

Book Review

Shahrukh Rafi Khan, *Pakistan Under Musharraf (1999-2002): Economic Reform and Political Change*, Vanguard Books, Lahore. Pages 178. Price: Pak Rs. 495/-.

Dedicated to Omar Asghar Khan, this book can be seen as a continuation of the author's previous *Reforming Pakistan's Political Economy*, published by Vanguard in 1999. Using findings from research done by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), when the author was its Executive Director, Shahrukh Rafi Khan takes us through the political and economic reforms undertaken by the present military government.

The book is then divided into eight sections: the first, which the author calls "the mother of all reforms", addresses the issue of agrarian (and land) reforms; the second deals with the first, most important and most talked about reform undertaken by the military government – devolution of power; the third, fourth and fifth sections have in common the concept of participatory rural development in education (and more importantly in primary rural education), in activating and formalizing social capital, and in sustainable development and the environment; the following section links up nicely with the previous, with trade and environment and the country's role in WTO negotiations; the structural adjustment reform policies, both before and after the military takeover, and the latter's experience with structural adjustment and privatization are covered in section seven; and finally the last section deals with other reforms including Islamic finance, NGO registration, child labor, and the need for peace in the India-Kashmir-Pak nexus.

By starting with land, and more importantly, agrarian reforms, the author sets the stage for what are considered the imperative reforms to be done in the country, which unfortunately, the military government is not keen on pursuing. The data presented in this section, along with the author's analysis, make us see that without a concerted effort by the State to enact such reforms, other reforms (including devolution of power) will have limited or no impact in eradicating poverty and improving the well-being of all Pakistani citizens, particularly the rural poor.

In *Devolution of Power*, Shahrukh Rafi Khan explains how the present reform was created and what are its major flaws. Within this section, readers can find SDPI adapted briefings and research on a possible working model for devolution, the lack of devolution of power to the grassroots level, the (negative) effect of landed power and *baraderi* in local government elections, power dynamics in smaller land holding constituencies, using theatre as a tool to get feedback and suggestions on the reforms at the grassroots level, and law and order within the context of power devolution. Two other interesting essays appear in this section: one on the costs of the devolution plan; and the other related to electoral reforms in the devolution context.

Participatory Rural Development is the constant theme in sections three (Education), four (Social Capital), and five (Environment and Sustainable Development). The concept is that without a serious effort by both the State and local population to involve the latter not only during the implementation of programmes, but also in decision-making and evaluation, sustainable rural development will not happen in the country. The state of education in Pakistan is, to say the least, abysmal. Taking into consideration that it is worse in rural areas (where the majority of the population and the majority of poor people live) and at the primary level, the author focuses on rural primary education, presenting a proposed educational action plan using several tools supposedly in place due to the devolution plan (e.g., parent teacher associations and school management committees), and showing the results of a comparative study of government, NGO and private sector rural primary schools. The following section deals in particular with the formalization of social capital, the early success of the Human Development Foundation (HDF) and obstacles to social mobilization. Finally, the section on environment and sustainable development looks into the State of Environment Report that the Ministry of Environment should produce annually, an analysis of the second budget of the military government and their seriousness towards this topic, a case study of the Kirthar National Park, and a final essay on the author's vision of sustainable development.

Trade and Environment is one of SDPI's core themes and section six shows us some of the research done related to Pakistan's stance in WTO-related issues and the link between trade and the environment. Structural Adjustment shows how the military government is willing to deal with what some people call the "macroeconomic" issues of the country, which the author correctly identifies as a free-market ideology and in keeping with IMF/World Bank reforms, which will just make the rich richer, and the poor poorer (do keep in mind that the Finance Minister's approach towards developing Pakistan is the infamous and erroneous "trickle-down approach).

The final section deals with other reforms that should be undertaken, but as we all know, are still lagging, i.e., Islamic financing, regularization of NGOs, child labor, and peace with India.

Shahrukh Rafi Khan's breakdown of the military government's first four years is definitely brilliant. One of the interesting aspects of *Pakistan Under Musharraf* is its excellent quality of qualitative data and very good analytical work done by the author. Together with a well-written and easy-to-read text, it makes this book readable not only as an academic work, but also as bedside reading.

This book is definitely a must read for undergraduate and post-graduate students interested in political economy, academics, journalists, individuals working in both PIOs (Public Interest Organizations) and government agencies, donor agencies, Pakistani citizens, and members of the present military government.

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