

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008

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PREFACE

General Pervez Musharraf (retired), President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1999-2008) decided to resign on August 17, 2008. Vide Article 41(5) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, “an election to fill a vacancy in the office of President shall be held not later than thirty days from the occurrence of the vacancy”. Accordingly, the Election Commission of Pakistan set the date for election as September 6, 2008.

Asif Ali Zardari, Co-Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), won the Presidential Election with a vast majority, from the Electoral College, which comprised of members of the Parliament and four Provincial Assemblies. Most of the political parties in the country supported his candidature and casted votes in his favour. He secured 281 out of 436 votes of Parliament, and out of 65 votes in each province, he got 64 in Sind, 22 in Punjab, 56 in NWFP and 59 in Balochistan. The other contestants, Justice (retired) Saeeduzzaman Siddiqui of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Mushahid Hussain Sayed of Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam) could secure a cumulative total of 153 and 43 votes respectively, as against 482 votes bagged by Mr. Zardari.

Asif Ali Zardari was born at Nawabshah (Sind) on July 26, 1955. He is the great grandson of Khan Bahadur Hassan Ali Effendi, the founder of the first educational institution for Muslims in Sind, named “Sind Madressa-tul-Islam, Karachi”. He was married to Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in 1987. He remained associated with her for 20 years till her *shahadat* (assassination) on December 27, 2007. During this period Mr. Zardari served as a Member of the National Assembly twice (1990-93 and 1993-96), Federal Minister for Environment (1993-1996), Federal Minister for Investment (1995-1996), and Senator (1997-1999). (See his profile at pages 81-83).

The *IPRI Factfile* includes selected articles and news items pertaining to the Presidential election appearing in the national and international media from June 15, 2008 till September 20, 2008.

IT'S PPP TO SEND PRESIDENT HOME: ZARDARI

Co-chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari said that the PPP would be the party to send President Pervez Musharraf home.

Asif Ali Zardari said this while addressing at a dinner hosted to the ministers and advisors of the Sindh cabinet at the Bilawal House, Karachi.

He said that the President Musharraf would be given a safe passage at a suitable time and the impression of any deal between the PPP and the President is not correct.

The News, June 15, 2008

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=47520>

US MAY BE DISTANCING ITSELF FROM MUSHARRAF

The White House has said that President George W. Bush believes only Pakistanis should decide who they want to lead their country, sending a clear signal that he will not rescue President Pervez Musharraf from an impeachment move.

Further elaborating its position on the dispute between President Musharraf and the PPP-led government, the White House ruled out the possibility of yet another military takeover in Pakistan.

Press Secretary Dana Perino made both the points at a regular briefing during which she also expressed America's desire to 'continue to work with the new government' in Islamabad.

Ms Perino said that President Bush was 'regularly briefed' on the situation in Pakistan and 'he is going to let Pakistanis make the decisions on who will be in the leadership of their country'.

The White House spokesperson also made it clear that a coup was no longer a serious option. 'I haven't heard of a military coup in the cards,' said Ms Perino when asked if the United States would accept yet another military coup in Pakistan.

'I think if they are moving forward on impeachment proceedings, it seems to be within their constitution and that they're following their own laws,' she said, effectively ending speculations that America will accept a peaceful military takeover in Pakistan.

Ms Perino's comments follow reports in the US media that President Musharraf has agreed to step down and is waiting for a US-led effort to arrange an honourable exit from power and a safe stay in Pakistan before announcing his decision.

On Friday, however, the media added a new angle to such reports saying that the Americans were also negotiating another deal which would

reduce Mr Musharraf's role to that of a figurehead while allowing him to continue as President.

Interestingly, reports about the impeachment move have not only occupied front pages of mainstream newspapers like The New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal, but have also figured prominently in local radio and television talk shows.

Quoting sources in the White House, some of these reports claim that the Bush administration has accepted the fact that it's no longer possible to save President Musharraf and is quietly urging him to step down voluntarily rather than prolong the crisis and face impeachment.

According to these reports, the US was keen to see an orderly transition of power, presenting Washington with the opportunity to build close ties with Mr Musharraf's successor.

The Bush administration's interest in maintaining close relations with Pakistan is built around the desire to carry forward cooperation in the war against extremism, the reports said.

Meanwhile, senior US officials are telling reporters that there had been no high-level contact with Mr Musharraf for some time. They said that President Bush's top national security advisers had counselled him 'not to take the call' if Mr Musharraf telephoned but that Mr Bush had not yet communicated a decision on the matter.

The Washington Post reported that the White House was split on how strongly to back Mr Musharraf, especially since the call for his impeachment.

Even Vice-President Dick Cheney, one of Mr Musharraf's principal backers in Washington, is now advising the administration to distance itself from him.

The White House, however, is reluctant to take a public stance on the dispute. 'We continue to monitor the situation,' said Ms Perino. 'We've always said that the issue of who would be in the leadership of Pakistan is going to be up to the Pakistanis.'

She said the White House also had seen reports of President Musharraf's voluntarily exit from the scene but noted that such reports 'go back and forth'.

Asked if the White House could confirm some of the reports about President Musharraf's resignation, she said: 'I'll see if there's anything I can do, but right now I think it's just pretty much a rumour mill that goes back and forth.'

Dawn, August 16, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/us+may+be+distancing+itself+from+musharraf>

DEFIANT MUSHARRAF SEEKS IMMUNITY FROM CHARGES

President Pervez Musharraf showed continued defiance on Sunday to threats of impeachment, saying through aides that he wanted to see the formal charges before making any decision to leave office.

Mr. Musharraf, a former general, is known as a fighter by instinct, and colleagues said that as his career seemed poised to end in indignity, he was determined not to bend to politicians whom he has long viewed with disdain.

On Monday morning his office announced that he would address the nation in the afternoon. He was expected to resign. A senior member of the coalition government said the impeachment efforts would not go forward.

Negotiations between representatives of Mr. Musharraf and the coalition government on an exit strategy that would satisfy both sides proceeded over the weekend.

At the core of the talks has been Mr. Musharraf's demand that he be immune from prosecution if he resigns before the impeachment proceedings begin.

The negotiations were bogged down over the legal technicalities of when immunity would be granted, according to a senior coalition official. The coalition was reluctant to grant immunity before Mr. Musharraf left office, because of fears that once he had won immunity he would not depart, said the official, who declined to be identified because of the delicacy of the talks.

The four-month-old civilian government announced 11 days ago that it would bring impeachment charges on the grounds that Mr. Musharraf violated the Constitution when he declared a state of emergency in November, firing 60 judges under the decree.

The coalition is composed of two major political parties, the Pakistan Peoples Party, led by Asif Ali Zardari, and the Pakistan Muslim League-N, led by Nawaz Sharif.

Mr. Sharif, whom Mr. Musharraf ousted as prime minister in a coup in 1999, was leading the impeachment effort.

Sherry Rehman, the information minister, said Sunday that the charges against Mr. Musharraf had been completed and that they would be presented to Parliament sometime this week. Ms. Rehman has made similar statements in the past several days, and it appeared that the coalition was stalling for time on presenting the charges in the hope that Mr. Musharraf would resign first.

Complicating the high-stakes political maneuvering were divisions within Mr. Musharraf's camp. An official familiar with the discussions said that Tariq Aziz, the President's close aide, was advising Mr. Musharraf to leave soon, as gracefully as possible.

Mr. Musharraf's chief political backer, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, was telling the President to fight the charges. Mr. Hussain, the chairman of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q, was particularly concerned, the official said, that the President wins iron-clad immunity from prosecution by the courts after he resigned.

Meanwhile, the army, the most powerful institution in Pakistan, has remained on the sidelines of the impeachment negotiations.

If a deadlock persisted between the coalition and the President, the army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, who succeeded Mr. Musharraf as head of the military, would move to prevent a drawn-out saga, a number of officials and analysts have said.

Mr. Musharraf is also facing the potential option of asylum. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said during an interview on "Fox News Sunday" that Mr. Musharraf would not be going to the United States. Asked if Washington would grant him asylum, Ms. Rice replied, "This is an issue that is not on the table."

Mr. Musharraf has made clear that he wants to stay in Pakistan. He has said he wants to occupy a house he is building in an exclusive enclave on the outskirts of Islamabad that is near a prestigious golf club.

Jane Perlez, *New York Times* online, August 17, 2008
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/18/world/asia/18pstan.html?_r=2&ref=world&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

SALIENT FEATURES OF PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

- President Pervez Musharraf's address to the nation begins with the recitation of Holy Quran
- Country is passing through difficult time
- Today is the day for important decisions
- Country was about to be declared a failed state
- I have full faith in Allah that if we work hard with honesty, Allah will be with us
- I faced several crises during the last nine years
- Nobody ever faced challenges which I had to face during my regime
- I faced many challenges including 9/11 and situation in northern areas
- Allah helped me cope with all these challenges
- My intentions remained very positive during this time
- I always put the country and its people first
- I gave the slogan "Pakistan first" to the nation
- Some elements put their vested interest above those of the country
- These elements leveled false allegations against me

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- Some elements are accusing me of current electricity crisis and other problems
 - Details will be released in the press
 - Our economy was on right track on December 2007, seven months ago
 - Our Foreign exchange reserves climbed to 17 billion dollars
 - KSE index touched 16,000 points
 - It was the result of our economic policies
 - These were the indicators of Pakistan's economy seven months back
 - Now (foreign exchange) reserves have reached below 10 billion dollars
 - KSE-100 index has plunged below 10,000 points
 - Foreign investors have stopped investing in Pakistan
 - Wheat, pulses' prices went up
 - Poor people are struggling to make ends meet
 - Those who criticize our policies are presenting a false picture to the nation
 - Power crises was the outcome of demand which witnessed increase after development projects
 - Power generation remained 3000 MW during last 8-9 years
 - Demand was higher than generation
 - 750 km long coastal highway was built in the past years
 - Islamabad-Murree Expressway was constructed
 - Many link-roads were built in northern areas
 - Roads networks laid across the country
 - Mirani dam inaugurated, dam in Skardu completed
 - Capacity will be doubled for Mangla dam
 - More dams are being built
 - Thal, Rani canals are being constructed
 - 3-million acres land will be irrigated
 - Our agriculture produce will be boosted by these canals
 - Gwadar port was established
 - There is a revolution in telecom sector
 - Massive industrialization was taking place in Pakistan
 - Four to five hotels are being constructed in Islamabad
 - With the emergence of Industries, employment opportunities were created
 - We made noticeable progress in education sector
 - We started technical training, thousands of children being trained
 - Foreign universities were about to open their campuses in Pakistan
 - 1500 PhDs every month

- Primary and Secondary health care was given preference
- Safe drinking water system planned across the country
- 6000 purification plants were being planned in the country
- Three-pronged strategy adopted for women sector
- Political empowerment was result of our policies
- We abolished discriminatory laws
- We empowered minority by giving joint electorate power
- We have a rich heritage, culture.
- Quaid Mausoleum was renovated, more space was made useable around the Mazar
- We have opened art gallery
- In Lahore, a Bab-e-Pakistan is under construction
- NIPA (National Institute of Performing Arts) was established to promote art
- There was only a label of democracy, we put essence in it.
- We introduced local government system
- Those who are against local government system, are against Pakistan
- Two elections were conducted under my rule
- It is the essence of democracy
- Before 9/11 nobody knew Pakistan, we gave image and value to Pakistan
- Pakistan is given importance in international forums
- We inducted police personnel on basis of merits, we increased their capabilities
- New terrorism culture began after 9/11 which we need to defeat jointly
- I am proud of all my achievements
- Delegates of 80 countries arrived in Pakistan during donors' conference
- We were pledged more aid than expected
- These achievements are for people of Pakistan

Current Political Situation

- I always promoted reconciliation in the country
- I have talked about three-phased gradual transition
- Third phase was last year when I quit post of army chief
- Power was transferred after transparent elections
- After Feb 18 elections, people associated their hopes with the elected people
- They wanted better future, leaving behind past
- Unfortunately, my all appeals regarding reconciliation went in vain

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- My efforts failed
 - Some elements were playing politics with economy, terrorism
 - Politics of vendetta began
 - I was blamed for hatching conspiracy from presidency which is completely baseless.
 - Free fair elections were held in which all parties participated. We made sure everybody participates in the election.
 - Prime Minister's unopposed election was held, how?
 - A culture of decency also developed in Sindh, Balochistan
 - I have publicly announced my support to the government
 - I announced to share my experience with the government with all my capabilities to face the challenges
 - Coalition took me as a problem not solution
 - The ruling coalition wants to impeach me, why?
 - Are they scared of my legal and constitutional right?
 - Impeachment and preparation of charge-sheet are rights of people, and to fight the impeachment move is my right
 - No charge-sheet can stand against me; they can not prove any charge against me
 - I did all with on the basis of "Pakistan First"
 - I took on board all the stakeholders including army, politicians, civil society members, Ulemas for every critical decision
 - I am not worried about charge-sheet, they can not prove any charge
 - The question that now arises is: Impeachment issue will affect the country
 - Can country afford uncertainty and instability?
 - Country can not bear politics of confrontation
 - It is the time for some serious thoughts
 - Nation will defeat whatever the result of impeachment would be
 - I offer my life for the sake of the country
 - I served the country for 45 years
 - I think that I should do something to bring the country out of crisis
 - I want to save the parliament from horse trading
 - If impeachment move is defeated, in my view, confrontation will exist between state institutions
 - Parliament and judiciary may face confrontation
 - I don't want to drag the army into politics
 - I consulted with legal advisers, army and aides
 - In the better interest of the [country] I resign from my post
 - Speaker will have my resignation later today
 - I don't want anything from anyone

- We have given sacrifices, our sacrifices are exemplary, I salute to them
- I am thankful to my political companions to support me during this year
- I am thankful to civil servants, their role in the functioning has been amazing, I am proud of them
- I am a middle class person and part of people
- I always think about the people's pain
- Prayers of my mother remained with me and my wife and children always supported and this is my strength
- May Allah protect the country
- May Allah make the lives of people better
- My life is always for the people of Pakistan
- Good Bye to Pakistan
- Pakistan Pains bad

Geo TV, August 18, 2008

http://www.geo.tv/important_events/President_speech_180808/pages/english_news.asp

IN MUSHARRAF'S WAKE, U.S. FACES POLITICAL DISARRAY

Facing imminent impeachment charges, President Pervez Musharraf announced his resignation on Monday [August 18], after months of belated recognition by American officials that he had become a waning asset in the campaign against terrorism.

The decision removes from Pakistan's political stage the leader who for nearly nine years served as one of the United States' most important — and ultimately unreliable — allies. And it now leaves American officials to deal with a new, elected coalition that has so far proved itself to be unwilling or unable to confront an expanding Taliban insurgency determined to topple the government.

“Whether I win or lose the impeachment, the nation will lose,” Mr. Musharraf said, explaining his decision in an emotional televised speech lasting more than an hour. He will stay in Pakistan and will not be put on trial, government officials said.

The question of who will succeed Mr. Musharraf is certain to unleash intense wrangling between the rival political parties that form the governing coalition and to add a new layer of turbulence to an already unstable nuclear-armed nation of 165 million people.

“We've said for years that Musharraf is our best bet, and my fear is that we are about to discover how true that was,” one senior Bush administration official said, acknowledging that the United States had stuck with Mr. Musharraf for too long and developed few other relationships in Pakistan to fall back on.

Administration officials will now have to find allies within the fractious civilian government, which has so far shown scant interest in taking on militants from the Taliban and Al Qaeda who have roosted in Pakistan's badlands along the border with Afghanistan.

At the same time, suspicions between the American and Pakistani intelligence agencies and their militaries are deepening, and relations between the countries are at their lowest point since Mr. Musharraf pledged to ally Pakistan with the United States after the 9/11 attacks.

Among the greatest concerns, senior American officials say, is the durability of new controls over Pakistan's nuclear program. Though Pakistan has been through far more abrupt political transitions than this one — through assassinations, a mysterious plane crash and coups — this is the first since it amassed a large nuclear arsenal.

Another central concern is the war in Afghanistan, which has been fueled by Taliban and Qaeda fighters who have used Pakistan as a rear base to carry out increasingly lethal and sophisticated attacks across the border.

After years in which Mr. Musharraf proved unable or unwilling to rein in militants in Pakistan, American officials say they are now more skeptical than ever that they can count on cooperation from Pakistan's military leaders, even including Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, a former head of Pakistan's spy agency, who replaced Mr. Musharraf as military chief last November.

The coalition government had "no comprehension" of the insurgency, said a former interior minister, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, whose parliamentary constituency adjoins the tribal areas. "They have one policy for domestic consumption: 'Have peace, don't use the army,'" he said. "Then for the foreigners they say, 'We will fight.'"

A main challenge for Washington now will be to fix the attention of the two leaders of the coalition parties, Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif, on the raging Taliban insurgency that not only threatens American soldiers in Afghanistan but also threatens to destabilize Pakistan itself.

The campaign against the militants is unpopular here in Pakistan because it is seen as an American conflict foisted on the country. Washington would like the new government to explain to the public that the effort to quell the Taliban is in Pakistan's interests as well.

So far, the coalition, distracted by internal machinations, has failed to make that case, even as the military has taken on the insurgents with new vigor in the last 10 days. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice sought on Monday to emphasize continuity with the new leaders of Pakistan, saying the United States would keep pressing the Pakistani government to battle extremism within its borders.

President Bush, at his ranch in Crawford, Tex., made no statement about Mr. Musharraf's resignation. A White House spokesman, Gordon D. Johndroe, said, "President Bush appreciates President Musharraf's efforts in

the democratic transition of Pakistan as well as his commitment to fighting Al Qaeda and extremist groups.”

The muted reaction from American officials was partly a result of the Bush administration’s having come to terms months ago with the expectation that it would have to pursue its strategy in Pakistan without Mr. Musharraf.

Mr. Musharraf’s political demise was nearly inevitable after he shed his military role last year and since his party was soundly defeated in parliamentary elections in February.

Since then, the White House has been grappling with a new political reality, where the civilian leaders seem to have tenuous control over Pakistan’s military and intelligence establishment.

Some inside the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon believe that Pakistan’s powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency has used the democratic transition in Islamabad to strengthen its ties to militants in Pakistan’s tribal areas who are carrying out operations into Afghanistan.

Uncertainty over who is actually in charge in Pakistan has heightened concerns over the country’s nuclear arsenal, which is today variously estimated at 50 to 100 weapons.

While American officials say publicly that they are confident it is secure, in private they have long harbored worries about what would happen when Mr. Musharraf no longer stood atop the country’s nuclear command structure, which has always been a creation of Mr. Musharraf himself. How robust it will prove without him, they say, is a worrisome unknown.

Perhaps the greatest concern is what one senior Bush administration official recently termed “steadfast efforts” by the extremist groups to infiltrate Pakistan’s nuclear laboratories, the heart of a vast infrastructure that employs tens of thousands of people. Some of the efforts, officials said, are believed to have involved Pakistani scientists trained abroad.

Pakistan’s weapons themselves are considered less of a concern — thanks in part to a secret program initiated by the Bush administration, with Mr. Musharraf’s consent, to help train Pakistani security forces to keep the weapons safe.

But American officials say they do not know the details of how much money was spent, and they have been barred from reviewing crucial aspects of the security procedures.

In announcing his resignation, from his Presidential office here in Islamabad at 1 p.m., Mr. Musharraf said that he was putting national interest above “personal bravado,” adding that he was not prepared to put the office of the presidency through the impeachment process.

Mr. Musharraf said the governing coalition, which was pushing for impeachment, had tried to “turn lies into truths,” and finished his speech by raising his clenched fists chest high and declaring, “Long live Pakistan!”

Mr. Musharraf decided to resign after the coalition mounted a campaign over 10 days to impeach him and said it would file charges based on gross violations of the Constitution. For the new government, elected with a big majority in February, his departure represented a vindication of democracy in a country that has been ruled for more than half its 61-year existence by the military.

By 5 p.m., Mr. Musharraf had been granted a ceremonial departure composed of a military guard of honor, and he left the Presidential building for the last time. He headed to an army house in Rawalpindi, a city adjacent to Islamabad, where he has lived as President.

He will stay there for the next few days before moving elsewhere in Islamabad, perhaps to a house he is building in an exclusive enclave on the outskirts of the city.

The chairman of the Senate, Muhammad Mian Soomro, who had served as caretaker prime minister this year, was named acting President. He will keep the office until a new President is chosen by Parliament and four provincial assemblies within 30 days.

Mr. Zardari, the widower of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and now the head of the Pakistan Peoples Party, which she led before her assassination, is known to want the job. But he remains something of a controversial figure, having faced multiple counts of corruption in the past, though he was never convicted and says the charges were politically motivated. They were dropped when Mr. Zardari returned to Pakistan this year.

A senior American official who deals with Pakistan said last week that the notion of Mr. Zardari as President was not appealing, but neither were the alternatives.

One of the other candidates mentioned is Aftab Shahban Mirani, a former defense minister and a longtime stalwart of the Pakistan Peoples Party.

Whoever emerges, the talks are likely to be long and contentious. Mr. Sharif, who has a past checkered by corruption allegations, maintains a barely civil relationship with Mr. Zardari, and is said to be strongly opposed to the elevation of Mr. Zardari.

A colleague of Mr. Sharif's said the Pakistan Muslim League-N, the party Mr. Sharif leads, might agree to Mr. Zardari in the post if it was stripped of its current powers, including the power to dissolve Parliament and to choose the army chief.

