

AGRICULTURE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, and GOVERNMENT POLICY in DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

Bandung Conference (1955) in Indonesia was the first large meeting of leaders from newly independent countries from Asia and Africa, where a declaration was submitted, which included opposing colonial and neo-colonial policies, to improve cooperation among the newly independent countries. It was also said to improve the living conditions of their people by safeguarding economic sovereignty and raising agricultural output to avoid occurrences of famines, which killed millions of people in the pre-independence period (Siddiqui, 2020a; 2020b). However, the strategy adopted to raise agricultural output was through land distribution i.e. allocating land to the tillers. It aimed, firstly, to remove rural inequality and increase output and incomes of the rural poor. Secondly, by increasing rural incomes, it was intended to expand markets for industrial goods. In most of East Asia, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and also in Vietnam and China, land was re-distributed to the tillers, which dramatically reduced rural inequality and increased agricultural outputs. Moreover, the state took a number of measures in the industrial sector



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both to encourage investments and joint-ventures, and also to encourage exports. As a result, these countries emerged as successful and economically powerful nations.

However, in contrast to East Asia, land reforms in South Asia and in Africa either did not take place or were incomplete. For instance, land reform measures in India only removed big urban-based absentee landowners and did not touch village-based big-landlords. (Siddiqui, 2019b) Thus, rural inequality continued and domestic markets for industrial goods remained sluggish. However, to increase food production in the late 1960s, a technological solution was initiated, where the government subsidised new agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, power, and irrigation, which was known as the 'green revolution'. By the early 1990s, these policies were exhausted and the farmers' frustration rose to new heights. However, by 1991, the economic crisis deepened and the government had to borrow money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and accepted IMF conditionality by adopting a