

## Scenario 187

### **ZARDARI ACCUSES PAK-ARMY & PM**

*Before proceeding ahead, a little perception of Mr Zardari held by Western foreign press*

Referring to an essay titled '**Asif Ali Zardari: the godfather as president**' by *Tariq Ali* appeared in '**the Guardian**' dated **7<sup>th</sup> September 2008**; Asif Ali Zardari –

*"The affection felt in some quarters for the Bhutto family is non-transferable. If Benazir were still alive, Zardari would not have been given any official post.*

*He [Zardari] was disliked by many of his wife's closest supporters in the People's Party (or the Bhutto Family Party) even when she was alive. They blamed his greed and god-fatherish behaviour to explain her fall from power on two previous occasions..... And he was shameless in his endeavours to achieve that status.*

*Today, he is the second richest person in the country, with estates and bank accounts littered on many continents....Many of Benazir's inner circle, sidelined by the new boss; Zardari did rub their noses in excrement by having his apolitical sister elected from Larkana.*

*Some even encourage the grotesque view that he was in some way responsible for her [BB's] death.*

*An opinion poll carried out by the New America Foundation some months ago revealed **Zardari's approval ratings at a low ebb – less than 14%....** a psychiatrist had pronounced him suffering from acute dementia .... designed for the courtroom had he been prosecuted in London or Geneva for large scale money laundering and corruption."*

**MR ZARDARI IN PRESIDENCY:**

President Asif Zardari was the first president in Pakistan's history to complete a full five-year term in office. However, the fact remains that had Benazir Bhutto survived, Mr Zardari might never have participated in Pakistani politics at all. She wanted him to stay away and look after the kids – not fit for politics.

Referring to '**The Friday Times**' dated **6<sup>th</sup> September 2013:**

*"A bigger irony is that he was able to match wits and get the better of all his political adversaries – especially head-hunting judges and Generals – and live to fight another day after surviving the onslaughts of the NRO, Salala and Memogate....."*

*"Not for nothing, therefore, have friend and foe alike bestowed upon Mr Zardari an honorary PhD in politics."*

One may stand up with shouts that Mr Zardari did a lot for Pakistan's hatchling democracy. Analysts held that far from witch-hunting his opponents in the opposition, media and judiciary, he showed a marked tolerance. Then what if he had '**voluntarily grasped**' all Herculean powers of the prime ministers and made them easy to '**only follow**' the directions from the Presidency.

Mr Zardari enabled the superior judges to become independent of parliament; he devolved many of the federal government's powers to the provinces through notorious 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the Constitution; he re-named NWFP as Khyber-PK and created Gilgit-Baltistan as nearly a province; and many more '**mixed reforms**'.

**The Friday Times** cited above also spelled out the bitter truth that Mr Zardari stranded and marooned Pakistan's economy at the altar of personal political survival. He chose two prime ministers, Yousaf Raza Gilani and Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, not on the basis of any track record or potential for governance and public welfare but on the yardstick of loyalty; he didn't care how corrupt and incompetent they were.

At the end of Zardari's five-year term in saddles, the country's economy had hit rock bottom, unemployment and public debt had doubled, poverty increased, foreign investment fled away, there was no energy to run homes and industries, terrorism was seen at peak, the country got isolated region-

ally and distrusted internationally, and Pakistanis were more alienated, frustrated, violent and apprehensive about their future than ever before.

Of course, Zardari's advisors [if there were any] were not sincere. Had he restored the judges instead of blocking and then provoking them to take up stick against the NRO, he might not have had to endure a long and vindictive campaign that sent the PPP government staggering from pillar to post which obstructed and marred their way to good governance.

Mr Zardari could have ruled the country from the sidelines; but he preferred to wield greater leverage in selecting not only the dummy prime ministers but also their cabinet members. **Result;** Zardari's PPP was wiped out in all provinces except in rural Sindh where its standing was based on the slogans of Sindhi nationalism BUT not good governance at all. The PPP remained hard pressed as Karachi was rocked by waves of terrorism, sectarian killings and abductions for ransom through its whole tenure.

The PPP needed new blood, new inspiration and new ideas to mount an effective challenge to the rival parties; PML[N] and PTI both. Bilawal Zardari had the entire urge to start where Benazir Bhutto had left but Mr Zardari's 'wisdom' always remained there to block Bilawal's way towards the real goals of prosperity.

### **ZARDARI vs GHQ SINCE LONG:**

Earlier, in May 2008, Zardari had developed differences with military establishment when Mr Zardari [then in the capacity of PPP's Chief only] triggered the trouble, only a few weeks after the change of government, at a briefing arranged for him and the new prime minister Mr Gilani at the ISI headquarters, where he had lectured before the military leadership on strategic issues and delivered his action plan to deal with problems concerning India and Afghanistan.

