

**Consuming Empire: Food Aid, Hunger,  
and Benevolence in the Cold War Asia and Pacific**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

To Mom and Dad, whose love knows no bounds.

To Calvin, whom I love more than anything in this universe.

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As a glass half-empty person, I can tell you that the life of a graduate student is no day at the beach. A typical workday is likely filled with some variation of existential screams, spiraling thoughts of self-doubt, and late-night dances with scholarly ghosts in a haze of insomnia. Thankfully, in the face of that black void of mental anguish, there are the people that yank you back from the abyss and anchor you to a place of momentary solace. So, to all the people that made the hell of graduate school more livable, I want to express my sincerest gratitude.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces legacies of imperial intervention and cultures of debt in Asia and the Pacific Islands during the Cold War by reading U.S. food aid as an imperial discourse and an integral component to the infrastructure of U.S. colonial governance. Through a close reading of literary, cultural, and state narratives and archives, I examine the imbricated projects of military intervention and humanitarian assistance in three sites—South Korea, the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and Hawai‘i—places that hold distinct legal and political relationships to the United States. I argue that the interpellative pull of U.S. might is not only through military muscle, but also through the psychic and biopolitical impact of food assistance and aid rooted in Cold War legislation.

Drawing from Asian American studies, American studies, diplomatic history, and postcolonial literary studies, this dissertation works at the intersection of several fields of inquiry to address questions of how hegemony and power are constituted, negotiated, and even contested. I argue that Asian and Pacific Islander literary and cultural productions comprise a counter-archive that undermines benevolent claims of American foreign policy and imperial governance. In these sources, I show how food serves as both an escapist fantasy and a material necessity that enables cultures of violence, control, and exploitative labor in the foreign and “domestic” spaces of U.S. dominion. Literary and cultural performances, I argue, present not



only an alternative historiography of liberation and Cold War rescue that the archives attest, but a generative space for creative imaginings and a site for alternative political and coalitional futurities.

This dissertation argues that official historiographies of “liberation” and Cold War rescue through food assistance constitute a colonial discourse that masks American empire. In four chapters, I examine several flashpoints of the Cold War—the Korean War, the U.S. administration of the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, and Hawai‘i statehood—to argue how American benevolence work to render colonialism invisible. I contend that U.S. food aid from American agricultural surplus, dispersed through various legislative pipelines, comprise an imperial feeding infrastructure.

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Growing up in Hawai‘i in the 1980s as the child of immigrants who left South Korea in the late 1970s, I have always felt a marked difference between my family and the “local” Asians in my hometown of Mililani—in respect to family histories and differing senses of place. In Mililani, a town largely composed of families that had settled many generations earlier on the pineapple and sugar plantations of central Oahu, my parents’ so-called “fresh off the boat” status as immigrants seemed to stand out among a community of people that had assimilated long ago.

As children born during the Korean War, my parents filled my suburban childhood with stories of war, tales and memories filled with *kosaeng* (고생): suffering and hardship. It is a common story of generational divide—immigrant parents coming to America, telling their children that they should be grateful for everything that they have. In fact, the narrative is so common that one could say it is a tale as old as America itself.

My parents grew up in poverty at a time when food was scarce, a fact of life they never let me or my brother forget.

“Finish your food,” my father would say, “because children in North Korea are starving.”

“Don’t throw any away,” my mother ordered. “When we were young, there was no food to waste!”

“We ate meat only once a year,” they would tell us. “There were no such thing as vegetarianism; we were all vegetarians by default.”

It didn't help that my maternal grandfather, who had come to live with us after my grandmother died in 1984, corroborated these stories. Grandpa, who was born and raised in Pyongyang, had lost his first family—a wife and two sons—during the war, only to end up searching for them for the rest of his life. They were never reunited. Grandpa was grateful for the life he had in Hawai'i with his new friends at the Wahiawa Korean Seniors club, located just behind the Seoul Inn restaurant on California Avenue. He was a quiet man and, more often than not, it was the silences that revealed the well of sorrow for all that he was forced to leave behind.

But these stories were not limited to my immediate family. Circulating among both my extended family and the larger Korean community of Oahu was an overarching narrative of refuge in the United States, one filled with a sense of gratitude for the benevolence and charity that brought them to American shores. According to this line of thinking, the United States had saved the southern half of the Korean peninsula from becoming communist, rescued them personally from starvation and poverty, and helped South Korea become the success story and paradigmatic example of democracy it is today. This narrative comes in direct contrast to the backwardness and “loser” status of the failed state of North Korea. Thus, the Korean War (1950-53) was understood as the United States saving Koreans from themselves; specifically, from the idiot troublemakers of the north who started a fight with an unassuming and peaceful south.

As pervasive as this interpretation may be, it is important to turn back the clock to understand why. The dovetailing of American liberation from the Japanese at the close of World War II in 1945 serves as a pivotal framework to grasp the magnitude of this narrative of American assistance and rescue. Japanese occupation from 1910-1945, the subsequent American

liberation of the Korean peninsula from the Japanese, and the U.S.-led war against communism of the Korean War of 1950-53 all serve as important national flashpoints that inform the prevailing collective consciousness of U.S.-directed gratitude. With the decades of aid from the U.S. and a national education policy reflective of Manichean Cold War bipolarity, a narrative of American munificence followed Koreans both in the peninsula and in the diaspora.

My grandparents' experiences and day-to-day life under Japanese occupation cannot be easily dismissed as a distant, antiquated past, but instead serve as a living and operative narrative that informs and energizes the ongoing story of U.S.-led assistance and liberation. The sequential chapters of Japanese occupation and American-supported independence inform the memory of Korean subjectivity in powerful and syncretic ways. Gratitude toward American assistance continues to resonate in the memory of my grandparents' and parents' generations, producing a deeply felt sense of indebtedness, despite the grainy imperfections of political realities. Indeed, attention to Japanese colonialism and American liberation in Asia and the Pacific by scholars such as Vincente M. Diaz, Keith Camacho, Takashi Fujitani, and Lisa Yoneyama (specifically, the latter's edited anthology *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* from 2001) speak to such politics of memory and inform my understanding of the widespread resonance of this very phenomenon.

Memory and narrative falter in many ways, underscoring certain details while eliding others, omitting crucial elements that could portray a more holistic and even complicated version of events and reality. For example, despite its anti-communist credo, the culmination of South Korea as a state-building project through American assistance did not bring to fruition the paradigmatic place of glory and freedom for its citizens. In fact, it was quite repressive, with horror stories brought to light of South Korea's regime of state violence against political

dissenters who dared challenge extreme rightist militarism. Scholarship by Bruce Cumings, Dong-Choon Kim, and other critical scholars of modern postwar Korean history show the abject and repressive nature of the South Korean government, a history which touts merciless repression in the name of anti-communism and free market development. It comes as no surprise then that immigration to the United States and migration away from South Korea, in this context, can be understood to accompany a sense of affective relief for many.

This sense of gratitude and remembrance is something that lives on today albeit in faded and distorted forms, crystallizing in the collective memory of the Korean diaspora of a certain generation. In recollections of American rescue, food serves as a common touchstone. Anecdotes of cornbread handouts by Peace Corps volunteers, tales of churches doling out candy and milk to children, and the discreet whispers of an occasional white bread sandwich given by an American G.I. meandering through local neighborhoods pepper not only my family narratives but also the literary landscapes of Korean and Korean American fiction and memoir. American kindness through food indeed seared lasting impressions on a national and transnational scale—enough to shape the memories of many Koreans and remain with those who migrated outside the Korean peninsula.

For those displaced by the war and their children, *diaspora*—that shifting, uneasy, ambiguously fluid, and often romanticized term—denotes a sense of dispersal and longing for home, living away from a place to which one does not often return. The term invokes an invisible tether to a sense of home or homeland. *Gratitude*, a term which rests on an idea of debt and indebtedness, in this context within relation to American benevolence, plays a role in inculcating a particular affect among the Korean diaspora—that is, *gratitude* as an anticipated affective impact on the receiving end of mass assistance and aid. How can a people, even a

generation removed feel a sense of gratitude or expectant gratitude despite the temporal and spatial distance from liberation? I have even been witness to Korean Americans of my own generation (born in the U.S. in the 1980s), who were raised in the United States yet possess and articulate this inherited politics of gratitude towards the United States. Yes, there are Korean Americans who are not only deferential to the accepted historiography of Americans saving Koreans, but take it even further by curiously thanking Korean War veterans in the most genuflecting and grateful of terms.

What is gratitude-infused historiography and memory indicative of? What does it divulge about a benevolence-fused method of militarism and colonialism, and what does it reveal about the communities who pass on this narrative? Asian American studies scholar Mimi Nguyen frames her book *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (2012) with a similar question in response to the curious phenomenon of “the gift of freedom” and American liberation, particularly regarding Vietnamese refugees. For Nguyen, “the contemporary political life of this empire goes by the name *the gift of freedom*, a world shaping concept describing struggles aimed at freeing peoples from unenlightened forms of social organization through fields of power and violence.”<sup>1</sup> Nguyen wonders, “Why are we—those of us who have received this precious, poisonous gift of freedom—obliged to thank? What powers oblige us?”<sup>2</sup> As in the case of Vietnam, the Korean War originated as a struggle of political visions and produced Cold War-era Korean American diasporas, simultaneously creating a historically contingent, peculiar, and yet powerful sense of indebtedness, while often eliding the facts of America’s hand in the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Nguyen, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

This dissertation investigates this historically contingent form of gratitude and attempts to make sense of the legacies of U.S. military and humanitarian benevolence and their impacts in multiple sites of overlapping empires and diasporas in Asia and the Pacific. For many Koreans of a certain generation, there exists a dual sense of gratefulness and relief about an escape from not only the brutal hardships of the war but the imagined future hardships that would have been faced had they remained in Korea. This comingled sense of gratitude and release follows them to locales such as Oahu, a place that carries so many overlapping and coexisting colonial legacies. Tracking communities in diaspora as well as indigenous rooted and routedness, my dissertation poses the question: what does it mean that communities have shared or distinct colonial histories which are being contended with, made sense of, and resisted on a day-to-day basis in a shared location in space?

This curious experience of colonial *proximity* and *distance* through circumstances of diaspora, settling, and rerouting, lies at the heart of what I call the American empire in the Pacific. Honolulu, a place where so many imperial interventions come to roost, is a single site of many overlapping narratives, different points of origin, and crisscrossing coordinates of U.S. benevolence. In setting off the push-and-pull migration patterns behind the very routes of Cold War diasporas, how, I ask, can American empire create such proximities between people, but render distance and invisibility at the same time? How can empire be invisible and even illegible? Throughout the dissertation, I confront the problem of imperial amnesia, investigating how it is produced, sustained, and contested.

That empire exists everywhere and nowhere, remaining visible at each turn and yet invisible in textbooks are contradictions driving this inquiry. My dissertation is rooted in a desire to understand the many inconsolable, incommensurate, and unbridgeable divides amongst lived

realities in Hawai‘i, as well as within disciplinary formations and fields of knowledge. This project attempts to make sense of these contradictions by bringing imbedded insights and experience to a sustained reading of a disparate set of archives. Growing up in Hawai‘i provides a historically particular vantage point not only for thinking about the Cold War and American empire in Asia and the Pacific, but also in grappling with the many narratives that make up the social memory of a given place.

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*Consuming Empire: Food Aid, Hunger, and Benevolence in Cold War Asia and Pacific* presents a sustained contemplation and inquiry into American cultures of colonialism and infrastructures of imperial governance forged during the Cold War (1947-1991) with repercussions on the political present in sites within Asia and the Pacific Islands. Through a number of avenues, I examine how American foreign policy through food assistance and humanitarian aid in the wake of World War II had a drastic impact on the lives of people within the oceanic Pacific peripheries of American empire. I excavate food aid and discourse by way of American foreign and domestic policy during the Cold War in what ostensibly became constructed as the “American Pacific”—that is, the American Pacific as not a natural location, pinpointable on a world map, but a geopolitical construction and political project of American imperial governance. This definition could include any nation currently or formerly under political control by the United States, including the Philippines (which gained independence in 1946); Guam, an American unincorporated territory; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; American Samoa; the Federated States of Micronesia; the Republic of Palau;



and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (the latter three in associated in trust relationship). To this point, literary and cultural studies scholars such as John R. Eperjesi, Chris Connery, Rob Wilson, and Arif Dirlik have teased out the cultural baggage of the issue of naming the Pacific that problematically utilizes umbrella terms to refer to a wide stretch of space as the “Pacific Rim,” “Asia-Pacific,” as well as “Euro-American Pacific,” and the “American Pacific” among other place names. Furthermore, Epeli Hau‘ofa’s articulations of Oceania includes the Pacific Islands that often get sidelined in discussions of the “Pacific Rim,” which focuses more on the continental hegemons of the U.S. and Australia, as well as economic powerhouses of Asia (Japan, Taiwan, China). For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use the term Asia and the Pacific Islands. These scholars have outlined how the American Pacific is an imagined idea of space, contingent on the naturalization of American colonial and military conquest from the nineteenth century to the present. American expansion and consolidation of the nation state in the nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth were the antecedents of Cold War projects of oceanic expansions and militarized cementings of power.

I examine Asian and Pacific Islander cultural productions in the wake of Cold War humanitarian rescues generated by various sites of U.S. military and colonial “intervention.” I explore three sites of American imperial benevolence including the following: the Korean War and its aftermath, the U.S. administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (or TTPI; 1947-1986), and the Hawaiian Islands which currently stands as the fiftieth star on the American flag since the granting of statehood in 1959. Tracing distinct, yet interconnected legacies of imperial involvement during the Cold War, I find a common thread of food policies and aid tactics accompanying military interventions. These, in turn, jeopardized state sovereignties, shaped political relations, and impacted political subjectivities throughout Asia and the Pacific

Islands. The creation of a relationship of food dependence and subsequent imperial interdependence at a state level presents a critical site of analysis in thinking about colonial infrastructures that inform and empower imperial hegemony.

Delving into U.S. state archives, I also examine and offer a critique of state-generated discourses of Cold War narrativization that narrowly frames political discourse by short-circuiting the multitude of voices across a wide oceanic expanse. Such state-generated discourses include narratives of liberation, receipts of American assistance, and demonstrations of humanitarian care for impoverished people in the Korean peninsula, Micronesian atolls, and Hawaiian Islands. I have selected these three sites because of their varying degrees of U.S. colonial relationality within Asia and the Pacific in the twentieth century. A U.S. state (Hawai‘i), a divided yet sovereign nation (South Korea), and a region comprised of islands that hold varying sovereign statuses (Micronesia)—these three sites, together and in assemblage, constitute a way of thinking comparatively and collectively about U.S. hegemonic forms. Additionally, the shared currency of strategic militarized importance for U.S. national security jeopardizes the sovereignty of these states, and the diasporas within and across these regions contain significant populations with comparative colonial memories and palimpsestic colonial histories.

By juxtaposing state discourses with counternarratives of local and indigenous voices, I find a powerful critique of American foreign policy and searing contradictions undergirding the logic of American imperial control. My dissertation tracks not only how people are critiquing, resisting, and addressing imperial encroachments in a one-way dialogue, but are also speaking amongst one another and, at times, forming, a collective vocalization of dissent. Throughout my dissertation, I argue that the cultural expressions and performances I examine here offer critiques

of imperial governance and the shortcomings of colonial infrastructures, while generating alternative frameworks of independence and survival.

### **Food Aid History and Framing**

When examining the multiple flashpoints of American foreign involvement abroad, one discovers the striking co-presence of humanitarian intervention and the project of military intervention or “liberation.” In other words, liberation is almost always accompanied by both physical violence and (staged) acts of purported care.<sup>3</sup> Among these acts of assistance, food is typically one of the first items present.

The discourses and literature surrounding American food aid during the Cold War era constitute a body of state literature and a state narrative of its own that are worthy of and long overdue for critical analysis. The term “food aid” refers to consumable and edible humanitarian assistance distributed by the United States and its arm-affiliate organizations from World War II to throughout the Cold War era and today. This includes various military aid, foreign assistance, emergency and disaster relief, and even federal assistance of welfare to places deemed domestic. Along with foreign policy, food aid presents a rich site in the arena of U.S. Cold War politics with multiple implications for American and ethnic studies. Food aid, I argue in this dissertation, serves as a sizable body of literature and state discourse that links up with other liberation narratives and fictions of WWII and the Cold War. Together, these symbiotically create a

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<sup>3</sup> It is often true that when the United States goes to war, moral obligations of caring for the needy are conjured as reasons to justify the mission. This remains true for the moral obligations of the Korean War, Vietnam War, and even the subsequent Gulf Wars after the official end of the Cold War.

powerful, iron-clad story of American benevolence that cuts through political divides and informs both hegemonic cleavages and modes of consent.

