasal Ahmed, Nazim-e-Talimaat (education-in-charge) . . . The administration of the religious seminary produced all the relevant registers of admission and discharge from the madrassa for inspection of investigation team. The investigation team checked all the registers in order to identify accused involved in the assassination of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi . . .

During the inspection of the record, the accused detected by the investigation team were Abdullah alias Saddam s/o Ali Rehman, Nadir alias Qari Ismail s/o Musafar, Rasheed Ahmad alias Abdul Raheem Turabi s/o of Qudrat Shah, and Faiz Muhammad s/o Shah Nazar. . . . The JIT investigation team seized the original forms pertaining to the above-mentioned accused persons. Wasal Ahmad, the Nazim-e-Talimaat of the seminary, in a statement under Section 161 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr PC) promised to produce the original admission registers in the court as and when required. The investigation team, during inspection of the record found that the above mentioned four accused involved in the assassination of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto remained students of the Madrassa Haqqania. As a result, their complete particulars have been confirmed.

In his statement, Wasal Ahmad, the Nazim-e-Taleemat (in charge, educational affairs) of the Madrassa Danil Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak, disclosed that the accused Said Arab s/o Azim Khan, Gul Roz s/o Ali Akbar, Muhammad Shafique s/o Badshah Gul, and Rasheed Ahmad alias Abdul Reheem Tarbi s/o Qudrat Shah were the students of the Madrassa Darul Uloom Haqqania and were arrested by the police for their alleged involvement in a terrorist attack on the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex in Karma near Attack, and their links with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. The FIA is further examining the role of Madrassa Darul Uloom Haqqania's management pertaining to allegations of their harboring of terrorists involved in the Bhutto murder case.

Going by the FIA report, the Bhutto murder accused, Hasnain Gul, was arrested by the police on 5 June 2008, about five months after the Liaquat Bagh tragedy. He subsequently made a confessional statement under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code, before the magistrate. According to his confessional statement, two suicide bombers—

Bilal and Ikramullah—had stayed at the residence of his arrested co-accused Muhammad Rafaqat on 26 December 2007. The next day, Hasnain Gul helped the two bombers prepare at his residence to carry out the suicide attack on Benazir Bhutto. While leaving in Rafaqat's taxi, the suicide bombers left one shawl, one pair of jogging shoes and a cap at the residence of Hasnain Gul.

'These items were subsequently sent by the FIA to the DNA Laboratory of the FBI at Quantico, USA to obtain DNA profile of above mentioned articles for comparison with DNA profiles already prepared by Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Rawalpindi, from body parts of three different individuals,' the FIA report said. 'Comparison report of FBI Lab corroborated accused Hasnain Gul's confessional statement by confirming that two terrorists who had left a shawl, a pair of joggers and a cap in Hasnain Gul's residence were killed in the blast, on the crime scene outside Liaqat Bagh in Rawalpindi on 27 December 2007.'

The FIA findings created confusion about the number of suicide bombers involved in the attack. An earlier investigation into Bhutto's assassination conducted by the Musharraf regime had concluded that the shooter and the suicide bomber were one and the same person.

According to the JIT inquiry report of February 2008, on the basis of which the five Bhutto murder accused were challaned, the suicide bomber who exploded himself in Rawalpindi after failing to shoot down the PPP chairperson was one Saeed alias Bilal, a resident of South Waziristan. The JIT report claimed that according to the assassination plan, Saeed was to carry out the suicide attack in case he failed to shoot down Bhutto, while Ikramullah who was covering him would detonate the explosives on himself if Saeed failed. 'As Saeed alias Bilal failed to hit Ms. Bhutto, he blew himself up, killing the PPP leader and 23 others, mostly on the spot,' the JIT report had stated.

Even otherwise, the pieces of evidence collected from outside the Liaqat Bagh crime scene by the Punjab Police (before its hosing down) included only one mutilated head (that of the suspected suicide bomber), both his legs, as well as his hands, on which he had applied *henna*. *Henna*, which has been used since antiquity to dye skin, hair, fingernails, leather and wool, is one of the usual trademarks of the human bombs who believe it has religious connotations as the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) used to apply it on his beard. It is also believed that the suicide bomber dresses up as a groom who will be going straight to paradise after the 'holy act'. Therefore, the application of *henna* is a part of his grooming. A part of the skull of Bilal, the only suicide bomber who had exploded himself according to the JIT findings, was recovered a day after the Rawalpindi attack, and that too from atop one of the buildings near the crime site.

The JIT's inquiry report also contradicted the findings of the Scotland Yard's investigation report, which had concluded that the gunman and suicide bomber who

had targeted Bhutto was one and the same. The Scotland Yard report had also referred to the speculation that two individuals were directly involved in attacking Bhutto: The suggestion was that one suspect fired shots, and a second detonated the bomb. But the available evidence points towards the person who fired shots and the person who detonated the explosives being one and the same person. Body parts from only one individual remain unidentified. Expert opinion provides strong evidence that they originate from the suicide bomber. . . . The inevitable conclusion is that there was one attacker in the immediate vicinity of the vehicle in which Ms. Bhutto was travelling. In essence, all the evidence indicates that one suspect fired the shots before detonating an improvised explosive device.

