

Key Questions

- ▶ Who would want to kill presidential candidate Benazir Bhutto, and why?
- ▶ In what ways would the perpetrator benefit from her death?
- ▶ Who would want to see her die, and why?
- ▶ How difficult would it be to assassinate her?
- ▶ How long would it take to mount such an operation?
- ▶ What are the most likely political consequences of her death?

5 The Assassination of Benazir Bhutto

CASE NARRATIVE

Only two months after Benazir Bhutto returned from exile to Pakistan to take up the family's political banner, she was assassinated on 27 December 2007 as her caravan departed a political rally in Rawalpindi, just south of New Delhi. Bhutto had been warned not to return to Pakistan to run for the presidency and, after she returned, had earlier been denied permission to hold a rally in Rawalpindi because of the tenuous security situation. Bhutto, however, refused to be intimidated by the numerous threats on her life and saw such political rallies as key to demonstrating popular support for her candidacy in upcoming presidential elections. The suicide-bomber assassin was later identified as a fifteen-and-a-half-year-old teenager, but questions remained about who had ordered the killing. The list of potential masterminds was not short. It included Islamic militant extremists, political rivals, senior officials in the Pakistani government, and even family members. The event and subsequent investigations captured the attention of the world, as both experts and amateurs sought to determine who ultimately was responsible for her death.

Intertwining Politics and Family

Pakistan has suffered a history of political turbulence since its genesis in 1947. No elected government has survived until the end of its term since the nation was created as a homeland for Muslims during the British partition of South Asia. The main fault lines, then and now, run between secular and fundamentalist Muslims and between civilian leaders and the military.¹

Benazir Bhutto personified this political turmoil. The military ousted her father as prime minister in 1979, convicted him of complicity in the death of a political opponent, and hanged him.² The family was forced into exile. In 1986, Bhutto returned from exile in England to head the secular Pakistan People's Party (PPP), founded by her father. She led the party to victory in 1988, becoming the first female prime minister of a Muslim country. The Pakistani president dismissed her in 1990 for alleged corruption and her failure to curb ethnic violence. She regained office in 1993.

Violence continued to plague members of the Bhutto family even during Bhutto's years in office. Her brother, Murtaza, who challenged her for control of the PPP, was gunned down near his home by police in 1996.³ His daughter, Fatima, has since called the attack a carefully planned assassination in which Murtaza was allowed to bleed to death after being shot at close range. Fatima, now a newspaper columnist and pro-democracy activist in Karachi, holds Benazir morally responsible for Murtaza's death. In 1996, Bhutto was once again dismissed from office for alleged corruption.⁴ She was later convicted in 1999 for failing to appear in court, but that judgment was subsequently overturned. Facing corruption charges in five separate cases, she fled the country that same year.

Violent Homecoming

Bhutto returned from exile once again on 18 October 2007 after President and Army Chief of Staff Pervez Musharraf, signed a "corruption amnesty."⁵ The declaration, drafted under pressure from the White House and the US Congress, not only paved the way for Bhutto's homecoming but also held out at least a vague promise of power sharing.⁶ Another prominent regime opponent, twice-deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, returned to Pakistan in the fall of 2007; he and Bhutto were longtime political rivals and had no plans to make common cause.⁷

The country was tense after months of protests against the Musharraf government.⁸ Much of the tumult was driven by political bickering surrounding the upcoming presidential elections and a possible return to democracy after more than eight years of military rule. While individual politicians, political parties, and the military all jockeyed with one another for power in advance of the upcoming vote, Islamic militants increased their attacks, seeking to stall the country's sudden move toward democracy. At the same time, the United States and the international community increased pressure on Pakistan to take a more active role in suppressing the Taliban and

Map 5.1 ► Pakistan



Al-Qaeda. Some observers claim "the brink" and left it "the main country on earth."⁹

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Al-Qaeda. Some observers claimed that the turmoil was driving Pakistan to "the brink" and left it "the main contender for the title of most dangerous country on earth."⁹

About 200,000 supporters greeted Bhutto at the Karachi airport.¹⁰ The government deployed over 20,000 security personnel to maintain order. Despite her personal security worries, Bhutto refused a request by Pakistani authorities to use a helicopter.¹¹ When leaving the airport en route to the tomb of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, she also decided not to use the bulletproof glass cubicle mounted on her open-air truck (see photo, page 82). She stood at the front railing surrounded by other party officials.



