Benazir Bhutto: her political struggle in Pakistan.

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BENAZIR BHUTTO:
HER POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN PAKISTAN

A Thesis Presented
by
KIMIE SEKINE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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BENAZIR BHUTTO:
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Benazir Bhutto --- former Prime Minister of Pakistan who had held office for twenty months until she was ousted in August 1990 --- had attracted much attention both at home and abroad. She was the first democratically elected prime minister of Pakistan in more than a decade. The victory of her Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in the 1988 November elections and her subsequent appointment as Prime Minister coincided with the global march of democracy and was hailed as a dawn of new democratic Pakistan. She was also the first woman to lead a Muslim nation in modern history, a fact resented by conservatives and religious groups in the country.

Among all other reasons, what distinguished her most was the fact that she was the daughter of the late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto --- a legendary figure in Pakistani politics who was much loved and much hated. He was a charismatic leader who had ruled Pakistan from 1971 until 1977 when a military coup d’état of General Zia-ul Haq ousted him. His socialist policies had a strong appeal to the underprivileged masses and the Pakistan People’s Party he had founded received tremendous popular support. However, his left-wing populism, including nationalization of industries, antagonized conservatives and industrialists of middle- and upper-classes. Moreover, his strong leadership gradually came to be viewed by many as authoritarian and repressive. The election in March 1977 led to social unrest fueled by the opposition and the army under General Zia-ul Haq intervened in the name of restoring order. After two years of imprisonment, Bhutto was hanged in April 1979 for alleged complicity in a political murder.

The legacy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistani politics had remained very powerful for more than a decade after his death and had a considerable impact,
both positively and negatively, on the political actions of his daughter. Popular support for the PPP continued partly because he was considered to be the victim of injustice. When people gave Benazir Bhutto their support, they were recalling her father. His appeal was clear: “Bhutto did good things for the poor.” Her father’s legacy also became apparent when she confronted the opposition groups after she formed the government. Being a woman and a Bhutto, she was destined to face antagonism of the conservative elements and religious fundamentalists in the country. At the same time, she abandoned the left-wing populism that had brought her father to power, and moved toward the center, claiming herself as a social democrat. This reflected both the changes in the social conditions of Pakistan from her father’s time and her concerns not to alienate the vested interests which would resent socialist policies like her father’s.

Benazir Bhutto’s political life began practically after her father’s execution. Since then, she underwent a series of house arrests, detention, and imprisonment until the beginning of 1984 when she left for London in exile. During this period she tried, along with her mother, Nusrat Bhutto, to maintain the PPP. It was crucial to give an impression that, although Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was dead, his party was not. Owing to a number of seriously committed party workers, the PPP managed to survive while both of its two leaders remained in jail most of the time.

In February 1981, leaders of nine opposition parties gathered and agreed to be united against the government as the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The process of forming the alliance faced difficulties --- some of the leaders were even former enemies. One source of constant disagreement within the MRD was the PPP’s “dominance” in the alliance. The PPP was by far the largest and post powerful component party in the MRD, whose other members were mostly small and regional groups with hardly any supporters. Naturally, the PPP leader, Benazir Bhutto, intended to exercise power relative to her party’s strength. However, the leaders of the other smaller parties in the MRD resented this tendency of Bhutto, leading to inner squabbles within the alliance. Despite
such difficulties, however, the MRD remained united as the country’s only capable opposition force with an objective of unseating Zia-ul Haq.

In January 1984, Benazir Bhutto went in exile to London where she continued to put pressure on the military regime to secure the release of political prisoners who numbered some forty thousand and many of whom were PPP activists. She met frequently with other PPP leaders who were also in exile in London, but their interests often conflicted with each other. During this period, ethnic conflicts, particularly in the province of Sindh, intensified and bursted into riots in which hundreds of people were killed and injured. Such violence was, to a large extent, a result of Zia’s repressive policy.

In February 1985, general elections were held, but the PPP, along with other MRD parties, boycotted them because they were conducted on a non-party basis. All candidates had to contest the elections as independents, and the use of party symbols was prohibited, making it impossible for largely illiterate voters to identify the parties they supported. The intention of the Zia regime was obvious; it wanted to make certain that Benazir Bhutto’s PPP, the largest and the only national party, would not win on the strength of its leader’s popularity, even if the elections were held. The party-less elections of 1985 resulted in the appointment of Mohammad Khan Junejo, the Pakistan Muslim League leader, as prime minister and the formation of his quasi-democratic government. After giving part of power to Junejo’s civilian government, on December 30, 1985, General Zia-ul Haq lifted martial law which had lasted for more than eight years.
CHAPTER 2

RETURN TO PAKISTAN

Campaign against the Government

On April 10, 1986, after two years of self-imposed exile in London, Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan. A massive welcoming crowd was waiting to receive the leader of the largest political party in the country. They were so tightly packed that it took nine and a half hours for the Bhutto motorcade to travel the eight miles from the airport to the site of the rally in Lahore. The size of the crowd she attracted went far beyond all expectations; it was simply unprecedented in the entire history of Pakistan. It was a surprise for those who had doubted that Benazir could enjoy the kind of support for which her father was famous.

It would be fair to note, however, that, at that point, the immense crowds that greeted her were inspired more by the memory of her father than by Benazir herself. This was observed in every procession throughout the campaign that followed her return where the slogan most heard and hailed was in respect of the former prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The campaign processions, in spite of the huge crowds, were initially quite peaceful. Bhutto was careful in her speech and attitude so as not to create violent situations. Her main demand in her speech was holding of party-based elections, restoration of the 1973 constitution and consequently peaceful transfer of power to the people. “Bhutto’s dilemma was . . . how to translate broad popular support into a political movement powerful enough to force new elections; and how to do so without triggering violence, thereby risking the re-imposition of martial law.”

As the anti-government campaign proceeded, however, mass rallies had begun to spark so-called “street politics.” Although Bhutto’s emphasis on electoral transfer of power remained valid, the campaign processions had led to
anti-government marches and agitation. Some PPP leaders hoped that such measures would force General Zia to call early elections. It proved wrong. The government was becoming less and less tolerant as the opposition’s criticism against it mounted. After all, it had been only a few months since the lifting of martial law. It was predicted that in case the PPP along with other MRD parties could mobilize their resources to launch agitation and protests in favor of their demand, the government would be left with only two options. One would be the severe confrontation. The other would be to impose yet another martial law. The government had decided on the first path.

The heavy-handed blow of the regime came down on the opposition on August 14, 1986 when the PPP and other MRD parties held an Independence Day mass rally despite the warning given by the government. Both the government and the opposition had planned on a rally for the holiday, but the Junejo government canceled its plan and ordered Bhutto and other opposition leaders to do the same. They ignored the order and held the public meeting, which invited crackdown by the government and resulted in thousands of political arrests of party workers and the major opposition leaders including Bhutto herself. It was said to be the worst political unrest in Pakistan since the one in 1983 which was brutally repressed by the military regime of Zia-ul Haq. Having realized the limitation of agitational politics she had waged since her return in April, Bhutto conceded that her party had to reconsider its strategy. She admitted that she made a serious error in judging the political situation and in launching a premature movement against the government. “We have decided not to push things so fast,” she explained, “but to pace them out in a manner that will permit us to exercise our popular support at another time when the tension . . . has gone down.”

Another cause for the failure was the lack of coherent organization. It was criticized that Bhutto launched her “holy war” against Zia with more zeal than organizational strength of her party. Before the crackdown, “she honestly felt that all she had to do was to say the word and the same crowd that greeted her would come out on the streets and die for her.” Now she realized that attracting huge
crowds was one thing and transforming her personal popularity into strong political power was another. Although her arrest lasted just over three weeks, the whole incident raised doubts about her ability to effectively challenge the powerful government and forced her to renounce the policy of direct confrontation and, instead, adopt a slower and more moderate course of action.

**Disintegration and Reorganization of the PPP**

While forced to the sideline of the nation’s politics, Benazir Bhutto also had to cope with the internal problems of her Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). Bhutto’s decision to take a more moderate stance against the government was brought about for fear of inviting another crackdown or martial law. It was also argued that Bhutto finally came to realize that she had to win the confidence of the vested interests which had controlled the government if she truly wanted to govern the country. She renounced socialism as the party principle, claiming herself a social democrat on the left of center of political spectrum. Bhutto explained that what the PPP had strived for was socio-economic justice and that her father was neither a Marxist nor communist but simply wanted to bring about democratic changes in the country’s political and socio-economic set-up. Another important reason for Bhutto’s renouncement of social radicalism was the change in socio-economic conditions of Pakistan from her father’s days. Economic discontent among people was much less than that in early 1970s.

Such a shift on the party’s stand and moderation in its program frustrated those devoted and militant party members who wanted a real structural change in society. They had “suffered (under martial law) for a certain dream, vague but compelling: the vision of a better society which Bhutto... symbolized and which his daughter from a distance embodied. (Now they feel that) at close quarters she is another confused politician.” 4 Softening of Bhutto’s attitude toward the United States was also disturbing to many of the PPP supporters. “There is a dispute in
the party over Benazir’s position,” one PPP leader said. “Our political workers are very anti-American.” Benazir could not bridge the gap between her party’s extreme segments with more moderate components and, therefore, had to settle for a divided and weaker party. The slogan of Bhuttoism was still being chanted but it was never made clear what the term really meant. The lack of clarity on issues and absence of clear-cut program were hurting the morale of the party workers badly.

Another challenge Bhutto had to face was the complaint that democracy was non-existent in her party. It was criticized that the PPP leadership was “addicted” to a dictatorial style of decision-making. Some party leaders accused her of autocratic tendencies. As a response to this charge, discussions were made for holding of intra-party elections. It was hoped that such elections would activate the party members, give them a sense of satisfaction and hopefully bring the in-fighting to an end. However, such elections never materialized. The PPP remained an organization in which all major decisions were made by Bhutto and the rift between her and elder party leaders kept growing. Makhdoom Khaliquzzaman and Mir Hazar Khan Bijnani resigned from their leadership positions in Sindh, protesting against the personalized style of decision-making at the top which were carried out without consultation with other party leaders. Khaliquzzaman argued that the party did not belong to any one family and there were many others besides the Bhuttos who were also political heirs of the founder of the party. Some went as far as saying that the political legacy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had degenerated, under Benazir’s leadership, into a modified theory of “divine rights of kings” in which the concept of power and authority of elected leaders is the same as that of absolute monarchs.

It must be noted that when Bhutto returned to Pakistan in April 1986, not all the PPP leaders were happy to see her back. In exile she depended on the old guard to sustain the party. After her return, however, she began to follow her own instinct and rely on younger aides. This was a sensitive issue given the fact that many of the old-timers were friends of her father and they expected her to address
and treat them as "uncles." Moreover they used the Urdu word for "little daughter" in speaking to her. Bhutto refused this and tried to exercise her independent leadership. "The acting chairman knows everything," complained Mustafa Jatoi, who was fired from his post as party leader in Sindh. "She feels in her infinite wisdom that she has no need to consult with others like me who claim seniority and experience and have sacrificed for the party." 6

Criticisms mounted not only of the autocratic decision-making at the top but also of the enforcement of these decisions without active involvement of the party cadres. Since the contact between the PPP and the masses, the source of the party's strength, was maintained through a highly motivated cadre, a two-way communication between the top and the cadre was crucial in maintaining the popular support. Aware of the lack of this communication and the resulting weakness of the party structure, one analyst argued:

Not having had the need to actually build popular support to woo people, she has not apparently much thought about it and equipped for it. That must explain why she has been so oblivious to the signs of erosion that are obvious to almost everyone else and why she cannot see that the course she had adopted is causing strain in that direction. . . . Her party has not had a long history, and loyalty to it and to her personality and the family cannot be a matter of habit or blind devotion for a very large number of people. 7

As one PPP member explained, "When people come into the streets to face the brutality of the state, they must do it for something. People are not going to face bullets for Bhuttoism." 8

There was another accusation against Bhutto that personal loyalty to her carried more weight than members' contribution to the party principles and that she did not care for dissent and surrounded her with "yes-men." "Perhaps personalized politics was a necessity during martial law," one observer noted.
"But now with comparative freedom of operation for parties, a change has become imperative. Acceptance of subservient role and personal loyalty should no more be the sole criteria for appointment to central and provincial offices. Continuation of this policy will keep internal differences boiling and erode its popular base."

Bhutto denied her "dominance" over the party and claimed that she simply did not want to be a "rubber stamp" for the party elders. However, it was quite apparent that Bhutto intentionally replaced those "uncles" and dissenters with younger and more obedient ones in order to consolidate her grip on the party which she believed was her own. After all, the PPP was a party built around the Bhutto family, around Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's personal charisma and his martyrdom.

**Weakening of the MRD**

The Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), despite the fact that its components ranged from Marxist left to religious right and included both small and large parties, had remained united under martial law as the only capable opposition group to put pressure on the Zia regime. However, after the lifting of martial law in December 1985 and the following restoration of civil liberties to a considerable extent, the MRD's original demand and slogans lost some of their urgency; the restoration of the 1973 constitution and fresh elections on a party basis were not live enough issues around which people could rally. But the MRD, unable to adjust itself to the new political climate, continued to speak in its old idiom.

By this time the MRD was divided on various issues horizontally as well as vertically. It could no longer stand up and fight against the government because it was almost impossible to unite on the whole set of major issues confronting the country. "As a result of this scattering of focus in the MRD, the alliance failed to express informed critical opinion about the policies pursued by the Junejo government at home and abroad," one observer noted. "In the absence of this
ability to express the grievances of the masses, the mere agitational style of the martial law period has lost its appeal for the common man who is supposed to bring about the Movement's victory.'10 Being unable to redefine its aims in specific terms, the MRD appeared to have been left with no goal in sight and had become increasingly out of touch with reality.

The other factor that furthered the weakening of the MRD was its inner squabbles, just as was the case with the PPP. The most critical issue derived from the huge gap in size between the PPP and the other component parties. Bhutto had demanded that her PPP should be given "weightage" in the decision-making process because of its mass popularity distinguished from that of others. The smaller parties argued that all parties in the MRD were equal members with equal rights and that their points of view should be accommodated accordingly for the over-all democratic working of the alliance. They felt that, despite its numerical majority, the PPP should not be given super political power status in the alliance which, they feared, would lead to its dominance over the remaining parties within the MRD. Bhutto argued that the PPP, with its strong popular support on the national level, could not be equated with small regional parties with hardly any follower. The leader of the smaller parties accused Bhutto of arrogance. Even when the MRD was united against the common enemy, Zia, Bhutto's high-handed style angered her alliance partners. Now that the dictatorship was gone, at least from the front scene, the reason for their unity was also weakened. The old animosities that had been embedded in the MRD since its formation were beginning to crop up again.

There was another point on which the PPP and the smaller parties disagreed: the strategy of the MRD campaign against the government. As was seen in the PPP's change of course in its struggle for democracy, Benazir Bhutto had realized that the political game had to be played only within the framework set up by the regime. Since the political parties had been unable to overthrow the existing system, they had to learn to live with it and work toward a gradual shift to democracy. Bhutto's pragmatic approach had a lot of logic in it and appeared
quite hopeful, but the rest of the MRD either showed reluctance to accept it or simply rejected the whole idea. "They are small, lack a popular base and hence are in no position to play a worthwhile electoral role," one analyst noted. "They make the best of this drawback by favoring the adoption of ultra-puristic positions which make for impressive but unrealistic politics." As a result, whenever the MRD leaders met, they gave an impression of purposeless drifting and final decisions were always postponed.

Meanwhile the public was getting frustrated with inability of the MRD to take concrete actions and disillusioned with the promise of democratic freedom within the foreseeable future. It was criticized that some of the MRD leaders seemed to have given up the battle against the government and favored the perpetuation of the status quo. Frustration with the MRD's incompetence made one critic say, "If the MRD leaders, on account of physical tiredness or mental sluggishness, wish to abandon their role, let them say so frankly and abdicate publicly.... If the MRD cannot move further forward, let it hand over the torch to other more willing hands." Another critic argued, "Instead of earnestly trying to iron out these differences, the MRD leaders have engaged themselves in meaningless problems and petty squabbles over trivial points of prestige." The MRD still commanded public attention because of the "automatic goodwill" that people still felt for it. In fact, for a few years after its formation, almost all the meaningful political activities that took place in Pakistan were either initiated or achieved by the MRD. However, if judged solely on its record since the lifting of martial law, it really deserved little public sympathy.

Local Bodies Election

As a means to consolidate his Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and build a nation-wide support base for it, the Junejo government had decided to hold local bodies elections on November 30, 1987. Although political parties were
technically banned from participation, the polls were treated in practice as a crucial “dress-rehearsal” for the next general election. The MRD parties except for the PPP decided against participation in the polls, arguing that such an action by the MRD would mean its recognition of the illegitimate Junejo government.

Despite the opposition of the MRD partners, Benazir Bhutto decided to take part in the party-less polls by supporting individual PPP candidates. She justified her decision by arguing that her party workers needed election experience after eight years in the wilderness and that elections would add momentum to the democratic process in the country. The failure of the MRD boycott of the 1985 elections being still vivid in her memory, Bhutto was determined not to make the same mistake again. “During the long wait in the sidelines, significant changes had taken place in the body politics threatening to render the PPP irrelevant to the course of events. It was therefore necessary for the party to come down from its ‘ivory tower’ and bridge the gap between the ‘desirable’ and the ‘available.’ ”

The defiance of the PPP against the MRD’s decision on boycott was both a reflection of Bhutto’s pragmatic politics and an indication of the continuous inner-tussle within the MRD. It was also argued that the PPP deliberately defied the MRD partners in order to emphasize its separate identity.

The campaign strategy of the PPP showed significant changes from its old style. The PPP supported the candidacies of those influential who had the potential of winning elections on the strength of personal or family connections. Their democratic credentials and contribution to the party were not the important criteria for the selection process. Bhutto also tried to persuade the vested interests that she and her party did not pose any threat to them. As discussed earlier, she practically abandoned her father’s socialism and projected herself as a social democrat. The alteration of policy indicated Bhutto’s effort to create a national consensus for her party through a political style with moderation in ideology and accommodation of diverse vested interests including landowners, industrialists and religious conservatives.
The weakness of the PPP’s organizational structure was exposed during the local elections. It had failed to establish strong grass-roots organization. The old guard of the PPP conceded that they found themselves totally out of touch with the thinking of the masses. Since the elections were party-less, Bhutto herself could not be put on “display” to attract fragmented voters. As a result, the PPP made a poor showing in the elections; it was badly defeated in the Punjab. Even in Sindh, Bhutto’s home province, the party achieved only mixed results. The morale of the party was at its low.

**Dismissal of the Junejo Government**

While Benazir Bhutto was struggling to consolidate the PPP and strengthen its support base, the regime was beginning to show a widening rift between President Zia-ul Haq and Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo. When Zia hand-picked Junejo as prime minister, he had made it clear that Junejo must unconditionally obey him in three areas: defense, foreign relations, and internal security. But Junejo had begun gradually exercising his own authority. He showed his independence by disagreeing with Zia over such issues as Afghan policy and appointment of a foreign minister. Junejo also claimed that it was his government that had martial law withdrawn and restored civil rights. Zia was extremely annoyed by this claim and made it clear that it was he who imposed martial law and it was he who lifted it. Zia’s repeated reference to an Islamic system and Junejo’s assurance for restoration of democracy also suggested the uneasy relationship between the two.

On May 29, 1988, without any prior notice, Zia-ul Haq removed Prime Minister Junejo and dissolved both national and provincial assemblies. Since this move was within the framework of the constitution, some observers termed it “Zia’s constitutional coup.” The official reasons for Junejo’s removal was his failure to control corruption and carry on the Islamization program. What was
behind this official explanation was Zia’s increasing dissatisfaction with Junejo’s position on Afghan settlement negotiations. Politicians’ criticism of the military and their attempt to cut the defense allocation were also frustrating to Zia and other generals. Zia felt that Junejo and his colleagues were taking their constitutional role too seriously. After all, what Zia expected was to share power with civilians and not to hand it over to them. Junejo had considerably relaxed restrictions on the activities of political leaders. Zia was said to have become apprehensive of his isolation in the face of growing consensus between Junejo’s PML and the opposition parties for rapid progress toward party-based politics. In more general terms, dismissal of the Junejo government was a result of the fundamental and growing difference between the politicians and the military over the priorities in running the country. And Zia decided, “Politics is too important to be left to politicians.”

General Zia-ul Haq’s announcement of his decision on May 29 came as a surprise to everyone. Despite his effort to avoid the impression that he intended to bring back martial law to the country, the suspicion was running deep in people’s minds. Opposition leaders were divided in their response. Most of them could not directly oppose the dissolution of the assemblies and plans for fresh elections because that was what they had demanded for the past three years. Yet a civilian government, even though it was not a truly representative one, was better than direct rule by Zia for the latter could gradually go back to something similar to martial law. Meanwhile political leaders began preparing for the elections which were supposed to be held within ninety days after the dissolution of the assemblies.

The anxiety of the opposition leaders over the possibility of Zia’s one-man rule was never shed completely off their mind but was considerably reduced on July 20, 1988 when Zia announced the date of the next general elections: November 16, 1988. Despite the good news, however, many were still concerned that the elections might be held with the condition of non-party basis again. The biggest damage of such a rule to political parties, particularly to the large ones like the PPP, was that they would be denied the use of a common symbol through
which the country’s largely illiterate voters would identify their candidates. Banning a common symbol on ballot paper would mean that a political party would not be able to take advantage of its national leadership’s popularity and would have to organize itself better on the constituency level, making it hard for many political parties most of which were not tightly run. The opposition’s dilemma was that their violent rejection of Zia’s proposal would invite a crackdown. They had to play carefully.

Bhutto along with her MRD partners challenged in the Supreme Court the legitimacy of Zia’s Political Parties Act, whose clause required prior registration of political parties which practically excluded the PPP and other opposition parties from elections. The Supreme Court ruled in late June 1988 that the registration clause of the Political Parties Act was unconstitutional and that political parties were a “necessary part of a democratic government.” The Supreme Court ruling was a great encouragement for Bhutto’s PPP and other MRD members, but there was no guarantee that Zia would allow party-based elections.

Given a new common cause of elections to fight for, the MRD had shown a good sign of unity after Zia’s sacking of the Junejo government. It brought back to the alliance a greater sense of realism and cohesion. At a mass rally in Lahore on July 12, 1988, Bhutto and other MRD leaders stood together on a public platform for the first time in almost two years and jointly criticized the Zia regime. The PPP earlier had plans for cooperation with other parties outside the MRD but Bhutto abandoned the idea and decided to remain in the alliance because of its symbolic value in mobilizing public support. In fact, the massive turn-out at the MRD rally in Lahore was explained not so much by what the MRD had actually achieved but by the fact that the people still accepted it as a symbol of resistance to authoritarianism. The MRD’s strategy this time was to put moral pressure on Zia while avoiding direct confrontation that could result in harsh measures by his regime. Nevertheless, apprehensions had persisted that the elections would be either postponed with some convenient excuses or used for a referendum on new constitutional proposals.
Despite the indication of cooperation between the PPP and other MRD parties, the problem of internal conflicts persisted. The question of parity among all the component parties was raised over and over, leading to frustration of the PPP and Bhutto’s accusation that the smaller parties were trying to dilute the PPP’s influence. Another sensitive issue for the MRD was whether it was an electoral alliance or not. ‘‘With the elections in sight, the MRD parties began to drift apart. Narrow-based and mostly one-man organizations, these parties wanted to convert the MRD into an electoral alliance to enable them to ride on the mass support of the PPP and get more of their members elected than they could on their own.’’16 Bhutto had insisted that the MRD was a movement and it was never meant to be an electoral alliance. She expressed her willingness not to field PPP candidates against the other MRD leaders but refused to contest the election together. There was some softening on this position by Bhutto after the announcement of the election date, but the PPP and the rest of the MRD never reached a complete agreement on the issue. Bhutto had occasionally considered these alliance partners as a burden but she had remained reluctant to take the PPP out of this long-time alliance because of its earlier-discussed symbolic value, and for fear of totally alienating its other component parties in the future political scene.
NOTES

CHAPTER 3

DEATH OF ZIA AND THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS

Death of Zia, August 1988

On August 17, 1988, General Zia-ul Haq, who had ruled Pakistan for over eleven years, was killed in an airplane crash along with several other generals and the U.S. ambassador. It came as a shock to the whole nation; Benazir Bhutto called it one of those “moments in life so stunning, so unexpected, that they are difficult to absorb.” General Mirza Aslam Beg succeeded as the chief of army staff and requested Senate Chairman Ghulam Ishaq Khan to take over as president in accordance with the constitution. The most significant change that took place after Zia’s death was that the positions of the president and the chief of army staff were now occupied by two different individuals. Ishaq Khan took charge, declared a state of emergency, and formed an emergency council which consisted mostly of civilians. He was known as a highly-skilled technocrat and had no political constituency. Although he had cordial relations with many of the army generals, he was said to be without political ambition.