However, the JIT findings pertaining to the number of the suicide bombers who targeted Bhutto on 27 December were close to the findings of the UN Inquiry Commission which had investigated the murder: 'While Ms. Bhutto died when a fifteen-and-a-half-year-old suicide bomber detonated his explosives near her vehicle, no one believed that this boy acted alone.'

While the JIT investigators differed from the Punjab Police about the number of the human bombs, they did endorse some of their other conclusions. For example, the JIT backed the police contention that the record of a phone call made by the arrested accused in the Bhutto murder, and the data regarding the two phone numbers of those involved in the conversation about the successful execution of the assassination confirmed the role of the accused in the murder plot. The JIT report said the records of cellular and landline phones had linked the conspirators to one another and to the telephone conversation between Ameer sahib (identified as Baitullah Mehsud) and a man identified as Maulvi Sahib.

The FIA claimed that a forensic analysis of the cell phones recovered from Hasnain Gul and Mohammad Rafaqat (two of the accused) and certain identified landline numbers, as well as the call records analysis of six more cellphones and two landline numbers revealed that the accused—Nasrullah, Qari Ismail, Abadur Rehman, Hasnain Gul and Mohammad Rafaqat—remained in touch with one another between 2 December 2007 and 27 December 2007, when they were planning the suicide attack on Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi, and their subsequent escape from Rawalpindi to Dir. It also brought to the surface, once again, the name of the dead Baitullah Mehsud as the only mastermind or handler of this 'case'.

In this regard, the statement of the special operator of the ISI, Mohammad Ismail (recorded by the FIA) assumes paramount importance. Ismail, who has been attached to the ISI for the last five years, and claims to be well-versed in Pushto, said his duties included overhearing and recording the telephone conversations of the commanders of the different jihadi organizations. According to his statement, on 28 December—just one day after the assassination of Bhutto—during the interception of telephone

conversations, he had intercepted a phone call from a cell number (registered in the name of Mazharuddin) to another number (registered in the name of Haji Shah Wali Khan). Through experience, Mohammad Ismail claimed, he had 'identified' Baitullah Mehsud as one of those in conversation.

However, according to the findings of the FIA (during the course of the forensic analysis of these two cell numbers), the mobile phone that was being used by Baitullah at the time of Bhutto's assassination had switched to a new number, presently active in Karachi. So the million-dollar question remains: How could a dead man (Baitullah in this case) still be using his mobile?

Anyhow, the FIA inquiry team questioned thirty-four people in connection with the investigation, including the senior vice chairman of the PPP, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, and others who had been with Bhutto in her vehicle at the time of the attack, former IB chief Ejaz Shah, some senior police officers, as well as the doctors at the Rawalpindi General Hospital who had treated her. Conspicuously absent from the list of those interviewed by the Joint Investigation Team of the FIA was the federal interior minister, Rehman Malik, who was strongly criticized in the UN Commission's inquiry report. Therefore, there were many in PPP circles who believed that some powerful individuals in Bhutto's own party had endorsed the Musharraf regime's questionable findings about her assassins to hush up the case in a bid to save their own skin.

The fresh inquiry report by the JIT deliberately ignored the signs leading to the key figures who might have plotted Bhutto's assassination. It also raised a number of questions: What was the rationale behind President Asif Zardari's insistence on a murder probe by the United Nations? Does the JIT report reflect what the PPP leaders believed about Bhutto's assassins, before coming into power? If it does, then why did the PPP leadership earlier issue statements dismissing the possibility that Benazir Bhutto had been killed by Mehsud's militants?

In short, the domestic inquiry that was initiated by the PPP government with a lot of sound and fury seems to be back to square one, with President Asif Zardari claiming that 90 percent of those accused of involvement in Bhutto's murder have already been arrested.

Shortly after the JIT inquiry report was made public, there was a shocking development. On 8 July 2010, the Pakistan government, apparently acting under pressure from the country's military and intelligence Establishment, formally wrote a letter to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, ostensibly to point out 'a spate of inaccuracies and unsubstantiated observations' in the UN Commission's report on Bhutto's assassination, saying that 'such unauthenticated inferences hold no credence at any level.' Written by the foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the seven-page letter objected to, among other things, 'repeated but un-evidenced finger-

pointing at the role of Pakistani security agencies and the Establishment, in the Bhutto murder'.

Quite bizarrely, the letter was written two months after the UN report was submitted to the government and welcomed by Zardari, who had stated that it had strengthened the hands of his government and would help in pursuing the murder investigation effectively. The main thrust of the letter was to deflect attention from the 'Establishment' and therefore lessen the opprobrium directed at it. It may be recalled that the UN Commission had quoted multiple sources as having claimed that the country's Establishment— the *de facto* power structure comprising the military high command and intelligence agencies, in particular the ISI, the MI and the IB, and their powerful allies among the political parties and civil bureaucracy felt threatened by the possibility of Benazir Bhutto's return and was involved in or bore some responsibility for her assassination.

