

Musharraf's political future appears troubled

DAVID ROHDE

FORMER Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's death raises the specter of prolonged political conflict between Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, and the country's opposition, according to Pakistani and American analysts. How he handles the next several days could determine whether nationwide antigovernment protests erupt.

"I see a lot more trouble for Musharraf in the near future," said Hasan Askari Rizvi, a leading Pakistani political analyst.

Ms. Bhutto's party, the largest in the country, is now leaderless, and many of its members already blame Mr. Musharraf's government for her death.

Mr. Musharraf remains deeply unpopular after declaring a state of emergency in November and suppressing Ms. Bhutto and his other political opponents.

Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif, the country's other main opposition leader, is scrambling to reorganize his party after years in exile.

Ms. Bhutto's death upends the political landscape in a country that has searched, often in vain, for political stability since it achieved independence 60 years ago. Pakistani observers pointed out on Thursday that Ms. Bhutto was shot a few yards from where the country's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, was assassinated in 1951. Since then, military coups, fixed elections and bitter political battles have marred attempts to stabilize the country.

How events unfold in the coming days and weeks lies largely in the hands of Mr. Musharraf, Ms. Bhutto's husband and Mr. Sharif, according to Pakistani analysts. But it is Mr. Musharraf who faces the largest political threat.

Analysts said the assassination would hurt Mr. Musharraf politically and place him in one of the most difficult positions of his turbulent eight years in power.

At the core of Mr. Musharraf's problem is a widespread perception that he did too little to protect Ms. Bhutto or that his government carried out the killing

itself, analysts said.

On Thursday, members of Ms. Bhutto's party accused Mr. Musharraf's government of exactly that. And Mr. Musharraf's own supporters blamed the government for lax security.

"The government had responsibility to ensure that she was safe," said Ikram Sehgal, a Pakistani security expert who served in the military with Mr. Musharraf. "There was a concerted effort together."

Demonstrations are expected to peak at Ms. Bhutto's funeral on Friday outside Karachi, Pakistan's second largest city. Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, could call for restraint or for further protests.

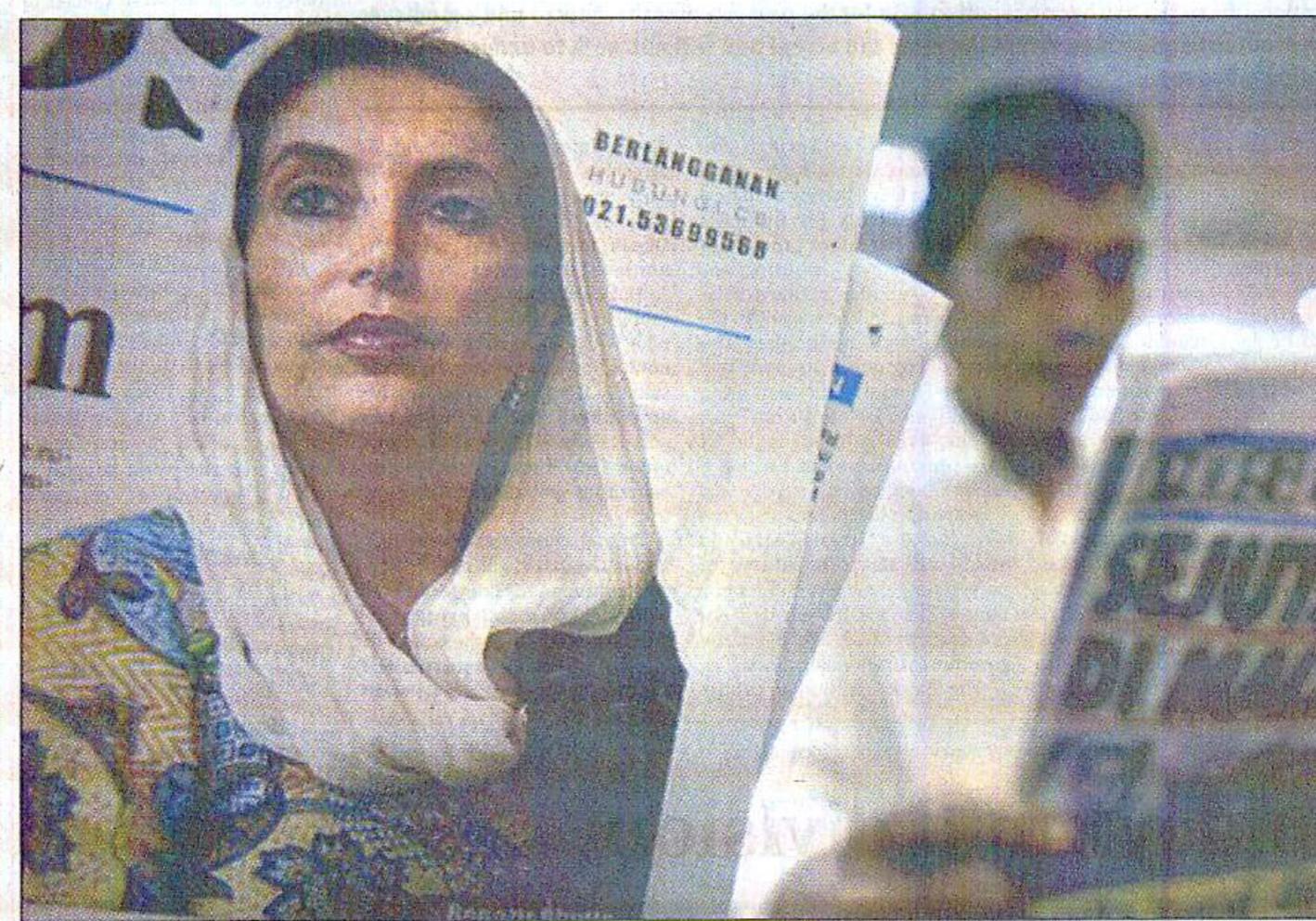
If Mr. Musharraf declares a state of emergency to rein in protests, he is likely to meet stronger popular opposition than he did when he declared emergency powers in November, analysts said.

