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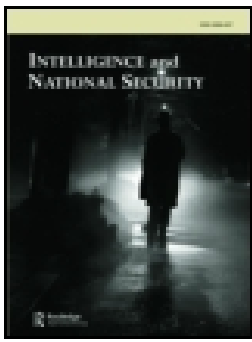
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## The Bhutto family and Pakistan: Power, Politics, and the Deep State

R. Gerald Hughes and Ryan Shaffer 

**The Bhutto Dynasty: The Struggle for Power in Pakistan**, by Owen Bennett-Jones, New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2020, x+320 pp, 28 illustrations, \$28/£20 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0300246674.

Military coup d'états are the worst enemies of national unity. Coup d'états divides and debases a free people. If there was any doubt on the subject, the events in Pakistan have shown that the people of the Third World have to primarily guard against the internal enemy, if foreign domination or hegemony is to be resisted.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto<sup>1</sup>

My father always would say my daughter will go into politics. My daughter will become prime minister, but it's not what I wanted to do. I would say, No, Papa, I will never go into politics. [...] As children we had been taught that no price was too high to pay for our country. But the personal price to our family had been high. I pleaded, begged with them to let me embrace my beautiful father for the last time. They refused. We parted without being able to touch. I have led an unusual life, I have buried a father killed at age 51 and two brothers killed in the prime of their lives and I raised my children as a single mother when my husband was arrested and held for eight years without a conviction, a hostage to my political career. [...] The tragedies, the triumphs, the turbulence in Pakistani society mirror my life as a woman and political activist. [...] There will come a day when you will see the result of your struggles. You can imprison a man, but not an idea. You can exile a man, but not an idea. You can kill a man, but not an idea. Freedom is not an end; freedom is a beginning.

Democracy is the best revenge.

My death will be the catalyst of the change.

Benazir Bhutto<sup>2</sup>

In *The Bhutto Dynasty*, Owen Bennett-Jones draws on years of journalism and scholarly research to analyse the Bhutto family in Pakistan with special attention to their quest for power, how they wielded that power and their relationship with Pakistan's military. It is first and foremost centred around the person of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928–1979) and his daughter, Benazir Bhutto (1953–2007). However, other figures such as Zulfikar's son, terrorist Murtaza Bhutto (1954–1996) and Benazir's son and current chair of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Bilawal, are also featured. The chapters are organised chronologically to examine 'the Bhutto dynasty since Pakistan was created' which is largely 'the story of the conflict between it and the army' as well as the Bhuttos' unsuccessful 'attempts to reach a compromise with the generals' (7). In doing so, Bennett-Jones' study connects to the broader theme of the 'dilemmas faced by Bhuttos – how to think about the West and how to manage the military' which 'are the issues that preoccupy Pakistan as a whole' (7).<sup>3</sup>

The book is largely composed of two parts, with the first exploring Zulfikar and his ancestors. Starting with pre-colonial and colonial periods, Bennett-Jones describes the Bhutto family's cooperation with the British colonialists in the southern province of Sindh (8–35). The family migrated from Rajputana (now mostly Rajasthan in India) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (9). The Bhuttos then duly proceeded to become very wealthy, largely from their extensive landholdings, as loyal subjects of the British Raj.

As Bennett-Jones notes: 'The British may have prided themselves on bringing the rule of law to Sindh, but they also taught the big families how to bend the law to their purpose and how to get away with infractions' (15). In 1930, the British recognized the loyalty of Shah Nawaz, Zulfikar's father, awarding him a knighthood (29). Having established himself as a pillar of the Raj, Shah Nawaz then proceeded to entrench the influence of the Bhuttos and he became a leading light in a campaign for full provincial status for Sindh. This movement achieved its goal in 1936 and, when the new states of India and Pakistan were created eleven years later, Sindh, with its majority Muslim population, chose to join the latter.

Turning to Zulfikar, who was nineteen years old when Pakistan was born, Bennett-Jones details his early life and education paying due attention to his privilege, first marriage and cosmopolitan upbringing. After completing his university education in the United States and the United Kingdom, Zulfikar became a lawyer and was drawn inexorably into Pakistani politics, serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs under President Ayub Khan between 1963 and 1966.<sup>4</sup> Following a falling out with President Yahya Khan, he formed the PPP in 1967. After being placed under house arrest, Zulfikar portrayed himself as a martyr and used this to his political advantage before winning many seats in West Pakistan at the 1970 general election. However, this did not deliver power for, despite the PPP's popularity in West Pakistan, the Awami League won an overall majority in parliament. The PPP and the Awami League were unable to agree on a common programme, especially on the issue of the increasing demands for more autonomy by East Pakistan. Increasingly brutal violence only provoked East Pakistan into declaring independence (becoming Bangladesh) in March 1971 and securing its independence, in alliance with India, in December of that year. This led to Zulfikar becoming president of Pakistan on 20 December 1971.