The letter stated that the Pakistan government had approached the United Nations with a plea to warn member states against using, to Pakistan's disadvantage, observations about the military Establishment made in its report on the Bhutto murder:

The government of Pakistan maintains that any comments, observations or findings given in the report in respect of all matters except those that are directly relevant to the facts and circumstances of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto shall not be viewed as having determined any fact that relates to any matter of foreign policy of Pakistan, neither shall it have the effect of influencing any position that the government of Pakistan has been adhering hitherto.

. . . certain observations and discussions in the UN report have the effect of influencing regional matters that may affect positions that Pakistan has been taking in certain sensitive bilateral relations . . . It is also noteworthy that in many aspects, the UN Commissions report is beyond the ambit of its terms of reference and mandate . . . a superficial judgment accusing the so-called Establishment is based on evidence that is not specific or substantial in value.

But what had particularly ruffled feathers were repeated references to the Pakistan Army and the ISI's role in promoting Taliban and Kashmiri jihadi groups. Shah Mahmood Qureshi's letter to the UN Secretary General stated:

Comments and observations about the Pakistan Army, Inter Services Intelligence or the so-called Establishment, are only the opinions of the members of the Commission. They do not represent authenticated determinations based on any fact or evidence, and the same shall neither form a precedent nor a basis to lend credence to a political position in this regard, in the practice of States and/or that of international organizations.

The UN report has a serious flaw because the Commission has failed to approach or to provide some reliable information to unearth, if any, international linkages perpetrating, planning, financing or abetting the assassination of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, although there is mention and reliance on such sources. No doubt there were hiccups, and the Commission should have taken more time and effort in this regard, but unfortunately it appears that it paid scant attention to this aspect and instead has tended to focus on internal matters. The international linkages were an important aspect of the mandate of the Commission under paragraph 3 of the terms of reference, which remained unfulfilled. This is notwithstanding the fact that due to its United Nations backing, the Commission was in a far better position to carry out this inter-State inquiry owing to its global or international mandate, rather than a domestic inquiry team . . .

The government of Pakistan wishes to present the clear understanding to the Office of the UN Secretary-General that the comments and observations so made by the members of the Inquiry Commission in the report, which are not authenticated and referenced, shall not be used or adopted by any State or institution as 'facts determined', and in the event that any State or institution makes an attempt to rely on them, then the said reliance shall not hold any credence whatsoever.

About the account given in the UN report of the tragic incident in which Bhutto was killed, the letter said no referential information or supporting material had been provided. Similarly, the role of different persons had been discussed without any proof or materials, which could have been used for further criminal investigations as desired in the report:

Such supporting and relevant material would have assisted in fixing the responsibility of the persons mentioned therein during different stages of the provision of security to Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, or other arrangements which might have saved her life, and is now necessary to determine their due role or inadventure in the performance of their duties.

The UN Secretary General, however, rejected the Pakistan government's objections to the Bhutto Inquiry Commission report. In a letter delivered to Pakistan's permanent mission to the United Nations on 12 July 2010, the UN chief reiterated his strong support for the commission and stated that the commission carried out its work professionally in fulfillment of the Terms of Reference agreed between the government of Pakistan and the secretariat and noted by the Security Council. Ban Ki-moon's letter also added, The UN Commission's report speaks for itself and can be helpful to any subsequent investigations . . . The terms of reference of the commission called for the commission to conduct an inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the assassination

of Ms. Bhutto. The UN report painstakingly sets out the facts regarding the assassination and provides an extensive description of the circumstances around the crime. Therefore, the United Nations stands by the report produced by its commission.'

Although the Pakistan government found the UN Commission's observations offensive, there were many in the country's diplomatic circles who found no fault with them, as they felt that the comments were well within the mandate of the commission. Besides, they maintained, Pakistan had consented to the Terms of Reference governing the working of the three-member commission, which inter alia called for 'freedom of access to all sources of information, including documentary material and physical evidence, freedom to interview representatives of governmental, as well as other institutions and, in principle, any individual whose testimony is considered necessary for the fulfillment of its mandate'.

This raises an important question: was the Pakistan government caught off guard by the army and ISI bashing the findings of the UN Commission's report? The government circles in Islamabad say, on condition of anonymity, that it was actually the country's military and intelligence Establishment which had ratcheted up the pressure on the PPP government to tell the United Nations officially that the allegations contained in its inquiry report against the army and the ISI and their roles in regional issues were completely baseless and unacceptable. Almost two weeks after Shah Mahmood Qureshi wrote the letter to the UN Secretary General, in an obvious bid to appease the Pakistani Establishment, the Army Chief General Kayani, was given an unprecedented three-year extension by the PPP government.

Hardly three days later, on 24 July 2010, talking to a delegation of journalists at the Sindh chief minister's house. President Asif Zardari expressed his dissatisfaction with the UN Commission's report into Benazir Bhutto's murder, saying it was incomplete as the UN had released the report despite his government's repeated request to the UN Secretary General to take more time to make its findings more comprehensive. One wonders at the logic behind Asif Zardari's insistence on a UN-led murder probe—that cost the national exchequer several million dollars—if he was not in a position to bear the Establishment's pressures, and proceed against Bhutto's actual killers in the light of the UN Inquiry Commission's findings.