Benazir Bhutto returns to Pakistan on 18 October 2007 atop an open-air truck. (Bhutto pictured center, with scarf.)

The procession crept forward, with supporters dancing in the streets. Suddenly, there was a small explosion ahead of the truck. It was followed by a large blast near the truck itself, which set an escorting police van on fire and broke windows in Bhutto's vehicle.¹² Bhutto was shaken but not

injured in the attack. In all, 179 people were left dead, including several police officers, and more than 600 were injured.¹³ Police officer Raja Khitab later said evidence at the scene (see photo, facing page) pointed to a suicide bombing.¹⁴

Bhutto was well aware of the dangers. Two days before her return to Pakistan, she wrote a letter to Musharraf in which she named four people she believed were plotting to kill her: Ijaz Shah, current chief of the Intelligence Bureau, which answers to the Interior Ministry; Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, former chief minister of the Punjab region; Arbab Ghulam, former chief minister of Sindh; and Hamid Gul, former chief of the Pakistani intelligence service, ISID.¹⁵

After the bombing, Bhutto rephrased her warning and made it public:

On Oct 16, before returning home, I wrote a letter to Gen Musharraf in which I informed him that if anything happens to me as a result of these attacks, then I will neither nominate the Afghan Taliban, nor Al Qaeda, not even Pakistani Taliban or the fourth group. I will nominate those people



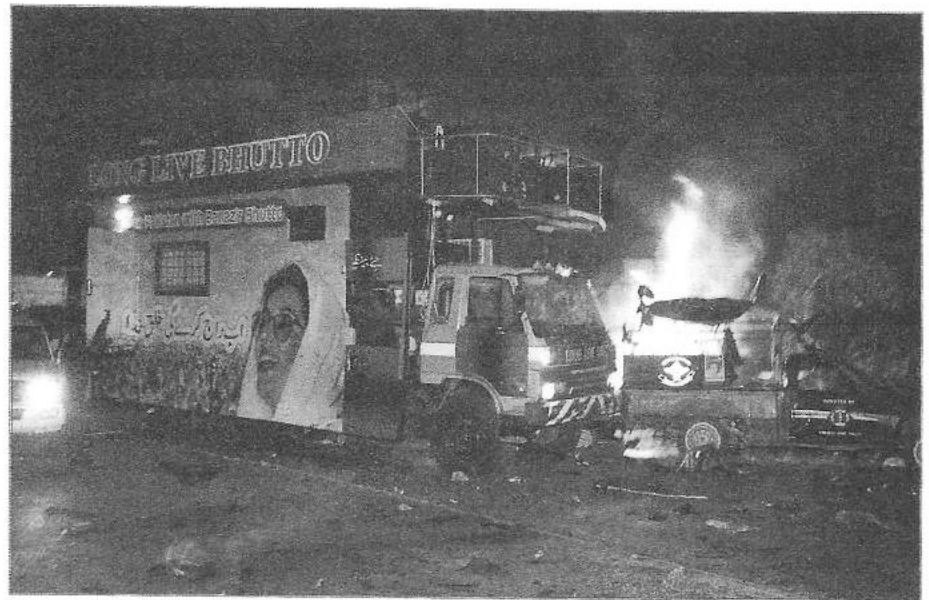
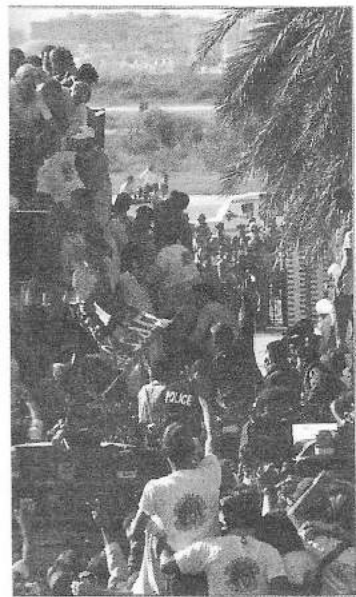
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Probable suicide bombing
near Bhutto's bus on
18 October 2007.