The most notable in this period was the role that the military played. The new head of the army, General Beg, assured the nation that the army had no intention to intervene and that it would keep aloof from politics, saying that it was the sole domain of politicians. Skeptics doubted the sincerity of such a statement: a reaction well-justified in a country where the generals had ruled for two-thirds of the period since its independence. There were reasons for this position that the military chose. “In the eyes of... General Beg, an immediate and unplanned military takeover would have been counter-productive. It would have bogged the military down in confronting unpredictable politicians when the command structure had to be recognized and the defence of the country strengthened.” Moreover,
by this time, the army resented the police duties it had been repeatedly called upon to perform. The generals felt that the prolonged military rule had damaged their professionalism and wanted to restore their prestige. With the death of Zia, they have been relieved of a lot of liabilities and burdens.

It is also to be noted that the death of Zia’s key commanders in the same accident also made the military’s retreat from politics easier. Some argued that death gave Zia an ‘‘honorable exit’’ from the political scene. To be fair, it should also be remembered that the same was the case with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who had been regarded as a martyr ever since his hanging. In October Beg announced that the army and the judiciary had created the conditions for fair elections and asked the politicians to ‘‘rid the country of the prevailing crisis.’’ It became known to everyone that the military had decided to see peaceful conduct of the elections.

Opposition leaders welcomed this constitutional transition of authority and Bhutto commended the military on its peaceful role. Now that Zia, the biggest obstacle to free elections, was out of the scene, Bhutto and other political leaders demanded the removal of the caretaker governments which were formed under his regime, arguing that neutral ministers were necessary to reduce the advantage of the incumbent politicians and thereby ensure fair elections. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed this demand as an attempt by opposition leaders to find a new focus for attack. Meanwhile, anti-PPP groups continued to look toward the military for guidance, ‘‘though none seemed ready to admit publicly that they preferred a military government to the return of the PPP.’’

Despite the assurance of the army for non-intervention and its apparent willingness to allow free elections, Bhutto had to remain cautious. The military could change its position if politicians failed to recognize its priorities or if law and order situation deteriorated. It had already made clear its commitment to a continuation of the defense and foreign policies. Bhutto admitted that no one in Pakistan was naive enough to believe that an opposition party could come to power without the army’s tolerance. The military viewed politicians with contempt because of the latter’s corrupt and inefficient manners in handling political affairs.
Politicians in Pakistan are traditionally considered to be less interested in national unity than in advancing their own individual interests. "Pakistan stumbles on," one critic argued, "because politicians have never put down roots, which would give their parties a degree of stability and coherence and, in turn, would allow them to govern effectively." It should be noted, however, that such lack of stability derives from "the political clientelism or patron-client relationship that have flourished in the highly personalized character of Pakistan's politics, perpetuated in large part by the lack of an appropriate institutionalization of politics." Deeply skeptical of politicians' ability, the military stayed in the backstage for the moment.

**Election Campaign**

**Campaign Strategy of the PPP**

The momentum toward the elections grew over the weeks after the death of Zia-ul Haq, and political parties started serious preparations for election campaigns. The PPP presented a manifesto that included various economic programs: implementation of previous land reforms, no more nationalization and encouragement of private sector, reorganization of tax system, more budget for education, reorganization of trade unions and so on. The PPP manifesto possessed no revolutionary element and aimed at bringing about basic and moderate reforms. Bhutto had already abandoned her father's slogan of "food, clothing, and shelter," calling it too radical. Her own slogan concentrated on the following points: Islam is our faith; democracy is our polity; all power to the people. As she had been doing so for the previous two years, Bhutto had steadily moved from the left toward center in an effort to convince the establishment that she would pose no threat to them.
Despite Bhutto’s effort to accommodate the conservatives by offering a more moderate line of policies, many of them remained uneasy about the idea of the PPP ruling the country again. The prospect of a PPP victory was extremely upsetting to those who had suffered under the authoritarianism of her father. The frightening memories of his period were hard for them to erase. Businessmen associated the party with socialist policies which led to nationalization of industry, while the religious groups saw the PPP as a threat to traditional Islamic values. The big landowners were also wary of the possibility of large-scale, radical land reforms despite Bhutto’s assurance that there would be no such reforms. Many people also believed that Bhutto would seek revenge of her father, which she repeatedly denied. The legacy of her father, which gave her strong popular support, once again appeared to be an obstacle to her coming to power.

Not only the PPP but almost all other parties except for the fundamentalist religious parties had shifted toward the political center. Radicalism on either left or right had little appeal and political parties sensibly responded to this trend by refraining from any drastic policy. As Ghafoor Ahmed of the Jamaat-e-Islami, a fundamentalist group, put it, “The polarization between the right and the left of the late 1970s is no longer here.’’6 What was left as a campaign tool in this subdued state of ideological confrontation was the invocation of the shaheed, or martyr. Zia has been declared a shaheed by his followers and the army and so was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by his daughter Benazir. Some said that the real political battle would be fought between the ghosts of these two men. This ‘‘shaheed syndrome’’, however, did not last so long for Zia supporters. Over the weeks, the establishment ceased to turn to Zia’s legacy, which proved to be far from vote-catching. He was better remembered for negative memories of martial law, manipulated non-party elections and one-man rule. Soon his name disappeared from campaign scenes. The PPP campaign, on the contrary, made every effort to invoke the positive memory of the late Bhutto’s image as a champion of the poor and aroused sympathy over his unjustified execution under Zia. It was speculated that the appeal to his martyrdom might be reduced because his hangman was now
also dead and Benazir could no longer accuse him of her father’s suffering. While this argument had some validity, its impact was insignificant. In the course of the campaign, Benazir’s personal popularity as a charismatic leader was also growing. In the eyes of the public, she continued to appear as an “under dog” fighting against the establishment and attracted their support.

**Dissolution of the MRD**

As the election day neared, the issue of seat allocation became the focus of the MRD squabbles. The smaller parties of the MRD demanded much larger share of seats than what they deserved. For instance, one component party demanded 25 out of the 47 national assembly seats in Sindh and 50 percent of them in the NWFP. In the Punjab, the total demand of the MRD parties besides the PPP added up to more than the number of seats in the entire province. The PPP protested that these demands by the MRD parties were “irrational” and “unacceptable”, and suggested a compromise formula which did not provide a percentage division of seats but offered only the ones that the MRD components could secure. According to this formula each of the smaller parties would get no more than three or four seats, which was also “unacceptable” to them.

The rest of the MRD accused Bhutto of her arrogant behavior which stemmed from the conviction that her party could win the elections on its own. They felt that their cooperation was necessary for the PPP to ensure its victory and that they deserved more respect from their largest alliance partner. On the other hand, the PPP had been annoyed by the “subtle blackmail” of the smaller parties whose demands could be satisfied only if the number of seats available had been twice as large. Bhutto eventually decided that her party would be better-off contesting the forthcoming elections on its own and parted from her long-time allies of the MRD. On October 19, 1988, the MRD was practically dissolved when its leaders told the public that the objectives of the MRD had been achieved and that the MRD had outlived its utility while blaming the PPP for its break-up.
Bhutto defended her decision, insisting that her party had never accepted the MRD as an electoral alliance and that this position of hers had always been made clear to the rest of the MRD. She strongly criticized her former partners in the MRD for their inexplicit but obvious expectation to secure more seats than they deserved on the strength of the PPP’s popular support. Being aware of the need to reduce political polarization, however, Bhutto had decided not to field candidates against the top MRD leaders. She also promised to include them in her cabinet even if she won a majority. “The token gesture of not putting up candidates against the top MRD leaders has enabled the PPP to defuse the usual bitterness of a break-up and, by promising to share power with former allies after winning the elections, it has kept the door open for future cooperation.”

The dissolution of the MRD was quite a disappointment to the voters who had always seen it as a symbol of resistance and a hope for change. “Saying it was dissolved because it had achieved its objectives of restoring democracy may make music to an ideologue’s ears but is not factually correct,” one observer noted. “Having led an ideological battle for seven years, it finally fell prey to the nitty-gritty requirements of electoral alliances which could not be met.” Despite its strong mass support, some also feared that the PPP might have miscalculated its prospects. It was a strategic error for the PPP to ditch its long-time allies in the MRD. Consequently it stood politically isolated and put itself in a position where it would not be able to form a coalition government with the other political forces after the elections. This was the situation in which Bhutto was placed when she was to form her government.

**Internal Tussle of the PPP**

While the MRD was going through its break-up, the PPP was suffering from its own internal problems: distribution of the PPP tickets for the up-coming elections. Bhutto declared that the former PPP members could come back to the party and announced its intention to welcome a large number of provincial
ministers and members of both national and provincial assemblies. Realizing that the PPP had a good chance in the forthcoming elections, a number of political opportunists rushed to the PPP bandwagon to benefit from its nomination. "In fickle Pakistan whoever looks like doing well attracts a flood of converts," said one analyst. "The PPP, which in dark days under President Zia had difficulty in collecting money and keeping members, is now buried by both." The decision to give its tickets to such groups of people was aimed at securing its seats through those influential politicians who could win largely due to their personal connections and wealth. It was also intended to assure the army and the vested interests of the shift the party had made toward a more moderate line.

The PPP's policy of ticket distribution, however, caused frustration among the party faithfuls. They claimed that they could not support a PPP which would ignore their sacrifices under martial law. They also argued that the socio-economic program of the party was more important than personalities. Many of the new "enthusiasts" were former adversaries including some ministers who had served the martial law government of Zia-ul Haq. Some others were notorious defectors from the official camp. Many of the rival influential who rushed for the PPP tickets also had little tie with the policy or activity of the PPP. The case of a national assembly candidate, Raja Shahid Zafar --- a multi-millionaire who joined the PPP in June 1988 --- clearly indicated the absence of commitment to the party.

There is scarcely, if any, link between him and local PPP apparatus. "He is running his campaign as it were a non-party election again," grumbled another PPP candidate. He is keen not to be burdened with any sense of obligation to it, it seems. . . . His campaign is controlled by his relatives. The party itself is completely oblivious of his activities. His main election office is on the first floor. . . of his vast plaza on Bank Road. A frayed, faded poster or two is all that gives it the pretension of belonging to a PPP candidate. It was
the few banners put up in the area bearing only his name, the party being represented only by its three colors.11

By allowing the ex-employee of the old regime and rural influentials to be among the PPP candidates, Bhutto furthered the organizational weakness of the party. First, given the fact that one of the PPP’s strongest assets was a large core of dedicated workers who had stayed with the party even under martial law, any action that disappointed or frustrated them would erode the morale and the fundamental strength of the PPP. Second, those new-comers, since they had almost no loyalty to the PPP, could line up behind anyone who was appointed as Prime Minister by the president, thereby weakening the PPP’s position in the assembly.

Nevertheless, Bhutto did not change her belief that she could win only if she had sufficient number of winning candidates no matter what their past records were and no matter what the party workers said about her decision. She faced a choice between “stability” and “electability” and she gave a priority to the latter. This policy of Bhutto invited various criticism from outside the party as well. One critic argued that the acquisition of political power could not be an end in itself to be reached by any means. Another questioned the wisdom of Bhutto’s choice; “How can the PPP plan to make Pakistan a ‘twenty-first century nation’ with this team of political opportunists and vested interests only its co-chairperson knows?”12

Formation of the IJI

While the PPP was advancing toward the November elections, though not without problems, the official party of the government, the PML, was suffering from its own internal conflicts. After the dismissal of the Junejo government in May, 1988, the PML’s unity was seriously weakened and an attempt by some to replace Junejo as party leader split the PML, leading to its separation into two factions. One group consisted of Junejo loyalists. The other one comprised those
who supported the caretaker chief ministers who enjoyed the late president Zia-ul Haq’s backing. The split was formalized when the PML held two separate meetings. Junejo group re-elected him as party president while the other chose former NWFP governor Fida Mohammed Khan for the same post. The driving force of the Fida faction, however, was its secretary-general and the Punjab chief minister, Nawaz Sharif.

At the beginning of October, the Junejo faction of the PML and two smaller anti-PPP parties, Jamiat-Ulema-Pakistan and Tehrik-i-Istiqlal, agreed to form the Pakistan People’s Alliance (PPA). Soon after the formation of the PPA, Fida group of the PML and the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami, along with nine other parties, formed the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), or Islamic Democratic Alliance. Although the PPA was supposed to last for five years, the Junejo group withdrew from the alliance only eleven days after its formation and decided to join the IJI, providing another example of fragility of political alliances in Pakistan. To reunify the PML Junejo gave up his opposition to the caretaker ministers who, in return, agreed to accept Junejo as party leader. However, it was evident that he would not have absolute power in the party.

The IJI members formed the alliance to prevent vote-splitting among anti-PPP parties and cutting into each other. In other words, the alliance’s main goal was to ensure a consolidated anti-PPP vote. In this sense, the IJI was intended to serve the role that the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) had played in 1977 when its anti-PPP agitation had enabled General Zia-ul Haq to overthrow the PPP government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The anti-PPP force of conservatives and religious parties did not want to repeat the same mistake of 1970 when they won more votes than the PPP but failed to secure even a third of the seats because of vote-splitting among themselves. The IJI was never a coherent or strongly united alliance; relationships were uneasy among some of its key leaders. Nevertheless, it remained as an alliance for the common interest: to defeat the PPP in the elections and prevent it from coming into power again.
Results of the November Elections

On November 16, 1988, the first free and party-based general elections since 1970 were held in Pakistan. The conduct of the election was remarkably free of violence and, despite some reports of irregularities, vote rigging was kept minimal. The people of Pakistan who had been occasionally deprived of their rights to choose their own leaders gave the final verdict: victory for the PPP. One analyst noted:

The historic verdict of the people has repudiated the allegation that PPP and its leaders had no roots among the masses and that PPP and its chairman, the late Z. A. Bhutto... misruled the country and would never be allowed by the people to come into power. ... Common people have a good memory and a keen sense of judgement as to what is good for them. ... The architect of the resistance got their inspiration from Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto who kept the candle of democratic hope lighted when all around was complete darkness. They suffered untold miseries and repressive measures but undauntedly and fearlessly they championed the cause of democracy.13

Another commented: “The people’s Party is led by two women, Miss Benazir Bhutto and Mrs. Nusrat Bhutto. The election was won by a man; the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. ... Eleven years after Zia deposed him and nine years after he was hanged, his appeal was clear: ‘Bhutto did good things for poor people.’ Poor Pakistanis, on this thesis, have now paid their debt.’”14

In National Assembly, the PPP won 92 seats out of 205 while the IJI had to settle for 54. However, the PPP failed to secure an absolute majority, which created problems for Bhutto in claiming her right to form a government. What was
most remarkable was the fact that most of the senior politicians from all parties lost to younger candidates who were nationally less known. Heavy weights like Junejo, Jatoi, Tikka khan, Professor Ghafoor, Asghar Khan, Pir Pagara, and Noorani were all swept aside. Several candidates who had joined the PPP at the last minute hoping to benefit from the Bhutto’s popularity lost in regions where the party otherwise did well. The people dumped the so-called old guard or opportunists in favor of fresh leadership, reflecting their desire for change in the nation’s politics.

The MRD parties also did very poorly in the elections. “By each party asking for too much, they... collectively received less than what the people were willing to give them... What the people really wanted was for the MRD alliance to face the polls as a coalition... (But) when the election fever hit the alliance, every party wanted to grab more than its proper due.”15 As a result, the MRD parties not only received fewer votes than they could secure but also helped the IJI capture more seats than it otherwise could. The defeat of the small MRD parties may also be viewed as the voters’ inclination to reduce the number of political parties in the country to avoid further fragmentation of society.

Things were not so smooth for the PPP in the provincial assemblies. The PPP failed to secure majority in all three provinces except Sindh, home province of Bhutto, where the party won 67 out of 100 seats. The Punjab, the largest and most powerful province whose assembly had 204 seats, came to be controlled by the IJI which secured 108 seats. The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan had to be run by coalitions. Only in Sindh, the PPP enjoyed the absolute majority. The control of the Punjab by the opposition was a major setback for the PPP. The province is run by Bhutto’s most powerful opponent, Nawaz Sharif, who was the Punjab chief minister under Zia and has been spreading anti-Sindh sentiment among the Punjabi chauvinists. It had become evident that Bhutto’s first problem was the provinces which were not totally under her control.

The national identity card condition worked against the PPP as its leaders had worried. In Pakistani electoral system voters are required to register themselves before the elections and obtain national identity cards in order to be
eligible to vote. A large number of rural population, of which many were PPP supporters, could not obtain their new national identity cards in time for the elections, thereby being denied their right to vote. The PPP leadership maintained that the Punjab PPP, which won 94 seats in the provincial assembly, lost to the IJI by a narrow margin of 14 because of the identity card condition. The PPP also claimed that this requirement along with other similar manoeuvre by the caretakers might have cost it 15 to 20 seats in the national assembly, a number which otherwise would have given an absolute majority to the party. Nevertheless, an overall result of the elections were accepted by all parties and did not provide an excuse for any force to cause social strife.

**Appointment as Prime Minister**

In the absence of an absolute majority, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan was given the prerogative to call upon any leader to form a government. Although her party had the largest number of seats, Bhutto simply had to wait for the president's request. The political climate for her appointment was not entirely encouraging; there were many who did not want to see her appointed as prime minister for various reasons.

The most vocal opposition came from the male chauvinists including all religious groups who could not accept the idea of having a woman as head of the state. Islamic scholars argued that a nation that would hand over its leadership to a woman would not enjoy welfare and prosperity. "Pakistan would suffer if it was governed by a woman," a male worker said. "Women should stay at home. . . There are many men in her party. Why don't they come forward?" Such opposition to the idea of having female head of the state was criticized as "hypocritical" by the Punjab Women Lawyers’ Association, which pointed out the fact that many of these conservative parties had earlier supported Miss Fatima Jinnah in the presidential elections against Ayub Khan.
The military remained cautious as well in letting Bhutto take office despite her repeated assurance that she would not disrupt its defence concerns. There were several areas of policy where the military did not want to see any change: support for the Afghan mujahideen, a sufficient budget allocation for defence, non-interference with the military's internal affairs, continuation of nuclear program, and rejection of India's regional preeminence. Bhutto agreed on all these conditions. Another reason for the army's reluctance to see Bhutto in prime minister's office was said to be its nervousness about having the daughter of the man they overthrew and executed a decade ago. The army insisted on no immediate changes to the constitution which gave more power to the president than to the prime minister. It wanted to make sure that Ishaq Khan would stay as president and head a cabinet defense committee that would oversee the domestic security and intelligence.

Another force that caused the delay in appointment was the IJI chief, Nawaz Sharif. He, along with other anti-PPP forces, tried to persuade President Ishaq Khan to convene the provincial assemblies first for fear that independents would all flock to the PPP if Bhutto was appointed prime minister first, thereby weakening the opposition force of the IJI. They finally succeeded in talking the president into naming prime minister after the provincial governments were appointed. Bhutto had to wait until then. However, her chance to be appointed was strengthened when Nawaz Sharif withdrew from the national assembly to remain as Punjab Chief Minister in order to fight against her through controlling the country's most powerful province. After all, it would have been so unfair and unreasonable to look beyond Bhutto who had 92 seats in the national assembly and choose Sharif who had only 54. After the long and frustrating two weeks, Benazir Bhutto was named prime minister of Pakistan. This was the first time in the history of Pakistan that the transfer of power was carried out peacefully.
NOTES

3. ibid., September 8, 1988, p. 18.
CHAPTER 4

COMING TO POWER

Forming the Government and the By-Elections

It was evident in everyone’s eyes that the new prime minister, surrounded by harsh environment, had difficult time ahead. Bhutto “inherited not only a fragile tradition of democratic rule, but an economy in dire straits and a coterie of senior political figures and military men who neither know or fully trust her.”1 Bhutto was aware of the need to proceed without causing distrust or fear. “We are moving very cautiously so as not to ruffle feathers, to permit people to get to know us,” she said. “We would like to make an impact in a gradual way.”2 She also declared that her government did not believe in a policy of vengeance although it was widely expected that she would take certain measures of retaliation against those who had made her and her party suffer in prior years.

Even the most optimistic had to admit that her freedom to maneuver was severely curtailed in various ways --- politically, economically and structurally. The lack of a clear majority in the national assembly was a crucial and decisive weakness for her government. It was hoped that the PPP as the ruling party would be able to gain more supporters in the assembly and improve its position. But even this was not without risks and drawbacks. “Miss Bhutto may be able to woo more independents once she has taken office,” one analyst argued, “but they will want jobs and other nice things in return for their support. That costs money. This is the politics Pakistan’s politicians know, but it is not what many of Miss Bhutto’s supporters were voting for. They voted for her because they remember her father as a scourge of the rich. They may not be impressed to find his daughter horse-trading with the land-owners.”3
Bhutto's 17-member cabinet consisted largely of the party faithful. Although all five of her advisors with ministerial rank had served in her father's government in the 1970s, the majority of the ministers were party stalwarts who were inexperienced in running a government. A few exceptions to this were the Zia holdovers including a long-time foreign minister, Yaqub Khan. He was retained in the cabinet apparently due to pressures from the military and Washington to continue the past foreign policies particularly in areas such as Afghanistan. After all, this was one of the "conditions" under which Bhutto was allowed to assume the prime ministership in the first place.

Bhutto was quick to counter anti-democratic measures taken by the previous regime. She lifted ban on trade unions and student organizations. She promised to abolish the National Press Trust, which controls government-owned newspapers, to assure press freedom, and she also said she would reduce control over broadcasting media. On the human rights front, she had all death sentences commuted to life imprisonment and pardoned all women prisoners except those convicted of murder. Bhutto also undertook to review all cases of political prisoners convicted under martial law. There were still hundreds of political prisoners, most of whom were PPP activists.

On January 28, 1989, by-elections were held to contest fourteen seats in the national assembly and seven in the provincial assemblies. The by-elections were necessary because, while the Pakistani electoral system allows candidates to run for more than one seat in assemblies, those who successfully contested them are required to surrender all but one. Therefore, those candidates who won the November general elections from more than one constituencies had to choose one and vacate the other seats to be contested again in the by-elections.

The stakes were high for both Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Punjab Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif. Bhutto needed to increase her strength in the national assembly which fell short of a majority in the November elections. She also wished to improve the PPP's position in the Punjab provincial assembly where the PPP won 94 seats to the IJI's 108. Sharif's political future also depended on
these by-elections. If the IJI did well, Sharif's grip on the Punjab would be strengthened as well as his capability to create more problems for the center. If the IJI did not, Sharif's power would be seriously undermined due to already growing resentment against him within his own Muslim League. The results of the by-elections were also expected to indicate how the people of the Punjab perceived their chief minister's declared intention to challenge and oppose the central government. Inevitably the Punjab became the focus of attention.

The IJI's election campaign in the Punjab had been carried out by an Islamic fundamentalist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, whose hard-core activists led the fight against the PPP government. Because of her good relations with the Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, they accused Bhutto of selling out to India -- an emotional issue in the Punjab where anti-Indian feeling is strong. The Punjab borders on India and its inhabitants detest those who are soft on Indians. The Jamaat's attack on the PPP government also centered on its alleged secularism and socialism. Nawaz Sharif, on the other hand, was beating the "Punjabis-against-everybody drum," stirring particularly anti-Sindh sentiment among the Punjabis. They are accustomed to running at least the army and the bureaucracy even when they concede the prime ministership to Sindh. Punjabis were totally displeased with the fact that they were holding none of the country's top positions; the prime minister was a Sindhi, the president a Pathan, and the army chief of staff a mohajir. "I will stand like a rock in the path of the PPP to thwart its evil designs," Sharif declared on election eve. "A PPP victory on the [January] 28th will be a victory for India and the enemies of Pakistan." Bhutto failed to effectively counter her opponents.

The election results turned out to be less than satisfactory to the PPP. Of the fourteen national assembly seats, the IJI won seven, the PPP five, and one each went to the Awami National Party (ANP) based in the NWFP and to the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) of Sindh. As a whole the PPP got three more seats than it had surrendered. The disappointment was that it could not make any new gains in the Punjab, the stronghold of its opponents, the IJI, and its leader, Nawaz
Sharif. In Pakistan the ruling party in the center is usually expected to do well and rake up the votes in by-elections through various favors it can promise because of its advantageous position of power. Therefore, it was regarded as a major setback that the PPP which was now in power gained less than the IJI.

The two national assembly seats that the PPP won were NA-133 in Dera Ghazi Khan and NA-113 in Okara. NA-133 had been vacated by the federal minister for water and power, Sardar Farooq Leghari, who then hoped to be the Punjab chief minister. As it became more apparent that the PPP had no chance to form a government in the Punjab, Leghari was called back to the center and asked to contest the seat he had vacated earlier. NA-113 in Okara, which had been surrendered by the Punjab assembly speaker, Mian Manzur Ahmed Wattoo, was won by PPP’s Muhammad Maneka who was defeated earlier in the November elections by Wattoo.

The defeat in Okara was painful for the IJI but equally damaging to the PPP was the loss of NA-94 in Lahore which Bhutto herself had vacated upon becoming prime minister. It was won by the IJI’s Omar Hayat who had earlier been defeated in the November elections. NA-95 in Lahore also attracted particular attention because this seat was vacated by Nawaz Sharif after he decided to remain in the Punjab assembly as the province’s chief minister. The contest resulted in the IJI’s victory. This was the only constituency where a violent clash took place between the IJI and PPP workers.