After becoming president immediately in the wake of war with India and East Pakistan's independence, Zulfikar consolidated his power and negotiated the 1972 Simla agreement with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, regaining territory and getting about 90,000 Pakistani soldiers released from Indian custody. Meanwhile, Zulfikar's 'autocratic' actions damaged Pakistani civil service institutions as he struggled with the role of Islam in Pakistan. As Bennett-Jones argues: 'His basic orientation of campaigning for social justice became wrapped up with his advocacy of Muslim causes' (87). Ultimately, Zulfikar's new constitution in 1973 promoted a Pakistani polity with a more Islamic orientation (which, for example, included clauses stipulating that non-Muslims could no longer serve as prime minister). Zulfikar, who had relinquished the presidency to become prime minister under the new constitutional arrangement, also struggled with the military. Before coming to power, Zulfikar had expressed reservations about the power of Pakistan's intelligence services. Once in power, however, Zulfikar ignored his left-wing advisers and embraced the opportunity to spy on his political opponents.<sup>5</sup>

Always conscious of opposition, and unhappy with the work of the civilian Intelligence Bureau (IB), Zulfikar charged the external intelligence agency, the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), with undertaking operations within Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> Zulfikar established the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and, although ostensibly a counter criminal force, it was often deployed against political opponents, investigating tax evasion and other financial irregularities. Zulfikar also set up a para-military law enforcement body, the Federal Security Force (FSF), which came to be used for breaking up opposition meetings and harassing their leaders. This active promotion of a national intelligence security state had severe long-term consequences, not the least of which was the weakening of the political foundations of Bhutto's elected government.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it weakened the foundations of *all* future elected governments of Pakistan. In 2000, Mubashir Hasan wrote that 'It has been the tragedy of Pakistan that more than a score of presidents, prime ministers, chief ministers, and parliaments have had an unconstitutional ending because of the policies pursued by a president or prime minister based on the secret information supplied by the intelligence services of the country.'<sup>8</sup> Most significantly, in terms of the growth of the power of intelligence agencies, was that influence accrued by the ISI. As Dennis Kux noted in 2001, ever since Bhutto's reforms, '[t]he ISI has . . . been an active and destabilizing force in Pakistan's political life and opposing perceived opponents.'<sup>9</sup> On one

occasion, it is alleged that Mubashir Hasan, the co-founder of the PPP, told Zulfikar to rebuild his power base amongst the people and turn away from the national security state. Zulfikar supposedly responded that 'What you want me to do, I do not have the power to do.'<sup>10</sup>

Having failed to tame the military and other opponents, Zulfikar 'told the Intelligence Bureau to set up a parallel cell watching the ISI, but it did not gather much information and, when it came to the crunch in 1977, it failed to get wind of the coup that was to bring Zulfikar down' (101).<sup>11</sup> As anti-government protests proliferated and following an apparent fraudulent election (in which the PPP romped home), General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq seized power in July 1977 and a defiant Zulfikar was found guilty of conspiracy to murder a political opponent (with the chief of the FSF, having been granted immunity, as the chief prosecution witness).<sup>12</sup> This prompted a lengthy appeal process and the petitioning of Zia by a number of world leaders (UK Prime Minister James Callaghan wrote that 'As a soldier yourself you will, I know, remember the truth of the old saying that the grass grows swiftly over a battlefield but never over a scaffold' (112)). Zia, knowing that Bhutto was determined to return to power, was not to be deflected from his purpose.<sup>13</sup> Zulfikar was hanged on 4 April 1979. In his death cell, he had penned what was effectively his last will and testament (and published as '*If I am assassinated ...*'). In it, he wrote that

I was born to make a nation, to serve a people, to overcome an impending doom. I was not born to wither away in a death cell and to mount the gallows to fulfill the vindictive lust of an ungrateful and treacherous man. I was not born to be humiliated and insulted by a barbaric and spiteful clique. I was born to bring emancipation to the people and honour them with a self-respecting destiny. Sooner or later for every people there comes a day to storm the Bastille.<sup>14</sup>

Such rhetoric aimed at enhancing Zulfikar's stature as a martyr for Pakistan's freedom. Globally, and especially in the West, this was a status that many commentators were willing to embrace. Immediately following Zulfikar's execution, one sympathetic Western journalist reflected:

In the ultimate analysis many believe that the leaders of Pakistan in 1979 have greatly miscalculated. They have wrought a tragedy on a family and a people in an act of unparalleled ingratitude towards a former head of state ... Undoubtedly in order to eliminate Bhutto the military authorities have taken all manner of risks regarding the interests of the country. Only in the fullness of time, as Bhutto would himself say, will people know just how great a disaster for Pakistan was the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Most believe they have destroyed a great leader and brought upon themselves prolonged conflict.<sup>15</sup>

