

Pakistani Civil Aviation and U.S. Aid to Pakistan, 1950 to 1961[†]

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This paper is a preliminary exploration of the nature and extent of U.S. aid for Pakistani civil aviation in the 1950s, and the relationship of this aid to the wider political and economic ties forged between the two countries at that time. It suggests that the United States was central in shaping the development of Pakistani civil aviation in this period, and that U.S. aerial aid was part of the wider capture of Pakistan into the U.S. military-strategic orbit in the fifties. The paper in particular posits a connection between U.S. aid for Pakistani civil aviation and the usefulness of Pakistan as a military ally in the Cold War. The paper suggests that the growth of international civil aviation in Asia was to a certain extent driven by the United States and its geopolitical and commercial concerns.

The years following the Second World War were transformative for national civil aviation networks around the world. Networks suspended during the war were restarted or reconstructed, and new networks and airlines were created or expanded in newly sovereign states. The burgeoning postwar industry literature on civil aviation showed rapidly increasing numbers of aircraft, passengers, passenger-miles, and airlines.¹ This expansion was particularly prominent in Asia. In the decade following the war, large numbers of countries gained their independence, and as they did so looked to stabilize their newly emergent sovereign territories whilst also acquiring markers of status, prestige, and modernity.² A modern and modernized national civil aviation network, and particularly its most prominent public components, national airlines and international airports, fulfilled these roles. This transformation in civil aviation was driven by technological change too. The war had led to the development of new types of aircraft that promised faster, safer, and more comfortable travel. It also drove the expansion of aviation industries in Britain and the United States, which by 1945 were looking for new markets for their commercial transport aircraft.³ These factors pushed the development of civil aviation in Asia, including the replacement of older aircraft with newer ones, and the refurbishment of aerial facilities

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¹ See for example: The Department of State, *International Civil Aviation 1949-1950*, p. 3.

² Davies, *Airlines of Asia since 1920*.

³ See for example: Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet*.

such as runways, air terminals and air control centres, and ground navigation equipment. Asian aerial networks also developed and expanded because of the military and geopolitical concerns of the leading international aerial and imperial powers such as Britain, the United States and the Netherlands. Aerial networks across Asia kept open trade and communication links, as well as their supply lines to their military forces and colonies in Asia.⁴

Pakistan was one of the many sovereign Asian nation-states which looked to build a new national aviation system in the decades following the Second World War. The country emerged in 1947 with few industrial resources and even fewer of the markers of modernity. Its leadership was keen to grow its economy and modernize the country as quickly as possible, and to expand its armed forces in order to stabilize the nation and defend it against its neighbours. Civil aviation quickly emerged as one of several areas that appeared to require growth and investment. The state needed civil aviation for the fundamentals of national governance; to be able to, for example, move its officials from city to city and city to province. Pakistan was split into two wings, East and West Pakistan, with regional rival India in between, and land transport networks were poor within each of the Wings too. Although Pakistan had a pre-existing Indian colonial-era aerial network it could build on (including the subcontinent's largest civilian airport, at Karachi), creating a sustainable network that could satisfactorily bind the nation together appeared to be beyond the national technical and economic capabilities of the Pakistani state and private Pakistani enterprise. Pakistan had from its very beginning been reliant on foreign assistance for its nascent civil aviation infrastructure, but in the 1950s the state turned to the United States for assistance for a far reaching program of aerial network building.

This paper is a preliminary exploration of the nature and extent of U.S. aid for Pakistani civil aviation in the 1950s, and the relationship of this aid to the wider political and economic ties forged between the two countries at that time. It suggests that the United States was central in shaping the development of Pakistani civil aviation in this period, and that U.S. aerial aid was part of the wider capture of Pakistan into the U.S. military-strategic orbit in the fifties. The paper in particular posits a connection between U.S. aid for Pakistani civil aviation and the usefulness of Pakistan as a military ally in the Cold War.

There is a growing literature on twentieth century aviation which is now moving away from earlier heroic narratives, and exploring its political, economic, and cultural aspects in exciting and informative ways, and connecting aviation history to the wider history of the twentieth century.⁵ The development of aviation in Asia remains poorly explored in this regard, however, and the role of transnational currents and connections even less so. R.E.G. Davies' classic work, *Airlines of Asia since 1920*, remains the only major synoptic overview of civil aviation in Asia. Although wide-ranging, the book essentially consists of separate studies of national civil aviation systems, with little connection to international or global wider social, political, and cultural currents.⁶ A steadily growing number of national case studies are connecting to wider national socio-political currents, though to transnational connections are still scarce. Military connections and considerations moreover remain largely absent or only obliquely alluded to this literature.⁷

⁴ See for example: Hingham, *Speedbird*, pp. 97-100, 111-116, 118-119, 130.

⁵ Some recent examples are: Hiatt, *The Rarified Air of the Modern*; Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air*; Piglia, "Carry our colours and defend our interests under the skies of other Continents"; Taylor, 'From Turbulent Skies to Calmer Air Currents'.