Mr Zardari tried to give a practical shape to that plan when in July 2008 the Prime Minister's office issued orders to place the entire administrative, financial and operational control of the ISI under the Federal Ministry of Interior [of Rahman Malik]. This had invited an immediate response from the Army and the notification had to be withdrawn within three hours.

Mr Zardari made another stunning move when he invited Afghan President Karzai [not accepted by the security establishment] to join him in the maiden press conference Zardari held after taking oath as the president of Paki-

stan in September 2008. In the same press conference, Mr Zardari shocked the civil and military leadership alike by making astonishing statement of a major breakthrough on Kashmir within a month. Neither the prime minister nor the Army was aware of any such development.

In an interview with the Wall Street Journal in October 2008, **Mr Zardari described the Kashmiri Mujahideen as terrorists** and mocked Gen Musharraf for calling them "freedom fighters"; it was an 'unwanted' statement and the GHQ got upset.

Then **on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008**, in the wake of terrorist attack on Mumbai, President Zardari, without any consultations with national security establishment, instantly agreed to the demand of the Indian PM Manmohan Singh to send the ISI Chief to New Delhi, a move that was later back-peddled on PM Gilani's intervention.

President Zardari's relations with the military received another blow when the **New York Times** broke the story in the last week of August 2009 about US diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad's secret contacts with Zardari in his bid for Afghan presidency. Khalilzad was on warpath with Pakistan's establishment during his tenure as the US ambassador to Kabul and revelations of his secret contacts with Zardari was a disturbing news for the GHQ.

Later, the army leadership got more disturbed where the GHQ noticed with shock that the Presidency saw no problems with the controversial clauses of the Kerry-Lugar Bill that were declared **mistakes** even by the United States ambassador in Islamabad.

[Full details are available in '**Judges & Generals in Pakistan Vol-III**' Scenario 67, pps 950-68 [2013] GHP Surrey UK]

This KL Bill gave an impetus to serious difference of perception between President Zardari and the Pak-Army on issues of national security.

Referring to the '**New York Times**' dated **26<sup>th</sup> August 2008**; the US State Department was not in favour of an undignified and hasty departure of Gen Musharraf in Pakistan, but unknown to them, Zalmay Khalilzad, the US ambassador to the Security Council, was busy in secretly advising Asif Zardari [*on their Shiite origin grid perhaps*] to plan oust the General:

*"Mr Khalilzad had spoken by telephone with Mr Zardari, the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party [PPP], several times a week for the past month until he was confronted about the unauthorised contacts, a senior United States official said, "Can I ask what sort of 'advice and help' you are providing?" ...*

Mr Boucher wrote in an angry email message to Mr Khalilzad:

*"What sort of channel is this - Governmental, private, personal? Copies of this message are also being sent to others at the highest levels of the State Department."*

NYT's Tariq Ali continued to say: Khalilzad was an inveterate factionalist and a master of intrigue. Having implanted Hamid Karzai in Kabul, he had been furious with Gen Musharraf for refusing to give 100% support to his Afghan protégé. Khalilzad then saw an opportunity to punish Gen Musharraf and simultaneously try and create a Pakistani equivalent of Karzai.

***"Zardari fitted the bill. He was perfectly suited to being a total creature of Washington..... Zardari's [Swiss] bank accounts ..... pending corruption cases.... would make him a pliant president of Pakistan."***

Khalilzad held the opinion and ultimately succeeded in his plans.

**On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2008;** a team of US commandos launched an attack inside Pakistan and 20 innocents were killed. Zardari was being tested and he kept quiet – he proved himself a perfect choice.

***A wasteful era of the PPP passed with 5 years tenure.***

**On 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015;** Zulfikar Mirza accused the former president Asif Ali Zardari of laundering money through super model Ayyan Ali, and called for the formation of a Joint Investigation Team [JIT] to investigate the matter.

In an appearance on the **Dawn News TV show 'Jaiza'**, the former interior minister of Sindh said that the money being laundered to a foreign country belonged to Asif Zardari, asserting that Ayyan Ali was ferried back and forth from Bilawal House with full protocol - had Ayan not been arrested, then she would have been Faryal Talpur's sister-in-law.