Given the circumstances, many in Pakistan believe that bringing the killers of Benazir Bhutto to justice will remain a pipe dream and the UN Commission's inquiry report will probably meet the same fate as the Hamoodur Rehman Commission's inquiry report—the only other document pertaining to another national tragedy. The Hamoodur Rehman Commission was constituted by the government of Benazir Bhutto's father, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, to investigate the military and political causes of the Pakistan Army's defeat in the 1971 war with India that eventually led to the dismemberment of the eastern part of Pakistan (which became Bangladesh). It was

asked to investigate 'the circumstances in which the Commander, Eastern command, surrendered, and the members of the Armed Forces of Pakistan under his command laid down their arms and a ceasefire was ordered along the borders of West Pakistan and India, and along the ceasefire line in the state of Jammu and Kashmir'.

The Hamoodur Rehman Commission's inquiry report was critical of the role of the Pakistani military and political elite and its publication was not allowed at the time. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had created the commission after succeeding Yahya Khan as the President, in the aftermath of the dismemberment of Pakistan. The commission was formed in December 1971 with Hamoodur Rehman, the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan as its head. Justice Sheikh Anwarul Haq of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and Justice Tufail Ali Abdul Rehman, the Chief Justice of Sindh and Baluchistan High Courts were the other two members of the commission.

Their findings established that the Pakistani Army had carried out senseless and wanton acts of arson and killing in the countryside. Besides, intellectuals and professionals were murdered and buried in mass graves. On the pretext of quelling their rebellion, Bengali officers and soldiers were killed, as were East Pakistani civilian officers, businessmen and industrialists. A large number of East Pakistani women were raped and tortured, and members of the Hindu minority community were killed as a deliberate act of revenge.

The Hamoodur Rehman Commission's report accused the generals of what it called a premature surrender and said the military's continued involvement in running the government after 1958 was the prime reason for the corruption and ineffectiveness of senior military officers. Even responsible service officers had asserted that because of the corruption resulting from such involvement, the lust for wine and women and greed for lands and houses, a large number of senior army officers, particularly those occupying the highest positions, had lost not only their will to fight but also their professional competence. Pakistan's military ruler at the time, General Yahya Khan, who stepped down after the country's military defeat in December 1971, was accused of being a womanizer and an alcoholic, who had permitted and even instigated the surrender. And, the commission recommended that he be publicly tried along with other senior military colleagues. However, no action was ever taken, based on the Hamoodur Rehman Commission's report, against any military officer.

The only difference between the Hamoodur Rehman Commission's inquiry report and the UN Commission's inquiry report is that it took decades for the Rehman report (which was declassified only in 2000) to get to the Pakistani public; whereas the UN Commission's report was released in the short span of one year. Both the commissions found that the Pakistani Establishment, dominated by the military and civil bureaucracies, was the only reality of political power in the country. But more

importantly, the common factor was that while both the reports kindled a fire of concern and anxiety, justice for the victims remained elusive.

In a nutshell, it seems as if the Benazir Bhutto murder case is in the doldrums as President Zardari may not have the political capacity to bring the actual assassins to book. Many in Pakistan believe if Bhutto's killers cannot be unmasked now while her Pakistan People's Party is ostensibly in power in Islamabad, it is less likely that they will ever be unmasked, and there is a possibility that like all infamous murder cases, the mastermind of Bhutto's murder will also remain a shadowy figure on whose role people will only speculate in whispers. With the death of the world's first woman to have led an Islamic nation twice, only truth and justice can be the greatest revenge. That is what the people of Pakistan want and that is what Benazir Bhutto deserves.

PART TWO

FROM DEFIANCE TO DEATH

BENAZIR BHUTTO'S LAST SPEECH

BEFORE ASSASSINS STRUCK on 27 December, Benazir Bhutto had seriously considered abandoning public rallies. Because of the rising security concerns, she was advised by her close aides to tape her speeches and messages and deliver them on radio or television channels to keep her election campaign going.

She was due to hold a rally that afternoon in the garrison town of Rawalpindi, and the city made her nervous. For one thing, it was the home of a military she had distrusted her entire life. For another, her father – the former prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto – had died there, hanged in 1979 by the country's third military dictator who had overthrown him, General Mohammed Zia ul Haq. And Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, had been assassinated in 1951 in the very same Liaqat Bagh where her rally was to take place. But Bhutto eventually decided otherwise, saying that for her PPP to have a chance in the 2008 general elections, she could not forgo mass rallies which are central to Pakistan's political culture.