Bennett-Jones notes that Zulfikar's execution 'left a wound on Pakistan's body politic that is still raw forty years later' (113). Benazir had predicted that the hanging of Zulfikar's would cause 'Civil war, the breakup of Pakistan, a massive and total outburst from the people' (116). That these things did not happen is to not in any way to minimize the lasting impact that the execution caused. As to the man himself, Bennett-Jones insists that Zulfikar 'deserves to be judged on the basis of his own performance, [and] not his successors,' drawing attention to his work for the underprivileged, legislative victories as well as his failures to build democratic institutions (116). Zulfikar's legacy is, however, hardly straightforward. As one journalist told British academic Anatol Lieven: 'Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is the only Pakistani leader who has ever spoken to the poor as if they mattered, and made them feel that they mattered. No one else has done that. So though in fact he did little for them, and Benazir [did] nothing at all, they still remember him with respect, and even love, and something of this still sticks to the Bhutto name.'<sup>16</sup>

The second half of the *The Bhutto Dynasty* focuses on Benazir's rise in politics and traces the fortunes of the Bhutto family until the present day. Recounting Benazir's education and life in the United States, and then the United Kingdom, Bennett-Jones describes how she quickly worked to 'secure his political base' after the 1977 coup which occurred just ten days after returning from the University of Oxford (126). He explains how while she built her standing in politics, her brother Murtaza turned towards terrorism supported by Libya and Syria. In 1979, in response to General Zia's execution of their father, Murtaza (and brother Shahnawaz) established the Marxist militant group the People's Liberation Army to overthrow Zia (in 1981, the name of this organisation changed to the

Al Zulfikar Organisation (AZO)) (133). The AZO made a number of attempts on Zia's life and tried to kill Justice Maulvi Mustaq – the man who had sentenced Zulfikar to death<sup>17</sup> – although the attempt went awry and they killed his colleague. Murtaza took full responsibility for the attack but stressed that AZO were not counter-terrorists, not terrorists (139–40). Both Murtaza and Shahnawaz met with premature deaths shrouded in controversy. Shahnawaz died in France in 1985, supposedly of poisoning (146–7); and Murtaza was shot to death when the police in Karachi ambushed in his convoy in 1996 (during Benazir's second time in office) (203–5).<sup>18</sup>

In power, Zia pursued Islamification at home. He also blatantly sought to identify support for the regime, with support for Islam. In a 1984 referendum, General Zia sought a mandate to continue as an 'elected president' for another five years. With opposition banned, the voters were asked to say 'Yes' or 'No' to the following statement:

Whether the people of Pakistan endorse the process initiated by General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, the President of Pakistan, for bringing the laws of Pakistan in conformity with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Koran and Sunna of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and for the preservation of the ideology of Pakistan, for the continuation and consolidation of that process and for the smooth and orderly transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people.<sup>19</sup>

For the domestic audience, Zia's active opposition to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan enhanced his stance as a champion of Islam. His funneling of support<sup>20</sup> to the mujahedin resistance against the Soviet occupiers in Afghanistan<sup>21</sup> also bolstered his international standing. Zia's role in Afghanistan, which he denied officially (telling President Reagan that Muslims had the right to lie in a good cause),<sup>22</sup> gave him considerable advantage in Washington<sup>23</sup> and saw him feted by the United States. Indeed, Reagan noted of Zia that: 'He's a good man (cavalry). Gave me his word they were not building an atomic or nuclear bomb. He's dedicated to helping the Afghans & stopping the Soviets.'<sup>24</sup> For a time, with the West fixated with the Soviet threat, this combination of harnessing the power of Islamic feeling, and friend of the West as the chief opponent of Soviet power in Afghanistan, made Zia's position seem impregnable.

All of this changed abruptly when Zia's eleven years in power ended with his death in August 1988. This unexpectedly returned the Bhutto family to centre stage. Benazir emerged victorious in the 1988 election and became prime minister with an alliance with the secular Muttahida Qaumi Movement. Benazir also had to make an uneasy peace with the military (as one contemporary commentator noted: 'She knows that she cannot make it to Islamabad without the army's acquiescence.'<sup>25</sup> Benazir was certainly keen to build upon her father's legacy, proclaiming that 'Jeeay Bhutto ["Long Live Bhutto", or Victory to Bhutto']. It's a lovely word. It's warm and wonderful. It lifts the heart. It gives strength under the whip lash ... It means so much to us, it drives us on. It makes us reach for the stars and the moon.'<sup>26</sup> It was clear that things were going to be far from straightforward for an unmarried 35-year old woman in charge of a Muslim-majority country. This was all the more apparent when one considered her supposed western leanings and the fact that she was the daughter of a man overthrown in a coup involving the powerful Pakistani military.<sup>27</sup> Bennett-Jones analyses Benazir's careful approach to the military, whereby she appeased them but opposed them politically. She was right to fear them, however, as the military and the intelligence community (the latter in the form of Operation MIDNIGHT JACKAL),<sup>28</sup> put mounting pressure on her government. By August 1990, Benazir was out of power and left in no doubt that the preponderance of the military, Islamists and the ISI were all perpetual opponents. (The ISI thus provided staunch support for Nawaz Sharif in the 1988 and 1990 elections).<sup>29</sup> Bennett-Jones notes that some of her mistakes stemmed from her inexperience, and the institutional framework in which she had to operate, but 'that could not hide her failure to deliver the change people hope for.' Furthermore, when apologists claim that Benazir had been undermined, it should be noted that when President Ghulam Ishaq Khan 'complained about the corruption of Benazir's government, he had a point' (181).

