

BOOK REVIEW

I

Group Interests and Political Changes—Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh by Talukder Maniruzzaman, (New Delhi, also Madras: South Asian Publishers, 1981,) viii and 271 Pages, price not mentioned.

In recent years historical, descriptive and formal-legal approaches to the analysis of political changes in developing countries have proven inadequate in providing deeper insight to forces at work. The major draw-back of such a formal analysis is that it fails to accommodate the indigenous traditional institutions that play a dominant role in the political process of developing societies. A new approach—sociological in nature—is being successfully applied by political scientists for a better grasp of inner forces of the political system in these countries where even modern-looking institutions are built on regional, ethnic, linguistic and cultural sentiments. It is through mobilisation and sometimes polarisation of these socio-cultural cleavages, and not through modern institution building, that state elites seek power share and role in decision making. Thus, “it is conflict among group elites, drawing support from horizontal, communal and territorial cleavages rather than vertical class divisions, that provides the main dynamics of politics in the new states.” This, in essence, constitutes the backdrop of *Group Interests and Political Changes—Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh* by Professor Talukder Maniruzzaman. Yet on another count, the book is an addition to the humble body of literature in comparative political science on Pakistan and Bangladesh—the two countries that formed a political partnership till 26 March 1971.

The book is the compilation of 14 essays written and published in different journals over a period of 15 years with the exception of the first and the last articles. The first article was specially written

for this volume at the request of the publisher, while the last article written in 1979 was updated in 1981. The 12 reprinted articles have not been modified in any form "in the hope that the reader will gain a real feel for the cataclysmic changes that took place" (p. vii).

The book primarily seeks to explain the break-up of united Pakistan and the turbulent process of political changes in the post-liberation Bangladesh. And as the title suggests, group interest and for that matter, group politics, has been taken as the explanatory variable in understanding the changes in political process in both countries. The author concluded that "the politics of Pakistan and, until recently, of Bangladesh were a politics of decay rather than development." The author, therefore, uses a value-neutral phrase—"Political Change"—in the title of the volume (p. 28).

Prof. Maniruzzaman introduces the first article, "Politics of Group Interest : Insights from Pakistan and Bangladesh", as the decennial review of the break-up of Pakistan. The first section of the article deals with the basic issues like mechanism of break-down of political system, the border line between regionalism and nationalism, the dynamics in which political and socio-economic forces transform into fully grown nationalism and the relative importance of state elites *vis-a-vis* natural endowments or what the author calls "tyranny of geography" meaning geographical distance in this particular case. In dealing with the architectonic role of the state elites, the author successfully traces the roots of dysfunctional role of the Pakistan state elites in nation building activities. In contrast to the Indian state elites drawn from a broad spectrum of social strata and regions, the state elites of Pakistan were drawn almost wholly from upper class political leaders and civil-military bureaucrats of western region, containing a minority of the total population, as observed by the author. And most importantly they lacked subtle political skill needed to create a supra-regional national identity and viable statehood.

On the issue of nationalism in the then East Pakistan, the author is of the view that it was originally linguistic nationalism provoked by the Pakistan political leaders at the beginning of political

union between the two wings. But what rally crystallised the feeling of nationalism was the step-brotherly attitude of the Pakistani rulers in developmental policy and allocation of resources to the eastern wing. The author also points out the inherent fallacy of Ayub's growth-based development strategy that exacerbated social and regional disparity and further distanced the two wings.

Sections two, three and four of the article, however, take an abrupt departure from the trend of the article and turn on to review of the line of developments as contained in the subsequent articles in the volume. Thus, though the title of the first article otherwise suggests deliberation on the group interests in Bangladesh as well, such treatment was given mainly to the extent that they come up in connection with review of the articles in the volume. The contents of these sections could very well form the preface or introduction of the volume. But combining them with the genesis of political process in Pakistan leading to the birth of Bangladesh seems to be an awkward mosaic piece. Similarly, Chapter Two under the title the Politics of Development : an analysis, is purely a theoretical piece giving the conceptual framework of the theme pervading the 12 articles in the volume. Logically, this important piece of theoretical work could have been placed at the beginning of the volume.

Coming to the body of the volume, the articles topic-wise have been chronologically ordered. Third to sixth articles deal with the Pakistan period under the titles : "Group Interest in Pakistan Politics, 1947-58", "National Integration and Political Development in Pakistan : Crisis in Political Developmen and the Collapse of the Ayub regime in Pakistan", and "Political Activities of the University Students in Pakistan." These articles trace successfully the main trends of the "ineluctable break-up of Pakistan", though at the cost of repetition of themes and events. But this is not unexpected, as the author also has admitted that the articles have been written at different times over a period of fifteen years. The articles on Bangladesh delineates the political process in Bangladesh in two phases: upto 1975 August coup and the period of 1976 and onward till the death of Zia

which has been covered in the last articles. Articles under the titles "Bangladesh in 1974" and "Bangladesh: An Unfinished Revolution" analyse the trends of politics in Bangladesh during Sheikh Mujib's rule and provide reasons why the nation was led to the "precipice" (p. 139) in 1975. The grim happenings discussed in the article "Bangladesh in 1975" follow logically from the preceding two articles.