Gripping the podium at Liaqat Bagh with both hands and addressing her last public meeting, a daring Bhutto was at her best. Benazir Bhutto's last speech was a shining testament to her vision, wisdom, courage and determination to steer the country out of troubled waters. The following is the English version of her last speech:

I have come to Rawalpindi today, the city of brave people, who have sacrificed much. I consider Rawalpindi my second home. When Bhutto Sahib (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) was a minister, I used to live here. I used to go to a school at Rawalpindi. I have seen moments of joy and times of gloom, in Rawalpindi. I must say that the brave people of Rawalpindi have been with me in moments of happiness; the brave sisters and brethren of this city stood by me in the hours of our sadness too – they have never made me feel alone.

This is the same city whose people thronged to Liaqat Bagh to hold a massive rally, which eventually compelled the dictator, General Yahya Khan, to step down as the President of the country. Later, the government of the Pakistan People's Party was established. Rawalpindi is the same city from where my father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto started his struggle against the dictatorship of General Ayub Khan. This is the city which has defeated all the military dictators Pakistan has seen since Independence and, Inshallah, its people will once again inflict a crushing defeat on another dictator and usher in an era of democracy; the sun of

democracy will again rise on the horizon of Rawalpindi. The people of this city love democracy and have never bowed their head before autocratic regimes.

When General Zia ul Haq toppled the PPP government in 1977, he let loose a reign of terror. Young people were persecuted and sent to jail – young Abdul Hameed burnt himself to death, and Idrees Tooti was hanged. Thousands of PPP workers were flogged and made to face brutal treatment at Lahore's Shahi Fort. Yet, they did not leave either their sisters or the Pakistan People's Party. Quaid-e-Azam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto established the PPP for the poor, the hapless and the oppressed. He and his government worked for the welfare of the downtrodden. He made the defence of Pakistan inviolable, and the comity of nations held our country in esteem and respect. When you voted Bhutto into power, you did not merely elevate him to the office of the prime minister; you also chose the chairman of the Islamic Summit Conference, which Shaheed Bhutto held in Lahore, where he gathered together the leaders of the entire Muslim world. He chose Lahore (for the conference) because Lahore is the heart of Punjab and Punjab is the heart of Pakistan.

The people of Punjab have always put up a courageous struggle for the unity and integrity of Pakistan. Even when Pakistan was yet to be established, the people of Punjab stood behind the Quaid-e-Azam. The emergence of Pakistan in 1947 was through a bloodbath, and no one can forget that great sacrifice of the people of Punjab. They have always been in the forefront of democratic struggle and offered every sacrifice for this cause. The people of Punjab have not only offered unforgettable sacrifices for the establishment of Pakistan but also demonstrated fearlessness and valour for the sake of its survival, progress and development. Who can forget the bravery and steadfastness of the people of Punjab when they saved Lahore and Pakistan during the war in General Ayub Khan's time? To prevent the fall of Lahore, they tied bombs to their bellies so that Indian tanks would be destroyed when they ran over their bodies. I pay my compliments to the sons and daughters of these brave people.

My dear sisters and brethren, you are the real power. If Pakistan is one of the foremost countries in the world, and is held in respect by the world, it is because of your strong will and sacrifices. Your sister feels confident that the way you stood by Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Quaid-e-Azam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the Pakistan People's Party for the development and well-being of Pakistan, you will lend your strength to the daughter of Bhutto to achieve the cherished goal of a glorious, strong and prosperous Pakistan, where we can live in peace and in an environment of dignity and honor.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a great leader; he gave the country the Constitution in 1973. The people and the brave workers of the Pakistan People's Party

safeguarded the Constitution against all odds. You remember the days when the dictator Zia ul Haq attempted to undermine the Constitution, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his party stood against him to save the country's basic laws. They would gather at Liaqat Bagh, vowing to protect the Constitution. And when they came out publicly in its defence, the retribution that followed was swift and severe. They were flogged and maltreated, but after every lash they received they yelled slogans calling for the restoration of the Constitution and the release of Bhutto [who had been arrested]; and said that they would always stand firm and fight for justice, and not yield before tyranny.

This was under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who turned Pakistan into a nuclear power. When India detonated its nuclear device, it caused agitation all over Pakistan. India first broke Pakistan during General Yahya Khan's regime, and then conducted nuclear tests to become an atomic power. This was the time that a fear crept across the country about the security and unity of Pakistan. It was at this point in time that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto said we will eat grass but make the nuclear bomb as a deterrent and ensure that no one casts an evil eye on our beloved country. And the world saw Pakistan join the nuclear nations' club, and this actually saved our country from the danger of another dismemberment. Thus Bhutto made Pakistan's defenses strong.

When the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power, army generals came to her saying that the Indians have missile technology that we do not have. This technology will enable them to strike Pakistan with their bombs, and Pakistan will not be able to respond in a befitting manner. Once they [Indians] know that Pakistan has the missile capability to counter their assault, they will not be able to attack Pakistan. Brethren and sisters, I provided the Pakistan armed forces with the necessary missile technology, which will make the country's defenses strong and act as a deterrent against military aggression, so that the people of Pakistan are able to live with dignity.