This dissertation critiques discourses of American benevolence and liberation through food assistance from an assemblage of Asian and Pacific Islander literary expressions as well as state-produced literature of food dependency. Asian and Pacific Islander literary productions include the site-specific literature and poetics of Native Hawaiian, Micronesian, and Korean diasporic voices across the Cold War landscape of Asia and the Pacific Islands. Tracking by region and sites of interventions, I evaluate a constellation of primary sources, including the following: the official language of U.S. diplomatic policy, United Nations literature and film, performative acts of gift-giving both at the federal and international level to needy recipients or what I call “staged benevolence,” and the evidentiary archiving of aid given, what I term the “receipts of rescue.” Within the archives, innumerable receipts, relics, ephemera of consumable presents and edible aid are scattered throughout countless files, boxes, reports, and memos. Through this assemblage, I argue that food aid operates within the narrative circuits of American benevolence. Rather than being a byproduct or an accompaniment of military intervention, my study contends that food aid is always already a weaponized part of the artillery of war and empire-making. In other words, food aid works alongside, becomes entangled with, and symbiotically gains traction through other state discourses to form a circuitry of imperial infrastructure that undergirds U.S. administration, dominance, and hegemony.

I view food aid as both an event and a discourse, whereby actual food stuffs being dropped and dispersed in addition to the discussions and public relations of food aid, work together in creating a powerful narrative of American capitalist Cold War moral superiority and munificence. The language of American bounty, philanthropy, and warm-hearted charity surface

as hallmarks of its democracy, reflective of American moral, ideological (i.e. capitalist), and economic dominance.

The relationship between militarism and humanitarianism or humanitarianism in the wake of militarism is a twentieth century American phenomenon. Indeed, one of the greatest compliments bestowed on the U.S. coming out of WWII was how the United States departed from previous victors of World War I in its treatment of former foes such as Germany and Japan. Instead of “punishing” these former enemy states, as charged of the western powers with Germany coming out of the first World War through unpayable “reparation” costs and debt (which historians contend served as a major precipitator and antecedent of WWII), the United States invested in developing and rebuilding the economies of its former nemeses to create alliances in the economic ideology of free market capitalism as an expression of freedom and peace, in direct contrast to communism.

During the close of World War II, the United States and the newly formed United Nations partnered in addressing famine and emergency relief in war-torn areas of Europe, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency, the arm organization of the United Nations addressing food and medical relief (closed in 1947), and the Marshall Plan (1948-51) were widely credited with saving Germans famished from war. The Berlin Airlift in 1948-49 presented an iconic display of U.S. and allied response to the Soviet blockade of food, water, and supplies to West Berlin in the midst of these tensions. By delivering assistance aerially, the U.S. demonstrated its commitment to humanitarian assistance by its Naval and Air Force power.<sup>4</sup> These displays in conjunction with the operation of wide-scale

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<sup>4</sup> This event was highly visible and publicized to western audiences. For the significance on UNRRA, I am informed by Kaete M. O’Connell’s “Hunger and the Hard Peace: Food Relief in Occupied Germany,” a paper from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) Annual Meeting, June 2015. Also, archival footage

humanitarian food credit and aid programs across the developing Third World through Public Law 480 laid the foundation for one of the United States' great touted achievements during the Cold War: the feeding of millions of people.

While no clear and direct analogue to the Marshall Plan existed in Asia and the Pacific, the U.S. military filled in its role of relief and assistance from the close of WWII and the transition to the Cold War. In Asia and the Pacific Islands, the U.S. occupying-cum-liberating military and United Nations relief organizations and U.S. Navy assisted in addressing the humanitarian crises of famine, sickness, and need. There were near innumerable shipments of rations, food, clothing, and blankets distributed to people around the world. Indeed, the volume and extent of care sent abroad and distributed in war zones and allied locations were impressive. Supplies included food items such as tea, milk, salt, corn beef, salmon, rice, and sugar. Even non-food items were provided, including everyday toiletries such as combs, soaps, and razors.<sup>5</sup> To this, the invoices of the American military and associated relief organizations index and archive the volume and extent of care sent beyond the shores of U.S. soil, a point to which I will return.

## **Literature Review**

One of the crucial issues that drives this study rests on the problem of colonial amnesia as a national narrative that has transnational repercussions covering a wide stretch of interethnic communities in variant spatial-temporalities (in psychic and material ways). The forgetting and

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and documentary of Air Force relief by the Department of Defense, "Airlift, Working for Humanity" (1979), provides an abbreviated history of five decades of U.S. Airlifts.

<sup>5</sup> RG 313 Records of Naval Operating Force, Folder "Military Government Supplies Ex SS Michael Casey."

cluelessness enfolded within our historiography and day-to-day lives generate colonial and national amnesias in a place not unproblematically known as the “American Pacific,” “Asia-Pacific,” or the “Pacific Rim.” How does the story of an American Pacific get told and who gets to tell it? What role do commemorations, performances, and legal literature have in legitimizing particular narratives? And how do indigenous and non-indigenous settlers of the American Pacific engage in conversations about empire and relate with one another, not just to empire writ large?

That American empire is at the very foundation of the United States is an axiomatic point of departure in this study to understand and view American benevolence as a colonial extension of an always already imperial ontology. I am indebted to early scholars of American studies who have articulated the very notion of American empire as a point of departure—that indeed the United States and its sovereignty are premised on Native American dispossession and genocide, the enslavement of African bodies, the acquisition and colonization of indigenous lands using conscripted if not coerced labor, and overseas coups and annexations resulting in its colonial expanse. In the essay “Imperial Anti-colonialism,” in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1962) American historian William Appleman Williams challenges the traditional view that the United States “has been anti-imperialist throughout its history” and subverts the myth of America’s so-called anti-colonial tradition by highlighting the nation’s foundational imperial history.<sup>6</sup> Williams contends that the myth of a foundational “anti-imperialist America” becomes undone when considering the range of nineteenth-century U.S. economic policies (the Monroe Doctrine for the Western Hemisphere in 1823 and the Open Door Policy with China in 1899) and the violent actions of Native displacement enacted by the United States that speak to the

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<sup>6</sup> Williams *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 117.

contrary.<sup>7</sup>

Critical historian in American studies Richard W. Van Alstyne also noted in *The Rising American Empire* (1960) that within the U.S., “It is almost a heresy to describe the nation as an empire...The concept of an American empire disappeared with the War between the States, but the consolidation of national power that followed that war meant that it was more than ever an actuality.”<sup>8</sup> Alstyne further highlights the United States’ early claims to the Pacific, where “the notion of a pre-emptive right to the continent was given legal affirmation by the first Colonial charters, which designated the Pacific Ocean, or the South Sea as it was then called, as the western boundary of the several colonies.”<sup>9</sup> The narrative of imperial denial is a marked characteristic of United States historiography tracing back to the republican rhetoric of the Revolutionary period.

In the 1990s, interdisciplinary literary critic Amy Kaplan, who coedited *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, also highlighted the gaping absences that contribute to the recurring denial of U.S. imperial history across the disciplines. “In *Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture*,” she tabulates the absences in the study of colonialism, specifically the exceptionalism of “the absence of empire from the study of American culture” and “the absence of the United States from the postcolonial study of imperialism.”<sup>10</sup> Thankfully, much scholarship since the publication of that seminal text heeded the call of critiquing American exceptionalism and American studies and ethnic studies pulls from and engages this critique across disciplinary formations.

Postcolonial literature has often been thought of in terms of European “post-colony”

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 125-128.

<sup>8</sup> Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>10</sup> Kaplan, *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, 11.



sites. Jodi Byrd's *Transit of Empire* (2011) demonstrates the paradigm shift of thinking about the U.S. as an imperial site in postcolonial studies, with the inclusion of Native American and Indigenous cultural forms as part of this genre. Byrd goes beyond binaries of colonizer/colonized while making room for the extremely nuanced triangulations of power in settler colonial presents wherein fictional narratives are produced. Asian American and Pacific Islander literatures—not typically read as postcolonial but often read under minority literatures or multiethnic American literature—track migrations, movements, and military conscriptions of the twentieth century that exceed the categorization of postcolonial studies. This scholarship informs my readings of texts to reveal the contradictions of imperial aftermath, including Native soldiers, Asian U.S. servicemen, embrace of empire, interethnic tension, racism, and what Andy Smith calls “the oppression Olympics” amongst some communities of color.<sup>11</sup>

For theories of empire, I am indebted to the thought-provoking scholarship of cultural studies and postcolonial studies. Edward Said's articulation of colonialism and narrative inform my understanding of power, culture, and knowledge production of discourse.<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault's conception of biopower informs my understanding of how power can be conceptualized in forms other than dictates by sovereign powers to kill and die, but one that includes the allowance of “let to live,” albeit on compromised terms.<sup>13</sup> The idea of empire as something not monolithic and oppressive (by force or coercion), but given consent to—as Stuart Hall has read Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony—have been critical in enriching my understanding and curiosity of how imperial maneuver and infrastructure operate and succeed. Cultural studies, by way of the Birmingham school, the UC Santa Cruz model, and Native Pacific Cultural Studies, has

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<sup>11</sup> Andy Smith's essay “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing” from *Color of Violence: the INCITE! Anthology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (1976)

remained useful for me in thinking about hegemony, its formations and contestations, and the shifting power relations that are ever-changing, fluid, and articulatory given sociocultural and geopolitical context.

American and ethnic studies and a departure from a more traditional literary studies has inspired me to examine different genres of text, not just those deemed literary in nature, i.e. novels, theater, and poetics. Archives of national and regional libraries that house the relics and evidentiary materials of imperial pasts and presents are included in my study and analysis. I attempt to bring insights to this study that people solely looking at archives will not necessarily connect and vice versa, for those scholars looking strictly only at literary materials and cultural performances.

While some scholars of multiethnic American literature focus on food within literary landscapes and life worlds within novels and texts, I seek to open the possibility of weaving food aid history to enrich meaning and understanding of such instantiations and appearances across Asian and Pacific Islander texts. Indeed, scholars of Asian American studies examine the significance of food in cultural texts and have fleshed out the racial, classed, and gendered implications of food and its invocations as operating within networks of power.<sup>14</sup> I explore and expand upon food's colonial lineage, specifically through food aid history during the Cold War, and how reading such a lineage will open new readings and understandings of texts, relations, and meaning.

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<sup>14</sup> Anita Mannur, Martin Manalansan, Jennifer Ho, Robert Ku, and others have laid a foundation upon of Asian American cultural criticism by examining various geographies and valences of food. See *Eating Asian America: A Reader* (New York University Press, 2013), *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2010), and *Consumption and Identity in Asian American Coming-of-Age Novels* (Routledge Press, 2005).

The study of American food aid as a colonial legacy is virtually absent in contemporary studies of U.S. colonialism, in theorizations of hegemony and empire in American Studies, and in scholarly projects of food studies and cultures of debt within Asian American and Pacific Islander studies. Food aid, in conjunction with an optic of hunger as framing analytics are left unaddressed or under-theorized even though in many ways, these legacies are constantly present. For this study and my area of inquiry, thinking of the relationship between humanitarian aid—specifically food aid—and cultures of debt (in the wake of liberation histories) provides a generative framework for thinking about modes of colonialism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This dissertation takes into serious consideration the role of humanitarian aid and assistance as a tactic of colonial regimentation.

Food aid history inevitably leads me to the study of American humanitarianism as it is linked with Cold War projects of benevolence and benevolent projection. Much of the historiography of food is couched within scholarship on development, humanitarian aid, and even (no surprise) triumphalist Cold War narratives of American generosity. Some texts must be read against the grain, or, to phrase it another way—narratives of selflessness and altruism need to be taken with a grain of salt. That is not to suggest that people were not generous or selfless, but that any wholesale story of uplift and altruism should be met with skepticism and a multi-textured reading of such claims.

Recent scholarship on transpacific studies recognizes the multiple and crosscutting layers of different imperial experiences as well as the transnational exchange of capital, migration, and movement within the Pacific and Asia. An interdisciplinary field of Asian American studies, Asian studies, and Cold War studies along with the study of migration, capital, and labor—transpacific studies present a shift in terminology, focusing on non-elite actors, refugees, and

migrants in the wake of imperial intervention, migration, and movement that is not contingent on U.S. impact per se. In *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field* (2014) editors Viet Thanh Nguyen and Janet Hoskins state that the transpacific “offers a framework to explore ties between the ethnic homeland, the adopted home of present residence, and ‘ethnoscapes,’ or geographically dispersed coalitions of coethnics (see Appadurai 1996). In this sense, the idea of the transpacific is an intellectual and political project as well as an aspect of modern life in the twenty-first century.”<sup>15</sup> Taking cue from the legacies of Black Atlantic studies, which centers transatlantic networks within African and African American studies, transpacific studies present an uneasy analogy in its framing of the transpacific, as this could result in an unusual elision of concerns of indigeneity and ongoing colonial presents.<sup>16</sup> Transnational and transpacific in scope, my work addresses themes of migration and overlapping colonial legacies raised within this field.

I situate my work at the intersections of various fields of inquiry including American studies, Asian American studies, postcolonial literary studies, and Cold War history. My dissertation pulls from a range of interdisciplinary scholars critical of U.S. imperial formation and Cold War legacies who have concerns surrounding comparative colonial models such as Lisa Lowe, Lisa Yoneyama, Takashi Fujitani, Keith Camacho, and Vincente M. Diaz. These scholars’ pioneering work engage with overlapping colonial legacies as they inform political subjectivity in Asia and the Pacific Islands. Works of scholarship such as *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (2001), *Cultures of Commemoration* (2011), *Cold War Ruins* (2016), *Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015), and *Repositioning the Missionary* (2010) have been invaluable resources in shifting my understanding of colonial palimpsests. Meanwhile, scholars

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<sup>15</sup> Hoskins and Nguyen, *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field* (2014), 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

such as Melani McAlister, Jodi Kim, and Christina Klein and others have been critical in my understanding of the gendered and racialized frameworks of Cold War cultural production. In particular, Jodi Kim's *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (2010) presents a sustained critique of the racial and gendered formations within U.S. Cold War culture and historiography, while Melani McAlister's *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, And U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (2001), though not Asian and Pacific in scope, presents the critical work of popular culture in creating narratives of benevolence through a gendered U.S. supremacy.

### **Questions, Argument, and Method**

Food policy, benevolence, and notions of debt are key themes that I trace throughout this dissertation as it applies to and enacts violence on related, yet disparate sites. I argue that state distributions of food, both domestically and internationally, disrupt and unsettle knowledge of and expectations about the role of the “state”—as protector and provider of security and rights for citizens, and even as colonial master and governing body. Centering food as an analytic and a historically contingent issue challenges the narratives of do-good policy, disrupts justifications of imperial interventions, as well as reframes theorizations of American empire. And, fundamentally, centering food unsettles assumptions of what aid means for people.

I examine the role that memory and hunger play in the conceiving and constructing of ideology—be it conservative politics, a community's sense of debt, and even feelings of gratitude or resentment. I ask how hunger, memory, and the implicated feelings attached to colonial feeding and a colonization of tastes inform cultural production and the ways in which

those issues are even engaged publicly, privately, and collectively. Several questions drive this inquiry: What does the study of food reveal about contemporary colonial history and culture of the United States? What insights are revealed in thinking about the role of food in Cold War history as it was employed for political leverage? And to this issue of debt, what does it mean to be indebted? And by what means does one pay back empire?

