

Book Review

The Muslim World: Geography and Development

by Dr. Mushtaqur Rahman; Lanham: University Press of America, 1987, 190 pp.

This book owes its origin to a major international conference held in April by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists at Iowa State University in April 1983. The papers cover "a wide range of topics to match the wide range of crises in which the Muslim world finds itself." It includes forty-six illustrative maps and figures and twenty-six tables, which make the texts more meaningful.

In recent times, the issues of Third World development and technology transfer have stirred much controversy, resulting in a polarization of views. On one hand is the Third/Muslim World view that the so-called transfer of technology, whether from the capitalist or communist countries, is counterproductive and exploitive, generating a client/dependency relationship. On the other hand, the donors feel that their "technological giveaways" promote "interdependence, collective self-reliance, and mutual interest." Between these two extremes lies Muslim resurgence and Islamic revivalism, with Islam as a sociopolitical force providing its own ideological and institutional solutions to the issues of development and technology transfer. The emphasis is on conscientious "value-patterned" socioeconomic development. Iowa State University's 1983 Conference and the present book focus on this motivating

theme. They advocate alternate development strategies which are basically Islamic in spirit, substance, and system.

In section 1 of the book, trends and issues typical of the Muslim world are evaluated, specifically with reference to Pakistan. The first paper is a comparatively short study of colonialism (capitalist and communist) vis-à-vis the Muslim world. The remedial recipe is an Islamic Development Policy/Strategy. The second paper discusses the development dilemma of the Islamic countries, in the light of Islamic values. The third author emphasizes that Islamic development is holistic, aiming at the moral man in a moral society. Taken together, these first three papers form a contextual framework for specific area case studies analyzing the influence of alien aid and alienating development strategies.

Section 2 includes four case studies, one each on Malaysia, Egypt, Kuwait, and Bangladesh. The first paper is about the "Impact of Development on Environment." The second talks of the "Modernization of Al-Sheykh Wali." The third is on the "Geographical Controls of Agricultural Productions" (in Kuwait). The fourth assesses the "Dynamics of Agricultural Land Use Around Dhaka City." Urbanization, modernization and agricultural development are major concerns of the Third World. The Muslim countries are no exception. But what distinguishes them is the ideological inspiration in development ideals.

The third section highlights urban development in regard to Jeddah and "Creating (Other) Arab Islamic Cities Through Application of Modern Building Codes." Settlements in Kohat (Pakistan) and in Shahjahanabad, (New Delhi, India) figure in two other papers portraying palpable perceptions.

The concluding section discusses energy. The energy crisis of the 1970s and the development of OPEC ironically presented the affluent West as the deprived, aggrieved have-not. But this momentarily wronged party has been reactively active ever since, often calling the shots and balancing OPEC, if not cutting it to size. The real fallout of the oil price hike has been on the silently suffering Third World, which is deficient in energy resources and impoverished by back-breaking debt servicing. This section on "Energy Development Issues" is a most welcome addition to the book, but sadly, it contains only two brief studies on the "Energy Resources of Jordan and Modelling Wood Fuel Resource Use in Arab Arid Areas." Still, it is some food for serious thought.

The Muslim World: Geography and Development brings forth a major point that capitalist and communist development strategies should be replaced in the Muslim World by strategies that are "primarily Islamic in nature and values." (p. 179). "The Muslim World is not far from reality to seek salvation in the Islamic Development Strategy, which, from the very beginning, has the proven record of development over growth. Islamic development is necessarily comprehensive, which associates material development with

spiritual and moral values of religion." (p. 180).

"The basic principle is that Allah created the world for man's fulfillment of the Divine trust or "Amanah." . . . Therefore, an Islamic development strategy unavoidably follows a patterned value. It is socially responsible, ecologically adaptable, sustainable, and convivial. An ecologically adaptable development conforms to the prevalent ecosystems, social structures, and cultural habits. Such a strategy "avoids impertinent demands on the biosphere and gives priority to renewable resources." (p. 181).

The message favors the concept of a sustainable society over blindly exponential growth. It also urges a humanely new universal order based on freedom and fraternity, justice, equity, and peace. Peaceful systemic social change may be the answer, rather than traumatic turbulence. All the papers in the book are by experienced subject specialists and prove to be insightful, thought-inducing and a valuable tool in understanding the Muslim World.

Ikram Azam
Pakistan Futuristic Institute
Islamabad, Pakistan

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EDITOR : MUHAMMAD KHALID MASUD

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The Circulation Manager,
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