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United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia: Making a Military Commitment to Pakistan, 1947–1954

Robert J. McMahon

On February 25, 1954, the United States announced its intention to embark on a major program of military aid to Pakistan. On May 2 the two nations formally signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement. Later that year, Pakistan joined the United States alliance system as a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO); the next year, it became an original member of the American-sponsored Baghdad Pact. In a remarkably short time, Pakistan had thus become, as one of its leaders so aptly phrased it, "America's most allied ally in Asia."¹

Pakistan's alignment with the West can best be understood as part of an evolving global strategy devised by the United States for containment of the Soviet Union. Convinced that unchecked Soviet expansion would pose an unprecedented threat to American interests and world order, the administration of Harry S. Truman had by the late 1940s broken fundamentally with past policies and assumed vastly increased responsibility for the maintenance of international stability. Initial efforts to implement the so-called containment doctrine focused on Western Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. By 1949, with the formation of an Atlantic military alliance and the massive infusion of American capital into Europe under the Marshall Plan, administration analysts believed that effective deterrents to Soviet aggression in those areas were being established. United States policy makers were convinced that their firm response to the Korean War of June 1950 demonstrated the nation's determination to meet all Communist threats to East Asia as well. Another critical region, the Middle East, proved more problematic. By 1951 American policy makers viewed the oil-rich Middle East as strategically and economically indispensable to

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¹ Mohammed Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A Political Biography* (New York, 1967), 130.

the West and yet highly vulnerable to Soviet military power. Defense of the area against potential Soviet aggression consequently ranked as an essential goal of American diplomacy. Yet the region's daunting problems—endemic political and economic instability, the bitter Arab-Israeli dispute, tensions among the Arabs, and lingering resentment over Western colonialism—just heightened its vulnerability.

A growing number of top American planners came to believe that the participation of Pakistani troops in an area defense plan could help resolve the West's strategic dilemma in the Middle East. Acting on that assumption, early in 1954 the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower agreed to provide Pakistan with military assistance in return for Pakistan's promise to partake in a regional defense pact that was to be centered on the northern tier states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan.²

While historians of American foreign relations have generally overlooked Pakistan's importance to the overall defense strategy of the United States, scholars of South Asian affairs have closely explored the alliance between Washington and Karachi. Their efforts have focused especially on the regional consequences of Pakistan's alignment with the United States. Echoing a charge leveled at the time by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India, many have criticized the United States for bringing the Cold War to South Asia. Not only did American military assistance deeply alienate India and Afghanistan and foster their ties with the Soviet Union, those scholars insist, but it fatally undermined prospects for regional stability.³ That indictment appears essentially sound.

A focus on the consequences of the American military commitment to Pakistan has deflected attention from the causes and origins of that policy. A close investigation of this subject can serve as an instructive case study in the globalization and militarization of American diplomacy during the early postwar era. Historians have long recognized the expanding geographical boundaries of the Cold War and the consequent burgeoning of American security commitments throughout the world

² On the evolution of United States strategic interests in the postwar Middle East, see Aaron David Miller, *Search for Security: Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy, 1939-1949* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton, 1980); Gail E. Meyer, *Egypt and the United States: The Formative Years* (Rutherford, 1980); Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago, 1985); David S. Painter, *Oil and the American Century: The Political Economy of U.S. Foreign Oil Policy, 1941-1954* (Baltimore, 1986); William Stivers, *America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-53* (London, 1986); and Peter L. Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Attempt to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," *Diplomatic History*, 11 (Winter 1987), 23-40. A superb study of British policy is W. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (New York, 1984).

³ Selig S. Harrison, "Case History of a Mistake," *New Republic*, Aug. 10, 1959, pp. 10-17; William J. Barnds, *India, Pakistan, and the Great Powers* (New York, 1972); Baldev Raj Nayar, *American Geopolitics and India* (Columbia, Mo., 1976); Tripta Desai, *Indo-American Relations between 1940-1974* (Washington, 1977); S. C. Tewari, *Indo-U.S. Relations, 1947-1976* (New Delhi, 1977); Selig S. Harrison, *The Widening Gulf: Asian Nationalism and American Policy* (New York, 1978), esp. 260-70; Srinivas Chary Mudumbai, *United States Foreign Policy towards India, 1947-1954* (New Delhi, 1980); M. S. Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan, 1947-1958* (New Delhi, 1982); Stanley Wolpert, *Roots of Confrontation in South Asia: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and the Superpowers* (New York, 1982); Sultana Afroz, "U.S.-Pakistan Relations, 1947-1960" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1985); Gary R. Hess, "Global Expansion and Regional Balances: The Emerging Scholarship on United States Relations with India and Pakistan," *Pacific Historical Review*, 61 (May 1987), 263-67.

as significant and pervasive themes of American foreign relations since World War II. They have often disagreed quite sharply, however, in their attempts to explicate those processes. An earlier generation of historians viewed American expansion as a purely defensive response to Soviet aggression, triggered especially by Russia's naked grab for power in Eastern Europe and the fear that American security would be gravely jeopardized by further Soviet expansion.⁴ During the 1960s, influenced in large part by popular disillusionment with the war in Vietnam, a revisionist school emerged that saw American leaders aggressively and self-consciously forging a modern-day empire to meet the needs of an insatiably growing capitalist economy. The ensuing debate between traditionalist and revisionist scholars over the motives underlying American expansion was a heated—and often a bitter—one.⁵

In recent years that debate has grown notably less shrill; some have even boldly proclaimed the emergence of a "post-revisionist synthesis." John Lewis Gaddis, a leading proponent of postrevisionism, now acknowledges that the postwar United States became an empire, a major revisionist tenet. But he calls it a defensive empire, formed largely at the invitation of nations vulnerable to Soviet military penetration. Other historians, unconvinced by Gaddis's neo-orthodox approach, have sought to reinvigorate a revisionist critique with the argument that strategic, rather than economic, considerations lay at the heart of American postwar expansion. The conception of national security developed by American leaders between 1945 and 1948 was so sweeping, writes Melvyn P. Leffler, that it included "a strategic sphere of influence within the Western Hemisphere, domination of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, an extensive system of outlying bases to enlarge the strategic frontier and project American power, an even more extensive system of transit rights to facilitate the conversion of commercial air bases to military use, access to the resources and markets of most of Eurasia, denial of those resources to a prospective enemy, and the maintenance of nuclear superiority." Given such an expansive definition of postwar security needs, Leffler submits, a globalized and militarized foreign policy was virtually inevitable.⁶

⁴ Representative works include George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (Chicago, 1951); Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton, 1957); John W. Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since World War II* (New York, 1960); and Norman A. Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy, 1945–1960* (Princeton, 1962).

⁵ Representative works include Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War* (New York, 1967); Lloyd C. Gardner, *Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941–1949* (Chicago, 1970); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–1954* (New York, 1972). For reviews of Cold War historiography, see J. Samuel Walker, "Historians and Cold War Origins: The New Consensus," in *American Foreign Relations: A Historiographical Review*, ed. Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker (Westport, 1981), 207–36; Jerald A. Combs, *American Diplomatic History: Two Centuries of Changing Interpretations* (Berkeley, 1983), 220–57, 322–46.

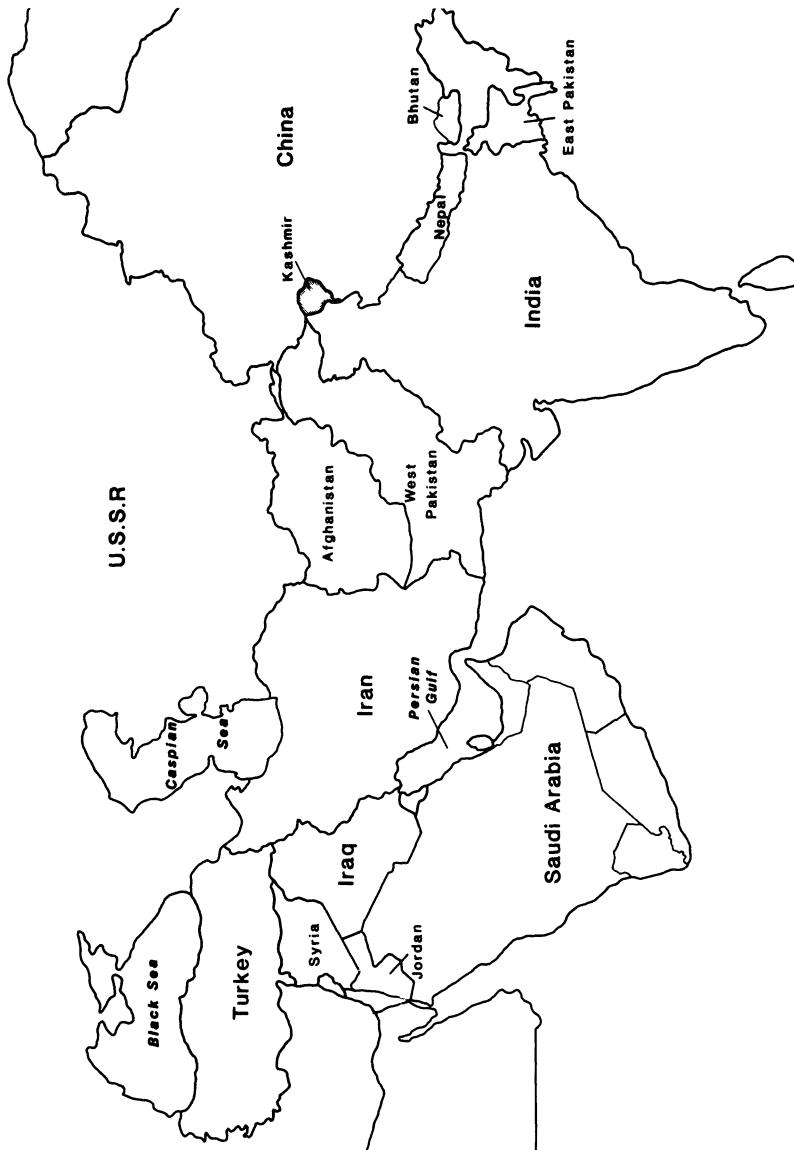
⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, "The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, 7 (Summer 1983), 171–90. See also John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York, 1982); and John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into Aspects of the Cold War* (New York, 1987). Melvyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945–48," *American Historical Review*, 89 (April 1984), 346–81, esp. 379. For a response to Leffler, see John Lewis Gaddis, "Comment," *ibid.*, 382–85. See also Melvyn P. Leffler, "From the Truman Doctrine to the Carter Doctrine: Lessons and Dilemmas of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, 7 (Fall