"President Musharraf already does not enjoy a high degree of support," said Ijaz Gilani, the chairman of Gallup Pakistan, a leading polling agency. "With this incident, his ability to withstand all these negative segments about him is even more difficult."

If Mr. Musharraf goes ahead with nationwide elections scheduled for Jan. 8, he is likely to encounter street protests as well. Analysts said holding the elections would be seen as an effort by him to take advantage of Ms. Bhutto's death.

Without her, Ms. Bhutto's party, the Pakistan Peoples Party, will struggle to compete effectively in the elections. Ms. Bhutto was the party's chairwoman for life and tightly controlled its functions, analysts said. Her three children are too young to take her place, and her husband is widely viewed as corrupt and is opposed by many party leaders.

After Ms. Bhutto was killed, Mr. Sharif, the other main opposition leader, announced that his party would withdraw from the elections. Visiting the hospital where Ms. Bhutto was pronounced dead, Mr. Sharif vowed to take on her mantle as the main opposition leader to Mr.



Musharraf.

"Free elections are not possible in the presence of Musharraf," Mr. Sharif said on Thursday, Reuters reported. "Musharraf is the root cause of all problems."

If both of the country's primary opposition parties were out of the election, Mr. Musharraf's party which trailed them in recent polls would probably win control of Parliament. If that occurred, analysts predicted, Mr. Sharif and leaders of Ms. Bhutto's party would mount nationwide demonstrations calling for Mr. Musharraf's ouster.

"If Musharraf goes ahead with the elections, it will be a one-sided kind of affair," Mr. Rizvi said. "These people will try to challenge the whole process in the streets."

Since returning to Pakistan from exile last month, Mr. Sharif has positioned himself as a more vocal opponent to Mr. Musharraf than Ms. Bhutto was. He has campaigned well, showing more discipline and political savvy than he did during his two tenures as prime minister in the 1990s, according to analysts. His clearer defiance of the unpopular president has attracted large crowds to his rallies.

"This steady determination he's shown since November is a new thing," said Teresita Schaffer, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "Part of it is his visceral dislike for Musharraf."

The Pakistan Peoples Party, meanwhile, will struggle to choose a new leader, analysts predict.

Its senior vice chairman is Makhdoom Amin Fahim, who, like Ms. Bhutto, comes from a feudal family with roots in Sindh Province. Officially, Mr. Fahim should be the successor, party officials said.

