

A Resounding Victory

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In a decades-old war between democracy and dictatorship in Pakistan the former has finally won. This is a great moment for national rejoicing. The restoration of the 1973 Constitution through the 18th Amendment is a major triumph of the people of this country after years of groping in the dark. The history of constitution-making in our country does not present a rosy picture. Without going into the details of the 'law of necessity' it is safe to assume that Pakistan is back on its feet once again. This great restoration also means a peaceful transfer of power which has generally been the casualty of repeated deviations from the rule of law. The Constitution of 1973 was so massively distorted that it looked like a miracle to retrieve the same from the debris of our convoluted history. This miracle has finally happened -- thanks to the commitment and perseverance of our political leadership. The PCCR led by Raza Rabani deserves the highest gratitude of the nation. From now on principles will take precedence over personalities. Finally we have graduated into the status of a normal democratic state.

The restored Constitution will be dissected and analysed by commentators, some of whom will find fault with the amended document. The restored Constitution is not a flawless social contract. But it has set the stage for a stable, liberal and democratic Pakistan. Those versatile writers who are dreaming of a utopia must realise that any further change in the Constitution needs the support of at least two-thirds of the members of parliament. The nation has debated and the people have voted through their chosen representatives. This is how constitutions are amended. The haphazard changes introduced by military dictators are null and void and, therefore, have no legal standing. The impact of the latest changes will be enormous. The government, freed from the seemingly endless constitutional debate, will be able to concentrate on core issues affecting the life of the common man. The war on terror will receive a tremendous boost from the unanimous passage of the 18th Amendment. Pakistan's prestige will rise in the international community. The world will now listen to Pakistan. The souls of Jinnah, Z A Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and all others who struggled and sacrificed for democracy and reconciliation will stand rewarded. All organs of the state are finally in place. This is the moment to move on and leave the darkness of the past far behind.