Common to those diverse interpretations is a tendency to see American policy makers operating from a clear-headed conception of national interests, whether that conception emerged from an integrated plan for advancing American power and influence, an ad hoc response to a perceived threat to the security of the United States, or a combination of the two. The present case study offers a different perspective. While underscoring Leffler's argument for the critical importance of strategic considerations to postwar American expansion, it suggests that American policy toward Pakistan was driven by a remarkably imprecise and inchoate formulation of the nation's strategic needs. *American planners came to view Pakistan as a key to the defense of the Middle East, but they were never sure exactly how it would contribute to that larger objective*, nor were they certain about the exact nature of the threat Moscow posed to that troubled region. Given the imprecision in American strategic thinking, nations other than the Soviet Union could sometimes play a significant role in the growth of the American empire, a phenomenon that has not been sufficiently appreciated by historians of the Cold War. This essay argues that a peripheral state like Pakistan could often exert substantial influence on the United States, pressing for military aid for its own purposes and virtually forcing an American response. Countervailing pressures from an ally like Great Britain and a regional power like India, moreover, could often delay American military commitments indefinitely. This article suggests, in sum, that historians should pay more attention to the limitations and inconsistencies of American strategic designs and should analyze more closely the active role played by some peripheral states in the globalization of American interests and commitments.

Immediately after the partition of the Indian subcontinent in August 1947, United States policy toward the new nations of India and Pakistan appeared straightforward and uncomplicated. The United States sought the establishment of stable, peaceful states, oriented toward the West and resistant to Communist threats, either internal or external. In numerous early intelligence appraisals the State and Defense Departments and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) outlined those objectives, stressing the potential strategic, political, and economic significance of the area. Given more dramatic, immediate issues in Europe and elsewhere, however, senior American officials devoted little in-depth attention to the problems of India and Pakistan. The subcontinent, after all, had long been, and probably would remain indefinitely, within the British sphere of influence. Every major American policy formulation emphasized that the United States should follow the British lead on all substantive matters relating to South Asia.⁷

1983), 245–66; Melvyn P. Leffler, "The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," *ibid.*, 12 (Summer 1988), 277–306; and Melvyn P. Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945–1952," *Journal of American History*, 71 (March 1985), 807–25.

⁷ Central Intelligence Agency report, "India-Pakistan," SR-21, Sept. 16, 1948, CIA Reports File, Harry S. Truman Papers (Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.); U.S. Department of Defense, *United*



Pakistan's strategic location impressed United States policy makers.
Map by Steven Rogers.

The one issue that did attract high-level attention during the period immediately after independence, and the issue that gradually brought the United States more directly into the affairs of the subcontinent, was the continuing tangle over the future disposition of Kashmir. Pakistani leaders felt betrayed when the leader of that predominantly Muslim state chose to accede to India under the terms of the partition agreement negotiated by Great Britain. Late in 1947 fighting erupted in Kashmir between Pakistani-supported Pathan tribesmen and Indian troops. The resulting tension between India and Pakistan brought the two dominions to the brink of war. Aware that there could be no durable peace in the region until the Kashmir dispute had been amicably resolved, the United States allowed itself to be drawn into the controversy as a United Nations mediator. Again, American objectives appeared remarkably direct and simple: to help the two sides to achieve a peaceful and equitable settlement, to maintain friendly relations with both newly independent countries, and to encourage long-term stability, cooperation, and prosperity in the area.⁸

Despite the carefully evenhanded American approach to mediation of the Kashmir dispute, the Truman administration displayed far more interest in India than in Pakistan during the immediate postindependence years. American officials routinely speculated that India, with its vigorous leadership, rich natural resources, and vast size and population, was destined to play a major role on the world stage. They viewed Pakistan, on the other hand, as an anomalous creation whose very survival was still much in question. The United States chargé in Karachi reported in October 1947 that Pakistan's problems were so overwhelming that they had already "assumed such proportions as to threaten the very existence of the new State." Another American diplomat in Pakistan, reviewing developments during 1948, reported that Pakistan's leaders "may at least heave a sigh of relief and thankfulness that they have survived"; it was, he commented acidly, "a bad year." Some American experts considered Pakistan's absorption into India to be only a matter of time.⁹

Yet, even during that period of unfamiliarity and relative indifference, some United States officials viewed Pakistan as potentially a major strategic asset. Col. Nathaniel R. Hoskot, the United States military attaché in Karachi, urged Washington as early as 1948 to consider military assistance to the new government due to Pakistan's "strategic worldwide importance." This view, which resonated especially

States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, vol. VIII (Washington, 1971), 226-72; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949* (9 vols., Washington, 1974-1978), VI, 8-31; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (7 vols., Washington, 1976-1980), V, 245-52; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951* (7 vols., Washington, 1977-1985), VI, 1650-52; Joint Chiefs of Staff 1992/48, Jan. 12, 1951, G-3 092 Asia TS (sec. 2), Records of the Army Staff, RG 319 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

⁸ For early indications of that policy objective, see *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948* (8 vols., Washington, 1973-1976), V, pt. 1, 265 ff.

⁹ Charles W. Lewis to Department of State, Oct. 27, 1947, file 845F.00/10-2747, Records of the Department of State, RG 59 (National Archives); Hooker Doolittle to Department of State, Jan. 4, 1949, file 845F.00/1-449, *ibid.*; Doolittle to Department of State, Sept. 26, 1949, file 501.BC-Kashmir/9-2649, *ibid.*; S. M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (London, 1973), 116-18; Betty Miller Unterberger, "American Views of Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Pakistan Liberation Movement," *Diplomatic History*, 5 (Fall 1981), 313-36.

within the military and intelligence communities, was based on two principal considerations: Pakistan's near-contiguous border with the Soviet Union, and hence the desirability of establishing air bases and intelligence-gathering facilities there, and Pakistan's proximity to the Persian Gulf, and hence its potential role in the defense of Middle East oil fields. A Joint Chiefs of Staff study of American interests in South Asia, dated March 24, 1949, succinctly summarized this view: The Karachi-Lahore area of Pakistan, it noted, "might be required as a base for air operations against [the] central USSR and as a staging area for forces engaged in the defense or recapture of Middle East oil areas." The report also speculated that Pakistan might provide a strategic base for covert operations launched against the Soviet Union. Adopting a similar perspective, in mid-1949 White House staff assistant Stephen J. Spingarn argued for the strategic importance of Pakistan in a series of papers and memoranda. The case for closer relations with Pakistan, he emphasized, rested almost exclusively on strategic grounds: Pakistan's proximity to the Soviet Union; its proximity to the oil fields of the Middle East; its potential role in the defense of both the Indian Ocean area and the Indian subcontinent; its position as the largest Muslim nation in the world; and its army, which he called the best in the Middle East. Accordingly, Spingarn warned that "it would be prejudicial to American interests in the Middle East and Far East to develop an Indian policy without taking into account Pakistan's legitimate interests."¹⁰

For its part, Pakistan sought to use its strategic importance as a bargaining chip in its initial contacts with the United States. Its leaders repeatedly called attention to Pakistan's geopolitical significance in their efforts to coax large-scale financial and military support from Washington. Only two months after independence, Gov. Gen. Mohammed Ali Jinnah boldly invited the United States to become the principal source of external support for his new nation. Jinnah's request was extraordinary; he asked for a loan of close to \$2 billion over a five-year period for Pakistan's armed forces and for industrial and agricultural development projects. Aware that he faced staggering problems, Jinnah was in effect offering a quid pro quo: alignment with the United States in return for an American commitment to underwrite Pakistan's economy and guarantee its security. As nearly all informed observers understood, Pakistan's overwhelming security concern lay, not with the Soviet Union, but with India. Nonetheless, its representatives carefully couched all appeals to the United States in a virulently anti-Soviet rhetoric that would, they hoped, strike a responsive chord with the Truman administration's Cold War planners. Pakistan's most vexing external problem, declared one document passed to American officials, was "the proximity and vulnerability of Western Pakistan to Russia."¹¹