As a leader of the opposition, Benazir was under increasing threat from jihadists, but she successfully manoeuvred a return to power in 1993 and managed to improve relations with the military. Part of this compromise was achieved by effectively undertaking not to interfere in programmes deemed essential by the military. A.Q. Khan thus received a five-year extension from Benazir to continue his search for a Pakistan nuclear capability as head of the Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) – even though Benazir herself was forbidden from setting foot inside this facility.<sup>30</sup> The aspiration to acquire nuclear weapons was something Benazir had inherited from her father. As early as 1965, Zulfikar had famously announced that ‘If India builds the bomb, we will eat grass or leaves, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own. We have no alternative.’<sup>31</sup> In January 1972, only a month after assuming office, Zulfikar convened a meeting of scientists at Multan effectively launching the race for the bomb. The subsequent nuclear programme became an integral part of the policy of the Pakistani national security state, and of the governments of all hues, for over twenty years (98–9). ‘But none of the subsequent contributors to Pakistan’s nuclear project would deny that, without Zulfikar’s vision and determination to match the Indian programme, it would never have got off the ground (99). Although Pakistan’s nuclear programme is inextricably linked with Zulfikar’s legacy although there are many legends surrounding it. Not least of these is derived from Zulfikar’s claim, written in his death cell testament, *If I am assassinated . . .*, where he claimed that his pursuit of nuclear weapons was the reason he was to be executed.’<sup>32</sup>

Once she assumed power in 1988, Benazir found herself squeezed between the military’s desire for a bomb, and US pressure to desist. In June 1989, she told a joint session of the US Congress that ‘Speaking for Pakistan, I can declare that we do not possess nor do we intend to make a nuclear device. That is out policy.’<sup>33</sup> Domestically, such statements caused her problems – something that she took on board before she returned to power in 1993. In October of that year, Benazir duly declared that ‘We will protect Pakistan’s nuclear program and will not allow our national interest to be sacrificed’ (190–1). Indeed, as Bennett-Jones notes, Benazir may well have personally exchanged information on nuclear technology with North Korea and China during her official visits to those states in late 1993.<sup>34</sup>

By her second term, Benazir had also embraced right-wing market reforms and she proclaimed that ‘I was in England when Margaret Thatcher introduced the economics of privatization. I was also in America to see the economics of deregulation. And I took these lessons from the East to the West’ (206). As it was, Benazir was rather more preoccupied with accusations of corruption and domestic challenges, and her second government ended in 1996. Benazir’s husband, Asif Zardari, was imprisoned and remained incarcerated until 2004. Benazir herself, convicted of corruption in absentia, was barred from political office. In 2007, Pervez Musharraf, the general who had ruled Pakistan since taking power in a 1999 coup, saw his public support collapse. Musharraf was thus compelled to make a deal with Benazir, dismissing the legal cases against her and allowing her to return to Pakistan.

As she returned to Pakistan in 2007, Benazir updated her autobiography. In it, she wrote that she was ‘determined to fulfil my pledge to the people of Pakistan to stand by them in their democratic aspirations.’ While the spectre of a violent death was clearly in her mind (‘I take the risk for the people of Pakistan’) Benazir, as ever, was determined to project her charisma to a global audience.

[My return to Pakistan] is not about personal power. It is about simple decency and respect for the right of men and women to live in security and dignity and in liberty. And now, in this new age of danger, extremism and terror, it is about something more. Democracy in Pakistan is not just important for Pakistanis, it is important for the entire world. In this age of the exploitation and radical interpretation of my beloved religion, we must always remember that democratic governments do not empower protect and harbour terrorist. A democratic Pakistan, free from the [yoke] of military dictatorship, would cease to be the petri dish of international terrorism.<sup>35</sup>

Her hopes unrealised, Benazir was assassinated on 27 December 2007. *The Bhutto Dynasty* opens with a detailed reconstruction of this brutal event, demonstrating some fine detective work on the part of the author (already evidenced elsewhere<sup>36</sup> – especially in his prize-winning BBC radio/podcast series on Benazir’s assassination).<sup>37</sup> Later in the book, the subject of Benazir’s assassination

comprises an entire chapter ('Assassination', 216–44). As the US and British governments were preparing for Benazir's political comeback (although not to the degree of actually make real efforts to secure her safety),<sup>38</sup> Al-Qaeda and the Pakistan Taliban were engaged in the planning of her murder (216). Understandably, Bennett-Jones' chapter lacks definitive conclusions to match the reconstruction of the assassination itself. This is hardly surprising for, as Bennett-Jones notes elsewhere in the volume, 'As ever with high-profile deaths in Pakistan, even basic facts soon became contested' (146). Heraldo Muñoz, head of the United Nations' inquiry into Benazir Bhutto's assassination, was nevertheless forthright in his criticism of the behavior of the local law-enforcement agencies.

