

Benzair's Assassination – Future of Resistance to Imperialism and Military Rule

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Assassination of Benazir Bhutto has brought enormous grief and mourning throughout Pakistan. Millions, including followers of Peoples Party and its opponents, considered the life-time Chairperson as a big challenge to the existing state of exploitation, discrimination and unemployment. The death of Benazir Bhutto by implication is another setback for forces against military rule and imperialism.

Assassination has proved that military backed dictatorship has failed to perform with unconstitutional powers gained through the martial law as much as it was failing earlier. Despite using bombardment, kidnappings and collective punishments the rulers' last ditch effort to rule upon the people against their will appears to have failed. The incident has opened the wounds inflicted on the nation through continuous dictatorship, imperialist domination, exploitation and oppression. It has come amid US moves to seek direct intervention in Pakistan and build pressure on Iran . The extraordinary reaction of the world leaders to the assassination shows a concern on international scale about an imminent failure of the nuclear banana republic establishment they have used to wage their wars for occupation. It also threatens to deepen division between the people of Sindh and Punjab, although the recent lawyers and anti-martial law movement as well as the widespread immediate protest against Benazir's death al over the country goes against such a threat. If the US military intervention is expanded and formalized it will open up chances of further fragmentation by arming local sectarian and ethnic militias for its war against terrorism, obvious examples of imperialist innervations that fragmented societies are Afghanistan and Iraq and earlier in Lebanon.

As a national leader the death of Benazir Bhutto has brought shock and jerk to the entire capitalist world. The international oil market, commodities market and the regional stock exchanges felt the impact, oil prices rose and stocks fell. This was an addition to the war on terror that has destabilized the capitalist world order -- oil prices have doubled in last twelve months bringing fortunes for the companies and massive price rise for the poor. The response of imperialist powers, the United Nations and other power brokers to the assassination shows that nuclear power they used to secure their interests is now seen as a potential threat to world order.

Benazir Bhutto was loved by the masses but was also adored by the US and other powers. She came to power twice in last twenty years and her third bid was mixed with the desire to share powers with the military and to continue the war against terror by showing an unbending will to confront the Islamicists fighting US occupation. The military's second line of leadership and now through its chief, General Kiyani, also showed their approval of the former prime minister. Kiyani as chief of ISI presided over the operation against liberation Baloch resisting mega-projects and Al-Qaida related disappearances, saw through the deal between Benazir and General Musharrf earlier in the year.

The anger and grief at the tragic death of Benazir is in continuation of the October 18 2007 attack on her and shows that the society as a whole is paying the price in the general rising of violence to sideline political participation in war on terror and those responding to it. It also exposes the extent to which the imperialist relations, regional powers and the world market are now connected to what happens in this poor country. Continuation of neo-liberal capitalist expansion and its undermining of bourgeoisie institutions within the society means that politicians seek refuge and patronage of international and regional powers who in turn

seek share in liberalized internal markets doing their brokering, backing and in process increasing distortion of the society and market, the consequences of such an economic and political integration are horrific. While past corruption is reconciled, various leaders of capitalist class go through a process of realization of the present, that is accompanied by a desire to crush new enemies or to cohabitate with them. While their decisions are an extension of the desires of the local capitalists they are more undermined by world capitalists powers.

On the one hand the wars and conquests of imperialism and its world institutions undermine civil society and on the other hand it has to rely on old institutions like parties and militaries to achieve consent of populations against whom the wars and conquests are waged. Thus bourgeoisie politics appears solely massively popular but subjugated to imperialist and regional power influence that go against the interests of local population they seek to represent. Corruption, massive exploitation by capitalists, huge gap between rich and poor results in extreme outrage from the worst sufferers in capitalism – in our case the rural poor finding terrorist response as the only way to regain land from the occupier. While their charisma is unmatched these bourgeoisie politicians, including Benazir Bhutto, reflect varied capitalist formations, interests and responses. Coming as a response to combined and uneven development of capitalism in underdeveloped countries it also brings combined and uneven responses, institutions and political formations. They produce brave and challenging leaders like Benazir and Zulfikar and highly meek like many others. But it also brings with them their indirect, discreet, self-centered organizations, churns out overdeveloped individuals and underdeveloped institutions including bourgeoisie political parties.

Thus we have movements against neo-liberalism and war trying to regain what the twenty years of neo-liberalism has snatched away. Before that the capitalist state was forced to make concessions faced with working class movements. Now food, transport, education, health are managed by the state for the haves only. The death of Benazir sparked widesparked anger of the dis-empowered have-nots that attack state institutions serving the high and mighty only.