This study examines different kinds of texts and moves between various genres of narrative, including the following: state archives, novels, poems, video performance of slam poetry, blog posts, and theatre, in addition to state-generated archival material including pamphlets, memos, official reports, manuals, film, photographs, and staged performances. I examine an extensive archive of official documents constituting what I call a state discourse of benevolence through food. These include literature and film from the United Nations, the United States military (including Navy and Air Force), and speeches and press of American foreign and domestic policy. The archives include documents and media found in the national archives and records administration storehouses (NARA). I have gathered and examined materials from the Eisenhower Library, the Pacific Collection at Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, the Pacific Territory archives at San Bruno, California, the national archives in College Park, Maryland, and the national archives in Kansas City, Missouri. The scattered nature of archives throughout the United States reflects the fractured and confused recordkeeping on the part of U.S. agencies. Pulling from various sites and libraries and examining numerous files of American colonial governance, I cull the volume of inventory and read these salient texts against the grain. Furthermore, I consider the ways in which such a disciplinary framing and categorization falls short and is not wholly adequate for grasping the intricacies and entanglements of American empire. For example, reading poetry from Emelihter Kihleng and

categorizing her book *My Urohs* (2008) as a postcolonial text, a work of multiethnic literature of the United States, or a voice of indigenous literary artistry may indeed be correct, but the naming and placing of texts and voices within certain banners frames and can limit the conversations that can take place. One must factor in a contextualization of migration, the colonial history of Pohnpei and Guam in the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, and the contemporary politics of classifying ethnic literatures to grasp a clearer picture surrounding the text and the worlds revealed therein.

I examine the role humanitarian food aid has on specific sites and communities, where food policies and aid continue to shape subjectivities and understandings of empire. Taking seriously the voices of Asian and Pacific Islanders, I turn to the literary and cultural expressions of Korean, Micronesian, and Native Hawaiian writers and activists, whose voices serve as interventions that disrupt narratives of benevolence and state-sanctioned care of the U.S.

In a way, this dissertation is an exploration and assemblage of a counter-archive that gives sound and sight to the expressions of communities within the peripheries of U.S. imperial governance, which has been rendered invisible through political framings of “dissent.” The method for both reading and moving throughout this dissertation is itself hybrid, mongrel, and assemblatory. I juxtapose archival and literary sites, showing the disconnect between narratives and pushing the reader to think about what these differences reveal. I approach poetry from a literary studies angle, where the art of close reading is tantamount to method itself, employing postcolonial and Native feminist methodologies and reading practices. I apply this same critical practice to the archive, where documents do not stand-in as facts and truth or mere evidence of events, information, and historical circumstance. Rather, I employ the critical methodologies of reading and critiquing the archive, as Lisa Lowe’s articulates in *Intimacies of Four Continents*.

Here, Lowe emphasizes the need for criticality in reading and approach, as the archive “mediates the imperatives of the state” and “subsumes colonial violence within narratives of modern reason and progress.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, rather than viewing the archive as a “stable, transparent collection of facts,” she cautions us to think of its relation to the “architecture...of the imperial state.”<sup>18</sup> In this spirit, I approach documents and official materials with caution, viewing these as sources in need of critique rather than as stand-in evidence. For instance, looking at the state archives of the Korean War, I find multiple references to humanitarian rescue of refugees through food distribution, relief rations, and medical stations across the files on the Eighth Army. Reading these memos alongside a novel such as Ahn Junghyo’s *Silver Stallion* (1986) presents a drastically different image of what that rescue looks like. Such a critical analysis and counterpoint are invaluable in approaching how one reads an archive. Indeed, regarding the politics of the archives, Angel Velasco Shaw, curator and co-editor of *Out of the Archive: Process and Progress* (2009), asks “How does an archive live? To me, an archive is not simply a repository of information and image to be utilized for scholarly and public research purposes. It is animate. It has a life of its own out of which we make many kinds of creations that have the potential to expose the processes of history.”<sup>19</sup> I take this critical reevaluation of the archives as a reading practice and as a methodological approach and gain inspiration by imagining the possibilities of new interpretive futures. Thinking of an archive as something animate and malleable is liberating because it also means that future framings and possibilities are not foreclosed. Taken together, Lowe and Shaw present a provocation to rethink the ways we read, assemble, and utilize the archive and think about the power of one form of material over another.

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<sup>17</sup> Lisa Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Angel Shaw, *Out of the Archive: Process and Progress*, 2.



This dissertation presents an intervention in monolithic narratives of state sanctioned aid. I interpret food aid as affectively bound to colonialism, liberation, and narratives of uplift. Culling through the national archives with its military and diplomatic language, unfamiliar to many, and examining texts generated from within these sites, I seek to make sense the lives and afterlives of those impacted by legacies of aid. This project is blend of literary studies, cultural studies, and food studies with a historically informed framework of thinking through cultural expressions, political presents, and possible futures.

All of these works has been chosen for inclusion in this dissertation due to their engagement with legacies of debt through food and for the ways in which they grapple with themes of military occupation, war, migration, and hunger. More broadly, multiethnic literature presents a site of protest, reclamation, and alternative possibility through engagement and articulation of violent histories. Asian American, Asian, and Pacific Islander literary and cultural productions speak for and give voice to political modes of expression (of dissent and sometimes even consent). Rather than categorizing these as contemporary postcolonial fictions with the U.S., I situate the writings within a genre of transnational protest narrative. Framed within critical ethnic studies, American studies, and Cold War history, I challenge the idea that these are mere multiethnic U.S. literature speaking back to empire, as in a postcolonial “writing back.”

In chapter two, “American Food Aid as an Imperial Discourse: Humanitarianism, ‘Surplus,’ and the Cold War,” I trace a genealogy of American aid, showing how Cold War food assistance was applicable to strategic sites of U.S. interests within Asia and the Pacific Islands. I argue that the agricultural surplus, undesirable in the U.S., was transformed and re-signified into a crafted image of benevolent foreign aid both at home and abroad. This food assistance,

particularly images of PL 480 or Food for Peace and emergency assistance, then in turn re-signified the face of war and occupation.

I show how the version of foreign aid of the early Cold War became tethered with American interests both at home and abroad during the 1950s and 1960s. The intersections between American self-interest at home financially through agricultural surplus disposal and internationally through stylized and self-fashioned projections of American bounty and generosity present a critical site for analysis. This chapter examines how state discourse of aid was tied with anti-communism along with claims about cultural tolerance and U.S. benevolence towards racial others in sites of American military interests.

Providing an overview of state discourses of food abundance, technology, and agriculture, I explore the political possibilities of exploiting that largesse. I then turn to that American archival culture that reveals the hoarding personality of what I call the “receipts of rescue”—that is, the inventory, invoices, and evidentiary paper trail of the bureaucratic, mundane, and seemingly inane musings in the stockpile of “receipts” documenting Americans helping others. In researching American archives, looking for insights into the culture of colonialism, I found thousands upon thousands of files of paperwork (of memos, graphs, correspondence) that document the sheer volume of purported food concerns during the early Cold War. I contend that these receipts of rescue are a legacy of American assistance and understand their production through examining print culture, United Nations and U.S. military films, political pamphlets, and military telegrams of assistance.

Chapter three, “The Korean War and the Debts of Food: Negotiations of Benevolence in Cultural Forms” examines Korean and Korean American articulations of war that include figurations of American assistance in literary and filmic representations. Through my analyses of

contemporary novels by Ahn Jung Hyo and Nora Okja Keller, I argue that food becomes a metonym for America and this food, as both the source of escapist fantasy and as material necessity, enables a culture of exploitative sexual labor.

The third chapter examines the event and aftermath of the Korean War. Often referred to as the “forgotten war” (or *the other* forgotten war, if one considers the Philippine-American War as the forgotten war), the 1950-53 conflict on the Korean peninsula exceeds the traditional chronological and spatial boundaries of the event and remains an epistemological issue of knowledge and discourse formation. This chapter will explore Korean and Korean American articulations of war recollections, including figurations of American assistance in literary and filmic representations. What are the affective responses to a life of anti-communist American-led liberation? Indebtedness, gratitude, silence? This will be explored through the analyses of works by contemporary novels by Ahn Jung Hyo and Nora Okja Keller. How do Koreans respond and internalize the official histories, state narratives, and then family stories (which are often in conflict) and how is this expressed in literary and filmic imaginaries of contemporary cultural production?

American benevolence in the archives will be revisited in this chapter. Whereas in chapter two, I will highlight the breadth of American food aid discourse as one inclusive of a needy Korea, this chapter picks up with the deliverance of American aid and generosity that feeds its needy Asian allies. State archives reveal a narrative of American generosity and goodwill while Korean and Korean American fiction, as an alternative archive, portray an oneiric and fraught affective relationship with such American largesse and pity. I explore this divide and consider issues of expectant affective gratitude alongside the legacy of food aid.

Chapter four, “All-Consuming Cold War Debts: Micronesian Poetics and the Legacies of Colonial Aid,” examines the ruptures that cultural and literary expression performs in the face of U.S. narratives of dependency in Micronesia. I argue that this battle rages on as the U.S. performs a continuous amnesia building through its repeated staged acts “gifting” the region, playing on ignorance to breed more ignorance.

The fourth chapter examines Micronesian poetics that contend with colonial narratives that continuously weave a dominant story of dependency since World War II. Poetry by Emelihter Kihleng and Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner ask readers to reexamine the way knowledge is produced and circulated about people, regions, and distinct communities within Micronesia and in the former and current Pacific island territories of the U.S. Furthermore, I examine contemporary cultural productions by Chamorro, Pohnpeian, and Marshallese artists to reflect on issues of invisibility within American empire. How is it that Micronesian history and voices get excluded from the frame of U.S. empire? And what significance does food play in addressing the legacies of American colonial governance of the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands?

In this chapter, I further examine the yearly recurring event of Operation Christmas Drop, juxtaposing it with colonial renderings of American rescue from earlier generations. The annual food aid drop by the American military onto remote Micronesian atolls, I argue, is packaged and framed as a holiday gift drive that both performs and sanitizes U.S. colonial violence from Cold War nuclear testing and imperial governance of a geopolitically carved-up Micronesia. In chapter five, “Hunger, Thirst, and the Biopolitical in Native Hawaiian Writing: Capsizing American Cold War Benevolence,” I read Native Hawaiian literature to underscore how food and sustenance are invoked. Textual analysis, historical contexts, and legislation coalesce to reveal the ways in which American benevolence within the framework of a state (as in the fiftieth state of

the union) operate in order to render colonialism invisible. How does the mere language of food aid transform in a place that switches from an American territory long in the national imaginary to statehood? I examine how food aid is made invisible by the fact that Hawai‘i is legally a part of the union (as the fiftieth star with an elected governing body and full representation in Congress). Food assistance, then, for disaster relief, welfare (EBT or SNAP benefits for food, i.e. food stamps), school lunch programs, and other “benefits” are no longer considered foreign aid after 1959, even though resources arrive from the very same surplus warehouses and agricultural infrastructure that donate or “dump” food abroad.

Parallel to this invisibility, I read through contemporary Native Hawaiian literature of stage, performance, and poetry to examine the curious predicament of hunger, socioeconomic insecurity, and lack. Within these expressions, food stands in for more than merely an object or detail of descriptive value. Rather, food becomes a significant metaphor and entry point into thinking about structures of colonial violence and literal U.S. takeover of land and resources—as subjects grapple with issues of state dependency and colonial dispossession. The political imagination within these literary worlds reflect the stark realities of life in a place that has been reduced to commodified tourist kitsch in popular culture. Here, I examine the 1980s and 1990s works of Wayne Westlake, Haunani-Kay Trask, and Alani Apio to explore the signification of hunger in Waikiki narratives, while arguing that surplus disposal, security and fear, remain co-present within Hawaiian literature to reveal the abscesses of U.S. imperial frameworks.

This dissertation examines an expansive breadth of migration, settlement, and rerouting to Hawai‘i as a fiftieth state, port of entry, and coordinate of American empire in the Asia and Pacific. I then explore the issue of American hegemony in light of these various histories of interpellation, new market creations, and military and colonial interventions as these intervene

and reroute migration with implications for Asia, the Pacific, and the U.S. I return to the issue of imperial amnesia, overlapping colonial legacies, the wayward and circuitous routes of migration and settler colonialism from the Cold War and onward in the palimpsest landscape of Honolulu in the twenty-first century.

## CHAPTER II

American Food Aid as an Imperial Discourse:

Humanitarianism, “Surplus,” and the Cold War

This chapter examines the 1950s Cold War origins of American food aid policies and traces how food assistance was couched within a humanitarian framework and rhetoric from the Eisenhower era. I examine food aid and the discourse surrounding it as a prism through which new knowledge and framings of imperial power emerge, arguing that food—and the humanitarian discourse that accompanies it—serves as a critical part of the infrastructure of U.S. colonialism and militarism with global repercussions. I contend that the legislative pipelines of assistance through congressional laws such as PL 480 and FEMA-type emergency and disaster relief present a sprawling network of imperial and biopolitical leverage on vulnerable populations in both foreign and domestic spaces.

Despite extensive debate over the imperial and colonial dimensions of economic development programs of the Cold War, less attention has been focused on legislative food assistance and humanitarian aid history within American studies.<sup>20</sup> Here I explore these actions as instruments of colonial culture, as well as a key component of the Cold War political economy. Scholars in fields as diverse as diplomatic history, political science, economics, and development studies have traced the formations and precedence of American food aid that

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Irene Gendzier *Development Against Democracy* (Tyrone Press, 1995; previously: *Managing Political Change: Social Scientists and the Third World* (Westview, 1985); and “Play it Again Sam: The Practice and Apology of Development,” in Christopher Simpson, ed., *Universities and Empire* (New Press, 1998).

predates the Cold War era (1947-1991). And the history of food aid has been documented and researched by a handful of economists, political scientists, agricultural historians, agricultural law scholars, as well as in the historical monographs of Cold War presidents.<sup>21</sup> I examine food assistance, as rooted in U.S. interests and concerns during the Cold War, to think expansively about American culture, empire, and the interpellation of subjects into the U.S. imperial fold.

In this chapter, I trace the genealogy of American food aid, highlighting the cultural productions, popular representations, and discourses that accompanied American foreign policy of the 1950s. Through an investigation of the emergence of American food aid policy, I draw out the significance of legislation in regards to the places I explore in-depth throughout chapters three, four, and five: South Korea, the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands in Micronesia, and Hawai‘i. Furthermore, I explore the meaning of “assistance” in contexts between nations and within spheres deemed “domestic” to the United States and grapple with the legacies of archival “receipts” or evidentiary documents that index lasting military commitment and imperial interest in the region to this very day. This chapter argues that American food aid policies and practices constitute a technology of colonialism, albeit masked as benevolent humanitarianism, which operate within the ideology of Cold War containment, military base-building, and imperial control.

## **Food Aid History**

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<sup>21</sup> Notable scholars and works include Mitchel B. Wallerstein’s *War-Food for Peace: United States Food Aid in a Global Context* (1980), Christopher B. Barret and Daniel G. Maxwell’s *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting Its Role* (Routledge, London. 2005), Jean M. Massa’s essay, “Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act: Public Law 480,” originally published in *South Dakota Review*, 31 S. D. L. REV. 383 (1986) pp. 383-393, and Kristin L. Ahlberg’s *Transplanting the Great Society: Lyndon Johnson and Food for Peace* (University of Missouri Press, 2008).



By the end of World War II and the Cold War years that followed, the United States devoted billions of dollars annually (adjusted for inflation) in food and resources to generous acts of giving. Such benevolence demonstrates the political commitment to postwar development as part of the landscape of Cold War global politics. Yet, this was not the first time that the U.S. donated food to nations abroad. From the nineteenth century until World War II, food aid disbursements by donor nations and volunteer organizations operated, albeit in a less-systemized fashion. Instances of U.S. relief include crisis-based assistance to Venezuela after an earthquake in 1812, to Ireland in 1848 to address the potato famine, to India in 1899 after famine, and to Europe and the Soviet Union during World War I to address famine once again.<sup>22</sup> In these cases, we find that natural disasters and wars were the primary reasons for U.S. assistance. By the mid-twentieth century, these ad hoc food donations and aid transfers transitioned into a more organized infrastructure of post-WWII disbursements.<sup>23</sup>

Not until the end of World War II did food and disaster relief become organized beyond the impromptu response of volunteer agencies, church organizations, and Red Cross services as a means of direct action to famine wreaked and poor war-torn agricultural economies. In 1947, the U.S. enacted the European Recovery Program, widely known as the Marshall Plan, that sent aid to European nations ravaged by war in the wake of WWII. While not conceived as a food aid transfer, 29% of the total Marshall Plan aid came in the form of “food, feed, and fertilizer,” approximately four billion dollars’ worth of aid.<sup>24</sup> The U.S. became the largest food aid donor, whereby in 1963, it accounted for 96% of all international food aid.”<sup>25</sup> Promulgated by Secretary

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<sup>22</sup> Clapp, *Hunger in the Balance*, 16; Ruttan, *Why Food Aid?* 4; Ahlberg *Transplanting the Great Society*, 15; For a comprehensive overview of early food aid history, see pp. 2-38 in Vernon Ruttan’s edited *Why Food Aid?* Chapter One “The Politics of U.S. Food Aid Policy: A Historical Review” (1993).

