**Benazir Bhutto her legacy**

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Professor Amin Mughal, a doyen of progressive humanistic thinking, in his remarkable paper, After Benazir Bhutto: Some reflections said, “I confess, in the least uncharitable terms, that I was never fond of Benazir Bhutto. In fact, I was inimical to her politics. In death, however, she has redeemed herself. In the imagination of the masses she has acquired a mystical significance that is destined to be a never-ending source of inspiration in their struggles ahead. Most authentic martyrs in history were reluctant to die. All of them were, however, prepared to accept death. Benazir went further. Her detractors have accused her of being foolhardy. That is not true. She only embraced what she had in the last days of her life come to perceive to be her destiny.

Hers was an act of courage steeled in deliberation and schooled in the imagination. It matters who killed her, but what matters more is that she knew she would be gunned down. Had she escaped death that day, the suicide bombers would have done her in sooner than later. Yet, she decided to take the risk. Again, it matters whether she died of the gun wound or was later levered down into death. But what matters more is that she was there, facing a possible killer. She did not flinch”. This is the best tribute to Benazir Bhutto till today.

The act of great courage demonstrated by Benazir Bhutto praised by Amin Mughal and many others changed the entire political scene of Pakistan, unfortunately for the worse.

She sacrificed her life to save the country from forces, working on the dictates of Late Neo-colonial masters. The killing of Bashir Bilour, senior minister and prominent leader of Awami National party and nine others in Peshawar on December 22, 2012 was continuity of their ‘Grand Design’. The latest dossier on Indian sponsoring of terrorism in Pakistan testifies to what Benazir was actually fighting against.

The analysts/scholars/historians have ignored her assassination and later events of massacre in Peshawar Army School, blasts in Quetta and elsewhere, attacks on our armed forces—even continuing till today—from the perspective of ‘New Great Game’—the aim of which is to contain China, sabotaging Road &amp; Belt initiative (BRI) and using Israeli-Indian nexus to capture resources of Middle East and creating rifts among Muslim states leading to wars.

Today (December 27, 2020) marks the 13th death anniversary of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, a popular leader with great vision, who courageously resisted the agenda of late neo-colonial forces—pushing Pakistan towards becoming a toothless nuclear State. In recognition of her great services, she was awarded posthumously the prestigious UN Human Rights Award on December 10, 2008 that is given every five years. It was special as it coincided with 60th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The book, RECONCILIATION: Islam, Democracy &amp; the West, she finished days before her assassination, Benazir elaborated her vision of Islam as “an open, pluralistic and tolerant religion”. She emphasised: “Islam and the West need not to head toward “clash of civilizations”. She quoted extensively from Al Qur’an to prove that Islam is a religion of peace, but it has been abused by extremists to create chaos/disorder. She traced the factors behind “Militant Islam’ and exposed the agenda of Late Neo-colonial forces to create secretariat divisions and other discords among Muslim states. These views and her determination to counter it annoyed the Late neo-colonial forces that want to keep the Muslim World divided and engaged in armed conflicts. These forces used their proxy (militants) to assassinate her at 54.

The events after her assassination—still shrouded in mystery—proved the theory, propounded by Dr. Sachithanandam Sathananthan, a Visiting Research Scholar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University School of International Studies, in his paper, The Great Game Continues. He rightly argued that removal of Benazir paved the way for Late Neo-Colonialists to implement their agenda. Blackwater and others of their alike infiltrated into the country to help militants undermine our sovereignty and attack men in uniform.

Dr. Sachithanandam rightly highlighted: “The earliest foreboding surfaced in the backroom manoeuvres by United States and British intelligence services to engineer panic about the security of Pakistan’s nuclear assets. It was a repeat of the duplicitous hysteria they generated over non-existent weapons of mass destruction that Iraq allegedly possessed”. It was Washington’s renewed interest’ in Zardari and Rehman Malik and not Benazir that forced Musharraf—once a close ally of Bush—to offer firm opposition to US Late Neo-colonialism to ravage Pakistan.

According to Dr. Sachithanandam, “politically challenged Pakistani liberals—a motley crowd that includes members of human rights and civil liberties organisations, journalists, analysts, lawyers and assorted professionals—were utterly incapable of comprehending the geo-strategic context in which “Musharraf maneuvered to defend Pakistan’s interest”. So they slandered him an ‘American puppet’, alleging he caved in to US pressure and withdrew support to the Afghan Taliban regime in the wake of 9/11. In reality, the purpose was to ouster him and bring Zardari in.

In this background, it is understandable why Benazir decided to join hands with Musharraf to resist Late Neo-colonialism. American discomfort with Musharraf was palpable by late 2003, after he refused to send Pakistani troops to assist in the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. When he offered to cooperate under the auspices of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), naïve Pakistani media and analysts lunged for his jugular, condemning him again for succumbing to US demands—in reality he nimbly sidestepped American demand. Therefore Pakistan did not participate and he was proved correct.

Benazir was fully aware of the fact that Bush Administration had been becoming increasingly hostile to Musharraf’s determination to prioritise Pakistan’s interests when steering the ship of the state through the choppy waters of the unfolding New Great Game, which the West—led by the US—has been manoeuvring to contain growing Russian and Chinese influences in Central and West Asia. She decided to work with Musharraf, precisely for resisting this agenda of Pakistan-hostile forces. She became the prime target of these forces and was eliminated—interestingly the blame of hiding the real hands was shifted to Musharraf. Since then events show and prove that under the “chosen” leadership, Pakistan is moving towards disaster.

Benazir became victim of ‘New Great Game’ in which her own party stalwarts betrayed her. Benazir’s legacy has been that of continuous struggle. Pakistanis need to continue her mission of resisting the ‘New Great Game’ aimed at controlling South Asian region through the bogey of ‘Militant Islam’ and ‘Hindutva’ with the ultimate aim of containing China and muzzling the strong army of Pakistan. An army, equipped with nuclear arsenals, courtesy Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, is a formidable challenge for them in their bid to increase Israeli influence and power to destroy another strong power, neighboring Pakistan having support of Russia. Only a block of China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran and Turkey can counter their ‘Great Design’. They removed Benazir from the scene knowing she could be the main catalyst for such an alliance.

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