Jane Perlez, *New York Times* online, August 18, 2008
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/19/world/asia/19pstan.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

MUSHARRAF, FACING DAUNTING ODDS, RESIGNS

President Pervez Musharraf, who often vowed never to run away from a fight, surrendered to his political foes on Monday by tendering his resignation from office to escape the humiliation of impeachment, making way for Pakistan's transition to a full parliamentary democracy after a lengthy military dictatorship.

The end of nearly nine years of his rule, which the 65-year-old former army chief announced in a televised address, marked a historic success for the country's political forces that sought his ouster, although a thoroughly isolated President claimed he chose to bow out "for the sake of the country and the nation" rather than pack up a parliament that was preparing to impeach him within the month.

The acceptance of defeat by Pakistan's fourth military ruler without a promised fight in a bitter power struggle with a fledgling coalition government triggered nationwide celebrations.

Coalition partners were left to consider who would be the next President, a position which most are in favour of curtailing and limiting.

Parliament has already made clear its intention to clip the wings of the presidency and abolish sweeping powers - such as the power to dissolve the National Assembly and sack the prime minister - which Musharraf assumed through decree.

Partners of the four-and-a-half month old coalition government, led by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), finalised a charge-sheet accusing the President of violating the constitution and misconduct.

A formal notification was to be presented to the National Assembly Speaker Fehmida Mirza by Tuesday to begin proceedings within three days for impeachment by a joint session of the two houses of parliament after a minimum of seven and a maximum of 14 days.

But the President pre-empted the move by announcing his decision to tender his resignation although his spokesmen had repeatedly denied rumours that he would do so.

It was no longer the fist-waving ex-commando Musharraf who often said he was a fighter who would never run away and "lead from the front".

Amid growing pressure from his political opponents and isolation at home and abroad, a humbled President admitted it was time for "no individual bravado" but for "serious thought".

And he said that although he believed none of the still undisclosed charges against him could be proved, the threat of a confrontation between national institutions dissuaded him from defending against the allegations in parliament.

“Therefore, after considering this whole situation and consultation with my legal advisers and political supporters and with their advice, it is for the sake of the country and the nation that I have decided today to resign from office,” he said, adding that he would send his resignation to the National Assembly speaker.

The resignation came amid media reports, none of which were confirmed by opposing camps, that foreign powers such as the Saudi royal family, were trying to broker a ‘safe exit’ for the President.

But the President, in an apparent reference to such a possibility, sounded confident about his future and said: “I don’t need anything from anybody, I have no concern. I leave my future in the hands of the people. Let them be the judges and let them do justice.”

Senate Chairman Mohammed Mian Soomro has taken over as acting President until a successor is chosen within 30 days by an electoral college of both houses of parliament and the four provincial assemblies.

There was no indication whether Mr Musharraf would stay in the country or seek exile abroad as was done by his two main political opponents during his rule – former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

With Musharraf out of the way, the immediate political tasks before the coalition partners, will be the promised restoration of about 60 superior court judges who the former President sacked under his controversial emergency proclamation of Nov 3, 2007; and clipping the powers of the President to arbitrarily dissolve the National Assembly, sack a prime minister and appoint armed forces chiefs and provincial governors.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told the National Assembly on Monday that the parliament had finally gained real sovereignty and that the coalition would do away with the controversial 17th Amendment to the constitution that had legitimised President Musharraf’s extraordinary powers.

The coalition partners also face the daunting tasks of tackling other pressing problems they largely blame on Musharraf’s policies such as an unprecedented inflation, food and energy shortages, a wave of militant violence in the tribal and settled areas of the NWFP and a low-level insurgency in Balochistan.

Mr Musharraf’s resignation, whose ‘second five-year term as President’ started on Oct 15, 2007, after a controversial election, shattered his ambition to become the country’s longest serving military-cum-civilian ruler.

A normal expiration of his present five-year term in 2012, would have given him 13 years in power compared to over 10 years of Pakistan’s first military ruler ‘Field Marshal’ Mohammad Ayub Khan (1958-1969), 11 years of Gen Mohammad Ziaul Haq (1977-1988) and two-and-a-half years of Gen Yahya Khan (1969-1971).

Mr Musharraf became the second military ruler after Ayub Khan to announce his resignation in an address to the nation in the face of public pressure.

However, Musharraf allowed the Senate chairman to become the acting President after doffing his uniform, in contrast to Ayub Khan who handed over power to Gen Yahya Khan through martial law instead of allowing the National Assembly to hold elections.

President Musharraf went to great lengths in his hour-long Urdu-language speech only four days after the Independence Day, to defend his rule since Oct 12, 1999 when he seized power after toppling the elected government of Nawaz Sharif government.

Enumerating the high points of his rule, he said his tenure was an 'era of an economic progress, during which he had prevented the country from being branded a terrorist or failed state, introduced an 'essence of democracy' in the shape of local governments, and successfully overcome serious challenges like the drought of 2000, a 10-month military confrontation with India in 2001, withstanding the fallout of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on the United States and the October 2005 earthquake.

But he regretted that the present government, which had emerged victorious after defeating his loyalists in the Feb 18 elections, had failed to respond to his appeals for a political reconciliation and rejected his offers of support with his experience of the past and regarded him as a "problem and not a solution".

And he wondered if their impeachment move was motivated by their fears about "my constitutional power about a lot of things" or by their "desire to hide their present and future mistakes".

He said he recognised parliament's right to impeach him and his own right to contest it, but he asserted he had faith in God that "no charge-sheet can stand against me. No charge, not one charge can be proved against me because I have confidence in me that I did nothing for my own self. Whatever I did was in following in his idea of (taking) 'Pakistan first' (over everything else)."

He said that in taking every complicated and critical decision he "took on board all stake-holders", including the military, politicians, civilian bureaucracy as well as the civil society when needed and the ulema where they were concerned.

Mr Musarra's impeachment, also demanded by all the four provincial assemblies, had appeared a certainty after most independents and many of his loyalists were about to switch sides.

But he said that although he had no fear of the charges he was sure could not be proved, he would avoid facing them because they would mark the "defeat of the nation."

The potential for harm to the dignity of the country and the office of President and his desire to avoid prolonging a state of uncertainty, “horse-trading” in parliament, putting “my (political) associates to a difficult test” and the prospect of unending tension between the government and the presidency was too great

Raja Asghar, *Dawn*, August 19, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/President+musharraf+facing+daunting+odds+resigns>

BEYOND MUSHARRAF: IMPEACHMENT CHARGES CAN'T STAND; SUCCESS OR DEFEAT BOTH WOULD HAVE MEANT DEFEAT OF THE NATION

Jubilation across country; Gilani says 17th Amendment will be scrapped.

President Pervez Musharraf, who often vowed never to run away from a fight, surrendered to his political foes on Monday by tendering his resignation from office to escape the humiliation of impeachment, making way for Pakistan's transition to a full parliamentary democracy after a lengthy military dictatorship.

The end of nearly nine years of his rule, which the 65-year-old former army chief announced in a televised address, marked a historic success for the country's political forces that sought his ouster, although a thoroughly isolated President claimed he chose to bow out “for the sake of the country and the nation” rather than pack up parliament that had prepared to impeach him within this month.

The acceptance of defeat by Pakistan's fourth military ruler without a promised fight in a bitter power struggle with a fledgling coalition government triggered nationwide celebrations as coalition partners began to ponder about the choice of the next President who they have pledged will only be a figurehead rather than with sweeping powers Mr Musharraf had assumed by decree such as dissolving the National Assembly and sacking a prime minister. Partners of the four-and-a-half months old coalition government, led by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), had finalised a charge-sheet accusing the President of violating the constitution and misconduct and planned to notify National Assembly Speaker Fehmida Mirza possibly by Tuesday to begin proceedings within three days for impeachment by a joint session of the two houses of parliament after a minimum of seven and a maximum of 14 days.

But the President pre-empted the move by announcing to tender his resignation although his spokesmen had repeatedly said he would not resign and would prefer to contest the charges in a parliament where the coalition appeared to have mustered more than two-thirds majority of the total 442-

strong total membership of the 342-seat National Assembly and the 100-seat Senate required to pass an impeachment resolution.

It was no longer the fist-waving ex-commando Musharraf who often said he was a fighter who would never run away and “lead from the front”.

Amid growing pressure from his political opponents and isolation at home and abroad, a humbled President admitted it was time for “no individual bravado” but for “serious thought”.

And he said that although he believed none of the still undisclosed charges against him could be proved, different thoughts had been crossing his mind and recourse to them could possibly lead to a confrontation between national institutions like parliament and judiciary or even drag the armed forces.

“Therefore, after considering this whole situation and consultation with my legal advisers and political supporters and with their advice, it is for the sake of the country and the nation that I have decided today to resign from office,” he said, adding that he would send his resignation to the National Assembly speaker.

The resignation came amid media reports, none of which was confirmed by the opposing camps, that some foreign friends of Pakistan, possibly including the Saudi royal family, were trying to broker a ‘safe exit’ or immunity for the President for his alleged constitutional and other violations, including the charge of treason for subverting the constitution that is punishable with death.

But the President, in an apparent reference to such a possibility, sounded confident about his future and said: “I don’t need anything from anybody, I have no concern. I leave my future in the hands of the people. Let them be the judges and let them do justice.”

Even hours after Senate Chairman Mohammed Mian Soomro took over as acting President until a successor is chosen within 30 days by an electoral college of both houses of parliament and the four provincial assemblies, there was no indication whether Mr Musharraf would stay in the country or seek exile abroad as had been done by his two main political opponents during his rule – former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

With the obstacle of Mr Musharraf’s extraordinary powers out of the way, the immediate political tasks before the coalition partners, including the Pakistan Muslim League-N of Mr Sharif and two smaller allies, will be the promised restoration of about 60 superior court judges the former President sacked under his controversial emergency proclamation of Nov 3, 2007, and clipping the powers of President to arbitrarily dissolve the National Assembly, sack a prime minister and appoint armed forces chiefs and provincial governors.

No wonder, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told the National Assembly later on Monday that parliament had gained real sovereignty and that the coalition would do away with the controversial 17th Amendment to the constitution that had legitimised President Musharraf's decrees that gave him the extraordinary powers that would now go to parliament and the prime minister as committed in the Charter of Democracy, signed by Ms Bhutto and Mr Sharif in London two years ago.

The coalition partners also face the daunting tasks of tackling other pressing problems they largely blame on Musharraf's policies such as an unprecedented inflation, food and energy shortages, a wave of militant violence in the tribal and settled areas of the NWFP and a low-level insurgency in Balochistan.

Mr Musharraf's resignation, whose 'second five-year term as President' started on Oct 15, 2007, after a controversial election, shattered his ambition to become the country's longest serving military-cum-civilian ruler. A normal expiration of his present five-year term in 2012, would have given him 13 years in power compared to over 10 years of Pakistan's first military ruler 'Field Marshal' Mohammad Ayub Khan (1958-1969) and 11 years of Gen Mohammad Ziaul Haq (1977-1988) and two-and-a-half years of Gen Yahya Khan (1969-1971).

And Mr Musharraf became the second military ruler to announce his resignation in an address to the nation in the face of public pressure, though he, having become a civilian after giving up as chief of the army staff eight months ago, let the constitution take its course with the Senate chairman becoming the acting President while Ayub Khan handed over to Gen Yahya Khan who declared the country's second martial law instead of allowing the National Assembly speaker to hold elections.

Gen Yahya had hurriedly, without making any speech, handed over power to PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the winner of the 1970 elections in what was then called West Pakistan after the 1971 East Pakistan debacle.

General Zia's rule ended with his death in a still unexplained 1988 C-130 plane crash whose anniversary was marked only a day before the end of the Musharraf era, which put the total of military rule in Pakistan at 33 years in 61 years of the country's life.

President Musharraf went to great lengths in his hour-long Urdu-language speech only four days after the Independence Day, to defend his rule since Oct 12, 1999 when he seized power after toppling the elected government of Nawaz Sharif government. Enumerating high points of his rule, he said his tenure was an 'era of an economic progress, during which he had prevented the country from being branded a terrorist or failed state, introduced an 'essence of democracy' in the shape of local governments, and successfully overcome serious challenges like the drought of 2000, a 10-month

military confrontation with India in 2001, withstanding the fallout of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on the United States and the October 2005 earthquake.

But he regretted that the present government, which had emerged victorious after defeating his loyalists in the Feb 18 elections, had failed to respond to his appeals for a political reconciliation and rejected his offers of support with his experience of the past and regarded him as a “problem and not a solution”.

And he wondered if their impeachment move was motivated by their fears about “my constitutional power about a lot of things” or by their “desire to hide their present and future mistakes”.

He said he recognised parliament’s right to impeach him and his own right to contest it, but he asserted he had faith in God that “no charge-sheet can stand against me. No charge, not one charge can be proved against me because I have confidence in me that I did nothing for my own self. Whatever I did was in following in his idea of (taking) ‘Pakistan first’ (over everything else).”

He said that in taking every complicated and critical decision he “took on board all stake-holders”, including the military, politicians, civilian bureaucracy as well as the civil society when needed and the ulema where they were concerned.

Mr Musharraf’s impeachment, also demanded by all the four provincial assemblies, had appeared a certainty after most independents and many of his loyalists were about to switch sides.

But he said that although he had no fear of the charges he was sure could not be proved, he avoided facing them because he believed his success or defeat both would have meant “a defeat of the nation” because of potential harm to the dignity of the country and the office of President and his desire to avoid prolonging a state of uncertainty, “horse-trading” in parliament, putting “my (political) associates to a difficult test” and the prospect of unending tension between the government and the presidency.

Raja Asghar, *Dawn*, August 19, 2008

<http://www.dawn.com/2008/08/19/top1.htm>

MUSHARRAF EXITS, BUT UNCERTAINTY REMAINS

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf’s resignation Monday signaled the beginning of a new round of political uncertainty as the country’s civilian government tries to reshape the legacy of nearly nine years of military rule.

Politicians began marathon meetings about possible replacements for Musharraf, with early reports suggesting a woman might be chosen. As word of the resignation spread, Musharraf’s opponents celebrated with cakes in some places, gunfire in others. Financial markets rebounded.

But with the country's economy at an all-time low and a radical Islamist insurgency based in the country's tribal areas gaining in strength, the civilian coalition faces challenges that will not be easily or quickly sorted out, analysts here said.

Musharraf's exit, facilitated by an immunity agreement, appeared to augur a new rapport between the country's newly elected civilian government and the powerful military. But few people here seemed certain the nuclear-armed nation's episodic clashes between military might and secular statesmanship were at an end. And the departure of a man who closely allied himself with the United States in anti-terrorism operations opens the question of how his successor will work with Washington and confront the growing insurgency within Pakistan's borders.

Officials said it is likely that Musharraf, who took power in a 1999 military coup, will soon leave the country, possibly to live in the Persian Gulf emirate of Dubai. He negotiated immunity from civil and criminal prosecution for events during his rule, assurances that smoothed his resignation, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject.

Musharraf announced his decision in a nationally televised public address 11 days after leaders of the two ruling parties said they would proceed with his impeachment. Demands for his resignation became increasingly vocal last week after Pakistan's four provincial assemblies voted overwhelmingly for his ouster.

In the hour-long address, Musharraf struck a defiant and emotional tone, saying that opponents had opted for the politics of confrontation over reconciliation. He said he would step down in the interest of maintaining stability in Pakistan.

"I am leaving with the satisfaction that whatever I could do for this country I did it with integrity," Musharraf said. "I am a human, too. I may have made mistakes, but I believe that the people will forgive me."

In Islamabad, the capital, news of Musharraf's departure was greeted with jubilation. People flocked to sweets shops in the city's popular Jinnah Supermarket to buy cakes and pastries to celebrate. Shazia Hassan, a 32-year-old homemaker, was nearly bursting with excitement as she stood in line to buy cakes for her husband and children. "It's the dawn of democracy," she declared.

Leaders of the ruling Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-N party hailed the resignation. "This is a victory for democratic forces," said Farzana Raja, a top member of the Pakistan People's Party. "It should have happened much earlier. The dictatorship should have been done away with some time ago."

The parties, which defeated Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League-Q faction in national parliamentary elections in February, have pledged to elect a

new President as quickly as possible. Coalition government leaders met late Monday in Islamabad to discuss the next steps and potential candidates for the post.

Leading contenders for the presidency are likely to come from the Pakistan People's Party, which won a majority of seats in Parliament in the February elections.

Party leader Asif Ali Zardari has remained noncommittal about his interest in the job. Zardari, who was named head of the party after Benazir Bhutto, his wife and the longtime party chief, was assassinated last year, has suggested that a female party member might be Pakistan's President.

The roster of female candidates in a country long dominated by political strongmen is relatively short. Many here speculate that Faryal Talpur, Zardari's sister and a member of Parliament from the southern province of Sindh - a PPP stronghold - could top the list. Other potential female contenders include the speaker of the National Assembly, Fehmida Mirza, a longtime associate of Bhutto's.

Parliament has 30 days to elect Musharraf's replacement. Until then, the presidency will fall to the chairman of Pakistan's Senate, Mohammed Mian Soomro. A member of Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League-Q party, Soomro was governor of the southern province of Sindh from 2000 to 2002 and was elected to the Senate in 2003. Soomro, a former banker, was appointed interim prime minister by Musharraf last year, days after he declared a state of emergency in the country. Soomro could not be reached for comment Monday.

The immunity deal that helped ease Musharraf out rankled some members of Pakistan's elite. Aitzaz Ahsan, President of the country's Supreme Court Bar Association, said Musharraf should face trial for treason, an offense punishable by death in Pakistan. Ahsan, who became a staunch and vocal critic of Musharraf after the President last year suspended the chief justice, said Musharraf was "running away from accountability."

"If he's man enough and as he has said he has done nothing wrong, he should stand trial," Ahsan said.

Born in New Delhi in 1943, four years before the partition of India and Pakistan, Musharraf emigrated with his family to the southern Pakistani city of Karachi in 1947. He graduated from the prestigious Pakistan Military Academy, then quickly rose through the army ranks, serving several years with the Pakistani army's elite commando unit.

Musharraf came to power by overthrowing then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Oct. 12, 1999, amid a highly public falling-out between the two men over a controversial military operation in the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Musharraf promised at the time that military rule would be short-lived and would "pave the way for true democracy to flourish in Pakistan." But in

ensuing years, he maintained a firm grasp on power while the country witnessed unprecedented economic growth, boosted in part by aid from the United States. Widely credited with initiating a thaw in relations with rival India and banning the practice of honor killings against women, Musharraf enjoyed strong domestic support during the early years of his rule.

He aligned the country openly with the United States after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, though many U.S. officials came to question his commitment. As ire over the alliance grew at home and in the wider Muslim world, his grip on power began to slip. The first signs of trouble appeared last March, when he suspended Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry, considered a preemptive move to head off a court challenge to the legitimacy of his presidency.

Month by month, political turmoil escalated. Former Prime Minister Bhutto returned from exile, only to be assassinated in December; insurgents along the border with Afghanistan stepped up attacks.

Bhutto's death generated widespread anger at Musharraf and sympathy for her Pakistan People's Party, which won a resounding victory in the February national elections.

Last week, Zardari and Sharif, head of the other coalition party, appeared to present a united front after announcing plans to impeach the President. But many here wonder how long the honeymoon will last in what analysts are calling a marriage of convenience.

Ahmed Rashid, a regional terrorism expert and Pakistani author, said he doubts the coalition government is prepared to confront the terrorism challenge within its borders. In his view, the government is likely to remain a junior partner to the military in any future decisions about how to confront extremist fighters.

Yet it is the government, not the military that is likely to face criticism at home and from its international allies.

"There's going to be enormous pressure on the civilian government from the American administration to get their acts together, to show that they can confront militancy in Pakistan," Rashid said. "It will be a test of the coalition, which I think will fall apart."

Coalition government leaders were expected to meet again Tuesday before making an announcement about their plans for selecting a new leader.

Candace Rondeaux, *Washington Post* online, August 19, 2008

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/18/AR2008081800418_2.html?hpid=topnews&sid=ST2008081800520&cs_pos=

THE LAST PUNCH

The final push for Musharraf came from the Army top brass which was sucked into this controversy by the outgoing dictator himself primarily to save his skin from a sure impeachment, sources told The News on Monday.

The undisclosed, complicated rounds of talks between Musharraf, Asif Ali Zardari, the Army top brass, and some foreign friends continued for about two weeks culminating in a situation where the chief of Army staff made it clear to Musharraf that the Army would not interfere in the political process even if Musharraf is impeached.

"You will have to go now," was the message that trickled through following these parleys. Musharraf, in return for ironclad guarantees to resign on August 18, wanted guarantees that he would not be tried under any charges and would be given indemnity.

These guarantees were provided to him, the sources said. The decision of Musharraf's resignation, its procedure, and the timing were finalised between the nights of August 16 and 17. According to the deal, which sources claimed was just an "understanding", Musharraf will continue to stay in the Army House Rawalpindi for a month or so.

During his stay, he will be provided tight security by the Army and only a select group of people would be allowed to meet him. In his highly protected abode, Musharraf will prefer to stay away from media and would not issue any statement.

Once this phase is over, he would move to a foreign country. In addition to the Army's guarantees, the emissaries of a friendly Muslim country have also been busy these days in finalising the "understanding".

It was learnt that the army, through its chief, had conveyed its decision to Musharraf to stay away from politics quite early. Despite that Musharraf turned to them when the chips were down. The dragging of the Army into politics, however, did not serve any purpose and Musharraf had to seek the intervention of his handpicked judiciary, which, as was expected, refused to oblige him at this crunch time.

The final straw came when Musharraf, about four weeks ago, started toying with the idea of dissolving the assemblies. His visits to Quetta and Karachi and the tone of his speeches, which he delivered there, proved to be his Waterloo.