<sup>23</sup> For excellent donor nations food aid policies, other than the United States, please see Barrett and Clapp.

<sup>24</sup> Clapp, *Hunger in the Balance*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

of State George G. Marshall in a commencement speech made at Harvard University in 1947, the Marshall Plan and U.S. aid had become synonymous in western Europe. Focusing on the redevelopment and stabilization of the western European economy, this aid program from 1948-51 is considered “legendary,” having obtained near “mythical” status by shaping the “construction of that community of ideas, economic links, and security ties between Europe and the United States we know simply as ‘the West.’”<sup>26</sup> Cold War historian William Hitchcock elucidates that at a cultural level, one of the outcomes of U.S. aid dollars and United Nations recovery support was the “Americanization of Europe” with habits of production and consumption (from drinking Coca Cola to wearing blue jeans) reflecting the “deeper convergence among Western states.”<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, the convergence of American agricultural technological advances of the 1940s and federal farm subsidies (from the U.S. government’s interventionist policies of the 1930s New Deal Era) created a “problem” of agricultural surplus. According to agricultural historians Edward and Frederick Schapsmeier, the issue of American agricultural surplus was rooted in the Agricultural Adjustment Acts of 1933 and 1938, the latter which allowed farmers to store agricultural commodities in warehouses while waiting for the perfect time to sell. The technological advances that included new hybrid seeds, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers also contributed to a situation where even small farms were overproducing crops and contributing to the problem of overabundance by the late 1930s and early 1940s. In essence, the federal government crafted an agricultural system where overflowing surplus was the natural outcome, whereby in 1941, such storage facilities were “bulging with federal owned agricultural

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<sup>26</sup> William Hitchcock, “The Marshall Plan and the creation of the West” in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, 154.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-173.

commodities.”<sup>28</sup> From dairy products to grains, these commodities were left rotting in the warehouses of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), the federally owned and operated entity that was created in 1933 to stabilize and support American farmers and agricultural interests. The CCC, the entity within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), oversees surplus commodities and works with Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), International Organizations (IOs, such as the United Nations), and the federal government to allocate food donations to needy nations. It essentially serves as the commodity food bank for distribution, processing commodities, the logistics, and paperwork, for foreign aid loans and disbursements.<sup>29</sup> For politicians, this problem of surplus was ripe with possibilities.

Thus, the United States turned its agricultural bounty into an opportunity for global giving in the service of public relations and diplomacy meant to win the hearts and minds of hungry people across the world in places of war-induced famine. Food was distributed immediately following the end of WWII in the military’s spaces of occupation and liberation. These distributions served diplomatic and humanitarian purposes, notably in Europe, but also in places deemed strategic for American allies, including Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and in the Pacific. The efforts connected to the Marshall Plan and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in Europe were the most visible of these programs.

UNRRA (1943-1946), the short-lived agency housed within the United Nations, was a joint effort by forty-four nations with the U.S. serving as the top donor. This organization came together to provide relief for war victims “in any area under the control of any of the United Nations through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities, medical

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<sup>28</sup> Edward L. Schapsmeier and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, “Eisenhower and Agricultural Reform: Ike's Farm Policy Legacy Appraised” in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*. Vol. 51, No. 2 (Apr., 1992), pp. 148.

<sup>29</sup> Today the Commodity Credit Corporation is housed under the Farm Service Agency within the United States Department of Agriculture, so an entity within an agency.

and other essential services.”<sup>30</sup> UNRRA worked in conjunction with CARE (the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe, though now known as the inclusive and expanded Cooperative of Assistance and Relief Everywhere, since 1993), which also had its origins as a postwar relief agency addressing European hunger, medical needs, and recovery assistance.<sup>31</sup> Such response and relief agencies reflected the systematization of aid that grew out of the second world war’s recovery efforts and transition to the needs of the post-war/Cold War era.

The tradition of feeding the hungry extended beyond the confines of Europe in the immediate postwar years of the 1940s, continuing well into the following decades through legislative measures in the United States. A provision of the Agricultural Act of 1949 (section 416) allowed for the use of American surplus commodities “in danger of spoilage to volunteer agencies registered with the Advisory Committee,” which marked the beginning of moving surplus in large-scale quantities and channeling through the pipeline of private voluntary organizations (or PVOs) for “disposal.” This legislation was significant because it earmarked surplus as something usable—a valuable commodity in the potential leveraging of foreign and domestic relations.

### **PL 480: Agricultural Surplus and Cold War Food Assistance**

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<sup>30</sup> UNRRA Agreement, Article 1 and 2.

<sup>31</sup> Formed in 1945, CARE began as a European recovery effort but expanded to include response missions to Asia (Korea, Philippines, and Pakistan), Latin America, and Africa. It has since become one of the world’s largest NGOs and continues operation to this day in projects of development and uplift in war torn regions. <http://www.care-international.org/who-we-are-1/cares-history>

In the late 1950s, American President Dwight Eisenhower referenced that “Food can be a powerful instrument for all the free world in building a durable peace.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Eisenhower stated, in one of Eisenhower’s first foreign policy addresses, “The peace we seek...can be fortified, not by weapons of war but by wheat and by cotton, by milk and by wool, by meat and by timber and by rice. These are words that translate into every language on earth. These are needs that challenge this world in arms.”<sup>33</sup> Such a statement reflects the newly inaugurated president’s dedication to a just peace for all through the means of securing food to all in need.

The inauguration of the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 or Public Law 480 (often simply called “PL 480”) under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, set into motion the formalization of a food and credit program that continues to this very day under the name of Food for Peace. Under this program, American agricultural surpluses transformed into food aid, development credit, and disaster relief for hungry people around the world and developing nations of American Cold War interest. Renamed “Food for Peace” and placing it under the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the 1960s, Public Law 480, as both domestic and foreign policy legislation wrapped in one, signified one of the most important pieces of legislation and conceivably changed the face of how America was imaged and imagined in the world.

PL 480 served multiple functions. It kept American farmers afloat and sought to improve the economy by stabilizing agricultural prices through the “disposing” of agricultural surpluses onto global markets. It also doubled as promotion for foreign relations with “friendly” nations of

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<sup>32</sup> This quote is highlighted on the Food for Peace literature, on its website today and is also cited in William Lambers’ *The Spirit of the Marshall Plan*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> “A Chance for Peace,” Address Delivered Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 16th, 1953 Dwight D. Eisenhower Archives.

the United States during the heated times of Eisenhower's administration. Since its inception, PL 480 has authorized billions upon billions of dollars in food assistance. While a definitive number cannot be given, if one considers that such legislation for PL 480 was enacted in 1954 with a cap of \$700 million dollars of aid per year, and that it ran continuously through the present day at recent averages of \$2 billion dollars a year, the total amount of aid given numbers in the hundreds of billions. The *Congressional Research Service* estimates that since 2006, U.S. annual averages of global food aid hover at \$2.5 billion dollars with PL 480 accounting for 71.8 billion of that total. At its peak, adjusted to inflation, U.S. food assistance neared \$8.4 billion in 1964 alone, and, at its low, 1.54 billion in 1996.<sup>34</sup>

While such numbers demonstrate the sheer amount of generosity, it is also important to note that this was also a way of saving money. While this sounds like a contradiction—that in order to save, one must give—it has been noted that nearly a million dollars a day was being wasted in 1959, according to a correspondence letter with Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson (in office 1953-61), in which food was referred to as sitting in warehouses “rotting.”

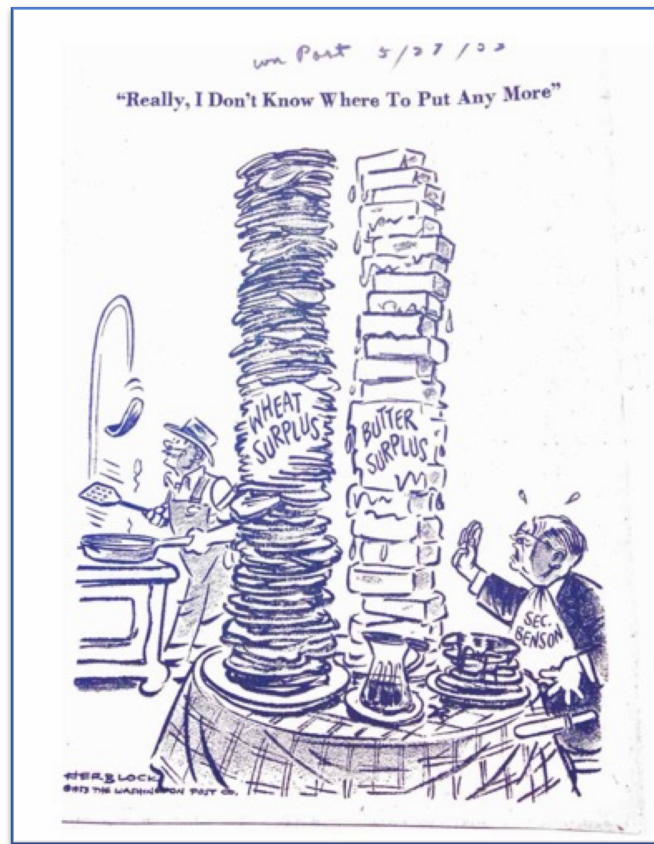
In a Herblock comic strip from May 27, 1953's *Washington Post* depicts the problem of “surplus” that confronted American farmers and the Eisenhower administration.<sup>35</sup> The multiple Pulitzer prize-winner cartoonist for the *Washington Post* was renowned for his political commentary on domestic and foreign policy and lauded as the creator of the term “McCarthyism” during the anti-communist panic of the early Cold War. This political cartoon from 1953 shows American farm commodities stacked high with the American farmer in the background continuing to flip another pancake, while a distressed Benson motions a “stop” sign

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<sup>34</sup> Randy Schnepf, “U.S. International Food Aid Programs: Background and Issues” September 14, 2016 *Congressional Research Service*.

<sup>35</sup> “Agricultural Surplus Folder (2)”; Box No. 14, DDE: Papers as President 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File). Image from Dwight Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas.

with his palm. Made with flour, butter, and milk—pancakes are an appropriate image, since much of the overproduced surplus included wheat and dairy products. One obvious message of the cartoon is that a stack of pancakes and butter can be appetizing, but this level of output is unnecessary and excessive.



**Figure 2.1** Herblock comic “Really, I don’t Know Where To Put Any More” for the *Washington Post*, 1953.

The comic invokes the issue of the surplus and the resultant conundrum of overcultivation of wheat and milk products. The “basic products” that were allowed in the original farm subsidies (by way of the Agricultural Act of 1933) included the following: wheat,

corn, cotton, hogs, rice, tobacco, and milk and items made from milk.<sup>36</sup> Farmers of these items were given federal subsidies as protections so as to guarantee a profit to benefit their labor, regardless of the market price of food items. The government would store items as surplus—essentially buying the products—until more favorable conditions and times. By WWII, price supports would also include turkeys, dry peas, soybeans for oil, peanuts for oil, American Egyptian cotton, potatoes and even “nonbasic” crops such as barley, oats, rye, dried fruit, and various seed crops.<sup>37</sup> These foods were grown through the encouragement and safety net of U.S. federal funding.

Surpluses were alleviated by the distributions handed out during and in the immediate aftermath of World War II—notably through the Marshall Plan—and then transitioned into an outpouring flow of goods servicing the Korean War (a subject to which I will return shortly). However, by the early 1950s, this surplus conundrum returned, presenting an opportunity in President Eisenhower’s administration to battle the Cold War on a diplomatic front. Represented through visuals as well as the speeches and records of Congress and the President, a cartoon sketch by Burriss Jenkins Jr. (1897-1966) captured the underside of the nifty solution to surplus. With the newspaper clipping filed in the Dwight David Eisenhower files of the Presidential Library, in the White House Central files of 1953-1961, in a folder titled “Agricultural Surpluses” the exact publication date and newspaper are listed as unknown, estimated to be in 1953 to 1954. Given that Jenkins worked as a cartoonist for *New York Journal-American* since 1931, a daily newspaper defunct since 1966, this may have been printed in that publication.

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<sup>36</sup> Schapsmeier 147-8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.





**Figure 2.2** “Food is a Weapon” by Burriss Jenkins Jr. Exact publication date and newspaper unknown though estimated 1953 or 1954

In this image, we find an explicit portrayal of American surpluses resting in Uncle Sam’s hand, posed and extended to feed hungry people around the world.<sup>38</sup> The possibilities of food distribution, with the title, “Food is a Weapon,” index the latent political power of implementing food to leverage the Cold War geopolitics and communist sympathizing. Indeed, it was envisioned to serve as an anti-communist “weapon” by people in government and in nongovernmental positions. A letter from CARE to Secretary of Agriculture Benson stated that this food could be of tremendous value in psychological warfare,” in reference to the power of food in the context of Korea, where the Korean war was raging.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Dwight David Eisenhower White House Central Files, Official Files 1953-1961. Box 429; Agricultural Surplus Folder 2; Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. Irregular shape is due to the cut out of the newspaper clipping. The circular stamp on the left lower corner is the stamp of the Eisenhower presidential library in Abilene, KS.

<sup>39</sup> Dwight David Eisenhower White House Central Files, Official Files 1953-1961. Agricultural Surpluses. Box 429; Folder 106-1

This idea of food as a “weapon” is a powerful message. Its potency is read as doing the work of bombs, as a war tactic in bringing about a “win.” As more than just benign diplomatic leverage, as Hubert Humphrey envisioned. In 1954, the then-senator from Minnesota said:

We have got to look upon America’s food abundance, not as a liability, but as a real asset...Wise statesmanship and leadership can convert these surpluses into a great asset for checking communist aggression. Communism has no greater ally than hunger; and democracy and freedom no greater ally than an abundance of food.<sup>40</sup>

In my own research of agricultural surplus in the Eisenhower library, I found significant evidence of correspondence about the potential of food surplus not only within sites of foreign interest—i.e. communist aggression in East Asia, Europe, and Latin America—but also within sites deemed “domestic,” that is the continental United States. For example, the idea of allocating surplus food for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and needy families within the United States were also issues raised with the potentialities of American farm surplus, a point to which I will return.

While not conflating food with weaponry, the Eisenhower administration saw the connection and linkage of these two ideas as very much present in the inception of the PL 480 program. Food operated as anticommunist assistance in American foreign policy, thus making it a cultural weapon or wedge in the management of political affairs and winning the hearts and minds of needy, hungry bellies. Looking at the Burris image closely, these racially ambiguous emaciated people respond to the extension of U.S. food with outstretched arms. And while these projected potential recipients stand in for those of the non-aligned Third World, they look upon the hand of American generosity. This packaging of surplus as benevolence created a win-win scenario for PL 480.

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<sup>40</sup> July 16, 1954; As quoted in Vernon W. Ruttan, ed. *Why Food Aid?* John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. 1993, 2.

With PL 480, not only could American surpluses feed the world, but the development and cultivation of a new generation of consumers would be instituted. In fact, in the passing of Public Law 480 on July 10<sup>th</sup> 1954, under a bill titled “Farm Surplus Disposal,” Eisenhower proclaimed: “the burdensome stocks which had already accumulated . . . would create *new markets* for United States products, and assist friendly countries” (emphasis mine).<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the Agricultural Trade and Development Act proposed to “lay the basis for a permanent expansion of our exports of agricultural projects, with lasting benefits to ourselves and peoples in other lands.” In addition, “the Act also provides authority to give surpluses to meet famine and other emergency requirements, thus enabling us to maintain our American tradition of generous help in time of need. . . . Thus, in following our own broad interests, we shall be reflecting our responsibilities as a member of the family of nations.”<sup>42</sup>

President Dwight Eisenhower’s public policy statement shows the expansive reach and intention of this piece of legislation. This speech also reveals the transparency of U.S. interests as coming first and foremost, that in following “our own broad interests” the U.S. also demonstrates its commitment to a global community or “family of nations.” The *harmony* between U.S. interests—of ridding itself of the “burdensome” surpluses—with serving the needs of other nations (due to food shortage) reveal a strategic American innocence in linking the formula of reconciling domestic surplus with global shortage.