Also being mentioned Thursday night as a possible new party chief was Aitzaz Ahsan, the prominent leader of the lawyers' movement. Mr. Ahsan was jailed after the Nov. 3 state of emergency was imposed and remains under house arrest.

Mr. Ahsan is an articulate, Cambridge-educated lawyer and a forceful critic of the Musharraf government. But he had a rocky relationship with Ms. Bhutto. According to several members of the party, she resented his high

profile as the leader of the campaign to reinstate the chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, after he was fired earlier this year.

In the end, the arbiter of power in Pakistan will be the country's powerful army, according to analysts. Under pressure from the United States, Mr. Musharraf resigned last month from his post as army chief and became a civilian president. While the army is headed by generals appointed by Mr. Musharraf, he is not guaranteed their support.

"An awful lot depends on how the army reacts," Ms. Schaffer said. "Do they clamp down? Are they reluctant to clamp down? Do they blame Musharraf?"

Courtesy: The New York Times.

Farewell-Daughter of the East

BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN, ndc, psc, (Retd)

BENAZIR Bhutto has been stopped at her strides. Her third attempt to help her country a democratic government was gruesomely anticipated by those opposed to liberal ideas and democratic dispensation in Pakistan.

Someone had once said after the death of a young member of the Bhutto clan that the Bhuttos die young. Benazir's death has borne out the truth of the statement, sadly. She was too young to die, but in this part of the world politics and death combine to stalk the young. With her death ends the political lineage that her father Zulfikar Bhutto helped continue in Pakistan, at least for the time being.

It was the one of bleakest days in Pakistan's turmoil-filled history, certainly the bleakest event in recent times. She fell victim to the assassins' bullet in the very place that Pakistan's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan became a victim of what can be called the first political assassination in Pakistan. Then as now, the fingers were being pointed at the establishment; the only difference is that while then it was merely a surprise, this time President Musharraf is being accused of being complicit in Benazir's death either by association or default.

This is not the first political killing in Pakistan and one wonders whether, given the military ruled country's experiment with democracy which was patchy at best, with occasional tinge of democracy placed with prolonged period of military rule, sometimes indirectly but most of the times directly, we have seen the end of political assassination in that country.

Benazir had returned to Pakistan as a part of a deal brokered by the Americans. She had antagonized a section of people in Pakistan who was opposed to any action that would provide political space to Pervez Musharraf and validate the election and along with it perpetuate his role in Pakistani politics as its president. And it was perhaps because of US pressure that she was not able to respond to the call to boycott election. It appears that Musharraf failed to provide adequate protection to his political ally.

Benazir had a premonition of death. She knew fully well that her life was at risk and made no secret of it. That a quarter in Pakistan was not well disposed towards her return to the country was made amply clear the day she landed in Karachi for the first time in eight years of exile. More than hundred and fifty people were killed in the blast that greeted her arrival on Oct 18th this year. She was undaunted. And till the very day she kept on repeating her disdain for death and for those she thought was after her life. Whatever her enemies and detractors can accuse her of, they cannot accuse her of cowardice.

Benazir had many detractors in Pakistan, and many opponents of her policy. But it is hard to believe that any of her political opponents would like to see her out of their way in such a violent manner. She had been very vocal against the religious fundamentalist in her country. She had criticized Musharraf for having failed to control the rise of Islamic terrorists and the al Qaeda. She was critical of the military too and of the militarization of the administration, but only those in Pakistan that considered her a threat to their interests or indeed their existence are the ones that would benefit from her death.

The world's attention is focused on Pakistan, particularly on Pervez Musharraf, waiting to see what actions he takes related to the 8 Jan election. The elections will in all likelihood be postponed, but it ought to be held sooner than later, in the interest of both Musharraf and Pakistan.

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India's ballistic missile defense capabilities and future threats

NEHA KUMAR

INDIA carried out a series of anti-ballistic missile tests recently starting with an exo-atmospheric anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system test on 12 November 2007. This was followed by an endo-atmospheric test of a Prithvi missile defense system on 1 December 2007 from Wheeler Island near Balasore in Orissa. A high-tech instrument was utilized in the test launch which provided precise and accurate data regarding the performance of the interceptor missile. It is claimed that the missile performed much better than US PAC-3 missile.

