

BOOK REVIEWS

Omar Noman, *The political economy of Pakistan: 1947–1985*, (KPI, London and New York, 1988), pp.xiii + 218, n/p.

The inside cover of the book states that this is “the first serious academic work to cover the economic and political development of Pakistan between 1947, the birth of the State, and 1985.” This is a much more precise and accurate statement of the contents of the book than the title of the book suggests. The book does not really deal with the political economy of Pakistan, in the sense that it does not analyse the economic development of the country within any formal theoretical framework of political economy. Nor does the book attempt to define such a framework in the Pakistani context. What it does, however, is to describe and analyse, quite separately from each other, the major developments in the political and economic spheres, in a methodical chronological order.

It is certainly not the first work on the economic development of Pakistan, nor is it even the first on the political economy of Pakistan. This latter credit must go, if at all, to Ahmed and Amjad (1984). Even though that work was not political economy in a strict sense, it did attempt to synthesise politics and economic development, and tried to trace the path of the economy in a socio-political landscape. This present work is, however, the first that deals with the political developments in Pakistan in conjunction with the major economic developments that have taken place.

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with the period upto the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. The second deals with the Bhutto era and the last part covers the Zia-ul-Haq regime upto 1985. The coverage of the book is biased towards the post-1971 period and this is stated in the preface. The two chapters in part one deal with the political evolution of Pakistan during the early years. The first chapter analyses the circumstances that led to the creation of a new nation-state and the contradictions that arose out of the demands for the protection of a religious minority in British India to the birth of a state created in the name of religion. The early attempts of various religious groups and

parties to impose theocratic ideas into the governing of the state and the successful thwarting of these attempts by the secular minded bureaucrats and politicians is well documented by Noman.

The second chapter deals with the Ayub Khan era and, according to the preface "lays particular emphasis on a broad theme running through the text – that the political dynamics of Pakistan cannot be understood without reference to the form, structure and consequences of economic policies" (p.viii). While there is no denying this as a fact the chapter unfortunately does not live up to this promise. Neither do the subsequent chapters.

Quite clearly the main purpose of the book is to highlight and analyse the chequered course of Pakistan's politics, and to do this adequately it is necessary to analyse the course of economic policies. Both parts two and three of the book have one chapter each on the economic developments that took place during the periods covered in these two parts and there is a fresh approach and candour to these sections that is invariably missing from all economic texts on Pakistan. However, the causal link and inter-relationship between political dynamics, and economic developments and policies is never spelled out, or even adequately addressed. While some of these links are implicit and some quite obvious, unless the analysis is framed with some theoretical guidelines it cannot claim to be political economy.

Having said that, let us look at the contents of the book and assess them as political analysis. As a source book on the Bhutto regime, the Zia years, or even the pre-1971 period, there is a wealth of information that is presented in a lucid and concise manner. The analysis is sharp and the author has an intuitive feel for the reasoning behind the events that took place and presents his arguments very candidly.

Now that democracy has been restored in Pakistan, and various democratic institutions reinstated it is not without a touch of irony that one reads the section on the 1971–1977 period. The uses and abuses of populism and democracy should be essential reading for all of our present torch-bearers of democracy, both within the government and in the opposition. The thin line between political discretion and political excess has never really been understood by our political leadership and they have all too easily fallen into the trap of resorting to petty short-term political manoeuvrings with disastrous long-term political and economic consequences.

The martial law years of Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq are testimony not only to this fact but to the necessity of allowing democratic institutions, principles and practices to flourish and grow without let or hindrance.

Short term interests for self-preservation or perpetuation of rule have always been the reason for major political impasses and deadlocks that have eventually given the excuse to the military to "save the country", time and again, from its own leadership, even if this leadership is popular and elected. Clearly a lesson exists here and Noman's book more than adequately spells this out.

The eventual success of Zia-ul-Haq to impose a theocratic structure and to firmly establish theocratic ideas as the *raison d'être* for Pakistan and as the basis for the political future of the country is also very well analysed. After the marginalisation of the theocrats by Ayub Khan, Bhutto brought back the slogan of religion using it to propagate what was termed as 'Islamic socialism'. This misuse of religion was but a stepping stone to the eventual misuse of Islam by Zia-ul-Haq to perpetuate his rule for eleven long years. Not least of the charges against the Bhutto regime was its misinterpretation and misuse of Islam, with Zia-ul-Haq promising the heralding of "true" Islam as the basis for Pakistan's polity. So successful has this change been that even today not only do theocrats have considerable representation in the assemblies but theocratic ideas are a part of every major political party's manifesto, and will likely remain so for some time to come.