There exists classic American virtue in this “win-win” scenario. Aid, as it is worded here, is not a just crass gesture, but contains a sincerity and logical reasoning in its conceptualization. The language of assistance and the vision of mutual benefit is genuinely conceived as just that: a

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<sup>41</sup> 1954; *Public Papers of the President* 626.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

harmonious compact of helping others as we help ourselves (diplomatically and domestically, to get rid of our surpluses).

However, what is striking in this text is the usage of the term “surplus” instead of “food.” “Agricultural surplus” and “agricultural products” are viewed solely as commodities wasting away in American storehouses that must be “liquidated” so as not to “disturb markets” and disrupt profits. The language highlights a capitalist system of value, whereby the currency of commodities is rendered valueless without a consumer to purchase and receive these items. “Creating new markets” then, is just that: the expansion of American agriculture and demand for these commodities in perpetuity.

Second, the language of “disposal” and “dumping” invokes notions of garbage. The word choice of *surplus disposal* instead of food distribution, for example, reflects a self-assured and unabashed honesty in its mission. One may wonder then, what is the significance of the United States seeking to profit and benefit from something akin to undesirable surplus (though not quite “trash”)? Indeed, economics professor and food aid scholar Christopher B. Barrett calls this the “myth of food aid”—that American food aid being first and foremost about “feeding the hungry.” Rather, food aid advances self-serving goals—of surplus disposal, export promotion, and geopolitical leverage—all while wrapped in a bow of altruism.<sup>43</sup>

This harmony between American surplus goods meeting the food shortages creates an opportunity for the U.S. to lead the free (i.e. capitalist) world. This early articulation of food aid under Eisenhower is blatantly revealing—true to a vision that reconciles “surplus disposal” and “creating new markets” with serving American interests. These transparent proclamations neither disguise nor sugarcoat American intentions, but instead present a win-win situation. Not only can

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<sup>43</sup> Barrett, *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting Its Role*, 35.

America's surplus problem be solved, but by feeding other people in the short run, they become integrated into the global capitalist economy—the U.S. economy—in the long run. Furthermore, the early statement of PL 480 here indexes the sheer breadth of the legislation's potential reach. The impact and ramifications here are yet unseen, but the capaciousness of its original vision is astounding: a harmonious world of happy capitalist bounty.

### **Understanding PL480: What Does This Law Do?**

Newspaper clippings, haunting images, and the visual narrative of global hunger under communism and American benevolent bounty abound in the archives of American foreign policy of the early 1950s well into the 1960s. Here I examine PL 480, as it links with other flashpoints of American benevolence.

The records of PL 480 can be found in several national archive libraries including the NARA Agricultural files in Kansas City/Lee Summit, Missouri; the Department of Defense Files in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands records in San Bruno, California's Pacific Collection; and the Korean War files (among others) in the National Archives of College Park, Maryland. My research has taken me to these various archives as well as the presidential archives of Dwight David Eisenhower in Abilene, Kansas to assemble an understanding of the broad scope of this legislation's legacy.<sup>44</sup> Historian Kristin Ahlberg has traced the importance of Lyndon Johnson's administration in implementing and consolidating a more streamlined and efficient PL 480 in the 1960s—to follow through with JFK's New Frontier vision, and his own Great Society on a global scale, which has been tremendously informative to my study. The changes and expansions

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<sup>44</sup> Food for Peace and PL 480 archives are also held in the Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy presidential libraries.

of this piece of legislation from its origins in the early 1950s to its fruition in the 1960s and its aftermath are tricky to untangle, especially given the bureaucratic nature of the organizations in charge of allocation and administration. For the sake of clarity, I will streamline the significant points which I have gathered from my primary and secondary research that crystallize critical insights for reevaluating American benevolence during the Cold War.

Even before the passing of the Agricultural Trade and Development Act, discussions took place as to what to do with agricultural surpluses.<sup>45</sup> Scholars of agriculture have noted the history of surpluses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, due to the technological advances in agriculture.<sup>46</sup> And it is known that surpluses were utilized immediately following World War II with the Marshall Plan. After the end of the Marshall Plan, these surpluses returned and were then funneled to the Korean War. Upon the Korean War armistice, the surplus problem arose again, thus requiring new outlets to dispose of the bounty in American agriculture.

There were three original sections or Titles within PL 480. Title I of PL 480 allowed for “sales for foreign currency.” This designated or allowed for surplus commodities to be sold for foreign currencies (by the recipient nations), carrying a ceiling of \$700 million loss for the Commodity Credit Corporation over a three-year period. Under Title I, recipient nations of American surplus aid could use aid to purchase local currency (think of it as a loan) to invest in developing the local economy. The money or credit could also be used for state development projects (such as roads and highways) and military infrastructures (to build bases or purchase equipment and weapons).

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<sup>45</sup> Even prior to PL 480’s passing, discussions on what to do with agricultural surpluses were on the table at cabinet meetings, within conversations the US Secretary of Agriculture with Ezra Taft Benson (of the entire Eisenhower administration 1953-61), and among correspondences with the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

<sup>46</sup> Ahlberg 13-14. Also, see Mitchel B. Wallerstein’s *Food for War-Food for Peace: United States Food Aid in a Global Context* and Christopher Barrett and Daniel Maxwell’s *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting Its Role*. Routledge, London. 2005.

Within Title I, section 101 states that “In negotiating such agreements the President shall “(c) give special consideration to utilizing the authority and funds provided by this Act, in order to develop and expand continuous market demand abroad for agricultural commodities, with appropriate emphasis on underdeveloped and new market areas” and “afford any friendly nation the maximum opportunity to purchase surplus agricultural commodities from the United States.”<sup>47</sup> And as Sec. 106 clarifies these surplus agricultural commodities, designated as such by the Secretary of Agriculture which can be from lands publicly or privately owned. “Friendly nations” meant any nation other than the Soviet Union “the U.S.S.R., or to) any nation or area dominated or controlled by the foreign government or foreign organization controlling the world Communist movement.” In other words, friendly nations are non-communist ones and these foods and credit are, in essence, deemed non-communist or even anti-communist/pro-American.

Title II of PL 480 addresses “famine relief and other assistance.” Title II is the classic iconic food aid distribution measure. It authorizes transfers of food and other surpluses to “friendly but needy populations.” The recipient nations would receive the surplus commodities from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), the financing institution and government owned corporation that works with the Secretary of Agriculture (now housed within the United States department of Agriculture), whose head worked directly alongside the president in his cabinet. The CCC and the Department of Agriculture worked together in creating a credit system that benefited surplus-strapped farmers, sustaining price control of domestic foods, while the latter (Department of Agriculture) shaped the foreign policy plans that would send grain, flour, oils, and meat abroad to friendly nations. Title II represents the sending of literal food assistance abroad for famine stricken areas. Urgent relief and cooperation with voluntary relief

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<sup>47</sup> Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance act of 1954; PL 83-480, or P. L. 480.

organizations is filed under Title II.<sup>48</sup> Section 305 of this piece of legislation ends with a note that “All Commodity Credit Corporation stocks disposed of under title II of this Act... shall be clearly identified by, as far as practical, appropriate marketing on each package or container as being furnished by the people of the United States of America.” Under PL 480, recipient nations will know where their food is coming from; it is sealed and branded as benevolence from the USA. The Department of Agriculture, through PL 480, utilized surplus to speak for American intentions. The American farmers’ overabundance created the possibility for great political impact.

Title III of PL 480 allows for “general provisions,” permitting changes in the policy to come. This is also the most expansive and flexible title within the law that includes everything from local and domestic concerns to international relief. The title includes remarks on the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the school lunch program, emergency relief and disasters, as well as for foreign aid. This section, amended from the Agricultural Act of 1949 reads as follows:

[PL480] shall make available any farm commodity or product thereof owned or controlled by it for use in relieving distress (1) in any area of the United States declared by the President to be an acute distress area because of unemployment or other economic cause if the President finds that such use will not displace or interfere with normal marketing of agricultural commodities and (2) in connection with any major disaster determined by the President to warrant assistance by the Federal Government under Public Law 875, Eighty-first Congress, as amended (42 U. S. C. 1855).<sup>49</sup>

In essence, Title III expands the definition of food aid through surplus distribution by opening up the pipeline to include “domestic” areas and populations in need, including the following:

“commodities to the Bureau of Indian Affairs” as well as other “State, Federal, or private agency or agencies” for use towards nonprofit school lunch programs, charitable institutions, hospitals,

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<sup>48</sup> Title II “authorizes barter for certain materials, amending previous legislation relative to surplus disposal by voluntary agencies, forbids trade with the Soviet area.” (in “Review of PL 480 Decisions taken by the Interagency Committee on Agricultural Surplus Disposal ICASC, Dec. 15, 1954).

<sup>49</sup> Section 301 of PL 480 Title 3.



and the Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid of the Foreign Operations Administration. The capaciousness of food aid will be explored in the following chapters, wherein food aid and liberation are explored in colonially entangled sites registered as interchangeably “foreign,” “domestic,” and “interior.”<sup>50</sup>

Public Law 480, begins with outright statement that the use of agricultural commodities is “to improve the foreign relations of the United States.”<sup>51</sup> The report also ends with the suggestion to amend the title to read: “An Act to increase the consumption of United States agricultural commodities in foreign countries, to improve the foreign relations of the United States, and for other purposes.”<sup>52</sup> If the intentions driving this legislation rest in the desire to increase American goods, the moral implications of sending surplus as aid is multivalent and complex to consider, if not glaringly suspect. Reading through the legislation then showcases the transparency of the intent behind PL 480—that it was very self-consciously a promotional tool. Interestingly, it is significant to note than in my own research of agricultural surplus in the Eisenhower Library, there were significant correspondence of the potential of food surplus not only within sites of foreign interest—i.e. communist aggression in East Asia, Europe, and Latin America—but also within sites deemed “domestic,” that is the continental United States. The idea of allocating surplus food for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and needy families within the

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<sup>50</sup> Title III reauthorized as “Food for Development” in 1977 (P.L. 95-88, §211), amended Food for Peace to replace barter authority with debt forgiveness; Title III administered by USAID, makes government-to-government grants of U.S. agricultural commodities for monetization in support of non-emergency projects targeting long-term growth in least-developed countries. Other Food Assistance includes Section 416(b), CCC-funded Food for Progress, Title III Food for Development, Title V Farmer-to-Farmer; it has been inactive since 2002. Randy Schnepf, *Congressional Research Service*, “U.S. International Food Aid Programs: Background and Issues” 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> From the first lines of the Agricultural Trade Assistance and Development Act of 1954. This is the textual piece of literature that I found in the archives at NARA, College Park in a folder for PL 480, signed by the House and Senate. This is the primary document or textual legislation of PL 480 that I have obtained. It states 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress 2d Session, House of Representatives, Report No. 1947. RG 16 Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture General Correspondence, 1906-76, Box 2781, Folder “1955 Foreign Relations 3.”

<sup>52</sup> Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance act of 1954; PL 83-480, or P. L. 480.

United States were also issues raised with the potentialities of American farm surplus, another point to which this dissertation will address in full.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, agricultural surpluses and its ties with the Korean war remain a fascinating channel in reevaluating “soft power.” It is not a coincidence that many files of the Korean War and management of psychological warfare were housed within Eisenhower White House files of “Agriculture Surplus.” One memo in the same file, by former president and founder of a nonprofit Freedoms Foundation, wrote that “American food surpluses, primarily wheat, can permanently breach and raise the Iron Curtain. Food is now a greater weapon than military arms of pacts or propaganda.”<sup>54</sup> Furthering the notion that this is all anti-communist food, Section 304 includes a note that the President has the authority to assist friendly nations “independent of trade with the U.S.S.R. or nations dominated or controlled by the U.S.S.R. for food.” From Argentina to Yugoslavia. From Austria to Pakistan, the seventy-six original recipient nations of PL 480 read like a list of Cold War friends and allies with countries such as Turkey, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Chile, Peru, Spain, Argentina, Israel, Finland, Italy, Japan, Korea, United Kingdom, Austria, Thailand, Colombia, Greece, France, Ecuador, Brazil, Germany, Burma, and others.

### **Surplus and the Korean War: The United States and the United Nations to the Rescue**

Cultivating taste buds and feeding bellies are not the first thoughts that typically arise in a discussion of the Korean War. Invoking the Korean War often begins with conversations of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Harold C. Hagen, representative in Congress for 9<sup>th</sup> district Minnesota for instance, presents a letter to the white house about the Native Chippewa tribe requesting agricultural surplus to feed their communities. This raises the issue of the parameters of the relationship between *domestic aid* and the Department of the Interior. Within this file, there were also requests for agricultural surplus for needy aged persons too as well as school lunch programs, and food stamps.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Kenneth D. Wells, Folder 106-1 Agricultural Surpluses (2).

America's "forgotten war" (after the first forgotten war of the Philippine-American War, that is), as the first hot conflict of the Cold War, and as an ongoing ideological battle between communism and free market democracy. In economics, wealth, political stability, and health, North and South Korea seem worlds apart—often spoken of even within Korean communities as two racially different groups within just a couple of generations. Much of this divide is attributed to the aid provided by the United States. Aid to South Korea provokes a curious discussion—specifically in relation to the exceptional economic success of the nation the past decades. Sociologist John Lie has stated that American aid has been distorted to epically inflated proportions, while conceding that it did play a role in political corruption and corporate economic growth. \$2.3 billion of aid was given 1953-61, most of the aid coming to in the form of food, as short-term and edible assistance, while the U.S. simultaneously advocated agricultural development<sup>55</sup>

Examining official American military and United Nations aid documents generated during the Korean War, I turn my attention to think about how the first "hot war" of the Cold War operated within American discourses of rescue and humanitarian assistance. Specifically, I examine the official literature of the United Nations Civil Assistance Corps Korea (UNCACK), an organization which worked very closely with the Eighth United States Army in Korea (or EUSAK) and the Republic of Korea government (or ROK, led by Syngman Rhee) in providing relief supplies to civilians and refugees from 1950-53. The documents include a command reports to the Eighth Army for the period of November 1950-August 1951, an official UNCACK document written in Sino-Korean that contains a series of photographs of the work being done

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<sup>55</sup> Lie, *Han Unbound: The Political Economy of South Korea*, 23, 29-30.

by the United Nations also from the same year, and an UNCACK film from 1952, which I have uncovered at the National Archives in College Park.

The examination of official United Nations military and civilian documents raises a number of issues to consider, including the significance of American public relations during the war that promoted images of U.S. aid and benevolence both in the Korean peninsula and abroad as well as the issue relief invoices or “receipts” that index an impressive volume of assistance. What does the genre of invoices—of drudge military paperwork and memorandums—reveal about the U.S.-U.N.-led efforts?

The United Nations Civil Assistance Corps Korea or UNCACK was an agency in charge of civilian assistance and relief operations during the Korean War from 1950-53, later reorganized as the more efficient Korea Civil Assistance Command (KCAC).<sup>56</sup> Promulgated by President Truman in 1949, it worked very closely alongside the Eighth Army when ground forces needed assistance for the humanitarian crisis as a result of the war. UNCACK’s stated mission was simple: to provide relief and assistance for civilians and war refugees in the form of food, shelter, warmth, and medical care to prevent widespread famine and disease. UNCACK’s purpose was provide technical civilian and humanitarian assistance that comes along with a military ground war: in the matters of famine relief, medical aid, and caring for the dispossessed. From providing aid to soldiers to feeding and clothing both civilians and refugees to working with medics alongside various organizations like CARE and the Red Cross, UNCACK served as an umbrella organization working on the ground in Korea on all things regarding relief,

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<sup>56</sup> This reorganization took place in June of 1953 “so as to operate under the direct supervision of the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command.” KCAC would later administer all civil assistance programs “for the relief and support of the civilian population, the distribution of relief supplies and the carrying out of projects of reconstruction and rehabilitation other than those undertaken by the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency.” From the United Nations Yearbook, p. 115. “1953 Part 1: The United Nations. Section 2: Political and security questions. Chapter A: The question of Korea. “Economic and Relief Assistance.” p. 115.

assistance, and rehabilitation. It oversaw the setup of relief stations both north and south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, providing water, food, and medical aid for migrating refugees. Plans included coordinating with officials to evacuate displaced persons and setting up refugee areas that provided food distribution centers, milk stations, and medical aid and sanitation facilities.<sup>57</sup> Its organization was complex, with ten organizational units, and its execution of programs operated on an ad hoc basis wherein the most expedient needs were met and dealt with accordingly.<sup>58</sup> Most importantly, given the migrations and shifting of the control lines between Communists and UN forces, particularly after the Chinese Communists came to the aid of North Korea, UNCACK's focus centered on refugees at the most basic needs of health and self-preservation.