Asif Zardari, feeling the heat of an impending sword, decided to go for the impeachment but never wanted Musharraf's trial under Article 6. In the meetings that followed between the two main coalition partners, the PPP advocated a "walk away" for Musharraf.

But Musharraf, who not only wanted an indemnity in return for his resignation, had also been siring the ambition to play one more stint in Pakistan's future politics. Hence, he wanted to stay in Pakistan.

For Musharraf's possible future role, at least two of his former ministers have already launched a party and a pressure group. This party and an NGO, which might have served as Musharraf's launching pad into formal politics, are heavily funded by unknown sources. The offices have been set up and organisers appointed.

However, Musharraf's days were numbered when the numbers game tilted heavily in favour of the coalition and the impeachment became a real possibility. By the weekend, the coalition had assembled the support of 354 members of parliament although they required 295 for the impeachment.

This was the time when the commando felt cornered and his nerves shattered and he agreed to follow the advice of some of his close friends to trade his resignation for an indemnity. However, the burden to conjure up a two-thirds majority in the houses of parliament for this indemnity would lie with the PPP which will have to cobble together the required number.

For this the PPP will need the support of the PML-Q and the MQM to grant indemnity to Musharraf as the PML-N has decided to abstain in case a bill is tabled to give legal cover to Musharraf's unconstitutional acts. The PML-N ministers will return to the cabinet only after the restoration of the judges but the party would continue to extend its support to the coalition on other issues.

Absar Alam, *The News*, August 19, 2008
http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=16688

PPP, PML (N) MEET TO DISCUSS MUSHARRAF'S SUCCESSOR

Pakistan's Law Minister said on Tuesday that the government had not struck an immunity deal with Pervez Musharraf, who resigned this week as the nation's President in the face of possible impeachment.

Also Tuesday, ruling coalition leaders were expected to meet to discuss replacing the ousted President and possibly decide on how to deal with restoring dozens of judges he fired last year.

Law Minister Farooq Naek told reporters that coalition leaders had yet to make decisions on "accountability" for Musharraf. The second-biggest party in the government has said the longtime U.S.-backed leader should be tried for treason, which could lead to the death penalty.

"There is no deal with the President, and he had himself resigned," Naek said.

Local media reports have suggested Musharraf might leave the country for security reasons _ he is despised by Islamist militants and deeply unpopular among ordinary Pakistanis.

During his resignation speech Monday, the President did not specify his plans, saying only that his future was in the hands of the people. Musharraf's exit leaves the politicians who pushed out the stalwart American ally facing severe challenges such as militancy and economic problems in an already impoverished and volatile country.

Besides discussing possible Presidents and the judges, coalition leaders will discuss "the future plans of Musharraf" said Farhatullah Babar, a ruling party spokesman.

Babar also confirmed that the National Assembly speaker accepted Musharraf's resignation Monday night, while Mohammed Mian Soomro, the Senate chairman, had taken charge as acting President.

Pakistan's President is elected by lawmakers, a process that is supposed to be completed within 30 days.

How the coalition government deals with succession _ whether it leads to a power struggle or a united front _ is a looming question at a critical time for the country. Analysts say earlier infighting over Musharraf's future and the mechanics of bringing back the judges had distracted the government from tackling important issues.

"There is a huge challenge ahead," said Shafqat Mahmood, a political analyst. "Now this whole Musharraf excuse is behind us. Now people are going to be focusing on their performance."

Musharraf, seized power in a 1999 coup and dominated Pakistan for years, supporting the U.S. in the war on terror. But his popularity sank over time.

Pakistanis blamed rising violence in the country on the Musharraf's alliance with Washington. For many, his decisions to sack the judges and impose temporary emergency rule last year _ aimed at avoiding challenges to his rule _ were a final straw.

His rivals won February parliamentary elections, largely sidelining him while clamoring for him to quit. They announced an impeachment campaign earlier this month, leading Musharraf to ultimately calculate he could not stay. In his speech Monday, Musharraf listed the many problems now facing Pakistan, including its sinking economy and a chronic power shortage, and suggested his opponents were targeting him to mask their own failings.

"I am going with the satisfaction that whatever I have done was for the people and for the country ... I hope the nation and the people will forgive my mistakes," he said.

The Hindu, August 19, 2008

<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200808191140.htm>

NO DEAL YET IN MUSHARRAF TALKS

Leaders of Pakistan's ruling coalition have met in Islamabad to discuss who will succeed their long-time opponent, former President Pervez Musharraf.

Mr Musharraf stepped down on Monday after nine years in power to avoid a move by the government to impeach him.

The coalition, led by the parties of the late Benazir Bhutto and ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, held a first, inconclusive round of talks on Monday.

The coalition partners have agreed to meet again in three days time.

The BBC's Syed Shoaib Hasan says that it appears that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) need more time to resolve their differences over Mr Musharraf's long-term replacement and over the reappointment of scores of judges sacked by Mr Musharraf last year.

Bloodless Coup

Mr Musharraf himself has been replaced by caretaker President Muhammad Mian Soomro following his resignation on Monday.

Mr Soomro, Speaker of the senate and a political ally of Mr Musharraf, will lead the country until a new election is held by parliament.

It is unclear whether Mr Musharraf, who took power in a bloodless coup in 1999, will face prosecution now that he is out of power.

Leaders of the PPP, Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari (son of Mr Zardari and late Benazir Bhutto) met other members of the coalition in Islamabad on Tuesday to try and hammer out a deal.

Nawaz Sharif, who as PML-N leader heads the second biggest party in the coalition, was greeted by Mr Zardari and Bilawal.

Pakistan's Minister for Law, Farooq Naek, said before the negotiations that the coalition parties would make a "united decision" on the important issues.

But correspondents say that will not happen before the end of the week.

The PPP and PML-N distrust each other and have already said different things about Mr Musharraf's future, the BBC's Charles Haviland reports from Islamabad.

Mr Zardari's party said it believed Mr Musharraf might have immunity from prosecution.

But Mr Sharif's party argues he should stand trial for, among other things, abrogating the constitution.

Well known in the West for his support for the US after the 11 September 2001 attacks, President Musharraf had grown increasingly unpopular at home.

With the government on the verge of impeaching him, the former soldier's instinct was to fight on, correspondents say, but in his lengthy address he said he was stepping down for the good of the nation.

Bilawal Bhutto said he hoped the country could move forward after Mr Musharraf's departure.

Mrs. Bhutto was assassinated in Rawalpindi in December last year.

BBC News, August 19, 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7569311.stm

PAKISTAN PARTY CHIEF PROPOSES ZARDARI AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

A chief of former Pakistan's ruling party on Wednesday proposed that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari be the Presidential candidate.

Altaf Hussain, leader of the ethnic Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), told private Geo TV that Zardari was the right person for the Presidential slot.

The ruling coalition, including the PPP and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has remained divided over the Presidential candidacy after former President Pervez Musharraf announced his resignation on Monday.

Under the constitution, the election of the President could be held within thirty days after Musharraf left his office.

Former ruling party MQM was defeated in the Feb. 18 elections and sat on the opposition bench.

Xinhua online, August 20, 2008
http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-08/20/content_9535500.htm

PAKISTAN ANNOUNCES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DATE

Politicians set to elect a successor to Pervez Musharraf on September 6.

Pakistani politicians will elect a new President early next month, the election commission said today.

Members of the federal and provincial assemblies must select a successor to Pervez Musharraf, who resigned on Monday to avoid impeachment charges.

The commission secretary, Kanwar Dilshad, said the vote would take place on September 6.

Nomination papers would be accepted from August 26 and could be withdrawn until August 30, he said. He did not announce a final date for nominations.

Wrangling over the presidency is adding to the pressure on the shaky coalition government, which pushed Musharraf from power.

Benazir Bhutto's widower, Asif Ali Zardari, who heads the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) – the largest party in parliament – has emerged as a likely candidate for the role.

"The majority of the party thinks that Asif Zardari should be President," said Farzana Raja, a PPP spokeswoman.

A decision on the party's candidate was expected today, she said.

Under the constitution, a new President should be elected within 30 days of an incumbent's resignation.

The coalition government's second-biggest party, that of the former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, has threatened to quit the alliance, demanding that judges dismissed last year by Musharraf be restored to the bench.

Sharif agreed today to a debate in parliament next week on the restoration of judges, while setting a new deadline of Wednesday for the demand to be met.

"This resolution should be tabled before parliament on Monday. On Wednesday, it should be passed and the judges restored," Sharif said.

The PPP is reluctant to restore the judges because of concern the deposed chief justice might take up challenges to an amnesty from charges against Zardari and other party leaders last year, analysts said.

But even if Sharif's party were to move to the opposition benches in parliament it would not force a parliamentary election, analysts said. The PPP is the biggest party in parliament and should be able to gather enough support to remain in government.

The PPP and Sharif's party were bitter rivals during the 1990s when Bhutto and Sharif served two terms as prime minister.

Thrown together by opposition to Musharraf, their differences are likely to loom larger now that he has gone, analysts said.

The Guardian online, August 22, 2008

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/aug/22/pakistan.president>

SINDH ASSEMBLY BACKS ZARDARI: MARRI

The Sindh Assembly on Friday passed a unanimous resolution showing its support to Pakistan Peoples Party Co-Chairman Asif Zardari as candidate for President of Pakistan.

Talking to newsmen at the Sindh Assembly premises, Sindh Information Minister Shazia Marri said '(The) new President of the country should be from Sindh instead of other provinces and PPP Co-Chairman is most suitable for this office,'

'Talks are underway with PML-N seeking its support for Asif Ali Zardari's election as President of Pakistan. We are confident PML-N would extend its support to the PPP candidate,' she added.

She said the PPP had some reservations regarding the existing local government system and changes would be introduced to it soon. She said the PPP want to make the LG system more effective through new amendments in the law.

Marri also said that Article 58-2B of the Constitution would be annulled before the election of President of the country or soon after that.

'Annulment of Article 58-2B is priority of PPP. This Article would be repealed even after PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari's election as President of the country,' she said, adding Mr Zardari is determined to make the assembly independent by annulment of this Article.

Dawn, August 22, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/sindh/sindh+assembly+backs+zardari+582b+to+be+repealed+marri>

PAKISTAN SCHEDULES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FOR SEPTEMBER 6

Pakistan will hold a Presidential election on September 6 to pick a successor to Pervez Musharraf, who resigned this week to avoid impeachment charges, the election commission said Friday.

Hours after the announcement, lawmakers from the party of slain former Pakistan Premier Benazir Bhutto unanimously nominated her widower, Asif Ali Zardari, to stand as their Presidential candidate.

The selection of an election date came as a key member of the feuding coalition government extended his deadline for the restoration of judges sacked by Musharraf last year, an issue threatening to tear apart the ruling alliance.

A double Taliban suicide bombing at Pakistan's biggest weapons factory on Thursday, the deadliest ever attack on a Pakistani military site, has put fresh pressure on the coalition to end its bickering.

"Presidential elections will be held on September 6. The nomination papers can be filed from August 26," election commission secretary Kanwar Dilshad told a news conference.

Under Pakistan's Constitution, the new President must be elected by a simultaneous sitting of the upper and lower houses of the national Parliament and the country's four provincial assemblies, he said.

Nominations will be scrutinized on August 28 and the final date for any withdrawals will be August 30, Dilshad added.

Asif Ali Zardari, who now leads the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and is a frontrunner for the presidency, will soon announce whether he will run, said Information Minister Sherry Rehman. "Zardari thanked Pakistan People's Party of which he is the co-chairman and said he will announce his decision within the next 24 hours," Rehman told reporters in Islamabad.

The PPP remains embroiled in a critical dispute with Nawaz Sharif, another ex-prime minister, over the reinstatement of the judges whom Musharraf deposed under a state of emergency last year.

Sharif pushed back his deadline for the judges to get their jobs back until Wednesday next week, having previously threatened to quit the coalition if they were not restored by Friday.

Sharif said representatives of the two parties would draft a resolution on restoring the judges over the weekend and then introduce it in Parliament on Monday, with a vote on Wednesday.

"Wednesday should be the day for reinstatement of judges," Sharif told a news conference after meeting the leaders of two smaller parties in the coalition who had been trying to mediate the dispute. "We do not want to quit the coalition and wish to go along with our coalition partners."

But there was no immediate comment from Zardari or the PPP on the issue. A resolution would require their support, but they have shown no sign yet of keeping a pledge made in May to restore the judges.

The fate of the 60 judges, including the chief justice, has become a political sticking point with crucial repercussions for the coalition.

Critics have suggested that Zardari does not want chief justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry to come back because he could overturn an amnesty on corruption charges that Musharraf granted him and Bhutto last year.

The amnesty allowed Bhutto and Zardari to return from years in exile in return for an agreement on a power-sharing deal with Musharraf, which later collapsed.

Bhutto was killed in a suicide attack in December and the parties in the current ruling coalition defeated Musharraf's allies in polls earlier this year.

Daily Star (Beirut), August 23, 2008

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=2&article_id=95315

GOVERNING COALITION COLLAPSES IN PAKISTAN

Dispute over presidency, fate of judges.

Pakistan's ruling coalition broke apart Monday amid a political battle over the presidency, paralyzing the U.S.-backed government at a time when Taliban insurgents here and in neighboring Afghanistan appear to be gaining ground.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif said he would oppose the candidacy of his onetime political partner Asif Ali Zardari, leader of the Pakistan People's Party and widower of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. President Pervez Musharraf, a longtime U.S. ally, resigned under threat of impeachment a week ago, and Parliament is set to elect his successor on Sept. 6.

Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N party, said he decided to leave the coalition government after Zardari announced plans Saturday to run for President and reneged on a promise to reinstate dozens of judges deposed under Musharraf's rule. Pakistan's judges and lawyers led the struggle against Musharraf and have demanded more power for the judiciary and stronger checks on the executive.

"We have been forced to take this decision, which we take with great regret," Sharif said Monday during a nationally televised news conference in Islamabad. "Zardari pledged in writing to reinstate the judges within one day of Musharraf leaving."

Sharif's party garnered the second-largest share of votes in national parliamentary elections in February, after campaigning aggressively on a promise to reinstate the judiciary. Zardari, who served several years in prison on corruption charges that were rescinded under an amnesty deal struck between Bhutto and Musharraf, has appeared reluctant to strengthen a

judiciary whose leaders have sought to curtail the misuse of government power.

In Switzerland, where officials had been investigating money-laundering charges against Zardari, Geneva's prosecutor general, Daniel Zappelli, announced Monday that he had closed the case, saying an investigation had produced too little for him to continue, the Associated Press reported. The Swiss had been investigating allegations that Bhutto and Zardari used Swiss banks to launder millions of dollars in kickbacks. Bhutto and Zardari denied the allegations.

Zardari's Geneva lawyer welcomed the decision. "This result confirms what Mr. Zardari has argued since 1997," Saverio Lembo told the AP.

U.S. officials have tried to distance themselves from Pakistan's political crisis, saying that the election is an internal affair. But after devastating military setbacks in Afghanistan, U.S. officials have become increasingly vocal about Pakistan's lack of progress in containing the threat from the Taliban and al-Qaeda, which operate from remote mountain areas bordering Afghanistan.

In recent weeks, thousands of refugees have fled fighting between insurgents and the Pakistani military in the tribal areas. Many have sought shelter in eastern Afghanistan, which threatens to further complicate the U.S. military mission in the increasingly fractious region.

Sharif's party selected former Supreme Court chief justice Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui to run for President. A longtime political ally of Sharif, Siddiqui was appointed chief justice in July 1999 but was ousted months later when he refused to endorse the military coup led by Musharraf that ended Sharif's term as prime minister. A critic of Musharraf and Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies, Siddiqui is a highly respected figure in Pakistan's legal community and could pose a serious challenge to Zardari.

"He is the one who refused to take an oath under Musharraf's rule," Sharif said of Siddiqui. "This is a great Pakistani. His service to this country is unmatched."

Hours after Sharif announced Siddiqui's candidacy, Zardari, who assumed leadership of his party after Bhutto was assassinated in December, appealed to Sharif to rejoin the alliance in a televised address.

The general secretary of Musharraf's party, Mushahid Hussain, announced Monday that he would also run for the presidency. Hussain, a former journalist educated at Georgetown University who chairs the Pakistani Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, challenged Zardari to a televised debate hours after the coalition split was announced.

"Let people see the differences between the two of us," Hussain said. "Corruption and integrity is at issue, and we don't want to revert to the politics of corruption."

Sharif and Zardari called for Musharraf's impeachment on Aug. 7, effectively forcing him from power. United in their opposition to Musharraf,

the two politicians nonetheless failed to agree on when and how to restore 60 judges fired by Musharraf. Sharp divisions between Sharif and Zardari emerged within days of Musharraf's resignation when Sharif vowed last week to quit the coalition if the judges were not restored by a parliamentary measure on Monday.

At the center of the split is the status of Pakistan's deposed Supreme Court chief justice, Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry. Chaudhry became an opposition symbol after Musharraf suspended and then fired him last year. Since then he has become the public face of a powerful movement led by thousands of lawyers.

Currently, Zardari's Pakistan People's Party holds the largest share of seats in the lower house of Parliament and in at least two provincial assemblies. But a last-minute shift in alliances could frustrate Zardari's efforts to come to power eight months after his wife's assassination.

The winning candidate needs 352 votes out of 702 combined votes in the National Assembly, Senate and four provincial assemblies of Pakistan to take the presidency.

Under Musharraf's rule, Parliament granted the presidency sweeping powers through a series of constitutional amendments. Zardari has said his party would work to strike that amendment from the constitution, which would effectively return executive power to the prime minister.

Candace Rondeaux, *Washington Post* online, August 26, 2008
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/25/AR2008082500173.html?hpid=sec-world>

SLATE SET FOR PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Pakistan's election commission has announced the final list of three candidates for the upcoming Presidential election.

The commission said Saturday regional and national lawmakers will be able to choose from Pakistan Peoples Party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, retired judge Said-uz-Zaman Siddiqui and Mushahid Hussain Sayed.

Siddiqui is aligned with the Pakistan Muslim League-N party of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, while Sayed represents the party of former President Pervez Musharraf.

Mr. Musharraf resigned last week following a series of carefully orchestrated no-confidence votes in parliament.

He lost public support after he declared a state of emergency and fired several judges who planned to rule on the legitimacy of his presidency.

The election is set for September 6.

VOA News, August 30, 2008
<http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-08-30-voa12.cfm>

PAKISTAN OFFICIAL SAYS ZARDARI TO WIN CLEAR MAJORITY IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A Pakistani official said Tuesday that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari will have a sweeping election victory in the Presidential election scheduled on Sept. 6.

Pakistan's Information Minister Sherry Rahman told media that three provincial assemblies in the country have passed resolutions giving full support to Zardari and, therefore, there was no hurdle in his sweeping victory in the Presidential election.

Zardari, widower of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, will compete with former Chief Justice Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui and Senator Mushahid Hussain in the election.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nominated Siddiqui as its candidate after PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif quit the coalition and sat on opposition bench last Monday due to a row with the PPP on judiciary issue.

The former ruling party Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) nominated Senator Mushahid Hussain as its Presidential candidate.

The Presidential election is scheduled on Sept. 6 after former President Pervez Musharraf resigned on Aug. 18 under the impeachment pressure.

The Electoral College for the Presidential election includes the four provincial assemblies, National Assembly and the Senate.

Xinhua online, September 2, 2008

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-09/02/content_9757179.htm

TENSIONS FLARE IN PAKISTAN DAYS FROM PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Tensions are flaring across Pakistan just days before the election of a new President. A gunman Wednesday attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, who was not hurt in the attack on his motorcade a short distance from the capital city. Trouble is also rising in the northwestern tribal region after a cross-border incursion by Afghan-based foreign forces reportedly killed a number of civilians.

The assassin, who remains unidentified, fired shots at the prime minister's motorcade on the highway between Islamabad and the nearby city of Rawalpindi near Islamabad airport, where his flight was about to land.

Initially it was reported that Gilani was in one of two bulletproof cars that were hit by bullets, while no one was reported injured. Later, officials said the motorcade was on its way to the airport to pick him up and that none of his staff were in the convoy either.

Nevertheless, the attempt was seen as reflecting a major lapse in security, which is exceptionally tight around the country's top leadership, and as highlighting the raging violence in the only nuclear-armed Muslim nation.

Gilani, who became prime minister in March after an election victory by his Pakistan People's Party (PPP), was apparently returning from Lahore, where he was gathering support for Asif Zardari ahead of Presidential elections on Saturday. Zardari is the widower of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, also of the PPP, who was killed in an assassination bombing in December. ...

Middle East Times (Washington), September 3, 2008
http://www.metimes.com/International/2008/09/03/tensions_flare_in_pakistan_days_from_presidential_election/4958/

THE OTHER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Pakistanis may be taking certain, but of necessity vicarious, pleasure, in the Presidential election that has come upon them, but it is almost surely not as important to the world that the USA also has an election year.

But while this has only been made an election year because Pervez Musharraf chose to resign rather than face a long-drawn impeachment process borrowed from the USA itself, that this would be an American election year was carved in stone when their constitution was adopted over two centuries ago. Pakistan was not due for a Presidential election until 2012, Musharraf having been re-elected only last year, and unlike Pakistan, a Presidential resignation does not in the USA cause a fresh election, but succession by the vice-President, of which Pakistan has none. ...