It is my belief that the police deliberately botched the investigation into [Benazir] Bhutto's assassination. Some police officials did not execute their professional duties as vigorously as they should have, perhaps fearing he involvement in the crime of powerful actors or intelligence agents. At a minimum, the Rawalpindi police, as well as the Punjab administration and the federal government, failed to take the necessary measures to protect the former prime minister, though knowing that she faced fresh and urgent security risks.<sup>39</sup>

Prior to her murder, there were a number of assassination plots and actual attempts directed against Benazir. Osama bin Laden had first targeted her in 1989, when he began plotting to remove her. In 1993, Al Qaeda attempted to kill her. Indeed, it was the nephew of Al-Qaeda leader Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Ramzi Yousef, who placed a bomb in front of Benazir's house with the intention of activating it by radio control (although a police officer drove him off before he could detonate the device next to Benazir's car when it emerged from the garage).<sup>40</sup> That a police officer saved her life from a terrorist with ties to the ISI demonstrates nothing so much as the complicated relationship Pakistan's politicians have with institutions of the servants that are in theory meant to protect them.

In her steadfast refusal to be cowed by the constant threat of assassination, Benazir unquestionably showed herself to a woman of great courage, but she was also a skilled politician. She therefore incorporated these failed attempts into the political mythology surrounding herself and the Bhutto family. In April 2007, Benazir told a British newspaper that:

Let me tell you, the World Trade Center was attacked twice, although most people only remember the second one [on 11 September 2001]. But the first time, in 1993, it was Ramzi Yousef and the second attack was by [his uncle] Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who has confessed and is in American custody, and both these men tried to kill me and failed. So they succeeded with the World Trade towers but they didn't succeed with me.<sup>41</sup>

Bennett-Jones explores the numerous assassination plots, prior to unravelling the prelude to the successful attempt of December 2007 (216–7). At about 1a.m. on the day of her death, ISI chief Lieutenant General Nadeem Taj warned Bhutto of the plot against her life. Wary of accusations of having neglected the security of so prominent a figure, Taj actually travelled to Benazir's home in Islamabad to tell her that suicide bombers would target her at a proposed rally in Rawalpindi. Since Taj could not arrest the potential assassins, as Benazir requested, for fear of compromising sources. Benazir observed that her security was the responsibility of the state, and 'You beef up security and make sure that I'm fully protected. Not only I'm protected, but my people who are there, they're fully protected.' Taj undertook to do his best (1). Yet, and despite Taj's warning, there were still numerous figures associated with the government that had both the means and the motive to murder her. Bennett-Jones' narrative points to a wider conspiracy, reaching beyond Islamic extremists, as being responsible for her murder, alleging broader state involvement although, in some ways, this section is the most frustrating section of the book as Bennett-Jones brings up many actors and questions but offers few answers. After detailing efforts by the government to 'cover-up' aspects of Bhutto's assassination, Bennett-Jones explains: 'The most benign explanation is that they were trying to avoid embarrassment that would follow revelations about rogue intelligence or army officers being involved in the plot' (239).

Turning to the dynasty after the hammer blow of Benazir's murder, Bennett-Jones focuses on her widower, Zardari, and his tenure as president from 2008 until 2013. Zardari benefitted from an apparent improvement in civil-military relations, but he bequeathed his (and Benazir's) son, Bilawal



Bhutto Zardari, a weakened PPP and a diminished political network. The dynasty's future is uncertain, and Bennett-Jones observes that, even if Bilawal 'can make friends in high places in Washington', he must still build relations with the Pakistan Army (267). After all, while Zardari never held General Musharraf responsible for Benazir's murder, Bilawal did precisely that. In 2017, Bilawal told the BBC:

Pervez Musharraf directly threatened my mother that the guarantee of her security upon her return to Pakistan depended on Bhutto's cooperation with the government ... [Therefore,] I personally hold Pervez Musharraf responsible for the assassination of my mother. ... The PPP does not regard the young man who killed Benazir in a bomb and gun attack on her vehicle in 2007 as her murderer. In reality, Pervez Musharraf killed my mother by taking advantage of the situation. The terrorist did shoot the bullet from which my mother was killed, but the former president removed my mother's security protocol on purpose so she would be an easy target ... The court disregarded the UN investigation, phone call recordings, and DNA evidence, as well crucial testimonies, in the trial. The ruling in the case is a mockery of justice.<sup>42</sup>

Bennett-Jones asserts that, in accusing Musharraf in this manner, and in consciously adopting this particular stance, Bilawal was emulating his mother in criticising a former head of the army whilst not precluding working with that same influential institution. That said, if the history of the Bhutto dynasty is any guide, Bilawal may well cut a deal (267).