The very first UNCACK report from Nov 1950-August 1951 is very illuminative of all that UNCACK encapsulates: from its mission statement, organizations, as well as the supporting documents breaking down the numerical logistics of vaccines, food aid, invoices and distribution of relief goods. This annual report provides an overview of all that UNCACK had set out to accomplish, including its revision of plans, as well as the logistical and administrative network that is required to provide goods and services to populations within a war zone, whose borders and frontlines are constantly shifting. The report, written by UNCACK head Brigadier General

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<sup>57</sup> These refugees stop from one camp to another were place distant enough that one can reach the next station a day. RG 554, Box 1, p.13 of Report #1.

<sup>58</sup> An octopus of an organization, there were ten sectors of UNCACK outlined and organized as follows: 1) the Executive Section, which conducted surveys for the Eighth Army and supervised for the distribution of goods, 2) Civilian Supply, 3) Military Supply, 4) Welfare Section, 5) Public Health, 6) Sanitation, 7) Reports and Statistics, 8) Economics, 9) Labor, 10) Public Administration. Of these sectors, the ones most publicly visible were those in the fields of public health, sanitation, and food and ration distribution. UNCACK was organized in a more ad hoc manner, a shift reflected in the ever-changing demographics and realities of the ground war. The UNCACK report notes that: "Shortly thereafter when the new Chinese Communists thrust necessitated the withdrawal and evacuation of the United Nations forces to the south, the mission of this organization was changed from one of long range planning to direct and immediate assistance to the many thousands of homeless people and fleeing refugees from the north." (RG 554, Box 1)

William E. Crist stresses how important it is to “Impress Korean Officials with the nature of the future program.”<sup>59</sup> The document reveals a recognition of the importance of a good exterior image, indexing how critical the perception of UNCACK—and the United Nations operations by extension—was on the peninsula.

From blankets to medical aid, the United Nations spared no costs. The first Command Report provides a sample of what was typical in a single month’s shipment of relief goods. There were 38,000 blankets and 29,980 sleeping bags brought into Pusan. Additional relief supplies received in the shipment included food, DDT (“for “delousing”), medicine, and “care packages.” The food items include dried milk, barley, rice, and flour. These relief imports only increased as the war went on. In the following month of March (of 1951), the shipment included 52,250 blankets, 22,000 cases of B rations, 30 tons of sugar, 901 tons of salt, 39 drums dried powdered milk, and a generous donation of oatmeal baby food.<sup>60</sup> Such figures provide evidence of the volume of goods pouring into Korea.

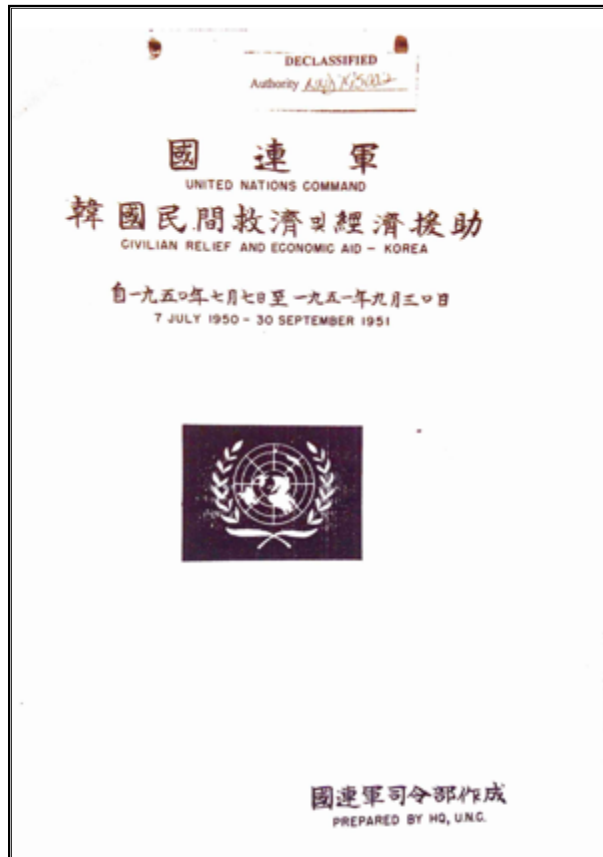
Not only do these documents reveal that UNCACK was responsible for delivering relief goods to Korean “war sufferers,” but also to those working in the organizations themselves and military officials. Check slips of civilian supply of grains and rice, rice distribution figures, special Christmas and New Year’s Day rations, and request for whiskey for the officers) can be found in the record boxes of the Eighth Army.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> RG 554, Box 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> National Archives in College Park, MD. RG 554, BOX 23, EUSAK Sep. 1951.



**Figure 2.3** United Nations Command, “Civilian Relief and Economic Aid—Korea,” 7 July 1950-30 September 1951

In UNCACK’s Korean manual, we find a richer picture of the Korean War through the eyes of the administrative efforts of the United Nations and the United States.<sup>62</sup> The image above is the title page of UNCACK’s Korean manual, a seventy-nine-page pamphlet with photographs made by UN headquarters for Korean officials’ readership and PR in 1951. Like the message in the command reports that describe UNCACK’s mission and objectives in helping Korea, this piece of literature differs in that it is the polished version with photographs taken by the Eighth Army to support said mission of the organization. This text was written in Sino-Korean (Korean composed of mainly *hanja* or Chinese characters), thus signifying an educated Korean elite

<sup>62</sup> Record Group 338, Box 1438.

readership, such as officials within the ROK government.<sup>63</sup> The Korean of this pamphlet, or the Sino-Korean here, is near impossible to read without the aid of a translator familiar with the writing of this period. For every single Korean character, there are nine Chinese characters, making this an incredibly difficult text to translate. For Koreans educated even a few years after my parents' generation (born during the war and educated in the 1950s and 1960s), the ability to read such Sino-Korean texts (Korean words derived from Chinese characters) was phased out for a more “purified” Korean written language.<sup>64</sup>

This pamphlet repeats nearly verbatim the mission of UNCACK's command reports. It states UNCACK's mission of providing urgent civilian and technical aid as well as proposing long-term economic development and reconstruction plans. UNCACK seeks to prevent disease, famine, and fear—or essentially, UNCACK is here to help. Whether it is to provide food, blankets, and medical care or help with reconstruction (for instance, rebuilding textile factories), UNCACK provides the goods to help Korea which will eventually then help itself as a new nation. The message and tone are benevolent, oozing with the rhetoric of paternal care.

One thing that is so striking about this pamphlet are the numerous images placed alongside the textual message of United Nations aid and relief. The interwoven assemblage of photographs and text present a unique juxtaposition for the elite Korean (ROK-minded) reader. These images range from the neutrally descriptive and industrious visuals to the heartbreaking photographs of orphan children and scared elderly. There are images of medical aid: seniors getting vaccinated, families with young children being sprayed with DDT (then an anti-lousing

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<sup>63</sup> For the translation of this text, I thank my father Laurence Kwak for taking the time to help me with this.

<sup>64</sup> How education policy shifts depending on the political climate is another critical matter worth considering. For instance, majority of Koreans in my grandparents' generation were often illiterate in Korean, with Japanese being the lingua franca in the schools. Educated people would be able to read Sino-Korean and Japanese, given that kanji is used extensively in Japanese.



spray believed to be as benign as household Lysol disinfectant), and food aid distribution scenes of all sorts. There are images bulk shipments to images of storage warehouses and scenes of flour and rice sacks being distributed to needy refugees. In a time of uncertainty and hunger, the images of food aid distribution and its consumption tell a story of abjection, humiliation, and shame. Photographs show everything from Koreans unloading American flour sacks from the bed of trucks to Korean women in the refugee camp preparing meals with the food rations. In an unforgettably haunting image, there are two orphans eating a “first meal” made possible by the United Nations:



**Figure 2.4:** Orphans having their first meal at a United Nations Orphanage in Seoul.

On one hand, the photograph taken by the Eighth Army looks like a staged PR image for the UN. On the other hand, it is difficult to determine what the actual circumstances for this photo. The Korean girls in the photograph are unnamed, but simply referred to as “orphans.” As subjects, it is not known who they are and whatever became of them. They may well have found homes abroad in the transracial adoptions of Korean orphans in the wake of the armistice or even

stayed in South Korea into adulthood. With their downturned heads, they are literally eating out of the can and, despite being the faces of food aid and allied benevolence, the children keep their faces hidden, as if obscuring themselves in shame.

The command reports, aid invoices, and images of UNCACK literature document a sense of anxiety and self-reflexivity about the war while at the same time narrating a story of need, security, and humanitarian assistance in the fight for justice. The UN forces—a global alliance of soldiers from around the world alongside American G.I.s—and UN aid workers are portrayed as “doing good” or “doing right” on the Korean peninsula. As the first Cold War intervention which mobilized troops to a far-off land in the name of western democracy, the Korean War was very self-conscientiously promoted.

The literature here provides strong evidence that the self-promotion of the UN’s forces was at the forefront of priorities, and one of these priorities was maintaining the flow of goods and services to dispossessed Koreans during UN-intervened war. With the flow of refugees migrating back and forth between the fire of UN and Soviet-backed North Korean and Chinese forces, the supplies were short. And of these supply lines, keeping them up and running was fundamental in maintaining the image of good will on behalf of the UN:

The total relief supplies for the end of Fiscal Year 1951 would meet only a small part of the needs but every effort would be devoted to give distribution priority to war sufferers in preference to increasing demands of the civil Labor Corps *or else be subject to embarrassments that the United Nations wasn't meeting its obligations and developing seeds of mistrust among the Korean governmental officials.*<sup>65</sup> (emphasis mine)

The comment on potential UN “embarrassments” and “seeds of mistrust” among the Korean ROK (Republic of Korea) are worth noting. The reference to embarrassments and seeds of mistrust indicate the existence of a lack of trust or the fear of such sentiments arising between the

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<sup>65</sup> National Archives, College Park, MD. Record Group 554. Box 1. August 1951.

U.S. military and Korean civilians. To not provide the emergency relief needed for dispossessed persons is tantamount to an embarrassing international incident for the UN, not just losing the war in battle.

The Korean War, as represented in official memos and military correspondence, was very much about winning hearts and minds, not just battles in the trenches. A smooth and sophisticated network that allowed for goods and services was critical to that mission. In one report, Brigadier General William E. Crist ends with a statement that “Military aid and economic aid alone will not win the final victory for United Nations. That can be won by securing the last good will and friendship of the Korean people...sufficient funds and qualified personnel would do much toward earning the good will of the Korean people.”<sup>66</sup> Friendship and funding go together in this mission.

In addition to the classified UNCACK documents analyzed so far, my inquiry led me to discover a number of UNCACK film reels, which document the ground-level work carried out by the United Nations.<sup>67</sup> While I cannot ascertain the exact audience of these films—whether American moviegoers viewed these clips or if this was televised as a special or on a regular basis on a more global platform—these film reels were labeled “Far East Report Series TV.” The way that the images and message were delivered suggests that this is meant for an American and international audience.

The UNCACK films generate a stock message of UN public relations—that is, all of the free countries of the world, plus volunteer organizations and agencies associated with the UN, are coming together in this benevolent project of liberating the Korean people from

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> I have not seen or heard of UNCACK films in other scholarly studies and seeing how the archivist at the national archives said these were deteriorating and could not provide further information on the context of these films.

communism.<sup>68</sup> Going beyond the UNCACK literature and photography, the archival film reels provide evidence of the televisual and filmic representations of good charity abroad. The repeated takes, cuts, and smoothing out of a paternal narrative are recorded with the journalist even stating, “We have a lot of work up here to do in addition to that which you’ve seen here in these movies.”



**Figure 2.5** April 1952, “Food Distribution Welfare” Scene. Far East Report Series TV, United Nations Civil Assistance Command Korea (UNCACK).

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<sup>68</sup>Motion Picture Films from the Army Library Copy Collection, 1964 – 1980. National Archives, College Park, MD. Record Group 111.



**Figure 2.6** Food Aid Truck Loading Scene



**Figure 2.7** U.S. Food Aid Truck

UNCACK's promotional films mirror the work being done in the textual and photographic records of the United Nations. That is, these military films reflect the mission of assistance, rehabilitation, and reconstruction in a devastated Korea. The many staged shots include several takes of the same scene—for example, the loading of a food truck that will be

distributed to hungry, needy Koreans. When a passing background noise interferes with the clarity of the audio, the take is cut and reshot to capture the smooth filmic representation of United Nations and U.S.'s benevolence. Missing from the UNCACK literature and film are the voices of Koreans and their experiences during the war. Given that these are field reports and commands—official state literature and film—it is not surprising that we do not hear the voices of Korean people. What we can gather from these sources, however, is the general impression that the United Nations and United States are needed in this war-torn landscape.

As one of the single largest recipients of food aid—mostly in the form of wheat, rice, powdered milk, and corn—many Koreans know of the significance of American food assistance of PL 480. A former breadbasket for the Japanese empire (during occupation 1910-1945), Korea switched from a place of extraction of food resources to that of a receiver.<sup>69</sup> For the generation of folks growing up in post-armistice South Korea, hungry Koreans were filling their bellies with policy corn bread and powdered milk in the public-school system. South Korea's government received millions of tons of U.S. food aid, these being distributed into local communities and transforming the local diets.<sup>70</sup>

Public Law 480 was reflective of the Cold War battle for the hearts of minds of its recipients and this is particularly the case in South Korea. It became largely symbolic of U.S.-Korean relations and presents another narrative as to how American culture and Korean consumption was informed in the early years of the Cold War. Promoting Food for Peace, John F. Kennedy stated, "Food is strength, and food is peace, and food is freedom, and food is a

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<sup>69</sup> On Japanese extraction of Korean food resources prior to and during WWII, I consulted Katarzyna Cwiertka's history in *Cuisine, Colonialism, and Cold War*.

<sup>70</sup> From the United Nations Assistance Corps Korea (UNCACK) files. RG 554 Box 1, 23; RG 338 1437-8 National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; See also Wallerstein, *Food for War-Food for Peace: United States Food Aid in a Global Context*, p. 5 and Barrett and Maxwell, *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting Its Role*, pp. 10-11, 39.

helping hand to people around the world whose good will and friendship we want.” Rather than articulating that food is a weapon, as seen in Burriss Jenkins Jr’s cartoon, we see a similar sentiment echoed in Kennedy’s linkage of food and friendship—something achievable through PL 480 aid.

The archives of American foreign relations provide a glimpse of the unspeakable tragedies of the Korean War. The example of South Korea presents a provocation in thinking about the intentions and impact of aid as well as its role alongside military intervention. The humanitarian face elides the military violence and human displacement that accompanies war, while the real-life aftermath remains unseen. From 1956-1970, the U.S. continued to send PL 480 aid for decades following the armistice. What is not in view are Korean reactions to such aid as well as how food aid transformed the landscape of Korea and the bodies of its recipients. The devastating effect on Korean farmers and Korea’s subsequent dependency on food imports has only grown to staggering numbers in the decades to follow.<sup>71</sup> Without oversimplifying the notion that food aid is the sole factor for South Korean food dependency, I would like to draw attention to its scaffolding in the infrastructure of U.S. militarized imperial networking.

