PREFACE

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is introductory. It provides a background to the study of political development in Southeast Asia. The problems associated with the process of political development in context of developing nations have been discussed. A brief geo-political, historical and cultural sketch of Southeast Asian countries has been constructed in order to comprehend the setting and the context in which political development has taken place in different polities of the region. The geographical, racial, cultural, historical, economic and political similarities among the states have been pointed out and Southeast Asia has shown to be a unit of analysis for the purposes of the present study. The marked differences, too, have been pointed out to account for the differences in the developmental experiences of these counties. The society, history and economy of Malaysia has been discussed in greater detail.

The second chapter conceptualizes political development. The concept of political development is in a confused rather chaotic state of affairs, because it has been used by a number of political scientists having different ideological considerations and motivations to suit their specific purposes. The concept is stretched to mean anything from some vague idea of political change to westernization in its plethora of uses. Some political scientists equate it with economic development or market economy or even industrialization. It means order and stability to some, while intense political mobilization and participation to others. It all depends upon what one wants to prove or achieve. A part of the difficulty lies in the lack of tendency to define the concept before applying it to a study.
Therefore, an attempt has been made in the chapter to conceptualize the term and arrive at a working definition of political development. The western and the empiricists’ bias in political development studies’ has been exposed. The concept has been fine-tuned to be applied to the developing countries which are in a state of constant flux. The concept has also been distinguished very clearly from the allied concepts such as economic development, political modernization, political mobilization, capabilities, performance, or democracy. A number of definitions evolved by various political scientists have been picked up and their shortcomings have been exposed. At last, by picking up the elements as logically appear more relevant to us, we have evolved our own generalized working definition of the concept, which can be fruitfully applied to the area under study.

The third and fourth chapters deal with the process of political development in Malaysia. The former chapter covers political development in Malaysia in structural – functional perspective. Some structural aspects of the constitution in the light of their bearing over the political development of the country have been studied. The problems of state building and national integration and their role in the maintenance of order, stability and cohesiveness of the political system have been looked into. A peculiar aspect of political development in Malaysia is the manner in which the remotely situated (divided by thousand miles of sea-distance) territories of Borneo have been incorporated and integrated with the Peninsular Malaysia despite the inbuilt tensions at ethnic and political levels between the two entities. The imposition of emergency in the wake of 1969-riots the breakdown of parliamentary democracy, the restoration of peace and democratic process within a couple of years, and the accompanied structural as well as informal changes in the rules of democratic process have been analyzed in terms of their bearing over the process of political
development. The main political themes at the national level, the elections, and the electoral system have been investigated in order to understand how they contribute to the sustenance of the same ruling coalition dominated by the same political party, United Malays National Organization. How the sound economic policies and strong leadership have contributed to the political stability and persistence of the same coalition in the ruling position has also been probed.

The fourth chapter carries out an in-depth and detailed analysis of evolution of civil and political rights, rule of law and egalitarian measures to reduce inter-ethnic disparities and poverty in Malaysia. The notions of liberty and equity have been applied at great length to understand the political change in last fifty years. The philosophical basis of the constitution has been delineated. The process of constitutional changes effected by the incumbent authorities in order to consolidate their hold over the political system have also been discussed. The basic rights available to the citizens and hollowness of some specific rights and safeguards has been laid thread-bare. Various Acts, their enforcement, and bearing over the rights of the citizens and opposition’s freedom of action have been thoroughly analyzed. The role of judiciary in the enforcement of rule of law and fundamental rights has also been discussed. Finally, the role played by various protective discrimination measures undertaken by the government to reduce the inter-ethnic disparities as well as poverty in achieving the egalitarian goals has been analyzed.

The fifth chapter deals with the political development in Southeast Asia in general. All the important elements, causes and agents of political development in different polities have been delineated and discussed in terms of their significance. How the colonial powers and traditional elites during transition towards autonomy and democracy, the colonial legacy, the hierarchical and clientist social structures,
problems of nation building and leadership styles and rapid economic development have shaped the process of political development in Southeast Asia has been probed in this chapter. The interface between military, bureaucracy, political parties and political process has been revealed. The process of strengthening of the civil society has been delineated along with its significance for the political development, particularly, in terms of rationalization and secularization of political culture and civil society pressures for the democratization of the political apparatuses. An in-depth analysis of developmental experiences of some important political systems has been undertaken in accordance with their significance.

The last chapter sums up the key findings of the research in terms of broad generalizations. The overall attempt is to understand the political dynamics and change in Southeast Asia in general and Malaysia in particular in a theoretical perspective.