¹⁰ Nathaniel R. Hoskot to Department of the Army, April 24, 1948, file 845F.00/4-2448, Records of the Department of State; Hoskot to Department of the Army, February 14, 1948, file 845F.00/2-1448, *ibid.*; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, VI, 29–31; Joint Strategic Plans Committee, JSPC 684/52, "Military Requirements for Base Rights," March 23, 1949, CCS 360 (12–9–42) sec. 36, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, RG 218 (National Archives); Stephen J. Spingarn to Clark Clifford, memoranda, Aug. 23, Oct. 25, 1949, "International Affairs—India" folder, Stephen J. Spingarn Papers (Truman Library); "Notes on Pakistan," Oct. 26, 1949, *ibid.*

¹¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, VI, 25–26; Robert A. Lovett to embassy in France, Oct. 25, 1948, file 501.BC-Kashmir/10-2148, Records of the Department of State; Office of Intelligence Research, Depart-

In December 1947, Malik Feroz Khan Noon, one of Pakistan's most prominent political leaders, offered a remarkably frank public appeal to the Truman administration. "The U.S. should realize three things," he said: "(1) that Pakistan is here to stay—there is not the slightest chance of any reunion with India; (2) that Pakistan will never be communistic; (3) that Pakistan is the Eastern bastion against communism as Turkey is the Western bastion. It is in the interest therefore of the U.S. to give military and economic support to Pakistan as well as to Turkey." Noon's statement, which was consistent with the thinking of much of Pakistan's ruling elite, received close attention in Washington.¹²

Despite burgeoning official appreciation of Pakistan's valuable geopolitical location, the State Department politely rebuffed all early requests for substantial American support. One reason is obvious: South Asia simply did not rank very high among American priorities during a time of heightened global tensions and escalating demands for limited American resources. As nearly all recent studies of American diplomacy during the late 1940s have shown, Truman administration planners concentrated their attention first on Europe and, secondarily, on the Middle East and East Asia; virtually everyplace else appeared peripheral to core United States national security interests. Furthermore, the United States deliberately chose to follow the British lead in the Indian subcontinent through the adoption of an evenhanded, regional approach. Such a strategy explicitly ruled out the option of supporting *either* Pakistan *or* India. Open support for one nation, in the view of British and American officials, would inevitably alienate the other and hopelessly complicate prospects for an amicable resolution of the Kashmir dispute. State Department and Foreign Office specialists were agreed that a Kashmir settlement was the *sine qua non* for regional stability.¹³

Significantly, when American officials did seriously consider a departure from the regional formula for South Asia, they tilted toward India, not toward Pakistan. The imminent triumph of the Chinese Communists led Truman administration planners to reassess American policy objectives in Asia in mid-1949. Some speculated that India might emerge as the most effective bulwark against further Communist expansion on the Asian mainland. Nehru's long-awaited state visit to the United States in October of that year quickly dashed such wishful thinking. He made it clear to his American hosts that India would not under any circumstances depart

ment of State, "The Foreign Relations of Pakistan," report no. 5493, Jan. 24, 1952, *ibid.*; Venkataramani, *American Role in Pakistan*, 2–3; Ayesha Jalal, "India's Partition and the Defence of Pakistan: An Historical Perspective," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 15 (May 1987), 303–17.

¹² Office of Intelligence Research, "Foreign Relations of Pakistan."

¹³ These views were consistently emphasized in U.S. policy papers and intelligence estimates of the late 1940s and early 1950s. See note 7. For British thinking, see Ernest Bevin to the cabinet, "Review of the International Situation in Asia in the Light of the Korean Conflict," Aug. 30, 1950, CAB 129/41, Cabinet Records (Public Record Office, Kew, Eng.); record of conversation between Donald D. Kennedy and Foreign Office representatives, Feb. 6, 1951, DO 35/3055, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office, *ibid.* For the argument that the United States pursued indirect influence in South Asia by relying on Great Britain and the Commonwealth, see H. W. Brands, "India and Pakistan in American Strategic Planning, 1947–54: Commonwealth as Collaborator," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 15 (Oct. 1986), 41–54.



President Harry S. Truman welcomes Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan at National Airport, Washington, May 1950.

United States Department of State.

Courtesy Harry S. Truman Library.

from its nonaligned stance. Further, his discussions with Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and other top United States officials revealed a deep chasm between New Delhi and Washington on key international issues, including the nature of the Soviet threat and the character of the new Chinese Communist government. In the period immediately following the prime minister's American tour, the United States and India gradually drifted apart on major issues. One British official not unfairly characterized American officials' attitudes toward India at the time as those of "a rejected suitor."¹⁴

Pakistan's consistent support for United States foreign policy initiatives stood in sharp contrast to India's independent position. Even before Nehru's visit several top Pakistani officials unequivocally pledged their nation's willingness to cooperate with the United States in long-range defense planning. "In the event of war involving the USSR," the State Department noted approvingly, "it seems likely that Pakistan would be prepared to assist the U.K. and the U.S. in every way possible, such as making air bases available." In May 1950 Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan arrived in Washington for high-level talks and promptly proclaimed Pakistan's

¹⁴ Dean Acheson to Harry S. Truman, Aug. 18, 1949, file 845.002/8-1849, Records of the Department of State; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, VI, 1750-52; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, V, 1461-66; Archibald Nye to Commonwealth Relations Office, Nov. 27, 1951, FO 371/92870, Records of the Foreign Office (Public Record Office). For analysis of U.S.-Indian differences and critique of U.S. policy toward India, see Dennis Merrill, "Indo-American Relations, 1947-1950: A Missed Opportunity in Asia," *Diplomatic History*, 11 (Summer 1987), 203-26.



President Harry S. Truman and Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan with their families in front of Blair House. Secretary of State Dean Acheson stands behind.

Washington, May 1950. United States Department of State.

Courtesy Harry S. Truman Library.

resolve “to throw all her weight to help the maintenance of stability in Asia.” He repeatedly implied Pakistan’s willingness to align itself with the United States while also hinting on several occasions—both publicly and privately—at Pakistan’s desire to purchase large quantities of American arms. His was a bravura performance. The contrast with Nehru’s diffidence—as Liaquat well understood—could hardly have been more dramatic. The British ambassador, Sir Oliver Franks, reported to the Foreign Office that American officials had no doubts about where Pakistan stood in the Cold War.¹⁵

American authorities of course understood that the Pakistanis’ continued disposition to cooperate would depend on the actions of the United States. As Liaquat had

¹⁵ Venkataramani, *American Role in Pakistan*, 87–89; George C. McGhee to James Bruce, Feb. 10, 1950, “MAP Index” folder, Records of the Military Adviser, Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, Records of the Department of State; McGhee to Acheson, Oct. 17, 1949, file 845.002/10-1749, *ibid.*; James E. Webb to Truman, Oct. 31, 1949, State Department Correspondence folder, Confidential File, Truman Papers; Acheson to Truman, Nov. 4, 1949, Official File 48-T, *ibid.*; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, VI, 1490–1502; Franks to Foreign Office, June 28, 1950, DO 35/2981, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; Commonwealth Relations Office, memorandum, June 30, 1950, PREM 8/1216, Prime Minister’s Papers (Public Record Office).

made clear during his Washington talks, Pakistan sought to trade alignment for American arms. That had been a consistent theme of Pakistani diplomacy since partition, albeit one that had not yet borne fruit. Following the Liaquat visit, Pakistan again demonstrated its reliability by embracing American diplomatic objectives during the United Nations debates over the Korean conflict and the negotiations for a Japanese peace treaty. Still, State Department and CIA analysts detected growing internal dissatisfaction with Pakistan's pro-American orientation. They found the prospect of a disillusioned Pakistan turning eventually to the Soviet Union for arms particularly worrisome.¹⁶

The Truman administration accordingly sought to resolve the dilemmas inherent in its South Asian policy by providing Pakistan with modest sums of military aid. That policy, begun in mid-1949 and continued through the early 1950s, sought to placate the Pakistanis through token support while avoiding a broad commitment that might alienate the Indians. Washington remained unwilling to compromise its commitment to an evenhanded posture in South Asia; both American and British officials continued to believe that a resolution on Kashmir was the key to regional stability and hence the overriding objective of American diplomacy.¹⁷

By early 1951 broader global concerns prompted a reassessment of Pakistan's strategic value to the United States. The origins of that reassessment lay in the growing United States concern about defending the Middle East should global war erupt. Following the Korean War, American officials were inclined to view the Soviet Union as having become a more aggressive and dangerous adversary, one likely to exploit any weaknesses in the West's defense perimeter. The fragility of the Middle East in the face of Soviet military power and Great Britain's declining financial and material resources lent new urgency to Anglo-American military planning for the region. "To retain the countries of the Middle East within the Western orbit is a vital cold war objective," stated a British planning document of October 1950, "and the Allies must be prepared to make military sacrifices to that end." American defense officials agreed, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed any measures that would commit American forces to the Middle East and recommended instead the substitution of friendly indigenous troops.¹⁸

As a result of those concerns, American planners evinced a growing interest in the potential contribution of Pakistani forces to the defense of the Middle East. A

¹⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, V, pt. 1, 496–97; McGhee, memorandum, Aug. 16, 1949, "MAP-Miscellaneous 1949" folder, Records of the Military Adviser, Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, Records of the Department of State; McGhee to Bruce, Nov. 14, 1949, "MAP Index" folder, *ibid.*; Avra M. Warren to Department of State, Nov. 18, 1950, file 790D.00/11-1850, *ibid.*

¹⁷ McGhee to Bruce, Feb. 10, 1950, Records of the Military Adviser, Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, *ibid.*; Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, "Communist Activity in Pakistan," report no. 5536, Sept. 29, 1950, *ibid.*; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, VI, pt. 2, 2206–16.