⁶ Davies, *Airlines of Asia since 1920*. A more succinct and temporally limited overview is: Baumler, 'Aviation and Asian Modernity 1900-1950'.

⁷ On Asia see for example: Raguraman, 'Airlines as Instruments for Nation Building and National Identity'; Young, *Aerial Nationalism*.

There is nevertheless a small literature on the politics of U.S. involvement in Asian aviation which provides an important backdrop for this paper. This literature shows that the United States had a deep interest in aerial development in Asia for commercial and geopolitical reasons. Jennifer Van Vleck has argued that U.S. aerial expansion in Asia (and elsewhere) was an 'empire of the air' which sustained U.S. influence or dominance, military, cultural, and economic, around the world.⁸ Her study of U.S. funding for Afghan civil aviation in the 1950s and 1960s points to the wider modernization and Cold War impulses driving U.S. aid at that time.⁹ Jeffrey Engel has meanwhile explored Anglo-American rivalry in commercial aviation in the decades following the Second World War, noting in particular the extension of this rivalry to the Soviet Union and China.¹⁰ On the other hand there are some significant case-studies of U.S. funding of aerial development in the near east. James Gormly's study of the U.S. construction of the Dhahran air base in Saudi Arabia in late 1945 also emphasizes Anglo-American rivalry (this time in the Middle East), and is noteworthy because of the connections it makes between military and civilian aviation.¹¹

I The Birth of Pakistani Aviation

Aviation in the Indian subcontinent has a rich history stretching back to early 1911, though it was in the 1920s and 1930s when the British state developed an air route from Britain to India, and eventually beyond to South East Asia. As well the British airline Imperial Airways, local Indian airlines were also setup in the thirties and during the Second World War, the most famous perhaps Tata Air Services (later Tata Air Lines) launched in 1932. One such airline, Orient Airways, launched by prominent Muslim businessmen in May 1947, shifted from its base in Calcutta to Karachi following Partition, and became Pakistan's premiere civil airline. The airline was small. It operated mostly ex-U.S. military Douglas 'Dakota' DC-3s left over from the war, and was soon joined by an even smaller operation, Pak Air Limited.¹²

By 1950 however the Pakistani state had decided that Pakistan's private airline industry needed to be nationalized. Although the reasoning behind nationalization is yet to be explored by historians, it is clear that, at the very least, a number of crashes and accidents raised safety concerns, and ongoing tensions with India continued to cause anxiety over the security of the existing air route between East and West Pakistan. Orient Airways Dakotas flying from Karachi to Dhaka needed to stop en route in India for refuelling, which meant that India could cut off the route at any time. Given ongoing tensions between the two countries this was a real concern. In 1951 a new technical solution presented itself: the launch of the long distance L-1049 Super Constellation airliner by the U.S. aerospace company Lockheed. The airliner, though expensive, promised new levels of speed, comfort, capacity, and operational range. Within three years it was in operation in the United States with Eastern Airlines and Trans World Airlines, and internationally with Air France, KLM, and Trans-Canada Airlines. Qantas and Air India acquired it too.¹³ Crucially for Pakistani policymakers the aircraft could fly nonstop between Karachi in West Pakistan to Dhaka in

⁸ Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air*, pp. 1-17.

⁹ Van Vleck, 'An Airline at the Crossroads of the World'.

¹⁰ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet*, pp. 104-117, 187-215, 221-251, 277-289.

¹¹ Gormly, 'Keeping the Door Open in Saudi Arabia'.

¹² Davies, *Airlines of Asia since 1920*, pp. 1-25, 63-66.

¹³ Francillon, *Lockheed Aircraft Since 1913*, pp. 309 – 314; Breffort, *Lockheed Constellation*, pp. 82-89.

the east. The plane was however too expensive for Orient to lease, purchase, or maintain. The State, it appeared, needed to step in and purchase the aircraft. This was duly done in 1954. The new non-stop L-1049C Super Constellation service connecting East and West Pakistan was inaugurated in June of that year, and the concurrent nationalization of Orient Airways was completed with the formation of the Pakistan International Airline Corporation in 1955, into which Orient was incorporated. In February 1955 Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) launched its first trans-continental air service, between Karachi and London via Cairo and Rome, using the new long-distance aircraft.¹⁴ The acquisition of the L-1049C Super Constellation, and the subsequent nationalization of the Pakistani civil aviation industry and the creation of PIA was made possible, as the rest of this paper shows, through loans, grants, and technical assistance from the United States.