M.A. Niazi, *The Nation*, September 4, 2008
<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/Columns/05-Sep-2008/The-other-presidential-election>

I WILL BALANCE THE POWERS OF PRESIDENCY

Asif Ali Zardari, the front-runner in the race for presidency, vowed on Thursday that if elected, he would trim the President's sweeping powers, which included the authority to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the prime minister.

"If I am elected President, one of my highest priorities will be to support the prime minister, the National Assembly and the Senate to amend the Constitution to bring back into balance the powers of the presidency and thereby reduce its ability to bring down democratic governance," Mr Zardari said.

In an article in *The Washington Post*, Mr Zardari noted that under the Constitution, the President was to be the head of state but not responsible for day-to-day governance. Two military dictators, Mohammed Ziaul Haq and Pervez Musharraf, reconfigured the Constitution to consolidate their power; they broadened the President's responsibilities to include the authority to sack democratically elected governments, he added.

His comments came ahead of the September 6 Presidential election --- a triangular contest among Mr Zardari, PML-N's nominee Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui and PML-Q's Mushahid Hussain Sayed.

Mr Zardari claimed that the "gravity of the situation" had led him, at the insistence of his party, to run for President. Otherwise, "my children and I are still mourning our beloved leader, wife and mother, Benazir Bhutto."

Mr Zardari also vowed to build an independent judiciary in Pakistan, rejecting allegations that he only supported 'selective' reinstatement of judges sacked by President Musharraf during emergency rule last year.

"It is essential that our nation's independent judiciary be reconstituted. Judges who were dismissed arbitrarily by Musharraf in November are being restored to the bench by the government my party leads, and I believe Parliament must enact a system of judicial reform to ensure that future judges are selected based on merit," he wrote.

Mr Zardari also claimed that the majority of Pakistani people had been "ignored and even subjugated" by the country's 'establishment'. "This concentration of unchecked power has strained our government to the point of fracture. "The PPP is the only party with support in all four provinces as well as in Kashmir and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The PPP's success in democratising the presidency will strengthen Pakistan's viability as a nation," he said.

In the article, Mr Zardari focussed his criticism on central and northern Punjab, saying that this region was ruling over the rest of Pakistan. Interestingly, this is also the region where his allied party PML-N received majority of votes in the last election.

Mr Zardari said Pakistani politics had always been a struggle between democratic forces around the country and "an elite oligarchy, located exclusively in a region stretching between Lahore and Rawalpindi-Islamabad". "The provinces of Sindh, North-West Frontier and Balochistan, as well as all of rural Punjab, have often been excluded from governance," Mr Zardari said in the article titled "Democracy within our reach".

Mr Zardari said the dictatorial forces that had dominated Pakistan for so long were now seeking partners to destabilise the new democratic government. "The establishment and its allies have unleashed a barrage of attacks against me, my wife and even our children," he wrote.

"This is consistent with the politics of personal destruction and character assassination that have defined the elites for more than 30 years."

Mr Zardari also vowed that Pakistan would continue to work with the United States to defeat terrorism. “Chief among the challenges that all Pakistanis face is the threat of global terrorism, demonstrated again in this week’s assassination attempt against Prime Minister Gilani.

“I will work to defeat the domestic Taliban insurgency and to ensure that Pakistani territory is not used to launch terrorist attacks on our neighbours or on Nato forces in Afghanistan,” he added.

“We stand with the United States, Britain, Spain and others who have been attacked,” he said in the article.

“It is important to remember that Pakistan, too, is a victim of terrorism ... Our soldiers are dying on the front lines; our children are being blown up by suicide bombers.”

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/zardari+vows+to+trim+Presidents+powers>

FATA LEGISLATORS DECIDE TO DITCH PPP

Parliamentarians from tribal areas have decided not to support PPP candidate Asif Ali Zardari in the Presidential election in protest against continuing military action in their region.

All senators and MNAs from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, except those belonging to the JUI-F, decided at a meeting on Thursday not to vote for Mr Zardari in protest against the government’s failure to accept their demand for halting the military operation.

Their parliamentary leader Munir Khan Aurakzai told 15 MNAs and Senators were in the group.

He said that in another meeting on Friday the legislators would decide whom to support in the Presidential election. ‘We will, however, not vote for Mr Zardari unless the operation is stopped,’ he said.

Mr Aurakzai said the group had informed Mr Zardari, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and PM’s Adviser on Interior Rehman Malik about their grievances. He said they had assured the group that the operation would be stopped but no practical steps were being taken.

It may be mentioned that the legislators had earlier offered conditional support to the PPP candidate. The government had promised that the military operation would be halted, especially during Ramazan. But the situation has worsened with an attack by US-led forces in South Waziristan on Thursday, leaving 20 people dead.

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/fata+legislators+decide+to+ditch+ppp>

PETITION AGAINST PRESIDENTIAL POLL REJECTED

Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court (IHC) here on Thursday disposed of a writ petition filed by Syed Iqtdar Shah for postponement of Presidential election.

He was seeking disclosure of the name of the parliamentarian who wrote “Pakhtunkhwa Zindabad and Pakistan Murdabad” at his ballot paper in the Presidential election of 1997.

However, the IHC CJ Sardar Mohammad Aslam directed the Secretariat police to submit its report within 15 days with the Deputy Registrar Office regarding the FIR that was registered in this case.

According to the details the petitioner Syed Muhammad Iqtdar Shah has taken the view before the IHC that in the Presidential election of 1997 some member of the parliament wrote on his ballot paper “Pakhtunkhwa Zindabad, Pakistan Murdabad”.

The petitioner Iqtdar Shah then filed his writ petition before the Lahore High Court that in 2007 seeking direction to the secretariat police to register an FIR.

The petitioner said that the majority of the sitting member of the Parliament in the present assembly was those who were also members of the Parliament in the 1997 National Assembly. He prayed that till the disclosure of the name of that person who wrote that slogan, the Presidential election may be stayed.

The petitioner has also adopted the view that the Defence Minister Ch Ahmad Mukhtar knows the name of that person.

In another case Malik Abdur Rehman Sadiq a leader of a local religious organization of Gujranwala has also challenged the Presidential election before the IHC.

The petitioner has adopted the view that as a candidate for the office of President he was to submit his nomination papers but the administration stopped him from doing so.

In his writ petition Malik Abdur Rehman Sadiq has said that all the three candidates that belong to the three major political parties are not eligible for the office of the President.

He said if the September 6 election were not stopped one of ineligible persons would be elected as President. He has prayed to the court to stay the election. The IHC CJ Sardar Mohammad Aslam would hear the case on Friday.

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/petition+against+presidential+poll+rejected>

JUSTICE SAEED PROMISES POLICY CHANGE

PML-N Presidential candidate Justice (retd) Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui has said that the present government was pursuing policies of the previous regime and he would change the policies, if he is elected to the office of President.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, Justice Siddiqui appealed to legislators from Balochistan to cast their votes after making an objective assessment of the candidates.

He said that if elected he would make concerted efforts to curb terrorism, reinstate the deposed judges and alleviate poverty.

Justice Siddiqui said that the people were dissatisfied with the policies pursued by the present government in Fata and Balochistan. The people of Balochistan should get adequate representation in the corridors of power in Islamabad and that the government should accept their genuine demands.

He said the President being a symbol of the federation should be a non-controversial and neutral person with no affiliation with a political party.

The PML-N candidate said that the election of Asif Ali Zardari, who was also co-chairman of the PPP, as President with powers under the 17th Amendment could push the country towards unitary form of government and endanger its parliamentary character.

He said that he had met PML-Q leaders and sought their support but they said that the PML-N leadership should talk to them.

In reply to a question, Justice Siddiqui said that the 'reappointment' of some judges of the Sindh and Punjab high courts was a ploy to weaken the lawyers' movement and divide the deposed judges.

About reports relating to the mental health of Mr Zardari, he said that he had read the reports in newspapers but did not have any more information in this regard.

PML-N Secretary-General Iqbal Zafar Jhagra suggested that Justice Siddiqui should be made a joint candidate of his party and the PML-Q and the two parties should play the role of joint opposition in parliament.

He said that if the PML-N could form a coalition with the PPP there was no harm in forging an alliance with the PML-Q. He called upon the Chaudhrys of Gujarat to withdraw Mushahid Hussain Syed in favour of Justice Siddiqui.

Mr Jhagra claimed that the PML-N had wholeheartedly supported the PPP in forming the government at the centre, but Mr Zardari disappointed Nawaz Sharif by violating their agreements. He said his party could not remain in the coalition because Mr Zardari had refused to reinstate the deposed judges.

About reopening of cases against Mr Sharif and members of his family by the National Accountability Bureau, he said the cases were fabricated.

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/justice+saeed+promises+policy+change>

JI SENATORS TO VOTE FOR SIDDIQUI

Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) Amir Qazi Husain Ahmad says election of Asif Ali Zardari as the head of state will not be a good omen for the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) itself because he is a controversial personality.

He was talking to the media after opening an Islamic fashion centre at Mansoorah here on Wednesday.

He said that JI senators would vote for Justice Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui (retired) for the party considered him the most suitable candidate for the office. He said though the JI did not want to bitter the political situation, it was a fact that his party had suggested boycott of the general election for the electoral process held under President Pervez Musharraf could not be expected to be fair and impartial.

He recalled that his party's stance was that all the parties should first launch a forceful movement to get rid of Musharraf, restore the Constitution to its 1973 position and then an independent election commission under an impartial interim government should conduct the electoral exercise.

He said PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif earlier accepted this stance, but then turned back and took part in the elections, accepting its results. 'The nation as well as Mian Sahib is now facing the consequences.'

He said after accepting results of the general election, it was not possible to reject results of the Presidential polls.

He said they had never accepted MQM's electoral success for the regional party had heavily rigged the polls, and the process had been captured and screened by some news channels as turnout at some polling stations in Karachi was more than 100 per cent.

Earlier, opening the Islamic fashion centre (Qawareer Fasion), he lashed out at secular elements' propaganda that hijab (veil) was just a customary obligation and a symbol of backwardness and suppression of women.

He said the spirit of World Hijab Day (Sept 4) was to counter the western propaganda linking hijab with backwardness, terrorism and repression of women. He said the secular lobbies involved in anti-Islam propaganda ridiculed all Islamic principles but their prime targets were hijab and jihad since they enjoyed key positions in fortifying and promoting Islam.

The JI leader said the secular elements attacked hijab by attributing it with the oppression of women in Muslim society whereas it was the symbol of women's modesty, prestige and honour.

He said the Muslim women observing Hijab Day showed that they observe hijab for the sake of modesty and protect their honour.

He wondered why the infidels around the world were afraid of hijab, saying they probably felt it was the symbol of Muslim civilisation's renaissance. He said by violating human rights many western governments like France, Holland and Denmark had banned hijab, terming it a religious symbol and holding that they could not allow a religious symbolism in their secular societies.

Qazi criticised joint celebration of Independence Day at Wagah, saying the dresses of women dancing on both sides of the borders were not different.

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/ji+senators+to+vote+for+siddiqui+qazi>

EX-SERVICEMEN WANT ELECTION DEFERRED

The association of retired military personnel has called upon the government to scrap the 17th Amendment and defer the Presidential election till it is repealed.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, Lt-Gen (retd) Ali Quli Khan said a national consensus should be developed on the Presidential election process because it was getting controversial.

The postponement of the poll, he said, would not pose any constitutional problem because the Sept 18 deadline for the new election could still be met.

He said the Pakistan Ex-servicemen Association “sees the dark clouds looming over Pakistan’s horizon” and the nation appeared to be in a trauma. As if this was not enough, the manner in which the Presidential election was held had engendered additional concerns, he said.

The democratic process initiated on Feb 18 is taking the country towards instability. The economic mismanagement has brought miseries to the people and the military action in Fata and Balochistan has rendered thousands of people homeless. On the other hand, the retired general said, US attacks inside Pakistan continued unabated. “At the same time we continue to receive ‘do more’ sermons. Pakistan today faces a great challenge to its sovereignty and integrity.”

Ex-servicemen feel that the journey towards democracy which began on Feb 18 is in a state of uncertainty. After getting rid of a dictator, mainly

through the struggle of lawyers and civil society, the country is once again in the grip of political intrigues, turmoil and manoeuvring.

He said that there appeared to be no national cohesion at a time when the leadership had to cope with serious challenges. Parliament, which should reflect the people's aspirations and concerns, has been made completely ineffective and irrelevant.

Gen (ret'd) Quli Khan said that a major source of concern for ex-servicemen was the control of the Nuclear Command Authority since under the 17th amendment the President was its chairman.

"NCA position must be defined as to who has the finger on the button."

He said the association had constituted a delegation to meet the parliamentary committees on defence and foreign affairs.

About foreign policy, the retired general said it needed a major remodelling brought in line with the wishes of the people. Instead of accepting external dictations, the policy of dialogue should be adopted.

He said that the association was sending a delegation on a conciliatory tour of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Swat and Kurram Agency with the objective of ending the military operation and knowing the viewpoints of other parties and in order to find a way to eradicate some of the un-Islamic and immoral practices in the areas. The delegation will also include members of the civil society, he said.

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/exservicemen+want+election+deferred>

OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS AND THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Overseas Pakistanis in many ways are queerer than the local residents. Now this fellow Nasser Ahmad who migrated to England in the early sixties from Rawalpindi's Babu Mohalla thinks Musharraf made a mistake listening to advice to resign just as Gen Ayub did disgusted with public uproar.

This love for the martial leader is not exactly hero-worship but the belief the uniform has something to do with stability, of which, by the way, a close aunt is ideology, by which a great many of us continue to swear. It is love of the land indeed, which from Slough looks secure with the baton and the boot.

His more republican younger brother, Munir, who runs a Karrahi corner shop, however thinks Musharraf could have made a smarter exit by restoring the judiciary the same way he had dismissed it. This way he could have restored himself also in the public eye somewhat while blocking the road

to the presidency whose doors his resignation has left ajar for his go-getting dealmakers.

Salim, who left a government job in the eighties because he could not get a government accommodation in Islamabad after 15 years of service and now has a house of his own in Luton, criticised people who never objected to khaki Presidents, never questioned their ability to govern, never asked about their education, experience, morals, probity, political background, their assets etc but were now raising eyebrows on the likelihood of Mr Zardari becoming the President.

He said if the Electoral College formed under the constitution chooses Zardari, he would be the country's lawful President and his position would be unquestionable. How he behaves in that office would be a different matter altogether, but to oppose his candidature at this stage was hypocritical of those who have been accepting gatecrashers without a whimper. He rejected Mushahid Hussain outright and expressed shock and awe at his gall in trying to step into the black boots he had been licking for eight years.

Saajid, who hails from Kahuta and has an accountancy business in Coventry, said that according to his calculation Mushahid was actually a Zardari nominee added to the gross to deduct any numbers he could from Justice Siddiqui's net. He was sure that the crafty Shujaat Hussain had cut a deal with Zardari at the behest of Musharraf or whoever the former President now represents. Asked why then Mushahid was asking uncomfortable questions about Zardari's assets and raising the issue of the reported release from forfeiture of \$60 million by a Swiss court, the accountant said it was nothing but 'Noora Kushti'. "Samjeya karo sir jee !" (try to understand) he winked meaningfully.

Zubair Bhatti, who had a flourishing retail business in the Melody market and had left Pakistan in disgust when Gen Zia hanged Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, is still a 'jiala' at heart. He has a general store in Birmingham and is very well off. He opposes Zardari's presidency for a very different reason: his love for the Bhutto clan. He thinks by re-inducting the family into politics Zardari was endangering his own and his children's lives. He thinks they should have kept away from power politics, as there was a curse on the family like the Kennedys and the Gandhis of India.

"But they are a brave and ambitious lot, ready to buy power with their lives," he mused. Then should they have handed over the party command to the Makhdoom of Hala? No, he said. The Makhdoom lacks the spark. Could someone from Punjab assume the party leadership? No. There is no chance. You see, it must be a Bhutto, even a half Bhutto, he remarked smarting under the admission.

No such aura or magic attaches to the house of the Sharifs. But over the years, among Pakistanis living in England, they seem to have earned themselves a good name as political workers and lot of respect too for

espousing popular causes, the justice's issue in particular. Riaz Raja from Murree, who works with a legal firm in Manchester, believes that if Zardari manoeuvres the ouster of the Nawaz League from Punjab all hell would break loose and could rock the boat for the PPP in Islamabad.

He discounts the common belief about Punjab worshipping the rising sun. He pointed to the wash out the Q League suffered in the February polls because of the great awakening in civil society that has been seen since Musharraf's action against the judiciary. The present setback Nawaz is likely to suffer when Justice Siddiqui loses the Presidential race is also going to be a long-term gain for him, as the problems facing the PPP government are daunting and beyond early solution.

Zardari should not have ditched Nawaz when he needed him most but ambition got the better of him. Raja Sahib goes on and on. But it appeared he was giving voice to the general feeling of disappointment overseas Pakistanis now have about the outcome of the February polls.

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/overseas+pakistanis+and+the+presidential+race>

WHAT A BLOODY MESS

How ironic. Having reiterated time and time again over the past years that the then President of Pakistan, Gen Pervez Musharraf, was (and remains) the best of the worst lot, it was highly amusing to read in a column headed 'Musharraf's Pakistan had true potential' printed in the Boston Globe of Aug 26: 'The sad thing is that Musharraf was the best of the current lot.'

And how factual was an editorial in *The Independent* (London) of the same day which opened up: 'Even by the notoriously low standards of South Asian politics, Asif Ali Zardari, leader of the PPP, is a compromised figure, dogged by corruption charges. So it is hard to be enthused by the PPP's decision to nominate its leader as the country's next President.'

This was one day after the *Financial Times* had broken the news of the medical reports compiled by two New York-based psychiatrists, which had been filed in a London court to support an application to delay corruption cases brought against him by the Pakistan government. The diagnoses were delivered in March 2007 and successfully served their purpose. The FT report opens 'Asif Ali Zardari, the leading contender for the presidency of nuclear-armed Pakistan, was suffering from severe psychiatric problems as recently as last year, according to court documents filed by his doctors.'

The FT report has also been picked up and commented upon internationally. Pakistan is in the news again to its detriment. Presidential candidate Zardari has been diagnosed as suffering from 'emotional instability',

memory loss and concentration problems, and major depressive disorder. These court papers have caused alarm amongst the citizens of his country who question his ability, and his fitness, to occupy the Presidential chair.

In these past few days, I have been inundated with e-mails calling upon me to come to the aid of the country and save it from Zardari. Little do they know what a columnist can achieve — all he can do is save a few blind donkeys and some old trees. Even were I to approach the courts, under the present circumstances, my petition would be thrown out quicker than a wink of an eye. And the same goes for the Election Commission. Citizens of Pakistan are, these days, wary of ‘consequences’.

Now, constitutionally where does Zardari stand in view of the court-backed doubts about his mental state? The President, under Article 41(2) is required to be ‘qualified to be elected as a member of the National Assembly’. According to Article 63(a) a person is disqualified to be a member of the National Assembly if ‘he is of unsound mind and has been so declared by a competent court’.

The court in London accepted the psychiatrists’ certificates and acted upon them. Zardari, if he wishes to deny the diagnoses, must plead that the London court is incompetent and that the psychiatrists were falsifying. We must go with an editorial of Aug 28 which counselled that ‘It would be unwise to dismiss the recent revelations about the fragile state of Mr Asif Zardari’s mental health as irrelevant,’ and asked ‘Does the country really need another potentially deluded individual to lead it through these troubled times?’

Dementia, as any psychiatrist will confirm, is a progressive disorder which usually does not remit with any known treatment. A combination of major depressive disorder and post traumatic stress disorder can hamper memory and judgment. This goes a long way towards explaining the recent Zardari string of dishonoured signed agreements and broken promises.

As if the Zardari mental health state was not sufficient unto the day, news broke in Europe and the US two days later about the release by Switzerland of assets amounting to some \$60m which were frozen in 1997 by a Geneva court investigating allegations of kickbacks received by Zardari and Benazir Bhutto between 1994 and 1997 (her second term as prime minister). In June, our attorney general penned a letter to the Swiss prosecutor general informing him that neither husband nor wife had done anything illegal and that the charges were politically motivated (thank you, USA and Musharraf, for the NRO). The money laundering case was dropped and Zardari is now richer than ever having pocketed a dubious \$60m, though the PPP leader vehemently denies receiving this amount.

The investigating judge in Geneva, Daniel Devaud, was flabbergasted. ‘It would be very difficult to say that there is nothing in the files that shows there was possible corruption going on after what I have seen in there. After I heard what the general prosecutor said, I have a feeling we are talking about

two different cases.’ The Swiss release should not in any way be interpreted as a sign of innocence.

Now, let us revert to our mutilated almost incomprehensible constitution which as far as Article 62 goes is clear. To qualify as a member of the National Assembly, and thus to be able to contest the Presidential election, a man must be ‘of good character and is not commonly known as one who violates Islamic injunctions’, and he must be ‘sagacious, righteous and non-profligate and honest and ameen’. No further comment is necessary.

We must wonder how our armed forces feel about all this. After all, the President is not only their supreme commander but he has his finger on the nuclear button. Zardari and his sycophantic supine political party must ask themselves if he truly qualifies to be a head of state. He has five days in which to prove himself a patriot and a democrat. Democracy, no matter what the party slogan may proclaim, is not a form of revenge and for him to carry through his ambition (which he has nursed ever since he made up his mind to rid himself of Musharraf) would be an act of vengeance upon his country and its people.

Of the three Presidential candidates, Mushahid Hussain is by far the cleanest (the ‘best of the worst’). I have suggested to him that, as a directly affected party, he go to the courts immediately and at least attempt to obtain a stay order. The frightened people of the world and the people of Pakistan will undoubtedly support his move.