¹⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, V, 217–18; Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism," 27–28. For the broader context of Anglo-American policy toward the Middle East, see Louis, *British Empire in the Middle East*, 575–747; John C. Campbell, *Defense of the Middle East: Problems of American Policy* (New York, 1960); F. S. Northedge, "Britain and the Middle East," in *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government, 1945–1951*, ed. Ritchie Ovendale (Leicester, Eng., 1984), 149–80; and Painter, *Oil and the American Century*, 153–76.

meeting of the United States chiefs of mission in the Middle East, held at Istanbul in February 1951, devoted considerable attention to that subject. In summarizing the results of the conference, Adm. Robert C. Carney, commander of United States forces in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, recommended that defense officials appraise Pakistan's military potential with a view to applying that strength "as [a] factor complementing [the] Middle East Security system." Later that month at Colombo, Ceylon, State Department representatives resident in South Asia reached similar conclusions. "The most effective military defense of this area," the Colombo participants recommended, "would be provided by strong flanks which on the west would include Pakistan. . . . Pakistan can provide important ground forces now, either directly in [Southern Asia] or to the Middle Eastern flank, provided the Kashmir question is settled or an agreement is reached that will ease tension with India." Accordingly, the conferees called for the early buildup by the United States and Great Britain of Pakistani ground forces, assisted by the provision of American and British military equipment. Participants decried India's unwillingness to provide support for the West and judged Pakistan as potentially a more important and reliable ally. A junior American official prosaically summed up the proceedings: "We decided that Pakistan was a better bet than India."¹⁹

At a conference with their British counterparts at Malta in mid-March, American military representatives in the Middle East raised those points. The two delegations quickly arrived at a consensus. Both American and British commanders agreed that the West faced a serious strategic dilemma in the Middle East that might be eased by the contribution of Pakistani forces. The participants concurred that the protection of key points within the region, especially Egypt, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf oil fields, required defense of Iran and Iraq—the so-called outer ring. There were not then sufficient troops available to permit an adequate western defense of the outer ring, a problem exacerbated by Anglo-Iranian political tensions. The possibility of committing Pakistani or Indian forces to the defense of Iran and Iraq could help overcome that deficiency.²⁰

A growing number of policy makers at the Pentagon and the State Department viewed Pakistani participation as critical to the defense of the Middle East in wartime. On April 2, 1951, during a meeting in London with British Foreign Office representatives, George C. McGhee, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African affairs, noted that Pakistan's contribution "would probably be the decisive factor ensuring defense of the area." His British interlocutors agreed, asserting that regional defense was "probably not possible without the effective support of Pakistan." Both American and British officials applauded Pakistan's

¹⁹ Acheson to George C. Marshall, Jan. 27, 1951, G-3 381 ME TS, Records of the Army Staff; Robert C. Carney to Forrest Sherman, Feb. 22, 1951, *ibid.*; McGhee to Acheson, Feb. 22, 1951, *ibid.*; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, V, 59; JCS 1992/72, May 4, 1951, G-3 092 Asia TS, Records of the Army Staff; R. L. D. Jasper to Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith, March 27, 1951, DO 35/3008, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; George C. McGhee, *Envoy to the Middle World: Adventures in Diplomacy* (New York, 1983), 277–83.

²⁰ Carney to Sherman, March 14, 1951, G-3 ME TS, Records of the Army Staff; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, V, 94–95.

well-trained army, its martial tradition, its strategic location, and its eagerness to cooperate with the West. On May 2, McGhee underscored these points during a meeting at the Pentagon. "With Pakistan, the Middle East could be defended," he stated flatly, "without Pakistan, I don't see any way to defend the Middle East." Gen. Omar N. Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, responded that perhaps the United States should then arm Pakistan as well as Turkey. Although most leading defense officials judged the inclusion of Turkey and Greece in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the greater strategic priority at that time, interest in Pakistan was on the upswing.²¹

In general, British and American strategic thinking in regard to Pakistan was developing along parallel lines. Like their American counterparts, British planners relished the prospect of Pakistan providing several divisions for service in Iran or Iraq. Like their American counterparts, British planners held out little hope for any cooperation from India. That British defense officials readily accepted the newfound American emphasis on Pakistan's military value should hardly be surprising. Indeed, some British strategists had long advocated that position and almost surely influenced State and Defense Department analysts. Sir Olaf Caroe, a former top Colonial Office representative in British India, was particularly important in that regard, both through his writings and his personal contacts with American policy makers.²²

Ironically, at this juncture representatives of the American government proved substantially more enthusiastic about enlisting Pakistani cooperation in Middle East defense efforts than did their counterparts in Great Britain. Assistant Secretary McGhee's London conversations of April 1951 revealed some of the differences. During those talks McGhee insisted that Pakistan could be persuaded to join Middle East defense planning if only the United States or Great Britain guaranteed its security against an Indian attack. He considered such an arrangement eminently practicable. In response, Foreign Office representatives expressed concern with the repercussions in India of any security guarantee promised to Pakistan. One British diplomat rejoined skeptically that until Kashmir was settled any Pakistani participation in Middle East defense arrangements would be unlikely.²³

Responding to a formal American request, the British government explored these matters at length during the spring and summer of 1951. Although British authorities agreed that Pakistani support for Middle East defense efforts was highly desir-

²¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, V, 104–10, 114–20; notes of the under secretary of state's staff meeting, April 6, 1951, Records of the Executive Secretariat, Records of the Department of State; record of conversation between McGhee and Foreign Office officials, April 3, 1951, FO 371/92875, Records of the Foreign Office; record of conversation between McGhee and Reginald J. Bowker of the Foreign Office, April 4, 1951, DO 35/3008, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; JCS 1887/16, May 9, 1951, CCS 381 EMMEA (11-19-47) sec. 4, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On American efforts to gain Turkey's accession to NATO, see Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War," 819–24.

²² Olaf Caroe, *Wells of Power: The Oilfields of South-Western Asia* (London, 1951); Harrison, "Case History of a Mistake," 11–13.

²³ Record of conversation between McGhee and Foreign Office officials, April 3, 1951, FO 371/92875, Records of the Foreign Office; record of conversation between McGhee and Bowker, April 4, 1951, DO 35/3008, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office.

able, they found the twin problems of formulating an appropriate guarantee and placating Indian opinion virtually insuperable. To be sure, opinions differed. The Chiefs of Staff judged Pakistani support for regional defense planning vital and were willing to run some risks with India to obtain it. The Commonwealth Relations Office, on the other hand, argued that any guarantees to Pakistan would pose unacceptable risks vis-à-vis India, possibly leading it to withdraw from the Commonwealth. The Foreign Office tried to straddle the divergent viewpoints by exploring various schemes for guaranteeing Pakistani security without alienating India. None of its efforts, however, proved satisfactory.²⁴

Policy makers in Washington found the practical problems involved in associating Pakistan with regional defense planning equally daunting. In May 1951 Elbert G. Mathews, director of the State Department's Office of South Asian Affairs, told a member of the British embassy that although the Truman administration still saw advantages in enlisting Pakistan in Middle East defense efforts, it was "completely stumped" on the question of providing appropriate inducements. On June 30 the State Department informed its representatives in the Middle East that there was now "great uncertainty" as to any possible Pakistani contribution to the defense of the area. That remained an important policy goal, but the department feared that any American effort to increase Pakistani influence in the Middle East would immediately be opposed by India and would almost surely result in additional Indo-Pakistani and Indo-American discord.²⁵

Renewed Pakistani appeals in September and October 1951 led the Truman administration to reconsider those reservations. On September 18 Mohammed Ikramullah, permanent undersecretary in Pakistan's Foreign Office, told Ambassador Avra M. Warren of the United States that the time was now ripe for discussions between the United States and Pakistan on Middle East defense matters. Several weeks later Mohammed Ayub Khan, the newly appointed commander in chief of the Pakistani army, made a similar plea to Warren. Those overtures again aroused the hopes of American strategic planners, who urged that Pakistan be asked to join the proposed Allied Middle East Command (MEC) and to provide forces for regional defense in time of war. Thus on October 12 the State Department requested the British government's reaction to a joint United States–United Kingdom approach to Pakistan.²⁶

London's negative response to that American initiative revealed a growing cleavage with Washington over South Asian policy. Pakistani participation was desirable, the Foreign Office admitted, but in the short run it would not spur Egyptian

²⁴ Extensive documentation on those deliberations is in files FO 371/92875, Records of the Foreign Office, and DO 35/3008, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office.