Brethren and sisters, the Pakistan People's Party has made significant efforts to make Pakistan strong. And when you elected your sister you did not only elect a prime minister but also the first woman head of government in the whole of the Muslim world. This raised the image of Islam and Pakistan as an enlightened society. The Pakistan People's Party firmly believes in the well-being of the people for that is the nation's greatest strength. We are firm in our conviction that a strong army alone does not make countries strong; the real strength of a country lies in the empowerment, progress and well-being of its people. Whenever the Pakistan People's Party has been in power; it has striven for progress and development and given the highest priority to improving the economic lot of the people.

As the PPP has stated in its manifesto, if the poor are living in sub-human conditions, if the stomach of an industrial worker or a child is empty, if sizeable numbers of people are living in abject poverty, if the educated youth and skilled and semi-skilled workforce are unemployed, if the salaried class finds it difficult to keep body and soul together, and if an elderly pensioner is unable to live on what he has, the country's defence and security cannot be considered strong, even if it has nuclear power or missile technology. Such a country is always vulnerable, and could fall prey to the conspiracies of unsavory elements that do not have the interests of the nation or its people at heart, and are bent on exploiting the situation to their benefit.

The Pakistan People's Party has always enjoyed the support and love of the people. We have formed strong governments and this strength was bestowed upon us by the people. No one dared to undermine our country when it was being governed by the Pakistan People's Party; no one ventured to impose wars on us while our government was ruling the country; and no one grew emboldened to resort to terrorism. Whatever wars we had to face, whether in 1965 or in 1971, were under military regimes. Pakistan had to abdicate unilaterally during the Kargil episode, and left our army men in the lurch. This unfortunate incident too did not take place during the tenure of the PPP government, because we hold the honor of this country as dear as our own honor, and we are prepared to sacrifice anything for the country.

The PPP governments established peace in the region. Our country was facing the threat of being declared a terrorist state. But this was dispelled when the Pakistan People's Party came into power and rid the country of the menace of terrorism. The country is once again in danger. An army operation is in progress in Baluchistan, our largest province. As a result, a wave of despondency has swept across the province. A strange situation prevails in our border regions. The lack of organization there has left the people with little incentive to cooperate with the administration. The conditions have so deteriorated that our police say that terrorists are about to attack, and they want reinforcement.

How did Zulfikar Ali Bhutto save the country? He mobilized the power of the people to steer the country out of every crisis. Today, our motherland is faced with greater dangers. See Baluchistan, see the northern areas, see our mosques; this land, our land, is asking you, and asking me for help. That is why I have come to you, I have come to Liaquat Bagh at this historic moment; I have come to ask you to fix your seal on the arrow; the arrow is the symbol of this country; the arrow is the image of the pride and splendid fixture of the country. Inshallah, when the government of the People's Party is in place, we will implement a five-point programme.

The Quaid-e-Awam, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was sent to the gallows, my two brothers were assassinated, my mother suffered head injuries, Asif Zardari was put in jail—he was kept in Pindi and Attock prisons, and I too was incarcerated several times. Yet we did not part ways with the people, and the people also remained steadfast and kept on supporting us; they are still with us and together we will realize the cherished goal of justice, and a welfare society, because ours is the way of truth, ours is the way of justice, ours is the way of legitimacy; no one can separate us from pursuing this path.

My brethren, this is a highly important year; several incidents took place this year; the Chief Justice of Pakistan was sacked twice; our judges were arrested; Islamabad witnessed the incident of the Lal Masjid in which over one hundred people were killed. Everybody had doubts about holding the elections in the wake of these troubling events. When I returned home to fulfill my promise to you to bring about a change in the country, to restore democracy and put an end to dictatorship, elements inimical to this change and democracy convulsed the city of Karachi with a massive bomb explosion. The attempt was aimed at removing the entire leadership of the Pakistan People's Party from the scene; disrupt the election process and pave the way for undemocratic elements to prolong and perpetuate their power unlawfully. But the savior is bigger than the killer and this conspiracy foiled. I pay my tribute to the martyrs who offered their lives to save the People's Party leadership.

Those who were unhappy with the forthcoming elections because it would mean the end of their despotic rule, once again conspired to impose a state of Emergency. They beseeched Musharraf to remain the Chief of Army Staff for five more years. These 'political orphans' wanted to use the shoulders of our armed forces to resort to 'political firing'; they wanted to flee from the elections.

Recent surveys indicate that the people have rejected these political orphans and the victory of the Peoples Party and the Nawaz League is imminent. No one will be able to thwart this victory, nor will they be able to rig these polls because no patriot can accept slavery and damage the country. They have, however, continued in their efforts to get a state of Emergency enforced, and secure another five years for Musharraf I pay you tributes for responding to the call of the People's Party to agitate against this. The people of Rawalpindi have demonstrated that they can hold a successful protest. Your sister was stopped from coming to Rawalpindi; but you braved tear gas and baton charges for several hours in the streets of this city. You have proved that you are a nation, a vibrant nation. You are the heroes and the political orphans are zeroes.