While most of these once-classified papers may appear irrelevant to the lives of everyday Koreans, these logistical correspondences and high volume receipts of rescue bring into focus a more complex picture of the Korean War, particularly at the beginning when good intentions

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<sup>71</sup> For postwar agricultural impact on South Korea, see Park, Seung Woo and Gary P. Green. 1994. “Agrarian transformation and colonialism: an historical-comparative study of Korea and the Philippines.” *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* 3:142-166. Park, Seung Woo and Gary P. Green. 1995. “Agricultural restructuring and capitalist industrialization: the cases of South Korea and the Philippines.” *Kasarinlan: A Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies* 11:103-148. “Free Trade Kills Korean Farmers,” Albie Miles and Christine Ahn, February 15, 2011. *Foreign Policy in Focus*. [http://fpif.org/free\\_trade\\_kills\\_korean\\_farmers/](http://fpif.org/free_trade_kills_korean_farmers/)

were still being sold to public audiences.<sup>72</sup> If the Cold War forged alliances with nascent nations, many of which were struggling for independence in the post-WWII age of decolonization, then it was also a time of defense and maintaining of the very boundaries between the U.S. and the non-aligned nations. The Manichean Cold War logics of “good versus evil” and “us against them” were dependent on a policy of containment, of drawing the geographical boundaries of security and defense. A place with a comparative, though not analogous, liberation narrative are the Micronesian islands that made up the former Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). These Islands were governed and administered by the U.S. from the close of World War II to the end of the Cold War. As liberators of Japanese colonial rule, the U.S. presence in the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands presents a second, interconnected site of analysis in thinking about how benevolence operates as ideology and practice within the circuitry of Cold War containment.

### **The Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands and the U.S. Receipts of Governance: American Food, Benevolence, and Micronesian Control**

From 1945-51, in the wake of WWII, the U.S. Navy occupied several island chains that were classified as Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) under United Nations mandate. The TTPI included the island chains of the Northern Mariana Islands (except Guam, which was already an American territory since 1898), the Marshall Islands, the Caroline Islands, Yap, and Palau—today more often known as the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the

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<sup>72</sup> RG 554, Boxes 1 and 23, in particular, show substantial evidence of the partnered work between the Eighth Army and UNCACK during the Korean War (1951-52, mainly) and what the logistics were of distributing rations to Korean Army units as well as the Korean people.



Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau. These islands were placed in the possession of the United States through United Nations oversight at the close of World War II to purportedly prepare them for independence. Held in “trust” by the U.S. as these islands were previously under Japanese colonial control, the people of the TTPI essentially witnessed the transition from one colonial administration to another.

According to most popular narratives, the U.S. liberated these islanders from Japanese military and colonial occupations and brought an end to the war. However, little did islanders know that their U.S. liberators would not only bring relief supplies and the end of war, but also a new chapter of colonial administration with the exploitation of their islands through nuclear testing. These tests from 1946-58 in the Marshall Islands reshaped Islander lives, impacted migrations, and devastated ecologies within the entire TTPI, a point to which I expand on in chapter four.

Once again, food accompanied American liberation. The U.S. navy provided relief from starvation through its seemingly endless supplies. The food relief did not end upon the close of the war, but continued for the duration of time under U.S. colonial governance of the TTPI, which ran officially from 1947 to as late as 1991. As seen elsewhere and even in the case of Korea, military occupation is often accompanied by food policies and infrastructures of distribution.

A series of aid policies applied to the islands during the Trust Territory period. During the Naval government from 1945-51, the U.S. provided unlimited access to food and relief goods to islanders until the U.S. Department of the Interior took its place under the civil administration in 1951. According to historian David Hanlon, who references the U.N. and Solomon reports, this was then followed by a period of neglect, between 1951-61. Following a scathing report by

the United Nations in 1961 that claimed the U.S. was negligent in its administration of the Trust Territories, U.S. aid increased exponentially to rectify this assessment of U.S. negligence.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the United States sent considerable amounts aid and resources into the TTPI and even applied Lyndon Johnson's revamped Great Society programs to the region. The surpluses that served PL 480 and Food for Peace programs became applicable en masse through a different name to the Trust Territories. Through lunch and nutrition programs, welfare benefits, and federal assistance programs of various names, the Trust Territories became recipients of domestic aid meant for America's own needy.<sup>73</sup> For instance, \$120 million in welfare funds from 1974-79, going mostly towards health and education federal assistance programs.<sup>74</sup> The Head Start program for preschool kids, Job Corps programs, special programs for seniors, and the Needy Family Feeding Program applied to this now westernmost reaches of American domain.<sup>75</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity defined poverty in such a way that, as Hanlon notes, "almost all indigenous residents of the TTPI qualified as members of poor and low-income families and were thus eligible for benefits from a variety of assistance programs."<sup>76</sup> Students were fed first through PL 94-105, the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program in 1975, and this was followed by an extension in 1978 to all "needy families." Essentially any person who identified as Micronesian qualified as "needy," and were provided rice, milk, and canned goods every sixty days by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>77</sup>

Investing in hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, David Hanlon writes that "American federal programs, concerned primarily with the provision of essential social welfare services to

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<sup>73</sup> For this historical context, see David Hanlon's *Remaking Micronesia: Discourses over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944-1982*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. See Hanlon's Chapter 6 "Dependency? It Depends." Also, from archival research and Lino Olopai's *Rope of Tradition*.

<sup>74</sup> Hanlon, *Remaking Micronesia*, 170.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 171, 173.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-5.

poor and low-income families within the United States, accounted for a third and significant source of funding for the Trust Territory.”<sup>78</sup> In 1963, Congressional legislation allowed for the TTPI to access assistance programs through federal agencies in the nation’s capital. Hanlon writes: “Johnson’s program for a Great Society sought to revitalize a declining nation and in its extension to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands offered Micronesians the status of an American minority group.”<sup>79</sup>

Discourses of “needy Micronesian families” and needy islanders abound in archival documents and reports of islanders, as were moralizing discourses over those being fed. For instance, David Hanlon notes that rice, alcohol, and tobacco were among the top three imports, engendering a moral judgment on Islanders’ consumption. Then came criticism of the TTPI becoming a “welfare state,” or an “economic basket case.”<sup>80</sup> A 1978 audit of federal grants reported that U.S. aid “created a preference for foreign goods over locally grown foods, undermined the strong work ethic needed for economic development, diminished the possibilities of self-reliance, and in short, promoted dependency.”<sup>81</sup> Some people who did not want to be “dependent on USDA surplus foods, desired to be self-reliant.”<sup>82</sup> And by 1980, there was a decrease of assistance amidst debates about dependency and discourses of self-reliance.<sup>83</sup> However, aid and federal assistance continued to shape conversations surrounding the negotiations of the TTPI’s political future.

Even though American agricultural surplus was envisioned as a measure for foreign policy to help our friends and allies, legislation allowed surplus foods to apply to the Trust

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 179-80.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 180.

Territories, whose sovereignty was bound to the United States in an inside/outside, colonial-tutelage-overseer relation. That foreign food aid and surplus could be distributed wholesale to a site deemed both foreign and domestic is significant in that it is a remarkable indication of American commitment of Cold War policy towards its foreign allies and non-citizen constituents. Agricultural surplus through PL 480 pipelines was intended for places like India, South Korea, and Vietnam—as an anti-communist gift. The fact that it was distributed in the Trust Territories through federal assistance and welfare programs unsettles notions of international relations between the U.S. and its allies and blurs the lines of how domestic and foreign spaces are defined. Is the TTPI a colonial possession? Or is it foreign ally in the Cold War? I contend that these food aid and domestic welfare programs of the Cold War in the TTPI present ways to think about the architecture of American colonialism.

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NND 982536

Civilian Supplies to be shipped to Indicated Destinations  
as soon as Practicable

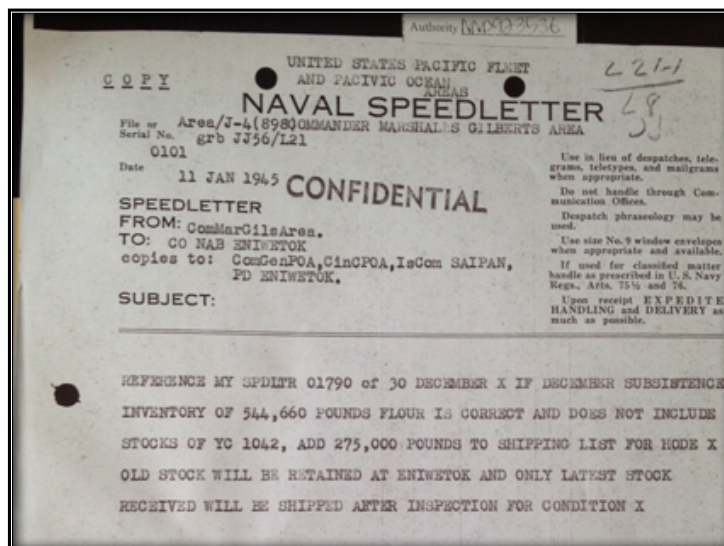
<u>Provisions</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>NSD GUAM</u>	<u>NSD SAIPAN</u>
Biscuits - dry	lb.	30,000	
Cornmeal - in sacks	lb.	8,000	3,000
Flour - wheat	lb.	380,000	80,000
Luncheon meat - 1-lb.	lb.	40,000	
Salmon - canned - 1-lb.	lb.	50,000	20,000
Sausage - Vienna - canned - No. 1/2 can	lb.	90,000	
Salted Corn Beef and Pork (in barrels)	lb.	80,000	
Beans, string - canned	lb.	30,000	30,000
Beets - canned	lb.	16,000	20,000
Peas - canned	lb.	40,000	20,000
Tomatoes - canned	lb.	70,000	20,000
Cornstarch	lb.	10,000	
Macaroni	lb.	10,000	10,000
Spaghetti	lb.	10,000	10,000
Rice - 50-lb sacks	lb.	600,000	530,000
Onions - dried	lb.	30,000	10,000
Coffee - 25-lb. cans	lb.	40,000	
Milk - evaporated	case	3,000	2,000
Powder - baking	lb.	2,400	
Soda - baking	lb.	2,000	
Extract - lemon - powdered	lb.	160	
Lard - substitute	lb.	60,000	60,000
Oil - salad - 1-gal. cans	gal.	2,400	
Pepper - black	lb.	1,200	500
Salt - table	lb.	30,000	32,000
Spices - assorted	lb.	480	
Sugar - granulated - 100-lb. sacks	lb.	156,000	20,000
Vinegar - 1-qt	qt.	1,600	1,000
Yeast - dry	lb.	7,600	500
Margarine	lb.	20,000	
Mustard	lb.	4,000	
Catsup - tomato	lb.	10,000	
Sauce - tomato	lb.	10,000	
Sardines - canned	lb.	20,000	
Chocolate - cooking	lb.	4,000	
Beans - Soy	lb.		244,000
Tea - Green	lb.		3,000

NOTE: All items should be packaged, where practical, in manner usual in commercial retail stores.

- 1 -

ENCLOSURE (A)

**Figure 2.8** A Naval invoice from December 1944 to Guam in the Mariana Islands. This receipt of “liberation foods” include biscuits, flour, luncheon meat, Vienna sausage, corn beef, macaroni, milk, and more. RG 313: Records of Naval Operating Forces; Box 17. General Administrative Files, ca. 1944-1951. National Archives College Park, Maryland.



**Figure 2.9** January 1945, Naval correspondence request of food to Enewetak in the Marshall Islands, a future site of nuclear testing. RG 313 Records of Naval Operating Forces, General Administrative Files, ca. 1944-1951, Box 17. “Relief and Rehabilitation supplies.”

The State-by-State Record of Recipients

The number of persons receiving surplus foods in the “needy persons” category has been increased to the largest total since 1942. Here is the State-by-State record of numbers of persons for the latest month reported, December 1958:

Alabama .....	131,571	New Hampshire .....	8,695
Arizona .....	34,851	New Jersey .....	20,003
Arkansas .....	219,354	New Mexico .....	40,020
California .....	35,397	New York .....	348,871
Colorado .....	25,429	North Carolina .....	607
Connecticut .....	1,156	North Dakota .....	11,220
Dist. of Columbia ..	37,162	Ohio .....	63,990
Georgia .....	42,135	Oklahoma .....	246,960
Illinois .....	81,664	Oklahoma .....	829,550
Indiana .....	100,482	Porto Rico .....	596,076
Iowa .....	92,468	Rhode Island .....	11,951
Kansas .....	11,148	South Carolina .....	1,377
Kentucky .....	254,377	South Dakota .....	31,019
Louisiana .....	137,713	Tennessee .....	154,551
Maine .....	51,891	Texas .....	127,698
Maryland .....	40,177	Utah .....	21,372
Massachusetts .....	3,609	Vermont .....	12,688
Michigan .....	538,385	Virginia .....	33,916
Minnesota .....	44,052	Washington .....	9,218
Mississippi .....	331,441	West Virginia .....	278,223
Missouri .....	87,862	Wisconsin .....	53,658
Montana .....	8,386	Wyoming .....	8,477
Nebraska .....	2,110	Trust Territory .....	5,835
Nevada .....	1,449	TOTAL .....	5,230,044

More Surplus Foods Also Donated Abroad

Since obtaining enabling legislation, the Department has also actively worked to move large quantities of surplus foods, through donations, to needy persons in foreign countries. These donations, through U. S. voluntary agencies in which church organizations play an important part, are made only after all requests of eligible recipients in this country have been met. The record of these surplus food donations follows:

**Figure 2.10** February 1959 memo or “Record of achievement for the ‘Direct Distribution Program’ for Surplus Foods” by the Department of Agriculture lists Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, here “Trust Territory,” as a recipient of American surplus, included as a naturalized member of the U.S.A.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> DDE White House Central Files, Official Files 1953-1961. OF106-1 Agricultural Surpluses. Box 430, Folder 21. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

In my research at the National Archives in College Park, San Bruno, Kansas City, Abilene, and in Honolulu, I found a lot of what I call “the receipts” of rescue. In one Naval correspondence on January 1945, for instance, over half a million pounds of flour is ordered to Enewetak, the very place where, only a couple of years later, U.S. nuclear testing on the islands will cause mass evacuations, ecological devastation, and the loss of food and livelihood. Today, Enewetak is remembered in U.S. national history —when it is at all—as a site where the bombs of Operation Ivy, Greenhouse, and Castle were detonated, a place where U.S. military technological dominance of the Cold War was perfected. David Hanlon has stated that the word “feeding” suggests “colonial hierarchies of power as revealed by the identities of those who feed and those who are fed.”<sup>85</sup> There is a significance in flour being delivered to the Islands and that this document is saved indicating so, since this is one of the surplus items that are not needed in the warehouses of the CCC. There are countless receipts such as these—invoices of humanitarian aid and food benevolence—in the National Archives and presidential libraries that can be found in the Department of Defense files, the Department of Agriculture files, and in the file of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. In my research, these indicate evidentiary proof of American benevolence and a paper trail of cultivated friendly relations that constitute a form of an “I. O. U.”

### **Hawai‘i: From American Territory to Fiftieth State**

What does it mean to get surplus benefits in Hawai‘i and what do surplus benefits look like in Hawai‘i? Surplus agricultural commodities and benefits “look” differently in Hawai‘i for

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 174.

various reasons. We often do not think of surplus funneled into domestic sites, but as I outlined with the Trust Territories, the naming of assistance colors the image of what is constituted as such. Naturalized in popular culture and in the U.S. political imaginary as the 50<sup>th</sup> state of the union, Hawai‘i’s history as an illegally annexed American territory at the turn of the century is often overlooked, simply ignored, or grossly misrepresented in literary, filmic, and televisual representations of popular culture.

It is often forgotten that Hawai‘i was a territory of the U.S. from 1898 until 1959, the year of statehood, despite countless commemorations of Pearl Harbor’s bombing and American sacrifice that drew the U.S. into World War II in 1941. It has indeed become seen as a naturalized extension of the United States’ western boundary in the fullest political sense—the midway point between Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Continental U.S., a historical context which I will explore more fully in chapter five.

As stated, American surpluses fed not only foreign allies in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, during the Cold War, but also served food aid to the American territories, including the TTPI and Hawai‘i. Federal surplus assistance came to the Hawaiian islands with the passing of Congressional legislation in December of 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor when the Islands fell under martial law. The bombing of Pearl Harbor is commemorated as a tragic event that marked the U.S. entrance into World War II, it also signals the entrance of American federal surplus foods into the Islands. At the end of December of 1941, Federal Surplus Commodity Corporation allocated goods to supplying the Hawaii Territory. Included in these shipments were beef, canned beef, canned salmon, canned sardines, eggs, canned milk, what flour, potatoes, onions, peas, canned baked beans, canned tomato juice, canned peaches, and more.<sup>86</sup> To build a

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<sup>86</sup> Bennett, M. K. “Hawaii’s Food Situation.” *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 11, No. 16 (Aug. 10, 1942), 174.



stockpile, the Federal Surplus Commodity Corporation shipped six months' worth of food to Oahu.

