**An old tussle**

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After inserting Article 6 in the 1973 constitution, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) was confident that the era of takeovers was over. It was not only violated in his lifetime, the entire judicial system was also hijacked to physically eliminate him. After failing to contain the ‘Bhutto influence’ in politics, Zia, the first violator of this article decided to create an establishment within the establishment. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif (NS) was chosen for this dirty job. A mid-level, but ambitious business group was chosen for this purpose. First Mian Muhammad Sharif was handed over their nationalised ‘Ittefaq Foundry’ without any financial liabilities, and then his eldest son was inducted into the Punjab cabinet as Finance Minister. There was no looking back, Nawaz managed to become the Chief Minister (CM) under Prime Minister (PM) Junejo, a seasoned politician from the province of Sindh.

He was given a free hand to make appointments in most government departments, doled out thousands of plots to gain loyalties, issued SROs to favour his family businesses, indulged in out-of-turn promotions of government servants to expand his personal influence, launched ambitious projects that allowed huge kickbacks, usurped land; the list goes on.

[Defeat evident on Maryam Nawaz's face: Dr Firdous](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/defeat-evident-on-maryam-nawaz-s-face-dr-firdous)

The emergency ordinance of 2007, signed by Pervez Musharraf was prepared by the law minister and forwarded by the PM for the signatures of the President. Under the law, all three should have been tried including the Secretary of the Ministry. The entire effort seemed more of a personal vendetta of the two powerful men of influence who considered themselves above the constitution and the law of the land. Despite his conviction, the General slipped away, and recently, NS also escaped in a similar fashion.

On August 14, 1973, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan attained the status of a constitutional democracy. The era of constitutional democracy did not last long. ZAB surrounded himself with the ‘Freemasons of Democracy’, the same class of politicians his party had defeated in the 1970 elections. ZAB was convinced to hold national elections ahead of time in early 1977. The day the over-confident PM dissolved the assemblies, an alliance of nine opposition (Pakistan National Alliance) parties was waiting in the wings. A movement was launched against the first elected PM of the country which paved the way for the third Martial Law on July 05, 1977 thus plunging the country into the ‘Zia Dark Ages’.

[President Alvi ratifies Anti-Rape Ordinance 2020](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/president-alvi-ratifies-anti-rape-ordinance-2020)

Now after over thirty years of their misrule, the Nawaz establishment has positioned itself to achieve the same results through use of its own influence in the state apparatus. They were able to use this control in the 2013 elections but were not able to do so in 2018, as the Police and the district administration was not allowed to enter the polling stations. Free and fair elections is the way forward, for which neutrality of the state apparatus is essential. Under the circumstances this may not be possible, unless the entire provincial administrative machinery is reshuffled or the elections are held under the auspices of the United Nations. This highlights the importance of the two real national political parties (PPP-Bhutto, PTI) to steer the country towards true democracy.