II U.S. Aims for Military Aviation in West Asia

U.S. interest in the area subsequently known as West Pakistan, from an aerial point of view, had in fact emerged as part of a wider interest in military aerial routes across Asia during the Second World War. As early as 1942 the U.S. set about developing air routes across the Middle East and India to supply Allied forces in the Far East. The establishment of the U.S. Tenth Army Air Force in India by March 1942, and the closure of the lower portion of the Burma Road for supplies into Burma and China, led to the development of a U.S. air route connecting the Middle East to India and then onwards to China. Pan American, which was already supplying aircraft to the U.S. military for transport, transferred ten DC-3s from its trans-Africa route to inaugurate the India-Burma-China route. The development of the route involved investment in ground aerial facilities, road links, ports and other infrastructure, particularly at the six Indian airbases and airports which hosted large numbers of U.S. army air forces. Karachi airport, then the largest commercial airport in colonial India, was one of the most important of these six. This airport was requisitioned by the Indian government for military use, and was extended and refurbished at significant cost in order to carry and service the increasingly heavier troops, equipment, and supplies heading east.¹⁵ The U.S. Tenth and Fourteenth Army Air Forces, as well as Air Transport Command, used the airport extensively. Air Technical Service Command established extensive maintenance and depot facilities at Karachi, and its air strips were hardened and lengthened to accommodate heavy military transports and bombers.¹⁶

This interest extended readily from the exigencies of the Second World War to Cold War concerns into the postwar period. On the one hand this extension was driven by the logic of U.S. airbase construction and planning on the ground. The United States acquired and invested in a number of foreign airbases, airstrips, and airports for military use during the war. But in some cases airfields were not fully ready in time. This was the case for the Dhahran airfield in Saudi Arabia. U.S. wartime interest in the construction of a large air base in the Middle East to handle the increasing air traffic towards India (and onwards to China and the Far East) led to negotiations with Saudi Arabia for the development of a small pre-existing airstrip at Dhahran. Opposition from Britain, amongst other factors, led

¹⁴ Andrus and Mohammed, *The Economy of Pakistan*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁵ Craven and Cate (eds.), *The Army Air Forces in World War II* volume 2, pp. 7-8; 'Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee'. The six major stations were: Karachi Airport, Agra Airport, Kharagpur-Dudkhundi Air Base, Calcutta Air Base, Dum Dum Airport, and Barrackpore Airport; see: 'Memorandum by the Acting State Member, State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (Hickerson)'.

¹⁶ Plating, *The Hump*, chapter 3; Daugherty III, *The Allied Resupply Effort*, pp. 63-65.

to delays, and the war was already over by the time an agreement was reached with the Saudis. The United States nevertheless continued with the construction of the Dhahran Air base as part of its wider global aerial military infrastructure. The wartime rationale, that the base was required to wage the war in the Pacific, was replaced by a postwar concern with securing supply lines to U.S. forces occupying Asia, and keeping Soviet power in check. Construction was begun in late 1945 and completed in 1946. The base was run by the U.S. military until 1962 when control was handed over to Saudi Arabia, though the base continued to be used by the U.S. military for many years afterwards.¹⁷

On the other hand, the United States military highlighted Asian air bases as a crucial component of its strategic planning, during the war, for the postwar period. The usefulness of foreign air bases had become apparent during the war, and the U.S. military began planning for the postwar period in 1943. The first detailed proposal (which included deployed strength numbers) was produced in the American Air Force's June 1944 *Initial Post-War Air Force Plan*. The plan highlighted the need for a string of overseas air bases to contain potential postwar threats to the United States, and to strike out at adversaries. Planning continued into 1945, and soon involved the navy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well. By July 1945 American Air Force planners were hoping to acquire (at the very least) military air transit and landing rights for more than 125 sites excluding those in U.S. overseas territories, or more than 150 including U.S. overseas possessions. This planning included the requirement for rights for a string of Asian airports and bases in order to maintain aerial connections from Europe eastwards into Asia. One Joint Chiefs of Staff report prepared in January 1946 suggested a major east-west aerial artery from Casablanca to Algiers, Tripoli, Cairo, Dhahran, Karachi, Agra, Kharagpur, Rangoon, Bangkok, Saigon, and Manila.¹⁸ In one November 1946 memorandum to the British Embassy the State Department pointed out that the United States had contributed over USD 12 million for the 'enlargement of existing commercial air fields' in Egypt, India, and Burma, and requested that the United States receive similar military usage right as the British government to key Indian airports and airbases: the Dudhkundi and Barrackpore airbases (now in the Indian state of West Bengal), and Karachi Airport. The memo suggested that these rights include 'Rights for landing, fueling, repair and if desired, the continuing right to retain, or later station, up to 100 air force personnel' for Britain and the United States. This military use was to extend to frontline offensive or defensive action: the bases, the State Department suggested, could be used by Britain and the U.S. to carry out 'such enforcement measures as may be directed by the Security Council'.¹⁹

This planning extended to the use of atomic weapons. Early postwar war plans envisaged bombing raids into the Soviet Union from a string of airbases close to the country's borders. Asian bases were especially important as they allowed U.S. bombers to hit targets deep within the Soviet Union which otherwise would not have been accessible. Air bases in Egypt and north/north-west India were valued because of their generally excellent weather conditions, and their ability to strike significant targets in the Soviet Union. War plans highlighted Karachi as one such staging point for these strikes. U.S. bombers setting out from Karachi airfields would have carried not only conventional explosives (and possibly chemical weapons), but atomic bombs too – one March 1948 war plan emphasized Karachi, alongside bases in the UK and Okinawa, as a crucial launching site for bombers laden with

¹⁷ Gormly, 'Keeping the Door Open in Saudi Arabia'.