Comrades, your protest ignited political agitation throughout the country; a long march was also held; and it is because of the popular pressure that the

conspiracy of the political orphans has failed. These political orphans used to mislead and confuse the people by making false claims that BB would not return; Nawaz Sharif would not return. I want to ask them to stop telling lies. Benazir has returned home and Mian Sahib has also come back, and the falsehood stands exposed. These elements also tried their best to get the Emergency enforced. But you made them flee, and Emergency Rule came to an end. They also claimed that elections would not be held for two years. My compliments to you, brethren, for making them retreat, and now, elections are being held on 8 January.

They also claimed that General Pervez Musharraf would remain the Chief of Army Staff for another five years. But they again failed as Musharraf had to step down after appointing a new Chief of Army Staff which was a dear indication to the political orphans that their end was round the corner. All their false claims have been exposed, one by one . . . their time is coming to an end; the people of Pakistan have given their verdict. The voice of the people of Pakistan, from Karachi to Khyber, resounds—welcome, welcome Benazir, welcome, and farewell, farewell political orphans, farewell.

My sisters and brethren, you have conferred a great honor on your sister. Twice you have elected me prime minister. It is no longer important if I become the prime minister for the third time. What is important is that my country is in danger. So I had to return even if it meant risking my life by coming back. I feel that the people are concerned about the state of the country. That is why I have returned home. I have come to you to say that your sister needs those who are brave; those who are courageous; and those who are faithful to the national flag—the flag of our motherland—and also the flag of the Pakistan People's Party. I need your support in the work I have undertaken for the security and integrity of Pakistan. Let us join hands to steer the country out of the crisis, and rid the nation of those who have endangered its security. Victory will soon bow before you. Thank you very much. Long live Bhutto! Long live Pakistan!

EPILOGUE

'BENAZIR'S STORY'

BENAZIR BHUTTO WROTE a poem to mark her fiftieth birthday on 21 June 2003, saying, 'I am going to be half a century old and that makes for reflection.' She titled her poem 'Benazir's Story'⁹ which, according to her, was inspired by 'Marvi of Malir,' written by Shah Latif. Bhutto told those close to her that Marvi was in exile from her land and yearned for it as she did. 'I was moved when I read it and adapted it to the present circumstances,' she explained –

When the world was still to be born,
When Adam was still to receive his form,
Then my relationship began.
When I heard the Lord's voice,
A voice sweet and clear
I said 'yes' with all my heart,
And formed a bond with the land I love.
When all of us were one
My bond then began.
An exile now by destiny,
I am nearer home than my heart's beat
I wonder: when will I be free
To return to Larkana.
From dust to dust
Loved ones return
To what they were.
When will I walk home from Arab lands
To my own sweet Motherland?
Waiting for messengers in dreams and by day
When will the message come
Taking me from here to there?
I want the answer to my heart,
I want to pass God's test,
O God, I await the messenger
Taking me to where I belong
Although the tyrants do not care,
Strands of white my hair now shows,

⁹ Reproduced courtesy Bhutto Legacy Research Foundation.

My face is gaunt with sadness
I to my people want to go.
I came in the winter of repression
I pray to return in different times,
Like the joy of a seasonal rain
The people's support I will reclaim.
Almighty God,
Let Mother's sickness not worsen in exile
Trapped in a mind wanting to forget
A heart weeping for young sons killed.

APPENDIX 1

BENAZIR BHUTTO'S HAND-WRITTEN POLITICAL WILL WHICH WAS RELEASED AFTER HER ASSASSINATION

Pakistan Peoples Party

To the officials and members of Pakistan Peoples Party I say that I was honoured to lead you. No leader could be as proud of their party, their dedication, devotion and discipline to the mission of Quaid-e-Azam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for a Federal Democratic and Egalitarian Pakistan as I have been proud of you. I salute your courage and your sense of honour. I salute you for standing by your sister through two military dictatorships.

I fear for the future of Pakistan. Please continue the fight against extremists, dictatorship, poverty and ignorance.

I would like my husband Arif Ali Bhutto to lead you in this interim period until you and he decide what is best. I say this because he is a man of courage and honour. He spent 11 1/2 years in prison without bending despite torture. He has the political stature to keep our party united.

I wish all of you success in fulfilling the manifesto of our party and in serving the down-trodden, discriminated and oppressed people of Pakistan. Dedicate yourselves to freeing them from poverty and backwardness as you have done in the past.

Benazir Bhutto

October 16, 2007

APPENDIX 2

THE MEDICAL REPORT ISSUED BY RAWALPINDI GENERAL HOSPITAL

MEDICAL REPORT OF MOHTARMA BENAZIR BHUTTO

On 27-12-2007 at approximately 5:35 p.m. a female patient was brought in Accident & Emergency Department of Rawalpindi General Hospital, Rawalpindi. She was brought to the Resuscitation Room and was received by Dr. Aurangzeb Khan and Dr. Saeeda of Surgical Unit-II. This patient was identified as Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Dr. Habib Ahmad Khan, Medical Superintendent RGH also arrived immediately.

The condition appreciated at the time of receiving the patient was as follows:-

The patient was pulseless and was not breathing. She was markedly pale. Her pupils were fixed, dilated and non reacting to light. A wound was present on the right temporoparietal region through which blood was trickling down and whitish material which looked like brain matter was visible in the wound. Her clothes were soaked with blood.

