Musharraf and when Nawaz Sharif came back into the spotlight. His whole election campaign was based around the release and reinstatement of Chaudhury and the other 59 judges that had been summarily been booted from their positions. Sharif quickly understood that if Chaudhry was reinstated he would overturn the National Reconciliation Ordinance thus making Bhutto and Zardari ineligible to run for office as well as proving to the public that he is a principled man who cares for the real rule of law, not a Musharraf styled regime.

After Bhutto's death Sharif and Zardari eventually agreed to take part in the national elections and with public opinion and sympathy behind them they swept into power. But all was not well, Sharif had promised to reinstate the judges including Chaudhry and set a date for the May 12. It was to be the day that both parties finally showed their hands. Sharif was desperate for them to be reinstated because they would probably overturn the amnesty Zardari was living under, and for obvious reasons Zardari was opposed to the idea as it would have stripped him of his party position and would have ended his chances of being president. They met in London and the talks fell through, Zardari was not going to budge and in response Sharif's party announced that they were leaving the coalition government. Since then Sharif has tried unsuccessfully to run for public office but previous cases against him have held him back as criminals are barred from holding public office. In between Musharraf resigned, Zardari was elected President and showed no intention of reinstating the judges which could possibly throw him out of office.



Sharif meanwhile has been desperate to run for public office but his criminal past not covered by the National Reconciliation Ordinance has got in his way time and time again. Things came to a halt when on the February25, 2009, the Supreme Court barred Sharif from contesting elections or holding public office a move which eventually played badly for Zardari even though he may not have had much to do with the decision.

The problem was that Zardari`s popularity decreased exponentially after he took over as President. Prices shot up in the country as Pakistan essentially sold itself to the IMF with over 7 billion Dollars in loans helping to prop up the fragile economy. There was increasing unrest in the border region with Afghanistan and Zardari was derided for his lack of political acumen and effectiveness. His reputation as a notoriously corrupt businessman also caught upon him as he was seen by many as Musharraf without a uniform. Sharif rode Zardari`s wave of unpopularity pointing his finger towards the government as the main conspirator behind his Supreme Court ban from politics and public office. Truth be told Sharif should not be allowed to run for office because for all intent and practical purposes he is a criminal. Funnily enough the same can be said for Zardari as he hides his criminal past behind the National Reconciliation Ordinance. But Sharif had one major advantage, the public was against Zardari, so when he was recently barred from running from office the public was outraged. Within a few days of his Supreme Court ban Sharif started up his mission to free Chaudhry again as it was his only hope to oust Zardari and squeeze his way back into politics. The tension spilled out onto the streets as Sharif`s activists agitated and he openly claimed that he would make the long march to Islamabad to free the real Chief Justice. Zardari placed him under house arrest but Sharif managed to escape and vowed to make his way to Islamabad.

That is where the current troubles came to boil, as Sharif escaped his house arrest and made his way to Islamabad the country was essentially in a state of emergency. Roads into the capital were blocked and riots turned violent as Sharif put Zardari under immense pressure to reinstate Chaudhry. With the country on the edge of revolution as Sharif put it, the government finally backed down. They avoided wide spread bloodshed and announced that Chaudhry would take over as the Supreme Court Chief Justice on the March 21. Sharif claimed a major victory and the government even managed to look magnanimous, but there is still a lot has to be resolved. In many ways Chaudhry and the other judges return would be problematic for many people. Zardari would be looking over his shoulder to see if the National Reconciliation Ordinance would be scrapped, that would pave a speedy way back to jail for Mr. 10%. The current Army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani will also have reason to feel uncomfortable if the missing persons` cases were reopened, as he was head of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) when it was rumoured to have helped in abducting so many civilians. America should also rightfully be edgy as most of those people were handed to them by the Pakistani intelligence agencies. Whatever happens, Pakistan is not on the immediate road to recovery. One feels there is a lot left to this story and for a country that has spent more than half of its existence under military rule, it seems like that has become a viable option again. ■