¹⁸ Converse III, *Circling the Earth*, pp. 51-55, 107-108, 135, 138; Leffler, 'The American Conception of National Security'; 'Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee'.

¹⁹ 'The Department of State to the British Embassy: Aide-Memoire'.

atomic bombs.²⁰ Karachi's importance was boosted by the realization that bases in Turkey and Egypt would be increasingly vulnerable to aerial attack as the Soviet Union developed a new generation of longer range bombers in the late forties. The 1948 *Frolic* war plan, for example, omitted Turkey and Egypt as launching sites for aerial strikes for this reason.²¹ There was also significant debate over whether or not a U.S. air base in Karachi could be defended against Soviet attack. One criticism was that the defence of Karachi required the maintenance of supply lines across the Middle East, and so if the Middle East needed to be defended anyway, it might be more efficient to concentrate U.S. defences there, along with the country's near east bomber fleet.²²

Notwithstanding these concerns, Karachi's port and proximity to the Middle East added to its attraction as a base of military operations. One 1949 Joint Chiefs of Staff study noted that 'the Karachi-Lahore area in Pakistan may, under certain conditions, become of strategic importance. In spite of tremendous logistic difficulties, this area might be required as a base for air operations against central USSR and as a staging area for forces engaged in the defense or recapture of Middle East oil areas.' The study suggested that the U.S. 'endeavor to make commercial arrangements which would, in emergency, facilitate development for operational use of base facilities in the Karachi-Lahore area.'²³ More detailed military plans envisaged that in the event of Soviet hostilities in the Middle East, carrier air and land-based air assaults would support amphibious assaults from Karachi onto Bandar Abbas, Qatif, and Bahrain, and then onto Kuwait, Basra.²⁴ The military recognized that Karachi air base would however need to undergo another series of (expensive) refurbishments to allow it to function as a base for atomic operations, and even though later war plans moved Karachi down the priority list of atomic air bases, the military nevertheless suggested that planning for this refurbishment should be undertaken.²⁵

III U.S. Aid and Pakistani Aviation

The Pakistani state had been keen to align itself with the United States in return for military and economic aid since Partition. As early as May 1947, even before the creation of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah met with U.S. diplomats in India and requested U.S. aid, arguing that Pakistan would promote U.S. interests by standing against the Soviet Union and Indian expansionism.²⁶ In October 1947, shortly after independence, the Pakistani government issued a formal request to the U.S. State Department for military and economic assistance. The amount requested was enormous, USD 2 billion over a five year period, consisting of USD 700 million for industrial development, USD 700 million for agricultural development, and USD 510 million for defence. The defence amounts included USD 170 million for the army, USD 75 million for the air force, and USD 60 million for the navy. 'This would involve virtual U.S. military responsibility for the new dominion' was one

²⁰ Converse III, *Circling the Earth*, p. 113, 172. Ross, *American War Plans*, p.71.

²¹ Ross, *American War Plans*, p. 71. On the politics of the Abu Sueir airbase in Egypt see: Colman, 'The 1950 "Ambassador's Agreement" on USAF Bases in the UK'.

²² Ross, *American War Plans*, pp. 72-74, 87. See also: Cohen, *Fighting World War Three From the Middle East*, p. 21, 22, 44.

²³ 'Report by the SANACC Subcommittee for the Near and Middle East'; McMahon, 'United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia'.

²⁴ Ross, *American War Plans*, p. 88.

²⁵ Ross, *American War Plans*, p. 74; Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, p. 22. Karachi may have been moved down the priority list because of British intervention, who pointed out adverse Indian reaction and probable Pakistani demands for greater aid and diplomatic support. Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, p. 22.

²⁶ Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan*, p. 1; Larson, 'United States-Pakistan Relations', p.15.

astonished response from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.²⁷

U.S. policymakers believed that Pakistan could be of immense geopolitical value to the United States, but were not willing to upset India by acquiescing to Pakistan's requests for large amounts of aid. A 1949 report by a White House staff assistant captured the wider sense of Pakistan's strategic significance for the United States. He emphasized its proximity to both the Soviet Union and the Middle East oil fields; its potential to defend both the Indian Ocean and the Indian subcontinent; the fact that it was the most populous Muslim nation in the world; and finally its army, which was substantially better than any in the Middle East.²⁸ Nevertheless, India's size and prominence could not be ignored in any consideration of its reaction to support for Pakistan, and so U.S. assistance was largely of a token sort in the late forties. In response to the 1947 request the U.S. only provided USD 10 million of emergency aid for refugees. This was followed in May 1948 by the provision of 30 AT-6 military training aircraft and spare parts for the Pakistan army's Stuart and Sherman tanks and various tracked carriers.²⁹