Writings on the second phase of Bangladesh consists of four articles : "Bangladesh in 1976: Struggle for Survival as an Independent State." "Administrative Reform and Politics within the Bureaucracy in Bangladesh"; "The Future of Bangladesh" and "Ziaur Rahman and Bangladesh". According to the author, a general theme that emerges from these articles is the increasing stability of Bangladesh national identity. (p. 27).

In the author's view, the Central idea that pervades the article on Pakistan and Bangladesh politics when taken together is the East Pakistan's disenchantment with Pakistan nationalism and their discovery of a real identity of Bangladesh nationalism (p.28). One can safely agree with the first part of the conclusion. But it is difficult to give unqualified support to the second part of the conclusion. While it is true that Bengali identity in Bangladeshi nationalism is well-defined, the influence of group politics on the 'grim conflicts' that the author himself takes cognizance of seem to have been toned down. The same type of factionalism and group interests operate in Bangladesh, though on a different scale. One probable reason for this impression of toning down may be the way the articles on Bangladesh have been developed. While articles on Pakistan are rather focussed on the theme of the book, those on Bangladesh appear to have taken a very broader frame of national development and as such the focus on the relationship between group politics and political change might have been diluted. Maybe a summing-up article on the findings of the articles on both Pakistan and Bangladesh side by side on a comparative basis might help.

Finally, two technical points may be mentioned. The dates of writing the articles could have been mentioned to help the readers

“gain a real feel for the cataclysmic changes that took place”. Secondly, several printing errors are there that irritate the reader. Despite all this, the book is a valuable contribution towards understanding of the political process in developing countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh.

—Abdur Rob Khan.

II

Changes in the Economy of Bangladesh by A. Farouk (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1982), viii and 122 pages, price not mentioned.

Most of the contemporary books on Bangladesh are coming out with a common problem—the problem of economic development of the country. *Changes in the Economy of Bangladesh* by Dr. A. Farouk is the latest in this series. But the author successfully distinguishes himself from others by discussing the relevant societal facts as the causes and consequences of present stagnation in the economy from the historical point of view. The book is a critical evaluation of present economic trend which is the result of various imperfect decisions made by the authority and insincerity of the practitioners. It examines the economic process and societal facts carefully over the last three decades and defines the inevitable changes in the mode and standard of living over the period which are either desirable or undesirable.

The book is the simple expression of the author's own experience, as he observed the events over the period as a student, as a researcher and as a government economist being inside the society. The author analysed some important issues and problems by relating them to the socio-economic and political forces responsible for the trend of the economy under review. Actually the book is the collection of seven essays on the economy of Bangladesh under seven different chapters. These are : (1) Geo-political Origin of Bangladesh, (2) Socio-economic Changes Over Time, (3) Evolution of Development Planning (4) Crisis in the Government Management (5) The Maligned Private sector, (6) Foreign Aid and its Consequences and (7) The Future of Bangladesh Economy. Except the first chapter, each one has been further divided into 3 sections.

The introductory chapter reviews the historical background of the origin of Bangladesh and the effects of various power politics

since colonial period which has shaped the country with a poor nationalistic spirit and an imperfect resource base. Considering the geopolitical situation, limited market facilities, poor resource base and other relevant socio-economic conditions the author is suspicious about the rapid development of the country.

The central point analysis in this book is the changes in the socio-economic condition of the people and major causes of these changes. The author presents a detailed treatment in the second chapter that how an egalitarian society graduated into distinct classes: one, a property owning groups with better facilities and the other, left in rural areas, mostly without land and opportunity to get education, health and housing facilities. The subsequent four chapters show how this changes have taken place by the government policies and the activities of the people of various interest groups.

Evaluating the development planning in Bangladesh, the author shows that, though the public sector increased considerably, performance was one of despair and disappointment owing to improper planning and ineffective implementation. "Planning degenerated into an exercise in using foreign aid for non-development purposes and increasing public sector employment. Planning Commission became a powerless organisation and planning became a *hoax*," the author noted. Same crisis appears in the management activities also. The expanded public sector has been filled up with employees of poor qualities through corrupt appointment. On the other hand, financial indiscipline, lack of accountability and negligency in duties have been marked as the main causes of mismanagement in the economy. This are discussed in chapter four in greater details.

The author critically discussed the consequences of the use of foreign aid to Bangladesh in chapter six. Citing various example he argued that if foreign aid substantially reduced in our country there will be a temporary increase in the hardship but in the long run, the economy as a whole will gain.

The concluding chapter, titled as "The Future of Bangladesh Economy" appears with some policy suggestion to be adopted. In

the preceding chapters the author has tried to show that by our action and negligence we have made our economy more complicated to reduce the poverty and minimise the corruption. Each chapter devotes some policy options as by-product of discussion. However, the author has finally formulated some policy recommendation by summing up all he discussed earlier concentrating on the four important areas of Bangladesh economy. These are : (a) Land use planning (2) Integration of isolated regions within the economy (3) Reducing dependency on foreign aid and exploring the possibility of a common market with the less developed countries.

The author seems to have omitted two important aspects which directly influence the economy of the country. One, use of foreign money by manpower export and secondly, the effects of population explosion. These two aspects might appear relevant to the present socio-economic situation of the country. In any case, the book under review has been successful in giving an insight into the present trends of economic development and social change in Bangladesh. Also the compilation of historical data on the economy of Bangladesh serves as a piece valuable documentation.

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