

differentiate man from other living creations and their proper use distinguishes the rightly guided individuals from the misguided ones.

The concluding section points out that although comprehensive in scope, the book's coverage on *fitrah* is certainly not exhaustive. This thesis however, is an improved attempt at developing an Islamic theory of human nature. It should stimulate further writings in formulating a more comprehensive framework of human personality. It is also a tool to "Islamize" the social sciences and eventually develop Islamic psychology as an independent discipline.

This book, no doubt, is an in-depth analysis of *fitrah*, succeeds in offering a constructive criticism of Western theories as well as in giving rational explanations for the Islamic alternative. With too many details, it is possible that a novice reader may get lost and confused in the philosophical explanations in some places. Works like these fill a void at a time when Islamic perspective in the social sciences is badly needed.

### **Authoritarianism and Economic Success**

*Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia* by Anne Munro-Kua. England: Macmillan, 1996. ISBN 0-333-64491-3, Pages 199.

*Reviewer:* Alieu K. Jammeh, Department of Political Science, IUM.

It is an indication of political maturity in Malaysia that many scholars are challenging the establishment and their policies. The author of this book takes up what she calls an apparent paradox in Malaysia whereby the state is recognized as economically successful as well as authoritarian, and yet the ruling Party has repeatedly obtained sweeping mandate at the polls. According to the author Malaysian political system involves extensive restrictions on civil liberties, despite the fact that the formal institutions of democracy remain in place. The author traces the origins and causes of such a contradiction as well as provides analysis on how it has been maintained and reinforced.

The author identifies colonial domination as the root cause of the apparent contradiction in Malaysia and shows how institutions were adopted and reinforced during the post colonial era. Thus, the emergency laws formulated to contain anti-colonial and labour movement disturbances were transformed into an equivalent law known as the Internal Security Act (ISA). In the economy, serious

consideration has been given to change the domination by foreign capital. Concentration remained also on the production of export commodities as well as continuation of the colonial legacy of urban biased development. Fearing loss of support with signs of support evident in the gains by the opposition, the ruling Alliance composed of the elites of the three major races—Malays, Chinese and the Indians—resorted to implementing policies to control any resurgence of disturbance reminiscent of the colonial period. Preventive detention became the strongest weapon of the executive in protecting “national security.” Chapter four shows how repressive the Alliance has been in applying preventive mechanism. Indiscriminate arrests and detention without trial were made. The opposition parties did succeed in curtailing the Alliance’s support base which resulted in the tragic 1969 riots. The author’s contention that the ethnic riots of 1969 were due to communal sentiments displayed by the Malay politicians who wanted to teach a lesson to the Chinese will seriously be objected to by serious scholars of the government and politics of Malaysia and by the Malays in particular.

In finding lasting solutions to the causes of the 1969 riots, a restructuring program of the state and society began. In chapter five, the author explains how this was done. Once again, the author makes a controversial point when she argues that with the NEP (New Economic Policy) and the NCP (National Cultural Policy), the Malay community became highly privileged with access to economic benefits. Malay culture and language gained prominence over all others and it is supposedly done to bring about unity as many different languages and cultures in the country could only encourage disintegration and disunity. According to the author, these policies divided rather than integrated the Malaysians.

The bulk of the author’s censure, however, was reserved for the Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad who is blamed for “his own kind of authoritarian populism revitalized into nationalism” (p.112). With his centralization of executive power, he undertook further restructuring of the society accompanied by policies like the “Buy British Last” campaign in 1981 and the “Look East” policy. Mahathir has been portrayed as an authoritarian leader because he often allegedly bypasses cabinet without consultation. As before, in the restructuring of the society, Mahathir favoured the Malay community over other communities. Cultural issues became highly centered on indigenous elements whilst the non-Malays were told that some of their

cultural practices were to be discarded. He used religion, Islam and the control of the media to retain his popularity and power. Thus his administration proved not only more authoritarian than that of his predecessors but also more imaginative in its populist appeal. Mahathir's period is characterized according to the author, by a repetition of popular show of dissatisfaction and the states' repressive mechanisms. Yet Mahathir held regular elections and won regularly with 2/3 majority in the parliament. Thus, there exists contradictory phenomenon of an authoritarian state endorsed by popular mandate. The author calls this the "dual system"---and the book is a condemnation of this system.

This piece of work has been drawn from the author's doctoral thesis to Manchester University in 1993. The premise of the theme seems to be largely influenced by the author's revulsion to the institutions of governance in Malaysia which in one degree or the other remain nightmare to her. She has had her husband detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in 1987. Her sympathy with the ethnic Chinese community in the country is apparently a consequence of her distaste with her perceived inimical treatment meted out to the Chinese community by the system dominated by the Malays. However, she does not mention the discrimination faced by Malays, under the British, which had deprived them of all economic and educational privileges. Had the author not been properly supervised, this work might have ended as no more than a polemic penned by a frustrated person.

### **The USA and the Pacific**

**The New Pacific Community: US Strategic Option in Asia** by Martin L. Lasater. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996, pp.177 ISBN 0-8133-88694.

*Reviewer:* Wahabuddin Raees, Lecturer Matriculation Center, International Islamic University, Malaysia.

The American post-Cold War foreign policy objectives in the Asia-Pacific region are identical to its national interests during the Cold War. However, the "exercise of effective leadership" into the Pacific Rim is a new dimension of the American Post-Cold War foreign policy objectives in the region. Moreover, while the substance of American interests in the Pacific Rim remains unperturbed, what has been