

***Islamabad and the Politics of International Development  
in Pakistan.* Daechsel, Markus. United Kingdom:  
Cambridge University Press, 2015.**

Sarah Akram<sup>\*</sup>

Markus Daechsel, in his book titled *Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan*, delves deep into a highly original and detailed account of the design and development of Pakistan's capital city, Islamabad, established in the 1960s. The author considers it as a very large urban reconstruction project of the 20th century. It book, spread over six chapters, gives a detailed account of an urban design project, which also explains the relationship between the famous Greek architect, Constantinos A. Doxiadis, and Pakistani policymakers, bureaucrats and others concerned while working on a large project in a post-colonial state. After General Ayub Khan assumed power in the country, he embarked upon a large development plan, which was all encompassing. He aimed at making Pakistan a hub of urban development and transforming it into a centre of industrial development and reforms. The 1950s and 1960s marked the beginning of an era of development in Pakistan as the then newly born state of Pakistan struggled to forge a new identity as a post-colonial state and build upon a new post-colonial order.

The author sheds light on the Greek architect and urban development planner, Doxiadis' experiences as an urban developer and how he tried to introduce an extremely sophisticated development view to Pakistan. The fact that Doxiadis was also hired to design the Korangi Pilot Township in Karachi, which enabled him to understand the local dynamics and also his extensive experience of touring various areas of Pakistan helped in understanding the local norms. Similarly, the Greek architect also had the experience of designing the extension of University of the Punjab campus in Lahore. Development, urban planning and architecture remained Doxiadis' primary interest. It is interesting to note that the debates about the location and nature of Pakistan's capital city had started way before Doxiadis's arrival and even before the partition had formally taken place. Although Doxiadis had engineered the First Five-year Development Plan for Pakistan,

---

<sup>\*</sup> *The book reviewer is Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.*

his involvement with the decision-makers became more entrenched and he was offered to give his input on the relocation of the capital city of Pakistan and he had responded by saying “No” to the relocation of the capital city (p. 165). However, at the insistence of his patrons, the master plan for Islamabad was formally approved in October 1960.

According to the author, Doxiadis was very conscious of the fact that he was operating in a Muslim society, which compelled him to conduct urban planning while keeping in mind the customs and cultural requirements of the Muslim societies. Moreover, he worked more as a planner than a designer. Doxiadis’s first and the foremost plan was the layout of low-cost housing for junior government servants in Islamabad’s oldest sector, G-6. His confrontations with the local bureaucracy did prevent him from fully realising his plans. Similarly, the restriction of movement was the reason why Doxiadis did not deliberately give Islamabad a railway system. The main components, identified by Doxiadis, in the structure of the city were ‘Man’, ‘Nature’, ‘Society’ ‘Shell and Network’ (p. 41). These structures in their varying combinations could be perceived according to five functions, mainly the economic, sociological, political, technological and cultural, thus, leading to various other possible combinations. The division of the city into several quarters reflected the planners’ intention to divide people into different social categories. It is the author’s argument that development has led to more politicisation instead of de-politicisation.

This book offers an insight into Doxiadis’s failures and successes and also helps understand a larger process of development in a recently decolonised country like Pakistan. The development politics was a major factor in the way Doxiadis operated and his interaction with the decision making elite as well as technocrats; all embody how the new state of Pakistan operated. The book offers a useful insight into how development and politics merged during the so-called ‘development decade’ of a newly created post-colonial state like Pakistan. The author concludes by saying that expected analysis may dictate that the most invoked solution to all the problems may be development itself; however, in the author’s opinion, this is a serious misapprehension. However, new solutions, better suited to the people of Pakistan, may be the answer to all the problems.