According to Mark Siegel, her US representative, Bhutto tried to obtain security personnel from the US firm Blackwater and the UK-based Armor-Group, but the Pakistani government refused to grant visas.¹⁷

Strident Messages Inflamm Opponents

Upon her return to Pakistan, Bhutto used the media to crusade against Islamic militants.¹⁸ She denounced jihadi terrorists with statements that few local politicians had dared to utter. During campaign appearances, she argued that suicide bombing was against the teachings of Islam.¹⁹

Bhutto attacked conservatives in the government, including officials close to Musharraf.²⁰ She accused them of aiding extremists and supporting the bombers who attacked her. Specifically, she warned against ISID and the residual power of those who had been responsible for her father's death. She assailed the military dictatorship in general but stopped short of attacking Musharraf directly, leaving the door open to the proposed power-sharing deal.²¹

Her opponents matched her rhetoric with countercharges. The chief minister of Sindh, Bhutto's home province, called the rule of a woman a curse for Pakistan. The leader of the Pakistani Muslim League, Chaudhry Hussein—a Musharraf supporter who strongly disapproved of compromise with Bhutto—suggested that the new arrival had arranged the blasts herself as a ploy for sympathy. Ejaj ul-Haq, the minister of religious affairs, blamed Bhutto for playing with people's lives by returning when she was aware of threats against her.²²

Musharraf grudgingly approved her return under US pressure to restore civilian rule, but many Pakistani democrats were skeptical of the image in the Western press of Bhutto as a savior who would rescue the country from autocratic rule and terrorism. Critics on TV talk shows and in newspapers complained that Musharraf had offered amnesty in return for Bhutto's support for an extension of his term in office. Many portrayed the amnesty offer as implicit approval of political corruption. A popular cricketer turned politician, Imran Khan, and his ex-wife, the wealthy British socialite Jemima Khan, lambasted Bhutto in the British press, calling her "a kleptocrat in an Hermès scarf." In a London editorial, Khan highlighted Bhutto's husband's moniker, "Mr. 10 Percent," and accused the two of having stolen more than \$1 billion from the Pakistani treasury during Benazir's second time as prime minister.²³ Opponents also pointed out that she was appealing a money-laundering conviction in the Swiss courts and that corruption investigations were ongoing in Britain and Spain.²⁴

Bhutto's estranged niece Fatima said in an interview after Bhutto's return: "I do believe Benazir is the most dangerous thing to happen to this country."²⁵ She argued that Bhutto's pro-American agenda was giving democracy a bad name and was jeopardizing hard-won progress in grassroots political development. "She has put us all in danger of an Islamic backlash," Fatima declared in the interview. Fatima threatened to ally with other opposition leaders.²⁶

Musharraf, meanwhile, continued his efforts to curtail Bhutto's political campaigning. On 9 November, police erected barbed wire around the Bhutto compound to prevent her from speaking at a rally protesting Musharraf's emergency rule.²⁷ They also rounded up thousands of her supporters. On 13 November, authorities put Bhutto under house arrest, citing concerns for her safety. She responded by calling for Musharraf's resignation and threatening to have her party boycott the elections scheduled for January 2008.

Bhutto's niece considered the complaints about a house arrest to be hollow. She pointed out that Bhutto's political planning was not stifled and, indeed,

more than fifty members of her family were in the country during the purported detention.²⁸ Moreo her garden, protected by the poli news conference. Bhutto's niece or tioned the idea of holding a press

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with countercharges. The chief minister led the rule of a woman a curse for the Muslim League, Chaudhry Hussein—a man disapproved of compromise with the Taliban. She had arranged the blasts herself as a minister of religious affairs, blamed for not returning when she was aware of

her return under US pressure to restore the country. Many were skeptical of the image in the media. She could rescue the country from autocracy. Talk shows and in newspapers come to her in return for Bhutto's support for the country. He portrayed the amnesty offer as implicit in the cricket. The cricketer turned politician, Imran Khan, lambasted the socialite Jemima Khan, lambasted the technocrat in an Hermès scarf. In a speech, he used his husband's moniker, "Mr. 10 Percent," to demand more than \$1 billion from the Pakistani government as prime minister.²³ Opponents of the money-laundering conviction in the 1990s were ongoing in Britain and

In an interview after Bhutto's return: "I don't think anything is going to happen to this country."²⁵ The agenda was giving democracy a bad press in grassroots political development. "Islamic backlash," Fatima declared in her other opposition leaders.²⁶ Her efforts to curtail Bhutto's political career were like barbed wire around the Bhutto family. At a rally protesting Musharraf's rule, thousands of her supporters. On 13 December, she was house arrest, citing concerns for her health. Musharraf's resignation and threatening to resign for January 2008.