Ardeshir Cowasjee, *Dawn*, September 5, 2008
<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/what+a+bloody+mess>

THE NEED FOR PRESIDENTIAL NORMS

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani’s belief that the President and the prime minister should be from the same party to ensure political stability is not supported by Pakistan’s history.

Benazir Bhutto had Farooq Leghari elected head of state when she became prime minister the second time, but that fact did not contribute to stability or to a greater awareness on the part of the political actors to observe the rule of the game and demonstrate a greater sense of commitment to democratic norms. Indeed, by invoking article 58-2(b), and dismissing a government which enjoyed the assembly’s confidence, Leghari only contributed to the political chaos that followed.

Nawaz Sharif’s second term as prime minister led to the election of a person of his choice — in fact a former employee of Ittefaq Foundry — as President. But Rafiq Tarar’s occupancy of the President House did not stop the drama that began with Sharif’s sacking of Pervez Musharraf as army chief,

the induction of a new general as chief of the army staff, and the hijacking affair, leading to the army coup.

The truth is that both the President and the prime minister can ensure political stability less by owing allegiance to the same party and more by refraining from committing the mistakes which the Presidents and the PMs did in the past — mistakes which not only led to their fall but spelled disasters for the country.

The head of state interfering with politics in a parliamentary form of government is unconstitutional. Unfortunately, Pakistan has a long tradition of the President/governor general playing an assertive role in politics — the examples of Ghulam Mohammad, Iskander Mirza, Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Leghari immediately come to mind.

The man to be elected President later this week has an excellent chance to make a break with the past. The lodestar for him and the prime minister is obvious: both should stay within the limits prescribed by the constitution. This also assumes that 58-2(b) and other articles which have altered the constitution's parliamentary character must be done away with, so that the President truly becomes a titular head of state. Shorn of these draconian powers, the President would be less tempted to intrigue and manipulate.

As the symbol of the federation's unity, the President must by his conduct up-hold the sanctity of the constitution under all circumstances and act as a father figure guiding the government. Finally, it is important for the opposition to realise the damage which the politics of vendetta and ambition has done to the democratic process, for quite often opposition leaders have felt no qualms of conscience about sabotaging democracy by asking the President and the armed forces "to do their duty".

Dawn, September 5, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/the+need+for+presidential+norms>

ZARDARI SET TO SWEEP PAK PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Pakistan's ruling PPP chief Asif Ali Zardari appears set to sweep tomorrow's Presidential poll and would be expected to tackle problems like rising militancy and economic malaise after his election.

Although Zardari has barely stirred out of the federal capital due to security concerns, his two rivals have been criss-crossing the country to drum up support.

But the 53-year-old widower of former premier Benazir Bhutto, who became head of the PPP after she was assassinated in December last year, has

been billed the front-runner to win the election despite the PML-N's decision to pull out of the ruling coalition and fielded a candidate against Zardari.

Sources said that Zardari expects to poll over 60 per cent of the 700 members in the Electoral College, in an election necessitated by former President Pervez Musharraf's resignation on August 18.

PPP has been able to rope in the backing from smaller parties like the opposition Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Awami National Party and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam and dissidents from the main opposition PML-Q.

The party commands adequate support in the two houses of parliament, the Senate and National Assembly, and the four provincial assemblies, which comprise the Electoral College for the polls.

In significant pre-poll comments, Zardari has said that he intends to trim the President's sweeping powers, which included authority to dissolve Parliament and dismiss Premier.

He also vowed to defeat the "domestic Taliban insurgency" and said his country stands with the US in the fight in the war against terror.

Times of India, September 5, 2008
http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Zardari_set_to_sweep_Pak_presidential_elections/articleshow/3448242.cms

I WILL BE SUBSERVIENT TO PARLIAMENT: ZARDARI

Vowing to fix "imbalances" in Pakistan's political system following his election as the new President, ruling PPP chief Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday said the presidency will be subservient to parliament.

Zardari, who won the Presidential poll by an overwhelming majority, described his victory as "another step towards the transition to democracy" that his slain wife, former premier Benazir Bhutto, was committed to.

"I reiterate parliament is sovereign. This President shall be subservient to the parliament," Zardari told a gathering of leaders of the Pakistan People's Party and its coalition partners at an *Iftar* hosted in the Prime Minister's House.

In a statement issued by the PPP, Zardari said he would "fix the imbalances in the system, bring peace into the country and unite all democratic forces to consolidate the political system".

After a decade of non-democratic rule, the presidency had come to be seen as "the centre of conspiracies against the nation", he added.

Addressing the gathering, Zardari, who was flanked by his daughters Bakhtawar and Asifa, said, "Today, the Pakistan People's Party has gone over a great roadblock to complete the democratic process...It is the philosophy of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in which we believe, which says democracy is the best revenge," he said.

"We (took) revenge on the dictators in the form of democracy. She (Bhutto) taught us how to live, how to do politics...we all intend to follow the philosophies of PPP, the philosophy of (party founder) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the democracy that they gave their life for."

Comparing his victory with a massive margin with that of "a dictator in uniform (who) could not perform", he said: "Democracy talks and everybody hears."

"To those who would say that the PPP or the presidency would be controversial under our guardianship and stewardship, I would say listen to democracy. Ninety-nine per cent of the people have spoken," the President-elect said.

In the statement, Zardari vowed to carry forward his late wife's mission "for a democratic and progressive Pakistan".

He said his election as a President is the "triumph of the ideals, policies and principles" of Benazir Bhutto.

"She strongly believed that a system advocating people's rule is the destiny of Pakistan and is worth every sacrifice. My election as the representative of the people of Pakistan is a demonstration that Mohtarma continues to live and rule from her grave," he said.

Zardari, who became chief of the PPP after Bhutto was assassinated in a suicide attack in December last year, said that democratic process needs "total commitment from all political forces".

"Pakistan's democracy is being closely watched and there are arguments being made about its inability to hold. It's a challenge, not only for me and for the democratic forces, but also for the people of Pakistan," he said.

"We have to prove wrong the perception that Pakistan and democracy cannot go together. I want to tell all those doubting our nation's commitment for a representative political order, that ours is the nation that has made the biggest sacrifices for the cause of democracy..."

He urged all democratic forces to support him in achieving the mission of bringing complete democracy to Pakistan. "My presence in the office represents the ideals that the nation wants its political leadership to implement. I need everybody's support for this objective," he said.

"It's a historical opportunity for all political forces to change the future direction of the country. We must rise above party lines to shut the doors on non-democratic forces, once and for all."

Times of India, September 6, 2008

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Pakistan/Humble_in_victory_Zardari_to_clip_Pak_prez_powers/articleshow/3453011.cms

CANDIDATES FOR PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENTIAL POLL

Pakistan holds a Presidential election on Saturday to replace Pervez Musharraf, who resigned on August 18 under threat of impeachment by the coalition government led by the party of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Under Pakistan's constitution members of the country's four provincial assemblies and the two-chamber national parliament elect the President.

Here are some facts about the three Presidential candidates:

Asif Ali Zardari

- * Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's widower and political successor, Zardari was thrust into the centre of politics by his wife's assassination on Decemebr 27, and then to the centre of power after their Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won the most seats in a February 18 election.
- * Born in the southern province of Sindh to a land-owning family, the telegenic Zardari, 53, has long been controversial.
- * He served as a minister in his wife's second government in the 1990s, and was a senator until 1999, but was accused of getting kickbacks on government deals and earned the nickname "Mr 10 Percent".
- * Zardari spent in all 11 years in prison on charges of corruption and murder, although he denied all accusations and was never convicted. He was released on bail in 2004.
- * Last year, Musharraf granted an amnesty to Bhutto, Zardari and other PPP leaders from graft charges under a power-sharing deal with Bhutto.
- * The PPP has rejected a report Zardari was mentally unstable, saying he was tortured in prison and as a result had been under mental stress and had had a heart problem, but was never mentally ill.
- * He married Bhutto in 1987 and they had three children -- two girls and a boy.
- * Analysts say Zardari should have enough electoral college votes to win.

Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui

- * Siddiqui is a former judge, nominated for the post of President by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's party, the Pakistan Muslim

League (Nawaz), which came second to the PPP in February parliamentary elections.

- * The soft-spoken Siddiqui was a Supreme Court judge when he ruled in favour of then Prime Minister Sharif in a confrontation with the judiciary in 1997.
- * Siddiqui lost his job as a Supreme Court judge after then army chief Musharraf overthrew Sharif in a 1999 coup and demanded an oath of allegiance from members of the judiciary.
- * Born in 1937 in Calcutta, in what was then British-ruled India, Siddiqui moved to Pakistan with his family in 1956.

Mushahid Hussain Sayed

- * Sayed was nominated by the Pakistan Muslim League which backed Musharraf and ruled under him. After the February elections it was the main opposition party in parliament until Sharif's PML (N) broke away from the ruling coalition last week.
- * Sayed, a former journalist, served as information minister in Sharif's cabinet until the government was forced from power by Musharraf's 1999 coup.
- * He was detained for more than a year after the coup but upon his release joined the party Musharraf cobbled together to provide him with a base of support, and was elected as a senator.
- * He later became secretary general of the so-called King's Party, a moderate face in a conservative party that was defeated in a February 18 general election.
- * The son of an army colonel, the astute, affable Sayed studied at Georgetown University in Washington.

Times of India, September 6, 2008

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Pakistan/Candidates_for_Pakistans_presidential_poll/articleshow/3451161.cms

PAKISTAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNDERWAY

Pakistan's Presidential election is underway today with polling expected to continue from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm.

Three candidates are contesting the election: Asif Ali Zardari, widower of the assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Co-chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party and Mushahid Hussain, former Chief Justice and candidate for Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) party.

The voting will be held through a secret ballot.

The candidate getting a simple majority would be the country's next President.

Members of the senate or the upper house of Pakistan's Parliament, members of the National Assembly or the lower house and those of four provincial assemblies will cast their votes in the Presidential election.

Sify online, September 6, 2008
<http://sify.com/news/fullstory.php?id=1475319>

ZARDARI VICTORIOUS IN PAKISTAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Asif Ali Zardari has swept to victory in Pakistan's Presidential election. Unofficial tallies gave him 480 of the 702 electoral college votes in Pakistan's national parliament and 4 regional assemblies.

His election completes an extraordinary saga which saw him take up the mission of his wife, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, after her assassination while campaigning in December, 2007.

After his election Zardari said, "Democracy talks and everybody hears and to those who would say that the People's Party or the presidency would be controversial and under a guardianship and under a stewardship, I would say: listen to democracy, 99% of the people have spoken"

While a controversial figure in Pakistan, his election was welcomed by the United States. Zardari has praised the US and has stressed Pakistan's commitment to the campaign against militancy.

In addition to curbing extremism, Zardari also has to contend with a host of problems. The Pakistan economy is in tatters and a split in his party, the PPP earlier this month, raises the spectre of political upheaval similar to that of the 90's.

Euro News, September 6, 2008
<http://www.euronews.net/en/article/06/09/2008/zardari-victorious-in-pakistan-presidential-election/>

VOTE COUNT IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan, the Chief Election Commissioner will determine the result of the election in the following manner:

- (a) the number of votes cast in the Majlis-i-Shura (parliament) in favor of each candidate shall be counted;
- (b) the number of votes cast in a provincial assembly in favor of each candidate shall be multiplied by the total number of seats in the provincial assembly for the time being having the smallest

- number of seats and divided by the total number of seats in the provincial assembly in which the votes have been cast; and
- (c) the number of votes calculated in the manner referred to in clause (b) shall be added to the number of votes counted under clause (a).

Note: The “total number of seats” includes seats reserved for non-Muslims and women.”

Quota for each assembly

VOTE COUNT		TOTAL
NA	1 person = 1 vote	342
Senate	1 person = 1 vote	100
Punjab	5.70 persons = 1 vote	65
Sindh	2.58 persons = 1 vote	65
NWFP	1.90 persons = 1 vote	65
Balochistan	1 person = 1 vote	65

If person X obtains 100 votes in the Punjab Assembly his votes would be $(100 \times 65)/371 = 17$ votes.

If person X obtains 100 votes in the Sindh Assembly his votes would be $(100 \times 65)/168 = 39$ votes.

If person X obtains 100 votes in the NWFP Assembly his votes would be $(100 \times 65)/164 = 54$ votes.

Dawn, September 6, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/counting+of+votes>

ZARDARI WINS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Asif Ali Zardari, co-chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, has secured enough votes to become the President of Pakistan.

Chief Election Commissioner Qazi Mohammad Farooq declared Mr. Zardari the victor, with a combined 481 votes from the provincial assemblies and parliament, in a short official announcement late Saturday evening.

The votes for each Presidential candidate are tallied through a voting formula whereby the national assemblies are given preferential treatment. Votes cast in the National Assembly and Senate, are given a higher weightage than votes cast in the provincial assembly.

According to preliminary results published by APP, Mr. Zardari - whose party already controls a majority in the National Assembly - predictably swept the parliamentary vote, winning 281 out of 436 votes cast. The Pakistan

Muslim League-N's candidate, Justice (ret'd) Saeeduz Zaman Siddiqui came second with 111 votes in the parliament.

	PPP	PML-N	PML-Q
Parliament	281	111	34
Sindh Assembly	64	-	-
Punjab Assembly	22	35	6
NWFP Assembly	56	5	1
Balochistan Assembly	59	2	2

Mr Zardari swept the ballot in three out of four provinces, but lost to Mr. Siddiqui in the Punjab Assembly.

In Sindh, his home province, Zardari secured a unanimous victory while his two main rivals, Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui and Mushahid Hussain, failed to get a single vote, sources indicate.

In the North West Frontier Province, Zardari emerged a clear winner with 56 votes against five secured by Siddiqui and one by Hussain, while in Balochistan, Zardari bagged 59 votes while Siddiqui and Hussain got two each. In Punjab - a PML stronghold - where Sharif commands a majority, Zardari received 22 votes while Siddiqui secured 35 votes and Hussain received 6 votes.

Voting Formula		Total
NA	1 person = 1 vote	342
Senate	1 person = 1 vote	100
Punjab	5.70 persons = 1 vote	65
Sindh	2.58 persons = 1 vote	65
NWFP	1.90 persons = 1 vote	65
Balochistan	1 person = 1 vote	65

PPP stalwart and cabinet member Sherry Rehman congratulated Mr. Zardari on his election win calling it a "victory for democracy."

"This man suffered jail for more than 11 years for the sake of democracy and today he is elected as the President of the country and it is a sign of the strengthening of democracy," she said.

Presidential elections were scheduled after the resignation of former President Musharraf who resigned on October 18 amid widespread criticism, preempting impeachment proceedings by the government.

Shortly after the resignation of Musharraf, former coalition member PML-N decided to sit in the opposition benches due to differences with

the PPP over the issue of reinstatement of dozens of judges deposed by Musharraf last year.

Dawn, September 6, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/special/zardari+wins+presidential+election>

A LOOK AT PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Pakistani lawmakers elected a successor to Pervez Musharraf as President Saturday. Here are some key facts about the election.

Who Won?

Asif Ali Zardari, widower of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and leader of Pakistan's largest political party, won easily. Mushahid Hussain, a leader of an opposition party that supported ex-President Pervez Musharraf, and retired Judge Muhammad Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui also contested the race.

Who Voted?

More than 1,100 lawmakers were eligible to vote in simultaneous, secret ballots in the federal Parliament in the capital, Islamabad, and the four provincial assemblies. Ballots cast in the larger provinces counted for less under a weighting system that left most of the voting power with federal lawmakers.

What Was At Stake?

The President holds the power to dissolve federal and provincial assemblies, and appoint military chiefs and Supreme Court judges. The head of state also acts as a bridge between the civilian government and Pakistan's powerful military.

Notable Past Presidents

Musharraf was the third army chief to become head of state. Bhutto's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, served as President in the 1970s. He later became prime minister but was ousted by the military and hanged. Pakistan's founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, died in the top office in 1948, just a year after independence from Britain.

International Herald Tribune, September 6, 2008

<http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2008/09/06/asia/AS-Pakistan-presidential-Election-Fact>

BHUTTO WIDOWER ASIF ALI ZARDARI WINS PAKISTAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The widower of slain former leader Benazir Bhutto will succeed Pervez Musharraf as President of Pakistan after winning a landslide victory in Saturday's election.

Partial results announced by officials after separate votes in the federal and provincial assemblies show that Asif Ali Zardari won an overwhelming majority of the votes.

Pro-Zardari lawmakers, some in tears, shouted "Long live Bhutto!" as the results came in. The couple's two jubilant but tearful daughters, one carrying a portrait of their late mother, smiled and hugged friends in the gallery.

But Saturday also brought a brutal reminder of the threats to the nuclear-armed nation's stability when a suicide car bomber killed at least 13 people and wounded dozens in the northwestern city of Peshawar.

Already head of the main ruling party, Zardari becomes one of the most powerful civilian leaders in Pakistan's troubled 61-year history. Last month, he marshaled a coalition that forced longtime U.S. ally Musharraf to quit as head of state.

Zardari, a novice leader stained by past corruption allegations, takes over at a critical time for this volatile, nuclear-armed Muslim nation of more than 160 million.

Pakistan's economy is crumbling and Saturday's attack was the latest in a string of suicide bombings usually claimed by Islamic militants who have steadily gained strength since Pakistan joined the U.S. war on terrorism in 2001.

Washington is pressing Pakistan to eradicate Taliban and Al Qaeda havens near its border with Afghanistan. A U.S.-led ground attack said to have killed at least 15 in Pakistan Wednesday sparked outrage and embarrassed Zardari's party.

As expected, Zardari trounced Mushahid Hussain, a senator from the pro-Musharraf party routed in February parliamentary elections, and Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui, a former judge nominated by the opposition party of another ex-prime minister, Nawaz Sharif.

Fox News, September 6, 2008

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,417982,00.html>

ZARDARI WINS PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co- chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday won a clear majority in the Presidential election, according to an unofficial result.

Zardari, widower of slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, secured 479 votes from the total number of 702 votes of the Electoral College consisting of two houses of the parliament and four provincial assemblies.

Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui, who was fielded by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), bagged 153 votes while Senator Mushahid Hussain, a candidate from the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), got 43 votes.

The PPP members and Zardari's two daughters, holding a photo of Benazir Bhutto, chanted slogans of "Long live Bhutto" to celebrate Zardari's victory in the parliament house.

"The PPP got this presidency not by force," said Information Minister Sherry Rehman told media after the election.

"The people gave their vote constitutionally," said Rehman, who is also a PPP member.

The other two candidates Siddiqui and Mushahid Hussain said they accepted the results and congratulated Zardari for his victory.

"We hope Zardari can bring good things and showcase a sign of unity," Mushahid said.

The Presidential election was held after former President Pervez Musharraf announced his resignation on August 18 under impeachment pressure.

China Daily online, September 6, 2008
http://chinadaily.cn/world/2008-09/06/content_7005289.htm

SHARIF ACCEPTS DEFEAT IN PAKISTANI PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, URGING ZARDARI TO BE NEUTRAL

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday accepted his party's defeat in the Presidential election, but urged the new President to be neutral.

Sharif, also chief of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), made the remarks shortly after Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari won the Presidential election.

Zardari, widower of slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, secured 479 votes from the total number of 702 votes of the Electoral College consisting of two houses of the parliament and four provincial assemblies.

But Sharif has been suspicious of impartiality if Zardari, who also heads the PPP, becomes President of the country.

Sharif appealed Zardari to reinstate all deposed judges including chief justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry.

The PML-N quit the coalition and sat on opposition bench due to its row with the PPP over the judicial issue.

Former chief justice Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui, who was fielded as the Presidential candidate by the PML-N, bagged 153 votes while Senator Mushahid Hussain, a candidate from the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), got 43 votes.

Xinhua online, September 6, 2008

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-09/06/content_9811433.htm

AMERICA, EUROPE, CHINA NEED TO HELP ZARDARI WIN INSIDE PAKISTAN

Newly elected Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari is his government's latest political tycoon. He spent many years imprisoned and harassed by former President Pervez Musharraf. His wife, former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, was assassinated. And now he is at the very top of Pakistan's political mountain -- but the peak he is on sits on top of small, constantly shifting, unstable rocks.

My colleague Anatol Lieven logs in this morning from Peshawar with an important call to the international community to help Zardari "deliver" on the economic front to his people.

Zardari is already weakened inside Pakistan because of the view that he is a puppet of American interests. The only thing worse than being too connected to America is being connected with none of the benefits to show for it. The domestic challenges faced by Zardari are further explicated by this front cover article in today's *New York Times Magazine* which outlines how constrained Pakistan's political, military, and intelligence forces have been in rolling back a resurgent Taliban.

In my view, Pakistan and its immediate surroundings are the most dangerous place in the world. The major stewards of the global order -- who I think are now the US, Europe and China -- need to help stabilize Pakistan's turbulent economic morass so that the state can stabilize and begin to deal with some of the serious problems facing it not only in the tribal regions but throughout the country.

In the days of John Foster Dulles, the U.S. embraced states economically so to keep them from falling into orbits or orientations antithetical to American interests. Japan was a classic case in which the strategic decision was made to embed Japan deeply into the currents of the American economy to prevent the re-emergence of a China-focused Japan.

Lieven and others including myself think that the US, Europe and even China must make a similar kind of strategic decision and embrace Pakistan and help it succeed economically.

This is a hard sell when America's own economic circumstances are so strained -- but the convulsions that will follow inside and around Pakistan if

Zardari fails in the near term could be genuinely devastating for US and the world's interests.

