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POLITICS OF DESIGNING PUBLIC POLICIES IN THE THIRD WORLD: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

The evidence is now overwhelming that the results obtained from the pursuance of various development policies and programmes in many developing countries usually fall far short from their declared objectives. It is widely believed that these policies fall short due to scarcity and poor implementation by the bureaucracy. But where explicit commitment and sustained conviction are absent for clearly identifying specific issues and priorities as well as adequately assessing their implications for the society at large, the reasons for such shortfalls are apt to be considered more in terms of political rather than economic and administrative considerations. Those who argue along this line tend to justify their stand by hypothesising the fact that "whatever the origin or objective of policies, the important choices are invariably made by the political elites whose frame of reference include salient and sometimes decisive personal motives, ideological preferences and interest demands".¹ Accordingly they are of the opinion that political elites in many developing countries are deliberately pursuing vague

1. Marvin C. Weinbaum, "Political Risks in Agricultural Development and Food Policy in the Middle-East", *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 8, Spring 1980, p. 734.

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and ambiguous policies to fulfil "quite different objectives and generally succeeding in achieving them."² It, therefore, seems useful to investigate the reasons why governments actually initiate and implement such policies and programmes.

It is against this backdrop that a critical assessment of the political orientation of government *vis-a-vis* the operational determinants of policies is necessary to understand whether the government is willing to inject greater rationality in the policy making process, or it is mainly concerned with maintaining the *status quo*. Based on this premise, the article aims at analysing the political orientation and policy determination of government in the first section. The sections concerning domestic and external support to governments in power follow as a result of this analysis. In its final section a brief conclusion is drawn after a critical appraisal of the politics of policy designing and implementation.

Political Orientation and Policy Determination

In the western world, capitalism has gained political currency over decades and capitalistic ideology has evolved as the fundamental guideline of state philosophy. Conversely, a large number of post-colonial nations whose political structures were not developed indigenously, are facing serious problems to shape and manage their development policies. In contrast to their counterparts in the West, where the policy forming circles are relatively competent to mediate and coordinate various interests of different sections of the society³, the governments of developing nations usually neither have the political capability to mediate nor the administrative proficiency to coordinate the manifold conflicting public demands

2. Keith Griffin, *The Political Economy of Agrarian Change: An Essay on the Green Revolution*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) 1974, p. 2

3. For a detailed description of this factionalised nature of developing countries' state structure see, Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", *New Left Review*, Vol. 74, 1972; and A. C. Lindquist, *Cooperatives, Rural Development and the State: A Bangladesh Case Study*, M. Phil. Thesis, (IDS; University of Sussex) 1978.

because of the factionalised nature of society. This difficulty is further accentuated by the prevailing colonial economic infrastructure in which economic activities operate under age-old colonial traditions. Economic development and management of market forces are largely the product of sole state responsibility based on wholesale government support. The fairly extensive government investment usually appears to be non-conducive for the smooth running of the economy and market efficiency. Furthermore, government intervention in the form of nationalisation or state capitalism in most cases was counterproductive as it channelled scarce resources through subsidies. This not only brings economic malaise to the public sector, but limits the development of the institutions of private property and capitalistic entrepreneurship. Though the state operates nearly in the same style as in western monopoly capitalism, capitalist conviction is not sharply focused on as it ought to be. The capitalist classes do not enjoy the same social sanction⁴ in society or in the policy-making structure as in the developed world. Under such socio-economic structural impediments, the government generally upholds the interests of the dominant bourgeoisie networks - international imperialism in the centre and urban and rural national bourgeoisie at the periphery—who actively furnish government support.

As a result of this relationship, government policies are understandably designed in accordance with those goals that perpetuate their authority. Reinforcing this argument with specific reference to Pakistan and Bangladesh Alavi notes that, "it [the state] mediates the competing (but not totally contradictory) interests of the three propertied classes—the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed classes—while at the same time acting on behalf of all of them in order to preserve the social order in which their interests are embedded, namely, the institutions of private property and the capitalist mode as the dominant mode of production".⁵ Thus, government action pacifies the interests of those particular support providing sectors to whom its political debt lies.

4. Mosharaff Hossain, "Nature of State Power in Bangladesh", *The Journal of Social Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1979.

