

BOOK REVIEW

P. R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Iftekharuzzaman (eds.), Nuclear Non-Proliferation in India and Pakistan : South Asian Perspectives (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, for Regional Center for Strategic Studies, Colombo, 1996), 236 pages.

A senior Sri Lankan diplomat addressing a wide-eyed group of Foreign Service recruits intoned, a little ponderously perhaps, "Remember, where we diplomats fail, the soldiers march in!" The relative roles of the South Asian security scholar and the populist politician may not be quite so mutually exclusive. Certainly the Colombo-based Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) was established under its founder Executive Director, the late Professor Shelton Kodikara, as a South Asian think-tank for the region's scholars to forge regional solutions to regional problems. More ambitiously, it sees itself as a "Track Two" forum, which almost like alternate medicine, has been made popular by the unofficial Oslo back-channel running parallel to the official Madrid peace process in the diplomatic efforts to reach an Israeli-PLO accord.

Unsurprisingly, the crucial issue of nuclear proliferation in South Asia is addressed in one of the first research projects of the RCSS resulting in this well structured book blending together the perspectives of nine respected South Asian writers. As Zafar Iqbal Cheema writes "There is little informed debate about the effects of nuclear war on South Asia (p.122). Originally intended to be published before the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT),

the book has come out a year later reflecting, a little ruefully, on the *fait accompli* of a permanently extended NPT. South Asia remains unique through the continued presence of two major NPT holdout states who, at the time of writing, may even stand aloof from the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) the negotiation of which is at an endgame stage in the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament where India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are members. There is no doubt that the carefully researched description and analysis of the Indian and Pakistan nuclear programmes and their policy postures of designed or 'calculated ambiguity' on their nuclear weapons status is rich in perceptive insights. Whether the book is as strong in placing South Asia in the global context of the nuclear proliferation debate or in policy prescription is arguable. It will remain however, a substantial contribution to the literature on the subject illustrating a distinctive South Asian view of a South Asian problem with undoubtedly implications for global security in a field where so many outside the region have become *soi-disant* and instant *pundits*.

The RCSS project is described as an answer to why nuclear non-proliferation has acquired importance as a global policy and why South Asia - with the presence of China to form a nuclear triangle - is so unique in the present non-proliferation regime. In the achievement of the first objective there is a pre-occupation with the consequences of the permanent extension of the NPT and US policy objectives. A frequently repeated mistake is the reference to this extension as "unconditional". It was not. A careful reading of the package of the three closely inter-twined Decisions and the Resolution on the Middle East makes the terms and conditions of this extension abundantly clear. The larger framework of the nuclear disarmament debate and the imperatives for nuclear disarmament are also inadequately explored. For example, are not the cogent arguments against nuclear deterrence theory, so well articulated during the Cold War by South Asian

scholars and diplomats, applicable to South Asia? If not why? It used to be argued in the NPT context, that nuclear deterrence cannot be good for the nuclear states only and bad for the others. The validity of nuclear deterrence theory needs to be consistently questioned in whatever region it arises and whatever situation - weaponized or non-weaponized - it is upheld.

On the second objective, the authors do not provide any fresh solutions to the present policy of nuclear weapon capability but there are sufficient hints as to which way we may go. T.T. Poulose, and later Iftekharuzzaman, suggest that there can be a series of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan. A fresh look at the proposal of having a nuclear weapon free South Asia by having a freeze on the weaponization of India and Pakistan concurrently with the nuclear weapons states moving to eliminate nuclear weapons, and China unilaterally dismantling its nuclear missiles in Tibet is also suggested. The editors themselves refer to four factors which could have a key influence on nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia. They are the emphasis on economics in the post-Cold War era; the emergence of a younger generation unencumbered by the "burden of history"; international developments in disarmament and, finally, the domestic politics of India and Pakistan.

A number of interesting revelations are made in recounting the development of the nuclear weapon capability of both countries and the international efforts to halt this. US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott is alleged in 1994 to have offered the release of F-16s and other equipment to Pakistan through a one-time exception to the Pressler Amendment if Pakistan accepted non-intrusive verification of its nuclear facilities. Pakistan refused this at the time and now the US, through the Brown Amendment, has released US\$368 million worth of equipment to Pakistan without a *quid pro quo*, while the F-16s would be sold to another country and the proceeds repaid.

to Pakistan. Measures already taken bilaterally to contain the problem are also described and provide a basis for more work.

A significant feature of the book, and one of its great strengths, is the inclusion of the perspectives of three South Asian countries - Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Iftekharuzzaman of Bangladesh and Dhruba Kumar of Nepal provide the reader with their views from neighboring countries on the nuclear policies of India and Pakistan in the context of "the South Asian insecurity and instability syndrome" offering likely solutions. Gamini Weerakoon analyses Sri Lanka's stance on nuclear non-proliferation in the context of the evolution of that island-nation's foreign policy since its independence in 1948 illustrating the options of a small nation amidst competing pressures and influences.