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more than fifty members of her party were allowed to meet with her during the purported detention.²⁸ Moreover, Bhutto addressed the media twice from her garden, protected by the police, and was not reprimanded for holding a news conference. Bhutto's niece contended that other activists who even mentioned the idea of holding a press conference were jailed.

Bhutto's opponents matched her strident tone. In mid-November 2007, a leaked letter suggested that in 1990 Bhutto had sought to conspire with Pakistan's enemy, India, for political gain. It was common knowledge that Bhutto and then-US Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith had been close friends since college days. In the purported letter, Bhutto was alleged to have asked Galbraith to convince the Indian prime minister to create a military incident on the border to put pressure on the Pakistani government and keep it from disqualifying her in upcoming elections. Officials in Bhutto's party denounced the letter as a forgery, citing gross grammatical errors as proof.²⁹

The Final Days

By late December, nerves on all sides were frayed. Bhutto's detention had been lifted, and she had resumed her political campaign.³⁰ After the bombings on the day of her return to Pakistan, she had briefly considered abandoning public rallies and delivering taped messages by TV or radio instead, but she had concluded that mass rallies were crucial to her chances of electoral success. On 26 December, authorities detained a man carrying explosives near one of her rallies in Peshawar, close to the Afghan border.³¹ The man claimed it was celebratory dynamite from a wedding he had attended. Bhutto's husband phoned from Dubai to say he was nervous and wanted to attend the rally planned for the next day in Rawalpindi in her place, but she dissuaded him.³²

The controversial candidate planned to use her 27 December speech to charge that Musharraf intended to rig the elections set for 8 January.³³ She was scheduled to meet during the day with election observers from the European Union, US Senator Arlen Specter, and US Representative Patrick Kennedy. Her plan was to give them evidence that the elections would be fixed through fake polling stations and voter intimidation. Despite her busy day, she met early that morning with Afghan president Hamid Karzai to confer on the growing danger of extremism.³⁴

Bhutto was apprehensive about her trip to Rawalpindi, just south of the capital. Considered the home of the military, it was where her father had been hanged in 1979 and where Pakistan's first prime minister had been assassinated in 1951.³⁵ Things were already going badly in Rawalpindi. In the early

afternoon, a sniper on a rooftop killed four Sharif supporters and injured five others.³⁶ Sharif's party blamed Musharraf's group, claiming the attack was an attempt to intimidate potential voters. Despite the danger, at 1545, Bhutto and her top party officials drove the ten miles from Islamabad to Rawalpindi.

Bhutto held the rally as planned. Near dusk, as she drove away from the site in her bulletproof SUV, she raised her head through the sun roof to acknowledge the frenzied crowds chanting "Long Live Bhutto!"³⁷ Police constable Mohammed Qayyam, who was trying to clear a path for the vehicle, failed to see the man in sunglasses standing just behind Bhutto. Eyewitnesses later reported he raised a gun and fired three shots at close range. Nor did the constable notice the man a few paces back whose head was covered in a white scarf (see photos, facing page). Witnesses said he blew himself up moments later, killing himself, the likely gunman, and others all around. Bhutto was among those who died.

Bhutto was rushed to Rawalpindi General Hospital, where she was pronounced dead just after 1800.³⁸ The next day her remains were transferred to her husband and flown to Larkana. She was buried in the family's mausoleum that afternoon.