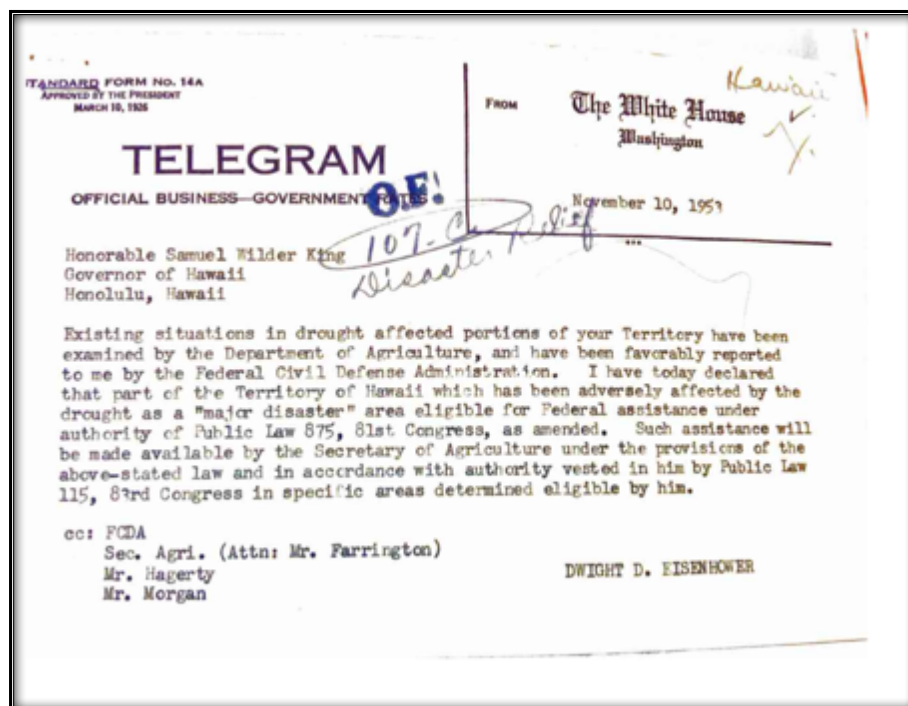
In the 1950s, prior to statehood, the United States has shown its commitment to Hawai'i and funneling of American surplus commodities in times of crisis. In a series of telegrams found at the Eisenhower presidential archives, for instance, numerous requests for assistance and relief from the federal government by Hawai'i governors and politicians are filed in folders of various boxes across several record groups. President Eisenhower's presidential term saw the authorization of Hawai'i's statehood; as an early proponent, he had a very eager attitude towards ushering Hawai'i into the union. The correspondence between territorial governor Samuel Wilder King and President Eisenhower reveal an interconnected closeness and prompt response in approving disaster relief under PL 875.

It is significant that American territories can request funds and food through congressional legislative measures. Public Law 875 or the Federal Disaster Relief Act (PL 81-875) serves as another way of thinking about food assistance through the Department of Agriculture and the Federal Defense Civil Administration. Like PL 480, it constitutes a way of funneling food, American surpluses, into the bellies of needy recipients, specifically in the event of unforeseen natural disaster. In 1950, Congress passed the Federal Disaster Relief Act, PL 81-875, to provide a framework for disaster policy.<sup>87</sup> This piece of legislation delegated power to the U.S. president to coordinate disaster relief efforts with local offices. A precursor to FEMA, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency which was established in 1979, PL 875 served as the legal precedence for the president's formal allocation of emergency and disaster relief due to natural causes or potential nuclear fallout—a true fear during the Cold War. Lawmakers were

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<sup>87</sup> Page 3 of “Disaster Relief Funding and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations” *Congressional Research Service*. By Bruce R. Lindsay and Justin Murray. April 12, 2011.

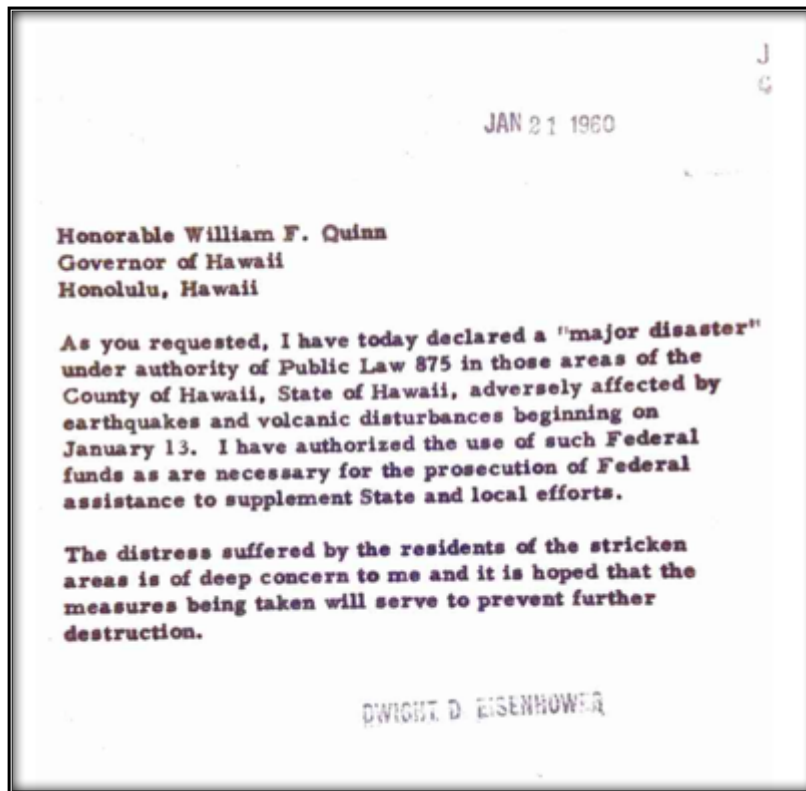
impacted by the political climate of the Cold War and during these early years, readied for natural disaster and potential nuclear threats. Most notable of these are the Civil Defense Act of 1950 and the Federal Disaster Relief Act or PL 975 in 1950. Bruce Lindsay and Justin Murray of the Congressional Research Service indicate how “these laws set into motion federal-to-state assistance, prompting the need for an account to fund disaster and emergency activities.”<sup>88</sup> With the framework of federal disaster assistance in place, the legislation authorized and amended a series of acts, including the Disaster Relief Acts of 1966 and 1974, and the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988.<sup>89</sup>



**Figure 2.11** Telegram between President Eisenhower and Hawai‘i Territorial Governor Samuel Wilder King, greenlighting aid and disaster relief through federal funds. Nov. 10, 1953. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS. White House Central Files, Official File, 1953-61. Box 444.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 2.12** White House Central Files, Official File, 1953-61, January 21, 1960.

Does it matter that it is not called PL 480, but instead termed “disaster relief,” PL 875, or any other emergency servicing legislation? What is the significance of the federal government assisting in times of disaster, to send aid to its territory-turned-state? Because surpluses and aid are not sent via the PL 480 category, the aid itself is rendered almost invisible, merely a natural extension of supplies.

From 1803-1950, Congress passed 128 laws dealing with disaster relief. Each disaster prompted a new piece of legislation, rather than a single law that would cover all of disaster relief (which would make sense). It was not until 1950, with PL 81-875 that a single umbrella legislation would apply to all disasters, not just ones on a case-by-case basis. This law allowed the President to provide federal assistance to states that needed help during a disaster. The Carter

administration (1976-80) then created the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 1979 that combined various emergency management programs under one umbrella organization. Among many forms of assistance, such as transportation, communications, public works and engineering health services, and firefighting—among others—included also providing food to affected families and individuals through the U.S. Department of Agriculture: “The Food and Nutrition Service is an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that oversees two major disaster assistance programs: food coupons and food commodities... The Secretary of Agriculture has the authority to donate surplus commodities for the mass feeding of disaster victims.”<sup>90</sup>

The U.S. is still using surplus commodities from the Department of Agriculture. As stated in the language of FEMA and other Disaster Relief agencies, the USDA continues to provide surplus for the use of emergency disaster across the continental U.S. Disaster relief funding through FEMA has obligations for all its fifty states plus the District of Columbia and its insular territories: these include Pacific and Caribbean insular areas. Indeed, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, the territories of American Samoa, Guam, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands are included in FEMA’s obligations.<sup>91</sup>

The American national archives and records, its regional branches, the many presidential libraries, and even University holdings speak to the haunting nature of U.S. culture of collection and accounting. However, what does it mean that many of these holdings are kept within files and musty boxes, cordoned off from the public? Who is the audience for PL 480 and food aid

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<sup>90</sup> “A Citizen’s Guide to Disaster Assistance,” September 2003, Emergency Management Institute, FEMA, “Unit Three: Overview of Federal Disaster Assistance,” 14.

<sup>91</sup> “Emergency Management and Homeland Security Statutory Authorities in the States, District of Columbia, and Insular Areas: A Summary,” *Congressional Research Service* Report for Congress March 17, 2004, Keith Bea, L. Cheryl Runyon, and Kae M. Warnock.

receipts — which are housed across sites as diverse as the Hamilton Library Pacific Collection, the National Archives at San Bruno, California, the Agricultural files at the Kansas City, Missouri, National Archives at College Park, the Presidential Libraries of Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and presumably the Presidents after them; they are housed in files as different as the department of defense (the Navy, Army, Air Force), the Department of Agriculture, the Department of American International Development, Congressional Records, the Korean War files (at various libraries in College Park, MD and in Abilene, TX, for example), the Administration of the Trust Territories (also at various archives), Hawai‘i Statehood Files (again, at different archives). The library seems to hold stacks of Borgesian magnitude. That is, the library’s holdings, while quantifiable in its numeric limitedness, present a seemingly infinite trail of echoes, receipts, and sources showing evidence of U.S. benevolence.

## **Conclusion**

With the Cold War came an onslaught of diplomatic and military policies that went hand-in-hand in building alliances, allegiances, and “trust” in disparate “bases” of American empire in Asia and the Pacific Islands. This chapter has traced the formation of American foreign policy—through an agricultural surplus disposal legislation—that in turn funneled U.S. foods into hungry bellies through wartime relief and an imperial pipeline of feeding. As food aid became a part of surplus disposal in places like the Korean War, it also became a part of American domestic “assistance” programs that in turn perpetuated and naturalized the presence of the United States as a breadwinner and food provider, eliding its imperial visage in the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands and Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i, that which became the 50<sup>th</sup> star of the U.S. flag speaks to the political erasures and amnesias of America’s colonial core values—of being colonial,

expansionist, and annexationist—as it preaches political independence and respect for autonomous democratic states, particularly during the Cold War.<sup>92</sup> The United States had crafted a seemingly win-win scenario. It is not just that the U.S. has saved images of itself as a hero, but also a testament to how the United States leverages and negotiates relations. I argue that this is done in an effort that is self-consciously concerned with the nation’s public image. And, like a meticulous accountant, there is not a pound of flour unaccounted for in its history of giving.

This chapter also examined the haunting nature of American archives—as disjointed and muted repositories of U.S. benevolence overseas that belies the colonial violence behind its projects of generosity, its inventory of care and paternalism. Receipts of rescue speak to the stingy nature of American generosity, one that is constantly tabulating the dues of others. The inventory and relief aid docket provide evidence of quantifiable aid funneling out at any given moment. It shows the calculable largesse and high volume benevolence of U.S. engagement, archived for posterity. With these, the United States can be said to essentially save all its receipts—that is, the United States has kept a record, an inventory of all that it has given with nothing left unaccounted. In a way, this serves as a living reminder of owed gratitude, of the deserving indebtedness of others, indexed by the thousands upon thousands of files in archival repositories throughout the United States national records.

The paper trail of receipts gives material evidence and quantifiable figures to American Cold War benevolence, even though there are benefits to the United States. Agricultural surplus was delivered to U.S. allies and emergency relief supplies to America’s insular territories to places such as the TTPI and territory of Hawai‘i (which saw statehood only in 1959 under

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<sup>92</sup> On the importance of the American image in an international Cold War context, see also Mary Dudziak’s *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (2000) and Penny Von Eschen’s *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (2004).

Eisenhower), while benefiting foreign and domestic relations and U.S. agriculture. The conflation of unwanted surplus with U.S. benevolence casts a shadow on the bounty of U.S. generosity. It is my contention this in conjunction with the stockpiling of “receipts” must be included in any formulation of U.S. empire, hegemony, and influence from the Cold War years and beyond.<sup>93</sup>

As Mitchel B. Wallerstein, Christopher B. Barrett, Daniel G. Maxwell, and many other food aid scholars have shown, the fundamental and oft-repeated myth of food aid is simply self-serving:

The US government’s food aid programs have always aimed to advance self-serving goals of surplus disposal, export promotion and geopolitical leverage to benefit privileged domestic interest groups. While the rhetoric of American food aid has always emphasized its altruistic appearance, the design and use of US food aid programs have always been driven primarily by donor-oriented concerns, not by recipient needs or rights.<sup>94</sup>

Rather than food aid being an untethered, untied, and selfless act of charity, the fact remains that aid, specifically Cold War aid, benefits the United States farmer, the American image, and the American economy. I use the phrase “tied aid,” which refers to whether aid comes with political strings of agricultural restructuring and whether the food was sourced within the United States or in the recipient nation. “Tied” aid uses the food grown in the U.S. or other donor countries and exports it to the place in need. So, the U.S. often sends tied aid or food grown in the U.S. and distributes them to places in need through PL 480, particularly during the early decades of the Cold War. Critiques of tied aid obviously rest on that it helps local American farmers, while simultaneously keeping recipient nations agriculture economies crippled and dependent on foreign aid.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> It’s also interesting to think about how PL 480, now as Food for Peace lives on today, with its social media pages versus these musty stacks of self-project. The receipts are now online.

<sup>94</sup> Barrett and Maxwell, *Food Aid After Fifty Years*, 35.

<sup>95</sup> Ahlberg107; Clapp, 5-6.

The crippling of indigenous agricultural economies has been explored through the agricultural histories and critiques of globalization in recent decades. Notably, Vandana Shiva's study on the violence of the "Green Revolution" was aimed precisely at the U.S. Cold War policy of food aid and development, which sent assistance through agricultural supplies and restructuring as part of modernizing Indian agriculture through new farming technologies to eradicate famine.<sup>96</sup> While not always the case, for some nations, one of PL 480's contingencies included "adopting American style agricultural practices in pursuit of higher crop yields."<sup>97</sup>

One cannot separate American Cold War food policy with the legacies we find in indigenous histories, memories, and stories of Asia and the Pacific. Food aid constitutes a discourse of Cold War ideology and enactment of technology that impacts the lives of people not only within the network of foreign allies, but also within the its "domestic" trusteeship relations and its newest incorporated state. I have argued that food aid operates within the narrative circuits of American benevolence—that it works alongside, becomes entangled with, and symbiotically gains traction through state discourses of security and munificence. This is part of the assemblage of imperial circuitry and infrastructure of U.S. hegemony in the Cold War era until now.

American Cold War legacies continue in the bloodstream of people in Asia and the Pacific today. PL 480, and American food assistance in its myriad of forms and channels then open up the implications of the U.S. cultivating a demand for American commodities, beyond

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<sup>96</sup> See Vandana Shiva's *Violence of the Green Revolution* (1989); her critiques of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program are harsh and this study reveals the sad reality behind supplanting indigenous farming practices in the Punjab region of India. Kristin Ahlberg monograph, *Transplanting the Great Society*, also grapples with agricultural restructuring in places like India (with some reference to the Philippines); however, she shies away from the critiques so prevalent in Shiva's work.

<sup>97</sup> Ahlberg, 45.



just aid purposes, in creating a taste for U.S. goods and diets, in supplanting agricultural economies while supporting U.S. agribusiness, and eating from the hand of empire.<sup>98</sup> The food of American surpluses of Cold War policy, as I show in the following chapters, resurface in literary forms where I link the sites of U.S. Cold War intervention in the Korean peninsula, the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, and Hawai‘i as distinct projects of governance with a shared currency of humanitarian assistance.

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<sup>98</sup> More than interesting is the fact that there exists sizable correspondence with food companies and agricultural producers (of certain grains like bulgur for instance, or dairy farmers promoting milk consumption and companies such as Campbell’s pushing their products to the CCC).