²⁵ B. A. B. Burrows to J. D. Murray, May 2, 1951, FO 371/92875, Records of the Foreign Office; memorandum of conversation between Burrows and Elbert G. Mathews, May 2, 1951, file 790D.5/5-251, Records of the Department of State; Acheson to certain American diplomatic and consular officers, June 30, 1951, file 691.90D/6-3051, *ibid.*

²⁶ Sir Percivale Leisching to Clement Attlee, minute, Sept. 20, 1951, FO 371/92875, Records of the Foreign Office; Oliver Franks to Foreign Office, Oct. 8, 1951, *ibid.* For the evolution of American and British thinking about the Allied Middle East Command, see Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism."

adherence to the MEC, the key to that organization's prospects, and would further confuse an already confused situation. The Foreign Office, moreover, saw little chance of Pakistan providing battle-ready formations for service outside its borders in the foreseeable future. Karachi, furthermore, would almost surely demand a high political price for its cooperation, and New Delhi would almost surely be vehemently opposed. "We are anxious," cabled the Foreign Office to its embassy in Washington, "lest United States impatience with India should lead them to discount risks involved with India." In a brief for Foreign Minister Herbert Morrison, the Foreign Office expressed concern that the United States might develop a unilateral approach toward South Asia, breaking with the well-established tradition of pursuing a dual approach under the leadership of Great Britain. "It is possible," the brief cautioned, "that the present American interest in problems in Middle East defence may lead her still further towards a pro-Pakistan and anti-Indian viewpoint." More seriously, if the British kept resisting American "pressure" with regard to Pakistan, warned one Foreign Office specialist, it might have "unpleasant effects" on Anglo-American relations. When Pakistani Foreign Minister Zafrullah Khan told the London press on November 1 that his nation could make no contribution to Middle East defense efforts until the Kashmir dispute was resolved, British policy makers heaved a collective sigh of relief. The initiative, they believed, was now moot.²⁷

Still, despite London's unambiguous rejection of Washington's overture and Karachi's public disavowal of interest, American officials persisted in their efforts. Throughout late 1951 and early 1952, the Truman administration urged the new Conservative government of Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill to join in making an appeal to Pakistan regarding membership in the MEC. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden complained to Churchill that the United States was "pressing us hard" on the issue. Cutting to the heart of the differences between London and Washington, Eden wrote: "The Americans take the view that we are inclined to sacrifice the advantages to be obtained from a Pakistani contribution to the defense of the Middle East for fear of antagonising India."²⁸

That was precisely the American view. Donald Kennedy of the State Department's Office of South Asian Affairs underscored this point during a meeting with British ambassador Franks. The deterioration of its position in the Middle East was so serious, he argued, that the West could ill afford to waste any opportunity for strengthening Pakistan. There was little hope for India beyond neutrality, continued Kennedy; accordingly, the Indian view could not be allowed to slow progress on Middle East defense, especially given Pakistan's strategic position on the flank of

²⁷ Foreign Office to Embassy in the United States, Oct. 13, 1951, FO 371/92875, Records of the Foreign Office; Foreign Office, brief for Attlee, Oct. 16, 1951, DO35/3052, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; Phillips, minute, Oct. 1951, FO 371/92876, Records of the Foreign Office; Burrows to Foreign Office, Dec. 19, 1951, *ibid.*

²⁸ Anthony Eden to Winston S. Churchill, minute, Nov. 1951, FO 371/92876, Records of the Foreign Office; Hastings Lord Ismay to Churchill, minute, Nov. 21, 1951, DO 35/3008, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; Burrows to Murray, Jan. 28, 1952, FO 371/101198, Records of the Foreign Office.

any possible Russian move into the Middle East. The British remained unmoved by the appeals. Eden reiterated his government's reservations during a trip to Washington in December. Yet, as one Foreign Office official subsequently noted, the State Department "apparently finds it hard to take No for an answer."²⁹

American persistence was largely due to the belief that Pakistan could make a valuable contribution to a vital national security objective: preservation of western influence in the Middle East. Pakistan, declared a State Department–Defense Department working group, "possesses the greatest military potential in the Middle East next to Turkey." Although American planners still feared the ultimate possibility of a Soviet military thrust into the area, they were more concerned at this juncture with alarming trends within the region. A National Security Council (NSC) paper, approved by the president in April 1952, noted: "Currently, the danger in this area to the security of the free world arises not so much from the threat of direct Soviet military attack as from acute instability, anti-western nationalism and Arab-Israeli antagonism that could lead to disorder and eventually to a situation in which regimes oriented toward the Soviet Union could come to power." The Truman administration was troubled more, in short, by the internal disintegration of the western position in the Middle East than it was by any external military threat. As that disintegration continued apace, especially in Iran and Egypt, Pakistan's strategic stock soared.³⁰

Yet the precise contribution that Pakistan could render to the resolution of those formidable problems remained curiously vague in American planning. The Truman administration's initial interest in Pakistan's military potential emerged at a time when it feared the possibility of a Soviet military thrust into the Middle East. But if the greater problem was now internal instability, from which the Soviets might ultimately benefit, how precisely could Pakistani troops offer meaningful assistance? Surprisingly, the administration never adequately addressed that cardinal question.

Another factor influenced thinking in Washington. United States experts feared that Pakistan might reorient its foreign policy if its leaning to the West did not soon yield more concrete benefits. Pakistani leaders tried to manipulate that fear to their own advantage. In July 1952 a high-level Pakistani military delegation once again pressed American officials for military equipment. Special defense adviser Mir Laik Ali requested \$200 million in military supplies for Pakistan's army and air force along with a sizable line of credit in the United States to help fund Pakistani purchases. In a meeting with Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett, he insisted that the weapons were intended for use, not against India, but against possible Communist aggression. Public alarm with regard to Soviet intentions was so strong in

²⁹ Franks to Foreign Office, Nov. 8, 1951, FO 371/92876, Records of the Foreign Office; Foreign Office to embassy in the United States, Nov. 7, 1951, *ibid.*; Commonwealth Relations Office, brief, Dec. 1951, *ibid.*; Phillips, minute, Feb. 14, 1952, FO 371/101198, *ibid.*

³⁰ State-Defense Working Group, report to the secretary of state and secretary of defense, April 15, 1952, CD 092 (Middle East), Office of the Administrative Secretary, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, RG 330 (National Archives); *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954* (14 vols., Washington, 1979–1988), IX, pt. 1, 222–26.

his country, Ali stressed, that he feared a “psychological surrender” if western help was not soon forthcoming. At the same time, the Pakistani representative softened that dire forecast by intimating that his nation would be willing to enter into an “active and positive” alliance with the United States in opposition to the Soviet Union.³¹

Following Ali’s approach, the State Department reopened with the British Foreign Office its long-stalled request for Pakistani participation in Middle East defense efforts. This time, after further detailed study, Whitehall proved more receptive. On November 5 representatives of the British embassy informed the State Department that their government would now welcome Pakistan’s association with such efforts. Changing emphases in regional defense planning and shifting political currents in the Middle East largely explain Great Britain’s reversal. American and British planners had by June 1952 scrapped plans for a formal Middle East command structure, principally due to Egypt’s adamant opposition. They had concluded that a less formal arrangement, dubbed the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO), would be far more effective than an area defense grouping modeled loosely on NATO. Since participating countries would not be required to contribute permanent forces but only to enter into joint planning and consultative exercises, British authorities believed that Indian objections would be less strenuous. Additionally, the steady deterioration of British relations with Egypt and Iran in the face of aroused nationalist movements in those nations enhanced the value of Pakistan’s participation. It could help compensate for Egyptian and Iranian unreliability. As an Islamic nation, added a Foreign Office assessment, Pakistan could bring security and stability to the Middle East, with which it had strategic, political, and cultural links.³²

The British raised two caveats about approaches to Pakistan. The first concerned India. The British noted that India, besides fearing a militarily strengthened Pakistan challenging it, had “always been nervous of moves which might be regarded as tending to entangle the subcontinent in the Western-Soviet struggle.” Although such suspicions could probably not be entirely dispelled, “it is very desirable that every effort should be made to ensure that the Indian attitude towards M.E.D.O. and toward the approach to Pakistan is not unfriendly.” They sounded a second cautionary note on the question of military aid. The British strongly urged that no additional arms or aid be provided to the Pakistanis as a reward for joining MEDO. While American officials wholeheartedly agreed that the utmost care must be taken to soothe Indian fears, the latter issue proved more nettlesome. In a meeting of November 5, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that funds be obtained at once

³¹ Memorandum of conversation between Lovett and Mir Laik Ali, July 23, 1952, CD 092 (Pakistan), Office of the Administrative Secretary, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Frank C. Nash to Lovett, memorandum, Oct. 23, 1951, *ibid.*; Acheson to embassy in Pakistan, Aug. 2, 1952, file 790D.5-MSP/8-252, Records of the Department of State.

