**Shahbaz Sharif, a Loyal and Steadfast Leader**

**Shahbaz Sharif demonstrated his unwavering loyalty when he was directed by Nawaz Sharif to assume the role of Prime Minister.**

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Shahbaz Sharif, who today took oath for the second time as the country’s 25th Prime Minister amid looming financial and econom­ic challenges, stands out as a rare example of unwavering loyalty to his elder brother, Mr. Nawaz Sharif. Despite numerous of­fers of the premiership by various army chiefs, includ­ing Musharraf, in exchange for shifting his allegiance, Shahbaz Sharif’s loyalty has remained stead­fast. His resolve has never wavered, and no amount of wealth, power, or worldly riches has been able to weak­en his deep-seated love, respect, and allegiance to his brother, though both are diametrically opposite on ideologi­cal considerations and philosophically bent of mind.

Shahbaz Sharif demonstrated his un­wavering loyalty when he was direct­ed by Nawaz Sharif to assume the role of Prime Minister in a coalition gov­ernment in April 2022. Despite know­ing that accepting the premiership at that tumultuous time, with the oust­ed Prime Minister Imran Khan enjoy­ing immense popularity and leading widespread public protests against his removal, would be an immense chal­lenge, Shahbaz Sharif did not falter. He held his fort amid long marches, large rallies, numerous sit-ins, drawing un­precedented crowds that exerted im­mense pressure on the country’s ad­ministrations.

[Drive on social media attempt to destabilise country: Baligh](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Mar-2024/drive-on-social-media-attempt-to-destabilise-country-baligh)

Many, including myself, have pon­dered whether Nawaz Sharif would have accepted the premiership under such challenging circumstances in April 2022, given the country’s financial, eco­nomic woes, assertive establishment and high degree of political uncertain­ty . It’s likely that the response from readers and myself would lean towards a resounding “no.” This raises a criti­cal question: why did Nawaz Sharif in­struct his loyal brother to assume the premiership in such trying times.

Once Shahbaz Sharif assumed office as Prime Minister in April 2022, his primary objective was to secure the re­turn of Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan with­out facing any risks. In pursuit of this goal, Shahbaz Sharif made significant concessions to the military establish­ment, compromising civilian powers in the process. Notably, he enacted the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Bill 2023, which granted full legal status to the military’s extensive business interests, criminalized criticism of the armed forces, and authorized them to engage in activities related to national devel­opment and strategic interests. Addi­tionally, the Official Secrets (Amend­ment) Bill 2023 was passed, granting security agencies broad discretionary powers to arrest individuals deemed threatening. The legislation also pro­hibited approaches to military installa­tions and offices, with suspects subject to trial in military courts.

[Two robbers killed in Khanewal: Police](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Mar-2024/two-robbers-killed-in-khanewal-police)

By capitulating critical and sensitive positions of the country and granting unparalleled powers to the military, Shahbaz Sharif fulfilled his end of the deal. In return, the establishment facili­tated Nawaz Sharif’s return to Pakistan under VVIP status, despite being a de­clared absconder and convicted crimi­nal, previously disqualified from hold­ing public office.

Upon Nawaz Sharif’s return, the es­tablishment swiftly resolved all legal cases against him, including the dis­appearance of his prison sentence and disqualification. The stage seemed set for Nawaz Sharif’s potential fourth term as Prime Minister. However, it ap­pears that either bringing Nawaz Sharif back to power was not part of the deal, or the establishment reneged on their agreement with the PML(N).

In Scenario C of the article titled “Will Nawaz’s hopes die down soon?” pub­lished on December 10th, 2023, it was concluded that based on past bitter ex­periences with Nawaz, the Establish­ment would never bring back Nawaz Sharif as the Prime Minister. The sce­nario suggested that to navigate resis­tance and controversies surrounding Nawaz Sharif’s leadership, the Estab­lishment might orchestrate conditions during pre-poll and after poll 2024, where Nawaz will have no choice but to abdicate power in favor of his broth­er, Shahbaz Sharif.

[Food items distributed among deserving families](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Mar-2024/food-items-distributed-among-deserving-families)

In pursuit of this strategy, the results of the 2024 elections were orchestrat­ed in a manner that significantly under­mined Nawaz Sharif’s electoral pros­pects. Nawaz suffered a decisive defeat, losing one seat by a significant margin and barely managing to secure a vic­tory in Lahore, a stronghold contested fiercely by his rival candidate. In con­trast, Shahbaz Sharif emerged victori­ous in all his contested seats, clearly in­dicating the establishment’s preference for him as the chosen candidate.

Nawaz Sharif, who had set securing a simple majority in the parliament as the single most important condition to assume the premiership for the fourth time, found himself demoralized and humiliated by the election outcome. His hopes, pinned on assurances from the establishment, were dashed, leaving him feeling betrayed and dejected.

As predicted in the article, Nawaz Sharif found himself with no choice but to relinquish the premiership in fa­vor of his younger brother. This raises an important question: why did Nawaz Sharif believe that something unfavor­able for himself would be beneficial for his brother? Upon closer examination, the answer lies in Nawaz’s uncompro­mising nature, which, at times, becomes his biggest liability, and Shahbaz’s com­promising nature, which, conversely, becomes his biggest asset.

[Transport secretary chairs meeting in Sargodha](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Mar-2024/transport-secretary-chairs-meeting-in-sargodha)

Nawaz Sharif is characterized by his unwavering commitment to freedom of thought and action, refusing to suc­cumb to pressures and intimidation until his limit is reached. When pushed beyond this threshold, he responds with a vengeance, disregarding po­tential consequences. He possesses a strong vision and dedication to a spe­cific ideology, particularly in promot­ing democratic values.

Since the 1990s, Nawaz Sharif has emerged as a formidable challenger to the dominance of the military estab­lishment in Pakistan. He has actively pursued policies aimed at curbing the military’s influence, including efforts to assert civilian control over intelligence agencies and challenge the military’s dominance in national security deci­sion-making. Despite facing threats, in­timidation, and periods of exile, Nawaz Sharif has remained steadfast in his commitment to advancing civilian au­thority and democratic principles. His resilience in the face of adversity un­derscores his determination to uphold fundamental values and principles in Pakistani politics.

[WASA disconnects 132 connectionsof defaulters](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Mar-2024/wasa-disconnects-132-connectionsof-defaulters)

In contrast, Shahbaz Sharif’s with his pragmatic approach to governance, of­ten necessitating compromises with various stakeholders, including the military establishment and coalition partners. He willingly engaged with the establishment leading to perceptions of accommodation and compromise with the military, especially during pe­riods of political turbulence or when facing pressure from powerful institu­tions. He has at times adjusted his posi­tions and policies to accommodate the demands of coalition partners, even if it meant making concessions on cer­tain issues even at the expense of ide­ological purity and principles and the integrity of governance or undermined democratic norms.

Nawaz Sharif, as the elder brother, may have come to the realization more than anyone else that his prolonged pe­riods of exile have disconnected him not only from his voter base but also from any lasting favor within the estab­lishment. He may have recognized that his ideological and visionary approach to politics has been overshadowed by the tactical compromises of his younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, and the theat­rics orchestrated by his daughter, Mary­am Nawaz, and her inner circle. In this political landscape, his close associates such as Khaqqan Abbasi, Mufta Ismael, Mohammad Zubair, Asif Kirmani, Dany­al Aziz, Khawaja Asif, and Khawaja Saad Rafique find themselves marginalized, with little influence or relevance.

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