5. Alavi, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

Thus, Griffin says "the ends as well as the means of government policies usually are largely determined by the government's sources of support".⁶ Blair stresses in the same vein when he conceives that:

The primary need of a low income country's government (or more accurately, of the politicians running it) is to stay in power... . The major requirement for meeting that need is for stability, and stability in turn is most easily realised by maintaining the support of the groups who could disrupt it.⁷

The typologies of such support sources are discussed in the following sections both from domestic and international perspectives.

Domestic Support Sources

Domestic sources of support generally emanate from the economically powerful, politically dominant and bureaucratically favourable urban gentry and rural wealthy. Whatever the fragmented and distorted nature of their class orientation and differences of opinion, these dominant petty bourgeoisie and rural landed force constitute the main support base of the regime, and quite often enjoy a privileged position both within and outside the government. Due to their stronghold of power in the body politic, substantial command over the economy, and their easy institutional access to the power structure, a certain measure of patron-client interaction has firmly been established between them and the majority of the population in society. This interrelationship is maintained on the basis of a simultaneous exchange of resources—political, economic and even institutional. The nature of exchange usually occurs in an asymmetrical and informal situation as it naturally takes place between the stronger and the weaker. As a matter of this interpersonal exchange, the patron - the dominant stronger force—generally receives support, loyalty and votes from their clients, while the clients—the poor and weaker group—in turn, get assurance by their patron

6. Griffin, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

7. Harry W. Blair, "Agricultural Credit, Political Economy and Patronage" in Dale Adams *et.al.* (eds.), *Limitations of Cheap Credit in Promoting Rural Development*, (Mimeo), (The World Bank and the Ohio State University) 1983, p. 3

of solidarity and protection.⁸ Using this chain of exchange relationship, the politically dominant elite corps are amassing even more power in the arena of government. In the absence of mass participation as well as the lack of institutionalised political cohesion, the regime in power generally find little option but to depend heavily on these political forces either for marshalling votes in favour of it during the election or maintaining stability to continue its authority. Hence, the political debts of the regime to this urban and rural wealthy are increasing. Though in certain situations like progressive populist movements, emergence of reformist regime or in similar other situations, they have had experiences of threat to maintain their domination, they in alliance with their immediate allies - the state bureaucracy, have enabled themselves to protect their authority without making any significant concessions to any group whatsoever.

By classifying the developing nation's social power structure into five different sectors, Ilchman and Uphoff⁹ identify the dominant class as the 'core combination group' who support the government directly for furthering their prosperity. According to them, these core combination groups know that in order to fulfil their objectives, and enhance their ideological preferences, they must in return furnish the regime with some measure of resource and support. With the aid of this 'venture capital' and due to the dependence of the regime upon them to remain in power, they enjoy a privileged position *vis-a-vis* the authority of those in designing the policy process. Almost all of their demands are thus more effectively realised than the demands of other social sectors. The second group, the ideological bias group due to their socio-political linkages with the core groups as well as their implicit tendency for imitating the values and norms of the latter, usually motivate themselves to pilot some support to the regime. It is largely believed that the nature of their support is an indirect one.

8. S.N. Eisenstadt, and Luis Roniger., "The Study of Patron- Client Relations and Recent Developments in Sociological Theory" in S. N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand (eds.), *Political Clientilism, Patronage and Development* (London: Sage Publications) 1981.

9. Warren Ilchman, and Norman T. Uphoff, *The Political Economy of Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1969.

Consequently, the priorities of the regime are seldom altered by the demand of these sectors.¹⁰ The third group, the stability group probably on the hope of getting some slices of the 'benefit pie' willingly or unwillingly acknowledge all the major decisions of the regime. They thus put themselves in a position analogous to that of the ideological bias group. The remaining faction of the stability group in alliance with the extremist or extra-stability group- the fourth group, generally oppose the government, and frequently try to destabilise its authority by generating considerable obstruction or protesting vehemently against it. The last group - known as 'immobilised sectors' - consist of the great majority of the rural and urban population. They are largely nonpoliticised, and do not possess any resource or potentiality to support the regime or to react against it. Even a large segment of these sectors usually do not know their own existence in the power struggle of the society and public issues that involve the nation hardly focus upon them.

After their analysis of sources of regime support on the basis of social power structure, Ilchman and Uphoff maintain that the regime generally chooses policies that ensures its maintenance of authority and paves the way for it to stay in power. They concede that governmental resources are often used and designed according to political rather than socio-economic efficiency criteria.