³² Burrows, minute, July 30, 1952, FO 371/101198, Records of the Foreign Office; Foreign Office, “Pakistan and the Middle East Defence Organisation,” Aug. 1952, DO 35/6650, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; Foreign Office to embassy in the United States, Nov. 4, 1952, *ibid.*; Franks to Foreign Office, Nov. 5, 1952, *ibid.*

for grant military assistance to selected countries in the Middle East region, including Pakistan, in order "to help attain strategic objectives." American officials plainly viewed Pakistan's price for cooperation with the West more realistically than did their British counterparts. Some United States military aid, they recognized, would be essential to ensure Pakistani adherence to MEDO. British efforts to decouple the two struck American planners as fanciful.³³

Before those Anglo-American differences could be narrowed or specific initiatives pursued, a complicating factor arose. In November and December 1952, rumors of western plans for including Pakistan in MEDO swept India, igniting a firestorm of protests. Indian leaders insisted that the Pakistanis wanted arms only to strengthen themselves vis-à-vis India, and that Pakistan's supposed contribution to western-led collective security measures was a ruse. Nehru angrily informed Ambassador Chester Bowles that any arms transferred from the United States to Pakistan would more probably be used against India than against the Soviet Union. His vehement reaction to the rumors regarding MEDO stemmed from a mixture of ideological and practical considerations. Hopeful that South Asia could avoid entanglement in the East-West conflict, Nehru had long argued for what he was convinced was the morally superior posture of nonalignment. At the same time, he genuinely feared that an influx of American armaments might embolden Pakistani leaders to seek a military solution to the Kashmir problem; at the least, such military aid would force India to increase its own arms expenditures.³⁴

Bowles, an ardent and indefatigable advocate of India's importance to the United States, essentially agreed with the Indian analysis. The former governor of Connecticut feared that an arms pact with Pakistan would inevitably lead to another sharp downturn in Indo-American relations. Consequently, in late 1952 and early 1953 he flooded Washington with a series of near apocalyptic warnings. The impact of a United States–Pakistan arms deal on India and on the whole region, he emphasized repeatedly, would be catastrophic. Any prospect for an amicable resolution of Kashmir and other regional disputes, he said, would be dealt a death blow. Moreover, the Soviet Union would be granted a golden opportunity to enhance its position in the region.³⁵

Bowles repeated those views in lengthy personal communications with leading members of the new Eisenhower administration. If the United States entered into

³³ U.K. memorandum, "Middle East Defence Organisation," Nov. 5, 1952, Appendix A to JCS 1887/62, G-3 38 MME, Records of the Army Staff; Joint Chiefs of Staff 2099/253, Nov. 5, 1952, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec. 83, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Foreign Office to embassy in the United States, Nov. 28, 1952, DO 35/6650, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; Franks to Foreign Office, Dec. 4, 1952, *ibid*; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, IX, pt. 1, 315-17, 323-24.

³⁴ "Memoranda of Conversations in New Delhi and Elsewhere between Ambassador Bowles and Indian Officials, October 20, 1951–March 20, 1953," folder 392, box 104, Chester Bowles Papers (Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.); *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, IX, pt. 1, 317-19; Chester Bowles to Kennedy, Jan. 29, 1953, folder 268, box 95, Bowles Papers; Nye to the Commonwealth Relations Office, Jan. 13, 1953, DO 35/6650, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office; Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. II: 1947-1956 (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 183-84.

³⁵ Bowles to Kennedy, Jan. 29, 1953, folder 268, box 95, Bowles Papers.

an arms deal with Pakistan, he wrote Under Secretary of State-designate Walter Bedell Smith, "I believe that a serious deterioration in Indo-American relationships is inevitable and that, far from having advanced our position in this part of the world, we will suffer a very considerable setback." One of the by-products of such a decision, he predicted, would be "that the efforts of the Nehru Government to build India into a stable democratic nation may be seriously jeopardized."³⁶

The Truman administration's failure to consummate an arms deal with Pakistan probably had less to do with the impassioned arguments of Bowles and the Indians than with the administration's lame duck status. The decisive Republican electoral triumph of November 1952 made any bold new foreign policy initiatives imprudent, especially given the incoming administration's insistence on taking a new look at American overseas commitments. To be sure, Bowles's warnings and India's fulminations were weighed carefully and may well have slowed down a decision on aid to Pakistan. Yet, as Donald Kennedy confided to a British embassy representative in December, the risk of a strong Indian reaction was well recognized but had to be weighed against the positive advantages of Pakistan's association with MEDO. The result of that balancing act, he said, definitely lay on the side of going ahead. Since the State Department judged the prospects for an imminent breakthrough in the long-deadlocked Kashmir negotiations highly unlikely, there was no compelling reason to postpone a decision. Only the quirks of the American electoral calendar prevented the Truman administration from going forward with the initiative. It had, however, established an impressive, if not always persuasive, rationale for an American-Pakistani military relationship, one that the Eisenhower administration would inherit and ultimately act on.³⁷

There was a remarkable degree of continuity between the Middle East policies of Truman and those first purchased by Dwight D. Eisenhower. During the administration's early months, few international issues occupied policy makers' attention as much as the problems of the Middle East. As had their predecessors, President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles found the question of how best to preserve western influence in that vital area unusually vexing. The Anglo-American position in the region seemed to deteriorate almost daily. The stalemated negotiations between Britain and Egypt over the future disposition of the mammoth British base at Suez effectively thwarted movement on the MEDO initiative. In early February 1953, Prime Minister Churchill pressed Eisenhower to reaffirm United States support for the proposed Middle East Defense Organization. The president agreed to abide by Truman's commitment, although he and Dulles feared that the increasingly acrimonious Anglo-Egyptian talks might fatally undermine that organization's prospects. American defense officials, meanwhile, continued to emphasize Pakistan's strategic value to any regional defense plan.³⁸

³⁶ Bowles to Walter Bedell Smith, Jan. 15, 1953, folder 282, box 96, *ibid.*; Bowles to John Foster Dulles, Feb. 5, Feb. 25, 1953, folder 243, box 94, *ibid.*; Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life* (New York, 1971), 477-81.

³⁷ Burrows to Foreign Office, Dec. 2, 1952, DO 35/6650, Records of the Commonwealth Relations Office.

³⁸ Memorandum of discussion at National Security Council meeting, Feb. 24, 1953, NSC Series, Whitman File,



Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles
shake hands in New Delhi, May 1953.

Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles, *Courtesy Princeton University Library.*

As the Suez deadlock dragged on through the spring of 1953, Dulles decided to obtain a firsthand view of the region's problems. In May he and Mutual Security Administrator Harold E. Stassen embarked on a three-week trip to the Middle East and South Asia, including Pakistan, in order to assess local conditions and to reevaluate the viability of the MEDO proposal. Both men found political trends in

the area disturbing. The secretary of state conveyed his initial impressions to Eisenhower in a cable of May 17: "Bitterness toward [the] West, including [the] United States such that while Arab good will may still be restored, time is short before loss becomes irretrievable."³⁹

On June 1 Dulles amplified those views in a report to the National Security Council. He stated that Egypt and many of the other Arab states were too preoccupied with internal problems and too complacent about the Soviet threat to be dependable allies. Consequently, the old concept of MEDO with Egypt as its nucleus, he said flatly, "was certainly finished." Instead, Dulles suggested that Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran—the so-called northern tier states—could be induced to form a regional alliance that would be far stronger than one based on Egyptian cooperation. Describing himself as "immensely impressed by the martial and religious characteristics of the Pakistanis," the secretary of state said he believed that Pakistan would serve as a "potential strong point for us" in any regional defense grouping.⁴⁰

With President Eisenhower's approval, throughout the summer and fall of 1953, State and Defense Department planners considered the northern tier alternative. A pact between Turkey and Pakistan might provide the initial impetus for a broader regional grouping. This proposal was discussed in depth at a meeting of the NSC on July 9. In introducing a draft of a new policy paper on the Middle East (NSC 155), National Security Adviser Robert Cutler emphasized that Egypt could no longer be depended upon to provide the cornerstone of a regional defense structure. "On the other hand," he said, "the so-called northern tier of nations, stretching from Pakistan to Turkey, were feeling the hot breath of the Soviet Union on their necks, and were accordingly less preoccupied with strictly internal problems or with British and French imperialism." The new policy paper, approved by the president at the meeting, criticized such previous efforts as MEDO as western impositions totally lacking in local support. To build a viable, indigenous organization, the paper recommended that the United States first encourage Pakistan to enter into an agreement with Turkey—as those two nations were strategically located, friendly to the West, and willing to cooperate—and later expand the pact to include Iran and Iraq. The proposed Turco-Pakistani agreement would thus become the nucleus of a broader regional defense structure, with Washington relegated to a behind-the-scenes role and at least the pretense of an indigenous defense effort rigorously maintained.⁴¹

In complex diplomatic initiatives, there is often a lag between conceptualization and actualization. Such was the case with the northern tier proposal and the con-

Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kans.); Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense, memorandum, Feb. 12, 1953, enclosure to JCS 1887/60, 381 EMMEA (11-19-47), sec. 14, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Joint Strategic Survey Committee, report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 1, 1953, *ibid.*

³⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-1954, IX, pt. 1, 87-88.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 379-86; Dulles, "Important Points of Trip," May 1953, Middle East folder, box 73, John Foster Dulles Papers (Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.).

