

The Estey

Journal of International Law and Trade Policy

Abstract

Megatrends Affecting Air Transport – Connecting the Dots

Ruwantissa Abeyratne

Senior Associate, Aviation Strategies International

The air transport world is fast moving toward an evidence- and data-based approach with a view to facing the forces that drive our existential lives. Called megatrends, these forces portend a world that will be riven by the rapid evolution of current trends that leaders of the aviation world will have to contend with over the next 25 to 30 years. These trends are already among us and will evolve in significance. In the context of the aviation industry a reckonable fact is that by 2020 the global middle class will number 3 billion people, and the aviation industry will be able to connect with them all through the smart devices in their pockets. By 2020, 21 billion network devices will be in use – up from 2 billion just a decade ago. Mobile technology, cloud computing, data analytics, biotech and genomics, and artificial intelligence are all advancing rapidly. Consequently, one can expect growth opportunities related to aircraft digitization and new high-performance materials, as well as hybrid engines and 3-D printing. As this article discusses, although information technology is one of the most pervasive megatrends, others such as the shift of global trends, demographic change, climate change, and other trends and drivers are intertwined. This article discusses the megatrends in their various linkages and argues that law and regulation are key elements in managing these trends and ensuring that whatever the buzzwords might be in modern usage and however much they would facilitate the functioning of a rapidly changing world, they must be properly regulated.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, aviation; climate change, connectivity, demography, geo-politics, ICAO, information technology, megatrends

*Editorial Office: Estey Journal of International Law and Trade Policy, College of Law,
University of Saskatchewan, 15 Campus Dr., Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5A6, Canada
Phone (306) 966-6879; email: estey.j.editor@usask.ca*