There was however more willingness to provide assistance to build up civil aviation in Pakistan due to Karachi's strategic position along the major Middle East to Asia aerial route, and its location in relation to the Soviet Union. Support for Pakistani civil aviation was part of a wider U.S. strategy to build up civilian aerial infrastructure in key allied states in west Asia. An April 1950 (that is pre-Korean War) Department of State Policy Statement on Pakistan emphasized the need to 'assist Pakistan to maintain adequate air, navigation and communications facilities, together with a sound domestic air transport system' in order to allow for maximum commercial aerial transit through the country, and even the picking up of passengers in Pakistan for further travel east or west (the so-called 'fifth freedom traffic'). U.S. airlines, in addition, needed to maintain air services to the country.³⁰ Through the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act (which provisioned for U.S. information and cultural exchanges abroad) and the International Aviation Facilities Act Congress authorized the Civil Aeronautics Administration to send teams of advisors to foreign countries to assess civil aviation needs. The first teams were sent to Turkey and Pakistan.³¹ One outcome of this visit was that Karachi airport received a state of the art USD 180,000 General Electric 'High Intensity Runway and Approach Lighting System' in 1949, giving the airport one of the most advanced lighting systems in Asia.³²

As concern over the spread of Communism in Asia grew from 1950 onwards, especially following the onset of the Korean War, U.S. policymakers became more responsive to continuing Pakistani requests for economic and military assistance.³³ More fearful of Communist aggression, and concerned with protecting Middle Eastern oil supply if a global war broke out with the Soviet Union, policymakers once again focused on the possibility of Pakistani military support in the Middle East. State Department representatives meeting in Colombo in February 1951 concluded that 'the most effective military defense of this area would be provided by strong flanks which on the west must include Pakistan...Pakistan

²⁷ Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan*, pp. 16-26; 'Report by the SANACC Subcommittee for the Near and Middle East'.

²⁸ 'Notes on Pakistan' in Stephen J. Spingarn Papers (26 October 1949), cited in McMahon, 'United States Cold War Strategy'.

²⁹ Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan*, pp. 16-26, 48-50; Larson, 'United States-Pakistan Relations', p.19; 'Report by the SANACC Subcommittee for the Near and Middle East'.

³⁰ 'Department of State Policy Statement'.

³¹ Van Vleck, 'An Airline at the Crossroads of the World'; Franck, 'The Interchange of Government Experts'.

³² 'News Digest'.

³³ Larson, 'United States-Pakistan Relations', p. 44.

can provide important ground forces now, either directly in [Southern Asia] or to the Middle Eastern flank.' At a meeting at the Pentagon in May of that year the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African affairs flatly stated that 'With Pakistan, the Middle East could be defended, without Pakistan, I don't see any way to defend the Middle East.'³⁴

U.S. military and economic support, however, was effectively blocked by British concerns over the impact on relations with India and by a wider lethargy within the Truman administration. Requests for military aid, such as that by a high-level Pakistani delegation in July 1952, went unfulfilled. It was only when Eisenhower won office that the U.S. moved to cement an alliance with Pakistan. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Mutual Security Administrator Harold E. Stassen visited Pakistan in May 1953 as part of a three-week tour of the Middle East and South Asia. They returned with the suggestion that the U.S. abandon hopes for defending the Middle East through Egypt, as the British had been suggesting, and instead invest in the 'northern tier' countries as the key to the defense of the region: Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. By the time Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistani army General Ayub Khan visited the U.S. later that year to (once again) request military aid, U.S. policymakers were already moving towards the conclusion that they needed to supply Pakistan militarily. Ayub was assured that aid would soon be forthcoming. In January 1954 Eisenhower approved military assistance for Pakistan, and in February Washington publicly announced this commitment. In May Pakistan and the United States signed the Mutual Defense Assistance (MDA) Agreement, which formally committed the U.S. to military and economic support for Pakistan. Pakistan also built closer ties with U.S. allies and joined alliances sponsored by the United States. Most prominently in September 1954 Pakistan joined the South East Asian Treaty Organization, and in 1955 the Baghdad Pact (later known as the Central Treaty Organization).³⁵

Initially, in late 1954, the United States put together an official MDA aid package worth USD 105.9 million, composed of USD 75.6 million in commodity assistance, USD 5.3 million in technical assistance, and USD 25 million for defense support. In addition a second agreement committed the U.S. to equip four Pakistani army infantry and 1.5 armored divisions, to provide aircraft for six air force squadrons, and supply twelve naval ships. This military aid was at that time costed at USD 171 million spread over several years, of which USD 50 million was expected to be spent in the coming fiscal year.³⁶ Over the years the cost of fulfilling this commitment ballooned. U.S. reports in 1956 estimated that the October 1954 commitments would cost USD 505 million, with an additional U.S. military aid commitment of USD 100 million per year.³⁷ The financial appendix to NSC 5701 estimated a total Military Assistance cost of USD 410 million over the four years 1957 to 1960, and a Defense Support cost of USD 374.7 million over the same period.³⁸

Although there were significant concerns over the swelling costs of the military commitment to Pakistan, as well as doubts about the country's political and economic stability (and even its ability to effectively deploy forces in the Middle East), the United States remained committed to its military promises. This was due not only to a sense that the administration would lose face by backing out, but also because of increasing tensions

³⁴ McMahon, 'United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia'.