⁴¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-1954, IX, pt. 1, 394-408.

joined question of military aid to Pakistan. By late summer 1953 planners at the Pentagon and State Department had developed persuasive strategic arguments for moving forward on both matters. Still, a series of unresolved details proved nettlesome: How much aid should the United States provide? What form should it take? Should arms be given only if Pakistan adhered to a regional pact? How vociferous would be India's reaction? And how could the United States most effectively limit any resultant damage to Indo-American relations? The complexity of those essential questions, coupled with normal patterns of bureaucratic caution, produced a decision-making process that many Pakistanis—who had already been informally notified of American plans—considered glacial.⁴²

In an effort to force an immediate policy decision, Gen. Mohammed Ayub Khan insisted on meeting with senior American officials in the United States. On September 30 he met with the secretary of state. A direct and often blunt man, the Pakistani general told Dulles he had come to Washington for one purpose: to acquire military assistance for the Pakistani army. According to the official State Department record of that conversation: "The Secretary observed, smilingly, that it was none of his business but he hoped General Ayub would get what he came for." When Ayub expressed frustration with the slowness of the American policy process, Dulles explained that the Defense Department had to complete a study of the feasibility and desirability of the proposal before a presidential decision could be obtained. He counseled patience. Dulles closed this frank colloquy by assuring Ayub that he was fully prepared to assist Pakistan militarily regardless of the Indian attitude. Quite understandably, Ayub believed that he had obtained the firm commitment that he sought.⁴³

On October 9 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John D. Jernegan informed Harold Beeley, counselor of the British embassy, that the United States had just reached a decision in principle to extend some military grant aid to Pakistan and that it was exploring appropriate means for doing so. Until then, the Eisenhower administration had kept its ally completely in the dark with regard to its plans for aiding Pakistan. Not surprisingly, the sudden notification caused consternation in London. Not only had Washington evidently abandoned the well-established pattern of close Anglo-American consultation on South Asian matters, but the American initiative also threatened to scuttle chances for a regional settlement. British experts believed that continuing Indo-Pakistani negotiations over Kashmir were fast reaching a climactic point, with better chances for a breakthrough than ever before. Military aid, in the view of Foreign Office analysts, would almost certainly prejudice those talks. "In return therefore for the uncertain prospect of future assistance from Pakistan," wrote Asian expert R. W. D. Fowler, "the United States proposal will spoil the more immediate prospects of improved relations between India and Pakistan,

⁴² Joint Chiefs of Staff to secretary of defense, memorandum, Aug. 11, 1953, 381 EMMEA (11-19-47) sec. 15. Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁴³ Henry A. Byroade to Dulles, Sept. 25, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/9-2553, Records of the Department of State memorandum of conversation between Dulles and Ayub Khan, Sept. 30, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/9-3053, *ibid.*

which can provide the only real basis on which a strong Pakistan, capable of playing a valuable role in western defense, can be built.”⁴⁴

Yet the British found themselves in an awkward position. If they sought to dissuade the United States from aiding Pakistan, as the Chiefs of Staff pointed out, Pakistan would almost certainly find out and relations between London and Karachi would be strained indefinitely. On October 16 British representatives told State Department officials quite bluntly that their government did not like the American proposal. At the same time, they stressed that they “would not wish to stand in the way” if the Eisenhower administration chose to ignore London’s advice. Above all else, the British diplomats implored the United States to delay any definitive offer to the Pakistanis and to maintain tight secrecy about all plans.⁴⁵

Within weeks Pakistan had lifted that veil of secrecy through a series of calculated press leaks designed to force a quick decision by the United States. On November 2 the *New York Times*, in a dispatch from Karachi, revealed that the United States was planning to form a military alliance with Pakistan. Two days later most major Pakistani newspapers reported that Washington was contemplating a military assistance program of at least \$25 million for Karachi. Predictably, India responded with great indignation. The Indian minister called at the State Department on November 5 to register his government’s opposition to any American alliance with Pakistan. Repeating a charge by then familiar, he said that military aid to Pakistan would bring the Cold War to the subcontinent. In response, Assistant Secretary Henry A. Byroade insisted that the published reports were greatly exaggerated while conceding that for some months the United States had been considering the provision of military aid to Pakistan within the broader framework of Middle East defense plans. Such a pact, he said, would have no adverse impact on India. Leaders in New Delhi, however, thought differently. Nehru made barbed public statements decrying the reported United States plans to arm Pakistan. The ensuing tangle of rumors, charges, and countercharges had the effect of moving sensitive deliberations from the secrecy in which they are ordinarily shrouded into the harsh glare of publicity. Public disclosure raised the diplomatic stakes for the Eisenhower administration substantially while constricting its policy options.⁴⁶

Such was Pakistan’s intention. Its principal military and political leaders, convinced of the need for American arms and support, hoped to rush a favorable American decision through a combination of public and private pressures. Along with the newspaper leaks, Pakistani leaders availed themselves of every opportunity to

⁴⁴ Dulles to embassy in Great Britain, Oct. 10, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/10-1053, *ibid.*; Sir Roger Makins to Foreign Office, Oct. 9, 1953, FO 371/106935, Records of the Foreign Office; Foreign Office to the embassy in the United States, Oct. 13, 1953, *ibid.*; R. W. D. Fowler, minute, Oct. 14, 1953, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Record of Chiefs of Staff meeting, Oct. 15, 1953, FO 371/106935, Records of the Foreign Office; Foreign Office to embassy in the United States, Oct. 16, 1953, *ibid.*; Makins to Foreign Office, Oct. 16, 1953, *ibid.*; memorandum of conversation between John D. Jernegan and Harold Beeley, Oct. 16, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/10-1653, Records of the Department of State.

⁴⁶ J. E. Cable, minute, Nov. 10, 1953, FO 371/106935, Records of the Foreign Office; memorandum of conversation between Byroade and N. Haskar, Nov. 5, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/11-553, Records of the Department of State; George V. Allen to Department of State, Nov. 16, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/11-1653, *ibid.*

press their case with senior American representatives in Washington and Karachi. Following Ayub's departure from the United States, Gov. Gen. Ghulam Mohammed and Foreign Minister Zafnullah Khan joined the procession to Washington. Like the general, they too underscored the necessity for United States support; the consequences of a rejection, both leaders warned, would be disastrous for their country's future orientation. Vice President Richard M. Nixon heard the same refrain when he visited the Pakistani capital in early December. Ghulam Mohammed complained to him about the long delay by the United States in reaching a final decision on the much-discussed military assistance program. If the United States were to refuse grant aid now, after all the publicity, the governor general declared, "it would be like taking a poor girl for a walk and walking out on her, leaving her with only a bad name." Of course, he conveniently avoided mentioning that his government had been the major source for the newspaper stories. Regardless, those entreaties, coupled with the publicity to which Ghulam Mohammed alluded, made an early American decision virtually imperative. Pakistan proved extraordinarily effective in forcing the United States to respond to its agenda.⁴⁷

By the end of November 1953 the Defense Department added its formal support to the swelling consensus in favor of a military assistance agreement with Pakistan. The Defense and State Departments now saw four broad advantages of such a pact: (1) it would increase the defensive strength of a pro-western state with a large military potential and a strategic location for defending the Middle East; (2) it would tighten American-Pakistani ties and help overcome any latent neutralist tendencies in Pakistan; (3) it would pave the way for regional defense arrangements along the northern tier and possibly for the later acquisition of base rights; and (4) the "failure to follow through after recent publicity and statements by Nehru would disillusion [the] Pakistanis and give Nehru (as well as others) good reason to think we dance to his tune." To these, the United States ambassador in Pakistan, Horace A. Hildreth, added a fifth. The recently appointed government of pro-American Prime Minister Mohammed Ali would be strengthened politically and economically. A decision against aid at this point, on the other hand, would lead to deep internal disappointment and disillusionment with the incumbent Pakistani leadership.⁴⁸

To be sure, all interested parties within the American government did not share that perspective. George V. Allen, who had replaced Bowles as ambassador to India in early 1953, registered vigorous objections to the administration's plans. On October 19 the embassy informed the State Department that its senior officers agreed

⁴⁷ Dulles to Dwight D. Eisenhower, Nov. 10, 1953, Pakistan folder, International Series, Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers; Dulles to Richard M. Nixon, Nov. 25, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/11-2253, Records of the Department of State; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, XI, pt. 2, 1831-35.

⁴⁸ Joint Strategic Plans Committee, report, JCS 2099/326, Nov. 9, 1953, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec. 97, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Joint Logistics Plans Committee 414/146/D, Nov. 19, 1953, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec. 99, *ibid.*; Charles Wilson to Dulles, memorandum, Nov. 24, 1953, file 780.5/11-2453, Records of the Department of State; Dulles to embassies in India and Pakistan, Nov. 27, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/11-2753, *ibid.*; Horace A. Hildreth to Department of State, Nov. 30, 1953, file 790D.5-MSP/11-3053, *ibid.* The Joint Chiefs of Staff granted their final approval to the military assistance program on December 11. Joint Chiefs of Staff to secretary of defense, see memorandum, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec. 101, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.



Secretary of State John Foster Dulles talks with Prime Minister Mohammed Ali of Pakistan in Washington, October 1954.

Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles, *Courtesy Princeton University Library*.

that the Indian response to direct military aid to Pakistan “will be bitter and vigorous and will color and perhaps change [the] course of [the] United States-India relationship for [a] long time to come.” Such skepticism was expressed most often by officials, like Allen, with direct responsibility for United States-India affairs. Convinced that overriding national security concerns were at stake in the proposal to aid Pakistan, Dulles and other senior officials dismissed that perspective as too narrowly focused.⁴⁹

The British government sought, with no more success than dissidents in Washington, to slow down the proposed United States initiative. On December 7 Foreign Minister Eden warned of the dangers of a military alliance between the United States and Pakistan during a private conversation with Dulles in Bermuda. Top

⁴⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, IX, pt. 1, 423-24; Smith to Byroade, Dec. 4, 1953, file 790.5/11-2753, Records of the Department of State.

officials from the Eisenhower and Churchill administrations had arrived at the resort island for discussions on a number of pressing international issues. Meeting at the beach after breakfast, the foreign secretary inquired about American intentions with regard to Pakistan. Dulles explained that his government had not yet decided precisely what form American aid to Pakistan would take. He implied, however, that it would most likely be part of a general defense plan for the area, including Turkey and Iran. In response to Eden's expression of concern about the possible effects of that pact on western relations with India and Afghanistan, the secretary of state conceded that "these were bad." He added, however, that India might choose to remain neutral, but it could not claim the right to prevent other nations from lining up with the West.⁵⁰

That view was shared by Vice President Nixon, another increasingly vocal proponent of a Pakistani arms deal. Speaking to the National Security Council on December 16, he averred that it would be a fatal mistake to back down on the proposed aid package solely because of Nehru's objections; such a retreat would risk "losing most of the Asian-Arab countries to the neutralist bloc." At the next meeting of that highest policy body, on December 23, Nixon was even blunter: "If we do not give aid to Pakistan," he argued, "we've got to find a way to not give it without giving Nehru the victory." Referring to his recent trip to Karachi, Nixon continued: "Pakistan is a country I would like to do everything for. The people have less complexes than the Indians. The Pakistanis are completely frank, even when it hurts. It will be disastrous if the Pakistan aid does not go through."⁵¹

Dulles sent his final recommendations to Eisenhower in early January 1954. He reiterated previous plans calling for limited United States military assistance to certain key states that were strategically located and prepared to "stand up" to the Russians. In response to secret approaches, the secretary of state continued, both the Turks and the Pakistanis had expressed themselves in favor of a mutual defense pact on the understanding that the United States would subsequently provide military aid to Pakistan. He acknowledged that "we must expect quite a storm from India if we go ahead with a military program for Pakistan" but predicted that "we can ride out the storm without fatal effect on U.S.-Indian relations." In conclusion Dulles suggested that "we can gain a great deal by going ahead," whereas "failure to do so at this juncture would be disastrous both to our relations with Pakistan and to the position of the present pro-American Pakistani Government. It would probably also be disastrous to our standing with the other countries of Asia, who would assume we had backed down in the face of Indian threats."⁵²

At White House meetings on January 5 and 14, Eisenhower made the final decision to proceed with the Pakistani aid program. As he assented to the program, the

⁵⁰ Record of conversation between Dulles and Eden, Dec. 7, 1953, FO 371/106937, Records of the Foreign Office.

⁵¹ Memoranda of discussion at National Security Council meetings, Dec. 16 and 23, 1953, NSC Series, Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers.

⁵² Dulles to Eisenhower, memorandum, "Meetings with the President 1954" folder, White House Memoranda Series, John Foster Dulles Papers (Eisenhower Library). The memorandum is undated, but it was most likely written in early January 1954, probably as a briefing paper for the meeting of January 5.

president emphasized his concern about reactions in India and directed that every possible public and private means be used to ease its impact there.⁵³

On February 24 Eisenhower instructed Ambassador Allen to deliver a conciliatory letter to Nehru, explaining the broader strategic rationale for the United States decision to aid the Pakistanis and insisting that the program was directed solely against Communist expansion, not against India. The next day the White House issued a press release containing the text of the president's letter as well as a statement by Eisenhower that reiterated the American assurances to India. Indian criticism of the decision to aid Pakistan was nonetheless severe, as Nehru repeatedly condemned the pact and accused the United States of bringing the Cold War to the subcontinent. The ensuing rift between Washington and New Delhi was a deep one; it strained relations between the two countries for the next several years.⁵⁴

Following Washington's announcement of its decision to provide Pakistan with military assistance, ties between the two countries developed rapidly. On April 2, 1954, Pakistan and Turkey concluded a mutual cooperation agreement, the pact that American officials hoped would serve as the nucleus for a broader regional defense grouping. On May 19 the United States and Pakistan formally signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement. On September 19, Pakistan became a founding member of SEATO. The following year it joined the Baghdad Pact. Thus in a relatively brief time, Pakistan had gone from nominal nonalignment to become a key anchor in the United States-sponsored global network for the containment of the Soviet Union.

Critics of the American-Pakistani alliance in the United States and abroad—and they were numerous—almost immediately charged the Eisenhower administration with a major political and strategic blunder. They contended that the agreement would deeply alienate India and Afghanistan, force those two nations to turn to the Soviet Union for military support, foster an arms race in the subcontinent, and foreclose prospects for the peaceful settlement of regional disputes. Some of those charges appear overdrawn. It seems simplistic to place primary responsibility for South Asia's endemic political and security problems on the United States; it would surely take a leap of faith to believe that an amicable resolution of the Kashmir dispute, for example, would have occurred if not for the American decision to arm Pakistan. Nonetheless, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the American-Pakistani military alliance was based on a deeply flawed strategic vision. Not only did the pact contribute to many of the unfortunate results noted above, but its sup-

⁵³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, XI, pt. 2, 1838–39; memorandum of conversation between Dulles, Eisenhower, Wilson, and Harold E. Stassen, Jan. 5, 1954, "Meetings with the President 1954" folder, White House Memoranda Series, Dulles Papers (Eisenhower Library); *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, IX, pt. 1, 453–54.

⁵⁴ Robert Murphy to Eisenhower, memorandum, Feb. 16, 1954, file 790D.5-MSP/2-1654, Records of the Department of State; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, XI, pt. 2, 1735–39; U.S. Department of State, *Bulletin*, March 15, 1954, pp. 400–401; Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, II, 183–89.

posed *raison d'être*—as the opening wedge in an overall plan for defending the Middle East against Soviet aggression—proved illusory.

Some American specialists in South Asian affairs, including Ambassadors Bowles and Allen, had cautioned against such a pact for precisely those reasons. They had been joined by senior British policy makers whose attempts to dissuade the United States from arming Pakistan were as persistent as they were unavailing. Bowles well captured the skeptics' principal fears in a personal letter to Dulles of December 30, 1953. "I believe we will isolate Pakistan," he wrote, "draw the Soviet Union certainly into Afghanistan and probably into India, eliminate the possibility of Pakistan-Indian or Pakistan-Afghan rapprochement, further jeopardize the outlook for the Indian Five Year Plan, increase the dangerous wave of anti-Americanism throughout India and other South Asian countries, open up explosive new opportunities for the Soviet Union, gravely weaken the hopes for stable democratic government in India, and add nothing whatsoever to our military strength in this area."⁵⁵

The response from Dulles, while perfunctory, is revealing. "As you know from your own experience," the secretary of state wrote Bowles in January 1954, "one rarely has the luxury in diplomacy of being able to choose a course of action which is all on the 'credit' side of the ledger and entails no 'debits' at all." With respect to the subcontinent, he continued, "we shall do our utmost to see that the benefits of any action we take outweigh the difficulties."⁵⁶

From Dulles's perspective the advantages of an alliance with Pakistan clearly outweighed any potential drawbacks. He was evidently convinced that military aid to Pakistan would serve the overriding strategic objective of containing Soviet expansion into a region of vital national interest. Consequently, the Eisenhower administration could dismiss with equanimity the alternative perspective offered by some of its own top experts on South Asian affairs and by its leading ally. But how, specifically, would Pakistani adherence to a weak regional organization help stabilize the Middle East? How, precisely, would Pakistani troops help thwart a Soviet military incursion into the region? And what, realistically, was the likelihood of such an incursion? The failure of United States planners to confront those fundamental questions suggests that the American strategic vision remained curiously inchoate and inconsistent. One searches through the voluminous American planning documents in vain for a more concrete explanation of the role that Pakistan was expected to play in the containment of Soviet influence and power.

Pakistan, on the other hand, sought arms and alignment for a quite concrete purpose: to protect itself against India, its chief regional rival. Any assessment of the American military commitment to Pakistan would be incomplete without a careful consideration of Pakistani diplomacy. Since 1947 Karachi's leaders had eagerly—and skillfully—courted Washington, always making it clear that military aid would be their price for cooperation with the West. A clever combination of public diplomacy and newspaper leaks late in 1953 virtually forced the Eisenhower administration's

⁵⁵ Bowles to Dulles, Dec. 30, 1953, folder 192, box 130, Bowles Papers.

⁵⁶ Dulles to Bowles, Jan. 14, 1954, *ibid.*

hand. Pakistan was most definitely not pulled reluctantly into an American empire. Nor, despite its persistent pleas, did it seek protection out of a genuine fear of the Soviet Union. Rather, this episode demonstrates how a peripheral state could at times take advantage of East-West tensions for its own purposes.

Pakistan's leaders could benefit from those tensions, but Pakistani desires and maneuvers never determined American policy. The principal reason for the American military commitment to Pakistan lay in Washington's conception of its own interests, interests that were defined almost exclusively, if imprecisely, in strategic terms. Driven by fears of Soviet power and Middle Eastern vulnerability, American planners coveted Pakistan as a significant military asset to the West for Cold War and hot war purposes. Pakistan actively courted a security relationship with the United States; the marriage was consummated, however, only because American officials believed that it well served American geopolitical needs.