The most serious setback for the PPP, however, was its defeat in NA-138 in Muzaffargarh where the IJI’s Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and the PPP’s Mian Tariq Gormani contested for a seat in the national assembly. Jatoi, a Sindhi landlord and a favorite of the army and the conservatives, had lost heavily to PPP candidates in two constituencies in his home province of Sindh in November. The IJI had planned to make him an opposition leader in the national assembly and selected a safe seat for him which had been vacated by the former Punjab governor, Ghulam Mustafa Khar. Both the PPP and the IJI deployed their full force against each other in this contest, but Jatoi won with a margin of about 39,000 votes. The PPP
Minister Mukhtar Awan alleged rigging in the constituency and asked the Chief Election Commission to withhold the official results. The request was not granted, however. Bhutto, on the other hand, responded to the result differently from her minister when she stated, "we'll not say the grapes are sour."

In the NWFP, an ANP candidate, Ghulam Mohammad Bilour, enjoyed a big victory over Mian Mohammad of the IJI. In this campaign, the PPP played an active role to support the candidate of the ANP which had been the PPP's coalition partner in the provincial government there. Nawaz Sharif, as the IJI president, personally visited the constituency in support of the alliance's candidate but it proved to be a fruitless effort. NA-203 in Baluchistan, which had been surrendered by Mir Zafarullah Jamali, was contested by BNA's Abdul Haye Baluch and PPP's Nabi Bakhsh Khosa who defeated the former by a large margin. Jamali was again a candidate from this seat but he later withdrew in favor of the PPP candidate.

Of the seven provincial seats contested in the Punjab and the NWFP, the PPP and the IJI won three each with the remaining one going to an independent. Five of the seven seats were in the Punjab where the IJI got three and one each was won by the PPP and an independent. Both of the two seats in the NWFP were won by the PPP. With these two seats along with the support of IJI legislators who had formed a so-called "forward block" to cooperate with the PPP government in the province, the PPP secured the provincial government in the NWFP which was headed by the PPP chief minister, Aftab Sherpao. However, Bhutto had to accept at the same time the bitter fact that Punjab Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif now held the full grip of the provincial assembly with a clear majority and that the PPP had practically no chance to oust him.

Though it suffered a set-back in the Punjab, the PPP could gain some relief from the fact that the opposition was an effective force only in the Punjab. The IJI could not win any national assembly seat in the by-elections from any province other than the Punjab. In contrast, the PPP had confirmed its position as the country's only nationally-based party. Nonetheless, the PPP's defeat in the most
populous and powerful province was taken seriously. "Any self-respecting Pakistani government, once in office, expects to wipe out the opposition by using the promise of patronage and the threat of bureaucratic harassment," one analyst argued. "The IJI runs the Punjab government, so it was expected to do well in the provincial assembly by-elections; but its success in the national seats runs counter to tradition." It was strongly felt that in order for the PPP to capitalize on the general mass support, better electoral strategies had to be formulated so that the party organization could function more effectively.

While Bhutto had to settle for disappointing results in the by-elections, Nawaz Sharif increased his self-confidence as the effective opposition leader. He even held a victory procession in his province's capital to impress the public and reassure their support for him. He termed the IJI victory in the by-elections as a verdict in favor of an Islamic order and against secularism and socialism. The failure to win in the country's most powerful province, even though it was in power at the center, marked the difficult time ahead for the still infant PPP government.

**Confrontation with the Provinces**

**Punjab**

When Mian Nawaz Sharif surrendered his national assembly seat and chose to be the leader of the IJI-controlled Punjab provincial assembly, the seed of the confrontation between the center and the Punjab was sown. It was the first time in Pakistan's history that two different parties came to control the governments in Islamabad and Lahore. Punjab is the most populous province and the Punjabis occupy important positions in the country's military, bureaucracy and industry, commanding great influence on the national politics. Now that the Punjab became the opposition IJI's stronghold, conflict between Islamabad and Lahore appeared
inevitable. Nawaz Sharif took a confrontational posture against the federal government of Bhutto from the very beginning. When Bhutto came to Lahore at the end of December 1988, soon after she was named prime minister, Sharif failed to give her a full protocol and did not hide his reluctance to receive her in his own province. After Bhutto left Lahore, Sharif told his audience in the midst of cheers: "Our resistance is for the sake of Pakistan as also our reconciliation. I live for Pakistan and will die for Pakistan. If somebody is sincere with the mission of the Quaid-i-Azam, I am ready to give him full honors but if his way is different from that of my Quaid, I am at open war with him."

Bhutto's attitude toward Sharif was never gentle either. "I am a democratic leader and expect democratic norms to be observed. I am not a military dictator, but my government is not going to turn a blind eye to the thuggery in Punjab," she said. "We could have difference with the Punjab chief minister. We could even criticize each other, but it should not be allowed to damage national interests." Among actions of the Punjab government that annoyed the center at the beginning was one relating to the release of political prisoners. The federal government ordered release of political prisoners many of whom were PPP activists arrested under Zia regime. The PPP regarded them as heroes of the struggle for democracy. However, the Punjab government, calling them murderers and dacoits, decided to keep them under surveillance on the ground that they might again commit the subversive and terrorist activities. The Punjab government criticized Benazir Bhutto for showing friendliness to the Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, at the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit at Islamabad in December 1988. On another occasion the Nawaz Sharif cabinet discussed the Afghan issue. Its intrusions in the area of foreign policy, being unconstitutional, were resented.

Nawaz Sharif's hostility toward Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the PPP was only natural in light of his political and personal backgrounds. He is from an industrialist family who suffered from expropriation under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's socialist government. He served in the Punjab government under Zia-ul Haq's
regime and claimed to be the true inheritor of his political legacy. More direct origin of the center-Punjab conflict, however, was said to be found in Bhutto's statements during the election campaign that the collaborators of the martial law regime would have to give full accounts of the plunder of state resources and disgorge all the loot. Nawaz Sharif was widely believed to be among those who benefitted most from the immunity from accountability under martial law.

Early in 1989 the central government made moves which resulted in damaging its prestige. It has been customary for the center to appoint its own officers to certain key positions in the provincial administrations. But this is done in consultation with the provincial government. Without consulting Nawaz Sharif, the Bhutto government appointed a certain officer to be the chief secretary, and another as the inspector general of the police, in the Punjab. Nawaz Sharif declined to accept these appointees and sent them back to Islamabad. In addition he threatened to remove scores of other federal civil servants, holding positions in the Punjab government, and to replace them with others from the Punjab civil service. After an extended exchange of angry words, the central government backed down and Nawaz Sharif prevailed. The Bhutto government was seen by the people as both weak and inept.

In March 1989, the PPP was getting prepared to stage a motion of no-confidence against the Punjab chief minister. By then, Bhutto was even more convinced that the only way to put an end to the rebellion of the Punjab against her central government was to oust Nawaz Sharif from the provincial government. It was clear to anyone that Sharif was determined to counter each significant move the Bhutto government would make. The PPP, which needed 30 extra votes to unseat Sharif, was hoping to win over at least 40 legislators in the Punjab provincial assembly. Sharif was first elected as chief minister at the beginning of December when a total of 151 legislators reposed confidence in him by show of hands. 103 legislators, affiliated with or supporters of the PPP, opposed him.

Sharif's position appeared to have been weakened somewhat by dissatisfaction within his own Pakistan Muslin League (PML). Some of the old
feudal stalwarts in the PML were skeptical of Sharif's confrontationist attitude toward the central government. Sharif called for a jihad, a holy war, against Bhutto and the Punjab police entered the prime minister's office in Rawalpindi to arrest a man who had allegedly made an objectionable speech against Sharif. They also feared that Sharif was becoming too influenced by the fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami. One of such PML dissidents was Makhdoom Altaf Ahmed, a feudal and spiritual leader from Multan. He had reportedly been promised the chief ministership of the Punjab by Bhutto if he succeeded in mustering enough votes to oust Sharif. As a minister in the Sharif cabinet in 1986, he led an unsuccessful revolt against the chief minister. If Sharif was ousted this time, a PML-PPP coalition government could be formed in Punjab. The situation became even more critical when the Punjab Food Minister, Sardar Maqsood Ahmed Khan Leghari, resigned from the provincial government as a sign of protest against Sharif's policy of confrontation with the federal government. He said he had warned the chief minister but all his efforts to make him see reason were ignored and the Punjab government continued to run the administration on the advice of the Jamaat-e-Islami and other anti-democratic elements. Leghari claimed that he felt it to be his patriotic duty to dissociate himself from the "anti-democratic and anti-federal conduct" of the Punjab chief minister.

Other leaders of the PML were also convinced that Sharif's term as the Punjab chief minister would not last long.

However, to save the party from disgrace in the event of no-confidence motion against the incumbent Punjab chief minister, they have asked the PML president, Mr. Muhammand Khan Junejo, to advise the chief minister to resign before the proposed motion is formally tabled against him. This, they argue, will save the party and the IJI government in the province as the IJI parliamentary party would be able to elect a new leader of the House. In such a situation, the PPP would not be able to bring a man of its own
choice to the fore. But if Mr. Nawaz Sharif stuck to power and the PPP enticed more IJI members to the dissident Forward Bloc of the alliance, the government will always be at the PPP's mercy.10

On March 12, Nawaz Sharif dealt the PML dissidents and the PPP a serious blow when he called a special session of the assembly, asked for a vote of confidence, and received one with a large margin. As many as 152 members of the IJI expressed their confidence in him by supporting a resolution moved by the provincial law minister, Nasrullah Dreshak. The resolution pointed out that federal ministers and advisors had launched a "campaign of vilification" against the Punjab chief minister. Expressing grave concerns over the undemocratic practices followed by the PPP in its drive to topple Nawaz Sharif, the resolution regretted the growing confrontation between the center and the province which, it said, would be very harmful to the larger interests of the country. The resolution also praised the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, expressing the hope that he would continue to serve the people with renewed confidence.

The large margin of Sharif's victory stunned his opponents who were claiming to pick up more than the additional thirty votes they needed from dissident PML members. It can be said, however, that the support for Sharif owed less to his personal popularity than it did to conservative fears that, without him confronting her in Punjab, Bhutto would become too strong. The IJI dissidents were also persuaded to vote for Sharif because of the continuing army support for him. Some of the dissident PML members, including Makhdoon Altaf Ahmed, who had been in the limelight in the campaign against Sharif, and Sardar Maqsood Leghari were absent from the voting. Manzoor Mohal, a PPP dissident, voted for Sharif and claimed that the conduct of the PPP members and the situation created by them would be dangerous for democracy in the country.

The PPP's failure to oust Nawaz Sharif, despite his vulnerability, showed not only its lack of experience but also an absence of common sense. It had issued numerous offers of financial help to the MNA's. One of the major reasons behind
the failure was an unwise and premature statement by one of Bhutto's advisors that Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi was negotiating with the PPP for the chief ministership in exchange for the support of 35 MPAs against Sharif. According to the PML circles, a team of PPP leaders, including Syed Yousaf Reza Gilani, were in constant touch with Elahi and a series of meetings were held to prepare him for the chief ministership. The disclosure, however, embarrassed Elahi to a point where he felt he must express unconditional and full support to Nawaz Sharif.

With the passage of the resolution in favor of Nawaz Sharif, the PPP's campaign to topple him temporarily came to an end. His victory strengthened his position both within his own party and at the national level. After he received Bhutto on March 14, two days after the vote of confidence, the PPP reciprocated the good will gesture of Nawaz Sharif by withdrawing a no-confidence motion against the Punjab assembly speaker, Mian Manzur Ahmed Wattoo, the following day. Some circles said, however, that the reciprocity of good will was just an excuse and that the PPP withdrew the no-confidence motion just because it had no chance to succeed as 152 IJI legislators had already expressed confidence in the speaker as well as the chief minister only two days before. Subsequently some PPP spokesmen suggested that, even if a no-confidence motion had failed, they would try to dismiss Sharif on charges of irregularities and corruption.

There was thus no real easing of the tension between the Punjab and the central governments. The IJI leaders started planning to move a no-confidence motion in the national assembly against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The PPP government still insisted that those who had not paid back the loans from nationalized banks under Zia era would be exposed. It was said that an earlier martial-law ordinance had benefitted one industry group nearly Rs. 2.3 billion ($115.6 million). The central government said it was investigating what it termed as financial irregularities in Sharif's business affairs. The IJI leaders claimed that the charges are fraudulent and corruption and mismanagement of the central government would also be exposed.
The essential problem in the center-Punjab confrontation was that the IJI cast the Punjab government as its instrument of opposition to PPP’s federal rule. The bitterness of the preceding election campaign was thus carried into the post-electoral governance. No matter what move the federal government made, Sharif was determined to oppose it.

In late July, the PPP government in NWFP arrested Lieutenant General Fazle Haq, former governor and chief minister, on charges of involvement in the murder of a Shia Muslin cleric, Syed Arifal Husseini. Fazle Haq was a member of the national assembly and president of the PML in the province. He was also believed to have acquired a fortune estimated at several billion dollars through involvement with narcotics trade. It was for the first time in the history of Pakistan that a military general was arrested on ground of alleged assassination. The IJI suggested that the arrest of Fazle Haq was aimed at weakening the party of which he was the strongest leader after Nawaz Sharif. Soon after Haq’s arrest, the Punjab government issued a warrant of arrest for federal Labor Minister, Mukhtat Awan, on a murder charge.

The tension between the center and the Punjab was heightened in late July when the federal government refused to provide railway wagons to the Ittefaq group, an industrial house owned by Sharif and his family. The Ittefaq group had been complaining about discriminatory duties and financial embargo on its ventures imposed by the federal government. Ittefaq now had been denied the railway wagons it needed to unload 2,800 tons of scrap iron from a ship anchored off Karachi port and transfer the iron to its foundries near Lahore. The dispatch of another ship bringing in more scrap iron was canceled, costing Ittefaq millions of rupees. Consequently, more than half of Ittefaq’s plants were shut down and some 3,000 people were laid off.

In a shrewd move, Sharif emphasized what had caused all the lay-offs -- the federal government’s refusal to provide the wagons. The workers staged a sit-in on a rail track in protest. As a result, trains coming from Karachi and destined for Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Peshawar had to be re-routed. They first gave the
impression that they were protesting against layoffs. But soon it transpired that the whole drama had been organized by the Punjab government. Instead of condemning the Ittefaq, the workers raised slogans against the PPP government for its failure to provide their employer with the required number of wagons. They then gave a 48-hour ultimatum to the railway authority for wagons and threatened that they would repeat the sit-in if their demand was not met. The federal government refused to give in to the blackmail and ordered the Rangers to prevent a new blockade of the rail track.

In late September, two officers were sent from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to conduct a raid on a Lahore soft-drink factory owned jointly by the sons of Zia’s latest chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General Akhtar Abdur Rehman, and the Punjab education minister. The FIA alleged that the owners were evading excise duty by declaring only half of their actual production. The Punjab police, in a challenge to the central government’s authority, immediately arrested the two federal officers, accusing them of harassing the factory’s night guards, and confiscated the investigators’ records. The federal officers were bailed out after several days. The federal home ministry stated that the FIA had been investigating evasion of income tax, excise and custom duties as well as theft of electricity by “one of the biggest industrial houses of the country”—widely taken to mean Sharif’s Ittefaq group. The official statement added that the arrest of the FIA officials came in the wake of several other acts aimed at subverting the constitution and the authority of the federal government. It went on saying that “rebellion” by the Punjab government was being examined. In retaliation, the federal government recalled to Islamabad two senior police officials and two other senior civil servants who were believed to be closely associated with Nawaz Sharif. He refused to release them.

One of the major excuses of Nawaz Sharif for defying the federal government had been to protect provincial autonomy. He accused the federal government of unconstitutional interference with the province’s autonomy and his authority as the chief minister by cutting down Punjab’s fiscal allocation and of its
attempts to crush the IJI administration economically. In what alleged to be an unlawful move, the Punjab government set up a bank of its own, the Punjab Bank, and got the Bank of Punjab Bill 1989 passed in the provincial assembly. It also declared its intention to establish its own power distribution authority so that it could provide electricity according to its own priorities. Two provincial ministers, Sardar Nasrullah Khan Dreshak and Shah Mehmud Qureshi, argued at a news conference that under Article 157 of the constitution, a provincial government was entitled to distribute power, purchased from the center’s network, according to its requirements. They alleged that the PPP government had selected villages according to its own political interests. Houses of PML supporters were ignored in the villages electrified by the federal government. Electricity was provided to them only after they promised to vote for the PPP in the next elections.

Although Sharif’s opposition to the central government in the name of provincial autonomy had cast him in a role of champion of provincial rights, it should be pointed out that Sharif’s strong stance on provincial autonomy was a recent phenomenon. During the martial law regime of Zia-ul Haq, and then as chief minister during the Junejo era, he never said a single word against the center. Therefore, one can argue that Sharif and other IJI leaders were engaged in “a microscopic examination of the constitution with a view to discovering more subjects falling in the province’s domain.”

The Bhutto government could not overcome the Punjab’s hostility, and it resorted to the same sort of tactics as those of the other side. It accused the Punjab provincial government of corruption and of employing civil servants to harass and persecute the PPP legislators and political workers. Its attempts to agitate the public against Sharif in Punjab did not succeed. The leaders of the Punjab PPP, Salman Taseer and Fakhre Zaman, lowered their voice against Sharif after various charges were filed against them by the Punjab police. Sharif, on the other hand, had nothing to lose. His open defiance of Bhutto strengthened the general perception that her government lacked power and did not command real authority. ‘‘All this is adding fuel to her adversaries’ campaign to push the idea that she has
an inept team bereft of political initiatives and would cling to power at any cost,'" observed one analyst. In fact, even his critics among the IJI had to admit that he was the most forceful politician against Bhutto and, thus, an indispensable player in this political game of accusations and counter accusations. "Sharif's biggest success -- for a man who was regarded during the Zia era as a minor figure -- is that he has become in the public eye a politician of prime ministerial stature," argued one observer. "His rivals in the IJI dare not oppose him for fear of being accused of pulling down the most effective opponent of Bhutto." Sharif realized and believed that attacking the federal government of Bhutto would provide him with the best defense for his political survival.

An end to confrontation would mean the political elimination of Nawaz Sharif, which [he] would not like under any circumstances. Similarly, if he adopts a course of peace, other provinces would forget him and thus he would not be able to face Bhutto in the next elections. His political interests require him to continue to be hostile to the prime minister and the PPP. In the light of the above, one can see no end to the confrontation.

The PPP was also becoming aware that with Sharif intact in the Punjab it would not be able to win the next election. Totally preoccupied with the continuing center-Punjab squabbles, government machinery came to a halt, and both governments in Islamabad and Lahore were unable to do the job for which they were elected.

Baluchistan

On December 15, 1988, Baluchistan Governor Mohammad Musa dissolved the provincial assembly less than a month after it had been convened. The action was taken on the advice of the provincial chief minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan
Jamali, who based his recommendation on the fact that no parliamentary group had majority in the house. Although Jamali was a member of the IJI, Bhutto was held responsible for creating the situation because her party was in the provincial coalition.

After the November elections the PPP had made an alliance of convenience with Jamali to help him form the provincial government. When the assembly was summoned to elect a chief minister, each of the two groups in the house got an equal number of votes creating a tie. The speaker of the house, Sardar Mohammad Khan Barozai, then cast his vote in favor of Jamali to resolve the stalemate. The situation took a crucial turn when a member of Jamali’s cabinet, Mir Dost Mohammad Hasni, defected to the other side which was preparing to pass a vote of no-confidence against the chief minister. Since it was later that night that Jamali advised the governor to dissolve the assembly, many suspected that he did so to avoid the no-confidence motion against him, hoping to improve his position in a new election.

The opposition group in the assembly, led by Nawab Akbar Bugti, alleged that the assembly had been dissolved to prevent this group from forming the government. It alleged also, as did the IJI, that the governor could not have acted without Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto’s approval, and that she had, thus, been part of the conspiracy. She denied involvement, but the opposition in the national assembly preferred not to be convinced. Governor Musa declared that he did not consult with the prime minister and had acted on his own. Jamali’s request was made on telephone at 3 a.m. on December 15 from Quetta to the governor who was in Islamabad. It was not until 9 a.m. that he informed Prime Minister Bhutto of his action. However, he was with Bhutto until 9:30 on the previous evening and the opposition argued that it was impossible that the two did not discuss the crisis in Baluchistan which had been brewing ever since Jamali was asked to form the government after he got a fragile majority by one. They also argued that it was "difficult to believe that when a sleepy Governor Musa received the dissolution
advice at three in the morning all he did was to reach for a copy of the constitution, read Article 112 and order dissolution.'"17

No matter what the circumstances were under which it took place, the dissolution of the Baluchistan provincial assembly provided an ideal occasion for the opposition to criticize Bhutto and her government. Opposition members, both IJI and independents, ganged up against the PPP government condemning it for interference in the province. One of them even called it ‘‘the first murder by the PPP government within the first fortnight of its office.’’18 In fact the opposition was happy about such an early opportunity to embarrass the new prime minister. PPP leaders counter-charged that the crisis in Baluchistan was a conspiracy by the opposition to undermine the new central government. Bhutto declared that, despite the opposition’s accusation to be otherwise, her government firmly believed in provincial autonomy and would not interfere in matters that belonged to provincial domain. She made it clear that she would not take any political advantage out of the situation and that any group was welcome to form a government in Baluchistan.

On January 25, 1989, the full bench of the Baluchistan High Court, acting on a petition filed by members of the provincial assembly, ruled that the dissolution of the Baluchistan assembly had been unconstitutional and the assembly was restored. In its judgement, the High Court ruled that the proceedings of the assembly, on the day Jamali presented himself for selection, had not been regular so that he could not be deemed to have received a vote of confidence. Consequently, he had not yet acquired the authority of a chief minister to advise the governor to dissolve the assembly. Most political leaders expressed their satisfaction at the Court’s verdict.

In fact, it was not so much the dissolution itself as the improper handling of the situation by Bhutto and her government that worsened the crisis.

The political damage which this issue has caused to the PPP could have been mitigated by early action. The federal government could have categorically denied involvement and without mincing words
condemned the dissolution as undemocratic. Bhutto along with her justice minister and other cabinet colleagues took a more belligerent line. First, Mr. Aitzaz Ahsan blocked a move to discuss the issue in the national assembly on highly technical grounds. Then, Bhutto defended the action as constitutional reading chapter and verse from the Green Book. This brought all the members of the opposition together in condemning the action. The failure of the PPP leaders to understand the full implications of the issue at an early stage and quickly respond to the situation was largely responsible for uniting all their adversaries under one banner so quickly.19

The crisis in Baluchistan made more difficult Bhutto’s task of convincing the provincial opponents that they could have a cooperative relationship with her government. The new chief minister of Baluchistan, Nawab Akbar Bugti, developed strong distrust of her government at the center. He had called a provincial general strike soon after the dissolution, claiming that the Baluchis were being denied their rights by the ‘‘oppressive’’ federal government. The Baluchistan crisis encouraged the Punjab chief minister, Nawaz Sharif, to mount his opposition to Bhutto’s federal government.

The new provincial government of Baluchistan was formed through a coalition of Bugti’s Baluchistan National Alliance (BNA) and the Jamiat Ulema Islami (JUI). Following the footsteps of Nawaz Sharif, Bugti also took a confrontational posture against the Bhutto government and sharply criticized her attitude towards his province. He warned that he would be forced into a possible alliance with the Punjab in its defiance of Bhutto if her federal government delayed or ignored the implementation of his demands concerning Baluchistan. He even appealed to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to intervene and restrain the federal government from taking ‘‘extra-constitutional, unlawful and undemocratic action which could cause turmoil and chaos leading to an end of federation.’’20 However, he failed to pinpoint instances where the center took such measures.
One of the reasons for Bugti’s anxiety was the fear that Bhutto might succeed in striking a deal with his coalition partner JUI at the national level. With PPP’s support, JUI would be strong enough in the Baluchistan assembly to unseat Bugti. In October 1989, the para-military Frontier Corps, run by the federal government, attempted to relieve local tribesmen of their weapons. Although the attempt failed, Bugti accused Bhutto of interfering with a provincial matter and trying to topple his government. Despite his persistent confrontation with the center, however, his opposition was confined to the power struggle within his own province. He did not meddle in the affairs of other provinces as Nawaz Sharif did.

People’s Program for Development

The center-province confrontation was probably best illustrated in the implementation of the People’s Program for Development (PPD). Benazir Bhutto’s federal government allocated two billion rupees for the program whose main objectives were to improve infrastructure by mobilizing local resources and generate jobs. The emphasis was given on such sectors as education, health, sanitation, water supply and rural roads. The program aimed at supplementing the existing development activities and letting the community decide for itself about its most-felt needs. In a letter to the PPP district presidents Bhutto emphasized that the ultimate beneficiary should be the poorest segments of the population. “The most important part of each scheme,” the letter said, “is the end output of benefits received by village or mohalla dwellers.”21 Bhutto characterized the program as one designed to “fight out poverty, develop confidence in people at village level and restore self-respect among them to shoulder future responsibilities rather than depending on others to solve their problems.”22

The program was finalized at a federal cabinet meeting barely a week after the PPP government took over, hinting at the high priority the Bhutto administration gave to the program. Its framework and implementation procedures were approved by the cabinet in early February 1989. Bhutto, on the grounds that
the funds were provided by the federal government, established the Federal Implementation Committee (FIC) as the program’s top administrative authority. It was headed by the minister for local government and rural development and district committees were created at local levels under the FIC’s supervision.