*[Ayyan Ali, 21 years model girl, was arrested by customs officials on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015 from Benazir Bhutto International Airport Islamabad after \$508,000 were recovered from her possession.*

*Shortly afterwards, Zardari's PA, who was accompanying the model, contacted the brother [Khalid Malik] of former federal minister of Interior [Rehman Malik] who also reached the airport to rescue*

*her. Khalid Malik also unsuccessfully tried to meet the customs officers but was advised to stay away.*

*Later, the former federal minister Rehman Malik allegedly contacted the customs authorities and tried to convince them that Ayyan was innocent and should be allowed to travel abroad but his efforts also proved unproductive. The customs authorities registered a case against the supermodel for trying to smuggle the amount out of the country and detained her.*

*She was arrested for violation of Section 2(s) of the Customs Act 1969 which is a 'predicate offence' under the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) 2010. The offence is non-bailable and non-cognisable – and seemed unmanageable by poor custom officials.]*

Mirza said that investigating the former president Zardari for corruption should not be a difficult task for authorities, but that despite the prime minister's statement, the National Accountability Bureau [NAB] was not taking action against corrupt people; it was there to cover up certain people.

When questioned about the differences between Asif Zardari and Bilawal Zardari, Zulfiqar Mirza said that after hearing how Zardari spoke about his son on television, anyone would disbelieve claims denying a rift between the two.

When asked why there were differences between the two, Mirza claimed that when Bilawal expressed a wish for Rangers to conduct operations in Karachi, he was given a break from party leadership.

Mirza was of the opinion that the People's Party is not the same as it used to be. Referring to it as a '**Hardcore Zardari League**', he said that:

*'...only Zardari and 'his people' have any say in the party - that he [Mr Mirza] wants to free the helpless people of Sindh from the current leadership of the PPP.'*

**On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2015;** Dr Z Mirza appeared in another live program of **GEO TV** titled as '**Shahzeb Khanzada key saath**' in which he openly told the audience that:

*'.....Ayyan Ali Bhabhi bante bante reh gayi, Ayyan Ali case main Zardari ka naam to aega....'* [Ayyan Ali was going to be Zardari's

wife but could not because of her arrest; moreover in Ayyan Ali case Zardari's name will also appear sooner or later.]

**ZARDARI ACCUSED PAK-ARMY [AGAIN]:**

**On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015;** Pakistan Peoples Party [PPP] Co-Chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari, while speaking at an oath-taking ceremony for party bearers belonging to Khyber PK and Fata, warned the establishment to refrain from character assassination of political parties. He gave a hard-hitting speech, where he lashed out at the military establishment for overstepping its domain. The former president loudly stressed that:

***".....army chiefs come and go every three years but the political leadership was here to stay. We know the country better and we know how to run its affairs."***

Speaking at an oath-taking ceremony for party bearers belonging to Khyber PK and FATA, Zardari warned the establishment to refrain from character assassination of political parties. He sternly warned that:

***"If you do not stop, I will come out with a list of accused Generals since Pakistan's creation."***

***He did not want to weaken the country's institutions, but they [establishment] should also not try to create hurdles for politicians."***

***This is our country, our army and we want to stand shoulder to shoulder with them."***

***I suggest that the establishment separate itself from politics and not interfere in matters out of its domain."***

Turning towards the PML[N] government, Zardari said that:

***"PPP was a staunch supporter of democracy, which was why his party backed PM Nawaz Sharif to complete its tenure. He had supported the government because he did not want them to later complain they had not been given their due time at the helm."***

*Had we joined Captain [Imran Khan] during his street protest and resigned from the Parliament, [early] elections would have been inevitable.*

*Others might be in a hurry, I am not. I can wait for the sake of democracy."*

Referring to former ruler Gen Musharraf, Zardari said:

*"I know the dangers that face Pakistan, Musharraf does not. Had he known, he would not say the things he did. I spent five years in jail during the time Musharraf was ruling, but the 'commando' is afraid to spend even three months in prison."*

**The PPP co-chairman threatened that:**

*"...if his party took to the streets, not just Sindh, the entire country's roads will be blocked. Whole country from Karachi to Khyber will come to a standstill and will remain so till I order otherwise."*

Next day, the whole media, print & electronic both, jumped out against the former President Zardari because in the eyes of general public the Rangers were doing the right job to clean Karachi through calculated operations against land & *Bhatta* mafias.

It is on record that Mr Zardari was upset since the last six months because the Rangers & NAB's combined team had:

- *Raided on PPP's sitting provincial minister and recovered two billion's burnt currency notes from the basement of his residence. The currency was put to fire when the home servants had seen the Rangers vehicles around the Minister's home.*
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- *The Rangers, in collaboration with the Karachi Coastal Guards, intercepted a Pakistani steamer boat in open sea, bound for Dubai, and had recovered bags of American Dollars being smuggled out – alleged that it belonged to Zardari.*
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- *The Islamabad Customs successfully intercepted the famous Model Ayan Ali and had recovered half a million dollars from her. The case run in the court for five months. PPP's Lateef Khosa, a veteran lawyer, pleaded her case and got her out on bail. Alleged that it was either Zardari's cash or of Rehman Malik.*
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- *A big business tycoon, had taken all the Zardari's 'financial documents' abroad successfully; the Rangers & NAB came to know later. The tycoon was called back but the Zardari's mission was complete and securely handled.*
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- Zardari's land mafia in Karachi was forced by the Rangers to repatriate billions of rupees to the Defence Housing Authority. Zardari helped the Rangers to get that amount back. The PPP's land mafia had snatched the DHA's valuable land by force and under threats.