Multiple Accounts in the Aftermath

Controversy immediately swirled, beginning with disagreements over the cause of death.³⁹ Initial reports were that Bhutto had been shot in the head or neck before the bomb went off and had died from the gunshot wounds. The next day, Ministry of Interior officials said she had been killed by shrapnel from the bomb. Two days after the attack, the Interior Ministry issued a more definitive statement, claiming that the shooter had missed but the bomb had caused her to fall; her head had struck a protruding lever on the sun roof, and she died from a skull fracture.⁴⁰ The Interior Ministry official showed X-rays to support this claim. Witnesses and close friends who rushed her to the hospital, however, said she clearly had been shot.⁴¹

Doctors who had attended Bhutto initially reported that she had died of gunshot wounds. They later released findings consistent with the Interior Ministry's position. One Pakistani doctor said the government had seized Bhutto's medical records and ordered the doctors to stop talking.⁴² A subsequent report issued by a UN team investigating the assassination noted that this doctor was not an attending physician, which caused some to question his credibility.⁴³

There was no autopsy, despite a legal requirement for one in such cases. The government claimed this was in deference to Islamic traditions and Bhutto's husband's wishes.⁴⁴ In response to a government offer to disinter her if her

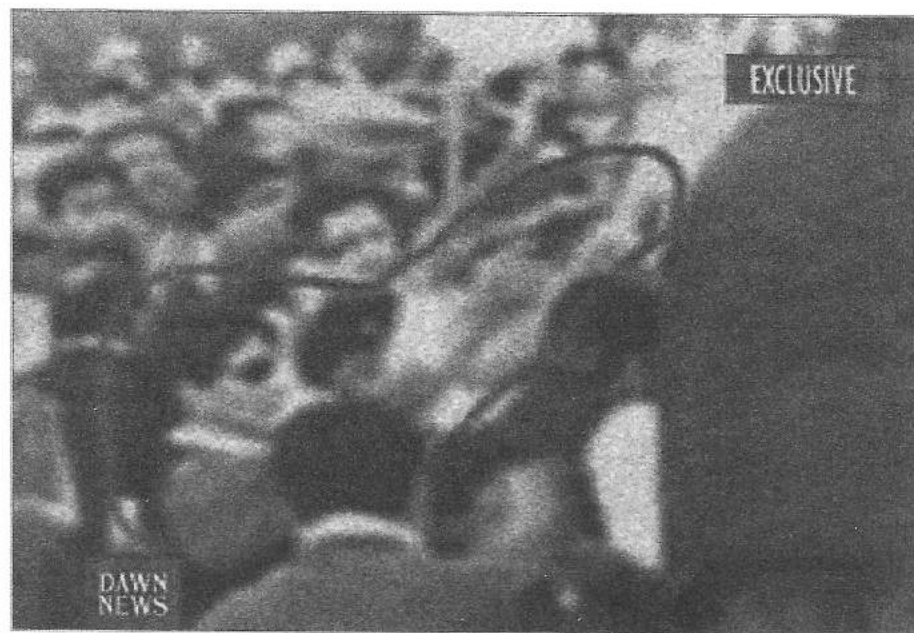


The top video image shows a man (Benazir Bhutto) on 29 December 2007. The bottom image shows a gunman and the suspected suicide bomber.

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The top video image shows a man (wearing sunglasses) pointing a gun at Benazir Bhutto on 29 December 2007. The bottom image shows this suspected gunman and the suspected suicide bomber (wearing white scarf).

husband so requested, Bhutto's husband declined, saying an autopsy would be useless because the results would be rigged.⁴⁵

An hour and a half after the attack, the senior police officer on the scene ordered police officers to wash down the street with fire hoses. Pools of blood, bullet casings, and DNA samples were all washed away.⁴⁶ Even Hamid Gul, a detractor of Bhutto with connections to both the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, publicly questioned why the government had washed away evidence at the scene of the crime.⁴⁷ All that remained was amateur footage showing a man in a black vest brandishing what appeared to be a gun and, behind him, a man in a white head scarf believed by some to be the suicide bomber. The government established a joint investigation team headed by local Singh authorities, which later examined the vehicle and reported that it could find no blood or tissue on the hatch where Bhutto was alleged to have struck her head.⁴⁸

Musharraf immediately took steps to distance the government from the assassination. He later acknowledged that Bhutto might have been shot, but he blamed her for poor judgment in ignoring her advisors by standing up in the vehicle, noting that no one else in the car was hurt.⁴⁹ He pointed out that most of the nineteen suicide bombings that had occurred in Pakistan in recent months were directed against the military and the intelligence service.⁵⁰ Discounting stories blaming ISID for the assassination, he stated: "No intelligence organization in Pakistan, I think, is capable of indoctrinating a man to blow himself up."⁵¹ The government had warned Bhutto of the danger of staging a rally in Rawalpindi, he said, and, in fact, had stopped an earlier rally planned for that location by putting her briefly under house arrest. Musharraf claimed security had been as tight as possible on the day of the assassination, with 1,000 police officers on duty, including snipers on roofs and mobile squads around Bhutto's vehicle.⁵²