Immediate cardiopulmonary resuscitation was started. She was ventilated by Ambu bag and within a minute was intubated with endotracheal tube, blood mixed with secretions was noticed in the throat, that was suctioned out before intubation. External cardiac compressions were started. A cannula was passed in her right hand and intravenous fluids were pushed in. 1mg adrenaline was given.

No response was seen. Patient was shifted to emergency operation theatre while resuscitation was continued.

In operation theatre Dr. Arshad, Anaesthetist joined the team. Prof. Mussadiq Khan also joined the team at 5:50 PM. As external cardiac massage was not leading to any success therefore open cardiac massage was started via left antero-lateral thoracotomy. No blood was seen in the left thoracic cavity or the pericardium. There was no cardiac muscular activity seen.

Artificial assisted ventilation, internal cardiac massage and intravenous fluid resuscitation was continued. She was given intra cardiac adrenaline, calcium gluconate. These drugs along with sodium bicarbonate were also repeated intravenously.

Though no cardiac activity was seen but in order to treat fine ventricular fibrillation, electrical defibrillation was carried out. No cardiac response was seen.

Prof. Azam Yusuf and Dr. Qudsia had also joined the resuscitation team.

Pupils were fixed and dilated, no evidence of any cardiac or respiratory activity was observed. ECG showed no electrical activity.

At 6:16 p.m. it was decided to stop resuscitation and patient was declared dead. The thoracotomy wound was closed. Fractured rib due to resuscitative thoracotomy was noticed.

Prof. Arif Malik and Prof. Saleem also reached by then.

DETAILS OF THE WOUND AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

There was wound in right Temporoparietal region. Shape was irregularly oval, measuring about 5 x 3 cms, just above the pinna of right ear. Edges were irregular. No surrounding wounds or blackening was seen. There was a big boggy swelling around the wound. Blood was continuously trickling down and whitish material that looked like brain matter was seen in the wound and on the surrounding hair. Sharp bone edges were felt in wound. No foreign body was felt in the wound.

Wound was not further explored. Gentle aseptic dressing was used to cover the wound.

Bleeding from both the ears was seen, more so from the right ear. Slight trickle of Blood was seen from right nostril also. Blood mixed with secretions was seen in the oral cavity also. Detailed external examination of the body did not reveal any other external injury.

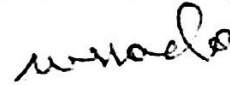
X-rays of the skull AP and Lateral views were done after she had been declared dead. Findings are as below:-

Comminuted depressed skull fracture involving right temporoparietal bone is observed with inwards depressed fracture fragment measuring approx. 35 mm (on-X-ray measurement). Depressed fracture fragment distant from intact bony skull measures 12 mm from outer to outer skull table & 12 mm from inner to inner skull table. Two to three tiny radio-densities underneath fracture segment are observed on both projections. Associated scalp soft tissue swelling & moderate degree of pneumocephalus is observed. Rest of the bony skull is intact. Radio-opaque dental fillings are evident.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Open head injury with depressed skull fracture, leading to Cardiopulmonary arrest.

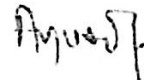
Prof Mohammad Mussadiq Khan
FACS, DABS, FCPS
Principal/Professor of Surgery
RMC/Allied Hospital, Rawalpindi



Dr. Habib Ahmad Khan
Medical Superintendent
Rawalpindi General Hospital
Rawalpindi



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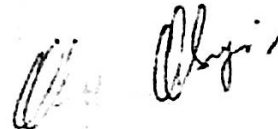
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APPENDIX 3

THE PUNJAB CID REPORT ON THE ASSASSINATION

Date & Place	Brief of the case
13) 27.12.07 Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi	On 27.12.07, one Suicide bomber targeted Mohdarma Benazir Bhutto in a procession at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi and subsequently exploded himself. Resultantly she & others 23 killed and 80 injured. <i>FIR No. 471 dt. 27.12.07 u/s 302/324/435/436/120-B/4/5ESA, 7/A74, PS City Rawalpindi was registered.</i>
Group Involved	1. Tehrik Taliban (Bait ullah Mahsood)
Members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rafiqat (Arrested) 2. Husnain Gull (Arrested) 3. Sherzaman (Arrested) 4. Rashed Ali (Arrested) 5. Alitzaz (Arrested) 6. Nadir @ Qari Ismail r/o Madrisa Haqania, Akora Khatak (Killed) 7. Nasrullah r/o Madrisa Haqania, Akora Khatak (Killed) 8. Faiz @ Kiskit, Ex-student of Madrisa Haqania Akhara Khatak. (Not Arrested) 9. Abad-ur-Rehman @ Noman @ Usman, Ex-student of Madrisa Haqania Akhara Khatak. (Not Arrested) 10. Abdullah @ Sadam r/o Mohmand Agency (Not Arrested) 11. Ikram ullah r/o Waziristan. (Not Arrested)
Suicide Bomber	1. Saeed @ Bilal r/o South Waziristan