Earlier to that, **on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2015**, Former Sindh home minister Zulfiqar Mirza said he had come to throw out 'Phoolan Devi' and Asif Zardari from Sindh and bring back PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Addressing a press conference at his residence, he alleged that:

*'Zardari is a RAW agent; Pakistan Army is fighting against such elements and I am also involved in the fight for the survival of the country and will play my active role in it.'*

Mirza termed PPP leader Faryal Talpur as Phoolan Devi, saying it was the same name being used by her employees for her. Meanwhile, strict security measures were taken in and around the Sindh High Court where Dr Zulfiqar Mirza was arrived with his supporters. A dozen lawyers and a crowd of supporters carrying the national flag also accompanied him.

Of course, Mr Zardari was upset on that count too because, in his opinion, Dr Mirza had come out on the instigation of the army & Rangers.

The discrete and indiscriminate arrests of five of the main political figures like Dr Asim belonging to the PPP and the MQM had shaken up Mr Zardari that his inner and bitter feelings burst out so loud. Most of the media anchors condemned the PPP leadership's irresponsible behaviour especially quoting that:

- *Mr Zardari spent five years in jail due to his wrong doings, criminal activities, loot and corruption, eating up poor nation's money through kick-backs and commissions AND not for some national cause or political mistakes.*
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- *The PPP could not gather 200 men on Benazir Bhutto's anniversary in December 2014, how can it block the whole Pakistan from Karachi to Khyber.*
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- *The PPP could win only one or two seats in recent Khyber PK and Gilgit local elections during 2015; how could it manage to gather thousands of men from this upper belt of Pakistan.*
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- *The PPP's democracy had already passed away with Mr Bhutto's hanging and BB's killing; Zardari had only pushed the PPP into the dark caves of corruption and kick-backs during their 5 years rule over Pakistan and 2 years [till then] rule over Sindh.*
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- *If Zardari is separated from Bhutto's legendary vote bank, he would find him at Bombino Cinema Karachi's gates again where he used to sell show-tickets in his youth.*
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- *Mr Zardari and his late father Hakim Ali Zardari both had lost their elections in 1985 and their 'Zamanat moneys' were also forfeited-that was their actual worth in politics.*

*[Nadeem Malik's show at 'Sama TV'; Kamran's show at 'Dunya TV' and Kashif Abbasi's show at 'ARY NEWS' all three dated 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015 are referred for above deliberations.]*

The general populace also witnessed that Mr Zardari was conveyed a cogent message from the same 'Establishment' that the files & cases concerning with his corruption in the past have been collected from the NAB and the FIA and that he should be ready to face the investigations & trials. **Mr Zardari simply left the country for Dubai within the same week,** apparently not to return back in the near future at least.

Bilawal Zardari, who had left the political field three months earlier, was sent back to Pakistan to hold and handle the party affairs. Later Zardari used to call the Sindh Cabinet meeting at Dubai; he could not find courage, may be for the time being, to come back to Karachi to chair the meeting of his ministers.

Federal Interior Minister Ch Nisar Ali Khan termed Zardari's remarks as inappropriate and needless. It was obvious that *'Mr Zardari was targeting a sensitive national institution to veil his own wrongdoings'*, Ch Nisar held.

It was unfortunate that those comments from the former president came at a time when Pakistan's soldiers were sacrificing their lives in the country's war against terrorism. ***"Zardari sahib can say whatever he wants but every Pakistani respects and loves Pakistan Army."***

Mr Zardari tried to play clever by calling on the PM Nawaz Sharif in the early hours of 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015 but the PM flatly refused to see him. PM did not

want to deliver the whole nation an impression what Zardari had played a move to strengthen the so-called democracy. PM behaved well in another way by issuing a televised release that:

*'.....the PML[N] stands by the Pak-Army and that Mr Zardari should have avoided to threaten the Generals in such rude way.'*

PM Nawaz Sharif went another step forward when he sent a telephonic call to his Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif, who was on official tour to Moscow, to convey him that the whole nation stands by the Pak-Army and that Mr Zardari was standing alone at the occasion.

**On 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015;** the PPP's spokesperson, former federal minister Kaira appeared in media TV to display that PPP was entering into a 'Repair Mode'. In that '**damage control approach**', the PPP made overtures to reach out to the country's political leadership to give concessions.