Purcell comes closer to such an exchange of political debt benefit framework of Ilchman's and Uphoff's in her empirical study on Mexico. She considers the governmental system as an 'authoritarian regime' due to its "(1) limited pluralism, (2) low subject mobilisation, and (3) the predominance of a patrimonial relationship on the part of a dominant leader or a small group".¹¹ She argues that in consequence of such a rulership style, the decision making process is characterised by a system where the ruler grants privileges, goods, or similar 'benefits' to a select portion of the

10. *Ibid.*

11. Purcell, Susan K., "Decision-Making in an Authoritarian Regime: Theoretical Implications from a Mexican Case Study", *World Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1973, p. 30.

ruled who acknowledge the authority of the ruler and defer to him. From these variables of the decision system, Purcell infers that limited pluralism and low subject mobilisation of an authoritarian regime reduces the number of demands made upon the authoritarian ruler and provides him with considerable autonomy in decision making. Because of this devious regulation between the ruler's decisions and the demands of the group, decisions involve issues never hitherto raised. Frequently raised issues of "various other social groups may be disregarded because these groups' lack resources and capabilities to press their demands."¹²

Eisenstadt¹³ too noticed the existence of this linkage by which government uses its resources to reward its supporters and maintain its authority and control various other social sectors. Predicting the consequences of this linkage he maintains that, it could easily come to an impasse by which the implementation of the various societal goals and government's ultimate claim to legitimation will become seriously impeded by the necessity of spending many more of its resources as emoluments for various support providers.

The presence of this political calculus in the policy process has also been referred to by several other writers. Inayatullah for example, in the context of Asia observes:-

The plight of the poverty stricken masses in Asia is caught not only in economic, but also a political vicious circle. Their poverty can be eliminated only if the rural economic and social structure can be transformed to enable them to have access to economic opportunities. Rural social structure can be transformed only if the governmental power is used to weaken the power of the land owning classes. But the governing elite is often reluctant or unable to transform this structure because it costs them political support without bringing any political dividend.¹⁴

12. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

13. S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires: The Rise and Fall of the Historical Bureaucratic Societies*, (New York: Penguin Books), 1963.

14. Inayatullah, "Political Context of Rural Development and Rural Poverty", *Approaches to Rural Development*, Vol. 5, 1975, p. 9.

From the above analysis, it appears that whatever its onerous effects on the economy, or in the policy formation and implementation, the political calculus which is based on exchange linking characteristics between government and its supporters comes to be usually weighted against societal development. Under such a conceivable political environment although the government is rhetorically committed to increase production and to change the fate of the poor majority, in reality, this type of commitment is mostly replaced by the much stronger and counterpoising imperative to hold and maintain authority. The result of this derailment further reinforces the power and resource trading capacity of the dominant sectors. Thus any policy that challenges the existing socio-economic structure or demands a complete overhauling of the prevailing power strata eventually collapses either in the initiation phase or during its goal realisation process. On the other hand, policy that maintains procrastination and protects the interests of the dominant sectors, receives government patronisation and thereby continues to hold its position firmly. The intrinsic truth of this support-benefit strategy is clearly noticeable in case of the following two policies, which are presented here as contrasting examples.

In spite of its popular rejection and modest impact on economic growth, the subsidised agricultural credit programmes have been receiving continuous attention from many low income countries' governments. For instance, the present agricultural credit distribution programme of Bangladesh that popularised in the aftermath of the 1971 liberation struggle with the objectives of enhancing agricultural productivity, employment and income generation in rural areas through the so-called two-tier cooperative system is still operating more or less in the same fashion as during the post-immediate liberation struggle recovery period. Despite considerable changes in the political scene in Bangladesh and wide-spread criticism against its management as well as the ineffectiveness of its reasonably lower interest rates, this programme has continued to survive with its heavy bias towards rural wealthier farmers. Although a large number of empirical studies including government's own appraisal reports drew the conclusion

that small and marginal farmers are now more willing to incur actual costs than their counterparts in the hope of getting adequate loans, no concrete action has so far been undertaken to rationalise this programme. Explaining the underlying reason behind the continuation of providing generous subsidies to these programmes in many developing countries, Blair aptly remarks:

Subsidized credit programs, in sum, tend to succeed all too well in keeping governments in power through political patronage and at maintaining, and even enhancing, the position of rural elites. These programs do so because they are part of a dynamic political economy that serves the interest of both these groups in continuing a status quo which does not include much possibility for either equitable allocation of credit or optimal economic growth.¹⁵