³⁵ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, pp. 153-173; 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council'; Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan*, pp. 301-303.

³⁶ Kux, *The United States and Pakistan*, pp. 68-69; Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan*, pp. 318, 333.

³⁷ Kux, *The United States and Pakistan*, pp. 83-84.

³⁸ Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan*, pp. 335.

with Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt (which would lead to a full blown crisis in July 1956 following Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal). There were concerns also that leading pro-Western Pakistani politicians would lose domestic support if the U.S. watered down its commitments.³⁹

New technologies also made Pakistan more useful for surveillance of the Soviet Union. In the mid-fifties Pakistan gave permission for the U.S. to set up a communications intercept center at Badaber, ten miles from Peshawar. The facility, run by the U.S. National Security Agency, carried out electronic monitoring of Soviet communications in the late 50s and 60s. More importantly, by 1956, the United States was ready to launch a new spy plane, the Lockheed U-2, which could take high quality surveillance photographs whilst flying at high altitude over the Soviet Union. Pakistan's proximity to the Soviet Union made it an ideal launching site, and U.S. interest in Pakistani military infrastructure, and air facilities in particular, increased even further. By 1957 the Central Intelligence Agency was regularly launching flights from a military airbase near Peshawar to overfly the Soviet Union and China. It was also flying the U-2 along Soviet border areas (and occasionally into Soviet airspace), and used airfields in Lahore (Pakistan), Adana (Turkey), and Meshad and Zahedan (Iran) for this purpose, alongside Peshawar. The U-2 spy plane shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960, which led to the capture of the U.S. pilot Gary Powers and subsequent crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations, had taken off from Peshawar.⁴⁰

As the idea of military support for Pakistan became increasingly acceptable to U.S. policymakers in late 1953, interest in Pakistan's aerial facilities also increased. An April 1954 RAND report, *Selection and Use of Strategic Bases* included Pakistan in its list of possible locations for air bases for U.S. strategic (that is, nuclear weapons) use over the coming six years.⁴¹ There was also concern with the growing reach of Soviet bombers: one strategic report highlighted Karachi airport and Pakistani military airfields as now being under Soviet threat.⁴² There were press reports of U.S. interest in Pakistani air bases. Military analyst Hanson Baldwin speculated in the *New York Times* in late 1953 that Pakistan was to receive military aid because of its strategically located air bases which would 'make more vulnerable to attack Soviet positions in Southwestern Asia.' China and the Soviet Union formally objected to a military aid-for-air-bases deal, and there were public demonstrations against this supposed deal in India.⁴³

There was no aid-for-air-base deal. Nevertheless the 1954 Mutual Aid package did include a small but not inconsequential amount for the improvement of military air fields: one Senate report noted that USD 1 million was earmarked for the 'improvement and expansion' of Pakistani aviation facilities for 1955.⁴⁴ This and subsequent amounts would not only be of use to the Pakistani military but to the United States as well. This use could potentially extend much beyond the U-2, and along the lines envisaged in earlier U.S. planning. One July 1959 interagency study highlighting Pakistan's military value to the United States noted that Pakistani airfields and other military installations 'constructed with U.S. assistance and to U.S. specifications' were of 'potential value to U.S. strategic air

³⁹ Kux, *The United States and Pakistan*, pp. 83-85, 91-92; McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, p. 208.

⁴⁰ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, p. 267; Polmar, *Spyplane*, pp. 108-110, 154. On Badaber see also: 'Airgram A-550 from the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State, October 6, 1969'.

⁴¹ Wohlstetter et al., *Selection and Use of Strategic Air Bases*, p. 40.

⁴² 'U.S. Studies Middle East Airlines'.

⁴³ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, p. 173-75.

⁴⁴ *Mutual Security Appropriations for 1956*, p. 669. Military aid for Pakistani air force facilities and infrastructure would increase over the next few years; key project work included the development of airfields at Karachi, Sargodha, and Peshawar: Grathwol and Moorhus, *Bricks, Sand, and Marble*, pp. 96-104.