Qamar Zaman Kaira said that only one portion of Mr Zardari's speech had been blown out of proportion, insisting that the former president had only asked that national institutions should remain within their constitutional parameters. According to him, Zardari had appreciated **Operation Zarb e Azb** in his speech, which was not highlighted; while Gen Ayub, Gen Ziaul Haq, Gen Yahya and Gen Musharraf were the faces of tyranny who had harmed Pakistan the most. Former minister Kaira added that:

- *Certain quarters wish to see a clash between PPP and national institutions. When we were in power, the same people were clamouring for Gen Musharraf to be sent away, but we avoided confrontation on all sectors.*
- 
- *Words can sometimes sound harsh, but this should not be taken negatively by the media and political opponents.*
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- *The provincial government be left to run its own affairs; whether Sindh's was the only administration that was corrupt; even the anti-corruption apparatus was itself corrupt.*

Following the press conference, PPP leaders began reaching out to the leadership of different parties, inviting them to an **iftar-dinner at Zardari House next day**. Next evening; the PPP was made clear that the PM would not attend it due to policy differences as he had earlier cancelled one duly scheduled meeting with Mr Zardari for similar reasons.

Zardari's Iftar dinner was not attended by any notable politician; even by most members of the PPP in Islamabad; it was an utter disappointment.

The PTI was reluctant to attend the PPP event because it wanted to distance itself from Mr Zardari's outburst. The PML[N] was not sure to attend owing to similar concerns. Separately, MQM chief Altaf Hussain had called Mr Zardari to encourage him and the two leaders vowed to shun their differences to stay off the then uprising challenges.

During the next few days of his speech, Asif Zardari left the country secretly and shifted himself to his Dubai home only to come back in December 2016 when Gen Raheel Sharif had proceeded on retirement.

**On 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015;** PPP's Senator Rehman Malik, while speaking at '**Dunya News**' TV educated the poor populace of Pakistan saying:

*'...going abroad [of Zardari] does not mean running away - the PPP leadership has not left but it will make others leave - then what if the key PPP leadership including Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and Faryal Talpur are in Dubai.*

*.....the army is a demonstration of Pakistan's unity and that PPP salutes the martyrs who fought against terrorism.'*

The fact remains that the PPP had to take defensive stance after Asif Zardari's aggressive speech. His **iftar dinner** could not achieve the intended goal of normalcy because most of the politicians, even the Senators and MNAs etc of his own PPP, did not attend the said sacred dinner. The arrests of Sindh officers and front-men continued whereas some politicians and bureaucrats secured pre-arrest bails. The intelligentsia held:

*"...what pre-arrest bails...What is the use of announcing their corruption or proofs found against them when they have gained amnesty before even being charged?"*

*SC is a BIG joke for granting them this crap! Allowing such crap pre arrest bails has shown how serious SC is about catching them in the 1st place."*

**On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015;** the Chief of Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif directed the civil and military authorities to break the "**evil nexus between terrorism, criminal mafias, violence and corruption**" to achieve the objective of ensuring a peaceful and terror-free Karachi.

**Exactly the next day**, through a press conference jointly held by Sherry Rehman & Qamar Zaman Kaira, PPP strongly refuted the impression it was involved in terror financing, saying the party had itself suffered huge losses in the fight against terrorism. Both leaders reiterated that:

- *"PPP has no objection whatsoever over the on-going operation & anti-corruption drive in Sindh and will create no hurdle in its implementation.*
- 
- *But it looks like politics of revenge is being carried out with the PPP as the sole target [separately, MQM's Altaf Hussain was also roaring on the same count].*
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- *We will keep alive our tradition of struggle for democracy and will face every atrocity.*
- 
- *The harsh waves have come at a time when party chairman Bilawal Zardari is carrying out a campaign to mobilise party workers.*
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- *The timing of all these actions is a bit of concern for us [forgetting that it was their leader Zardari who had called for shots].*
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- *We are not afraid of the actions being carried out against us and are willing to present ourselves before the courts, but the investigations should be carried out in a transparent manner.*
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- *There are laws and regulations to try white-collar crimes and corruption; laws made to try terrorists should not be used against political leaders on allegations of corruption.*
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- *The only party in Pakistan that took a stand against terrorists and sacrificed its leaders in the process is now being labelled as a terrorist party.*
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- *We are okay with the investigations carried out against our party members but any allegations related to terror financing are unacceptable [knowing that anti-corruption laws in Pakistan are impotent and an utter mockery].*

Those days' live TV programs all over the country had different colourful stories regarding Zardari's thundering statement. There were questions that, keeping in view the fact that Zardari was himself so corrupt, then why that challenge to the PML[N]. But the consensus remained on the fact that:

*'If Zardari himself is corrupt, he has not said that I had not done this and that. The real crux is that what ever allegations he has raised against PM Nawaz Sharif, Senator Ishaq Dar and Rana Mashhud – all are true. PML[N] has no answer to any of the allegation levelled nor anyone of them can defy.*

*In fact, **iss hamam mein thono hi nangey they.**'*

#### **ZARDARI TURNS GUNS AT PM SHARIF:**

**On 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015;** Pakistan Peoples Party [PPP]'s co-chairperson and former president, Asif Ali Zardari, embarked upon Nawaz Sharif saying that the PM had reverted to revenge politics of the 1990s, referring to the arrests of high-profile PPP members including Dr Asim. In a statement from London, Zardari said that:

- *'Bureaucrats in Sindh are being harassed by the Federal Investigation Agency [FIA] and the National Accountability Bureau [NAB] – pointing out that the Chief Secretary of Sindh is also on bail.*
- 
- *First Qasim Zia and Senator Bangash's son were arrested, which was followed by Dr Asim's arrest by Rangers. Immediately afterwards, warrants for the arrests of former premier Yousuf Raza Gilani and Makhdoom Amin Fahim are also issued.*
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- *Actions being taken by federal agencies in Sindh are clear violations of the Constitution.*
- 
- *If they want to conduct fair accountability, they should first take action against a federal minister who had confessed before a magistrate [Zardari refers it to Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar] his involvement in money laundering for the Sharif brothers.*
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- *A video had surfaced in Punjab, showing provincial minister Rana Mushhood receiving money on behalf of the Sharif brothers but no action has been taken against him.*
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- *All this unmistakably presents a clear pattern of political harassment and revenge; Sindh has been immobilised under direct orders from the Prime Minister House.*
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- *It appeared Nawaz Sharif has not learnt lessons from the past; the politics of revenge should immediately be halted or it will produce disastrous consequences.*
- 
- ***We are not the ones who fled to Jeddah after seeking pardon. The nation very well knows that Nawaz Sharif holds the 'honour' of applying for pardon, too.***
- 
- *We accepted results of the 2013 general elections for the sake of democracy, although those elections were "**Returning Officers' elections**". The recent verdicts from election tribunals have proved our point that the PML[N] received outside help and was made to win the elections.*
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- *At a time when our innocent citizens are being killed by indiscriminate shelling in border villages by the enemy, when Pakistani Army is fighting a decisive war against terrorists... Nawaz Sharif, instead of challenging the real enemy, is targeting Peoples Party and other political opponents.*
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- *Steps being taken by the government clearly indicate that it is dividing the nation in an attempt to save its natural allies – Taliban and terrorists – and weaken the war against terror.*
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- *The PPP stands with the army in the ongoing war against terrorism. We salute our jawans [soldiers] who gave the ultimate sacrifices in this war.*
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- *Today Nawaz Sharif is the prime minister and Shahbaz Sharif the chief minister of Punjab only because the PPP had removed the ban on third terms even though it was evident to us that it will only serve the interests of the Sharif Brothers.*
- 
- *Justice Najafi's report on the Model Town killings last year [2014] be made public, along with arrests of all those involved in this gruesome murder of innocent people.*
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- *Aren't those, who killed 14 people, including women, in the Model Town Lahore tragedy, were terrorists? Why are they not being arrested including Rana Sanaullah and the CM Shahbaz Sharif?*
- 
- *Why all characters involved in the Asghar Khan Case are not being apprehended or questioned despite SC's open verdict'.*

In response to the above accusations; Federal Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid assured the same day that the PML[N] government had not indulged in politics of revenge, had not done so in the past, and would not indulge in such tactics in the future. The minister said that every case would be referred to the courts, and they would leave it to the independent judiciary of Pakistan to take appropriate measures.

All political parties, including the PPP, had agreed to an across-the-board operation in Karachi and the operation was launched after all parties had agreed to support it. The PM had asked for a report on Asif Zardari's statement along with opinions of the concerned.

During Gen Musharraf regime, in 2001-02, there was no denial that Senator Ishaq Dar had appeared in the magistrate's court voluntarily, had given statement, signed each page of the statement before leaving the court – ***saying that he had been doing MONEY LAUNDERING less for himself and more for Sharif brothers.***

It was why that just after the statement from Zardari appeared on media, Senator Dar was asked to contact the PPP stalwarts in London to hold negotiations again. All PML[N] members were asked to release statements to pacify the PPP leadership. All PML[N] ministers and MsNA were sent the texts on their mobiles ***'not to speak even a word against PPP or Mr Zardari at any forum'*** – thus their reps in live show programs remained mum and avoided anchors' piercing questions.