As Lieven points out, McCain and Biden have both made similar statements about the need to stabilize Pakistan. Obama and McCain should meet now and encourage the incumbent President and Congress to move on expanded stabilization packages for Pakistan.

That would show leadership on both sides of the American political aisle and make their mutual call for interest-driven bipartisanship more meaningful.

Washington Note online, September 7, 2008

http://www.thewashingtonnote.com/archives/2008/09/america_europe/

MANMOHAN SINGH CONGRATULATES ZARDARI ON HIS ELECTION AS PAKISTAN PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has congratulated Asif Ali Zardari on his election as President of Pakistan.

He said in his message, as you assume this high office, I convey to you the desire of the Government and people of India to build close ties of friendship and partnership between our countries that respond to the aspirations of our two peoples.

The Prime Minister further added that the ushering in of democracy in Pakistan opens new opportunities for us to work together to bring the fruits of peace, prosperity and development to our region by developing the close and cooperative ties that should be normal between two neighbours.

"We have the political will to work with you to seize these opportunities and transform our relations. In your new office, you will find a friend in India," he added.

Zardari secured 281 of the 426 parliamentary votes and won a thumping majority in three of the four provincial assemblies.

The United States was among the first countries to congratulate Zardari.

Foreign and domestic leaders have hailed the election of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, as the President of Pakistan.

New Delhi News online, September 7, 2008

<http://www.newdelhinews.net/story/403553>

BHUTTO WIDOWER ZARDARI ELECTED PAKISTAN'S NEW PRESIDENT

Nearly a year after assassins killed Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, her widower won the country's Presidential election and hailed his triumph as a victory for democracy.

"I feel democracy has been vindicated," Asif Ali Zardari told CNN. "I feel we are coming closer to her [Benazir Bhutto's] mission of total democracy in Pakistan. And we shall take the oath of office of President in the name of Shahid Benazir Bhutto, and that will be a momentous occasion for all the democratic forces in the world."

Zardari, 53, had been the front-runner in the race to replace former President Pervez Musharraf, who was forced to resign last month.

Zardari is to be inaugurated on Tuesday and would take office the same day.

The election was not by public vote, but rather by lawmakers in the two houses of the National Assembly and in the four provincial assemblies around the country. Under Pakistan's constitution, the President is elected by a majority vote.

According to the chief election commissioner of Pakistan, Qazi Muhammad Farooq, Zardari received 481 votes. Retired Chief Justice Muhammad Saeed Uzaman Saddiqi received 153 votes and Senator Mushahid Hussain received 44 votes, Farooq said.

"The democracy talks, and everybody hears," Zardari said in a televised address Saturday evening. "And to those who would say the People's Party or the presidency would be controversial under our guardianship and under our stewardship, I would say, listen to democracy."

The President-elect said he would hand over many responsibilities to the parliament. "Parliament is sovereign, this President shall be subservient to the parliament," he said in the televised address.

"It is the philosophy of ... Benazir Bhutto, in which we believe, which says democracy is the best revenge," Zardari said. "She taught us how to live. She taught us how to do politics."

The pro-American Zardari will rule a nuclear power threatened by Islamic militancy and economic turmoil. The Taliban are resurgent in Pakistan and the country's economy is tanking.

Zardari took over Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) after her death late last year. His party had been confident of a win, saying Zardari had the support of three of the four provincial assemblies -- which would be crucial in helping Zardari forge the alliances he needs to tackle the country's main problems.

Hussain, who was a close aide to the ex-President, was representing Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League-Q. The party had painted him as a candidate who represented the middle class and has a clean track record -- in contrast to Zardari, who spent 11 and a half years in jail on corruption charges that he refutes.

Siddiqui was nominated by the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Musharraf resigned under intense political pressure last month as the ruling coalition began taking steps to impeach him. He had swept to power in 1999 in a bloodless coup.

The chairman of the upper house of the assembly, Mohammedman Soomro, has been acting President in the meantime.

Saturday's election came one day after Pakistan's Supreme Court reinstated three of its judges who Musharraf ousted in November, following his imposition of emergency rule.

The PPP had formed a coalition with Sharif's party, the PML-N, but the coalition split August 25. The PML-N had set that date as a deadline for the government to honor its promise to reinstate the judges who were fired.

The PPP, which led the coalition, said it believed the coalition should focus on picking a successor for Musharraf before it decided on reinstating the judges.

At least 60 judges were arrested after Musharraf issued his order. Some were jailed, others placed under house arrest.

Security around the National Assembly building in Islamabad was tight, with police on the roof and at the gates and riot police on site.

As the voting took place, a suicide car bomb exploded in northwestern Pakistan, killing at least 25 people, including eight police officers, local police spokesman Fazal Karim said. Eight-one others were wounded.

The explosion happened at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Peshawar, about 4 miles (7 kilometers) from the Provincial Assembly in Pakistan, where some of the Presidential voting was taking place.

Peshawar is the capital of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province. The province is near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan and is rife with Islamic extremists.

CNN, September 7, 2008

<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/09/06/pakistan.presidential.election/index.html?eref=edition>

PRESIDENT ZARDARI

It's official: Asif Ali Zardari will be the new President of Pakistan. The result of the indirect election was never in doubt given the majority that the PPP and its allies have in the Presidential Electoral College.

However, other doubts do hang over the next President. On Election Day, everyone had at least one eye on the Punjab Assembly, where the votes for Mr Zardari were billed by many analysts as a *de facto* vote of no-confidence in the PML-N government.

For now a fresh political crisis appears to have been averted as the PML-N candidate, Justice (ret'd) Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui, earned 201 votes — comfortably above the 186 required to secure a majority in the Punjab Assembly.

The second doubt concerns Mr Zardari himself. There have been more controversial Presidents in the past — indeed, the last occupant of the presidency, Gen Musharraf, was almost universally unpopular — but none has been as controversial as Mr Zardari at the time of assuming office.

The catalogue of allegations against him is well-known and every sordid detail has been raked up since his bid for the presidency was announced. While the past cannot be erased — NROs notwithstanding — what Mr Zardari needs to do is to dispel the impression that he is a political wheeler-dealer who is adept at making backroom deals but unable to rise to the requirements of statesmanship. The President-elect's performance since February 18 has highlighted precisely this deficiency. Mr Zardari was able to ease President Musharraf out of office but at the cost of trust in his public commitments.

That trust deficit is significant because Mr Zardari has renewed his pledge to pare down the extraordinary, anti-parliament powers of the President. If Mr Zardari fails to keep his word again his credibility and democratic credentials will be in tatters. It is in any case questionable how much Mr Zardari can now do to make parliament supreme.

As President, with a PPP-led government in parliament, Mr Zardari, regardless of his legal powers, will be the *de facto* centre of politics — rendering real parliamentary supremacy unattainable. But this is only another reason for Mr Zardari to give up 58-2(b) and the right to appoint service chiefs, governors and judges of the superior judiciary — it's the absolute minimum he can do to correct the structural imbalance amongst the institutions of the state.

The third question mark over Mr Zardari is his ability to steer the country out of the economic and militancy crises.

On the economic front, it is a fact that the PPP-led coalition government in Islamabad inherited a wobbling economy; however, it is also a

fact that the PPP-led government, now in the sixth month of its existence, has not arranged any significant amount of money to prop up the economy. As President, Mr Zardari must urgently lobby friendly governments and international agencies for quick money on comfortable terms.

The militancy crisis too has worsened. Most dangerously, the Americans appear to have lost patience with Pakistan and are launching regular strikes in the tribal areas. With fuel supplies to ISAF forces in Afghanistan now suspended, relations between the US and Pakistan are at their lowest ebb since 9/11. Mr Zardari must use his new office to immediately defuse this crisis — bravado aside, it is simply too dangerous to have the Americans breaking down the door to Pakistan.

It was Mr Zardari's right to become President; it is the people's right to expect leadership from him now.

Dawn, September 7, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/president+zardari>

ZARDARI THANKS NATION FOR VICTORY

The newly-elected President and co-chairman of ruling Pakistan Peoples Party, Asif Ali Zardari, thanked the nation Saturday for electing him as 12th President of Pakistan by an overwhelming majority on Sept 6, 2008.

“In the name of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, I humbly thank people of Pakistan for their faith in me and for entrusting me with responsibility to represent them at highest office of the country. I pledge to carry forward the mission of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto for a democratic and progressive Pakistan. I bow my head before God and pray to him to give me strength to deliver on the nation's expectations as I take this important responsibility,” he said in a statement shortly after being elected.

Zardari said his election as a consensus President is the triumph of the ideals, policies and principles of Benazir Bhutto who was determined to turn Pakistan into a society with strong political and democratic structures.

“Today's peaceful election marks another step towards transition to democracy that Shaheed Mohtarma was committed to. She strongly believed that a system advocating people's rule is destiny of Pakistan and is worth every sacrifice. My election as representative of people of Pakistan is a demonstration that Mohtarma continues to live and rule from her grave in Garhi Khuda Baksh.” Zardari said the democratic process needs total commitment from all political forces. “Pakistan's democracy is being closely watched and there are arguments being made about its inability to hold. It's a challenge, not only for me and for democratic forces, but also for the people. We have to prove wrong perception that Pakistan and democracy cannot go together. I want to tell all those doubting our nation's commitment for a

representative political order, that ours is nation that has made biggest sacrifices for cause of democracy, ours is nation that has looked dictatorship in its eyes and said: 'Kitney Bhutto Maaro Gay, Har Ghar Sey Bhutto Niklay Ga,' ours is nation that braved the might of state, yet fought on streets for their right to determine their own destiny."

He said it is these values that he has a responsibility to protect and uphold. "I make a pledge to the people I will do what I have been tasked to do. I have been sent by the people of Pakistan to this office to fix imbalances in the system, bring peace in country, unite all democratic forces to consolidate political system so that any other option of governance never finds its way in our nation's life in name of 'doctrine of necessity'."

He urged all democratic forces to support him in achieving mission to bring complete democracy. "My presence in the Office represents ideals that nation wants its political leadership to implement. I need everybody's support for this objective. It's a historical opportunity for all political forces to change future direction of the country. We must rise above party lines to shut doors on non-democratic forces, once and for all."

Dawn, September 7, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/new/s/special/zardari+thanks+nation+for+election+victory>

ASIF IN PRESIDENCY, TAKES OATH TODAY

President-elect Asif Ali Zardari moved to the Presidency on Monday and will take oath of his office on Tuesday.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar will administer the oath at the Aiwan-i-Sadr.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai is likely to attend the ceremony.

Mr Zardari was greeted by staff of the Presidency and his close aides when he arrived there with daughters Bakhtawar and Asifa. Insiders said that portraits of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto had been placed at the main porch of the building, while pictures of the two deceased leaders, PPP Chairman Bilawal Zardari-Bhutto and Mr Zardari adorned the Pink Room (where the President holds one-to-one meeting with guests) and Rotunda Hall.

Since renovation work on the main residential building is in progress, Mr Zardari's daughters will stay in the guest rooms on the seventh floor.

A Quran Khawani was also held on Monday.

After the oath, Mr Zardari will be presented a guard of honour by a contingent of the armed forces. He will address a press conference later in the evening.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, members of the federal cabinet, Senate chairman, Chief Justice of Pakistan, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and chiefs of the three services will also call on Mr Zardari.

Meanwhile, Mr Zardari has ordered government departments not to issue advertisements congratulating him on his election, adds APP.

In a statement issued on Monday, Mr Zardari said: “We are a poor country and cannot afford such extravagance at the expense of taxpayers’ money.

“The world is watching us and the government is facing many internal and external challenges. The government and the people of Pakistan have to prove that they have the will to bring about positive changes in the country’s social and economic structures.”

Criticising dictatorship, he said it had hurt Pakistan’s image abroad. Regaining the lost respect, he said, was “a gruelling task ... together we will achieve this goal.”

President Zardari stressed the need for austerity to put the nation on the path to progress.

Asif phones Altaf: The President-elect on Monday telephoned MQM chief Altaf Hussain in London and thanked him for proposing his name for the Presidential election.

Mr Zardari lauded the MQM leader for his role in Pakistan’s solidarity and security as well as for the promotion of democracy in the country.

Mr Hussain felicitated the President-elect on his thumping victory in the Presidential election and prayed for his success.

Syed Irfan Raza, *Dawn*, September 9, 2008
<http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/09/top1.htm>

THE POLITICS OF VALUES

Power can at times appear shamanistic. It is able to steal into hearts, subtly persuade and, with devastating logic, finally prevail. The political adroitness of Asif Ali Zardari, the new President-elect of the country, has achieved precisely this.

No mere ‘accident’ or proxy, he succeeded, on the contrary, in converting two-thirds of Pakistan’s Electoral College to his way of thinking and taking it along with him to clinch the top slot in the country. It has been a bravura performance that has brought even detractors up short.

Zardari’s has, of course, been the victory of *realpolitik*. Unimpeded by qualms about good faith, the road to it has proven compellingly Machiavellian. Its beauty lay in the curious combination of guile and temerity displayed, alike, in Zardari’s dealings with erstwhile foes and allies recently turned adversaries.

The path ahead may be fraught with uncertainty and hazard. Our economy is teetering at the edge. There are the Taliban and inter civil-military sensitivities to address. There is the delicate issue of Pakistan's reportedly sought-after nukes and the question of whether some of the historical baggage of absolutism needs jettisoning. But for the time being, there is just the sweet smell of success.

Does this mean that the other major political player in the country, Nawaz Sharif has all but been consigned to oblivion? Some analysts seem to hold this view. But it is short-sighted.

If Sharif and his PML-N cohorts are to be heard making conciliatory pro-democracy noises, this should not be construed as a sign of weakness. Apart from the fact that the party comfortably held its majority in the Presidential election in Punjab, there is method in what Sharif appears to be saying — with an eye to the long-term. Not enough attention has been paid to his discourse on a politics of 'values' as opposed to power. What are these 'values'? We must take these as having arisen out of Sharif's personal experience of power: notably, the catharsis of his imprisonment and subsequent exile.

Topping his list would logically seem to be the primacy of human dignity and civil rights. Yet his quest is equally for the overall democratisation of Pakistan: the sovereignty of parliament, the supremacy of the country's constitution and, of course, the independence of its judiciary.

This explains his unremitting advocacy of the restitution of all our deposed judges, something that, no matter how apparently improbable, would serve to guarantee the return of some semblance of the rule of law to the country. It is linked in turn to some very genuine apprehensions on his part about the future of the federation.

So instead of the impetuously self-seeking politico of yore, we see someone quite different today: a man aspiring to give the country what he feels it desperately needs by making principle fundamental to the business of politics. Though belated, this has nevertheless allowed Sharif to regain the trust of at least a portion of a formerly disenchanted electorate.

Yet, unlike Zardari, he also seems to be flying in the teeth of some inescapable historical realities. If, for instance, he is to be acceptable to the West — as he surely must to achieve more than just informal head-of-opposition status — he will have to come to terms with the need to contain the insurgency on the tribal belt, militarily and not just through 'peaceful' dialogue.

This does not mean that we must cynically barter away our citizens or pursue military solutions in the region to the exclusion of all else. And, clearly, incursions by US forces into our territory are not on. But it does imply sitting up to the facts on the ground and realising that we simply must clean house.

Regardless of the origins of its components, the Taliban apparatus has to be dismantled.

It may be that - like many in civil society - Sharif also exists in a sort of time warp or is out of touch with what is happening in the wings. He may be blinkered for one of two reasons. It is possible that he has simply been away from the scene for too long. Alternatively, this may be attributed to his parochial mindset and an inability to perceive the sea change that has come about in the smaller provinces or that the country has moved beyond a point where it can be reinvented in keeping with his faintly quixotic format.

The insurgency in the NWFP and Balochistan and the uprising in Sindh in the aftermath of Benazir's assassination all point in the same direction. Belief in the federation would seem perceptibly to be on the wane. The smaller provinces all share, as never before, a growing sense of alienation. The feeling by and large is that they are, and have been from the start, less equal or indeed 'federal' than Punjab. This is something Sharif is not perhaps reckoning with.

Zardari's candidature for the presidency may have been controversial but it also plainly had the support of these political margins. Reports relating to his mental illness and unaccounted for wealth were, his supporters here felt, mere hogwash designed to do them out of their legitimate democratic right. At the same time, given the somewhat awkward questions surrounding his name and the fact that authoritarian rule was no longer in vogue, there were those who saw an element ofchutzpah about his sudden bid for absolute power.

However, now that Zardari has won out, it is important that civil society give him a chance by taking its cue from Sharif in not trying to destabilise the new dispensation. What matters is that we address issues that concern us more directly. The judges' issue over which the PPP-PML-N coalition came apart is crucial. It still awaits resolution. The 'reappointment' of judges piecemeal smacks just very slightly of expediency.

The insistence of Sharif and the top PML-N leadership that the pre-Nov 3 judiciary — along with Ifikhar Chaudhry — be restored in one go speaks of a commitment to constitutionality and the rule of law not just for now but in the long term.

This is heartening as it suggests that they share our concerns and are thinking about a viable future for a country seriously at odds with itself and — Zardari's victory notwithstanding — with an increasingly nebulous horizon.

Adrian A Husain, *Dawn*, September 9, 2008
<http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/09/op.htm#top>

CEC URGED TO TAKE NOTICE OF BALLOT SECURITY VIOLATION

Justice (retd) Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui, who was PML-N's Presidential candidate, has urged the Chief Election Commissioner to take notice of what he called 'open violation' of the secrecy of the ballot during polling in the NWFP assembly, when a number of legislators showed the marked ballot to some people before putting it into the box.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he said it was a serious issue and there was enough evidence to declare the result of the polling in the NWFP assembly 'null and void'.

He said that he expected the CEC to take action on the 'blatant violation' of the Constitution.

Justice Saeed said that when all the powers enjoyed by Pervez Musharraf had been passed on to Asif Ali Zardari the PPP should act more responsibly than other political parties.

He said that the PPP should honour its commitments, including its promises to restore the judiciary to its pre-Nov 3 position and scrap the 17th Amendment.

Justice Saeed, who was accompanied by PML-N leaders Salim Zia, Mamnoon Hussain and Zahid Rafique Butt, dispelled the impression that he had joined the PML-N or any other party.

He said the interest of Pakistan required that the PPP and the PML-N should take good decisions because their leadership was mature and capable of leading the country to stability and progress.

Describing the situation in Fata as grave, he said the US attacks had violated Pakistan's sovereignty and there was need for a strategy to protect the country's sovereignty, without recourse to confrontation with the US.

Referring to allegations levelled by Justice (retd) Sajjad Ali Shah, he said he also could accuse him of being a controversial person. He added that he was not in Islamabad when the Supreme Court was attacked. "I was holding a court."

Expressing satisfaction over his performance in the Presidential election, he said that he had secured 111 electoral votes in the National Assembly against 281 of Asif Ali Zardari, while in Balochistan where the ruling coalition had 61 strength in the house of 62, he bagged 2 votes against 59 and in the Punjab assembly he got 35 votes against 22 in favour of Mr Zardari. In the NWFP assembly, he received five votes against 56 for the winning candidate.

He said distribution of development funds during the election process was a wrong practice which should be stopped.

After the announcement of the election results, he said, he conceded that the results were fair, and there was a need to work collectively to steer the country out of the crisis it was facing.

Habib Khan Ghori, *Dawn*, September 9, 2008
<http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/09/nat2.htm>

ZARDARI WILL BING STABILITY TO PAKISTAN: US THINK TANK

“Washington hopes that Asif Ali Zardari’s election to the Pakistani Presidency will help provide some stability within the government so that it can get down to the task of countering the terrorism and extremism that currently threatens the Pakistani state,” according to Lisa Curtis of the Heritage Foundation, America’s leading conservative think tank.

Curtis believes that if the opposition continues to call for some powers of the Presidency – such as the power to dismiss parliament - to be rolled back, Zardari will find himself quickly distracted from addressing serious challenges.

It would be better for the political parties to develop a level of reconciliation that would see the country through this delicate stage, rather than allow continued political infighting to slowly tear the system apart and lead to the strengthening of radical elements or the return to military rule, she concludes.

The News, September 9, 2008
<http://thenews.jang.com.pk/updates.asp?id=54633>

NAWAZ MEETS ZARDARI BUT DECLINES TO REJOIN COALITION

PML-N Quaid assures President-elect of full support to existing set-up.

In a rare show of political goodwill, PML-N leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Monday called on President-elect Asif Ali Zardari and congratulated him on his election to the country’s highest office.

But at the same time Nawaz politely declined Zardari’s request to rejoin the coalition government. Nawaz Sharif along with Punjab Chief Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif and a seven-member delegation of the PML-N called on President-elect Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at the PM’s House on Monday.

It was their first formal meeting after the PML-N pulled out of the coalition over the issue of the restoration of the deposed judges. Sources said Asif Ali Zardari during the meeting invited Nawaz Sharif to rejoin the

coalition government while Nawaz Sharif said he would not do so unless the 17th Amendment was repealed and all the deposed judges, including Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, were reinstated.

However, Nawaz Sharif assured Asif Zardari that he would continue to extend his full support to the existing set-up, sources said. The President-elect in return assured Nawaz Sharif that he would not allow any provincial government to be destabilised and would continue to promote reconciliation.

Both the leaders agreed on continuing cooperation with each other in defusing tension in the Punjab. The President-elect said that greater political engagement was the top priority of the PPP-led coalition government. "We want to work together with all the political forces and our aim is to strengthen democracy in the country," he added.