One downside to the book is the brief and infrequent discussions of external forces and pressures on the family, such as Kashmir, India and the Cold War, in favour of largely focusing on internal issues. With regard to Kashmir it was Zulfikar, after all, who once said that 'Kashmir must be liberated if Pakistan is to have its full meaning'.<sup>43</sup> Bennett-Jones only briefly notes that the army was concerned over Benazir's supposed reluctance to continue sponsoring covert action in Pakistan (160). In fact, it was during her periods in office that ISI had recruited large numbers of young men to die in Kashmir. That she was not in a strong position to resist in 1988 is unquestioned. The ISI was proud of its recent success against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and now, it reasoned, the same could be done to India in Kashmir by harnessing subversion and *jihad*.<sup>44</sup>

While Benazir had initially been reluctant to continue Zia's policy of supporting the Kashmiri militants, she soon fell in with the idea of continuing the plans of Pakistan army as the price for their toleration of her coming to power. Indeed, one Pakistani analyst even opined that 'even a child in this country knows that the Kashmir policy's architect is the Army and not Ms. Bhutto'.<sup>45</sup> While Benazir may not have had anything approaching even partial control over the army or ISI,<sup>46</sup> she nevertheless embraced the cause of the Kashmiri militants and openly visited a training camp for them in Pakistan.<sup>47</sup> In one speech she exhorted on those engaging in the struggle against India: 'The people of Kashmir do not fear death because they are Muslims. The Kashmiris have the blood of the mujahids and ghazis. The Kashmiris have the blood of muhajadeens because Kashmiris are the heirs of Prophet Mohammed, Hazrat Ali, and Hazrat Omar.'<sup>48</sup> Benazir increased assistance to Kashmiri militants and facilitated the creation of terrorist organisations such as Lashkar e-Taiba (Let) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).<sup>49</sup> In 1993, Benazir went so far as to state that supporting the militants in Kashmir was justifiable as a policy of revenge against India for the humiliating loss of Bangladesh and was the one laudable policy enacted by Zia.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the groups in Kashmir, Benazir was not averse to supporting other extreme groups – most notably the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup> Although more circumspect than some of her government (in 1994 her interior minister, General Nasirullah Babar, publicly referred to the Taliban as 'our boys'), Benazir was, at best, ambivalent about the Taliban. When asked by a British journalist about Afghanistan she blithely replied that Pakistan was 'monitoring events ... closely' as it was necessary to 'wait to see what happened'.<sup>52</sup> One can only surmise that, apart from personal convictions, Benazir was hoping that, by supporting the Taliban, she could reap political dividends from Afghanistan by appeasing the military and ISI.

The 9/11 attacks, exposed the problems in Pakistan's national security policy. Under severe pressure from Washington, the ISI played a double game by rounding up Al Qaeda suspects whilst simultaneously seeking to shelter Taliban leaders from the US. There was a high price for this, not least the spread of suicide bombing from Afghanistan (in Pakistan, while there was one suicide attack

in 2005, there were fifty-eight by 2008). Military operations against Islamist militants in Pakistan had only increased the antagonism of these groups and, by the end of 2010, 3,759 people had been killed in 239 suicide attacks in Pakistan. Many of the attackers were vulnerable children (some with mental and physical disabilities), susceptible to indoctrination by ruthless leaders, one of whom asserted that 'Children are tools to achieve God's will.'<sup>53</sup>

Benazir, whilst fully cognisant of the Islamist threat, also behaved as if groups such as Let and JeM would confine the fermenting of unrest to Kashmir. Alas, all such groups were soon enmeshed in a movement – which included the likes of the Taliban and Al Qaeda – that sought to pursue global jihad.<sup>54</sup> At interview with William Dalrymple, Benazir stated that that 'India tries to gloss over its policy of repression in Kashmir . . . [and although] India does have might, [it] but has been unable to crush the people of Kashmir. We are not prepared to keep silent, and collude with repression.' Dalrymple concluded that:

Benazir Bhutto was certainly a brave and secular-minded woman. But the obituaries painting her as dying to save democracy distort history. Instead, she was a natural autocrat who did little for human rights, a calculating politician who was complicit in Pakistan's becoming the region's principal jihadi paymaster while she also ramped up an insurgency in Kashmir that has brought two nuclear powers to the brink of war.<sup>55</sup>