**On 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015;** In a statement issued on the eve of *'International Day of Democracy'* the former president Mr Zardari once again asserted that all the state institutions should respect the limits imposed on them by the Constitution. He said that:

*"Fighting militancy and corruption are laudable aims but shall not be used as an excuse to overstep the constitutional limits and authority as seen in Sindh and Karachi.*

*Rule of law, restraining oneself within the constitutional limits, transparent and across the board accountability and tolerance to criticism are critical elements that constitute democracy.*

*Negative perceptions must not be allowed to gain strength."*

The former president Mr Zardari maintained that Pakistan had seen democratic setups assaulted by devices such as the doctrine of necessity, the so

called Legal Frame Work Order [LFO] and Provisional Constitution Orders [PCOs] etc. *"The enemies of democracy constantly change their faces and tactics,"* he remarked.

### **PPP's QUICK U-TURN:**

However, the PPP realised its folly soon and a U-TURN was seen.

**On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016;** the PPP felt pride in placing a resolution in the Punjab Assembly demanding the federal government should give extension to the Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif against whom Mr Zardari had hurled open abuses about six months earlier.

PPP MPA Khurram Wattoo, son of known parliamentarian Manzoor Wattoo, filed the resolution in the Punjab Assembly Secretariat, saying the country was facing worst situation and the armed forces were trying their best to root out the menace of terrorism. Under the circumstances, the government should rise above the politics of expediency and back the armed forces in war on terror.

The resolution said the announcement by Gen Raheel that he didn't want extension in his tenure was commendable but ***"this house asks the federal government to give him, Gen Raheel Sharif, an extension in his service in the national interest."***

The PPP resolution came a day after the party's co-chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari termed the decision of Gen Raheel not to seek extension ***'premature'***. It stressed the need for continuity of the military leadership as the country was passing through a difficult phase.

In the same calculated move, during an interview with Nusrat Javeed of ***'DAWN News TV' dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 2016;*** the former President Asif Ali Zardari said that:

***"The 'eent say eent' comment was directed against PML[N] not army.***

***.....that the former petroleum minister and his close aide, Dr Asim Hussain, who is facing legal action on charges of terrorism and corruption is like an innocent rabbit afraid of his own shadow.***

***Dr Asim is incapable of corruption - let alone facilitating or providing medical help to terrorists. Dr Asim is my childhood friend and my family doctor....."***

Earlier, on **24<sup>th</sup> February 2016**; the NAB had already filed references against Dr Asim in an Accountability Court [AC] telling the judge that ***'...there are 3,074 pieces of evidence against Hussain, alleging corruption amounting to Rs:462 billion against the former petroleum minister'***. The references were accepted accordingly.

Through the references, Dr Asim was alleged of misuse of authority in fraudulent allotment of plots and encroachment of state land for Dr Ziauddin Hospital, illegal gains and kickbacks, receiving commission through the fertilizer cartel, for illegal curtailment of gas for exploitive price hike and black marketing during years 2011-13, in addition to fraud with the general public and money laundering.

NAB had filed that first reference involving an amount of Rs:17bn only against the former petroleum minister whereas the rest of the amounts were being processed against him and his accomplices.

One could realise that, ***on the same date of 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016***, the PPP had submitted the above referred resolution in the Punjab Assembly demanding the federal government should give extension to army chief Gen Raheel Sharif.

**Abroad for medical reasons:** Rejecting speculation that he had left Pakistan in the wake of tensions with the establishment following his fiery rhetoric, Zardari said he was not one to flee out of fear; the statement was:

*"I spent 12 out of 27 years of my political career in jail, which means almost one out of every two days in my political career I was behind bars. Why did I do this? Just to bring back democracy. We fought a dictator and made him [Musharraf] walk out.*

*I have a whole history of the [medical] issues. I never got the opportunity to get these problems fixed."*

Next day, the whole electronic media held live programs on Zardari's claims that whether the former president had spent those 12 years in jail on the charges of corruption or for democracy. He was charged and pushed behind the bars by his own fellow political government of the PML[N], and NOT by Gen Musharraf. Gen Musharraf had rather helped him for bail &

release and go to the US in 2004 where he negotiated the '**come-back deal**' for Benazir Bhutto which finally took shape in July 2007.

In his speech of 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016, Zardari held PML[N] responsible for harassing PPP sympathisers and workers but made clear that his party would not join any sit-in or movement to derail democracy. He rolled up his sleeve and showed injection marks on his arm to the camera while saying:

*"I have problems with my eyes and nose, I'm getting old as well, but I'll come back to Pakistan soon and I do not wish to be buried in New York City.*

*I was a victim of state torture, my tongue was cut, I still have marks on my neck. Who did this to me? But I still stood with Mian Nawaz Sharif for democracy.*

*He had worked with almost all politicians of Pakistan for the sake of democracy and with best intentions for the state.*

*Some sections in the Pakistani politics are still ready to start a **dharna** but we will not join them.*

***I worked with everyone except Imran Khan. When Imran becomes a politician I will work with him."***

But alas, the rating of the PPP could not get better.