operations in the event of hostilities'.⁴⁵

By 1954 there was interest too in helping Pakistan develop its civilian aerial infrastructure. By that time the U.S.'s development of national civil aviation networks and facilities in the near east had already shifted much beyond Saudi Arabia. TWA was managing Ethiopian Airlines as well as Saudi Arabian Airlines, Pan American was assisting Middle East Airlines, and California-based Trans-Ocean Air Lines was involved with the management of Iranian Airways and Air Jordan. There was however some dissatisfaction with the lack of a co-ordinated U.S. policy for civil aviation in the region: later that year the Civil Air Attaché for the Middle East would claim that 'a regional rather than country-by-country program seems essential' to overcome the structural economic and regulatory problems that bogged civil aviation development in the region.⁴⁶ In mid-1954 the Foreign Operations Administration commissioned civil aviation industry experts to prepare a more systematic approach to U.S. aid in the region (including in particular Pakistan). 'Our purpose is to build up these local carriers', noted the lead consultant in an interview with *Aviation Week* magazine, 'for it has been realized that in order to contain communism we must also build up the standard of living of the people.' The consultants mostly had experience working for U.S. airlines abroad, and were to apply their experience to the near east. The lead consultant was a retired rear admiral and former President and general manager at United's Mexican subsidiary. He was assisted by a former vice president of American airlines in Mexico, an economist also formerly employed by United's Mexican subsidiary, and a fourth consultant who had been a pilot for Overseas National Airways during the Korean airlift, as well as for China Airways and Pan American. The lead consultant noted that one successful model of assistance that the consultants would look to apply to the near east would be TWA's management of Ethiopian Airlines.⁴⁷

Aid for Pakistan's civil aviation infrastructure was now possible because military assistance had opened the doors for a vastly expanded program of non-military aid. Non-military aid had already begun on a small scale in 1951 as part of Truman's new 'Point Four' assistance program. Named after point four of his 1949 inaugural address, the program was authorized by the 1950 Act for International Development, and sought to provide technical aid and investment for economic uplift and prosperity. A somewhat enlarged program was initiated in 1952 as part of the Mutual Security Program under the authority of the Mutual Security Act of 1951. This aid was expanded greatly once Pakistan became eligible for military assistance in 1954. In addition to military aid Pakistan was now eligible for additional 'substantial defense support designed to maintain economic stability and strengthen defense capabilities'. Moreover, as a later report by the Comptroller General noted, Pakistan's status as a military ally now changed the tenor of the non-military aid program. After 1954 the 'nature and direction of United States aid were increasingly determined by military and foreign policy objectives. Since fiscal year 1955, the program has been designed primarily to sustain and expand the country's economy as a means of maintaining political stability and strengthening military defenses in the area, thereby contributing to the security of the United States and its allies.'⁴⁸ In June 1954

⁴⁵ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, p. 267.

⁴⁶ 'Memorandum by the Civil Air Attaché for the Middle East (Thayer) to the Officer in Charge of Lebanon-Syria Affairs (Allen)'. Also: Williams, 'Commercial Aviation in Arab States'; Geiger, *TWA's Services to Ethiopia*; Oqubay and Tesfachew, 'The Journey of Ethiopian Airlines'.

⁴⁷ 'U.S. Studies Middle East Airlines'.

⁴⁸ Macekura, 'The Point Four Program and U.S. International Development Policy'; Shenin, *The United States and the Third World*; Afroz, 'American Economic Aid to Pakistan, 1947-1960'; Comptroller General of the United States, *Examination of Economic and Technical Assistance Program for Pakistan*, pp. 2-3, 17, 18.

Stassen met the Pakistan Foreign Minister Zafrulla Khan and the Pakistani ambassador in Washington and informed them that the U.S. was 'prepared to extend technical assistance to Pakistan on civil aviation, for development not only of technicians but of Pakistani civil air management as well.' He emphasized that this aid was to help the country develop civil aviation both within each wing and, to the delight of the Ambassador, between them too.⁴⁹

Pakistan received sizeable amounts of aid through the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) of the Department of State (and its predecessor, the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA)) in the fifties and into the sixties. Between 1952 and 1958 the ICA and the FOA obligated funds of USD 406.9 million of aid to Pakistan. This included USD 148.76 million for development projects, the rest being for commodity imports, famine and flood relief, and a small amount for the administration of these funds.⁵⁰ The development aid was allocated to around a hundred projects in agriculture, industry, and transportation, and made the United States the single largest donor to Pakistan in the fifties. Aviation received the highest proportion of the USD 24.24 million allocated to transport projects in the period 1952 to 1958: USD 3.99 million for 'improvement and expansion of aviation ground facilities', USD 3.07 million for the 'development of civil air transportation', and USD 0.262 million for 'aircraft overhaul and maintenance'.⁵¹