The analysis of economic developments after 1971 is concise but manages to present the key elements of major economic policies and changes in a well-argued manner. The post-1977 period is particularly interesting and some fresh insights are provided into the pitfalls of over-dependence on worker's remittances, and foreign loans and aid. Of major consequence, and a lesson to future economic policy makers, is the analysis of expenditures on defence vis a vis expenditures on health, education, and literacy.

The book concludes with two short chapters. The first of these deals with ethnic conflict and the new developments in the volatile ethnic cauldron of Pakistan are assessed. The analysis extends upto 1986 but completely fails to mention the new urban-rural ethnic divide in Sindh and the rise of Mohajir nationalism. The alienation of the Sindhi intellectual, particularly in the post-1983 MRD movement period is well explained, as is the domination of the Punjabi-Mohajir ruling elite in the history of Pakistan. The first chapter of the book, in particular, argued admirably the reasons why the Punjabi-Mohajir clique managed to dominate and determine the events of the early years of Pakistan. This second last chapter of the book continues this theme and shows how the dominance of the Punjab, with remnants of the Mohajir bureaucratic elite, still remains. The rise of Sindhi nationalism is presented, quite convincingly, in this light.

The last chapter is a very short, essentially theoretical, piece on the role of the state in countries like Pakistan. This is the only chapter in the book that is actually in the realm of political economy and should have not only been the first chapter of the book but should also have been used as the theoretical basis for the rest of the book. This is where Noman should have begun his analysis. Nevertheless, the book makes exciting reading and is a welcome addition to the brief literature existing on economic and political developments in Pakistan.

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Reference

Ahmed, Viqar, and Rashid Amjad, 1984, *The management of Pakistan's economy 1947–1982*, Oxford University Press, Pakistan.

M. Aslam Chaudhary, *Agricultural development and public policies: With special reference to Baluchistan*, (Izharsons, Lahore, 1989), pp. xv + 231, Rs. 129.75.

In the absence of a comprehensive research study on the agricultural development of Baluchistan, the title of the book generated special interest. Spread over five parts, comprising twelve chapters, the book is well-endowed with comparative provincial statistics on population, agricultural yields, input use and land distribution. However, an in-depth review of the text reveals conceptual errors, serious methodological problems and analytical shortcomings.

One of the objectives of the study is to account for the economic performance of Baluchistan and the "increase in its agricultural output per hectare is the primary focus of attention" (p. 5). Utilizing Boserup's model, the book claims:

It is surprising to note that the book, claiming special reference to the agriculture of Baluchistan, fails to take account of the relative importance of various crops in that province. For example, statistics for 1980-81³ indicate that dates (8,898 hectares) occupy a larger area than barley (7,800 hectares), while apples (6,680 hectares) and almonds (6,230 hectares) are certainly more important than bajra, maize, cotton and sugarcane in Baluchistan. For the reader, it would have been more interesting to learn how the output (and area) of certain important fruits and vegetables changed in Baluchistan rather than see them lumped under the category "all fruits". At present, the study gives an impression of being biased in favour of crops grown in the other provinces of the country.

It may be pointed out to the author that if a dozen studies on Sind and Punjab indicate that large farms are relatively most efficient, then at least an equal number of studies, if not more, can be quoted to support the opposite. Also, it is difficult to accept that the results of studies undertaken for Punjab and Sind should also hold at the 'regional level', especially in Baluchistan. The following causal relationship which the author indicates is dangerously misleading:

. . . "the regional differences in the farm structure is a source of rapid increase in per hectare agricultural output in Baluchistan. The province, Baluchistan, with the highest percentage increase in per hectare agricultural output, also had the highest percentage farm area under large farms, as compared to other provinces. On the other hand, other provinces with maximum area under small and medium farms – inefficient farms – also had a relatively slow increase in the agricultural productivity as compared to Baluchistan" (p. 91).

After reading the chapter on the green revolution, the logical conclusion one may derive from this book is simple: despite population pressure, low levels of input use, limited spread of technology and lack of public investment, Baluchistan's agricultural performance was relatively the best among provinces; therefore, policy and technology have limited roles to play in agricultural development.

The chapter on basic needs and welfare is interesting but could have been more so if the emphasis had remained on inter-provincial comparisons, with particular reference to Baluchistan. Similarly, on physical infra-

³ Development Statistics of Baluchistan, 1985-86; Bureau of Statistics, Planning and Development Department, Government of Baluchistan.

structure e.g., roads, electricity, etc., the brief discussion contributes virtually nothing towards analysis.

Given its shortcomings, the book is of little value to academicians or even the interested layman. Despite its pioneering nature, it is unfortunate that the book fails to enlighten us about agricultural development in Baluchistan.

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