In contrast, agrarian reform policy through wide ranging land distribution has remained a standard promise by policy framers since long. Rather than developing any action oriented policy and institutionalising concrete measures for its enforcement, the slogan of distribution of land among the landless in many instances has become a yearning for gaining popular support of the regime. After the success stories of Japan and Taiwan, many scholars including late Ladejensky who showed high optimism about its application elsewhere in Asia, later became skeptic arguing that government authorities in these societies are "usually controlled by the very forces likely to be adversely affected by progressive economic and social development".¹⁶ Though in some countries some disperse and unemphatic initiatives are targeted on the issue, they are not implemented properly because of inadequate political expediency or cumbersome implementation procedures. In this regard what Weinbaum discovered in some Middle-Eastern countries may exemplify the case of many others. He writes:

15. Blair, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

16. Wolf Ladejensky, "How Green is the India's Green Revolution", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, 1973.

Ceilings of ownership have been kept deliberately high. Laws permitted landlords to retain large estates through various exemptions... Land records are often notoriously poor, allowing some large landholders to avoid declarations entirely... Unscrupulous land reform officials sometime sold land to the highest bidder or retained it as state lands. Small farmers with complaints about the administration of land reform have usually found themselves, intimidated and without legal remedies.¹⁷

Thus, in the absence of a determined policy and the lack of a desirable administering mechanism, the issue of land reform has not been tackled effectively. As a result, the precarious hold of power by the landed wealthy in rural areas has been continuing while at the same time gross inequality of land ownership and skewed income distribution remain the fundamental problems in the policy arena of agricultural development.

The above discussion of regime orientation and policy determination, of course, is a generalised version. But there are few exceptions. Some genuinely interested and reform-oriented regimes often emerge with the conviction of initiating such policies as would be reasonably beneficial for the general public. Some of them even want to take substantial political risks by curtailing the interests of the dominant forces for a painful but necessary transition in the policy process. But in most cases, such good intentions are normally threatened and their initiatives foiled because of certain contextual constraints. It is well-known that many poor nations' policy making process is characterised by an environment where government is confronting certain serious problems, like wide-scale mass poverty and malnutrition, rampant inflation, rising unemployment, population boom, inadequate growth rate in all sectors of the economy, skewed income distribution, massive foreign debts, over-dependency on foreign technology and endemic corruption. In addition, the situation is further exacerbated by security of regime survivality¹⁸ due to frequent changes of government whether pursued constitutionally or not. Such palpable environmental

17. Weinbaum, *op.cit.*, p. 742.

18. John W. Sloan, "Comparative Public Choice and Public Policy in Latin America", *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1982.

constraints and legitimacy crises limit the capability of the policy making circles to develop policy from a long-run and planned changed perspective. These factors are also largely responsible for deviating the attention of the government from developmental issues to that of political survival issues. Environmental constraints of this nature considerably force even the very reformative bias regime to undertake or employ those policies, which help them to consolidate their position, although initially they are determined to make a major breakthrough in the existing power structure. Thus, willingly or unwillingly many of the constitutionally selected or extra-constitutionally nominated regimes of the third world eventually acquiesce themselves with the demands of the dominant sectors who are capable to disrupt the regime, and also control the socio-economic resources to overcome the prevailing environmental barriers for its sustenance. In this way, development policies of the regimes under analysis increasingly become subordinate to the necessity for the regime's survivability. The politics of policy determination, therefore, may be dubbed as a political tactic for maintaining the existing social order rather than a systematic instrumentality of mass oriented development strategy.

The Bureaucracy and Domestic Supporters' Alliance

Generally in many developing countries the adoption of a policy designed with the interest of supporters in mind is extracted quite optimally by the domestic support sectors in alliance with the bureaucracy. Many governments are not only creating a multicellular administrative and technical opening, but are often expanding the public sector quite remarkably in order to transfer developmental benefits from the upper to the lower strata of society. By placing greater emphasis on a heavily biased bureaucratic approach to development, the policy makers of these governments are, however, becoming increasingly dependent on their bureaucrats for imparting rationality in initiating and administering public investment decisions, managing manufacturing industries and statutory authorities, providing services to the ever expanding urban citizenry, and

