

Review Essay

The Nature and Direction of Political Change in Pakistan

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Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change by Khalid Bin Sayeed, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1980, pp. 194, price U.S. \$21.95.

In many respects, this is a significant work—and a controversial one. In terms of the data presented, analyses attempted, insights provided and conclusions drawn, it represents long years of research and reflection. And, it is not an easy book to review.

In this reviewer's view, any discussion on this work must necessarily begin with a flashback to the author's background and his earlier works since it would help put the present work in perspective. Khalid bin Sayeed is not only the most widely known Pakistani writer on Pakistan politics, but also the foremost Pakistani political scientist, having authored numerous papers in journals and compilations, and two major works—*Pakistan: The Formative Phase* (1960) and *The Political System of Pakistan* (1967). Being original and analytical, they achieved instant fame, acquiring, in the process, the distinction of being the most frequently cited works on Pakistan's historical and political development.

In the first work, a political history of Indian Muslims since 1858 and of Pakistan till 1958, Sayeed interpreted Pakistan in terms of Muslim nationalism and Jinnah's charismatic leadership, and the interplay of political forces and the course of politics in Pakistan's early years were explained in terms of the "viceregal system" of undivided India. Set in the tradition of the developmental theorists, his second work exploited dextrously the idiom and formulations of the behavioralists.

Now, in this third major work, Sayeed turns his back on all this and settles for a (modified?) Marxian approach. Page two alone features four quotes from Marx and one from the Marxist Geoffrey Kay; in particular,

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The Eighteenth Brumaire (1852) model provides the framework for most of Sayeed's present thesis.

Therein Marx wrote (and Sayeed cites), "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past", (*Selected Works*, Moscow, 1969, I:398). This social deterministic approach along with the Marxian prediction about "The Future Results of British Rule in India" (*Ibid.*, pp. 494-99) becomes the basis for Sayeed's new interpretation of the origins of Pakistan and of the development during its early years. Along with the socioeconomic situation and the British role, Sayeed does mention Islam as a factor in the enchanting appeal of Pakistan for Muslims; but which variable occupied the center stage is not explicitly mooted. Punjab and N.W.F.P. figure the most, perhaps because they are more amenable to the model. Sind and Baluchistan are mentioned briefly, but only to the extent of delineating its feudal societal structure.

In Baluchistan, it is true, the elites alone mattered till 1947 (and even long afterwards), but how about Sind where some 300,000—i.e., about 25 percent of the adult male Muslim population—had enrolled themselves as Muslim League members during 1943-44? And how about Bengal, where despite the overlordship of Hindu zamindar and bourgeoisie, the Muslims, though comparatively poverty stricken, responded more heartily call of Pakistan than those in any other Muslim provinces? Abul Hashim had claimed a League membership of 550,000 in 1944—more than the Congress membership in Bengal. Apart from all this, the Muslim bourgeoisie (and the masses) in the minority provinces stood to lose in case of Pakistan being established (and they did tremendously after partition), and yet they stood behind the call *enmasse*. This phenomenon, in the reviewer's view, cannot be explained merely in economic terms with or without a dose of Islam, but chiefly in terms of the appeal of Pakistan as a charismatic goal—a goal inspired by the Islamic concept of a charismatic community, the concept which answered the Muslim psychic need for endowing and sanctifying their sense of community with a sense of power. This is not to say that the goal, besides holding forth the prospect of power to order their lives and organize the society according to their own cherished ideals, did not hold forth the prospects of material progress and benefits. But had "bread" and "freedom" alone mattered, Indian Muslims would not have turned their back to the Congress mass contact movement nor to Nehru's economic appeal during 1936-37.

The violent sundering of the two wings in 1971 does, of course, represent a serious flaw in the Pakistan nationalism framework as it developed during 1950s and 1960s, but not in the Muslim nationalism concept as it emerged during the 1940s, to which, moreover, even Bangladesh owes its separate existence today.

