PREFACE

Military rule has been a pervasive phenomenon in many post-colonial states of Africa, Asia and Latin America. This has encouraged several scholars to study and examine the factors responsible for military intervention and rule. The major thrust of such studies has been the causes rather than the impact of military rule on Third World polities. There is, therefore, a need to supplement such studies by an analysis, with the help of existing theoretical formulations, of the political institution-building process initiated by military regimes in developing countries and its impact on the polity, society and economy.

In South Asia, Pakistan and Bangladesh have experienced military rule for long periods. Bangladesh in particular, was ruled by the military for 15 out of its 27 years of independent existence. The old power bastion of the Pakistani state—civil-military bureaucratic complex revisited Bangladesh only a little over three years after its independence.

This development acquires special significance because the very emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state was the result of a strong politico-military struggle for the establishment of democracy in the military bureaucratic ruled Pakistan. Independent Bangladesh opted for parliamentary democracy and the military was put under civilian control. The civilian rule was, however, abruptly ended with military’s assumption of power in 1975. The Bangladesh military in collusion with the civil bureaucracy, emerged as the ruling elite under the leadership of Ziaur Rahman and remained so till 1990.

The study of the impact of military rule on Bangladesh polity and society will be divided into the following chapters:

An attempt has been made in the first chapter to evaluate with the help of existing theoretical tools the factors responsible for military’s intervention in politics and the
performances of military regimes in the socio-economic development and political institution-building in developing countries, particularly in Indonesia, Turkey and Pakistan.

The second chapter deals with the origin, development, composition, strength, selection and recruitment procedures and training pattern of the Bangladesh armed forces. The chapter also examines the socio-economic background of the military personnel in Bangladesh.

The third chapter analyses the ideological orientation and political behaviour of the armed personnel, internal cleavages in the Bangladesh military, and the nature of civil-military relations during 1971-1990.

The fourth chapter examines how the civil-military bureaucratic elite and the anti-liberation forces gained prominence in the national decision making process after the 1975 political changeover. The chapter also analyses the constitutional changes, structure of the government, rural institution-building, ideological mobilisation, and the nature of corruption, under Zia. Moreover, the chapter tries to focus on the civilianisation programmes such as holding of referendum, and parliamentary, presidential and local body elections and formation of political parties by Zia.

The fifth chapter discusses the structure of the Martial Law Administration, socio-economic reform measures, administrative decentralization, and nature and extent of corruption, mismanagement and militarisation under Ershad. The chapter also examines the political compulsions behind the Islamisation, privatisation and civilianisation programmes initiated by the Ershad regime, the role played by the military, students, political activists, industrial workers, urban professional groups in the movement for the restoration of democracy and the factors that contributed to Ershad’s speedy removal from power.

The sixth chapter analyses the impact of the military rule on the key institutions like the parliament, political parties, constitution, the Election Commission, the judiciary
and the media. The chapter also examines the nature of the Khaleda government and military's role in it, the patterns of civil-military relations in the post-Ershad era and the prospects for civilian rule in Bangladesh.

The seventh chapter analyses the main features of the economic policies pursued by the military rulers and the evolution of the business elite in Bangladesh, military regimes' rural development strategies and their fallout, the nature and extent of Bangladesh's dependence on foreign aid, the impact of foreign aid on the process of class formation during 1975-90, and the state of socio-economic development and the structure of the rural society under military rule. The chapter also examines the status of the military in society and the socio-economic background of the ruling elites in the post-1975 period.

The last chapter puts together the conclusions drawn on various aspects of the impact of military rule on polity, society and economy, as analysed in the earlier chapters.