Asif Ali Zardari stayed relatively silent for longer than expected as PPP's other key persons kept on criticising the arrest of his close aide Dr Asim and the warrants issued against some party members. Zardari's response did not disappoint but raised many questions.

Zardari primarily accused PM Nawaz Sharif for reverting to the revenge politics of the 1990s. The accusation was a surprise but Zardari obfuscated certain facts, including that the corruption inquiries into Qasim Zia, Gilani and Fahim were older ones in which the PPP leaders had refused to join or comply with the ongoing investigations. In a sense, while the timing may have coincided with Dr Asim's arrest, the courts were left with very little choice but to arrest the leaders for inquiry.

Worth noting was that unlike the last time Zardari spoke – lashing out at army Generals – in his recent outburst the PPP leader avoided mention of

either the Rangers or the army and kept his criticism focused on the PML[N] and the PM Nawaz Sharif.

Co-Chairperson Zardari also pointed two instances in which PML[N] members were accused of corruption but were still serving in government without the noose of arrest and court cases hanging over them. Zardari had indirectly conveyed that the PM House was directly responsible for immobilising the Sindh government.

Did the PPP just discover that the PML[N] had been behind targeting of the party all along or was it just a desperate attempt to put pressure? There were many dead horses that the PPP leader tried to beat and raise, including the Model Town and Asghar Khan cases, to hit the PML[N] leadership. The PML[N] rejected all accusations of revenge politics.

However, blaming the PML[N] was a truth. Zardari certainly knew that the power was with some one else. This was not the 1990s - the mechanism being used in Sindh was entirely different in nature.

The PPP chief's outburst was intended to pressurise the PM N Sharif to dilute the Karachi operation, which was otherwise immensely popular to all Pakistanis especially the people of Karachi. Public calls were being consistently received by the Rangers and the army to forcefully continue the campaign till the elimination of all kinds of mafias in Karachi.

***The MQM, whose popularity and street power in the mega city was more authentic than the PPP's, had failed to weaken the operation although it relentlessly used different methods for the purpose.*** When the operation was not watered down due to the MQM's pressure, it was certainly not to be softened for the PPP.

Both the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the COAS Gen Raheel Sharif repeatedly stated that the Karachi operation would continue unabated come what may. Zardari squarely put the entire blame of arrests of PPP leaders on corruption and other charges on Nawaz Sharif. However, previously not only the Sindh chief minister but some other PPP leaders had been laughing [*simultaneously growling*] at the Rangers, accusing the force of being partial against the PPP. Whatever the reasons, it created a difficult situation for the prime minister.

Although the drive was going on for quite some time, the arrest of Dr Asim proved to be the proverbial last straw that had broken the camel's back. Zardari's sermon was unlikely to result in Dr Asim's quick release.

By shunning his much touted 'reconciliation policy', Zardari announced an open confrontation with Nawaz Sharif – but the hard reality was that this policy had benefited Zardari's person alone. It was because of this strategy that he uniquely succeeded in having his full five-year constitutional term in office. During those five years, Nawaz Sharif had been stoutly defending the democratic dispensation and had been a great barricade against any likely unconstitutional move.

PPP's Chief specifically mentioned five names of Sindh, who were arrested or feared apprehensions:

- Qasim Zia was taken into custody by the NAB on charges of committing fraud through his brokerage house.
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- Shaukatullah Bangash, son of PPP Senator Saifullah Bangash, was arrested by NAB for allegedly selling a banquet hall illegally. It was alleged that he, in connivance with and active abetment and assistance of others, violated NAB's caution and illegally sold out the property for Rs:52.5 million for his personal gains. The proceeds were distributed among all the accused - NAB had recovered the money from them.
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- Arrest warrants for former PM Gilani and former Commerce Minister Makhdoom Amin Faheem were issued by an accountability court in connection with a mega fraud in the Trading Corporation of Pakistan. The case was initiated on the directions of the Supreme Court during the PPP's own regime or Khoso's interim government.
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- The investigation being conducted against some bureaucrats of Sindh, were handled by the Rangers; directly related to alleged corruption, implicating prominent PPP leaders.

Hamid Mir, while talking in ***Shahzeb Khanzada's live TV show***, said ***on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015***, that the Karachi situation should be viewed in international perspective because the statements of US National Security advisor and German foreign minister after their visits to Pakistan's Chiefs did not go in our favour.