Although launched with a lot of fanfare by the prime minister, the People’s Program for Development was not immune from the center-Punjab squabbles which had already been simmering for some time. The Punjab government strongly opposed the program’s implementation through these newly created federal committees, claiming that it would not only be inefficient compared with implementation through the existing provincial institutions but would also be in violation of the provincial autonomy. Punjab government said that “the PPD was open interference in provincial matters. The projects envisaged under the program were primarily in the jurisdiction of local councils. . . If the federal government was sincere it should have involved the Punjab government by way of liaison committee representing both the federal and the provincial governments.”

The Punjab government’s objection to the PPD was echoed by the Baluchistan chief minister, Nawab Akbar Bugti. “While praising the objective of the program, he repeated his contention that it should be executed by the provincial governments because this was their constitutional right. “We will not allow any infringement on provincial autonomy,” he said. The Punjab and Baluchistan may nevertheless have eventually agreed to let federal government carry out the PPD in their territories because they badly needed financial assistance from the center. Because of the manner in which it was designed, however, the program invited their strong suspicions.

The major cause of friction was the federal government’s decision to appoint PPP leaders as chairmen of the district committees in those areas where the party had lost elections. Some criticized the program as “a pork barrel for party workers and their families.” The opposition was quick to label the entire program as an attempt to provide money to defeated PPP candidates in order to
help them prepare for the next election campaign. In his letter to President Ishaq Khan, Nawaz Sharif said:

Under the constitution, development activities within the provinces are the prerogative of the provincial governments and in the past the federal government has always channeled its development activity through the provincial governments. The People’s Party government has instead chosen to use its party cadres for the program despite provincial government’s protests and resistance. Inflexible and uncompromising posture of the People’s Party government regarding People’s Program for Development (PPD) threatens to give an ugly twist to the already violatile relationship of the center with the non-People’s Party governments in provinces. . . . The manner in which the PPD is being implemented leaves hardly any doubt that the People’s Party is being promoted at the expense of the public exchequer.26

For Bhutto, it was not merely an easy way to reward the party members. She saw the program as central to her efforts to reach the people directly and promote their support for the PPP. Therefore, it was imperative for her that the program was implemented through federal institutions run by the PPP without involving the existing provincial mechanism. Meanwhile, the provinces insisted that the funds should be given to the provincial governments which knew exactly what areas needed to be developed. In short, it was a matter of who should directly exercise political influence over the electorate.
Fragile Provincial Coalitions

North West Frontier Province

The North West Frontier Province was not an easy province for the PPP to handle either. In the November polls the PPP won 20 out of the 80 seats in the provincial assembly, as opposed to 28 secured by the IJI and 12 by the Awami National Party (ANP). Most of the remaining seats went to independents. In order to attain enough strength to form a government in the province, the PPP reached an agreement with the ANP on forming a coalition government there. PPP’s Aftab Sherpao assumed the chief ministership but his relation with the coalition partner, the ANP, and its leaders, Wali Khan and his wife, Nasim Wali Khan, was shaky from the beginning.

One of the major reasons for souring relations was the appointment of the provincial governor. Ever since it entered the coalition with the PPP, the ANP had been demanding that an ANP leader, Abdul Khaliq Khan, be made governor of the province, but this demand met strong opposition from the establishment. The ANP had traditionally been pro-Kabul and pro-Soviet. Ever since the Afghan civil war began, it had been opposed to the American role and the Pakistani role as an agent of U.S. policy in that civil war. It wanted Pakistan to quit its involvement. But the government of Pakistan, the army and the president, had been, since Zia-ul Haq’s time, firmly committed to supporting the United States and the mujahideen. Pakistan had been getting nearly a half billion dollars’ worth of aid (mostly military) in return for its support. Part of the NWFP is “tribal area” where the mujahideen had placed their bases of operation against the Kabul government and Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The tribal area is administered not by the provincial ministers but by the governor. Therefore, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan did not want an ANP nominee, Abdul Khaliq Khan, as governor and refused to give Prime Minister Bhutto an approval for his appointment. In addition, he probably liked
the idea of creating a rift between the PPP and the ANP because of his basically pro-IJI stance.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was placed in a difficult position; it had to meet the demand of the PPP’s NWFP coalition partner, the ANP, to appoint its nominee as governor. But it seemed extremely hard to get the approval for the appointment from President Ghulam Ishaq Khan who apparently was in no mood to give it. In the coalition agreement between the PPP and the ANP, the former was given three months to get the president’s approval for the appointment, which it delayed for over five months. Wali Khan repeatedly stated that if the ANP nominee was not acceptable for the NWFP’s governorship, his party would surrender its ministries. During her visit in late April to Peshawar, the NWFP’s capital, Bhutto received persistent reminder from ANP leaders to appoint their nominee as the provincial governor. Faced with the fact that both the army and Washington were opposed to the ANP’s nominee, she hesitated to take any significant step.

The ANP eventually ran out of patience and its five ministers and one advisor tendered their resignations as a protest against the PPP’s neglect of their demand. Although it withdrew its ministers, the ANP gave a public assurance that it would continue to support the PPP in the provincial assembly. Nevertheless, the moment the IJI heard of the difference between the ANP and the PPP, its leaders rushed to Peshawar and offered to give everything that the ANP wanted including the governorship only if it joined hands with the IJI. “If the IJI thought that it could exploit the present PPP-ANP differences to install its own government in the NWFP, it was sadly mistaken,” said Wali Khan. For this reason, although a setback, the ANP’s withdrawal was not perceived as a crisis by the Sherpao government.

A real surprise came only several weeks later when the ANP announced that it had entered an alliance with the IJI. Wali Khan, explaining his party’s decision, stated that the break with the PPP came after the provincial working council heard the plight of the ANP ministers in the Sherpao cabinet. "They were... totally
powerless," he said. "Official orders passed by them were not carried out. It seemed that the PPP itself wanted them to quit. Moreover... the Sherpao cabinet was called the PPP government and the fact that it was a coalition government was ignored. We have proved that we are not in the political field for ministries or other official positions." Another complaint of the ANP was that the Sherpao government was reluctant to spend development funds in areas considered as the strongholds of the ANP and tried to weaken its support base while strengthening that of the PPP. Wali Khan also added that when the working council decided to leave the coalition with the PPP, it directed the provincial ANP leaders to look into the possibility of allying with other parliamentary groups and eventually reached an agreement with the IJI. He asserted, however, that the ANP would maintain its independent status in the national assembly and would not join either the PPP nor the IJI at the national level.

The ANP-IJI alliance in the NWFP created a stir among ANP workers as well. What was most disturbing for them was the possibility of change in the party's Afghan policy and its commitment to peace in the region. "What causes disquiet is that the ANP did not reflect on the consequences of joining up with an alliance which is even more far to the right on Afghanistan than the PPP," argued one observer. "It is ridiculous to imagine Wali Khan inside an alliance that accuses Ms. Bhutto of having sold the Afghan resistance down the river and handed over state secrets to the Indian government." Wali Khan asserted that the ANP and the IJI had neither merged nor compromised on their principles on any matter. Such clarification, however, did not appease the party workers and most observers agreed that the ANP "let its bitterness against the PPP... get the better of its political wisdom."

The ANP's alliance with the IJI had not only affected the ANP's radical character but also damaged the credibility of its leader, Wali Khan. Former ANP leader Abdul Latif Afridi said, "the alliance was just a marriage of convenience and... the only aim of entering into an alliance was to dismantle the PPP government in the frontier. ... It was strange that the leaders of the stature of
Wali Khan and Begum Nasim -- who broke bread with Benazir Bhutto and assured her of support even after withdrawing from the NWFP ministries -- should later hold talks with the IJI chief Nawaz Sharif and then back out of their commitment within a matter of days.’” Breaking up with the PPP was honorable despite its inflexibility in politics, but allying with the IJI which it had been openly denouncing made many question its decision.

Some of the IJI parties also reacted sharply to Sharif’s decision to forge an alliance with the ANP without prior approval or even consultation with the IJI’s component parties. The IJI dissidents demanded an emergency meeting of party heads to discuss the matter. Among them was the chief of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Qazi Husain Ahmed, who contended, “taking such a decision of far-reaching consequences and of a fundamental nature without consultation with the authorized bodies [of the IJI] is neither in the national interest nor that of the IJI.” He also made it clear that the alliance with the ANP would not be acceptable unless it was approved by all heads of the IJI parties. There was no possibility of an IJI breakup for this particular reason, however, because they simply could not afford it while the PPP was still in power.

After the alliance with the ANP was formed, IJI leader Nawaz Sharif launched his campaign to oust the PPP government of Aftab Sherpao in the NWFP and install Arbab Jehangir Khan as the new chief minister. The opposition members of the NWFP assembly were given lavish hospitality by Sharif who tried to buy their loyalties and muster enough support to carry the move. The PPP’s Frontier leadership also began offering financial incentives and tried to buy loyalties of the IJI leaders. Eventually, Sherpao maintained enough support in the provincial assembly and the PPP barely managed to maintain its hold over the provincial government and controlled the local opposition by selectively giving away cabinet posts and other incentives to those who were willing to oblige.
Sindh

PPP's provincial coalition was even more problematic in Sindh, Bhutto's home province. The provincial assembly elections in November gave the PPP a dominant position with 67 out of 100 seats. The IJI won only one seat and the rest of the seats mostly went to independents. Despite its absolute majority in the Sindh provincial assembly, the PPP entered into a coalition with the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) partly because it needed the MQM's support in the national assembly and partly because the MQM's participation in Sindh government would help defuse the ethnic tension in the province. A 59-point agreement, called the Karachi Accord, was signed, following the November elections, between the two parties to achieve "united and unstratified society" and "reunification of rural and urban population of Sindh." The PPP-MQM alliance seemed essential for both parties; the MQM needed the dominant strength of the PPP in Sindh to achieve its demands while the PPP had to keep the MQM on its side in order not to lose its control over the national assembly.

Mohajirs are the Urdu-speaking immigrants who came from India after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. They had been settled in urban areas of Sindh such as Karachi and Hyderabad and grown to dominate commercial activities in the cities. Despite their economic success, mohajirs had suffered from various forms of obstacles in society and their grievances had accumulated. The MQM was strongly supported by the urban mohajirs in Sindh as a channel through which their demands could be voiced. Since the November elections, the MQM had emerged as an influential political party on not only provincial but also national levels. With its 13 legislators it became the third largest group in the national assembly.

The PPP's coalition with the MQM was never smooth, however. The central committee of the MQM issued a statement in March, expressing their dissatisfaction over the non-implementation of the Karachi Accord. Among their grievances were that the MQM prisoners had not been released, that the joint
committee to oversee the implementation of the Accord had not been set up, and that decisions were being made behind the back of the MQM ministers. Encouraged by PPP-MQM differences, IJI leaders, Choudhry Shujaat Hussain and Sheikh Rashid rushed to Karachi to draw the MQM away from the alliance with the PPP. The IJI leaders failed in their mission, however, as the MQM chief, Altaf Husain, despite his party’s differences with the PPP, reaffirmed the continuation of the alliance.

Problems were not just between the PPP and the MQM. On the right side of the political spectrum in the province were Sindhi nationalists such as the Sindh National Front (SNF), headed by Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, a former chief minister of Sindh and a cousin of the prime minister, and Jiye Sindh, led by G. M. Syed, who was known for his controversial speeches that had fueled ethnic resentment. The ethnic Sindhis accounted for only a little more than 50 percent of the provincial population and were fearful of dropping to a minority status in their own native land. They are already a minority in urban areas. In Karachi, less than 10 percent of the residents were identified as Sindhis. Sindhi nationalists, whose support base was the interior of the province, had been resentful about the growing power of the mohajirs and perceived them as a threat to their own well-being. What disturbed them most was the mohajirs’ demand that they be recognized as a separate nationality. Sindhis feared that such a demand was a prelude to separation of lower Sindh from the rest of the province. Bhutto’s balancing act worked for a while but she was gradually cornered because of the pressing dilemma; if she was seen too receptive to mohajir demands, she would antagonize the Sindhi nationalists in the rural areas which had been her support base; if she ignored the mohajir demands she could face their unrest in urban areas, especially Karachi, leading to serious economic instability.

Despite their leaders’ efforts to maintain the alliance, both PPP and MQM militants were fueling the antagonism between the two parties, which was attributable to a much deeper root of the problem of the province; there had been a serious conflict between the mohajirs and the Sindhis going on for years and both
sides had been resorting to violence. While Bhutto was keen to see the coalition government survive, a large number of PPP extremists wanted to see it terminated. They believed that with the PPP government at the center and in a dominant position in Sindh, they could govern the province on their own and the MQM could be ignored. Altaf Husain was also under increasing pressure from his followers who were growing frustrated by the PPP's handling of their demands which included release of the MQM prisoners. With both sides demanding violent retaliation to any provocation, Bhutto and Husain found it even more difficult to arrive at a compromise.

Altaf Husain too was not without dissatisfaction with the PPP and its treatment of his followers. As a gesture of unhappiness with the PPP's attitude, he decided to cooperate with the IJI on Bihari issue. The IJI was planning to create more problems for Bhutto in Sindh by insisting that the Urdu-speaking Biharis, who had migrated to East Pakistan following independence in 1947, and who were now unwanted in Bangladesh, should be repatriated to Pakistan and, presumably, settled in Sindh. The move was strongly resented by the Sindhi nationalists and put Bhutto in a difficult situation. When asked about implications of this move, Husain said that cooperation with the IJI on the Bihari issue did not mean that the accord had been affected. However, he expressed his bitterness on other matters, including the fact that he had not been consulted on formation of provincial cabinet. "If they had consulted us it would have been a good omen," he said. "But it only reveals the depth and understanding of those people. As you sow, so shall you reap." 34

In May, 1989, only a few days after the breaking-up of the PPP-ANP coalition in the NWFP, all the MQM ministers in Sindh resigned from the provincial cabinet. It followed the arrest of four MQM workers when a house-to-house search was conducted in Hyderabad in search of convicted criminals. Since Altaf Husain was staying in that particular neighborhood at that time, the MQM accused the PPP of harassing its leader and activists. The efforts of the PPP provincial government failed to persuade the MQM leaders to postpone
their resignations and wait until an investigation was made on the Hyderabad incident. Although it was now out of the Sindh cabinet, the MQM promised, as the ANP did in the NWFP, to continue to support the PPP government in Sindh and at the center and pledged to adhere to the Karachi Accord.

By the end of May, in a major setback for Bhutto, the MQM agreed to cooperate with the IJI in the debate on the national budget. The MQM, along with the ANP, asserted that Bhutto had failed to honor the promises she had made in return for their support when she came to power. This time, it was Nawaz Sharif himself that went into negotiation with the MQM. He had avoided a meeting with Altaf Husain on his two previous visits to Karachi for fear of annoying an IJI ally in Karachi, namely, the Punjab-Pakhtoon Ittehad (PPI). But now he overcame his earlier caution upon arriving in Karachi. He went straight to Altaf’s house and had lunch and four hours of talk with him. He tried to wean Altaf Husain away from the PPP and elicited his support for the IJI’s opposition to the federal budget. The PPP’s difficulty with its partners in the NWFP and Sindh had encouraged Nawaz Sharif to try to topple the PPP government during the budget session. The joint press conference by the two parties also confirmed that the main topic of their discussion was the strategy during the budget session. “The MQM MNAs would vote on the budget independently, considering every issue on merit,” the MQM Secretary-General Imran Farooq said. “We may vote against it if it does not reflect the aspirations of the people.” “The Accord has nothing to do with our meeting,” Altaf Husain said when asked about the Karachi Accord. “This is a meeting between two patriots and no one should object to it.”

Within 24 hours of this meeting, a delegation of three PPP ministers went to Karachi to have a talk with Altaf Husain. After prolonged negotiations, spread over several days, a new memorandum of understanding was signed by Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah and MQM Chairman Azeem Ahmed Tariq. The issue which required several rounds of negotiations and Bhutto’s personal intervention twice was the release of MQM prisoners. Both mohajir and Sindhi activists had been involved in cases of ethnic violence, including murder, arson, and other
crimes. The PPP government in Sindh was prone to overlooking, or treating more gently, its own people involved in these offenses, and it was prone to treating the MQM violators more sternly. The MQM, basing its argument on this partial treatment of the arrested activists, wanted its men, held on charges related to ethnic violence, released.

The two sides agreed on that those held on police complaints would be freed immediately and those held on complaints of private individuals would be let off within six months under a prescribed legal procedure. Among the other MQM demands were protection of non-Sindhis in the interior, guarantee of admission, giving real powers for the MQM ministers and transferring out senior bureaucrats in Sindh appointed by previous regimes. By the end of the talks the PPP ministers managed to reaffirm MQM's support for their party as long as it implemented key Muhajir demands. While banking on continuing MQM unhappiness about the non-implementation of the Karachi Accord, the IJI lacked a critical element in its bargain with the MQM; the MQM problems concerned Sindh and the IJI had nothing to offer there.

Another crucial issue in Sindh that troubled Bhutto was the escalation of violence in the province. "The ethnic violence," an analyst described, "which has dogged Sindh for years continues to escalate. Armed gangs, ethnic and purely criminal, dominate the streets of Karachi... The constantly shifting alliances of these groups add to the violence and the daily toll of innocent lives has earned the city the sobriquet of 'Little Beirut.' "36 On top of the ethnic rivalry, the province had been going through rapid population increase and economic stagnation, creating a vast army of unemployed youth who played a predominant role in robberies and abductions in the name of political activism. It was, to a large extent, a legacy of the brutal policies of the Zia era during which more than 1,000 people were killed in the province.

Blaming the previous regime of the dictator was not enough to solve the problem, however. What concerned Bhutto most was the fact that the army was watching closely this deterioration of law and order in Sindh. After the November
elections, the army had to let either Bhutto become prime minister or Sindh explode. In other words, the PPP’s majority in Sindh was one of the major reasons that forced the army to accept Bhutto as prime minister. Therefore, how she would maintain law and order situation was an important test for her government. If she was seen to be losing control of the province and Sindh slipped into further chaos, it would seriously affect her relations with the army on which her government’s political stability depended.

**The PPP Government and its Policies**

Another problem that Bhutto inherited from the previous regime was the economy which was said to be in a worse state than before. Bhutto herself described it as “horrendous” and called the government “virtually bankrupt.” Inflation was running at over 15 percent and, due to the officially encouraged consumerism of the 1980s, savings were lowest among the developing countries. There was also a deficit of over one billion dollars in the balance of payments. Foreign remittance, mostly from Pakistanis working in the Gulf nations, which had been a main source of hard currencies, was also falling, further increasing the deficit. According to unofficial estimates, the nation’s foreign exchange reserves had fallen to a mere 300 million dollars when Bhutto took office: an amount enough to cover only two weeks’ imports.

In fact, it was a mixed economic legacy that Bhutto had to cope with. Pakistan had experienced remarkable economic growth since 1977, averaging annually six percent per capita in real incomes. But significant economic disparities and a heavy burden of foreign debt remained. In fact, the growth had been created artificially by the massive inflow of foreign aid and loans which were given to the Zia regime due to the nation’s strategic location near Afghanistan. Between December 1971 and June 1988, the debt liability increased fourfold, demonstrating the previous regime’s heavy dependence on foreign loans. The debt
placed the Bhutto government in a serious predicament in as much as an ever-increasing proportion of the available resources would have to be diverted toward servicing it.38

One of the toughest economic issues Bhutto had to face was the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A few weeks before the elections, the caretaker government signed a package deal with the IMF, which offered one billion dollars over a three-year period in return for stringent conditions. These included removal of government subsidies, hiking of utility charges and budget deficit reduction. It was apparent that these measures would cause serious economic turmoil. The IMF conditionalities had been criticized as unsuitable and unrealistic for the economies of developing countries. "While financial discipline is laudable, experience has shown that countries which have tried to apply IMF conditionalities have suffered political upheavals of a severe nature," said one analyst.39 Some contended that the agreement with the IMF was an attempt to strangulate the new government. Bhutto asserted, however, that she would not renegotiate the agreement, despite calls from leading economists to do so and widespread belief among PPP leaders that the caretaker regime had signed the agreement with object of creating difficulties for the new PPP government.

Bhutto’s first major test came during the national assembly’s budget session. She had hard choices to make. There was need to act on her election campaign pledges to the poor, but she would invite massive political opposition if she imposed the taxes the IMF had advised. Hints in May that the budget would be tough brought a “chorus of protest” from the opposition politicians and merchants began hoarding consumer goods and raising prices. A major relief came when the IMF relaxed its conditions for the loan. The opposition had earlier hoped that the IMF conditions would force Bhutto to present a budget of politically explosive price and tax increases. But the riots in Jordan and Venezuela following the IMF-approved budgets in these countries made the Fund reconsider its strict conditions.

On June 3, 1989, Bhutto presented the fiscal budget to the national assembly. Revenue receipts in 1990 were to total Rs. 136.8 billion ($6.5 billion)
including Rs. 9.6 billion from new taxes and price increase of government-provided utilities and services. Expenditure, meanwhile, was to be Rs. 152.3 billion, leaving a deficit of Rs. 15.5 billion. Among the new taxes were sales tax on forty-four categories of consumer goods including textiles. A 7.5 percent tax was imposed on dividend income of more than Rs. 15,000. The PPP government had to look hard to discover items that could be taxed, without aggravating the already burdened lower-income groups. Despite the new taxes and overall price increase, the impact on the average Pakistani was milder than had been expected. The biggest price increase resulted from a value-added tax on luxury goods, which did not affect the ordinary people. Budget cuts came more from spending on development projects and on capital investment than from current spending and consumption. The fact that no major taxes were imposed on the poor blunted the opposition’s attacks on the new government regarding fiscal issues.

Bhutto, in an effort not to alienate the military, managed to maintain defense spending at the previous year’s level of 37 percent of the budget. Another 37 percent went to debt servicing, making it one of the highest debt-service ratios in the world. Pakistan received 3.1 billion dollars of pledges from Western aid consortium for 1990. The country’s total foreign debt was 14 billion dollars. Nonetheless, the government said that it would not seek moratorium or rescheduling of foreign debt and would make all repayments on time. In fact, the overall state expenditure was mostly non-productive; 37 percent on defense, 37 percent on debt-servicing and about 12 percent on law and order and general administration, leaving only 14 percent or so for all the social and economic programs.

As before, incomes in the agricultural sector, which accounted for one fourth of the GNP, would not be taxed. Such a tax had been considered periodically to enhance the government’s revenue base, but it was never adopted. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tried to impose such a tax in 1977, but it was discarded by Zia’s martial law regime. In 1986 Prime Minister Junejo’s government also had to abandon the idea. Bhutto’s failure to carry it forward disappointed many of her
party supporters because it had been a part of her manifesto in the 1988 elections. Given the fact that Pakistan had the most entrenched landowning aristocracy in Asia and that a majority of the legislators in Parliament and most of Bhutto’s cabinet colleagues were from land-owning families, it was hardly surprising that introduction of such a tax failed again.

Despite its shortcomings, Bhutto’s budget quieted down the opposition for the time being. The IJI had earlier concluded an agreement of cooperation with the MQM to combat the PPP in the budget debate in the national assembly which lasted through most of June. They anticipated the budget session to be a perfect occasion to attack Bhutto and to accuse her of incompetence in handling economic matters. It was a deftly-made budget and the PPP came out fairly well from its first major test in the financial and economic field.

In October 1989, a few months after the budget had been passed, Bhutto announced her intention to privatize over the next four years seven large public enterprises including Pakistan International Airlines, Pakistan Standard Oil, and Habib Bank. "Privatization is a key plank of our economic recovery," she said. "The sale of public assets, we believe, will not only generate additional revenue, but also effectively demonstrate our commitment to private enterprise." She added that her government believed in an open, market-driven economy that would allow the creative energies of the private sector to stimulate economic development. Bhutto wanted private business to relieve her government of the burden of running a substantial part of Pakistan’s industry and leave it free to develop the supporting infrastructure. The divestment would change the government’s proprietary role to a regulatory one, although the privately held stock in any of the seven companies was to be only 49 percent. The government was also desperately short of cash to fund the social programs it had promised in its election campaign. Some suspected that the whole operation of privatization was designed to raise money to fund those programs. The opposition also alleged that Bhutto was trying to establish links between her government and industry in order to create a lobby of business loyalties.