*The Bhutto Dynasty* takes for granted the veracity of one conspiracy amongst the many that surround the many contested events in the history of Pakistan. Bennett-Jones is unambiguous when it comes to the death of General Zia. 'On 17 August 1988,' he writes, 'General Zia's eleven and a half years in power were brought to an end by his assassination. That someone killed him was beyond doubt. To this day, the identity of his assassin remains a mystery' (154). Bennett-Jones' view of Zia's death is not universal. While there has never been any serious claim that either the PPP or Al Zulfikar were involved in Zia's death, although Bennett-Jones notes that, when asked if one of his men from Al Zulfikar had been involved, Murtaza Bhutto 'rather lamely replied "not to my knowledge"' (154-5).<sup>56</sup> In truth, the precise cause of the crash that killed General Zia and the other passengers is debatable.<sup>57</sup> The US ambassador to Pakistan Arnold Raphel, US General Herbert M. Wassom and nearly two dozen more people were on the flight and died with Zia.<sup>58</sup> As a result, the US government also investigated the crash, but had it arrived at rather less definitive conclusions than Pakistani authorities' findings about an intentional sabotage. The 'American experts who went to Pakistan' concluded 'the crash was probably caused by a malfunction in the aircraft and not by a bomb or a missile,' but 'did not rule out the possibility that sabotage could have caused the malfunction.'<sup>59</sup>

The death of Zia was, and remains, a very sensitive subject for many people. In 1988, amid speculation that the Soviet Union might have been behind the crash, one journalist observed that the US State Department might well have hoped that no evidence of foul play would be unearthed. For, '[i]f such evidence were found, the awkward question would be what to do about it. The United States, as some official noted last week, actually has an incentive not to discover that the Soviets did it.'<sup>60</sup> Twenty years later, Pakistani writer Mohammed Hanif published a comic novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, based on the crash that killed Zia. This superb book, whilst noting the large number of persons who wanted Zia dead, brilliantly satirised the deadly complexities of Pakistan's politics. Twelve years later, after the book was finally translated into Urdu, Hanif's publisher was raided and many copies were seized. Hanif claimed that the authorities had also threatened the publishers. Predictably, an ISI official denied these charges, claiming that the accusations represented a 'cheap attempt to gain popularity by hurling false accusations on a national institution'.<sup>61</sup>

Overall, Bennett-Jones' analyses of the deaths of Zia and Benazir underestimates the power of incompetence and unintentional error in a country with a lack of resources and strong government institutions, by favouring nefarious and intentional actions of state and non-state actors. These are, however, relatively minor quibbles for what is, in fact, a very fine piece of scholarship. While some books concerned with analysing the evolution of societies over protracted periods often do a disservice to research into either past or contemporary research, Bennett-Jones does justice to an impressive array of sources on the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. *The Bhutto Dynasty*

draws on a large number of interviews, a number of archives in Pakistan and the United Kingdom, as well as the Bhutto family library. While Bennett-Jones notes at the book's outset that he was unable to secure cooperation from the Bhutto family itself, he made good use of his extensive network of contacts in Pakistan and drew from his BBC radio/podcast series on Benazir's assassination where he interviewed notables from the family such as Asif Zadari and Bilawal Bhutto (viii). *The Bhutto Dynasty* is an excellent study that is far more than a chronicle of the Bhutto family, although that history is fascinating enough. Bennett-Jones' book provides the reader with a superb case study of civil-military relations in the modern state. *The Bhutto Dynasty* is essential reading for any historian of Pakistan as well as for any scholar interested in civil-military relations in South Asia.

## Notes

1. Bhutto, "If I am assassinated . . .," 168–9.
2. Syed Ishrat Husain, op-ed, "The fragrance of Benazir Bhutto," *Daily Times* (Lahore), 19 December 2020.
3. On the role of the military in Pakistan historically, see Saeed Shafqat, *Civil-military Relations in Pakistan*; and Hasan, "Pakistan," 88–100.
4. General Mohammad Ayub Khan was the second president of Pakistan (1958–69), having overthrown Iskander Mirza in the first successful coup d'état in the history of Pakistan.
5. Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 109–10.
6. Kux, "The Pakistani Pivot," 50; Leiven, *Pakistan*, 211. In addition to the IB and the ISI, each branch of the armed forces had their own intelligence wing; and the provincial governments all had a Special Branch for domestic intelligence. Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 110.
7. Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 110.
8. Hasan, *The Mirage of Power*, 202.
9. Kux, "The Pakistani Pivot," 50.
10. Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 111.
11. Bennett-Jones, *The Bhutto Dynasty*, p. 101. On Zulfikar's unsuccessful attempt to build an alliance with ISI prior to the 1977 elections, see Johnson, "Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence," 123–4. On Zulfikar and the ISI generally, see Sirrs, *Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate*, 95–106.
12. Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 111.
13. Leiven, *Pakistan*, 75–6.
14. Bhutto, "If I am assassinated . . .," 142.
15. Victoria Schofield, "Bhutto: the final act," *The Spectator* (London), 7 April 1979.
16. Leiven, *Pakistan*, 238.
17. Anwar, *The Terrorist Prince*, 130–49.
18. Following his death, Benazir's requested the ISI files on Murtaza. This request was refused. Mary Anne Weaver, "Bhutto's fateful moment," *The New Yorker*, 4 October 1993.
19. Hasan Akhtar (Islamabad), "Zia goes to the voters with little chance of losing," *The Times* (London), 17 December 1984.
20. Largely provided through the CIA's Operation Cyclone. On Zia's involvement in the Afghan War, see Riedel, *What We Won*, 56–63.
21. Kepel, *Jihad*, 138–9, 142–4.
22. Braithwaite, *Afghanstiy*, 296.
23. Kux, "The Pakistani Pivot," 50.
24. Diary entry, 7 December 1982. *The Reagan Diaries*, 117.
25. Mahnaz Ispahani, "The Generals' election," *The Spectator* (London), 27 August 1979.
26. Leiven, *Pakistan*, 236.
27. On the army and politics in Pakistan, see Muhammad, *An Army, its role and rule*; and Shah, *The Army and Democracy*.
28. The ISI-initiated Operation MIDNIGHT JACKAL attempted to secure a parliamentary vote of no-confidence. It failed. Bennett-Jones, *The Bhutto Dynasty*, 169; Sirrs, *Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate*, 146, 303.
29. Kux, "The Pakistani Pivot," 53.
30. Abbas, *Pakistan's Nuclear Bomb*, 189. Benazir later claimed that she contacted key figures in the nuclear programme, including A.Q. Khan, in order to ascertain exactly how far matters had progressed. Bhatia, *Goodbye Shahzadi*, 76.
31. Ellis and Kiefer, *Combating Proliferation*, 23.
32. Abbas, *Pakistan's Nuclear Bomb*, 178. Zulfikar referred to a conversation in which Henry Kissinger had supposedly warned him of dire consequences if he persisted with the pursuit of nuclear status.