Likewise, without the presence of an "event-making" man *al al* Sidney

Hook, environmental determinants or challenges alone do not explain the making of a major historical event like Pakistan. Man is the *creator* of his environment as well as a *creature* of it. Napoleon, for instance, was a product of the French Revolution, but subsequent French, and even European, history would not have run the course it did but for *his* decision to invade Russia. Pakistan, likewise, would not have come in 1947 but for, among others, Jinnah's sole decision to boycott the Constituent Assembly. This point has been discussed in some detail in the present reviewer's work, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation* (1981).

In any case, in Sayeed's present thesis, Muslim nationalism and Jinnah's charismatic leadership give way to the colonial heritage and socioeconomic milieu of the early years as the determinants of the nature and direction of political change. However, the viceregal-system paradigm from the first work is retained to explain the strengthening of the neocolonial state under Ayub, wherein he filled the role of the Viceroy, with the US as a substitute imperial power. Later however, the Ayub's regime is described as a "less advanced Bonapartist state" as against Bhutto's more advanced one (p.89).

Sayeed uses the Marxist concept of Bonapartism in a modified form, and goes on to show how and where it differs from Hamza Alavi's postcolonial-state paradigm. In Alavi's model, "the postcolonial state was relatively autonomous and mediated between competing interests of the various propertied classes" (p. 89); but Bhutto, besides mediating between various interests and classes, was "primarily motivated by *animus dominandi*....the aggrandizement of his own power...to control every major class or interest by weakening its power base and by making it subservient to his will and policies" (p. 91). This description of Bhutto is analogous to Marx's description of Bonaparte. "Bonaparte," Marx remarks, "would like to appear as the patriarchal benefactor of all classes....Bonaparte would fain be the most *obligeant* man in France and turn all the property, all the labour of France into a personal obligation to himself. He would like to steal the whole of France in order to be able to make a present of her to France, or, rather, in order to be able to buy France anew with French money..." (*Selected Works*, I:484-85). Bhutto fell because feeling himself chiefly as the representative of the working classes, he (to paraphrase Marx) was merely trying to keep their cause alive (if only to sustain himself in power), but was ever ready to do away with the effect of the espousal of their cause (i.e., the generation of political power) where and whenever manifested itself (as in Karachi and Lahore in June 1972 and April 1974 respectively; and as underscored in his rationale for the creation of the dreaded FSF).

As against Sayeed's thesis, the disparate and fragmented opposition became united in the PNA not for economic and religious reasons (p. 157) but chiefly for political reasons—in particular to abort Bhutto's plans to introduce the presidential system, and turn Pakistan into a one-party,

totalitarian state, which Sayeed learnt from Leslie Wolf-Phillips but which was common knowledge in Pakistan during 1976-77. Thus, democratic freedoms and civil rights, with particular emphasis on the vindication of the citizen's self respect which had been "badly bruised" and "systematically trampled" upon by the PPP regime, became the explosive issues in the election campaign. They received a weightage of 38.33 points in the PNA manifesto and major addresses of PNA leaders, followed by socioeconomic issues (31.05), whereas Islamic ideology only 12.86 (if only because Bhutto professed to own it with the enthusiasm of a new convert).

The PNA movement original plank, when it was launched on March 14, had only two aims—the restoration of civic freedoms and free and fair elections under neutral agencies. Religious issues got incorporated into the PNA charter of demands much later—to gain new adherents and to infuse further enthusiasm. And had religious issues alone mattered, the movement would not and could not have surged forward, gathering further momentum, after Bhutto's declaration of April 17 to introduce Nizam-i-Mustafa.