Soon after the attack, the Interior Ministry claimed it had a communications intercept that proved that Baitullah Mehsud, a leader of the Pakistani Taliban thought to be an Al-Qaeda affiliate, had instigated the attack (see Figure 5.1).⁵³ Mehsud's forces had been attacking Pakistani military units that were trying, at Washington's behest, to assert control over quasi-autonomous tribal areas where diverse anti-US militants had found sanctuary. The alleged intercept purports to record Mehsud congratulating a follower on a job well done. The US Central Intelligence Agency director, General Michael Hayden, said in late January 2008 that he believed Mehsud was behind Bhutto's assassination. Hayden did not lay out his evidence and made no comment on whether the alleged intercept figured in his calculation. Some wondered

Figure 5.1 ▶ Communications Intercept

Mullah: Peace be with you.

Baitullah Mehsud: And also with you.

Mullah: Chief, how are you?

Baitullah Mehsud: I am fine.

Mullah: Congratulations, I just got bad

Baitullah Mehsud: Congratulations to

Mullah: Yes, they were ours.

Baitullah Mehsud: Who were they?

Mullah: There was Saeed, there was

Baitullah Mehsud: The three of them

Mullah: Ikramullah and Bilal did it.

Baitullah Mehsud: Then congratulation

Mullah: Where are you? I want to mee

Baitullah Mehsud: I am at Makeen [to Shah's house.

Mullah: OK I'll come.

Baitullah Mehsud: Don't inform their

Mullah: OK.

Baitullah Mehsud: It was a tremendou

Mullah: Mashallah. When I come I will

Baitullah Mehsud: I will wait for you.

Mullah: Congratulations to you.

Baitullah Mehsud: Anything I can do f

Mullah: Thank you very much.

Baitullah Mehsud: Asalaam Aleikum.

Mullah: Waaleikum Asalaam.

Source: World Net Daily, "Pakistan In Crisis: News.com/index.php?pageid=45282, December 28, 2007.

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Figure 5.1 ► Communications Intercept Released by the Pakistani Government

Mullah: Peace be with you.

Baitullah Mehsud: And also with you.

Mullah: Chief, how are you?

Baitullah Mehsud: I am fine.

Mullah: Congratulations, I just got back during the night.

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

Mullah: Yes, they were ours.

Baitullah Mehsud: Who were they?

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

Baitullah Mehsud: The three of them did it?

Mullah: Ikramullah and Bilal did it.

Baitullah Mehsud: Then congratulations.

Mullah: Where are you? I want to meet you.

Baitullah Mehsud: I am at Makeen [town in South Warziristan], come over, I am at Anwar Shah's house.

Mullah: OK I'll come.

Baitullah Mehsud: Don't inform their house for the time being.

Mullah: OK.

Baitullah Mehsud: It was a tremendous effort. They were really brave boys who killed her.

Mullah: Mashallah. When I come I will give you all the details.

Baitullah Mehsud: I will wait for you. Congratulations, once again congratulations.

Mullah: Congratulations to you.

Baitullah Mehsud: Anything I can do for you?

Mullah: Thank you very much.

Baitullah Mehsud: Asalaam Aleikum.

Mullah: Waaleikum Asalaam.

Source: World Net Daily, "Pakistan in Crisis: 'Intercept' of al-Qaida Points to Bhutto Plot," <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?pageid=45282>, December 28, 2007.

whether Hayden's public statement was intended to exonerate Musharraf, a counterterrorism ally.⁵⁴

Other US officials agreed that Mehsud was a likely candidate.⁵⁵ The Taliban leader had been critical of both Afghan president Karzai and Pakistani president Musharraf for their close alliance with the United States. He was Pashtun and, like many in the remote tribal area straddling Afghanistan and Pakistan, wanted to see his kinsmen rule a country of their own that followed strict Islamic law and tribal traditions. In 2005, Musharraf had struck a deal with Mehsud, suggesting the two could coexist. Mehsud agreed to halt cross-border attacks into Afghanistan and stop sheltering Al-Qaeda and other foreign fighters in return for the withdrawal of Pakistani military forces from Waziristan, his tribal area. He denied that he had been given large bags of cash as a sweetener. Mehsud eventually broke the agreement, allowed foreign fighters back into the safe haven, and resumed operations against the Pakistan Army.⁵⁶

