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Book Review

Habibul Khondker; Olav Muurlink; and Asif Bin Ali (Eds.). *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, 2022), pp. XXIV+443

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Bangladesh celebrated 50 years of independence in 2022 and the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* investigates the historical, political, social, and economic journey of Bangladesh since her independence in 1971. The book includes scholarly contributions from academics, policymakers, activists, and development specialists. The inclusion of a few paragraphs from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's *Oshomapto Atmojiboni* (Unfinished Autobiography) makes the book worth reading, especially for the young generations of present-day Bangladesh.

The book has several chapters, including a scholarly introduction by the editors that sets the context for understanding the emergence of Bangladesh "from 1947 to 1971 as the historical setting when Bangladesh was incubated in the womb of Pakistan" (p. 8). Both authors clarified the myth and the reality of religion-based nationalism in erstwhile united Pakistan and the regional disparity with Pakistan's uneven and dependent development. At the same time, the authors highlighted West Pakistan's socioeconomic, political, and cultural marginalization of then East Pakistan. The exclusionary policies of the ruling West Pakistan-based central government helped the East Pakistani people and their political leader's struggle for self-governance following the six-point movement. Finally, the authors opine that the emergence of Bangladesh is an outcome of commitment to the concept of autonomy, initiated in 1966, which led the country to liberation.

Olav Muurlink's chapter discusses the impact of the great Bhola cyclone of 11 November 1970 on the politics of then East Pakistan. The West Pakistan government was unacceptably non-responsive to this mega natural disaster. The author argues that the great Bhola disaster consequentially played a big part in determining the future of Pakistan. Mustafa Chowdhury's chapter highlights historical narratives discussing war babies and the torture against women of East Pakistan during the liberation war. The author also discusses the role of the post-liberation Government of Bangladesh and the nature of the adoption of these war babies in Bangladesh and Canada. Tazeen Murshid's chapter addresses Bengali identity, secularism, and the language movement in then East Bengal as part of developing a worldview in the post-partition

intelligentsia. At the same time, religious radicalization in Bangladesh is a priority in Ali Riaz's discussion. The author argues that religious radicalization in Bangladesh is intrinsically connected to the country's political environment. Patronization of radical ideas and constructing a binary between good and evil have served the political interests of different regimes in Dhaka. A few more exciting chapters elaborate on the politics of the making of minorities in Bangladesh and the political economy of development from its emergence. Having a demographic dividend, the status of human development in Bangladesh is critically considered from a dynamic trajectory. The government's role in business relationships in Bangladesh gets significant attention. At the same time, the livelihoods and food security of the indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and its factors of change and prospects are also depicted.

Some of the essential thematic issues, for example, accountability in the Bangladeshi public administration, the changing role of the Bangladesh military from 1971 to 2020, the evolution of education policy, the success and consequences of Bangladesh's health report card during its 50 years of independence; the emerging diaspora of Bangladesh etc., have been critically investigated in this book. Finally, the status of media, films, their transformative role in Bangladeshi society, and hip-hop music activism are discussed in parallel.

This wide-ranging interdisciplinary book brings perspectives from sociology, law, political economy, political science, public administration, popular culture, gender, education, and health into a single frame. This book has tremendous importance if someone is interested in understanding Bangladesh's emergence from a holistic point of view. This book can be a good source for students of Bangladesh studies, political science, sociology, law, political economy, anthropology, gender studies, history, climate change, education, health, public administration, film and media studies, and popular culture.

Though the book is a notable contribution to Bangladesh studies, it could have been improved. First, most chapters are developed purposively, meaning they did not cover critical discussions centering around the development of the ready-made garments (RMGs) industry, the role of remittances in the Bangladesh economy, and the status of agriculture in the country. Similarly, the book needed to explain the rule of law situation and the constitutional dimensions concerning the security of citizens in the face of political oppression and repression by the government. Moreover, the editors should have raised the issues of gross human rights violations, uneven development, widening income inequality, electoral malpractices, and the crisis of political trust among the major political parties.