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## **Benazir Bhutto, 54, Lived in Eye of Pakistan Storm**

By [JANE PERLEZ](#) and VICTORIA BURNETT

Charismatic, striking and a canny political operator, [Benazir Bhutto](#), 54, was reared amid the privileges of [Pakistan](#)'s aristocracy and the ordeals of its turbulent politics. Smart, ambitious and resilient, she endured her father's execution and her own imprisonment at the hands of a military dictator to become the country's — and the Muslim world's — first female leader.

A deeply polarizing figure, Ms. Bhutto, the “daughter of Pakistan,” was twice elected prime minister and twice expelled from office in a swirl of corruption charges that propelled her into self-imposed exile in London for much of the past decade. She returned home this fall, billing herself as a bulwark against Islamic extremism and a tribune of democracy.

She was killed on Thursday in a combined shooting and bombing attack at a rally in Rawalpindi, one of a series of open events she attended in spite of a failed assassination attempt against her the day she returned to Pakistan in October.

A woman of grand aspirations with a taste for complex political maneuvering, Ms. Bhutto was first elected prime minister in 1988 at the age of 35. The daughter of one of Pakistan's most charismatic and democratically inclined prime ministers, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, she inherited the mantle of the populist Peoples Party that he founded, and which she came to personify.

Despite numerous accusations of corruption and an evident predilection for luxury, Ms. Bhutto, the pale-skinned scion of a wealthy landowning family, successfully cast

herself as a savior of Pakistan's millions of poor and disenfranchised. She inspired devotion among her followers, even in exile, and the image of her floating through a frenzied crowd in her gauzy white head scarf became iconic.

In October, she staged a high-profile return to her home city of Karachi, drawing hundreds of thousands of supporters to an 11-hour rally and leading a series of political demonstrations in opposition to the country's military leader, President [Pervez Musharraf](#).

But in a foreshadowing of the attack that killed her, the triumphal return parade was bombed, killing at least 134 of her supporters and wounding more than 400. Ms. Bhutto herself narrowly escaped harm and shouted at later rallies, "Bhutto is alive!"

Despite her courageous, or rash, defiance of danger, her political plans were sidetracked from the moment she set foot in Pakistan: She had been negotiating for months with Mr. Musharraf over a power-sharing arrangement, only to see the general declare emergency rule instead.

The political dance she has deftly performed since her return — one moment standing up to President Musharraf, the next seeming to accommodate him — stirred hope and distrust among Pakistanis. A graduate of Harvard and Oxford, she brought the backing of the governments in Washington and London, where she impressed with her political lineage and considerable charm and was viewed as a palatable alternative to the increasingly unpopular Mr. Musharraf.

But her record in power left ample room for skepticism. During her two stints in that job — first from 1988 to 1990 and again from 1993 to 1996 — she developed a reputation for acting imperiously and impulsively. She faced deep questions about her personal probity in office, which led to corruption cases against her in Switzerland,

Spain and Britain, as well as in Pakistan. Her husband, [Asif Ali Zardari](#), was jailed for eight years in Pakistan on corruption charges before his release on bail in 2004.

During her years in office, as during those of her rival, the former prime minister [Nawaz Sharif](#), Pakistan ran up enormous and unserviceable foreign debts and billions of dollars in foreign aid went unaccounted for. Ms. Bhutto, though progressive in her approach to Islam, was not above bending to the will of religious conservatives for when politically expedient.

Ms. Bhutto grew up in the most rarefied atmosphere the poor, turbulent country had to offer. One longtime friend and adviser, Peter W. Galbraith, a former American ambassador to Croatia, recalled meeting Ms. Bhutto 1962 when they were children: he the son of [John Kenneth Galbraith](#), the economist and American ambassador to India; she the daughter of the future Pakistani prime minister. Mr. Galbraith's father was accompanying [Jacqueline Kennedy](#) to a horse show in Lahore.

The two met again at Harvard, where Mr. Galbraith remembered Ms. Bhutto arriving as a prim, cake-baking 16-year-old fresh from a Karachi convent.

Ms. Bhutto often spoke of how her father encouraged her to study the lives of legendary female leaders, including [Indira Gandhi](#) and Joan of Arc, and as a young woman, she observed his political maneuvering up close.

After her father's death — he was hanged by another general who seized power, Zia ul-Haq — Ms. Bhutto stepped into the spotlight as his successor. She called herself chairperson for life of the opposition Pakistan Peoples Party, a seemingly odd title in an organization based on democratic ideals and one she has acknowledged quarreling over with her mother, Nusrat Bhutto, in the early 1990s.

Until her death, Ms. Bhutto ruled the party with an iron hand, jealously guarding her position, even while leading the party in absentia for nearly a decade.

Members of her party saluted her return to Pakistan, saying she was the best choice against President Musharraf. Chief among her attributes, they said, was her sheer determination.

But her egotism and her proclivity for back-room deals provoked distrust among detractors and some supporters.

“She believes she is the chosen one, that she is the daughter of Bhutto and everything else is secondary,” said Feisal Naqvi, a corporate lawyer in Lahore who knew Ms. Bhutto.

Ms. Bhutto’s marriage to Mr. Zardari was arranged by her mother, a fact that Ms. Bhutto has often said was easily explained, even for a modern, highly educated Pakistani woman. To be acceptable to the Pakistani public as a politician she could not be a single woman, and what was the difference, she would ask, between such a marriage and computer dating?

Mr. Zardari, 51, is known for his love of polo and other perquisites of the good life like fine clothes, expensive restaurants, homes in Dubai and London, and an apartment in New York. He was minister of investment in Ms. Bhutto’s second government. And it was from that perch that he made many of the deals that haunted Ms. Bhutto, and him, in the courts.

There were accusations that the couple had illegally taken \$1.5 billion from the state. It is a figure Ms. Bhutto vigorously contested.

Indeed, one of Ms. Bhutto's main objectives in seeking to return to power was to restore the reputation of her husband, especially after his prison term, said Abdullah Riar, a former senator in the Pakistani Parliament and a former colleague of Ms. Bhutto's.

"She told me, 'Time will prove he is the [Nelson Mandela](#) of Pakistan,'" Mr. Riar said.