It is also worth noting that throughout the election campaign, Bhutto was on the defensive, and the opposition, once it had the freedom to hold public meetings and use the loudspeaker, was able to rouse popular enthusiasm by exploiting skillfully the widespread discontent against the regime. Thus, the PNA leaders organized and addressed 16 major public rallies and processions as against only 5 such rallies addressed by Bhutto and other PPP leaders. Likewise, PNA's score of major public meetings was 143 as against PPP's 86. Additionally, the PNA organized a 125-mile long march from Rawalpindi to Gujranwala along the Grand Trunk Road which was joined at various stages by hundreds of thousands of people from far and near, holding in their hands lanterns and ploughs, the PNA election symbol. Asghar Khan's 20 mile long procession in Karachi on February 20, participated by nearly one million people, took almost 12 hours to reach its destination. The complete success of PNA's call for strike on February 28 and on March 10 in eight places and partial success in other places (including Lahore and Rawalpindi) showed which way the wind was blowing. Hence, although the middle class, as Sayeed contends, was the main component in the PNA movement, it also included the peasant and the working classes.

Sayeed's contention that it was confined to urban areas is not also corroborated by facts. Indeed, some of the trouble spots housed only about 10,000 males in the potentially active (15-59) age group—Daska (9,399), Sialkot, where curfew was imposed; Ahmedpur East (11,317), Bhawalpur, where eleven people were killed at one time; Sanghar (9,407), Sind, which was the scene of intermittent firing; and Mingora (9,747), Swat, where at least two people were killed. Indeed, in its duration, pervasiveness, and intensity, no movement in recent subcontinental history could match it. The joining of the peasant and

labour classes in the PNA movement indicates that Bhutto was opposed and toppled not for heightening "class conflict" but for trampling civic freedoms and hurting grievously the ordinary citizen's self-respect.

Sayed who had shown a tremendous flair for utilizing the primary sources and the interviewing method in his first work, and great dexterity in exploiting empirical data (besides interviews) in the second one, presents a prodigious array of facts, and figures (except the rather dated Table 8.4) to back up his statements and arguments. Yet the picture that emerges lacks totality. The models he uses seem to tilt him toward a procrustean-bed approach: he seems rather extremely selective in his sources, as also in what he includes and what he excludes. To give only three major instances: Gen. Zia's "Turkish solution" to Pakistan's constitutional crisis is referred to but not Bhutto's conceding almost a similar role to the armed forces in January 1971. Interestingly, Sayeed, elsewhere, does concede them a role in bringing about a social revolution (p. 188). Zia's preference for the proportional representation (PR) system is seen as a desire to reduce the PPP strength in the new legislature but Bhutto's pledge to introduce this system in his 1970 manifesto is not mentioned (nor the West German experience which showed the PR system's capability to develop a two-party system without steamrolling dissent which is the hallmark of an open society). The military's alignment with "conservative forces" is stressed repeatedly, but Bhutto's close relations with the top brass (including Yahya, Gen. Rahim, Jam. Gen. Gul Hasan) fail to find a mention, nor the role of Rahim, and Gul Hasan in manipulating Yahya's abdication and Bhutto's ascension to power in the garb of chief martial law administrator.

Situated as Sayeed is, he may well afford to decry the emphasis on institution-building, but those of us who have to wrestle with restive reality in the third world Pakistani situation, feel that had we attended to the tasks of institution building in right earnest from the very beginning, respected the autonomy of the various institutions within their respective spheres, brought a measure of coherence and systematization in their functioning, and provided adequate linkages between them, we would not have encountered three political disruptions within three decades, besides the traumatic experience of a nation torn apart. Class consciousness and labour militancy (as Sayeed seems to suggest) are no panacea for Pakistan's poverty—but the mobilization of internal and external resources to produce more and more, and the infusion of a certain measure of self-discipline in all spheres of life.

Finally, one may ask (*a la* Traver-Roper in respect of Toynbee's *Study of History*), what is the meaning of this work in the context of our time. It is meant to focus attention on (what Sayeed perceives to be) those variable which help explain "the nature and totality of social change in the third world." Thus, as a contribution to theory building, the work, despite a certain lack of rigour, may yet carve out a niche for itself in the literature.