This aerial aid continued into the early 1960s, and was part of a broadened program of aerial aid to strategically located Cold War allies. Over 40 countries received such aid between 1956 and 1961, but only 12 countries accounted for 85% of this aid, with the four largest recipients being Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Chile, and Pakistan.⁵² The Pakistani portion of the aid between 1956 and 1961 totalled USD 27.663 million in the form of U.S. Dollar loans and grants, and a USD 2.96 million loan in Pakistani Rupees. Pakistan received 9.6% of the total U.S. Dollar aerial aid allocated over this period by the United States. It was this aid which helped PIA to build up its maintenance and technical capabilities, update its airports, and, ultimately to become the first Asian airline to fly a commercial jet aeroplane. This amount was split as follows: USD 3.654 million was provided as a contract to Pan American for 'training of PIA in jet operations and maintenance and for purchase of jet aircraft', with an agreement between PIA and Pan American being signed in May 1955. A further USD 4.709 million was administered by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration to 'provide aeronautical ground aids and air traffic control services, including training and system planning.' This included the installation of and training for VOR short-range radio navigation systems at two airports, including Karachi. The Development Loan Fund handed out USD 3.915 million in U.S. Dollar denominated loans and USD 2.96 million Pakistani Rupee loans for the 'modernization of Karachi International Airport to accommodate jet traffic' (USD 4.8 million of which was for the refurbishment and extension of Karachi's airstrip and tarmac to accommodate jet aircraft). Lastly the Import-Export Bank provided USD 15.385 million in loans for the purchase of Lockheed Super-Constellation and Boeing jet airliners. The only countries to receive more funds were Brazil (USD 51.5 million, of which over USD 49.9 million were loans for the purchase of 19 aircraft from Lockheed, Douglas, Convair, and Boeing), Afghanistan (a total of over USD 45.4 million, of which over USD 40 million was to Pan American for the management and development of Ariana

⁴⁹ 'Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge, Economic Affairs, Office of South Asian Affairs (Fluker)'.

⁵⁰ Comptroller General of the United States, *Examination of Economic and Technical Assistance Program for Pakistan*, p. 18, 73.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 77. On total aid to Pakistan see: Brecher and Abbas, *Foreign Aid and Industrial Development in Pakistan*, pp. 24-26.

⁵² Heymann, Jr., *Civil Aviation and U.S. Foreign Aid*, p. 9

Afghan Airlines, construction of Kandahar airport, and other improvements to the country's air network), and Ethiopia (a total of over USD 34.7 million, of which USD 23.35 million was earmarked for the construction and improvement of 4 major and 22 minor airports and facilities and jet spare parts, and USD 10 million for the purchase of two Boeing jet airliners).⁵³

The actual work on the ground, it has to be said, often fell far behind that envisaged by the aid schedules. A 1959 report on obligated versus spent aid found that between 1952 and 1958 only 45% of the obligated aid for the improvement and expansion of aviation ground facilities was spent, 94% of aid for aircraft overhaul and maintenance was spent, and only 64% of other aid earmarked for the development of civil aviation was spent. This failure to spend the allocated funds was part of wider issues with the aid program to Pakistan, and was due, the report concluded, to technical and administrative limits to aid absorption, and the aid effort being dispersed over too wide a range of projects.⁵⁴

IV Conclusion

This paper has been a preliminary examination of U.S. funding for Pakistani civil aviation in the late forties and 1950s. It has suggested that civil aviation in Pakistan was supported and funded by the United States not only for commercial purposes, but also because Pakistani aerial facilities could be, it was thought, of use in a war with the Soviet Union. West Pakistan's location at the edge of the Middle East and just south of the Soviet border made it a promising launching pad for aerial operations, including nuclear weapons, both northwards and westwards. Karachi's location facing the Indian Ocean, meanwhile, kept it safe from Soviet naval attack. Although U.S. policymakers were aware of the limitations of using Pakistan in this way, this paper has suggested that they were nevertheless willing to spend funds building up aerial networks for their key Asian allies, including Pakistan, in the early 50s. The desirability of Pakistani air bases was boosted by the Korean War and the rise of radical Arab nationalism in the Middle East. On the other hand, British and U.S. concerns over upsetting Indian sentiments limited U.S. aid to Pakistan. The aid provided was likely crucial for the creation of Pakistan International Airways. This paper has suggested that without this aid, and the military and geopolitical sentiments that lay behind it, it is unlikely that the Pakistani state would have been able to purchase and maintain the Lockheed Super Constellation which formed the long-distance foundation of the national airline from 1955 onwards.

More broadly, this paper has suggested that the growth of international civil aviation in Asia was at least partially driven by the United States and its geopolitical and commercial concerns. The need to win and keep allies in Asia led the U.S. to meet Asian states' demands for aid for their civilian aviation networks. But these networks may also have been of use to the U.S. itself. Well-equipped airports could be used by U.S. airlines and even the U.S. military for logistical and offensive purposes. The deepening Cold War and flashpoints such as the Korean War and the Suez Crisis played an important role in driving

⁵³ Heymann, Jr., *Civil Aviation and U.S. Foreign Aid*, p. 6-8. *Hearings Before the Subcommittee for Review of the Mutual Security Programs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*, p. 236; *The Sixteenth Semiannual Report on the Operation of the Mutual Security Program*, p.46.

⁵⁴ Comptroller General of the United States, *Examination of Economic and Technical Assistance Program for Pakistan*, pp. 1, 77. In hearings before Congress in 1958, the Civil Aeronautics Administration officer who was former head of the U.S. Civil Aviation Assistance Technical Group for Pakistan explained the issues faced by the Group is getting its project off the ground: *Hearings Before the Subcommittee for Review of the Mutual Security Programs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*, pp. 233-248.

U.S. aid to its allies, and so, this paper has suggested, could also have played an important role in building national (and international) civil aviation networks.

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