Benazir Bhutto was also part of the response against injustices mitigated by the neo-liberal rule though through power sharing and capitulation to imperialist domination consequences of her actions were entirely different from the resistance movement. Thus in the recent past saw many setbacks for the movement. The movements by working class and oppressed against privatization, land rights, rights to organize unions and right to defend sackings by factory, banks, telecoms, airlines, schools and university workers; those of land rights, rehabilitation rights by peasants; against mega projects by Sindh and Balochistan populations; and those attacked in war on terror by US and Pakistani forces in Afghanistan, Waziristan and now in Swat got a mixed response from bourgeoisie political organizations. Largely they ignored the movement, rarely they showed muted solidarity and sometimes even condemn the resistance. So is their response the movement for restoration of judiciary being bravely waged by the students, lawyers and the left of the professional layers in the civil society.

The movement against military rule is also being partly supported, largely ignored and sometimes stabbed in the back by the bourgeoisie political parties. This movement is hugely crucial not only for the professional layers leading them but also for the working class within and outside this movement. That is why state apparatus and connivance is used to suppress it on many occasions. The movement started in March 2007 when the Supreme Court Chief Justice was sacked by the dictator. It faced huge repression on 12 May in Karachi , brutal attacks on lawyers and even their killings in Karachi , Lahore and Islamabad . It faced setbacks when Benazir's procession was attacked on October 18 and later failed attempt of bourgeoisie parties to boycott of elections, and before this the lull after judge was reinstated and during the brutal

operation against innocents in Lal masjid. Above all the imposition of Emergency or martial law in December brought state repression aimed to crush resistance against military rule.

Despite the role of the old order and institutions the last one year has seen huge successes as well. The rise of lawyers movement in March itself was a big success and when the Chief Justice Iftikhar Chowdry came to attend long marches it only brought to fore the hugeness of this national movement. The mass mobilization brought sense of participation and the reinstatement of CJ showed that the ruling class was forced to concede only to prevent popular movement to further widen divisions within the ruling class itself. July 20 2007 CJ was reinstated but it actually brought a massive realization amongst the masses that movements are worth to build for. The generalization of the idea that change is possible radicalized the professional layers which had earlier been passively involved in supporting the capitalist liberalization itself. Thus ruling class again tried to crush resistance on Dec 03 by imposing Emergency and five thousand were arrested on the first day, the protests by lawyers were then taken up by journalists, civil society and above all by the sectional rise of students movement

Benazir realized the turbulence and the impact of movements within this society. So do the imperialist occupiers and those using militant means to resist them. Mass movements bring bourgeoisie leaders and dictators under enormous pressure, they also undermine the terrorist methods which appear as the sole means resistance to those attacked by imperialists. The movement against military rule has been impacted by the movements of other social and political classes. Thus the return of assassinations, disappearances, suicide bombings, the occupation of Lal Masjid and subsequent brutal military operations have always appeared to snatch away the centre-stage of politics and above all push other forces against military rule to the sidelines.

Whether Benazir was killed by Islamicists or those within the ruling regime this is not the first time the movement against military rule has to deal with the question of terrorism and obviously the pressure to develop such a response to suicide, anti-women, anti-freedom attacks by the Islamicists. Dictatorship has used many such issues in the past with the premier one by the MQM that posed such a challenge to many in movement in Karachi in April 2007 by staging a big rally against extremism in Lal Masjid forcing many liberals to join. Thus there always is a danger of siding with the imperialists and dictators while opposing attacks on people by the Islamicists. The implications of a mistake here are far-reaching.

Assassination of Benazir has the implication of silencing street politics. Certainly on a much wider scale, like May 12 and October 18 killings, it has the potential to push public protests, demonstrations and strikes into the background. Pushing politics indoors and out of public realm favors Islamiscist but we saw in recent past that threat of terrorism is used with impunity by the imperialists and dictatorships to crush opposition to policies that favor neoliberalism, war and terrorism in its response. Suicide attack, state-sponsored assassinations have to be opposed by those against imperialist domination. But condemnation should not condemn those attacked by imperialism.

Benazir lived and died a life full of privileges and deprivations. What she has left behind is an increasingly dangerous world where she played her part in various ways. For those left behind her assassination brings a combination of increasing turmoil and polarization of this society in various ways. The possibility of fragmentation of Pakistan has increased. However, as we saw in the last one year that with every destabilizing act committed during war on terror it also opens possibilities of movement from below to gather more into a united front to fight for end to military and imperialist intervention. The imperialist conquests, wars and liberalization have once again proved to the working class and civil society that they have nothing to gain by looking up to imperialist forces.

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We now face a big challenge and that is to mobilize masses, force General Musharraf to quit and to show that we can deal with forces and causes of extremism without imperialist intervention.