The complexity of the nuclear issue is emphasized by the difficulty that the authors find in extricating this from the purely regional context and the polemics of the past. In a similar situation in Latin America, Brazil and Argentina moved from military dictatorship to elected democracy facilitating a dramatic change in policy on their nuclear weapon capabilities - a change which has now brought these two countries within the fold of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. In the case of South Africa the dramatic transition to a non-racial democracy was accompanied by the verifiable destruction of nuclear devices it had and the entry of a new South Africa into the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. In South Asia, with democratically elected governments pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities with popular support, it is clear the way ahead lies in the solution of the core political problems between India and Pakistan. The initial exchange of letters between the Gowda Government and the Pakistan Prime Minister is a hopeful sign. Another factor to consider is the ostensible public support of the nuclear programmes of both countries at the moment despite the brief reference to the anti-bomb lobby in

Pakistan. The absence of strong indigenous NGO opinion against the nuclear weapon capability of both countries or any other significant strand of contrary opinion has enabled this. However, just as French public opinion has shown a change in recent times, a similar development in India and Pakistan cannot be ruled out in future. Concrete and demonstrable progress towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in the world will undoubtedly be the ultimate catalyst in achieving progress in South Asia de-legitimizing the possession, let alone the use, of nuclear weapons by anyone anywhere.

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Shamsul I. Khan, S. Aminul Islam, M. Imdadul Haque, Political Culture, Political Parties and the Democratic Transition in Bangladesh, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1996, Price: Tk. 300, pp. 1-271

With more democratic impulses all over the world, the relationship between political culture and internal political process has become an ever more valuable tool for understanding social phenomena within states. It is an important component of the

nexus between the state and society, forming the general rubric within which political values and sentiments are formulated and expressed. While extensive research has been in many of the democracy-loving countries of the world, in Bangladesh very few works have been done on this issue. Amid such a vacuum, Shamsul Islam Khan, S. Aminul Islam and M. Imdadul Haque have done a seminal work by publishing the book titled *Political Culture, Political Parties and Democratic Transition in Bangladesh*, focusing the progress of democratic changes in Bangladesh. The authors explore the general theme of the book in a brief introduction and a more extended elaboration of topics by dividing it into eight chapters. This book concentrates on the crises of transition to democracy which the nation has been facing over the years because of the failure of the political parties to be viable agents of sustaining democracy. Basically, this is a behavioural research work done through applying theoretical framework on a well-defined empirical context of political parties in Bangladesh.

In the opening chapter there is an attempt to give a theoretical framework of the central hypothesis of this project, which is to spell out the factors that produced the failure of democracy in Bangladesh through an analysis of the performance of the political parties. It deals with a number of relevant theoretical terms like political culture, atomism, patron-clientelism, patrimonialism, neo-patrimonialism. Then it touches the historical roots of political culture of Bangladesh starting from first millennium to the present. This is full of insightful theoretical abstractions elegantly crafted to reflect the anatomy of political parties in Bangladesh. The political parties of the past twenty five years have been scrutinized in an objective fashion. The authors painted a similarity between the political history of united Pakistan and that of independent Bangladesh. They state, "Thus we find in United Pakistan political history a see-saw between neo-patrimo-

nialism and military rule. The cycle again reappeared in the political history of Bangladsh." (p.20). Lastly a number of propositions has been put forward to test their validity in the narrower area of political parties.

In chapter two the authors have made a sociological evaluation and analysis with regard to the political history of Bangladesh from 1972 to 1995 by dividing whole period into six distinct political stages five of which ended with either a neo-patrimonial or a praetorian rule. By and large the entire political history of Bangladesh reveals nothing but neo-patrimonial rule starting from the Mujib era, which has turned the state apparatus of Bangladesh into a mere 'private government' (p.27). This actually hindered the building of modern political system under any democratic set up based on three interdependent actors—the people, the government and the political parties. However, Khaleda Zia regime, believed to be an era of transition from a praetorian cum neo-patrimonial rule to that of a democratic one, failed to live up to expectations of the people, placing the future of democracy uncertain. As a way out to develop a country where civil society is extremely fragile, the authors have rightly put emphasis on the performance of political parties. Thus chapters one and two have fleshed out a general theory and set of propositions to account the political process in Bangladesh.