Some observers questioned the intercept's authenticity as too convenient and termed the government's accusation of Mehsud just another case of Pakistan rounding up the "usual suspects" when the police are stumped—the government had named him in previous investigations when it had no leads.⁵⁷ Mehsud quickly and publicly denied any involvement in Bhutto's assassination, just as he had rejected any role in the October bombing when Bhutto first returned. His spokesperson emphasized that striking a woman violated tribal customs and asserted that the crime was a plot by the government and the intelligence services.

Pakistani security officials arrested a fifteen-year-old, Aitezaz Shah, in the northwest tribal region on the suspicion he was involved in the assassination.⁵⁸ The Al Jazeera news network quoted security sources as saying the teenager had confessed that he was one of five suicide bombers sent to kill Bhutto.⁵⁹ During interrogation, Shah said that two of the attackers, Akram and Bilal, were to target Bhutto first. If they failed, the other three were charged with completing the operation. Bilal killed Bhutto by shooting her and detonating an explosive vest, Shah told officials. He was unable to provide details about the locations of other members of the assassination team.⁶⁰ Members of Bhutto's political party dismissed Shah's arrest, stating it was not the breakthrough the Pakistani government claimed. "Frankly, the arrest of a 15-year-old and his handler is neither here nor there," Abida Hussain, senior politician in the party, said.⁶¹

In her posthumously published book, Bhutto mentioned another possible assassin: Islamic radical Qari Saifullah Akhtar.⁶² Bhutto claimed he had helped

procure the bombs that went off in 2003. He had been arrested previously for plotting against Bhutto's second government. He had close ties with the Taliban and Mullah Omar's group, Harkat-ul-Islami (HUJI), a group with ties to Uzbekistan, and Bangladesh.

Scotland Yard Weighs In

As the initial international outcry over Bhutto's assassination quieted down, Musharraf sent a small team to investigate Bhutto's assassination on 8 January. Musharraf denied any involvement. Investigators were told that Pakistani authorities retaining custody of Bhutto's husband were denied permission to visit. Scotland Yard was denied permission to interview Bhutto's husband, who was accused of plotting to kill the intelligence chief.⁶⁴ Scotland Yard sent a team to Swat, a town in the area controlled by the Taliban, to look for fingerprints and links to the attack. The team was able to match the prints to a

Based on X-rays that were in Bhutto's possession (along with dental records) and on a witness who had washed her body before Bhutto died from a head injury to the roof hatch of her SUV.⁶⁵ The roof hatch was on the right side of the head, which exploded from a gunshot. A British Home Office report stated that the rapidly fatal head injury is consistent with the bomb blast. Given the severity of the injury, Bhutto was probably struck her head while the hatch had a solid lip of four inches. The hatch was not in view until 0.6 seconds before the blast. The absence of a full autopsy could not rule out the possibility of a neck wound.

Scotland Yard concluded that Bhutto was killed by a single attack. The team noted that several unidentified individuals—the p

ended to exonerate Musharraf, a

is a likely candidate.⁵⁵ The Taliban
ident Karzai and Pakistani presi-
he United States. He was Pashtun
diding Afghanistan and Pakistan,
of their own that followed strict
Musharraf had struck a deal with
Mehsud agreed to halt cross-border
Al-Qaeda and other foreign fight-
military forces from Waziristan,
wen large bags of cash as a sweet-
nt, allowed foreign fighters back
against the Pakistan Army.⁵⁶
's authenticity as too convenient
Mehsud just another case of Paki-
the police are stumped—the gov-
igations when it had no leads.⁵⁷
vement in Bhutto's assassination,
ber bombing when Bhutto first
striking a woman violated tribal
plot by the government and the

en-year-old, Aitezaz Shah, in the
e was involved in the assassina-
d security sources as saying the
five suicide bombers sent to kill
hat two of the attackers, Akram
ey failed, the other three were
al killed Bhutto by shooting her
officials. He was unable to provide
ers of the assassination team.⁶⁰
d Shah's arrest, stating it was not
claimed. "Frankly, the arrest of a
nor there," Abida Hussain, senior

utto mentioned another possible
⁶² Bhutto claimed he had helped

procure the bombs that went off in Karachi on 18 October 2007. Akhtar had been arrested previously for participating in an attempted "Islamic coup" against Bhutto's second government and had subsequently forged a relationship with the Taliban and Mullah Omar. Akhtar heads the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), a group with ties to terrorists in Tajikistan, Chechnya, Burma, Uzbekistan, and Bangladesh.

