

AIPS Summer Research Grant in Pakistan, 2016

**Planning the Islamic Republic:
Economic Expertise and Development in Pakistan, 1947-71**

Summary:

Conducting exploratory dissertation research in Islamabad, Pakistan from July through the end of August. I plan to work at the National Documentation Center (NDC); Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform; and the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE).

Research Statement:

The belief in development, and the power of economic growth, during the 1950s and 1960s has been described as a ‘global faith’. Prevailing historiography on development, working primarily within a Cold War context, has conceptualized developing nations as passive laboratories and staging grounds for theories on planning and modernization. However Markus Daechsel in *Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan* notes that “Pakistan was not born a developing nation, it became one only through its encounter with an army of experts and funding bodies, new international alliances and policy practices that all prescribed or facilitated a certain new way of making sense of the world”.¹ Focusing on the period from 1947-71 my research explores how Pakistan was molded into a discursive subject of development not only through its interaction with US foundations and foreign consultants, but also through the state efforts of projecting sovereignty.

Using the setting up of the Planning Commission (1952) and PIDE (1957) as the starting point of my research, I will examine the role of these institutions in creating an economic and developmentalist vision for the postcolonial Pakistani state. Today, a history of the Planning Commission and PIDE fails to mention the funding and technical assistance provided by the Ford Foundation and the Harvard Advisory Group (HAG) that was instrumental in setting up and building the capacity of these institutions. What forms of knowledge were produced in the publications and research of these institutions through this interaction between local economists, bureaucrats, and foreign consultants? How can we understand shifts in this knowledge production as representative of the imperatives of succeeding Pakistani administrations?

The histories of these institutions, and the ideas they produced, also provide a window into exploring how questions of resource allocation, appointment of official positions, and choosing candidates for foreign training were debated between the center and regions -

¹ Markus Daechsel, *Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 26.

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especially East Pakistan. These debates not only help us understand the development the nature of expertise and institutions in Pakistan, but also how the field of development planning itself was politicized over the period from 1947-71 - pointing towards larger tensions between developmentalism and postcoloniality.

While situating this history within the Pakistan - US relationship context my research also proposes to study these interactions as part of systemic change on a global scale, and uncover the entanglements between various intellectual communities through the production and circulation of ideas. Although firmly rooted within the local, I propose to explore how Pakistan's experiment with planning and development (especially rural development) was circulated and received by government and development actors in countries such as South Korea and Indonesia.

Research Program:

The AIPS Summer Research Grant will allow me to start exploratory research for my dissertation, and will be invaluable and helping me formulate my prospectus - which is due in December 2016. It will enable me to figure out the range of archival materials available in Pakistan before moving on to the research and writing stage.

My research will be primarily archival, and I am looking to collect a) official documents of the Planning Commission and PIDE; b) memos and correspondence between PIDE/Planning Commission officials and federal ministries, foreign consultants, and aid agencies; c) publications such as the Five Year Plans, PIDE journals, etc; d) newspaper articles on how economic development was articulated and debated in the local press; and if possible e) private papers and oral history interviews with leading economists and officials at both these institutes.

I am in the process of making contact with the Librarian at the Planning Commission to ascertain the range of materials available. However I do not foresee any difficulty in accessing the materials at the Commission, and at the NDC - which has straightforward research guidelines. I also have a local contact at PIDE, but it will also be useful to tap into the AIPS institutional affiliation to facilitate my research into its documents.

** Note on citizenship: Pakistani*