putting into effect a complex variety of socio-economic policies and programmes. The fundamental feature of this so-called administrative modernisation process is that it usually takes place by sedimentation and not by metamorphosis. As a consequence, the traditional clientilistic agencies continue to exist, more or less unchanged, alongside a host of new reasonably effective and rational ones. In Bangladesh, for instance, from the late 1970s to the early 1980s there were around 38 ministries and 60 divisions with a considerable number of supporting agencies and attached institutions.¹⁹ Similarly Grindle's study on Mexico confirms that "the Mexican federal bureaucracy in 1977 was composed of 18 regular ministries and departments; 123 decentralised agencies; 292 public enterprises; 187 official commissions and 160 development trusts; whereas the U.S. government was managed by only 17 executive offices, boards and councils; 11 departments; 9 agencies; 6 quasi-official agencies and 64 other boards, committees and commissions".²⁰ The magnitude of these nation's bureaucracy can be easily ascertained by the huge size of their government ministries and agencies. This pattern is unfortunately a familiar one in the case of many other bureaucracies where simultaneously most of their programmes and projects are plagued due to the shortage of fund.

Besides creating some administrative problems like overlapping and duplication in activities due to its multiple structure and causing an unusual pressure on the public exchequer, the over-expansion of bureaucracy also represents certain pathological conditions in the arena of policy initiation and implementation. Having a well-knit relationship with the politically dominant forces and their urge for maintaining the *status quo* have further strengthened alliances of the elite in the policy process. By manipulating their multiplying roles including policy implementing one, the bureaucrats are in a unique position to expand their interests as well as their allies. With

19. Boyd Wennergren, Charles Antholt and Morris Whitaker, *Agricultural Development in Bangladesh*, (Colorado: Westview Press), 1984.

20. Merille S. Grindle, *Bureaucrats, Politicians and Peasants in Mexico: A Case Study in Public Policy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1977, p. 3.

the support of the indigenous bourgeoisie who furnish governmental support and furbish its authority, they often successfully block any possibility that threaten their (class) interests. They are also capable of exerting tremendous influence in policy development regarding issues which benefit them. In the African context Hirschmann²¹ states that the bureaucracy, being the major component of the emerging native bourgeoisie, has the scope for enhancing its influence within that class and on behalf of that class. In reference to Latin America, Sloan²² indicates that the bureaucracy of these nations rather than implementing broad social and economic objectives, is trying to extend its zone of influence in order to perpetuate the interest of the educated middle class, and performing its official responsibilities mostly by providing permanent income opportunities for the governing class through nourishing private entrepreneurship.

Taking the example of India, one of the more democratic stable polities, Frankel's²³ analyses lead us to understand why 'sweeping changes of the social order by action from above' is thrown away despite repeated ideological assertions of Indian leadership for developing a socialistic pattern of society. Besides, the lack of explicit political commitment and the domination of propertied class over Congress politics, Frankel persistently insists that the elitist character of the Indian bureaucracy including their nearly monopolised role for overseeing almost all national and state level development programmes are equally responsible for making matters worse. The same tendency is also a marked feature in many other post-colonial societies including Tanzania, where one-party rule has been established since independence, and where it is said that the party itself is a reasonably mass-mobilised political organisation which is committed to socialism and social development. Referring to his experience on Tanzanian bureaucracy in the context of implementation problems of Ujjamaa villagisation, one observer has remarked:

21. David Hirschmann, "Sound of a New Bureaucracy: An African Example", *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1986.

22. Sloan, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

23. Francis Frankel, *India's Political Economy: 1947-1977*, (Princeton, N. J. : Princeton University Press) 1978.

Tanzania's civil servants have been hard working and sincere in their attempts to implement socialist and self-reliance policies set by the leadership....but these same officials, with a number of exceptions, have not been able to avoid the bureaucratic imperative to consider citizens as clients with its concomitant of a bias in favour of the better-off members of the community and a lack of responsiveness to the aspirations of, in particular, poor peasants.²⁴

Thus, the expansionist and protectionist behavior of implementing bureaucracy usually seems to be an inhibiting force in the process of development and change. Instead of moulding and modifying the loopholes of the stated policy ends and means that emerge during implementation, they are at this stage further accelerating the previously designed benefit-extraction system for the reciprocal interests of both the regime and its supporters. Therefore, bureaucracy in many developing nations generally aid towards completing the insulation fence which was already built between government and the masses by providing easier institutional access to the dominant social sectors. As a result, a growing gap tends to develop between policy outcome and its actual requirement.

