I recall that President John F. Kennedy once said “Men die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on”. The idea of democracy has survived tyranny over centuries since it was first practiced in ancient Greece.

When the 21st century dawned, the seeds of a new future had been planted. Power began to shift from the might of armies to the strength of the intellect. While military strength continued to be important, it was no longer critical in defining the greatness of a nation. Instead as Mr. Winston Churchill foretold “The empires of the future, will be the empires of the mind”.

In our times an individual’s education, intelligence and wisdom creates cumulatively the wealth of a nation. Therefore the investment in an individual, through education and health, will determine the quality of our society and the future of our people.

The Information Revolution has created, “the death of distance”. Communication costs are down helping to create a global community that transcends territory, culture and multiple languages.

We are witnessing a new divide between the advantaged global citizen and the disadvantaged local citizen. The challenge is to ride the crest of the new order by learning global values while retaining our cultural roots and languages.

Scientists today are discovering the secrets of the human gene which contains the story of our life. Stem cells promise to have as much impact as the discovery of Penicillin once did in affecting the age we can live up to.

As life span increases, so do the demands on our social services and civic structure. Can we cope if we continue to stress the values of the past in seeking greatness while ignoring the demands of a new century very different in its direction?

We need to ask what we can do to shape our future in terms of the new challenges. While global economies offer more opportunity for individuals trained to take advantage of them we also face problems. These problems include the threat from terrorism, climate change and diseases like Aids and Alzheimers as well as the poverty that affects one in six people born in the world today.

In one of the greatest ironies of our times, the rich die from eating too much food and the poor die from malnutrition.

Against the backdrop of this canvas, a new generation seems increasingly interested in non-stop entertainment. This entertainment is available through ipods, the internet, television and readily available dvds. Discussions are often made on the spur of
the moment through the press of a send button or a text message. The reflection and thought of the past is giving way to the speed of the future.

11. What kind of future we the people of Pakistan build depends on the nature of our political system, the strength of our judiciary and the use of our economic resources.

12. Can, we, a nation addicted to military rule and military assistance, reform our society by investing in the future of our children?

13. Our journey in answering this question reaches a critical point before the end of this year as we head towards parliamentary and possibly presidential elections.

14. For too long our Federation has remained under the shadow of military rule. Between 1977-2007, a passage of 30 years, we have been under direct or indirect military rule for 25 years. Thus the problems of terrorism, sectarianism, militancy, extremism, intolerance and increase in poverty are directly related to the prolonged period of military domination of our society.

15. As the crisis over the suspension of the Chief Justice of Pakistan’s Supreme Court demonstrates, justice in our country is elusive.

16. Despite Islam’s emphasis on Adal wa Insaf, justice has systematically been undermined by the military rule. In 1977 the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Chief Justice Yaqub, was removed by a martial law order. In 2007 another Chief Justice was removed. In between the dictators relied on the likes of controversial judges whose judgments were ridiculed the world over.

17. Islamabad’s dictatorship takes strength from strategic developments. These include resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the global war against terror. These strategic developments have provided Western support for military rulers.

18. For decades our economic approach has been to rent out our army’s services for fighting various causes like Communism or Terrorism. Since a crisis or a threat brings with it political power for the Generals, large amounts of covert funds plus military and economic assistance, there is little incentive to build peace in place of conflict, restore security in place of crisis or allow the empowerment of the people in place of subjugating them through militias or abuse of state power.

19. Military domination of the political system is not in the national interest. It led to the breakup of the country in 1971. At the time Al Badar and Al Shams groups played havoc. Now it is a series of groups like the Lashkar e Tayyaba or Jaish Mohammad which control small armies. In fact even Imams, like the Imam of Lal Masjid, can call upon madrassas to provide militants for paralysing the government.

20. The danger of fueling the fire of religious militancy is that it could become a self-fulfilling prophesy.
21. According to published reports a former Pakistan Air Force Chief stated that Pakistan’s ruling classes were “addicted to aid”. An American Congressman recently observed, “There doesn’t seem to be any problem in Pakistan that can’t be cured with a little more U.S. assistance”.

22. In the last six years, Islamabad received nearly $ 5 Billion in aid. An extra $ 100 Million are given monthly in coalition support funds. The amount for covert transfers of funds must be at least this high if not higher. Huge amounts of funds have come into the country but it has not trickled down to the people. It has not improved the lives of our people even though additionally our loans have been rescheduled for our support in the war on terror. We have a right to ask why this money has not translated into poverty eradication or increase in the salaries of our doctors and teachers or greater job opportunities for our people.

23. Significant flow of Western aid to Pakistan has been to military rulers. USAID figures indicate that between 1954 and 2002, Washington provided $ 12.6 Billion in economic and military aid to Pakistan. Of this, 75% ($ 9.19 Billion) went to military rulers over 25 years and 25% ($3.4 Billion) to civilian governments over 19 years.

24. Pakistan faces enormous problems including those of poverty, terrorism, militancy and extremism. It is obvious that these cannot be solved through the model of a rentier military class. The path to progress and civilization does not lie in threat perceptions. The path to a bright future lies in creating the noble quality of peace, the message that is enjoined upon all Muslims and is common to all religions.

25. It lies in creating harmony in society through consensus as well as ensuring that the light of justice spreads throughout the dark corners of the country.

26. It is restoration of democracy that can lead to regional peace as well as internal stability. Let us not forget that an army operation in Baluchistan threatens the unity and integrity of our country. It is by disbanding militias that we can save our people from sectarianism and religious persecution.

27. A fractured, bleeding society is calling to all its sons and daughters to hear its call, to revive the spirit of Quaid e Azam and Quaid e Awam’s struggle to save our people and our land from the dark shadow of military rule which has blotted out the sun of the people’s dreams, hopes and aspirations.

28. It is with unity of thought; spirit and action revive the democratic system. It is through the dignity, respect and service of our people that we as a Federation can once again regain the high ground to accept the challenge of the twenty first century, to accept and win in the age of the global community and global citizen while still remaining proud of our history and our heritage.