Nawaz Sharif assured him that his party would extend all-out support to the government for the promotion of democracy in the country. Talking to newsmen outside the Parliament House after the meeting, PML-N Information Secretary Ahsan Iqbal said Mian Nawaz Sharif congratulated Asif Zardari on winning the Presidential poll and said his party stood by the Charter of Democracy. He said the politics of the 80s and the 90s would not be allowed to return.

Replying to a question, Ahsan said though the PML-N was in the opposition now but it did not mean it was outside the system. "The PML-N will support the government on the issues of reinstatement of the deposed judges, implementation of the Charter of Democracy, repeal of Article 58(2) b and the 17th Amendment," he added.

He said Asif Zardari has assured them that the Punjab government would not be destabilised at any cost. "The national reconciliation process initiated by Benazir Bhutto would continue," he quoted him as saying.

"We hope the PPP will accept the PML-N mandate in the Punjab like we have accepted its mandate at the Centre." In reply to another question, Ahsan Iqbal said the PML-N delegation would also attend the oath-taking ceremony at the President House.

He urged the PPP leadership to take notice of the statements being issued to vitiate the political atmosphere in the Punjab. Other members of the delegation who attended the meeting included Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Javed Hashmi, Raja Zafar-ul-Haq, Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Zafar Iqbal Jhagra.

Leader of the House in the Senate Mian Raza Rabbani, Federal Minister for Labour and Manpower Sayed Khursheed Shah, Federal Minister for Information Technology Qamaruzaman Kaira and Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture Nazar Muhammad Gondal were also present during the meeting.

Asim Yasin, *The News*, September 9, 2008

http://thenews.jang.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=17113

ZARDARI TO RETAIN POWERS TO NAME COAS

President-elect Asif Ali Zardari will retain the discretionary powers of making key appointments, especially of the services chiefs, but will shed the authority to dissolve the National Assembly or dismiss a government, informed official circles say.

“We have no doubt that the new President wants to keep in his hand the exclusive authority to appoint services chiefs, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, the chief election commissioner, the attorney-general of Pakistan and the auditor general of Pakistan,” one official told The News.

He said there was absolutely no possibility that Zardari would voluntarily become or would like parliament to make him a Fazal Elahi or Rafiq Tarar just to earn kudos from the democratic forces.

He added apart from having a compliant prime minister, the new President, who would also be the supreme commander of armed forces, would be an effective head of state, having a dominant say in all principal domestic and foreign policy decisions.

A source said most of the PPP leaders, who were in close touch with Zardari and were of his mind, have now started talking about striking a balance between the powers of the President and the prime minister instead of reverting to the position of the two office-holders as repeatedly committed by the PPP over the past decade and as provided in the original 1973 Constitution, according to which the head of the state is just a titular figure.

The source said the ruling coalition knows for sure that the second largest party in the National Assembly, the PML-N, will be happy over scrapping of Article 58-2(b) and, therefore, will extend its support in this connection.

He said it was clear that the present ruling coalition didn't have the mandatory two-thirds majority separately in the Senate and the National Assembly to amend the Constitution without the PML-N's backing.

But contrary to this optimistic view, a PML-N leader told this correspondent that his party would not go for a patchwork to correct massive distortions in the Constitution and recommended that the presidency should be divested of all the discretionary powers and other authority that run counter to the original 1973 document.

He said the PML-N has come to know that Zardari is keen on keeping the constitutional powers relating to discretionary appointments, particularly services chiefs, but wants to dispense with Article 58-2(b).

“It will be eyewash, which will not restore the Constitution to its parliamentary form where all the powers are to be exercised by the prime minister and the President ought to be a figurehead.”

The PML-N leader said Zardari would lose nothing by agreeing to abolish 58-2(b) because his own party presides over the federal government and there is no need to keep this authority with him, as the necessity to use it would not arise.

An official source said the Constitution containing former President Pervez Musharraf's 17th Amendment and a host of other laws enacted by him would remain unchanged for quite some time because even a serious effort by the ruling coalition to amend it would meet with failure for having no two-thirds majority in parliament.

The PML-N is unlikely to be forthcoming in supporting any constitutional package of the government unless it is all encompassing and makes sweeping changes to the basic document, restoring it to its original form.

Not only Zardari but the Gilani government would be content but also extremely happy with the present Constitution because it vests all the powers in the President and the prime minister. They are unlikely to be in a hurry to change the present arrangement.

Tariq Butt, *The News*, September 9, 2008
http://thenews.jang.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=17115

SINDH GOVT STOPS ADVERTISEMENTS CONGRATULATING ZARDARI

The Sindh government has stopped all advertisements being issued to newspapers and TV channels to congratulate President-elect Asif Ali Zardari and has directed authorities concerned to cancel all such advertisements.

Zardari has taken notice of the advertisements appearing in the newspapers on Monday in which some provincial ministers and advisers congratulated the President-elect. He directed the provincial government to not misuse the budget on non-development projects.

Earlier the Sindh government cancelled the holiday announced for Monday to celebrate the victory of President-elect Zardari on his instructions. Sources said that party leaders who advised Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Qaim Ali Shah for the Monday holiday disassociated themselves after reports came in that Zardari had taken notice of this act and was angry. The party sources said the CM was left alone when Zardari took notice of the holiday and asked the CM to cancel it. ...

The News, September 9, 2008
http://thenews.jang.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=134731

JUDGE ASIF FROM TODAY

Having known Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto since 1987 I am proud of the fact that this exceptionally outstanding leader had chosen me to be the Director General, Intelligence Bureau (DG IB) in her government. I thus worked under her direct command. The unbearably tragic assassination of a leader as brilliant, brave and incomparable as her brought an untimely end to a very vibrant and purposeful life devoted to an unending effort to bring about true democracy in Pakistan. One could write unendingly on Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's personal courage, political acumen and her love for the people of Pakistan. She knew she was being hunted by ruthless assassins. Yet, this great courageous leader held rallies all over the country. The assassins finally caught up with her in Rawalpindi. Her biggest tribute is that she lived with the masses, commanded their love and respect and died amongst them, bravely, with a smile on her face and hand waving at the cheering crowds.

Seventeen days before Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's cold blooded assassination I had expressed some differences on political matters openly. Little did I then know that I will never see her again. It is this aspect that weighs heavy on me and makes me regret what I had done.

The grim situation arising out of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's assassination which saw Pakistan paralysed was handled by Asif Ali Zardari with dexterity and courage. The PPP was saved from likely fractures and was led through that turbulent period and the elections in such a manner that it emerged as the major party in the National and Sindh Assemblies. Zardari's handling of the post-election scenario brought about a grand coalition with the PML-N and others at the centre and he even managed to bring the MQM back into mainstream politics. These were no ordinary achievements.

Why the coalition broke after Musharraf's resignation is too well known. Heartburning could have been buried after Asif Zardari apologised to Nawaz Sharif on TV and requested him to return to the coalition. Knowing each other from the sixties, I and Asif Ali Zardari were also imprisoned together in Karachi Central Jail for three long years. Prison days leave an indelible imprint. As director-general of the IB, I was arrested on the night between Nov. 5 and 6, 1996, in Lahore. Asif Ali Zardari was then at the Governor's House in Lahore. He had my secret telephone number which had not been disconnected. He called me but got through to my wife who told him that I had been arrested an hour ago. After a short sojourn at Kot Lakhpat Jail I was shifted to Karachi Central Jail where I and Asif Ali Zardari then spent the next three years together. In late 1996, Asif and I were also locked up in the cold cells of a police station. We were subjected to days of brutal torture and interrogation. Who would have then known that this man lying on the

cold floor of the police station would one day become President of Pakistan? Bravo Asif.

Experiences like jail bring forth the real man in anyone. I admired the man I saw in Asif while in jail with him. He was a man full of courage and fight, and was never cowed by the many cases that were being instituted against him. With each new case he would be taken away for investigation (actually torture). He was stronger than the state that was bullying him, not knowing that he would one day head it as President.

He was subjected to months of solitary confinement after which, on a court order, I was allowed to visit him in his cell and, thereafter, we used to spend the day together. After sunset I would return to be locked up in my own dreadful cell. I can never forget Asif's concern for me all the time we were in jail. Asif helped many prisoners get a lawyer and helped numerous others in different ways. He was always a common man with the common prisoners and this ability to empathise with the downtrodden and to relate to them should now stand him in good stead. It is during these days that I gauged the extraordinary political acumen, courage, insight, understanding and fortitude that this much vilified man possessed.

Today, Asif Ali Zardari will be taking oath as Pakistan's indisputable constitutional President. I plead to all his detractors to bury the bogey of all the negative propaganda of the past two decades and judge him from now.

The democratically-elected structure is now in position and should gear up to solve the country's massive problems. These are challenging times. Only internal political stability and non-partisan national unity on issues affecting Pakistan's security and integrity will be able to deliver solutions. It is now incumbent upon all political parties to strengthen the hands of the new President and I am confident that Pakistanis may well be in for a pleasant surprise.

As a patriotic Pakistani and someone who has remained in the corridors of power, in a responsible position, I shall make a humble request to all political forces, in particular to Mian Nawaz Sharif and his PML-N, to rise above and give Asif Zardari a huge helping hand. To Mr Sharif, my humble request will also be that, notwithstanding the genuine grievances he may have, he give the coalition one more chance.

Masood Sharif Khan, *The News*, September 9, 2008
http://thenews.jang.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=134623

OVER TO ASIF

Immediately after his election as President, Asif Ali Zardari has struck the right notes. He has called once more, as he did after the Feb 18 election, for a national government, urging the PML-N and the MQM to join the federal

cabinet. With an overwhelming victory behind him, Asif also now speaks from a new position of strength. The Presidential poll proved his party remains virtually the lone national voice, able to pick up votes in all provinces. Indeed, it swept the ballot in Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan, with the PML-N obtaining a larger share of votes only in Punjab. While the result of the Presidential election was a foregone conclusion, the numbers as they came in have added strength to Mr Zardari's position.

The priority of the new President must be to build unity. The suggestions said to be coming in that the Punjab government be toppled must be resisted. The reports stating that Mr Zardari is already in dialogue with Nawaz Sharif about the possibility of patching over differences is encouraging (The two leaders met on Monday). For the present, Mr Sharif has offered 'positive' opposition; those close to Mr Zardari believe he may choose to continue work for a restoration of a full-fledged coalition. The President-elect has also spoken of looming challenges. His most immediate tasks will be to tackle militancy (whose latest manifestation was a massive suicide bombing outside Peshawar over the weekend), combat federal friction and take on economic disarray. These are obviously huge missions. But the reports that Zardari is already planning new policies for FATA and for Balochistan, and has been assured of full military support by General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani are encouraging.

The key to stability in Pakistan lies also in building greater regional harmony. Mr Zardari's success in the Presidential contest has brought in swift congratulations from India and an equally quick agreement to attend his oath-taking from Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan. These gestures from both nations offer a possible opening to making a good start with them. The reality is that cooperation with both is critical to solving Pakistan's multi-faceted internal problems, ranging from terrorism, to food shortages to inflation. Mr Zardari has lost no time in opening up parleys with various key players within Pakistan. He must also do the same as far as Pakistan's neighbours go.

Asif Ali Zardari, by cancelling the senseless decision of a holiday in Sindh to celebrate his victory, has also sent out a message of sorts. He has indicated he is aware of the need to work hard, and with commitment, given the national situation. But clear-cut goals and a sense of purpose need to be created. Asif Ali Zardari's most important priority must be to give a country that sometimes seems to have lost its way, a definite sense of direction towards which it can set out, seeking a future that is more harmonious and less violent than its present.

The News, September 9, 2008

http://thenews.jang.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=134619

WIDOWER OF BHUTTO TAKES OFFICE IN PAKISTAN

Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of the slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, was sworn in as President of Pakistan on Tuesday and immediately declared he would work alongside the leader of Afghanistan to fight terrorism. In a gesture of improved relations between the countries, Mr. Zardari invited the Afghan leader, Hamid Karzai, to attend his inauguration. He was the only foreign leader present.

Mr. Karzai has repeatedly accused Pakistan of helping Taliban fighters cross into Afghanistan in order to attack Afghan, NATO and American forces.

But there was no sign of sour feelings when the two men appeared at a news conference where Mr. Zardari was pummeled with sharp questions from Pakistani reporters about the alliance with the United States.

A major balancing act for Mr. Zardari will be how to allow the Americans to increase the attacks against the Taliban in the tribal areas — something Washington appears intent on doing — in the face of strong anti-American popular sentiment. For the first time, American helicopter-borne Special Forces troops landed in the tribal area last week and fought militants there.

The new President offered few clues as to how he would handle the conflicting priorities.

When a reporter suggested that it was time for the “Americans to go back into their tents,” Mr. Zardari sidestepped.

“We are in the eye of the storm,” he said. “I consider that an opportunity. I intend to take that and make it our strength.”

Mr. Zardari said he would attend the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly this month and go “as a victim of terrorism,” apparently a reference to the assassination of Ms. Bhutto in December. At the United Nations, he said, he will seek an inquiry into her death.

“I will ask the world to look upon us as victims of terrorism,” he said. He said he had a “comprehensive plan” for tackling terrorism, but he did not spell it out.

His first trip abroad will be to China, he said, a visit that will follow in the footsteps of Ms. Bhutto’s father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who as prime minister in the 1970s forged a strong bond with Beijing.

“I will take whatever brief the Foreign Office gives me,” he said of the purpose of the visit.

Mr. Zardari, 53, took the oath of office from Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar, a controversial start to his rule because Mr. Dogar was appointed under an emergency decree by the former President, Pervez Musharraf, and has remained in place with Mr. Zardari’s support.

The role of Mr. Dogar at the ceremony appeared to definitively signal that the former chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, who was fired twice by Mr. Musharraf, would not be invited back to his old job. Mr. Zardari has refused to reappoint Mr. Chaudhry despite pressure from his former coalition partner, Nawaz Sharif, who left the government over the issue.

Accompanying Mr. Zardari at the ceremony were his daughters, Bakhtawar and Asifa, and his son, Bilawal, who has been named heir of Mr. Zardari's mantle as head of the Pakistan Peoples Party.

The chief of staff of the army, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, and other top brass sat in a prominent position at the swearing-in.

Historically, the Pakistan Peoples Party, founded by Ms. Bhutto's father, has had difficult relations with the army and the Inter-Services Intelligence, the nation's premier spy agency.

Mr. Zardari begins his five-year term with mixed reviews. He, like Ms. Bhutto and other politicians, received an amnesty on corruption charges from Mr. Musharraf, but the cloud of the allegations still lingers.

He spent 11 years in jail, leading *The Daily Times*, an English-language newspaper here, to use the headline "Prison to Presidency" when Mr. Zardari won the Electoral College vote for the presidency on Saturday.

In a nationwide survey by Gallup Pakistan, 44 percent of respondents said none of the top three candidates should be the next President. Mr. Zardari received a 26 percent approval rating, compared with 18 percent for Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui, the candidate of Mr. Sharif's party, the Pakistan Muslim League-N.

About 2,000 adults were interviewed in person on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 for the survey. The margin of sampling error was four percentage points.

Jane Perlez, *New York Times* online, September 9, 2008
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/10/world/asia/10pstan.html?_r=1ref=world&oref=slogin

BUSH TELEPHONES ZARDARI, PLEDGES SUPPORT

President George W. Bush said he called Pakistan's newly elected leader, President Asif Ali Zardari, on Tuesday to pledge full US support to Pakistan as it fights terrorists and extremists in its border regions with Afghanistan.

"Defeating these terrorists and extremists is in Pakistan's interest," Bush said in a speech at the National Defense University.

"They pose a mortal threat to Pakistan's future as a free and democratic nation. Defeating these terrorists and extremists is also Pakistan's responsibility because every nation has an obligation to govern its own territory and make certain that it does not become a safe haven for terror."

According to the AP, Bush said the United States and its Nato allies will continue helping Pakistan in its efforts to defeat extremists.

"The same terrorists who murdered innocent civilians in Karachi and Islamabad are also plotting new attacks against the United States and Europe," he said.

Also, in the same speech, Bush announced that he will keep the US force strength in Iraq largely intact until the next President takes over, drawing rebukes from Democrats who want the war ended and a bigger boost of troops in troubled Afghanistan.

The President said he will bring home about 8,000 combat and support troops by February. He said more US forces could be withdrawn in the first half of 2009 if conditions improve in Iraq.

Dawn, September 9, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/world/bush+telephones+zardari%2C+pledges+support>

ZARDARI, KARZAI SAY UNITED IN TERROR FIGHT

Pakistan's new President Asif Ali Zardari and his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai said here Tuesday they would stand together in the fight against terrorism.

'It is an issue of importance to both countries,' Karzai told a joint press conference shortly after Zardari was sworn in as Pakistan's new leader.

'It is about fighting this menace in the right manner,' he added, saying that he and Zardari agreed on how the problem should be tackled.

'I find in President Zardari a good will and vision not only for relations between the two countries but for the region, that I have seen for the first time in this region,' Karzai said.

Relations between the neighbours were strained under Karzai and Zardari's predecessor Pervez Musharraf, with the Afghan leader accusing Islamabad of not doing enough to curb cross-border militancy.

'Pakistan intends to work with you, along with you,' Zardari told the Afghan President.

'We are bigger than the problems are,' he added.

Dawn, September 9, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/zardari%2C+karzai+say+united+in+terror+fight>

GOOD LUCK, MR PRESIDENT, YOU NEED IT

So then, did not even one of his friends advise Asif Zardari not to put himself 'in the line of fire' (pun very much intended) unnecessarily? I mean, he could have fought terrorism from behind the scenes, couldn't he?

Anyway, he is now the duly elected President, after an election that every political party has accepted as fair and proper.

What better news could there be for a people who, just days ago, were under the yoke of an army dictator who did his all and more to destabilise the country even as he was in the process of being prized out of office?

The past is past, however, and except for one hiccup all the signs augur well for the future. Most particularly President-elect Asif Ali Zardari announcing that parliament will be supreme, and the leader of the next biggest party Nawaz Sharif, saying that the Presidential election is a victory for democracy.

The one hiccup: whilst reports from three of the voting legislatures spoke of bonhomie, the leader of the PPP in the Punjab Assembly and sitting senior minister of the Punjab cabinet Raja Riaz, accused his own government's leaders of wrongdoing.

Why blame Riaz, however, when the Governor's House was festooned with banners proclaiming Asif Zardari the next President of Pakistan with, quite inappropriately, 'Lah Sahib Bahadur's' pictures adorning every banner? Which reminds me, Salman Taseer is a good-looking man: could he please stop glowering balefully from behind his too-young shades as if he were trying to put the fear of God into everyone and Charlie's aunt?

(By the way, Islamabad the Beautiful *guy* has it that Malik Riaz of Bahria Town is the next governor of the Punjab. As a friend asked, how is he less qualified than Salman Taseer?)

Back to our new President, however. One has to reiterate what was said in an editorial in this newspaper on August 7. There is a very deep trust deficit when it comes to Zardari keeping his word and whilst we must give him time, for the country is in one hell of a mess, the country has had quite enough of deceit and sleight of hand. He must restore all the judges to their pre-November 3 positions; make parliament supreme by encouraging it to repeal those sections of the Seventeenth Amendment that give extraordinary powers to the presidency, get rid of 58-2 (b), and hand over the day-to-day running of the party to someone else.

If a national government can be put together nothing like it. But in no case should either party attempt to destabilise the other's government. ...

Kamran Shafi, *Dawn*, September 9, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/good+luck%2C+president+zardari%2C+you+need+it>

AND NOW FOR THE DIFFICULT PART

Standing on the dais in Aiwan-i-Sadr's main hall and taking the oath of the office of the President, Asif Ali Zardari was visibly nervous. At times he even fumbled in his delivery while repeating the oath after Chief Justice Dogar, and perhaps heaved a sigh of relief once the brief ceremony was over.

But then all this was quite understandable.

For Mr Zardari it was more than a mere ceremony to get installed as the country's new President. It was the culmination of a long and arduous journey, interspersed with periods of political oblivion, controversies, scandals, incarceration, personal loss of a leader and wife, and much more. Anyone who until a few months ago had not even imagined being at the centre stage in politics, not to mention being the President, would have got jitters while standing before an audience of over a thousand dignitaries, family and friends, to take oath as the new head of the state.

Being a veteran back-bencher at numerous such oath-taking ceremonies, both of Presidents and prime ministers, in the 5th floor hall of the President's House, one can say with certain amount of confidence that this time round the atmosphere was quite different. As the PPP 'jiyalas', including many MPs and ministers, raised slogans of 'jeay Bhutto' and shouted in praise of the slain party leader, Benazir Bhutto, one couldn't take his eyes away from young Bilawal and his two sisters. And, of course, from Sanam Bhutto, as for her it was impossible to control her emotions. And if during all this political hullabaloo there was a breach of decorum, like continuous sloganeering when the national anthem was being played, it didn't appear to be intentional.

Having known Asif Zardari for well over two decades, and having seen the tremendous ups and downs in his personal and political life, it's hard to imagine him as the President of Pakistan. In the best of times in his previous incarnation, his political identity was that of being Benazir Bhutto's husband. In fact, Mr Zardari always said in his conversation with his friends and party loyalists that his identity, popularity, and sufferings were all because he was Benazir Bhutto's husband.

During all this period few people ever bothered to notice that Mr Zardari too was a politician and had his own ideas and a vision of sorts. Perhaps such ideas were mostly dwarfed by the wisdom and political sagacity of Ms Bhutto, but they were nevertheless there and were often presented by him before those who used to meet him during his days of incarceration.

Though I knew of Asif Zardari and his shenanigans from as far back as the early 1970s, it was only after his marriage to BB and after their coming into power a year later that I had my initial interactions. Still, some of my most detailed and memorable meetings with him were at the time when he was in

prison on charges ranging from financial corruption to misuse of authority, and even murder.