External Sources of Support²⁵

External influences in the name of political, economic and technical support often play a significant role in the formulation and implementation of development policies. To fulfil their prime concern of staying in power and to buy support among the dominant coteries, many weak governments understandably have to rely on donor governments for the meaningful operation of their policies. The donor governments use aid as an instrument against these nations' market forces to keep the politically unstable and economically feasible governments in power. While the strength of this

24. James R. Finucane, *Rural Development and Bureaucracy in Tanzania*, (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies) 1975, p. 185.

25. External sources of support are one of the main determining factors in policy planning and administration especially in the context of third world countries. This aspect is so crucial and exhaustive that it can itself be a separate issue of debate and research. The authors have made only a small reference to external influences since it has a significant impact on policy development and have thus refrained from making an elaborate discussion and analysis in the present context.

argument varies from government to government and country to country depending on their strategical importance, yet in any criteria, such international influence seems to aggravate development prospects and shatters the needs and aspirations of the majority of the population. In reference to Zaire, where International Monetary Fund provides very liberal doses of aid to protect Mobuto's regime, Blair notes that with this assistance, "President Mobuto-probably the greatest thief in the annals of crime, profits... Belgium gets its copper, the United states obtains cobalt and Zaireans starve, which is quite all right, for they are not needed any way, either as producers or as consumers".²⁶

To mesh the shared interests of both donors and recipient governments, the subjugation of 'national interests' as against 'vested interests' is quite evident in many situations. For instance, considering the present agrarian structure of Bangladesh which is characterised by high concentration of land and higher uneven income distribution, and where around 70% agricultural households are either landlesses or marginal farmers, the reaction of U.S. AID (Agency for International Development) in response to a proposal for wide ranging land redistribution is unencouraging. The comment of the agency, which generally believes in the effectiveness of the technological modernisation approach was that " ... we would do better to press ahead with the HYV strategy in spite of tenancy problem and make a start on the problems of landlessness".²⁷ An agricultural development strategy which is not preceded by peasant based agrarian reform, even though it enhances growth potentialities, usually creates inequalities and exploitations in rural areas. Consequently, it accentuates the vulnerability of the agrarian structure and intensifies poverty and underdevelopment by raising further dependency. This is exactly what is happening in Bangladesh where poverty and misery are in evidence due to lower income opportunities of the poor while the rich landed class is reasonably flourishing because of their easier access to means of production. As a result, a poor farmer who has very little land finds it

26. Harry W. Blair, "Reorienting Development Administration" *The Journal of Developing Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1985, p. 453.

27. Quoted in Muhammed Shahidullah., "The Political Economy of Underdevelopment in Bangladesh Agriculture" in Peter Bertocci (ed.), *The Study of Bengal: New Contributions to the Study of Humanities and Social Sciences*; (Michigan: Asian Studies Center), 1982, p. 77.

increasingly difficult to hold on to his petty land and is forced to dispose it off and become landless soon.²⁸ Thus, progressive social and economic development for the benefit of the so-called "broad spectrum of the masses" is lost in the power struggle of the policy process.

Concluding Remarks

This article has made an attempt to illustrate with the help of concrete examples that the political elite class and the bureaucracy have combined to produce policies which are constraints to development in many third world countries. These ill-designed policies have further established situations which are profitable to a small group of elites but highly unprofitable and perpetuating underdevelopment for the underprivileged general masses. The prevailing agricultural policy of distribution of benefits from above in Bangladesh, for instance, cannot possibly be extended to the needs of all groups of the farmers. As a result the landless and near landless are exempted from the benefits.²⁹ Moreover, the malfunctioning of the bureaucracy in the negative political, socio-economic environment hinders the initiation and implementation of clearly designed and explicitly prioritised policies and programmes. In these circumstances it is suffice to say that the present system of policy planning and administration has failed miserably to support the majority of the poor and has successfully served the interests of minority elite groups.

The preceding discussion, therefore, reaffirms the stated contention that governments in many developing countries rather than attempting to develop specific policy ends and distinctive priorities are generally pursuing ambiguous policies and programmes in order to stay in power and to consolidate their authority. They are frequently achieving these goals by serving those sectors from where their sources of support are derived. In such a situation, the question of adopting and applying a clear and comprehensive policy strategy for effective implementation has neither received proper attention nor has it been tried out with sincerity.

28. Government of Bangladesh, *Strategy for Rural Development Projects: A Sectoral Policy Paper* (Dhaka: Planning Commission), 1984.

29. Stefan De Vylder, *Agricultures in Chains: Bangladesh*, (London: Zed Press) 1982.