India conducted another endo-atmospheric missile test on 6 December 2007 utilizing the Green Pine Radar, purchased from Israel. In the exo-atmospheric test the incoming ballistic missile was killed above the earth's atmosphere while the aim of endo-atmospheric test is to kill the incoming ballistic missile within the earth atmosphere at a range of about 25km. India plans to deploy ABM systems by 2015 and these tests are a demonstration of India's determination to follow through with its missile defense systems for enhancing its deterrence power. Due to technical shortcomings in previous ABM projects like Trishul and Akash, India had approached Israel for cooperation in this field.

It is often said that Indian BMD capability would lead to instability in the South Asian region and an offensive-defensive arms race. This is because India's defensive measures are likely to be responded to by other countries by building or increasing their offensive weapons systems. If India acquires a BMD capability, its neighbors such as China and Pakistan would feel that their counter strike capability may be insufficient and therefore their deterrence is threatened. As a result they would engage in acquiring additional missiles or develop a BMD capability. However, in the context of India's no first-use doctrine the development and possible deployment of BMD is important both for its deterrence value and to enhance security.

China has put India's northern region under threat through reorganizing its missile facilities near Delingha in Qinghai province. According to recent satellite images, China is putting medium range missiles in this area which has a range of over 2500km. The deployment of medium range ballistic missiles in this region could put northern India, including New Delhi within range. China is also working to replace its liquid fuel ballistic missiles with solid fuel ones. Solid fuel ballistic missiles have greater advantage over liquid fuel missiles as they are more accurate and easy and quick to launch. China is threatened by the US

BMD program and is busy in modernizing its ballistic missile program. It has carried out tests of advanced version of DF-31 or DF-31A, which has a range of approximately 12,000km. It has multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV) which have the capability to hold 3 warheads each. Besides this, China is producing short range missiles which are comparable to Agni and deploying them on Tibet facing India. China treats this missile as "conventional," while India treats it as "nuclear." As a result, the conventional balance is shifting in favor of China.

China has also been helping Pakistan in its missile program since the beginning. China has provided at least 30 M-11 missile and its components to Pakistan, which is capable of carrying nuclear weapon up to a range of 300km. China is also building missile production facility in Pakistan. Today many analysts have raised concerns that Pakistan missile program is more robust than India and New Delhi is lagging behind. With Chinese help, Pakistan has moved ahead of India in developing nuclear missile systems. Pakistan's Hatf-III missile is compared with India's Prithvi missile. But, Hatf-III is a solid fuel missile while Prithvi is a liquid fuel missile. The use of solid fuel is of crucial significance because of its operational advantages. Solid fuel is non-corrosive and easy to handle. Pakistan's missile capability could become of concern due to its current domestic instability. There is fear of Islamist takeover of the country or civil war since the declaration of the emergency rule in the region. Under such conditions, the nuclear and missile capability of Pakistan could prove to be a danger to India.

India has always looked at its two neighbors with a degree of apprehension. Although, conditions at present are not tense but, with the border issue not resolved and rhetoric over China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh rising and Kashmir still tense there are greater reasons for Indian concern. India is conscious of maintaining its territorial integrity and need to preserve its deterrence for this purpose. China and Pakistan will continue to busy themselves in development and modernization of the missiles regardless of whether India develops its BMD capability or not. In fact, their robust missile programs have forced India to look to the option of missile defense and to move away from its traditional opposition to missile defense programs. Therefore, it has become important for India to look to a BMD program so as to maintain its deterrence and to deal with possible future threats.

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Tsipi Livni vis a vis Lieberman: A new doctrine

KHALED KHALEFA

TODAY, many Arab Israeli leaders are accusing the Olmert's Government of conducting a double standard policy towards the Arab community. Some of the current officials of this government have declared that the Arabs in Israel are equal citizens. On the other hand this government has incorporated the right-wing "Israel Beiteinu" Party, headed by Avigdor Lieberman into the coalition and has appointed him as the Minister of National Strategic Threats (mainly domestic) which he claims derive from the Arabs. Actually, Lieberman's main agenda is to create the circumstances that will enable the transfer of Israeli Arabs. He hopes to remove segments of the Arab population from the Galilee and the Triangle to the West Bank e.g. to the new Palestinian entity or enclaves.