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Relative success with the budget was more an exception than a norm in the first year of the Bhutto administration. In March 1989, as many as twenty-six ministers and eight advisors were sworn into the cabinet which now comprised of fifty-one members. Some reshuffle and expansion of the cabinet had been discussed earlier and expected. What was surprising, and became a target of criticism, was its absurdly large size. It was mostly a result of the pressure under which Bhutto was placed to reward the PPP leaders and others who had supported her. Some of them had been supporters of her father, the late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. However, the sheer size of fifty-one members --- by far the largest in the country’s history --- and lack of experience and proper qualifications on the part of many of the newly-appointed cabinet members invited additional criticism. Those appointed “advisors” were those who had not contested, or lost, the election held in November 1988. Bhutto’s critics called them her “cronies” or defeated politicians. Commenting upon the situation, an opposition politician, Asghar Khan, suggested that she should fire all of them.

The Bhutto government’s passivity in the national assembly was noted and advertized as evidence of incompetence on its part. It did introduce and pass a few small amendments to existing laws, but it brought no major policy proposals to the assembly and it did not appear to have developed a legislative agenda. As a result, the assembly had no real work to do. This situation gave the opposition more time and opportunity to criticize Bhutto, her father, her husband, and her party. One explanation of her legislative inactivity may be that she did not have a clear and firm majority in the assembly and that the senate was controlled by the opposition. The fear that her proposals might be defeated, and that she would then be called upon to resign, kept her from introducing legislation.

By any standard, the Bhutto government’s record has been a chronicle of unfulfilled pledges. Fearful of rebuff in parliament, the government has failed to bring forward reform legislation. Although Ms. Bhutto promised the repeal of a series of harsh
Islamic laws imposed by Gen. Zia, including one that has kept about 3,000 to 4,000 women in jail for adultery, concern about fundamentalist religious protest has caused relief on that front to be deferred as well. Tax laws that amount to a free ride for wealthy landowners, a scandal for decades, have also been left untouched.

Bhutto’s own supporters were not a united and cohesive group. While many of them belonged to her party, the PPP, some did not. They represented different interests and put conflicting pressures on her government. Moreover, the support of some of them was always tentative. They could be persuaded to defect to the other side.

Bhutto and other PPP leaders also had a problem with their political style. It gave the impression of being an opposition party rather than the government. As Asghar Khan put it, “the prime minister. . . says we will face bullets, we are ready to be martyred. This is not the kind of talk that people expect from their prime minister.” Fazlur Rahman, a Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam leader, was also critical. He said Bhutto should act as head of government and not merely as the chief of her party. He added that she and her colleagues were acting in a partisan fashion and did not intend to serve the people without discrimination. Bhutto and her ministers needed to adjust to their new status and responsibilities. One of her oldest advisors acknowledged the point. “These people are still acting like they are in the opposition,” he said. “What I should have been doing and they should have been doing is to get down to the serious business of governing.”

Conflicts within the PPP were also surfacing and many party officials had various grievances. Some party faithfuls were frustrated because they thought party tickets had been awarded to the wrong people in the previous elections. As noted earlier, the PPP had chosen the candidates based on their electability rather than their past contribution or loyalty to the party, leading to discontent within its ranks. Another was the ineptitude of some of Bhutto’s advisors who were wielding power although they had lost the election. As Bhutto put together her government,
people loyal to her father were given important positions, for which they were sometimes ill-equipped, while capable civil servants were dismissed for past disagreements with him.\textsuperscript{48} She was also criticized for surrounding herself with "yes-men" and secluding herself behind friends. However, some argued that these complaining PPP stalwarts were also to blame. As one analyst put it, "By adopting a patronizing attitude toward her because of her youth and sex, they alienated themselves and, consequently those who had no qualifications for the jobs assigned to them -- apart from their loyalty -- are now in control."\textsuperscript{49}

Squabbles among the top PPP leaders and the development of factionalism were affecting the actual functioning of the party and a need for reorganization was being discussed. Many of the PPP workers had been disenchanted since the November elections and became inactive. They were increasingly critical of Bhutto's lack of clear direction. "The best guarantee for the future of the party is that the PPP should reorganize itself on a political [rather than dynastic] basis," a PPP leader said.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{Relations with the Military}

It was the Pakistani military that Benazir Bhutto had to watch carefully. In the initial year of his rule, her father dealt with a defeated and demoralized army and dominated it. But a few years later, the army regained its confidence and ousted him from power. By the time Benazir took office, the army was accustomed to an assertive role.

The armed forces are always there, waiting and watching. It is not a question of good or bad generals. It is the institution. The armed forces are the most modern and organized force in Pakistan. . . But they have a belief that they are the guardians of the country. Guardians they are of the frontiers, but they also believe that they
have a right to give an opinion and see that the country is going in
the right direction politically, and whenever our internal situation
becomes chaotic, they feel impelled to step in.51

After three decades of military intervention, the reality in Pakistani politics was
that no government, not even a popularly-elected one, could expect to stay in
power without the army’s backing.

After Bhutto was chosen to form a government, the chief of army staff,
General Aslam Beg, declared that the army would not interfere in political matters,
and that its interest in facilitating a peaceful election had been accomplished. In
fact, many believed that the military was relieved to be able to stay away from
politics because its prestige had been damaged by the long years of martial law.
“‘The army is back where it wants to be,’” said retired lieutenant-general A.I.
Akram, and added that it would interfere in politics unless the political process
collapsed again.52 Rasul B. Rais, a political scientist at Quaid-i-Azam University,
was of the same view; “‘The army is using this [opportunity] for the restoration of
its prestige in the eyes of civilians,’” he argued. Following Zia’s death, the
generals had been relieved of many liabilities and burdens. They now wanted an
opportunity “‘to start again with a clean state.’”53

Bhutto’s relations with the military received their first jolt in May 1989
when she replaced the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Lieutenant-
General Hamid Gul. He was the most senior military ideologue remaining from
the Zia era and wielded significant influence in the army. Being a committed
proponent of Islam, he had monopolized Afghan policy and favored the most
fundamentalist factions among the mujahideen. In the wake of the Soviet
withdrawal, however, their role in the future Afghanistan politics had become
unclear. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto wanted to encourage a negotiated
settlement with the communist government in Kabul while the mujahideen,
supported by General Gul, wanted to defeat the Kabul regime in the battlefield.
But the mujahideen’s attempt to capture Jalalabad, a provincial capital in eastern
Afghanistan, failed in the spring of 1989. "The sacking of Lieutenant-General Hamid Gul... was believed directly related to the failure to occupy Jalalabad. Thousands of mujahideen were reported to have been lost in the ill-fated action, and the defeat was traced directly to Pakistani military strategy, a responsibility of the ISI."54 Gul was held responsible and blamed for pushing the mujahideen to attack the well-defended town.

Dismissal of Gul as head of the ISI enabled Bhutto to consider a different course of action. For the first time she expressed, in an interview, her intention to play a greater role in shaping Afghan policy.

Moving General Gul gave her the chance to break free from the Afghan policy of the late President Zia-ul Haq.... [He] believed that the mujahideen and Pakistan could together win a great victory for Islam by establishing an Islamic regime in Kabul and building an "Islamic block" on Russia's border.... Miss Bhutto is less concerned with Islamic triumphs than with an early end to the Afghan war. She is eager for the repatriation of the three million or so Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and she is firmly opposed to any move that would drag Pakistan even deeper into the Afghan quagmire.55

Although conflicts over Afghan policy were cited as the direct reason for Gul's dismissal, it was the ISI's domestic intelligence role even after she came to power that had particularly incensed Bhutto. Since its creation in 1948, the ISI had been used by a succession of Pakistani rulers for their own political purposes. During the Zia era, it became a "state within a state," acting more as an instrument for maintaining his personal power than as an agency for counter-intelligence.56 It had long run surveillance on the domestic opposition, and Gul was widely believed to have played a major role in creating and directing the IJI's election campaign.
In January 1989, Bhutto formed an intelligence organization committee, comprising of four members and headed by a retired air marshal, Zulfikar Ali Khan, to look into and possibly curb the ISI directorate. The committee was known to have the intention to deprive the ISI of its role in domestic politics. One of Bhutto’s cabinet ministers told a reporter: ‘‘We have no control over these people. They are like a government unto themselves.’’57 Other PPP ministers alleged that the ISI had been financing the IJI’s efforts to unseat Bhutto and that Gul’s support for the IJI had allowed its leader, Nawaz Sharif, to take on a confrontational stand against the center. There were also rumors that the ISI had fueled the ethnic violence in Sindh to destabilize the Bhutto government.

Gul was replaced by Shamsul Rehman Kallu, a retired lieutenant-general who had headed an armored corps and was once tipped to become chief of army staff. He was widely respected in the military for his professionalism. He believed that the army should be aloof from politics and this view cost him his promotion. Zia retired him when he suggested that Zia should resign as the army chief of staff when he assumed the presidency. Since Kallu, who was now a civilian, was believed to be more receptive to Bhutto’s wishes, some senior military officers were furious at his appointment, thinking that it would lead to a civilianization of the ISI. Traditionally the ISI had been part of the army and its head reported to the chief of army staff. The appointment of Kallu placed General Aslam Beg in the delicate position of having to go along with the prime minister while at the same time appeasing his angry generals.58

The manner in which this affair was handled fueled controversy and tension in the army. When chief of army staff, General Aslam Beg, was informed of Bhutto’s intention to transfer Gul, he agreed and submitted a list of serving generals from amongst whom she might choose a successor. But she ignored Beg’s list and picked Kallu instead. Bhutto was said to have signed Gul’s release order just an hour before she left for an official visit to Turkey and did not immediately inform either President Ishaq Khan or General Beg.
Although it caused some friction with the military, the move against Gul was seen as a major victory for Bhutto in her struggle to consolidate her power. It seemed she had canceled an understanding with the army, made before the army accepted her appointment as prime minister, which provided that she would not interfere in military affairs. Her success in ousting a powerful figure in the army caused the impression in certain circles that she had successfully asserted the authority of her office.

After six months in power, Bhutto’s image remained that of a weak woman trapped between the generals, a hostile president and Islamic fundamentalists ready to overthrow her. In a single dramatic sweep she has radically altered the public perception of her government and has emerged as a decisive leader who can make changes in the army.

Despite this incident, the military leadership continued to express its intention to stay out of politics. In his frequent speeches and interviews, Beg reiterated his support for the democratic process and declared that he and the military were subordinate to the civilian government. He made it clear that it had been the collective decision of the army high command to support the country’s democratic process despite pressures from various quarters for intervention.

In this year of trial, no Pakistani institution appeared more firmly in support of Bhutto’s tenure than that represented by the armed forces. General Aslam Beg...publicly and repeatedly declared his confidence in the civilian government. Whatever the motives of the Pakistani military, this determined action in support of Bhutto’s administration nullified substantial threats from other circles. Thus, despite the ‘‘mini insurgency’’ in Sindh, the perpetuation of the war in Afghanistan, the inability to displace the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad
(IJI) government in the Punjab, and soaring inflation and increasing unemployment, Benazir Bhutto managed to hold on to the reins of government.60

But the prime minister’s relations with the army would soon deteriorate, which will be discussed later.

Hostility of the President

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan’s attitude toward Bhutto and her government became increasingly hostile. Some observers even said that he was her most dangerous antagonist. An able career bureaucrat of wide experience, he had served Zia-ul Haq with zeal, and upon retirement from the civil service he was rewarded with a seat in the senate and, later, with its chairmanship. Upon Zia-ul Haq’s death, Ghulam Ishaq Khan became the “caretaker” president as required by the constitution. He held an election that was perceived as reasonably fair. Yet he was generally thought to be more formally disposed toward the IJI than he was toward the PPP. Nevertheless, Bhutto and her party tried to conciliate him and supported his election as president for a full term. The decision to support him may also have been influenced by the fact that he was favored by the army.61 He was also favored by the IJI, a disposition that he was inclined to reciprocate.

Friction between Bhutto and the president soon developed over a number of issues. Bhutto wanted to have the authority and power that a prime minister normally has in a parliamentary system. She expected the president to be only a ceremonial head of state. But under the constitution of Pakistan, amended in 1985 under Zia-ul Haq’s pressure (called the eighth amendment), the president retained “discretionary” authority in a number of matters, including the appointment of military service chiefs, high court and supreme court judges, among other things. He fully intended to exercise the authority that was his under the eighth
amendment. Under this amendment the president had the authority to appoint any
elected member of the national assembly as prime minister. He could dissolve the
national assembly at his discretion and call for a fresh election if he felt an appeal
to the electorate was necessary. Every decision made by the prime minister or the
cabinet had to be conveyed to the president who could demand cabinet
consideration of any decision made solely by the prime minister. The president’s
decision in matters, which the eighth amendment placed in his “discretion”, were
final and could not be questioned on constitutional grounds. Ishaq Khan, thus, had
inherited the power of virtually a presidential constitution.

During the last years of Zia-ul Haq’s regime, the PPP and several other
political parties had vowed to repeal the eighth amendment. Fairly early in 1989
Benazir Bhutto began to speak against this amendment and advocated its repeal.
Her supporters argued that the prime minister could not implement the formation
of her office while the amendment remained in force. This was not quite true
because there was still plenty for the prime minister to do. Moreover, some
mutually satisfactory arrangement could have been worked out with the president.
But Bhutto’s campaign against the amendment was seen as an attack on the
president’s office and he was displeased. Her critics, and former associates who
had now become critics, took the position that the amendment created a “balance”
between the power of the president and that of the prime minister, and that in its
absence the prime minister could become a “dictator” as indeed the late Zulfikar
Ali Bhutto had become. This much-praised division of powers between the
president and the prime minister was, however, open to question given the fact that
President Zia-ul Haq had dissolved the national assembly and dismissed Prime
Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo in May 1988 without any apparent good reason.
Thus one could argue also that the president’s discretionary powers under the
eighth amendment allowed presidential high-handedness, if not dictatorship.

A great frustration for the PPP was that any constitutional amendment had
to be passed by a two-third majority in both houses of Parliament. With barely a
simple majority in the national assembly, and the senate controlled by Zia
appointees, the PPP was in no position to undo the amendment. Bhutto knew also that fresh elections would not solve the problem because, given the polarization among the voters, the outcome would not be much different from the 1988 election results.

A major controversy surfaced in August 1989 when Bhutto wanted to retire Admiral Iftikhar Ahmad Sirohi from the post of chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee. Sirohi had assumed this post a year earlier when his predecessor died in an air crash along with Zia-ul Haq. Bhutto argued that Sirohi would complete his normal term of three years in the rank of admiral on August 14 and should then retire. She hoped to “promote” General Aslam Beg to Sirohi’s post and appoint an officer of her choice as Beg’s successor. Although the joint chief’s post was technically the highest in the military, it was largely ceremonial and the head of the army had much more power in real terms. Thus, General Beg had no desire to be “promoted.” Moreover, he felt this was another instance of Bhutto’s intervention in the military internal affairs and, thus, a violation of the understanding she had reached with the president and the army at the time of her appointment.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan responded to Bhutto’s move by issuing a “clarification” in which he maintained that Sirohi’s term as chairman of the joint chiefs should be counted not from the date when he was made admiral but from the time he assumed his current position. He also asserted that only the president had the authority to appoint or retire chairman of the joint chiefs. He based his position on the eighth amendment which gave him discretionary authority to appoint the three service chiefs and chairman of the joint chiefs. There was some scope for arguing that while the president had the authority to appoint the chiefs, he had no authority to decide when they would retire; their retirement date had to follow the established rule. However, Bhutto relented and Sirohi remained at his post.

A second major incident of straining relations between Bhutto on the one hand, and the military and the president on the other, had happened. Confrontation
surrounding the president’s appointing authority and its constitutionality surfaced again when Ishaq Khan refused to endorse Bhutto’s nominees for Supreme Court vacancies. The relations between them were so bad that they did not meet for months. The IJI leaders, following their frequent meetings with the president, issued statements which suggested that the president was fed up with the PPP. That he neither confirmed nor denied those statements strengthened the impression that he was siding with the IJI. Behind the president was the Pakistani army which, despite its assurances to the contrary, might not remain in the barracks forever.
NOTES

2. ibid.
15. ibid.
17. ibid., December 29, 1988, p. 9.
18. ibid., December 22, 1988, p. 15.
27. ibid., April 6, 1989, p. 17.
30. ibid., p. 21.
33. ibid., December 8, 1988, p. 12.
34. ibid., April 6, 1989. p. 10.
35. ibid., June 8, 1989, p. 16.
42. Economist, October 21, 1989, p. 33.
46. ibid., May 18, 1989, p. 12.
53. ibid.


59. ibid.


CHAPTER 5

DETERIORATION OF CONTROL

Vote of No-Confidence

A little more than ten months after coming to power, Bhutto faced a serious challenge by the opposition when a motion of no-confidence was tabled against her government. The PPP, having failed to obtain a clear majority in the national assembly in the November polls, had managed to retain parliamentary control with the support of 14 members of the MQM and several independents. Basic strength of the PPP before the no-confidence motion was 111 seats, eight short of a majority in the 237-seat assembly, while that of the IJI amounted to 91. By mid-1989, the opposition parties, led by the IJI, formed the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) in the national assembly with Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as its leader. The opposition parties had learned a bitter lesson in the last elections when splitting their votes among themselves enabled the PPP to take the largest number of seats. Although comprising various kinds of parties, with the Jamaat-e-Islami on the far right and the Awami National Party on the left of the political spectrum, the COP members shared one common goal: getting the PPP out of power.

The tabling of no-confidence motion itself was not so much of a surprise to Bhutto and the PPP; the opposition had been threatening to take such an action for months. What shook the PPP, however, was the defection of the MQM to the other side. On October 23, 1989 all fourteen legislators of the MQM declared that they would join the opposition. The MQM’s move came as a total surprise for the PPP because its leaders had long believed that the Sindh-based MQM could not afford to break its ties with the dominant party in that province. Trying to justify his party’s alliance with the IJI which had no representation in Sindh, an MQM leader, Imran Farooq, said that Bhutto had reneged on her promises made to the
party and adopted an unreasonable behavior toward it. He said the MQM’s
decision to withdraw its support to the PPP was a principled one. Uneasy
relationship between the PPP and the MQM was never a secret; the MQM had
been complaining about the PPP’s non-implementation of the Karachi Accord, and
it had supported the IJI at the budget session earlier in June. Nonetheless, the
MQM’s official defection to the other camp just before the vote of no-confidence
dealt a heavy blow to the PPP. An agreement between the IJI and the MQM was
said to have been secretly signed as far back as mid September.

The MQM’s defection greatly encouraged the opposition and convinced its
leaders that the time was right to take action against Bhutto. On the same day, the
COP submitted to the parliament secretariat notice of a no-confidence move against
Bhutto cabinet signed by 86 of its members. The next day, October 24, Nawaz
Sharif moved all the opposition members to a well-guarded hotel in Muree Hill
resort in the Punjab, about 25 miles from Islamabad. The legislators were heavily
guarded by Punjab police and were isolated from outside world including the press
so that the ruling party would not be able to contact them and try to lure them
away from the COP. In addition, the opposition launched a campaign of vote-
buying. It was alleged that PPP legislators were offered up to Rs. 20 million ($
1 million) if they would vote for the no-confidence motion. Bhutto said the money
being offered had come from the illicit trade in drugs. To dramatize her
accusation, she dismissed Tariq Magsi, a minister in her government, saying that
he had demanded Rs. 20 million in cash and other privileges as his price for
staying with the PPP. Magsi denied the charges and claimed that he had resigned
because Bhutto had given too much powers to her advisors and ignored the elected
ministers. The opposition also launched a campaign of disinformation claiming
defection of the PPP members to its side.

The opposition resorted to even more drastic methods. The minister of state
for minorities, Fr Julius, was abducted one night in Islamabad and held captive for
two days until he was freed by armed federal officers. In another incident, a
potential defector from the PPP arrived at the airport in Islamabad to find himself
being pulled in opposite directions by both the PPP and the IJI. By October 26, the PPP had become so concerned about the possible abduction or defection of its members that it transferred them all from the capital first to Peshawar and then to Mingora in the PPP-controlled NWFP. Although the press was allowed free access to them, the opposition alleged that the PPP had virtually imprisoned its own supporters.

Finally on November 1, the no-confidence motion was put to a vote. Under the rules of the national assembly, only the supporters of the motion were required to vote. The army was deployed in Islamabad to ensure that members of Parliament could safely reach the national assembly building. The arrangement was said to have been requested by the opposition leaders, to which President Ishaq Khan responded by assuring peace in the capital on the day of the vote. In the assembly of 237 members, no-confidence motion received 107 votes, 12 short of 119 required to bring down the Bhutto government. At least 30 potential supporters of the motion stayed away, including 10 PPP members from Sindh who had been dissatisfied with Bhutto’s policy towards their province as well as a half-dozen opposition members who eventually defected to Bhutto’s side.

After she won, Bhutto thanked the House for providing her with the opportunity to continue her program of national renewal. “It will be the solemn duty of myself and the democratic government to live up to the expectations and aspirations of the people,” she said. She also called upon the opposition to work with her administration for the benefit of the country. Opposition, she noted, was healthy and proper in a democratic society, but opposition for opposition’s sake only was counter-productive and could undermine Pakistan’s experiment in democracy. “I have no rancor nor any ill will against those who have moved that no-trust motion against me,” Bhutto said, and expressed the hope that “saner elements” in the House and throughout the country would join hands to make democracy in Pakistan work.

At a press conference following the vote, Bhutto acknowledged the mistakes that the PPP had made earlier and promised to improve the performance of her
government. "We are no angels," she said. "We've got to do some major rethinking and come up with some new policy steps." One of the changes that she promised was a reshuffle of her cabinet to clear out some of the unpopular ministers and advisors surrounding her. One analyst commented before the vote: "Bhutto's major disadvantage is her reliance on advisors who seem to ignore Pakistan's social conditions and allow the creation of grievances which can be exploited by the opposition." On the possibility of mid-term polls, however, Bhutto repeated her position that she would not call new election, claiming that two elections within one year would not serve any purpose.

The COP leader, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, conceded defeat and declared that the opposition would respect the decision of the House. Speaking to the press following the vote, however, he and Nawaz Sharif showed little sign that they might reconcile with Bhutto. They contended that the closeness of the vote was a moral victory for the opposition and vowed to try again in the near future. "Things will stabilize once she is out of power," said Sharif. "The battle is on." Referring to the government as "the most inefficient and weak in the history of Pakistan," he asserted that it "cannot last for long." They also claimed that Bhutto survived the vote only because the PPP ranks mostly stayed with the party and some independents allegedly sold their votes to her. The PPP was said to have competed with the opposition in the campaign of vote-buying by offering cash, government jobs and plots of land to legislators. Jatoi noted the absence of five MPs including powerful figures such as the ANP leader, Wali Khan, whose vote in favor of the no-confidence motion would have influenced others to vote against the government.

As the speaker of the House commented after the proceedings, it was the first time in the history of Pakistan that a government had faced a serious possibility of being ousted on a legislative vote and many cited the success of the democratic process. Although hailed by both sides as a watershed for democracy in Pakistan, the no-confidence motion also revealed the weakness of democratic institutions in Pakistan. The political tensions that led to the vote, as well as the
vote-buying by both sides, were casting shadows over the survival of democratic government. In the political tussle leading up to the no-confidence motion, each side accused the other of bribery and kidnapping allegedly committed to get the votes. Trading of legislators’ votes had never been done on such a scale involving millions of rupees spent to purchase or retain their royalties. As one analyst noted: “We saw a kind of politics never witnessed before. Individual consciences were never so freely and in such broad daylight bought and sold.” After ten days of intense maneuvering, the swing votes were influenced less by the social issues such as crime, drugs and poverty invoked in a two-hour debate preceding the ballot than by financial and political gains by individual legislators.

Although she defeated the opposition, Bhutto still had to remain cautious. The margin of victory was very narrow: only 12 votes. Moreover, she had practically received 25 fewer votes supporting her than she did in the vote of confidence upon assuming office six months earlier. During her 11 months in office, Bhutto had lost support of many independents and the minor parties which had grown disaffected with her administration. Besides reshuffling the cabinet, Bhutto also had to improve her dealings with party members and political allies. Her haughtiness and autocratic bent were criticized for having driven away many allies and caused some disaffected PPP members to flirt with the opposition. While the motion failed the instability was unlikely to disappear. The basic weakness of the PPP --- the lack of a simple majority in the national assembly --- from which the motion stemmed had not changed, inviting the opposition to repeat the move, which could paralyze her government. Many saw the narrow vote for Bhutto only as a temporary reprieve for her troubled administration. Jatoi called the result of the vote “the beginning of the end” for Bhutto government, which later proved to be the case.

The military had distanced itself from these political squabbles and insisted that it had ceased meddling in politics. The army chief, General Aslam Beg, had reiterated his support for the “democratic process” and refused to be associated with either of the contenders. For instance, when Nawaz Sharif asked for a
meeting with the army chief just before the no-confidence vote, Beg declined the request to claim his political neutrality. Many observers held the view, however, that despite its appearance of impartiality, it was the army that really controlled the outcome and that it had chosen to let the political process take its course this time around.

