**[New governance paradigm](https://www.dawn.com/news/1769662/new-governance-paradigm)**

[Tariq Khosa](https://www.dawn.com/authors/933/tariq-khosa) Published August 12, 2023

The writer, Tariq Khosa, is former inspector general of police.

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THE scion of a political dynasty finally spoke his heart out. During his last address in the National Assembly on the eve of its dissolution, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari “[indirectly expressed displeasure](https://www.dawn.com/news/1768998/bilawal-faults-his-elders-for-turning-politics-into-minefield) over the policies of his elders”, asking heads of the two mainstream dynastic political parties to “make decisions in a way that makes politics easier, and not difficult” for the next generation of ‘heirs apparent’ currently active in potential leadership roles.

“It seems that our elders have decided that whatever they suffered in their 30-year-long political career, they want us to suffer in the same way over the next 30 years.”

This is a bold and bitter recognition of the ugly political landscape since the 1990s that both the PPP and PML-N had to face due to the machinations of the security establishment and the deep state.

Bilawal Bhutto stressed the need for dialogue among all political parties and state institutions either to devise a new charter of democracy or adhere to the one signed in London in May 2006, between his late mother Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

“We need to settle on the rules of the game and decide which code of conduct we are to follow, the premise of which should not only be limited to interactions among political parties but also with institutions,” he added.

He also urged state institutions to function within their domain. He candidly admitted that the PDM coalition government “somehow failed” to keep “institutions within their domain during their 16-month stint” as rulers.

“History will be the judge of whether we were successful in our efforts or not,” he said, concluding in view of the approaching elections that “all political parties [should] consider how they can resolve this issue”. He asked “whether these parties would continue to tackle the same issues as in the past”.

It was Bilawal Bhutto’s nascent five-year tenure as a member of the National Assembly and baptism as minister that provided him with the opportunities, which he availed, to harness his potential in a future political leadership role.

During the final year and a half, his experience as foreign minister certainly groomed him in the art of diplomacy and politics. He is articulate, can stand his ground, and possesses a pleasant and smiling disposition, all of which are signs of evolving maturity.

His farewell remarks on the need to bring on board all political parties, even those outside the Assembly, on the back of a charter of democracy clearly indicate that his generation of politicians can be amenable to a broader understanding to changing ‘the rules of the game’ of the politics played thus far in our nation’s chequered history.

Stakeholders must come up with new charters of economy, democracy and governance.

This writer has consistently pleaded for all key stakeholders to rise above their narrow self-interest and come up with new charters of economy, democracy and governance in sync with our national interests. A hybrid regime cobbled together by the string pullers in 2018 lasted for about three and a half years.

The ‘same-page’ mantra stood exposed in the clash of interests. But the replacement was a hybrid-plus coalition of political parties that became willing partners to not only dislodge the new political kid on the block but also to dismantle the party whose leader had the ‘temerity’ to challenge the military establishment and the deep state.

This is the crossroads at which we stand today: continuing as a praetorian state of “partial law”, or letting sanity prevail so that we change course and tread the path of democracy in letter and spirit by holding free and fair elections within the time frame prescribed by the Constitution.

Accordingly, all eyes are on the caretaker setup which, unlike the ones put together in Punjab and KP, could be capable and determined enough to take the bull by the horns and embark upon a new governance paradigm by setting examples of decisions based on merit and fair play, and by upholding the rule of law.

A template for good governance is needed soon. The federal caretaker cabinet may comprise a maximum of 25 ministers and advisers known for their integrity, experience and impartiality.

This apex body of the government should take all the decisions that have political and administrative ramifications.

The national focus should be on coming up with interrelated charters of economy, democracy and governance after deliberations among the key stakeholders, including political parties, the military command, intelligence agencies, civil services, law-enforcement departments, criminal justice institutions and civil society.

An economic advisory council comprising economics and finance professionals, practitioners and experts can put together a charter of economy that aims to take the country out of the debt trap, create investment opportunities, and address the core issues of socioeconomic disparities and elite capture.

An internal security advisory council can assist the cabinet in the effective maintenance of law and order as well as in implementing the CT National Action Plan.

The Election Commission of Pakistan, assisted by the stakeholders concerned, must work to develop a consensus-based code of conduct before holding the elections. All political parties should be taken on board on issues related to funding, internal party elections, and transparency in public declarations before the conduct of national polls.

The caretaker cabinet and ECP must ensure that key administrative posts are assigned on merit and meet the criteria of integrity and impartiality. In this connection, the posting of federal secretaries, chief secretaries and inspectors-general of police in the provinces, and other heads of the law-enforcement agencies must be made after due diligence.

Finally, all eyes will be on the army chief to see how he steers his institution and the intelligence agencies away from perceived political engineering and towards the primary task of ensuring security against the existential threats posed by militants and terrorists.

The military is a national institution. We the people own the armed forces, not the other way round. A relationship of trust rather than fear will strengthen the bond.

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