In the following chapters three and four the authors have given a penetrating analysis of dominant political parties in Bangladesh, specifying their formation both in the pre-Liberation and post-Liberation periods. The most important aspect of their analysis is that they have developed a conceptual framework and highlighted the general trends of the political parties of the two separate times. The entire pre-Liberation era is termed as the period of political mobilization, while the post-Liberation time as one reflecting dialectics of power and protest. Between the two

periods, the life-sketch of eleven parties are discussed as living biography of which seven are from pre-Liberation and four from the post-Liberation period. The major features encompassing organisational and operational aspects along with a critical analysis of their performance are presented here. While going through these two chapters one can find them as an useful source of data and information about the existing political parties in Bangladesh. In a very lucid fashion, the authors sketched the rise and fall of the political parties, subsequently generating a number of factions making the whole political process more complex and thorny. The central theme of this important part of the book is to show how the political parties in Bangladesh have undergone a continuous process of fission, fusion, and proliferation, revealing a significant trend of Bangladesh politics, as the writers stated, "The history of political parties in Bangladesh suggests that the typical party is mainly leader-centred and often ideological in its orientation. The stark reality of political canvass in Bangladesh confirms that there have been frequent attempts by the political leaders to leave the old parties and join the others and forming the new ones."

Chapter five presents a socio-economic profile of a sample of political leaders drawn from eleven political parties. With a careful attention to methodological aspect, the authors have gone for selecting political parties first, and then identified the number of respondents and then identified the matrix of issues pertinent to the central question of this chapter. In this attempt to empirical study, the authors do not forget to mention the problems faced while on the fieldwork. The issues taken into consideration for placing before the respondents range from the age of the political leaders to their rural-urban background along with their self-assigned social class. Then the main thrust of political culture is addressed in chapter six by showing the values and attitudes of a sample of political leaders drawn from the select number of

political parties. The authors have addressed a host of questions extending from political mobilization to the preference of political system to understand the values and attitudes of the leaders crucial to the subjective aspect of political development in Bangladesh. One can find it as an exhaustive list of issues for examining the values and attitudes of the political leaders. Some issues addressed here are really fascinating and useful. These include media consumption, role type, degree of anomie, reasons of parties breakup and practice of religion. Undoubtedly, these are of immense importance to assess the position of our democratic culture.

Throughout chapter seven the authors have moved towards portraying the pattern and structure of political parties in Bangladesh. Based on concrete data, the study reflects the pyramidal structure of the most of political parties of Bangladesh with concomitant reflection of a number of bottlenecks emanating from the organizational point of view. About sample survey, it is undoubtedly a solid effort to work out appropriate questionnaire design to get the message. Some interesting findings have come out in this regards to show how the political parties in Bangladesh are organizationally weak and suffering from poor network. For instance, among the respondents, 83 per cent expressed that there has been regionalism and nepotism within the party, 89 per cent agreed with presence of mastans in the party, 51.5 per cent has no confidence in political parties, 88.7 per cent has found the absence of internal democracy in majority of the political parties and 55.2 per cent think about the absence of leader with high ideals etc. Chapter eight deals with the historic Parliamentary Election of 1991, which as the direct result of so-called mass upsurge of ninety, created the ground for newly-found democracy in Bangladesh. This has paved the way for democratic transition in Bangladesh. The authors have given an in-depth analysis of the electoral performance of the various political

parties which took part in the election. A causal analysis based on the findings of the data has been made to examine the unexpected electoral upset of the Bangladesh Awami League and the success of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in 1991.

In the concluding chapter the authors have given a note of optimism about the future of democracy in Bangladesh. It is worth stressing here that in spite of cultural and structural constraints, the cultural homogeneity of Bangladesh and democratic aspiration of its population are conducive to producing a stable democracy in the country. So, the daunting challenge before the nation is to transform the political parties into rational organizations by addressing at least two crucial issues—financial and training up the newly recruited party activists.

Thus, through this book the current concern over the future of democracy on the political canvass in Bangladesh has brought the study of political culture and political parties to forefront of public consciousness. It is refreshing to see that calm and objective scholars have put an important issue into analytic context. The book provides an excellent overview of the political parties and the main value of this book lies in its reasonable and articulate chapters and keeping the readers well informed.

However, while the book provides a great deal of useful information and insights into the political parties of Bangladesh, its title is a little misplaced. This reviewer would have expected that more attention would have been focused on the deeper analysis of political culture from a genuine social science perspective. Because, in my opinion, the book has been burdened with sociological perspective. My another problem is with the selection of sample respondents that play a key role in exploring the output of the research work. In selecting the respondents a balance has been maintained between the leftist parties and rightist parties in Bangladesh. In reality, the so-called leftist parties enjoy only a

very narrow support base, reflected at least in the last two general elections (1991 and 1996), while the parties like the BNP, the Jatiya Party and the AL together enjoy an overwhelming support base among the masses. So, the study, to some extent, fails to provide actual state of the attitudes, orientations and perceptions of the political leaders for understanding the political culture of Bangladesh.

That apart, this is a timely piece of readings in which the authors make a substantial contribution to political research in Bangladesh. The final test of the book is whether the students or policy-makers will like it or not. But the readings that it presents are interesting, informative and representative of the field of which they are a part.

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