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Prime Minister Olmert has condemned this politician but at the same time in order to balance his existence in the coalition, he has appointed an Arab Minister, Mr. Galeb Majadle. This Arab Minister was appointed to be the Minister of Science, Culture and Sport. However, he has no influence or authority neither inside the government nor with his own public.

Majadle was strongly attacked by the Arab population for his participation in the Olmert Government which includes the hard liner Lieberman who continually instigates against the Arab population.

Mr. Majadle's main function is to attend diplomatic receptions in which he often represents the Israeli Government and its political agenda in order to show the equality of the Arabs in the country.

It's obvious today that Mr. Majadle has no mandate to express his ideas or to promote any Arab agenda. At the same time, however, it's permissible for Mr. Lieberman to instigate against Mr. Majadle's population.

Lieberman conducts his personal agenda as if there is no Arab Minister and at the same time Mr. Majadle, who has no Arab political base, behaves as if

there is no Lieberman in the government. At the same time, Olmert uses Lieberman's participation in the coalition and his tough and radical right wing expressions against the Arabs in order to position himself in the center with Lieberman to his right. This doesn't reflect the real situation which is that Olmert's political roots are from the ideological roots of Jabotinsky, the famous Revisionist right wing leader who believed that Jordan is the homeland of the Palestinians.

Furthermore, Ms. Tsipi Livni Minister of Foreign Affairs has the same roots of being educated by Jabotinsky's national revisionism. Her father, Itzhak Livni, was the operational officer of the Etzel (Irgun Tsavua Leumi National Military Organization). She was recruited to the Mossad for two years only because of her family connections. Later, she joined the Likud and became a close associate of Ariel Sharon. Her progress has been described as meteoric. Sharon did not perceive her as a threat and promoted her because of her silence and obedience to him. She was appointed as his Deputy Prime Minister after the grand split from the Likud and the creation of Kadima.

Lieberman continues to be loyal to Sharon until his stroke in December, 2005. Because of her weakness, and with out the sup-

port of Sharon she was forced to surrender to Olmert and his company. She is perceived as a weak politician. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argue that she is a good politician who is always very well prepared for her meetings with other officials and listens carefully to the advices of her colleagues. At the same time, however, they claim that she lacks international and global dynamics perceptions and understanding.

For those reasons, she uses the tactics of minimizing her words. However two weeks ago, although she was appointed to negotiate the Palestinian track with Ahmad Qurei (Abu El Ala), she attacked the Arab Knesset members in the Knesset itself by suggesting that the Palestinian State in the West Bank has to be the Homeland of all the Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza, the Diaspora and the Arabs in Israel.

Tsipi Livni's statement created a strong reaction among the Arab community. Knesset members, leaders, mayors and Columnists attacked her personally and asked Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to dismiss her from the post. Advocate Gowad Bulus wrote in Haaretz 26/11/2007 that it's the first step in the implementing a transfer policy for the Arabs in Israel to second class natives without any rights. (Kol Israel 26/11/2007)

Until now, however, only some Israeli columnists have condemned her declaration against the Arabs. Meron Benvenisti argued that both she and Ehud Olmert have begun to return to the hard core of the Revisionism. Both Olmert and Tsipi Livni are behaving as the Likud right wing prides from the old days by trying to attract right wing Israeli extremists (Haaretz Op Ed 26/11/2007).

It seems that for domestic reasons that Olmert didn't take Livni's comments seriously. In an interview from Annapolis with an Israeli journalist, he refused to react to her declaration against the Arabs.

It's not quite certain whether the Arabs in Israel will react against her or not. What is certain is that as a result of her declaration against the Arab community she has been identified as a radical right minister, closer to Lieberman and Eli Yishai than to the moderate spectrum. Consequently, her colleagues will use this speech to neutralize her efforts to be nominated as Prime Minister after Ehud Olmert.

Currently both Livni and Lieberman by using the issue of transferring the Arab community from Israel are neutralizing any possibility of a political solution with the Palestinians in the aftermath of Annapolis. By instigating against the Arabs in Israel Lieberman is using the "Boomerang" to prevent any agreement. By doing that, both Lieberman and Livni are designing the limits of any concessions and are actually determining 80% of Israel's borders. The big question, however, is if Olmert himself ordered such pressures by joining them to his coalition.

The author is a journalist and member of The Arab Council for Foreign Relations.