More notable was the fact that the no-confidence motion came after a series of highly-publicized incidents hinting at the uneasy relations between Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. They had serious disagreement as to which one of them had the authority, under the constitution, to appoint certain high government officials, supreme court judges, and the military service chiefs. These conflicts convinced Bhutto’s supporters that the president had been conspiring with the IJI, had given his acquiescence to the no-confidence motion, and therefore was hardly a neutral party. Winning the no-confidence vote left Bhutto’s authority intact, but the political situation surrounding the vote clearly indicated the growing differences between Bhutto and the president.

**February By-Election**

A major political event that marked the beginning of 1990 was the by-election for a national assembly seat in NA-99, a rural constituency in Lahore, on February 18. It was contested by Arshad Ghurki of the PPP and Mehr Zulfiqar Ali of the IJI. Stakes were high for the PPP because it had earlier won the seat in the 1988 election and had to prove its popularity among the electorate. For Ghulam Mustafa Khar, the PPP’s chief campaigner, it was imperative that the party retain the seat. "I have put my 26-year-political-career on stake," he repeatedly said at rallies. The by-election was no less important for the IJI which was contesting the seat in the capital of the province which it considered as its stronghold, the Punjab. It was expected that the by-election would serve as a good indication of strength and popularity of each side.
Given the high stakes in the contest, both the PPP and the IJI deployed full force to beat the other side and claim victory. Funds were spent lavishly on development projects in the constituency to influence the voters. The federal government of Bhutto set aside a special grant of Rs. 100 million from the People's Program for Development to provide electricity, gas and roads. The IJI was not lagging behind in this respect. Special funds were sanctioned by the Punjab government for a variety of public works in the constituency. Moreover, all the financial resources of the Lahore District Council were thrown into the contested area for additional projects. While appearing non-committal, the voters shrewdly kept on asking for more civic facilities, amounting to over Rs. 300 million in total. To everyone's surprise, in a matter of weeks, the areas comprising NA-99 saw development projects that would normally take years. "The constituents of NA-99 have become the envy of the people of the Punjab," a resident of another city said.

On the polling day, PPP's Arshad Ghurki defeated IJI's Mehr Zulfiqar Ali by a slender margin. The voter turnout was 60 percent -- better than expected in a bad weather condition. The victory boosted the morale of the PPP which had lost several by-elections in the past. This by-election also gave a spotlight to Ghulam Mustafa Khar who masterminded the PPP campaign. The former Punjab governor and one of the most influential politicians in the province established himself as a leader who could understand the intricate game of politics and effectively counter the opposition's moves. He had been engaged in a war of nerve with the IJI leader, Nawaz Sharif, and given the by-election a personal color.

No serious political debate was heard during the campaign. It was evident that voters were influenced more by immediate material benefits and financial incentives. As one analyst observed:

There is no doubt that the repeated emasculation of established institutions, with carefully planned pervasion of the democratic system, has weakened people's faith in the political process. Our
dismal political history has, thus, fostered a cynicism which allows many people to imagine that political principles are of no great consequence and success can come more easily through the misuse of power, influence or money. 10

Demand for a Fresh Vote of Confidence

Having failed in the by-election, the opposition's next campaign against Bhutto was focused on a date, namely, March 20, 1990, which the IJI claimed as a date by which the president must act against the Bhutto government. A constitutional amendment imposed by Zia had provided that until this date the president possessed the authority to appoint a prime minister. The opposition argued that Bhutto had been appointed by the president under the said constitutional provision. The senior IJI leadership insisted that Bhutto would therefore cease to be prime minister after March 20 and that a new prime minister would have to be elected. Alternatively, Bhutto would have to obtain a fresh vote of confidence from the national assembly. An IJI legislator, Chaudhry Amir Husain, filed a petition with the supreme court, requesting that Bhutto be stopped from acting as prime minister, and that all orders given by her after the date be considered ineffective.

The IJI leaders hoped to have President Ishaq Khan's cooperation. Besides the power to appoint the prime minister, the president was also entitled to dissolve Parliament, although this provision had been interpreted by the courts as being limited by "certain objective conditions." The opposition wanted the president to use his powers either to ask Bhutto to seek a vote of confidence or dissolve the national assembly and schedule fresh elections.

The PPP, of course, rejected the opposition's interpretation and contended that Benazir Bhutto was not required to secure a fresh vote of confidence in the assembly. Nevertheless, Bhutto summoned the national assembly to meet through
the key period while her party worked hard to engineer defections from the opposition. The High Court ruling that the IJI was not a political party and, therefore, not subject to the anti-defection clause of the Political Parties Act gave advantage to the PPP over the IJI in the struggle to increase its strength. Five defectors joined the PPP and several opposition members who were not ready to openly defect promised to vote for Bhutto in any secret ballot. Most legislators wanted to complete their terms of five years and did not wish to create conditions for premature general elections. Bhutto had reportedly argued for holding a vote of confidence but the party elders opposed the idea on the grounds that this would mean conceding to the opposition’s initiative.

As March 20 approached, the IJI leaders intensified their pressure on President Ishaq Khan to ask Bhutto to seek a fresh vote of confidence. The claims and the counter-claims about the constitutional requirement for a fresh vote flooded newspapers and there was confusion all over. The argument finally ended when the president declared that he was in no way bound to ask the prime minister to seek a fresh vote of confidence. He said that the question of holding new elections should be decided by politicians of both sides in accordance with the people’s wish. He added that, if there was any confusion about any provision of the constitution in anyone’s mind, they should take the matter to the superior courts.

This was a setback for the opposition which had expected the president to side with them against Bhutto. The earlier reports of a widening gulf between Bhutto and Ishaq Khan had encouraged the opposition to think that the president would lend a hand to their scheme of ousting Bhutto through quasi-constitutional means. But March 20 passed without any change in the political scene. Now that it had to seek clarification from the courts, the opposition’s only hope was that the judiciary would interpret the constitution in its favor, though most legal experts argued it would be unlikely. Bhutto, on the other hand, appeared to have gained some momentum in her struggle against the opposition.
Growing Tension in Kashmir

While constantly confronted with domestic problems, Bhutto also had to cope with an increasingly difficult situation in Kashmir where Pakistan shared border with its hostile neighbor, India. Kashmir had been in dispute between the two countries ever since their independence from Britain in 1947. A ceasefire line drawn in 1949 after the first Indo-Pakistani war divided Kashmir into two areas --- one-third of the territory went under Pakistan’s control which Pakistanis call “Azad (free) Kashmir” and two-thirds was left under Indian rule and named Jammu and Kashmir. However, the line dividing Kashmir was actually drawn part of the way and the two countries vaguely agreed that it should run north to the glaciers. But soon they disagreed on how the line went. Pakistan believed that it ran roughly north-east to the Karakoram pass into China. India said it ran slightly north-west along Saltoro ridge which formed the western edge of the Siachen glacier. This gap between the two interpretations created the world’s highest battleground in the seven-mile-long and 18,000-foot-high Siachen glacier in the Himalayas over which both claimed sovereignty.

In the Simla Agreement in 1972, prime ministers of the two countries, Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had renounced the use of force to settle disputes. But the original poor demarcation caused a number of armed clashes in Siachen which India eventually seized in 1984 and then repelled repeated attacks by Pakistan. In early 1989, some initiatives were taken to ease the tension in Siachen without losing face. By May, the two countries were seriously considering to pull back their troops to positions from which they could no longer shoot at each other. The aim was to turn the Siachen glacier into “no-man’s land” as it had been until the 1960s.

Tension between Pakistan and India began to grow once again as a secessionist movement gained momentum in Jammu and Kashmir against the Indian rule. Majority of the population in both areas of Kashmir is Muslim. Jammu and
Kashmir had been directly ruled from Delhi through local puppet regimes brought to power by means of rigged elections. After 40 years of Indian "oppression," desire for self-determination, fueled by Muslim fundamentalism, had been growing stronger. They demanded that if independence was not going to be granted, at least a plebiscite should be held to decide whether to stay with India or join Pakistan. Finally, a widespread rebellion against Indian rule broke out on January 20, 1990 when police opened fire on a demonstration in the Kashmiri capital of Srinagar.

The crisis in the Indian side of Kashmir raised the possibility of armed clash between Pakistan and India with the former accusing the latter of a troop buildup along the border. Pakistani Foreign Minister Yakub Khan declared on national television that "Kashmir remained a disputed territory and that Pakistan did not want war with India but neither would it be cowed by threats." In February, a joint session of the national assembly and senate debated whether to declare a nationwide state of emergency in Pakistan. When India's army commander, General V.N. Sharma, promised to repulse any Pakistani drive, Indo-Pakistani relations were at their worst since the 1971 war.

India was determined to keep Jammu and Kashmir under its rule, and Pakistan was equally insistent that the Kashmiris should be given the right of self-determination, hoping that the Muslim majority there would vote for joining Pakistan. In March Bhutto visited Azad Kashmir where she declared her support for the "freedom fighters" and promised to set up a $4 million fund to help their struggle for self-determination. The new Indian prime minister, V.P. Singh, accused Pakistan of interfering in India's internal affairs. In May Deputy U.S. National Security Advisor Robert Gates, after his visit to the region, addressed the fear of an all-out war between India and Pakistan. Under international pressure, particularly that of the United States and the Soviet Union, the two countries agreed to return to negotiations for peaceful solutions and by mid-June high-level discussions were scheduled to take place. India's foreign secretary, Muchkund Dubey, visited Islamabad to sit at a negotiation table with his Pakistani counterpart.
Bhutto also met with Dubey and urged New Delhi to withdraw troops from the border, but no agreement was reached between the two sides.

**Defiance of the Punjab**

Following the defeats in the no-confidence motion and the February by-elections, the IJI-controlled Punjab government of Nawaz Sharif was more determined than ever to continue its confrontationist posture against Bhutto and her federal government. In opposing the federal government’s People’s Program for Development and in floating of the Punjab Bank, Sharif claimed to be protecting provincial autonomy. Following its establishment, despite strong objections by the federal government, the Punjab Bank opened several branches and was planning to open more. Under the constitution, each province reserves the right to establish its own provincial bank, but in reality all Pakistani banks had long been nationalized and controlled by the federal government. Therefore, the Punjab government’s sudden decision to establish its own bank was seen more as defiance against Bhutto government than as a simple exercise of its rights. Bhutto, in an attempt to discredit the Punjab Bank, publicly questioned its capability to honor its obligations to depositors.

Encouraged by the success in opening the Punjab Bank, Nawaz Sharif then attempted to set up a provincial television station. Television stations had also been run by Islamabad although the constitution provided the provinces with the right to have their own. As long as they operate within provincial borders, the activities were not in violation of federal law. Bhutto argued that the opposition was receiving more coverage on state media than any time in the past and that the Punjab government’s demand for its own station was yet another attempt to assert a separate identity in order to undermine the federal authority. PPP leaders implicitly accused the Punjab Government of fanning secessionism, comparing its actions with those leading to Bangladesh’s separation from Pakistan in 1971.
The Punjab government's activities surrounding banks and television stations coincided with growing demands from the opposition in parliament to re-address the issue of provincial rights and the division of federal and provincial roles as defined in the constitution. The discussion dates back to the era of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto when a consensus on the 1973 constitution was reached regarding a division of responsibilities. It was agreed that, beyond certain subjects placed exclusively in the federal jurisdiction and some placed concurrently in the federal and provincial jurisdiction, eight subjects including railways, mineral oil and natural gas would be placed under the over-all control of a Council of Common Interests (CCI). The council was supposed to have been formed of the four provincial chief ministers and four federal ministers, but it was not formally convened during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's rule and during that of Zia-ul Haq.

Now that the constitution became fully effective again, the opposition demanded the CCI to be officially formed. One agenda item in their mind was Punjab's demand for a dam to be built on Indus River in its own territory of Kalabagh. Punjabis had been dependent on the other three provinces for their rapidly growing energy demands; they were getting gas from Sindh and Baluchistan and hydroelectric power from the NWFP. A new dam was expected to help the Punjab increase its self-sufficiency in electric energy. But the project was strongly opposed by the NWFP because it would raise the possibility of inundation of its land and reduce the province's relative importance as a supplier of hydroelectric power. Sindh and Baluchistan also objected, fearing that a dam at Kalabagh would reduce the river's downstream on which they depended. The three provinces also had their own stakes in the CCI. Under the 1973 constitution, profits from hydroelectric stations and natural gas wells were to be collected by the federal government and then disbursed to the producing provinces. Zia-ul Haq's martial law regime had kept most revenues in federal hands. Those energy-producing provinces hoped, through the CCI, to change the system back to what it was originally designed to be and benefit from it. In fact they demanded not only the
entire income from their gas and electricity outputs but control over pricing. Punjab, the net importer, did not like the idea.

Bhutto was reluctant to activate the CCI, given this context of inter-provincial economic relations. She feared that open discussion at the CCI would let ethnic chauvinism explode and threaten the PPP’s pre-eminence as the only party with a credible legislative representation in all four provinces. Moreover, the constitution provided that the council’s decisions could be appealed to a joint session of the both houses of parliament where, given the IJI-dominated senate, the PPP had only a minority status.

Meanwhile political tensions kept running high between the center and the Punjab. In March, the PPP and the IJI held separate rallies for Golden Jubilee celebration of the 1940 Muslim League resolution which demanded the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. Bhutto invited all four chief ministers to participate and address the PPP rally but Sharif declined the invitation, saying “the makers of Pakistan cannot sit with the breakers of Pakistan” and labeled Bhutto a “traitor.”12 In April, the minister of state for parliamentary affairs, Sher Afghan, sent a reference against the Punjab chief minister and his brother, Shahbaz Sharif, to the Punjab assembly speaker. The reference accused the Sharif brothers of corrupt practice during the by-election in February and sought their disqualification along with that of some other opposition legislators. The opposition, in retaliation, also made a similar reference against Bhutto and her ministers on various grounds.

Bhutto was most incensed by Nawaz Sharif’s interference in foreign affairs which the constitution defined as a federal domain. It was the clearest indication of his open defiance of Bhutto’s federal authority. During his visit to Saudi Arabia and the United States in December 1989, Sharif publicly criticized Bhutto’s foreign policies. He allegedly had independent contacts with foreign governments and his administration was said to have hired an American public relations firm for tens of thousands of dollars per month to lobby in the United States against the Bhutto government. In January, 1990, in his capacity as Punjab chief minister, Sharif issued an advertisement appealing for a country-wide strike against the
developments in Kashmir. He urged that all business, industry and educational institutions should close throughout the country to pay tribute to the people of Kashmir who had been struggling for their freedom. The advertisement also condemned the oppression by the Indian army and expressed solidarity with the Kashmiri mujahideen claiming that Pakistan was fully behind them. By April, Sharif was making arrangements to hold an all-party conference on Kashmir issue, which the PPP condemned as “in contradiction with the federal government’s policy” and as “supporting the government and rulers of India.”

Another development in the center-Punjab conflict was the confrontation between Nawaz Sharif and Ghulam Mustafa Khar, the chief lieutenant of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto whose ruthless effectiveness as the governor of Punjab in the 1970s had earned him some notoricity. During the Zia era, disagreements had developed between Benazir Bhutto and Khar, who eventually joined the IJI and won two seats on its tickets in the November polls. In October 1989, after months of speculation, Khar announced his unconditional support for Bhutto and subsequently rejoined the PPP. He contended that supporting the prime minister was in fact supporting the democratic process and stressed that he was not going back to the PPP in quest for a job. On the same day that Khar expressed his support for the PPP, Sharif took Khar’s brother, Malik Noor Rabbani Khar, into his cabinet along with another provincial legislator. The induction of the new ministers was interpreted as Sharif’s attempt to strengthen his position relative to that of Ghulam Mustafa Khar.

It was widely expected that Ghulam Mustafa Khar would be the main agent for the Bhutto government to effectively counter Sharif and cut him to size. Some had earlier said that when he returned to Punjab politics, Khar would make one mouthful of Sharif. And that was what Khar wanted to do. He had warned the Punjab chief minister to adopt a policy of reconciliation with the center or face removal. “If the chief minister did not listen,” Khar said, “I’ll be duty bound to bring about a change in the province.” He claimed that he would contest election from a provincial seat and topple the chief minister within 35 days of his election. Questioned as to what he meant by Sharif mending his ways, Khar said
that the chief minister should support the federal government in light of the Indian threats on the border and improve the law and order in the Punjab. Khar argued that what he was seeking was not the chief ministership but a way to save the province from misrule. If Sharif mended his ways, Khar said, he would withdraw from the scene. To substantiate his warning, Khar claimed that after the by-election in February he had the support of ten more provincial legislators than required to unseat the chief minister and that the PPP supporters in the Punjab assembly had since increased in number. The only reason he did not make an attempt to oust Sharif was the border situation which had been unsettling due to the strife in Kashmir.

**Violence in Sindh and Conflicts with the Military**

It was the escalating violence in Sindh that further undermined the Bhutto government. Ethnic conflict between Sindhis and mohajirs had led to deterioration of law and order in the province, taking the lives of hundreds of people. Their rivalries had their roots in the history of Sindh and both Sindhis and mohajirs had legitimate grievances. The mohajirs, immigrants from India at the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, had been settled in urban areas of Sindh and come to dominate commercial activities. Since then, their hard-earned dominance had been gradually challenged first by large numbers of Punjabis and Pathans who also came to settle in Sindh and eventually by the increasing number of educated young Sindhis who were claiming their “share” of jobs in both the public services and private enterprise. Sindhis felt also that their land had been “invaded” by outsiders; large numbers of Pathans from the NWFP migrated to Sindh during Zia’s time and so did the Punjabis whose prominence in government and business increased, further alienating the Sindhis. They claimed that they had not been given their due share in society even though they were the “native sons of the soil.”
Compounding the problem of ethnic violence was the presence of bandits in rural Sindh. Besides their usual engagement in abductions, bank robberies and murders, they were now hired as urban mercenaries by the various ethnic groups which wanted to add to their forces. During Zia’s time, the number of the outlaws increased as traditional bandits were joined by many politically alienated Sindhis. The situation was further complicated by the divide-and-rule tactics of Zia who encouraged Sindhi feudal landlords to form private military bands to assert control in rural areas, which resulted in a complex mixture of ethnic antagonism and feudal rivalries.

To have their voice heard and demands met, the MQM resorted to various, often violent, methods. In early February, 1990, after months of disorder, another incident of ethnic violence erupted in Karachi when the MQM called for a general strike to get its detained workers released and have the president to impose governor’s rule in Sindh. About two hundred people were killed or injured and more than half the city was placed under army control. In April MQM chief Altaf Husain embarked on a fast unto death, demanding the release of MQM activists who had been arrested due to their alleged involvement in the murder of Najib Ahmed, former president of the People’s Student Federation. Husain’s hunger strike ended after only two days when compromise was reached between the MQM-COP team and Sindh Governor Fakhruddin Ebrahim. Meanwhile MQM workers continued to be engaged in violent activities. In one instance two young gunmen who were shot and captured in action turned out to be policemen and were also members of the MQM. As one analyst put it, “So far has the rot sunk into Sindh’s polarized society.”

Following the violence in February Bhutto dismissed the chief minister of Sindh, Qaim Ali Shah, whose administration had been criticized for its ineffectiveness, and appointed Aftab Shaban Mirani to the position. Such a change, however, was only cosmetic. The new chief minister did not have any apparent plan to restore peace nor did he take any initiative in reopening lines to the MQM. The PPP was criticized for its lack of capable administrators among
its ranks and of clear policy to revive the virtually collapsed provincial government. Prevailing view was that ending the violence and turning around the situation would require a strong hand and many believed that the PPP was not up to the job. The PPP’s critics argued that it had the powers it needed to cope with the problem but it lacked the competence to use them.

There were conflicting opinions among the Sindhi leaders also. Frustrations and anger of native Sindhis had led to emergence of Sindhi nationalism and formation of nationalist parties such as Sindh National Alliance (SNA) of Abdul Hameed Jatoi and Sindh National Front (SNF) of Mumtaz Bhutto, Benazir’s uncle. Despite their differences in opinion and level of radicalism, Sindhi nationalist leaders shared a common view: the PPP would not be able to solve the complex problem of Sindh and therefore people would ultimately desert it. By May these leaders were having talks with one another with a view to forming a united Sindh party in anticipation of an eventual decline of the PPP’s popularity.

The PPP and its Sindhi leadership had consistently maintained a distance from Sindhi nationalism and refused to align itself with any regionalist Sindhi demands. This anti-communal position of the PPP was reasonable given its governing role at the federal level. If it were to be in power at the center, it could not alienate the electorate in the Punjab without which it could not win general elections. Supporting any Sindhi nationalistic cause would antagonize the Punjab which was hostile to regionalist movements that challenged Punjabi domination. The PPP could not afford this risk and therefore had kept out of Sindhi nationalists, claiming that it was a “national” party and could not therefore support regional causes.

In late May another violent clash erupted in Karachi and Hyderabad claiming the lives of over one hundred people. Instead of the previously deployed paramilitary forces, the army was brought in to restore law and order in the cities. Although the deployment of troops stemmed the immediate crisis, the opposition members accused Bhutto and the PPP, the ruling party in Sindh, of pushing the country to the brink of a civil war. The opposition also asked President Ishaq
Khan to suspend the provincial legislature, dismiss the cabinet and suspend civil rights in Sindh until law and order situation would improve. Ishaq Khan refused to take such measures saying that situation would improve soon under a plan being put into operation by the Sindh government and the military. Many feared, however, that even though the violence was controlled, permanent peace could not be brought about unless a political settlement was made. Seeing the need for political solutions to the problem of Sindh, the PPP began to hold talks with other parties in the province. These talks were expected to lay the groundwork for an eventual all-party conference at the provincial level which Bhutto had suggested as against the president's proposal, backed by the opposition, for an all-Pakistan conference on Sindh. After completion of a round of talks with Sindhi nationalist parties, the PPP tried to have a dialogue with the MQM but it demanded a public apology from the ruling party before attending such a conference.

While the politicians were displaying their incompetence and inflexibility in handling the Sindhi situation, the military was growing more frustrated and less patient. Chief of Army Staff General Aslam Beg had earlier stated in September 1989 that the army fully supported the democratic process in which the political system should correct itself when something went wrong. "It has its own built-in mechanism to correct itself," he said. "Our responsibility and duty is to provide security to that system." Since then the army chief maintained silence on politics for over a half year until April. Even as late as March, deputy parliamentary leader of the opposition, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, said that the army was in no mood to stage a comeback even if the PPP and the IJI jointly asked for it. Following Altaf Husain's hunger strike in early April, Beg broke his silence and stated that the happenings in Karachi presented a "crisis situation" and the political climate was "very depressing" at a time when the country was faced with a serious threat from across the border. Even during Beg's silence, there had been constant but unspoken fear among civilian leaders that a further breakdown in law and order might convince the army that it had no choice but to impose martial law.
Beg’s statement added to such fears and caused a talk of Karachi being handed over to the army. Beg’s statements in early July indicated even more frustration as the army watched the situation in Sindh further deteriorate. While addressing officers in Sukkur and Larkana, the army chief said, ‘‘Given the legal authority, the army will restore peace and harmony in the entire province of Sindh in the shortest possible time,’’ and added, ‘‘We do not believe in chasing shadows. We believe in battering at the root cause of evil and eliminating it once and for all.’’

Beg had been dissatisfied with the use of his soldiers who had been so far acting only in support of the civilian police in cracking down on ethnic violence. While it did not ask for the imposition of martial law in the province, the army sought legal changes which would allow it greater powers to control the situation. The PPP leadership kept quiet on the army chief’s statement, indicating the delicate nature of its relationship with the military. A week later President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, without referring to the Beg’s statement, said in Karachi that the Sindh problem was essentially a political problem and could have no solution other than political. He also said that the use of force was no way to solve problems in a democratic system.

Responding to widespread speculation of a drastic political change, senior military leaders reaffirmed their commitment to staying out of politics. Fears of a return to martial law were persistent due to the country’s long history of military coups and were further intensified by the opposition’s efforts to exploit differences between Bhutto and the army. The opposition had been trying hard to create an impression that Beg resented Bhutto’s rule. For instance, some of its spokesmen argued that Beg, whose retirement was approaching in ten months, wanted an extension of his tenure. They claimed that Bhutto had tried to extend the tenure of Lieutenant General Alam Jan Mahsud so that he could be the next army chief, and that this had worsened the relationship between Bhutto and Beg.

In an effort to calm the fears of a military coup, Mahsud made a statement on July 24 that the army had no political ambitions and warned that military intervention could lead to disintegration of the country. But he also added that
political leaders should not create a situation which might give the army cause to intervene in politics and that political problems must be solved through the political process and the army should be left to defend the borders. Two days later Beg declared that the army was fully capable of providing security to the country against both external and internal threats. On the same day Bhutto’s Minister of State for Defence, G.S. Cheema, told reporters that there was not even a one percent chance of army takeover.
NOTES

10. ibid., p. 5.
14. ibid.
CHAPTER 6

THE FALL OF BENAZIR BHUTTO

Dissolution of the Assemblies

On August 6, 1990, late in the afternoon, troops which had already surrounded the house of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, entered the building, seized documents from her secretariat and ordered all the staff to leave and not to return. The troops also surrounded radio and television stations, telephone exchange, the Federal Investigation Agency, the Directorate of Intelligence Bureau and other important ministries. A few hours later the president announced that he had decided to dismiss the government of Benazir Bhutto on charges of corruption and incompetence. He also ordered dissolution of the national assembly as well as the provincial assemblies of Sindh and the NWFP, and let chief ministers of the Punjab and Baluchistan resign and their governors dissolve their assemblies. The president promised to hold a general election on October 24 and declared a nationwide state of emergency.