Scotland Yard Weighs In

As the initial international outcry over the assassination and bungled investigation quieted down, Musharraf asked Scotland Yard on 2 January to send a small team to investigate Bhutto's death.⁶³ The team visited the scene of the crime on 8 January. Musharraf established strict parameters for the Yard's involvement. Investigators were limited to looking into the cause of death, with Pakistani authorities retaining responsibility for identifying the culprit(s). Scotland Yard was denied permission to question some of the people Bhutto's husband accused of plotting to kill her, including several politicians and the intelligence chief.⁶⁴ Scotland Yard examined the gun purportedly used in the attack for fingerprints and linked the prints to the identity card of a man living in Swat, a town in the area controlled by Mehsud. It is unclear whether the Yard was able to match the prints to any of the victims at the scene.

Based on X-rays that were independently verified as Bhutto's (by comparison with dental records) and on reports from the doctors and family members who had washed her body before burial, the Scotland Yard team concluded that Bhutto died from a head injury when a powerful blast made her body hit the roof hatch of her SUV.⁶⁵ The only apparent injury was a major trauma to the right side of the head, which experts said was not an entry or exit wound from a gunshot. A British Home Office pathologist said "the only tenable cause for the rapidly fatal head injury is that it occurred as the result of impact due to the bomb blast. Given the severity of the injury, it is impossible that she inadvertently struck her head while ducking."⁶⁶ Scotland Yard noted the escape hatch had a solid lip of four inches and Bhutto did not completely disappear from view until 0.6 seconds before the blast. However, the limited X-ray material and the absence of a full autopsy and CAT scan meant that the pathologist could not rule out the possibility of a gunshot wound to the upper trunk or neck.

Scotland Yard concluded that only one person had been involved in the attack. The team noted that security officials found body parts from only one unidentified individual—the probable suicide bomber, according to expert

opinion. Media footage placed the gunman at the rear of the vehicle and looking down immediately before the explosion. No suspicious movements by others in the crowd appeared on the footage. Forensic evidence indicated that the bomber was one to two meters from the vehicle with no obstruction in front of him, strongly suggesting that the gunman and bomber were at the same location. It is virtually impossible that anyone who was standing near the gunman who could be clearly seen on the video could have survived the blast and escaped. Scotland Yard's final report did not discuss the possibility that vital forensic evidence could have been removed inadvertently or willingly in the postbomb cleanup.⁶⁷

The Scotland Yard report focused primarily on the events leading up to and just after Bhutto's assassination. Left unaddressed was the key question: Who ultimately was responsible for Bhutto's death? Bhutto's death had captured the world's attention, spawning many theories about who had ordered it. The challenge is to generate a comprehensive list of suspects, identify the most diagnostic information and key information gaps, identify a robust and comprehensive set of suspects, and provide a compelling case for who were the most culpable players behind the scenes.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Jones, Owen Bennett. *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Rashid, Ahmed. *Descent into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, paperback ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.

Table 5.1 ► Case Snapshot

Structured Analytic Technique Used
Chronologies and Timelines
Mind Maps
Analysis of Competing Hypotheses

THE ASSASSINATION OF BENAZIR BHUTTO STRUCTURED ANALYTIC TECHNIQUES

In this case, law enforcement and similar challenge: combing through items of evidence, and construct a case for each of these tasks.

Technique 1: Chronologies and Timelines
Chronologies and Timelines are used sequentially; display the information anomalies, or correlations. In addition, the evidentiary weeds to view a detailed timeline particularly useful in identifying levels in the reporting, and gaps in

Task 1. Create a Timeline of events

STEP 1: Label the relevant information and order in which it reported