In those days the best place to meet and chat with Mr Zardari was Rawalpindi's accountability court. By that time he had become a veteran jailbird and having learnt the trick of creating a medical situation, he had gotten himself shifted to a hospital. So, on most occasions he used to be brought to the court house in an ambulance and to the courtroom in a wheelchair. The court proceedings rarely moved beyond the discussion on deciding the next date of hearing, and for the rest of the duration the place used to turn into what can best be described as Zardari's court-house, 'darbar'. All kinds of courtiers used to frequent the place. Some used to come with valuable information about political developments, some with business or political problems and a few political activists like Qazi Sultan just for the love of BB, considering it their duty to attend to her incarcerated husband.

Having seen people breaking down after having spent less than a year in jail, it used to be an amazing site to see Asif Zardari meeting and greeting people with the same kind of enthusiasm. He always had a smile on his face, and often cracked jokes, and rarely discussed what he had been going through. However, he was always aware of the political developments taking place in the country, movements of various political forces, and the games that military regime had been playing. It was during this period that he had used the election results of 2002 to his advantage to re-establish his contact with the security establishment, which ultimately paid a dividend a few years later.

Even in jail, Asif Zardari was never able to develop a love for book reading, and he openly admitted it. One was never sure if he even had the time, or appetite, to read newspapers. However, jail made him a regular listener of news on radio, and in those days my acquaintance with him was largely due to news and analysis on BBC Urdu service. In the few discussions that took place in the court-house meetings, it was not difficult to make out that Mr Zardari certainly had views on politics, economy and global affairs. Still, it was difficult to say if they were anywhere close to the happenings of the real world. However, what one was able to gather was that he certainly had his pulse on the rapidly changing politics, and he remained in contact with those who in future could become PPP's political allies.

Indeed, his days in prison had somehow convinced him that in future there was a major role for him in the country's political affairs. Whether that was a wise thought, or a misplaced ambition of an incarcerated member of a major political family, remained a matter of debate till the time he made an appearance, albeit accidentally, on the country's political stage. Since then there has been no stopping in his rise from one major position to another, culminating in the office of the head of state.

So, if it was his dream to be the country's President, it has certainly come true. But if the dream was that as the head of state he would be able to

use his position and influence to change the fate of this nation, he would have to do much more than indulging in mere rhetoric, or by giving half-baked solutions to some of the most complex problems the country is faced with.

Perhaps, as a starter, he may need to counter the prevailing perception in the country that he is not a man of his word. The way he has walked away from some of the promises he made with his political allies like Nawaz Sharif, has certainly dented his credibility. He needs to do something about it. Then, if he plans to govern the country from the President's House even in the presence of an elected parliament -- something that seems to be on his mind -- President Zardari will then have to come out with his vision about Pakistan and the challenges it is currently faced with. Again, rhetoric alone won't do.

In the eyes of most observers, his maiden news conference has been a huge disappointment. For most people it was a non-event and it shouldn't have taken place if he didn't have anything concrete to present before the country. On almost all the major issues from countering terrorism to economy, and from sovereignty of the parliament to the matters of governance, his response, at best, was vague.

Most observers believe circumstances have thrown up for Mr Zardari a huge opportunity to make people forget the perception about him, which mainly has its roots in the past, and to rise to the occasion to provide the kind of leadership that may restore the public confidence in the elected civilian forums.

It is being said that the people of Pakistan have given him a golden opportunity to prove the world wrong. Perhaps, time alone will tell if he has the capability and the political will to deliver.

Dawn, September 10, 2008

<http://www.dawn.net/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/and+now+for+the+difficult+part>

ASIF ALI ZARDARI'S PROFILE

Following is the profile of President Asif Ali Zardari as officially issued by the President House.

Profile of Asif Ali Zardari:

PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari was born on July 26, 1955 in a prominent Baloch family from Sindh. He is the son of veteran politician Mr. Hakim Ali Zardari.

On his maternal side he is the great-grandson of Khan Bahadur Hassan Ali Effendi, the founder of the first educational institution for Muslims in Sindh. The founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali

Jinnah was among the prominent students to graduate from the Sindh Madrasa.

Mr Zardari received his primary education at Karachi Grammar School and secondary education at Cadet College Petaro.

He pursued his further education in London where he studied Business.

He was married to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in 1987 and was widowed on December 27, 2007 when Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in a terrorist attack in Rawalpindi.

Butto was PPP Chairperson from 1979 until her assassination and was twice elected Prime Minister of Pakistan of Pakistan. They have three children, Bilawal, born in 1988, Bakhtawar, born in 1990 and Asifa, born in 1993.

Mr Zardari served as a Member of the National Assembly twice (1990-93 and 1993-96), as Federal Minister for the Environment (1993-1996) and as Federal Minister for Investment (1995-96).

He was the principal architect of the Benazir Bhutto government's efforts to transform Pakistan's energy power sector by encouraging major investment opportunities in power generation. He was also the initiator of the Iran-Pakistan natural gas pipeline project.

Mr Zardari was elected Senator in 1997 and served in that capacity until the dissolution of the Senate following the military coup of 1999.

He was elected Co-Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party in January 2008 following the assassination of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Mr. Zardari's political career spans two decades spent working closely with Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. During this period he helped formulate policies that expanded the freedom of the media, revolutionized telecommunications and opened Pakistan for foreign direct investment.

During Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's first term in office CNN and BBC were allowed broadcasting rights in Pakistan and mobile telephone services introduced at Mr Zardari's initiative. During her second term in office, in addition to the independent power producers (IPPs) being allowed in, Mr Zardari encouraged the introduction of FM radio in the private sector.

Mr Zardari was targeted by anti-democratic forces for vilification and persecution and bore the hardship with fortitude. He spent eleven and a half years in prison in conditions often unacceptable by human rights standards, without any charge ever being proven against him. He won election as MNA and as senator while in prison.

Despite many offers from the government of the time to leave Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) or to go abroad under a negotiated political exit, he remained committed to Party goals and continued his fight for justice and the return of a democratically elected civilian leadership.

Mr. Zardari was asked by the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Pakistan Peoples Party to serve as Chairman of the Party after the assassination of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Although he was elected unopposed, he nominated his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for that role and instead accepted the job of Co-Chairman of the PPP.

After Ms. Bhutto's death he has remained in the frontlines of shaping a national consensus at the federal level on the politics of reconciliation initiated by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Under Mr. Zardari's leadership of the Party, the PPP's candidate for Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani was elected Prime Minister of Pakistan unopposed. This was a singular and unprecedented event in Pakistan's political history.

Mr. Zardari also spearheaded the appointment of Dr. Fehmida Mirza as the first female Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly, and continues to support the empowerment of women and minorities in all government policy making.

Today, the PPP government has coalition governments in all of Pakistan's four provinces.

Most recently the PPP, under Mr. Zardari's leadership, removed General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf, the unconstitutional President of Pakistan, from office in a historic move, through a series of complex negotiations and political diplomacy. Mr. Zardari united Pakistan's major political parties and this unprecedented act was accomplished without any violence.

Mr. Zardari was elected President of Pakistan with an overwhelming majority in the Presidential election held on September 6, 2008.

APP, September 9, 2008

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=51917&Itemid=150

JOINT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT BEGINS, PRESIDENT ZARDARI TO ADDRESS

The joint sitting of Parliament has begun here and President Asif Ali Zardari is addressing the joint session. Asif Ali Zardari is the 7th President to address the Parliament in Pakistan's 61-year history.

President Zardari's address to the joint sitting of Parliament today is a milestone in the country's history, as within two weeks of his election he will spell out government's policy on important national issues before the public representatives. Under article 56 of the Constitution, the President is bound to address the joint sitting of the National Assembly and Senate immediately after his election or at the start of new parliamentary year.

It is expected that President Zardari would present a clear-cut policy on the national issues, which the country is facing since the government took over the power after February 18 polls.

President Zardari, in his policy statement, will focus on Pak-U.S. relations especially after U.S. strikes inside Pakistan, Pakistan's nuclear program, Kashmir dispute, inflation and other important issues.

Invitations have been issued to all the distinguished guests including heads of all armed forces, Governors of all the four provinces, bureaucrats, Chief Justice of Pakistan, judges of Supreme Court, President and Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Auditor General of Pakistan, Diplomats, High Commissioners, 339 National Assembly members, 100 Senators and PM's advisors.

Special seating arrangements have been made for the members of the two houses. The front row will be reserved for the ministers while the rest of the members will sit in alphabetical order.

Meanwhile, special security passes would be issued for the visitors' galleries and the journalists.

The News, September 20, 2008
<http://thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=55812>

TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT

Following is the text of the address made by President Asif Ali Zardari at the joint sitting of the parliament here on Saturday.

“Madam Speaker,
Bismillah-e-Rehman-ur-Rahim
Honourable Members of the Parliament
Assalam-o-Alaikum

I bow my head in gratitude before Allah for standing here today to address the joint session of the Parliament. I thank the Members of Parliament and of all the provincial Assemblies for reposing confidence in me and electing me to this high office.

I have been given this singular honour and privilege in the name of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and I am humbled to be standing here in front of the seat of democratic power in Pakistan.

On this important day our thoughts go to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first woman Prime Minister of the Muslim World and the twice-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan whose personal sacrifice and courage has made democracy possible. We are here; this parliament is here because of the historic choices she made.

It is indeed her day. I wish she was addressing the Parliament today and not me.

Our thoughts also go to the shuhada of Karsaz, to the martyrs of Liaquat Bagh tragedy of December 27; to those who were martyred on July 17th in Islamabad and on May 12th in Karachi and indeed to all those martyred and injured for the cause.

At this moment in time I also pay homage to the brave soldiers who have embraced martyrdom on our borders and mountains as well as those who gave their lives. Today I ask this august house to join me in prayers for all the Shaheeds including Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and especially Mir Murtaza Bhutto whose death anniversary is observed today.

They are our real heroes.

For myself, I can only say that I stand here after crossing a river of blood and tears. I have been a prisoner of conscience, but will never let that make me a prisoner of history. This means that while I will learn from history, I will never allow my decisions to be dictated by the politics of vengeance and bitter memories.

It is time for us to move on. God has given us a unique opportunity and we must not waste it.

I wish to congratulate all the elected Members of the Parliament. I also congratulate the Prime Minister, the federal and provincial governments on assuming their responsibilities.

The mandate you have is both an honour and a great responsibility.

Madam Speaker,

To address the Joint Session of the Parliament in less than two weeks after my election as President shows that we hold the Parliament in the highest esteem, and accord the highest priority to the fulfillment of its obligations under the Constitution and law.

Under dictatorship, the Parliament was stripped of its powers, and not given due respect. The Constitution requires that the President address the Joint sitting of the Parliament after every election and at the beginning of every Parliamentary year. Yet in the last eight years, the Head of the State only once addressed the Joint sitting of the Parliament.

But let me assure you, that the days of constitutional deviation and bypassing the Parliament while taking decisions of national importance are over.

As head of the state I wish to make it very clear that the President and the government must always seek guidance from the Parliament in carrying out our duties. We are committed to upholding the sanctity of the Constitution, supremacy of the Parliament, and, rule of law.

The cardinal principle of our governance is respect for the mandate of the people as manifested in the February 18 elections.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of the Parliament,

I have a dream for Pakistan. My dream is to free this great country from the shackles of poverty, hunger, terrorism and disunity.

And I know that as law makers, you too share that dream.

For every hope, we need a plan, and for every plan we need an agenda.

Without a doubt, a heavy national agenda challenges your government.

It is the agenda of moving quickly to heal the wounds of the past and restore the trust in the federation.

Tendering an apology to the people of Balochistan was a long overdue step. The release from captivity of former Chief Minister Balochistan is also a positive move. The resolution recently, of a longstanding dispute and payment of billions of rupees to Balochistan is a step in the right direction.

But much more needs to be done.

Successive blows have weakened the federation. It needs to be strengthened.

For this, the bitterness of the past must give way to reconciliation and harmony. I believe that the 1973 constitution is the only consensus document that can fashion such a social contract.

I also request the government to start consensus building process on provincial autonomy and the allocation of resources through a new formula that meets the needs of a united federation.

We must root out terrorism and extremism wherever and whenever they may rear their ugly heads.

Reforming the tribal areas and bringing them into the mainstream of national life can no longer be delayed. They must be treated at par with the rest of their Pakistani brethren.

The people of the Northern Areas must also get their basic rights, representative rule and an independent judiciary.

We believe in the independence of the judiciary and all matters concerning the judiciary shall be resolved in accordance with the constitution and law.

Another great responsibility rests on your shoulders. That is the removal of distortions in the Constitution, made by successive dictators to prolong their rule.

As the democratically elected President of Pakistan I call upon the Parliament to form an all parties committee to revisit the Seventeenth Amendment and Article 58(2) b.

Never before in the history of this country has a President stood here and given away his powers.

Madam Speaker, Members of the Parliament,
Pakistan is at a critical security juncture today.

In order to meet the challenge/posed by the extremist and terrorist elements in the Tribal Areas and the adjoining regions, the Government has devised a comprehensive three-pronged strategy.

First, to make peace with those who are willing to keep the peace/and renounce violence;

Second, to invest in the development and social uplift of the local people and;

Third, to use force only as a last resort / against those who refuse to surrender their arms, take the law into their hands, challenge the writ of the Government/and attack security forces.

For all stakeholders to have ownership of this policy, I will request the Government to hold a national security briefing/for an in-camera joint session of Parliament./Let everyone have an opportunity to make an informed judgment about the risks to our beloved country and about how we should move forward with responsibility and clarity of vision.

I ask of the Government that it should be firm in its resolve to not allow the use of its soil for carrying out terrorist activities against any foreign country.

We will not tolerate the violation of our sovereignty and territorial integrity by any power in the name of combating terrorism.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament,
I believe that the world has become a dangerous place for nations with conflict on their borders.

So/we need peace not only within Pakistan but also in our neighbourhood. At all times, we must keep our national interest in mind.

This means understanding the limits of confrontation. Under this strategy, President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai was especially invited to my oath taking ceremony/as a mark of Pakistan's sincere desire and consistent efforts/to promote close relations and strengthen cooperation with the brotherly country of Afghanistan.

On the other side with India, the government believes that the relations between the two countries can and should be creatively reinvented.

As Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto said, "It is time for new ideas. It is time for bold commitment. And it is time for honesty, both among people and between people. There has been enough pain. It is time for reconciliation."

For these ideas and for seeking peaceful relations in the region, we were once called, a "security risk" by our critics.

But ideas cannot be killed by repression.

The Charter of Democracy binds the government to a framework of peace and justice for the people of Pakistan and peace and friendship with India.

Pakistan has decided to resume the composite-dialogue process with India, driving our relations through enhanced trade.

We express our complete commitment to the Kashmiri people in their just struggle for the restoration of their fundamental rights. We will continue to seek the settlement of all outstanding disputes, including the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir so that the main hurdle in the way towards peace and full normalization of relations between Pakistan and India is removed.

As a new initiative we will start a cross-LoC trade as a pioneering CBM in Kashmir. We also propose a more liberal visa regime to further expand people-to-people contacts and friendly exchanges, and establish new facilities for the visiting Sikh and Hindu pilgrims.

As another initiative in our relationship with India, I would urge the Parliament to form a bipartisan caucus for the purpose of resolving outstanding disputes relating to Kashmir and the Indus Water head works. All parties must be represented on this caucus so that the nation is united on this key issue and draws strength by speaking in one voice.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament,

The greatest challenge this government faces is an economic one. No elected government can survive the prospect of its people going hungry. The immediate and most urgent task before the Government is to provide food security to the common man burdened with the rising prices of food items.

But we must realize that given the global oil and food shocks we face today, and the neglect of the Agricultural sector over the past nine years, this will not be enough to take the edge off the growing poverty our people face. To provide immediate relief to the poorest of the poor, the government has introduced welfare schemes across the board, with no political strings attached, like the Benazir Income Support Scheme for which a budgetary allocation of Rs. 34 billion has been made in the current Financial Year.

The ban on trade unions has been removed and the minimum wage of an unskilled worker has been increased.

Madam Speaker,

I do realize that all of this is not enough.

Undoubtedly, your government inherited an economy that was driven by pure consumption, and as such was saddled with huge liabilities of unpaid subsidy-claims on account of petroleum products, power tariffs and luxury imports. The subsidies on oil and gas that we have removed is something no political government wants to shift, but this bitter pill we had to swallow

because our balance of payments account could not sustain the expenditures of the last regime.

I see a new beginning for our economy, marked by a program of restoring investors' confidence, resumption of foreign investment, gradual build-up of reserves, exchange rate stability and, above all, revival of sustainable growth.

Madam Speaker,

I am aware of the harsh reality that Pakistan is passing through an acute energy crisis due to a serious shortfall of electricity. Unlike the last government, which did not install a single new Megawatt in seven years, our Government has taken immediate short and medium term measures to address the issue. We cannot take Pakistan out of darkness in one month, but we can certainly do it by the end of the next year.

Madam Speaker,

The government needs to set core priorities.

I believe that the vast and rapidly changing agriculture sector offers enormous opportunities to hundreds of thousands of rural poor to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

Agriculture-led growth will raise farm incomes, lower food prices and generate the surplus for exports that we so urgently need. Therefore, agriculture needs to be placed at the top of the agenda for ensuring food security on a long term basis, generating jobs and income for a vast majority of people living in the rural areas of the country. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, the government is looking at crop-insurance schemes.

Madam Speaker,

Just development is not possible without justice for women.

I note with pain that despite legislation that protects women, the women of this great nation continue to suffer crimes against them with disturbing frequency.

I will request the Government to do its utmost to not just provide protection to women, but to empower them at every step of the long road to their just entitlements as full citizens of this state.

We cannot reverse decades of social backwardness by one stroke of the pen, but we can, and we will turn this tide slowly but surely. For the first time ever, all state allotments, both in income support or land, will be made in the name of the women of this country, as my late wife Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto would have wanted. This is a first step on a long journey, but let me assure you, the women of Pakistan will stand with me in this venture.

I also note that the minorities of Pakistan have played a crucial role in the development of the country but have not received their social and political dues. We will further draw them into the mainstream of national life and make full use of their potential.

Madam Speaker, Members of the Parliament,

The media has come a long way from the first day the PPP government opened up the airwaves to private networks. Our Government lost no time to dismantle the infrastructure of violence that the last regime had left behind in repealing the Pemra and Print media ordinances which hung over the media's head like a sword. We will soon be bringing other fundamental laws, such as the Freedom of Information Bill, and work with stakeholders toward an open atmosphere of self regulation with no interference from the state. I have requested the Government of the day to look into providing wage support and housing colonies in every province on a low-cost basis, for all journalists.

Madam Speaker,

Under the new set up, the Parliament is asserting its role as a sovereign body.

For the first time in more than 44 years, the Defence Budget was discussed in the National Assembly.

Also for the first time in the history of Pakistan, we have appointed a Chairman of Public Accounts Committee as per our commitment in the Charter of Democracy.

And we all know that across the board and transparent accountability forms a key pillar of good governance.

Unfortunately accountability has been grossly misused as an instrument of political witch hunting. I believe the government has decided to repeal the NAB Ordinance and replace it with a system that is across the board, transparent and within the accepted norms of the mainstream judicial system.

The harsh provisions in the FCR are being done away with. A committee for PATA and another committee on FCR set up by the government are finalizing their recommendations. I have recommended to the Government that they change the name of the NWFP to Pukhtunkhwa, in response to a long-standing demand of the people of that Province.

Madam Speaker, Members of the Parliament,

In the realm of foreign policy it would be our endeavour to promote regional and international peace and security as well as the economic and social development of our people.

The world has changed to market democracy. Our foreign policy would be geared to not only defense of territorial integrity and sovereignty but also promotion of commercial and economic interests.

Pakistan can position itself as the trade and energy hub for South and Central Asia.

We will strengthen our brotherly relations with Iran and take our time-tested and all-weather friendship and strategic partnership with China to greater heights.

With the United States and our European partners we will endeavour to build a long-term partnership that is broad-based and mutually beneficial.

Pakistan will continue to extend full support to the Palestinian cause of self-determination.

We value our ties with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Libya.

We will rejuvenate our relations with the Arab League, the OIC and ASEAN to promote bilateral trade and investment.

With the Islamic and Arab countries we enjoy excellent relations. We will further develop our friendship with the countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa.

We underscore our commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, international law and values of our common humanity.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Parliamentarians,
Democracy in Pakistan has finally been restored; but it is still a tender sapling which needs nurturing before it becomes a great sheltering tree.

There are still elements, who want to derail it yet once again.

With faith in democracy and national reconciliation as envisaged by Shaheed Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto we must remain vigilant against such elements.

The people of Pakistan have great hopes and expectations from this Parliament.

To help them realise their dreams we need to join hands and work together in harmony and not in discord.

We need to banish forever the politics of destruction and confrontation.

The people yearn for a better future.

They long for a Pakistan that was envisaged by the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

That indeed is the Pakistan for which Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto gave her life.

That is the Pakistan for which we will live.

And that is the Pakistan for which I, as President, will lend you all support. As someone who has walked from a death cell to the Presidency, let me assure you, nothing is impossible. I can steer the country out of darkness with the help of this Government.

I am confident that you will rise to their expectations and not disappoint our people.

Let us pledge to help build together a secure, strong and prosperous Pakistan.

May Allah help us in this noble mission.

Pakistan khappay!

Pakistan khappay!

Pakistan paindabad!”

APP, September 20, 2008

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=53416&Itemid=151