A few hours later in a telecast, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan delivered a long speech listing the “sins” of the dismissed government: corruption, nepotism, misuse of state media and failure to restore law and order in Sindh. He argued that under the deposed government constitutional and administrative institutions were undermined, conscience was sold for cabinet posts, plots of land and unsecured loans were granted, and the constitutional rights of the four provinces were violated by the federal government. He also accused the PPP government of setting free convicted criminals on the pretext of releasing political prisoners to gain cheap popularity and thereby making a mockery of justice. Many of these charges, however, were merely a repetition of unproven allegations levelled against the PPP by the opposition, some of which could as well be applied to the opposition itself.
The "horse-trading" of assembly members was initiated by the opposition during the non-confidence motion against Bhutto in November 1989. While declaring that his action was directed not against any individual or political party but against unconstitutional and undemocratic practices, opportunism, corruption and incompetence, President Ishaq Khan implicitly warned the public against returning Bhutto and her associates to power. "I have no doubt that my decision is thus in the best interest of the country, the nation and democracy. I am also sure that this action will be supported by everyone who puts national integrity above politics and constitutional obligations above expediencies, who has the good of the country at heart, who wishes to see democracy -- genuine and clean democracy -- to flourish." 

While his action may have been within the letter of the constitution, many regarded it against the spirit of parliamentary democracy. What enabled the president to take this step was the General Zia-ul Haq's eighth amendment to the 1973 constitution which enables the president to dissolve the national assembly if "a situation has arisen in which the government of the federation cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and an appeal to the electorate is necessary." Throughout her 20 months in office, the eighth amendment remained as a bottleneck for Bhutto in her struggle for more power vis-a-vis the president. Although it appeared at times as if she was gaining on her effort, it was the president who had the trump card. Bhutto argued that the charges the president had levelled against her government were the same as those Zia-ul Haq used earlier to dismiss Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo and his civilian government in May 1988. "Just compare the speeches," she said. In fact, the same charges had been cited against all the deposed civilian governments of Pakistan when they were dismissed by the military.

Bhutto denounced the president's action as "illegal" and "arbitrary" and dismissed all accusations as spurious. She also termed the action a "constitutional coup d'etat" as President Ishaq Khan had carefully observed the constitutional formalities and cited a number of clauses from the constitution to justify his action.
Despite his strong accusations of her government, Bhutto initially avoided a direct attack on the president and shifted the blame elsewhere. She said that she did not feel betrayed by the president and pointed out that he had not brought up any of the charges when the two held their last meeting only two days before the dissolution. She argued that the president had been forced into the move. “I believe there were other elements that wanted me out,” she said. Asked who forced the president’s hands, she said, “I will leave that to your imagination.” It did not take so much of imagination to figure out who had been behind the scene. The high-profile army presence at all the sensitive spots in the federal capital was a clear indication that the president’s action had the solid backing of the military. And not too many people accepted his speech at face value when General Beg declared, immediately before the caretakers’ swearing-in ceremony, that the army was only maintaining peace. “We are not involved in politics. We have never been involved in politics. We are not going to get involved in politics,” he added.

On August 8, in her first press conference after her government was dismissed, Bhutto asserted that the president’s dissolution order was not a civilian order but was prepared at the general headquarters of the army and claimed that the military leaders told Ishaq Khan, “Either you do it, or we will do it.” While contending that the military was running the show Bhutto limited her criticism to the military intelligence and avoided a direct attack on the top commanders including General Beg. Still hoping to leave the door open to the generals for any future reconciliation or compromise, she said that she had no complaint against the army chief or army corps commanders and that only the military intelligence directorate was to blame. Bhutto argued that the military intelligence, having acquired control of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) after its head, Hamid Gul, was replaced, had been engaged in subverting her government by leaking selective information to journalists and by misreporting to the corps commanders. “Before returning to parliamentary democracy we must redefine the role and powers of the military intelligence,” she said. Bhutto also asserted that the military intelligence
agencies had been attempting to destabilize her government from the very beginning and cited three examples of its conspiracies: the no-confidence motion in late 1989, engineered riots in Sindh, and an attempt to create a dissident group within the PPP. “It had been planned very well and for a very long time,” she said.

Unlike General Zia’s move against the Junejo government in 1988, the dismissal of the PPP government was not totally unexpected. It followed continuous confrontation between the center and the opposition-controlled provinces, prolonged violence in Sindh, reports of differences between Bhutto and the president as well as the army, and a variety of corruption scandals. The dismissal was preceded by a couple of days of intense political developments and Bhutto was reported to be in open conflict with both the president and the army chief over how to handle the violence in Sindh. A Lahore-based newspaper, which is considered to be close to the IJI, even carried detailed stories in its August 6 issue predicting the dissolution of the assemblies and Bhutto’s dismissal. They even named Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as would-be caretaker prime minister. Bhutto admitted herself that when she had met with General Beg a few days earlier the two had disagreements over several issues.

Among them was the disagreement over how to handle the ethnic violence in Sindh which was extremely serious and probably one of the direct reasons for Bhutto’s ouster. The army had been called to act in aid of civilian authority in restoring order in Sindh from time to time. After the local administration failed to stop terrorism in the province, which had been running for months, the army asked for powers, superseding those of civilian authority, to restore law and order. Military commanders felt that, without adequate powers to control the violence, army’s deployment served no useful purpose and it served merely to lower its standing. Fearing that granting such powers to the army would damage her support base in her home province and might even lead to a nation-wide martial law, Bhutto refused the request and tried to maintain her authority over law enforcement agencies. From the army’s point of view, given the tension with India
over Kashmir, the crisis in Sindh posed a security dilemma. General Beg was convinced that his troops were much more needed on the Indian border and wanted to quell the domestic strife as soon as possible in order to avoid having to fight simultaneously on two fronts. Having realized that the government was unable to control the war-like situation in the province, the army chief was convinced that he had to clear up Sindh fast.

The decision to sack the Bhutto government was made not so much because of a few separate incidents as the strong perception the military developed that Bhutto was going back on the conditions under which she had agreed to serve when she first came to power in late 1988. They included acceptance of Ishaq Khan as president, non-interference in military affairs, continuity in foreign policy, particularly that on Afghanistan, renouncement of vengeance on those from the previous regime as well as acceptance of the IMF’s conditional aid package which Jatoi’s caretaker government signed just before the PPP took power. Only when these conditions were met, and pressures from the United States were exercised, the country’s “establishment” (meaning the president and the military) reluctantly allowed Bhutto to assume office and tolerated her. Breaching these conditions inevitably invited strong resentment and antagonism of the establishment, which turned out to be politically fatal to Bhutto.

While Bhutto may have been caught by surprise, it had been evident that the military had been running out of patience for some time. While having been aware of the restrictions implicitly imposed on her authority, Bhutto nevertheless attempted to pursue different policies from those of the military. The generals resented Bhutto’s support for a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan where they had long assisted fundamentalist Muslim guerrillas, mujahideens, to defeat the Marxist regime of Najibullah. Within the framework of the Cold War, this policy coincided with American interests and worked smartly. But since the Soviet withdrawal from the region in early 1989, the United States had shifted its policy toward working with the Russians for establishment of a broad-based government in Kabul. Bhutto supported this policy, for her major concern was to return the
3.5 million Afghan refugees who had been residing in the NWFP and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan. It angered the generals to see Bhutto openly take such a stance which they considered an interference with their domain of authority. The strife in Kashmir and tensions at the Indian border provided another instance where Bhutto differed from the military. She preferred not to get into a war with India over Kashmir issue and hoped to use political and moral pressure to help the people of Kashmir in their struggle for self-determination. The army wanted to take a tough position on the issue and found Bhutto's stance disturbing.

What incensed the generals most, however, was Bhutto's 'meddling' in their internal affairs, such as appointments, transfers and promotions, which she had earlier agreed not to do. Following the replacement of ISI head Hamid Gul and Sirohi incident came another maneuvering surrounding the corps commander at Lahore, Lieutenant-General Alam Jan Mahsud. With his retirement nearing, Bhutto was said to have conveyed to the GHQ her wish to extend his tenure and promote him as the deputy chief of army staff, a position usually held by a potential successor to the army chief. By that time, however, the army's promotion board had already chosen its own candidate for the position. Bhutto's suggestion was seen as an attempt to interfere in the army's internal affairs and to create extra-institutional loyalties. Since Mahsud was known for his professionalism as a soldier, the military also suspected that Bhutto wished to make him the next army chief in the expectation that he would be more obedient to her. The military leadership reportedly complained to the president about what it perceived as Bhutto's attempt to create divisions in the ranks of the army. "The army, which prided itself on its discipline and the unity in its ranks... could not possibly be expected to tolerate what it perceived to be an attempt to divide it." The army swiftly responded by sending Lt. General Ashraf to replace Mahsud in Lahore. The next day a photograph of Mahsud receiving a farewell gift appeared in a number of newspapers and in a few days he left for a vacation to his home village.
The dismissal of the Bhutto government was very carefully timed. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1991 shifted the attention of the whole world to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. With her good connections in Washington, and the wave of democracy sweeping the world, Bhutto assumed her democratic government could safely stay in power. Her indulgence in this notion was well-reflected in her speech made after her dismissal: "I am clear in my mind that this action was quasi-military intervention, and now it is up to all the friends of democracy, inside and outside Pakistan, to insure that Pakistan does not deviate from the democratic process."11 She did not realize that she could not expect the same kind of relationship with the military as that enjoyed by the prime ministers of other democratic countries. She naively believed the brave statements by some U.S. senators that if any coup attempt was made against her government, Pakistani generals should "prepare to eat grass."12 It was no secret from the very beginning that one of the major reasons why the military establishment allowed Bhutto to come to power was the pressure from the United States. Because of Pakistan's heavy dependence on foreign aid, both economic and military, Bhutto expected the military to keep bowing to this pressure and refrain from any act that would jeopardize the aid. Aware of the international controversy it might create if they tried to remove her from power, and afraid of the subsequent aid cut, the generals had hesitated to act. But the U.S. preoccupation with the Gulf crisis drastically changed the scenario. Within a few hours of Bhutto's dismissal, a U.S. State Department spokesman said: "We have long supported democracy in Pakistan and [the action] appears to be within the constitutional provisions regarding democratic traditions."13

It was not merely that the United States was so busy with the crisis in the Middle East that it ignored Bhutto's ouster. The timing for the move was reportedly decided when Bhutto objected to the dispatch of Pakistani forces against Iraq, a request made by Saudi Arabia and supported by the United States. Despite its claim to be a neutral party in the whole event, it is hard to believe that the United States had no influence over the dismissal of Bhutto and her government.
On the weekend preceding Bhutto’s ouster, a meeting was reportedly held between the three service chiefs, U.S. Ambassador Robert Oakley and the Joint-chiefs-of-staff committee chairman at the latter’s headquarters in Rawalpindi. The United States Information Services spokesman denied that the ambassador had any prior knowledge of Bhutto’s dismissal. But Bhutto herself quoted one of the PPP legislators who had defected on the eve of the dissolution of the assemblies as saying that he had been told by the army that the United States would accept the events in Pakistan.14 There had been various plans to undermine the Bhutto government, including yet another no-confidence motion against her. But the U.S. assurance of acquiescence paved the way for the military to move directly against her, shedding all pretence of its highly-acclaimed political neutrality. As one analyst put it: “Can either Pakistan or the Americans, or both, ‘afford’ to jeopardize the comfortable relationship of the last 43 years for the sake of Benazir Bhutto?”15

Pakistan’s military leaders had other concerns in the face of the Gulf crisis. With unstable conditions on the borders with both Afghanistan and India, a new crisis in the Persian Gulf presented an alarming situation for Pakistan’s national security. As a Muslim nation with close ties with the Gulf sheikhdoms, it found itself in an awkward position in the Muslim world which was moving toward a new balance of power in the region. The times called for close contacts with other Muslim states in the Middle East and the Pakistani generals simply did not believe that they could leave such grave matters to a young woman whom they credited with limited experience and capacity. In fact, several generals found it difficult or even humiliating to obey a woman even if she was the prime minister.

Although many considered her as a victim in a military backed conspiracy, Bhutto and her government were not entirely blameless. While praised and popular abroad as a democratic leader, Bhutto never had a firm grip on events at home. Preoccupied with continuous confrontation with the opposition, Bhutto’s PPP government was unable to rule effectively and went through one crisis after another. During the 20 months in power, her cabinet could not pass any legislative
program besides budgets. In the course of her struggle against the opposition, Bhutto offered ministerships to buy political support, letting the cabinet to grow to the absurd size of over 50 ministers. "Politics took precedence over policy," one observer noted, "with the government showing more interest in outmaneuvering its opponents than in getting on with the job of governing."16 Besides being ineffective, her ministers also proved to be serious liabilities for her and the PPP. They were criticized for their arrogance and failure to understand the real problems of the country.

Even if the PPP administration's dismissal was a conspiracy, it could not have succeeded so easily if those who went to form the government had realized what was involved in holding a portfolio besides the perks of office. They failed to maintain a relationship with their voters and party workers. They thought that the ordinary person was as mean as they were. If anyone went to see them, they assumed that he must be looking for a favor. They did not realize that they had a formidable enemy; that theirs was a government of dissent; that they had a woman prime minister in one of the most chauvinistic societies; that what they thought was merit -- foreign education -- distanced them from the ordinary worker and even the upper echelons of the bureaucracy. Their feet were not on the ground. They thought they were the best and were there because of global changes and support for the democratic government in the U.S. Senate.17

Even the PPP workers were resentful of these ministers and they shared the view that Bhutto had to get rid of them before she would make a new move. Bhutto herself was also responsible for many of the problems that confronted her. The failure of the attempt to oust Nawaz Sharif from Punjab chief ministership put the center-Punjab confrontation to a point of no-return. She could not clearly define
her authority as opposed to that of the president and indulged herself in a power struggle with him. She failed to control the civil war-like situation in her home province of Sindh which was claiming hundreds of lives. The promise of better life she had made for the masses when coming to power, she could not deliver. Bhutto’s 20 months of political miscalculation and mismanagement eventually gave her enemies the grounds they needed to oust her.

The caretaker government of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, who was appointed interim prime minister by President Ishaq Khan on August 6, appeared even less well-equipped than the government of Bhutto it replaced. Jatoi, the biggest landlord of Sindh, had been known as the “perpetual prime minister-in-waiting.” Although a big and old name in Pakistani politics, he could not even win a parliamentary seat from his own constituency in the 1988 elections and had to depend on a seat Ghulam Mustafa Khar vacated for him in a safe constituency in the 1989 by-election to return to Parliament. Since then Jatoi had been fighting against Bhutto as the opposition leader in parliament. President Ishaq Khan, in appointing Jatoi as caretaker prime minister, said that he was not only an experienced politician with a good reputation but was a true Pakistani, implying that Bhutto was not.

Along with Jatoi four ministers were sworn in shortly after the president’s announcement of the assemblies’ dissolution: Rafi Raza, former aid to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Illahi Bux Soomro and Sartaj Aziz, both Zia’s ministers, and Ghulam Mustafa Khar. The most controversial among them was Khar who took over the ministry of water and power. He and Jatoi had been friends since their early days in the PPP as the party’s founding members with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Khar became estranged from the PPP and the Bhutto women in the early and mid-1980’s. He was ambivalent during Benazir Bhutto’s term as prime minister. He publicly pledged loyalty to Benazir only a few weeks before he joined Jatoi’s cabinet. At the end of August, 1990, however, he repeated President Ishaq Khan’s corruption charges against Bhutto and said that she should give the PPP’s leadership to him in the larger interest of the party. He claimed that he was the
true heir to the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s political legacy and that he could lead the PPP to victory in the upcoming elections in October. He also charged Bhutto with being involved in anti-Pakistan conspiracies and warned that her return to power would be a national disaster. Khar said that he had all the respect for the PPP workers and that he was ready to support the PPP without Bhutto. “But if the party is led by Ms. Bhutto, I will collaborate with any power to block her way,” he said.18

Jatoi initially hoped to form a broad-based government but failed in his efforts. His colleagues in the COP were displeased by the fact that he had accepted the premiership without consulting them in advance. Many parties did not want to be openly associated with his government because it included what they called “tried and tainted” members, some of whom had worked for martial law regimes. Even the MQM declined to join his caretaker government. Despite their claims to be a neutral party, the partisan character of the caretakers was evident as the president apparently had carefully selected only the PPP’s bitterest enemies to form both federal and provincial governments: Jatoi in the center, Ghulam Hyder Wyne of the IJI as Punjab chief minister, Mir Afzal of the IJI in the NWFP, Humayun Marri, Akbar Bugti’s son-in-law, in Baluchistan, and Jam Sadiq Ali in Sindh.

In his first press conference after he took office, Jatoi declared that the president’s promise of elections on October 24 would be fulfilled in an impartial manner and emphasized that elections were the priority of his government. The impartiality of the caretaker prime minister, however, soon turned out to be pure lip-service when his administration launched a ruthless drive against the PPP, particularly in its stronghold of Sindh. He ordered the arrest and detention of all those who had defeated him and his sons in the 1988 elections in his home district of Nawabshah. Those PPP workers who had contested local elections against the Jatoi’s family members were also arrested and detained. Jatoi went as far as dividing Bhutto’s ancestral constituency, Rattodero, to be absorbed into two separate districts of Nawabshah and Jacobabad. Another measure that he was
quick to take was to prohibit Bhutto, her family members, former ministers, legislators and key figures in finance from leaving the country. Horse-trading, for which Bhutto's government was condemned by the president, and the policy of carrot and stick, were carried out on a large scale. PPP leaders were offered ministerial positions and other inducements such as industrial permits, financial credits, and exemption from the accountability process to desert the PPP and join hands with the caretakers. Those who resisted and remained loyal to the PPP were threatened with accountability, victimized or arrested. The objective was to deter PPP workers from supporting the party and intimidate them to switch their loyalty. Thus, ironically, the most corrupt of the PPP ministers were the first to be welcomed by the caretakers. It was as though the caretakers had been assigned the job of wrecking the PPP by all means. As one analyst said: "There is no neutrality here. If President Ishaq meant what he said, he would not have brought such people in." 19

**Legal Battles**

When the caretaker government of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi came to power and promised to hold elections on October 24, it also emphasized the need to look into the conduct of the previous government. "Elections are our priority," Jatoi said. "but the looting that has gone on in the past 19 months cannot go unaccounted." 20 The president set up six special tribunals, and the federal caretaker government established five special courts, to try and punish the misconduct of those in public office. The special tribunals, which were originally set up by Zia-UL Haq after the coup in 1977 and resurrected by the caretaker government, could disqualify those convicted from taking part in the elections and from assuming any public office for seven years. The special courts of the caretaker government could punish legislators if they were found guilty of any misdemeanor. All courts were headed by high court judges.
Partiality of the caretaker government was clearly revealed when Jatoi announced that the process of accountability would be confined to the previous 20 months. Those who had held office during the martial law regime, or under the Junejo government, would not be touched. Indeed, some of them were now serving in the new caretaker cabinet. Moreover, not a single case of wrongdoing was brought against the IJI notables who had been in power in the provinces of the Punjab and NWFP during the previous 20 months. PPP members who had defected to the new government were also exempted from investigations. The partisan approach of the caretaker government clearly showed that their accountability process was aimed only at Bhutto and her loyal colleagues, and gave even more credibility to Bhutto’s claim to be a martyr for democracy. Bhutto in response demanded that a high-powered commission comprising Supreme Court judges be established to investigate the conduct of all presidents and prime ministers since 1985. and refused to recognize the special tribunals.

It was evident that the caretaker government had already decided to use accountability as part of its election campaign which was designed to systematically tarnish the image of Bhutto and other PPP leaders, and possibly disqualify them from contesting the upcoming elections. In fact, accountability process in Pakistan had always been carried out in a partial manner in the past and only those who had fallen out of favor with the establishment were subjected to it. Accountability had been usually employed to justify the dismissal of an elected government when there was no proof that it had lost the confidence of parliament. The underlying principle was simple: “If you cannot politically defeat them, disqualify them.”

And those politicians who were considered acceptable to the establishment had been immune from accountability even if they were no less guilty of abuse of power.

Since corruption was allegedly one of the main reasons for dismissing Bhutto, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan came under pressure to provide substantive proof against her government and secure convictions from the special tribunals in order to justify his action on August 6. His critics were asking why he had dismissed parliament if he did not have evidence at hand. The caretaker
government of Jatoi, which also promised to present evidence of the previous government's misconduct, was frustrated with its own failure to do so. "Even I as Prime Minister would admit that the delay has done us no good," Jatoi said at one point. "Our credibility has been questioned." He insisted that the delay was caused by difficulties in gathering information from officials of the previous government. Bhutto denied the allegations against her as baseless and argued that ethics required the president to resign if he could not produce any proof even more than a month after his action. To counter the president's move against her, Bhutto also filed a reference against him in which she argued that the president had exercised undue influence to benefit his son-in-law. It was alleged that the president's influence had granted his son-in-law the largest concession for selling liquified-petroleum-gas, a write-off of the bank loans he owed, and release from drug smuggling charges.

On September 10, more than a month after her dismissal, the president filed two references against Bhutto in a special tribunal in Karachi. One of them concerned the award of a contract for the sale of cotton at a rate far below the international market rate to a firm in Karachi. The other accusation referred to the illegal use of an Asian Development Bank loan to hire a foreign consulting firm for a Karachi power extension project. Two weeks later on September 24, two more references were filed in a special tribunal in Lahore and the court ordered Bhutto to stand trial on October 9. One dealt with the grant of over 200 acres of prime land to an international company for a hotel project in Islamabad. The land was allegedly granted at a much lower rate than the prevailing market rate. The other concerned the grant of illegal marketing rights for liquified petroleum gas to her close friends. The obligation to appear in court made it difficult for Bhutto to carry out effective election campaign. "I have come here to show the people the hollowness and maliciousness of the whole process," Bhutto once said before entering the courtroom. "I have come here because I want to make a point -- that the former prime minister and leader of Pakistan's biggest political party is being
dragged from court to court. . . . This is aimed at keeping us from fighting the election.”23

Beyond the special tribunals, there were trials in the media. Stories relating to allegations that had not yet been brought before the court were circulated by the government news agency implicating PPP members in unproven charges. One of the most talked-about stories concerned the unsecured loans from nationalized banks and development finance institutions. Loans from some of these institutions were reported to have more than doubled or tripled during Bhutto’s first year in office. As much as one billion rupees were said to have been given by the PPP government to 22 entrepreneurs without adequate collateral. Most of the loans were not expected to be paid back. According to an estimate by the World Bank, bad loans of Pakistani banks and development finance institutions amounted to nearly 7 billion rupees. Urban middle class was particularly offended by these stories.

It may be worthwhile to mention that there are basically two types of corruption in Pakistan; one is called sifarish -- patronage -- and the other is shady financial deals. The former is basic to Pakistan’s society and politics. Many of Pakistan’s politicians are tribal or clan leaders who are expected to hand out jobs and other benefits to constituents when they come to positions of power. Therefore, sifarish tends to be accepted and not considered as real corruption. However, under pressure to provide benefits to her friends and party activists, who had suffered persecution during Zia’s long rule, Bhutto practiced sifarish on a scale that evoked severe criticism. For instance, a placement bureau was set up within Bhutto’s secretariat and, by sending lists of those to be employed to the heads of nationalized banks and government offices, it placed as many as 26,000 people. The head of one nationalized bank was said to have been removed from the position allegedly because he refused to find jobs for 400 persons on a Bhutto’s list. The fact that Bhutto held high moral ground when she came to power as the first democratically elected prime minister in 11 years also made it easier for her opponents to criticize her government’s misconduct and disappointed the public
even more. Although Bhutto’s personal popularity held up quite well, her ministers and advisors were severely criticized even by PPP supporters. The way Bhutto interfered with the existing system and procedures angered the bureaucrats and the generals. They were not pleased to see new-comers skip the regular steps and jump to the promotion ladder.

The biggest target of the corruption charges turned out to be Bhutto’s husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who was alleged to have used his wife’s official position to add to his already considerable fortune. He was accused of opening his offices in both the prime minister’s house and in her secretariat even though he was not a cabinet member. “All petrol pumps in Islamabad were owned by Mr. Zardari’s men,” his opponent said, “and the prime minister’s secretariat looked like a stock market where business deals were struck.”

It was widely believed that he charged certain proportion, said to be one-tenth, of contracts that he helped friends and others obtain, giving him the famous nick-name, “Mr. ten percent.” Government-owned media accused him of involvement in illegally importing vehicles and alleged that his servant was involved in a terrorist massacre in Karachi. When asked about Zardari, Bhutto said that her husband was “an honorable, dignified and dynamic young businessman who (was) implicated in false cases only to pressurize the PPP.”