33. Ellis and Kiefer, *Combating Proliferation*, 33.
34. Bennett-Jones, *The Bhutto Dynasty*, 190–1; Bhatia, *Goodbye Shahzadi*, 41–2; Ellis and Kiefer, *Combating Proliferation*, 38–9.
35. Bhutto, *Daughter of the East*, 431.
36. Bennett-Jones, “Questions Concerning the Murder of Benazir Bhutto,” *London Review of Books*, 34/23, 6 December 2012; Bennett-Jones, BBC News, “Benazir Bhutto assassination: How Pakistan covered up killing,” 27 December 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-42409374> (accessed 2 January 2021).
37. Bennett-Jones, BBC, *The Assassination*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05rgk0d> (accessed 29 December 2020).
38. Heraldo Muñoz, head of the United Nations’ inquiry into Benazir Bhutto’s assassination, noted that the US and the UK were the ‘key external players advocating Bhutto’s return to Pakistan ... [although] they were not willing to assume responsibility for her security’ by exerting pressure on Musharraf. Muñoz, *Getting Away with Murder*, 128.
39. Muñoz, *Getting Away with Murder*, 161.
40. *Ibid.*, 62.
41. Mark Harrison, “Destiny’s Daughter,” *Sunday Times* (London), 28 April 2007.
42. News Desk, “Pervez Musharraf killed my mother: Bilawal Bhutto,” *Express Tribune* (Karachi), 27 December 2017.
43. Bhutto, *Foreign Policy of Pakistan*, 13.
44. Johnson, “Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence,” p.127; Leiven, *Pakistan*, 189.
45. Noorani, “The Betrayal of Kashmir,” 259.
46. Johnson, “Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence,” 138 (n.44).
47. Allen, *Benazir Bhutto*, 106.
48. Bhatia, *Goodbye Shahzadi*, 61.
49. Paul, *The Warrior State*, 59.
50. Bhatia, *Goodbye Shahzadi*, 62.
51. Rashid, *Jihad*, 215.
52. Fergusson, *Taliban*, 46.
53. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom*, 226–7. Quote at 227.
54. Ollapally, *The Politics of Extremism in South Asia*, 138.
55. William Dalrymple, op-ed, “Bhutto’s Deadly Legacy,” *New York Times*, 4 January 2008.
56. Anatol Lieven asserted that ‘no one knows who was responsible for [Zia’s] assassination,’ although he provided no evidence that Zia was deliberately killed. Leiven, *Pakistan*, 65.
57. Speculation over the cause of the crash began immediately. At this time, many people were convinced that the Soviet Union had had a hand in Zia’s death because of the war in Afghanistan. See, for example, Lally Weymouth, “Who killed Pakistan’s Zia: The fears and the theories,” *Washington Post*, 28 August 1988.
58. Crossette, “Who Killed Zia?” 94.
59. Bill Gertz, “Missile killed Zia, Pakistan indicates,” *Washington Times*, 29 August 1988; AP, “Pakistan Points to Sabotage in Zia Crash: American investigators remain unconvinced,” *New York Times*, 17 October 1988. On the divergent Pakistani and US views of the assassination of Zia, see also Elaine Sciolino, “Zia Crash: Two Views,” *New York Times*, 19 October 1988.
60. Weymouth, “Who killed Pakistan’s Zia”.
61. Alison Flood, “A Case of Exploding Mangoes ‘targeted by authorities after Urdu translation’,” *The Guardian* (London), 9 January 2020.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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