Despite Bhutto’s strong defence of her husband, it was widely believed that Zardari had made a number of shady deals, taking advantage of his relationship with the prime minister. “There was virtual consensus,” one observer noted, “that if the PPP was thrown out of office before completing a full term. . . it would not be because of the Bhuttos but as a result of the Zardaris -- Asif Ali and his father Hakim Ali.”

There was an endless stream of scandal stories about the Zardaris and it did not seem to matter much how accurate they really were. Some even said that Bhutto’s gravest mistake was agreeing to an arranged marriage in a wrong family.

Asif Zardari was formally arrested on October 10 and remanded to custody until October 23, the last day of the election campaign, for complicity in an extortion case. It was alleged that he, along with Ghulam Hussain Unar,
kidnapped a Pakistani-born British businessman in April and robbed him of 17 million rupees. Zardari claimed that he was arrested just because he was contesting elections against Murtaza Jatoi, the caretaker prime minister’s son, and that its sole purpose was to prevent him from campaigning in the constituency which was home to both Zardari and Jatoi clans. Murtaza Jatoi was said to be in a weak position and the arrest of Asif Zardari became inevitable. Bhutto argued that her husband had been used as leverage against her and claimed that she had been offered a deal by the caretaker government whereby no cases would be brought against her or her family if she would renounce politics and leave the country. She declared that even Zardari’s arrest would not intimidate her into such a compromise and that she would never surrender before those who had come through the back door. The caretaker government denied offering such a deal to Bhutto.

Another battle between Bhutto and her opponents was fought over the legality of the president’s dissolution of the assemblies. The PPP challenged this action in courts. The first major decision was given by the Peshawar High Court on September 26 on the petition filed by the former NWFP chief minister, Aftab Sherpao, which challenged the governor’s dismissal order by pointing out that it did not even mention the grounds for dismissal. The governor, in his haste to throw out the PPP government in his province, had apparently neglected the legal requirements for the order he issued. The full bench of the Peshawar High Court, accepting the petition, declared that the dismissal of the NWFP provincial assembly had been invalid and ordered its immediate restoration. The decision was hailed as a great victory for the PPP and considered a slap in the face for President Ishaq Khan. Within less than half an hour of the Peshawar High Court’s decision, the caretaker federal government, using powers under the national emergency in force, obtained a “stay order” from the Supreme Court which suspended the verdict. The stay order was obtained from a Supreme Court Judge, Usman Ali, who, according to the caretaker government, happened to be present in Peshawar at the
time of the verdict. Later that day the Supreme Court sitting in Karachi formalized the order.

Bhutto lost another case on October 14 when the Lahore High Court dismissed other petitions by the PPP, which challenged the president’s action of August 6, and ruled that the president had the legal prerogative to dissolve the National Assembly if he thought fresh elections had become necessary. Among the grounds for the ruling the court cited were: the government’s inability to carry out substantive legislative work, failure to put down the violence in Sindh, failure to convene the Council of Common Interests resulting in persistent confrontation between the center and two provinces, and launching of a municipal development program by the federal government without proper legislation.

**October Elections**

Campaign for the general elections in October had practically started on August 6, the day of Bhutto’s dismissal. From the IJI’s point of view, the dismissal of Bhutto and appointment of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as caretaker Prime Minister were the beginning of its campaign to come to power. There were basically three areas that the IJI campaign strategy focused. First, it vigorously repeated the president’s accusation against the PPP leaders to damage their credibility and disrupt their election campaign. Second it spent massive amount of funds for election campaign, particularly for development projects and welfare programs in constituencies, to influence voters. Third, the IJI tried to employ a so-called “one-against-one” tactic where only one consensus candidate was fielded against the PPP in every constituency in order to avoid vote-splitting among the non-PPP parties as had happened in 1988 elections.

There were some disagreements among the caretakers as to whether they should totally disqualify Bhutto and other prominent PPP leaders from contesting the elections or let them stand and hope for their defeat. Short of substantial
evidence against the PPP leaders to convict them in special tribunals in time for elections, the caretaker government of Jatoi allowed Bhutto and others to carry on their election campaign while making every effort to block their way. Hundreds of PPP workers were harassed, framed and arrested, including six former PPP ministers. The accountability process kept the PPP leaders too busy defending themselves in the courts to carry out effective campaign for elections. The court hearings were also scheduled to match the busiest time of the campaign and Bhutto had to appear in courts in Karachi or in Lahore almost everyday.

In addition to bad publicity from accountability, the image of the PPP candidates was also tarnished by a smear campaign through the government-controlled media. One oft-repeated allegation was that Bhutto was not loyal to her own country. She was accused of having links with the Zionist and Indian lobbies in the United States which were said to have engineered the suspension of American aid to Pakistan. There had been some concern in the United States whether Pakistan was building nuclear weapon. Pakistan had long insisted that its nuclear program did not include weapons but this assertion had become less convincing to the Americans. American law prohibited economic and military aid as well as any delivery of military equipment to Pakistan unless the president could give a written certificate confirming that Pakistan had no nuclear weapons. In 1990 Pakistan was the third largest recipient of American aid, after Israel and Egypt, getting over 500 million dollars. In the absence of the required certificate from President George Bush for the new fiscal year, the United States Congress suspended aid to Pakistan on October 1. The IJI leaders, taking advantage of its timing, made the loss of U.S. aid one of the major topics of its election campaign and accused Bhutto of sending her mother, Nusrat Bhutto, to the United States to lobby for the suspension of aid. Bhutto was also criticized for hiring an American public relations expert, Mark Siegel, whom the IJI described as a "well-known Zionist." The federal information minister, Abida Hussain, accused Bhutto of paying Siegel nearly half a million dollars from the government treasury to improve her image in the United States. Bhutto's criticism of the military
intelligence as being responsible for her ouster was also exploited by the IJI which painted her as a "foreign agent."

The IJI poured massive amounts of money into development projects and welfare programs in important constituencies. In Sindh, the home province of caretaker Prime Minister Jatoi, thirty-five development projects were inaugurated in Nawabshah and Naushero Firoze, where he and his son were to contest, during his three and a half months in office. The Punjab caretaker chief minister gave away a grant of 420 million rupees to local bodies. The IJI candidates were given about 4 million rupees each to launch development projects in their constituencies. Greater emphasis was placed on districts where candidates of opposing camps had roughly equal popularity. Here the decisive factors would be the provision of electricity and installation of sewerage channels. Asghar Khan, an opponent of Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif in NA-95 in Lahore, condemned the latter's lavish spending on his campaign as "an obscene display of money" and claimed that the money had not come from Sharif's own source but had been diverted from the government's rural development funds. Many considered the allocation of funds to the IJI candidates as bribing of both candidates and voters. The IJI, which had earlier criticized the PPP government for spending funds from People's Program for Development through its own legislators, was now doing virtually the same thing.

The one-against-one tactic was a potentially effective method but was nevertheless hard to implement. The IJI learned a bitter lesson in 1988 elections: in many districts parties other than the PPP, together, won the majority votes, but vote-splitting among themselves enabled the PPP to win seats. The IJI and other anti-PPP parties initially planned to field just one consensus candidate against every PPP nominee in each district and tried to make "the PPP v.s. the rest" scenario. This much-acclaimed strategy, however, proved far more difficult in practice when it came to negotiations on seat adjustments. Consensus was hard to reach among the COP parties whose leaders had begun publicly criticizing the policies of the IJI. The IJI itself was experiencing internal division and its main component, the
Pakistan Muslim League, had serious disagreement within its own ranks, which eventually led to the creation of a dissident group. Infighting within the COP was almost inevitable in light of the strange mix of parties in the coalition. Islamic parties such as the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) found it difficult to cooperate with the Awami National Party (ANP) of Wali Khan because of its secularism and pro-Afghanistan policies. Fazlur Rehman of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) had never forgiven Akbar Bugti, who had just launched a new party, the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), because of Bugti’s insulting attitude towards JUI’s ministers when they were in the Balochistan coalition. The infighting was eventually mitigated and it appeared that the COP could enter the elections as one united alliance even if consensus candidates could not be fielded in all cases.

The situation took a new turn when the IJI president, Nawaz Sharif, announced his unilateral decision not to field IJI candidates against the MQM nominees in Sindh. He added that whoever violated the alliance’s discipline would be expelled from the alliance. The IJI had earlier attempted to convince the MQM to join the COP but the MQM declined and decided to go it alone as it successfully did in 1988 when it won 13 national assembly seats. Sharif needed the MQM’s support for his bid for the premiership. But his decision meant that the Jamaat-i-Islami, which had been supporting Sharif in all his actions, should withdraw its half a dozen candidates in Karachi and Hyderabad, including Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed, Secretary-General of the IJI. The Jamaat, a powerful force within the IJI, threatened to pull out of the alliance unless Sharif changed his decision. Its strong stance finally forced Sharif to yield.

The PPP also formed an electoral alliance with Asghar Khan’s Tehrik-e-Istaqlal and a Shia party, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiq’h-e-Jafariya (TNFJ) and named it the People’s Democratic Alliance (PDA). Although neither of its alliance partners had secured any seats in the 1988 polls, the PPP made the alliance mostly to offset its psychological isolation. Asghar Khan was known for his personal honesty and as a skilled morale booster. In case of the PDA victory, he was expected to
become senior minister in the federal cabinet and possibly the party’s next presidential candidate. The PDA cost the PPP very little since only a small number of constituencies were to be awarded to its partners to contest. The PPP had to be careful with its party ticket distribution this time. It dropped almost 40 members from its previous list of candidates for the national assembly, including some cabinet ministers who had attracted public criticism for being corrupt. The party tickets were not given to those who were expected to be arrested or those who demanded too high a price for staying loyal to the party. This process resulted in more new candidates on the PPP’s list than on that of the IJI although both parties retained still a large proportion of their incumbents.

The PPP’s campaign focused on the “sympathy factor”, projecting Bhutto as a victim of injustice and state oppression, an image that had greatly contributed to her victory in 1988. She drew huge crowds to her public meetings, and it appeared that public sympathy was with her. She said that the regime had been threatening her that she and her family would suffer if she persisted in her political activity. Calling herself “the brave daughter of a brave father” Bhutto declared that she would not be cowed down by threats. Public sympathy for her ordeal was reinforced by the arrest of her husband, Asif Ali Zardari. “She is one of us now,” said a woman in a village in Okara district, “we cannot let her down in her hour of need.” In her speeches at various meetings, Bhutto admitted that she and her party members might have made some mistakes and might not have paid proper attention to the people’s needs. She assured the public that she would not tolerate such mistakes if she returned to power, and that she would expel those guilty of misconduct.

Having experienced his outright partiality against the PPP, Bhutto changed her tactic in dealing with President Ishaq Khan. While she had earlier avoided direct criticism of the president, and blamed the military intelligence for her ouster, she now began openly accusing him. In a huge public meeting on October 11, Bhutto said that Ghulam Ishaq Khan was no longer acting as President of Pakistan but had become President of the IJI, and that he had masterminded a plot to keep
her out of the elections. She even declared that the contest was not between the PPP and the IJI but between the PPP and Ishaq Khan.28

The PPP's election campaign, however, suffered from what some called "the worst of both worlds." On the one hand, it had the disadvantage of being an outgoing party; the public tended to be critical of its performance in office. On the other hand, it could not enjoy the advantages of incumbency in terms of administrative clout and media access.29 The government-controlled television stations were said to be giving the PPP less than one tenth of the time they allotted to the IJI. The caretaker government of the Punjab set up urgent identity card services in several districts where important IJI candidates, including Nawaz Sharif and Mohammad Khan Junejo, were contesting so that they could have all their supporters vote for them. Harassment and arrests of PPP candidates and activists continued. As one observer put it, "The dice was heavily loaded against Benazir Bhutto before the elections."30

While politicians kept themselves busy campaigning, there was little enthusiasm among the electorate, particularly in Karachi. There were several reasons for this. First the public was still not wholly convinced that the elections would be held as promised. Even if they were held, many questioned whether the establishment would accept the voters' verdict if the PPP won. It was widely understood that the president did not dismiss Bhutto only to welcome her back in three months. Many expected the caretaker government to manipulate the election results in order to ensure their "positiveness." All the measures that the caretakers were taking against the PPP strengthened the belief that the desired results were going to be secured. Political parties were partly responsible for the lack of enthusiasm among voters. Both the PPP and the IJI were fielding many of the former assembly members who had lost the public's confidence due to their poor performance in office. Seeing the same old faces turned off the voters. Election platforms of both alliances were produced only a week or so before the election day, indicating the little importance issues or programs had this time. Besides both platforms were similar in contents and voters disregarded them.
The election for the national assembly on October 24 turned produced a landslide victory for the IJI which won 145 seats out of 207, securing a clear majority and therefore the right to form its own government at the center. The PPP won only 45 seats, sharply down from its previous 93. The third place went to the MQM with 15 seats, adding two more to its previous strength. The result surprised everyone because most observers and analysts were expecting a close call between the PPP and the IJI. The unanticipated IJI landslide was considered a political watershed, comparable to the 1970 elections which had brought the PPP to power for the first time, in the sense that the electorate had given a massive mandate to a single political party or alliance. The IJI’s overwhelming victory was most prominent in the Punjab, the most populous and powerful province which accounts for more than 60 percent of the country’s population and 115 national assembly seats. The PPP, which had prided itself on being the country’s only national party with representation in every province, was virtually wiped out in the Punjab. It did better in Bhutto’s home province of Sindh where it won 24 seats, more than a half of its total of 45 seats, but still less than 31 it had taken in 1988. Out of the seven seats the PPP lost in Sindh, six were won by members of the caretaker government or their relatives and friends: caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and his son Murtaza, Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Jam Sadiq’s son, Jam Mashrooq Ali, Muslim League President Junejo and Federal Caretaker Minister Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani.

Bhutto suffered a personal set-back when she lost by a large margin a seat she was contesting in Peshawar. While she easily won a seat in her home district in Sindh, she wanted to show her national strength by winning a seat in another province. Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who also contested from two districts, while still in custody, was defeated in his native constituency but was elected from a safe Bhutto constituency in Karachi that his wife had vacated for him. Of a total of 42 ministers of the former Bhutto cabinet 24 contested but only 11 were returned to Parliament, showing the public’s disapproval of the former ministers.
Provincial assembly polls that took place three days later on October 27 also resulted in the IJI’s victory. It won an overwhelming 208 seats out of 234 in the Punjab assembly and secured sufficient seats in the NWFP and Balochistan to form coalition governments. The PPP, on the other hand, failed to gain even a simple majority in its stronghold of Sindh and was prevented from forming the government there. It won only 42 seats in the Sindh assembly this time compared to 70 in the 1988 polls. Even seen in the context of the party’s defeat throughout the country, the extent of the PPP set-back in Sindh was a shock to everyone.

Bhutto alleged that a massive rigging by the caretakers and the IJI took place before and during the elections. She claimed that many polling stations were targeted for electoral fraud under a centralized plan implemented at various levels of the administration. Scores of them, particularly those in the IJI’s strongholds, were said to have had no PDA polling agents because they were either denied access to or thrown out of the stations. The PDA also alleged that ballot boxes were switched around or otherwise tampered with after they had been collected from the polling stations. A PPP polling agent said that at New Jatoi, the caretaker prime minister’s home village, a group of Jatoi supporters, armed with Kalashnikovs, invaded the station. “‘They stamped the ballots and stuffed the boxes,’” he said. The PDA also alleged that the IJI had prepared, and distributed bogus identity cards and special voters’ lists, containing many ghost names, to bring additional votes to the IJI candidates. The fact that all the major anti-Bhutto candidates won seats gave some credibility to the PPP’s allegation of rigging. Bhutto did not call for a mass agitation to protest the fraud for fear of attracting the imposition of martial law. Caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi dismissed the PPP allegations as baseless and blamed Bhutto for making excuses for her party’s failure in the contests. He maintained that manipulating election results on such a large scale would have been extremely difficult and argued that the PPP had become out of touch with the reality of the Pakistani public. Nawaz Sharif responded similarly saying that Bhutto was finding it difficult to come down from “her pedestal” and accept the popular verdict.
International observers had slightly different opinions about the elections. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs, a Washington-based organization affiliated to the Democratic Party of the United States, issued a preliminary statement on October 26 on the elections. It described the October elections as “open, orderly and well-administered.” It listed a number of problems that prevented the election from being totally impartial but argued that those irregularities did not significantly alter the results. Although it stopped short of calling the elections “free and fair”, the phrase it used for the 1988 polls, the ND’s statement was interpreted by international media as a certification of the election results. However, another team of foreign observers from the Paris-based League of Human Rights claimed that the IJI victory was a result of “sophisticated fraud.” They argued that bogus votes were stuffed into ballot boxes when they were transferred from polling stations to election officials.

While the nation-wide rigging may not have taken place as Bhutto alleged, there were examples of irregularities. First, although most observers noticed a small turnout on October 24, official figures showed a large increase in voter turnout. This phenomenon may have been caused by the fictitious names on the voter lists which were said to have given extra votes to the IJI. Second, there was circumstantial evidence that suggested possibility of ballot box tampering by the IJI. “Wherever a PDA candidate received a low percentage of votes, the overall vote also remained low and wherever a PDA candidate showed strength the total vote also rose to record figures.” However, even when these irregularities had been corrected and numbers adjusted, statistics showed that the outcome would not have been radically different. According to some analysts, even if it had won those districts where rigging was said to have given seats to its opponents, the PPP would still not have secured enough seats to defeat the IJI. Therefore, “the party’s defeat in 1990 was real even if rigging made it look greater than it might otherwise have been.”

The elections in 1990 witnessed a fundamental change in political thinking in Pakistan. Voters’ concern had shifted from their ideological affiliation to local
issues, particularly improvement of the daily life through development projects and welfare program. Ideological differences between the PPP and the IJI on the micro level had become almost meaningless. "The whole street where I live decided against the People's Party because the road was repaired by Ijaz," one voter said referring to the IJI candidate Ijaz-ul Haq, the son of the late Zia-ul Haq, who succeeded in his first bid to public office. Candidates, having sensed this shift in public mind, attempted to project themselves not so much as party members but as social workers who would get the job done for their constituents. And this was where the IJI chief, Nawaz Sharif, had succeeded the most. For five years as Punjab Chief Minister, Sharif had promoted economic development in his province. A businessman himself, with humble origins, he received strong support from the country's growing urban middle class which had gradually distanced itself from the traditional politics of landed aristocratic families such as the Bhuttos, the Jatois and the Junejos. Meanwhile, the PPP depended upon its mass support as it did in the past elections and expected their sympathy for its ousted leader to work for its advantage. But this strategy failed. "The people of the Punjab thoroughly rejected those who had failed to live up to their promises and voted for those whom they felt were on the side of hope."
NOTES

1. For the full text of the presidential order, see Viewpoint, August 9, 1990, pp. 11-12.


3. ibid., p. 9.


8. Friday Times, August 16, 1990, p. 3.


26. ibid.


32. Lawrence Lifschultz and Rabid Ali, “Election '90: Fair or Foul?'”,


34. Anwar Syed, “The Pakistan People’s Party and the Punjab”,


CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

After her return to Pakistan from an exile in 1986, Benazir Bhutto greatly contributed to the restoration of democracy in Pakistan, a country which had seen a number of military regimes. As the daughter of the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, former Prime Minister who was ousted and later killed by the martial law regime of General Zia-ul Haq, Benazir kept together her father’s Pakistan People’s Party, and came to power in December 1988 as the first democratically elected prime minister of Pakistan in more than a decade and as the first female head of government in the Muslim world. The initial euphoria, however, quickly gave way to a series of mounting problems that confronted the young prime minister: conflict with the provinces of the Punjab and Baluchistan, ethnic violence in Sindh, economy in dire straits, a civil war in neighboring Afghanistan, and tension with India over Kashmir. She also had to deal with the “establishment” which remained skeptical of her: a hostile president, suspicious army, and uncooperative civil service.

When she came to power, Bhutto had to agree to certain conditions under which she would serve. They included acceptance of Ghulam Ishaq Khan as President, continuation of the past foreign policy particularly with respect to Afghanistan, and non-interference with the military’s internal affairs. Bhutto, in an attempt to exercise her own independent authority, did not strictly observe these restrictions and thus caused a great deal of disaffection among the generals. Meddling with their appointments and promotions of officers particularly annoyed them, reinforcing in their mind a sense of deep-rooted suspicion about Bhutto. The Pakistani army had run the country for 25 of its 43 years since independence and come to function as its ultimate arbiter. Bhutto was able to remain in power only
so long as the military allowed her to. Her power had been even more curtailed by the eighth amendment to the 1973 constitution which gave the president discretionary authority to dismiss Parliament when he deemed fit.

It was not just external forces that led to Bhutto's ouster. Her government was rightfully blamed for its inability to conduct legislative work and solve the problems the country faced. There were nearly 50 ministers in her cabinet, but the vast majority of the ministers and advisors, as well as Bhutto herself, have had no previous experience of political office. Some advisors had been bureaucrats or generals but not successful politicians holding government positions. Bhutto herself has had no job experience of any kind. Preoccupied with her attempt to confront and outmaneuver the opposition, Punjab Chief Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif in particular, Bhutto committed a number of political blunders, which eroded her and her party's credibility.

Benazir Bhutto's cabinet was criticized for being not only incompetent but also corrupt. The PPP had been in political wilderness for 11 years when she took office. Its workers and officers had experienced severe persecution and deprivation. It is, therefore, not surprising that the workers wanted jobs and other types of relief when their party came to power. But many of those who became ministers were already wealthy. They should have restrained themselves from excessive indulgence in power and privileges of high office, but they did not. Bhutto could not control them or did not want to. Many of them did not seem to have a clear idea of what the ends of power should be. Perhaps they thought that, since their predecessors had profited from public office by plunder, it was now their turn. Given the fact that the PPP had only a plurality and the opposition forces were large and determined, they should have been much more careful in their behavior so as not to give the opposition any ground to criticize them in this respect.

Bhutto was criticized for her political style as well; her haughtiness and autocratic behavior, often compared to those of her father, made some of her allies and other PPP leaders leave her. Many considered her marriage to Asif Ali
Zardari a grave mistake and a political disaster because of the negative reputation of the Zardaris, both Asif Ali and his father Hakim Ali, which was reinforced by corruption stories surrounding them. Her failure to restrain them resulted in a public perception of her as a weak woman who could not stand against her husband and his family.

The IJI’s landslide victory in the general elections of October 1990 were an eye-opener for many. There had been changes in Pakistani society and political thinking of the public. People and their primary issues were quite different in 1990 from those in 1970 when the PPP first came to power; urban middle class had increased in its size and power. Local issues outweighed ideology. That the PPP failed to pay attention to such changes of trend and carried out its campaign solely on the sympathy factor largely accounted for its defeat in the October elections. The PPP also needed to reconstruct its organizational structure in order to have more effective machinery that could translate its considerable mass support into real political power. Only when these changes and adjustments were successfully made, Benazir Bhutto and the PPP would be able to move forward. But such a step would present a dilemma for Bhutto. She wants to rule her party as a monarch and, therefore, does not wish to hold internal party elections. Since party officials are her nominees, they do not have their own independent support in their constituencies, and, thus, are not able to mobilize the people in support of the party and its top leadership. But if they were elected to their positions, and had their own support, they would probably no longer tolerate Bhutto’s autocratic style. She does not like to see that happen.

The election results were also a strong indication that Bhutto name had lost some of its magic. Benazir had both benefitted and suffered from her father’s legacy. She had to try very hard to convince the business community that she would not follow her father’s leftist economic policy. Yet she also had to hold onto the basic principles of his populism to maintain the mass support which the PPP had long relied on. Bhutto won only a plurality in 1988 because, while many Pakistanis still cherished Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s populist stances and policies, many
disapproved of the same. He had polarized Pakistani politics which still remains polarized. This legacy of her father made it extremely difficult for Benazir Bhutto to enlarge her support base. If she identified with her father’s legacy forcefully, those opposing that legacy would intensify their opposition to her. If she dissociated from that legacy, those supporting it would leave her. She neither fully identified with it nor abandoned it. Consequently she made her stance ambivalent and got nowhere. She claimed that her father and her party were never socialist, that she favored private enterprise, but that she was still a champion of the poor. But she failed to say how and by what policies she would serve the underprivileged people.

The president, representing the bureaucracy, and the military had disliked Zulfikar Ali Bhutto because he not only brought them under control but humiliated them. Naturally they were unhappy with the idea of giving the office of prime minister to his offspring, let alone a daughter. It is not easy for a woman to be head of government in a traditional Muslim society where men do not like to be subordinated to a woman. Nonetheless, they might have continued to tolerate her had she and her team been honest and competent. Faced with the reality being otherwise, however, they were confirmed in their opinion against the Bhuttos and prejudice against a woman’s rule. The military and the bureaucracy are, and have always been, formidable centers of power in Pakistan and have never thought much of politicians. They were forced to submit to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto because he had initially gathered mass support for himself. That was not the case with Benazir. Her youth and lack of experience also worked against her. Benazir Bhutto’s twenty months in office, which earlier had been hailed as a dawn of a new era in Pakistan, thus, proved to be merely a short recess for the country’s “‘establishment’” that had dominated the politics of Pakistan.
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